

ECO-ETHICS INTERNATIONAL UNION



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Humanity can survive
only with a new concept
of ethics: eco-ethics

Eco-ethics differs from historical ethics. The roots of eco-ethics are not revelation, faith and philosophy, but scientific research, knowledge and compatibility between nature and humanity. The subject of eco-ethics is not a single species but communities of different, co-existing forms of life.

Our continuously further developed views on ethics strive to open up new avenues into the future of mankind.

Eco-ethics further developed text: 01.05.2002*

Otto Kinne

EEIU Headquarters, Nordbunte 23, 21385 Oldendorf/Luhe, Germany

Ethics is the bedrock of humanity – a basic guideline for human conduct, thinking and belief. No human society can thrive without ethics.

Human societies are dynamic; most change in many ways and at increasing speed. In contrast, most traditional ethics are static and remain dogmatic. This discrepancy causes growing concern and dissonance between ethics and society, and it brings forth the need for developing and implementing a new, adaptable, modern ethical construct; a construct that takes into account the problems, requirements and anxieties of today's humanity and the fact that our species can survive only in a healthy nature.

Building on ecological knowledge, the Eco-Ethics International Union (EEIU) develops, distributes and represents such a new ethical construct. It roots in the fundamental significance of ecosystems for life on earth: **eco-ethics**. Evolved over billions of years, **eco-**

logical dynamics form the cradle, motor and directive force of life. They determine creation, maturation and death of all forms in which life on earth manifests itself, including our own species *Homo sapiens*. The EEIU does not conceive *H. sapiens* as crown of creation or as ruler of Earth, but as part of our planet. We know that we owe our lives to a balanced co-existence with other parts, and that this balance is the prime prerequisite for the survival of our species.

The EEIU campaigns for more self-restraint and critical self-re-assessment. We hope for support from those who can share our views and concerns. Together, let us build a **new house for humanity** – a house based on love of nature, respect for her, and increasing knowledge of her grand ways and designs.

Our **aims** can be summarised as follows:

- (1) Discuss, further develop and implement eco-ethics concepts and theses (p. 2)

**You are cordially invited to join the Union as a member.
Please support our efforts!**

*Based on: Kinne O (1997) Ethics and eco-ethics. Mar Ecol Prog Ser 153:1–3

Kinne O (2001) Eco-ethics further developed text 01.05.2001. EEIU Brochure, Inter-Research, Oldendorf/Luhe, p 1–6

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- (2) Found and develop Local EEIU Components (see p. 6) in all parts of the globe
 - (3) Teach eco-ethics, especially to children at home, to pupils in schools and to students at universities. Only if we succeed in bringing eco-ethics to the heads and hearts of the young generation can there be hope for approaching EEIU aims, including a sustainable long-term equilibrium between nature and modern human societies
 - (4) Invite interested people to join us as EEIU Members, and ask related groups and organisations to cooperate with the Union
 - (5) Inform and motivate decision makers, the general public and the media, and ask for moral and material support
 - (6) Seek sponsors and solicit donations.

Nothing is now more important than to know that we can survive only with a sustainable balance between ecosystem health and human needs. The investigation and maintenance of such a balance is a foremost concern of eco-ethics.

Our main instruments for approaching our aims are:

- the **Eco-Ethics International Union**, founded in 1998 (EEIU; www.eeiu.org)
- the publication organ of the EEIU, the international scientific journal **Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics**, founded in 1999 (ESEP; www.esep.de)
- the Local EEIU Components (**Chapters, Youth Groups, Task Forces**; p. 6)

For the latest information on the rapidly growing EEIU please consult our continuously updated web site (www.eeiu.org). The following pages outline our con-

cepts and theses and introduce the structures and functions of the Union.

You are cordially invited...

... to participate in discussions on the further development of the Union. Please send your manuscript – in English, short, concise – to one of the editors of 'Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics' (ESEP). Editors' names and addresses, as well as guidelines for authors and further details on ESEP, are available at www.esep.de. Critical or challenging contributions are welcome.

... to become a Member of the EEIU. The Union does not charge membership fees but it expects members to help advance its development. Names and addresses of Union Members are listed alphabetically in our web pages (www.eeiu.org).

Please address your membership application to:

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**For convenience use the form printed under
www.eeiu.org/members.html**

ECO-ETHICS: CONCEPTS AND THESES

Eco-ethics concepts

Life on earth has evolved and exists in ecosystems. Healthy ecosystems are the prime prerequisite for the continuation of life as we know it. Dynamic forces of ecosystems control creation, maturation and death of all forms in which life manifests itself. In ecosystems, everything changes, everything flows. In contrast, traditional ethics tend to re-

sist change and to be static; in addition, they are one-sided and focus on a single life form among millions – *Homo sapiens*.

To be able to meet the immense tasks confronting modern humanity, we need a new ethical concept – a construct that extends beyond the narrow and self-centred world we have built for our own immediate ends. We need a construct that can grow, adapt and mature in

concert with nature and humanity, and that is open to change, development and critique.

Ethics in religion and philosophy

Ethics has been a major concern of religious people and philosophers for many centuries. Both have invested immense efforts in the examination and interpretation of

human behavior. They must be accorded great merit for developing the concepts and ideals of ethics that have guided and accompanied large parts of humanity over many centuries.

Theologians and philosophers have used the term 'ethics' often synonymously with the term 'morals'. Both terms refer to human behavior held to be standard for the majority of a given people. The standard reflects what is right or wrong, good or bad in inter-human relationships. Theological considerations are based on the authority of revelation, philosophical considerations on the authority of reason. One leading school of philosophers has analyzed and formulated normative criteria for developing ethical concepts and rules; another, ethical principles and methods of formulating moral judgment of what is good or bad.

Being believers, religious people side with supernatural phenomena. Their God has created the world. *He* makes the decisions and formulates the rules. Believers are allowed to interpret the decisions and to discuss the rules, but not to oppose or disobey them and they are not allowed to make essential changes. Philosophers have developed complicated, partially contradictory, systems and terms. They concentrate on theory and side with rational argumentation. The world of theologians consists mainly of extrapolations of their beliefs; the world of philosophers, of extrapolations of their reasoning.

Both theologians and philosophers have created anthropocentric and geocentric models of the world – models with insufficient relevance to the realities around us. *Homo sapiens* is not the center of the earth, and the earth is not the center of the universe. *H. sapiens* is one species among millions and part of the life process – just as a dolphin, a mouse or a virus. Earth is a planet among billions in our

galaxy, and there are billions of such galaxies.

Most theologians and philosophers assume that standards of global dimensions can be developed. However, certain traits of ethics have strong local roots (situation ethics), as do the people who created them. Global standards should formulate basic principles, but leave space for religious and cultural variation. Some people insist that what they have regularly practiced successfully over long stretches of time is right and good, and hence moral. Can we accept different ethical standards? Why not, as long as they respect human dignity, rights and freedoms as defined by the United Nations. Ethics will always contain subjective components; it should remain open to debate and be subject to change. Everything changes as a function of time! Nothing, absolutely nothing is exceptable from this natural law.

Ethics in ecology: eco-ethics

Life on earth evolved over billions of years firmly integrated within the dynamics of ecosystems. No species, not even *Homo sapiens*, can live by itself. Ecosystems consist of non-living and living components. These connect in diverse, mostly complex ways. The living components react with and against each other, they utilize each other as sources of energy and matter, and they interact with their non-living environments. Life modifies environment and environment modifies life.

Such are the basic realities of life on earth as we ecologists can grasp them. Principal elements of evolution, these realities provide the life process with drive and direction. What is good here, what bad? There are no such things in nature's original plan.

Life unfolds under the harsh grip of ecosystem laws: (1) Ruthless competition, exploitation and maximization of selfish advantages; trans-

formation of foreign materials into own materials. (2) Integration into the patterns of flowing energy and recirculating matter. (3) Maturation with time; diversification, self-regulation and building up of interspecific ties. (4) Merciless punishment of lawbreakers. This is the ancient world in which *Homo sapiens* was born, in which our species lived 99% of its time, and in which all its essential structures and functions formed. In each of our billions of cells we still carry the genetic programs devised for ecosystem members, for our ecosystem past.

What went wrong? Never before has a form of life disregarded ecosystem health as much as modern humankind. Never before has a single species changed Planet Earth so ruthlessly and relentlessly and attained an ecological dominance of such outrageous dimensions. And never before has the discrepancy been so large between what we are doing and what we ought to be doing.

In order to meet the extraordinary challenges modern humanity faces, we must enlarge the traditional concept of ethics to embrace not only *Homo sapiens*, but also environments and other forms of life. The word proposed for this enlarged concept is 'eco-ethics', i.e. human thought and conduct oriented to what is right or wrong, beneficial or destructive for the total system 'Nature plus *Homo sapiens*'.

Eco-ethics Theses

Our dilemma is this: we were born in, and built for, a world from which we have to a considerable extent escaped. In this sense, we are runaways and lawbreakers who have become experts in bending or evading nature's rules for our own ends, and masters at replacing patterns of coexistence with patterns of dominance. We will be punished severely unless we establish a new

balance between our modern ways and those of our ecosystem past – unless we re-establish compatibility between nature’s metabolic patterns and those of the human population. **This is the first thesis of eco-ethics.**

Environmental protection, as presently practiced, is a potentially misleading and dangerous concept. Why? Because it seeks primarily to protect the environment of nature’s worst enemy. The result? Additional support for the already towering human dominance. We need a new concept of environmental protection. It must also strive to protect the environments of our fellow creatures. They cannot speak out for themselves. We must act on their behalf according to the best of our knowledge. Our societies and educational systems have to take this into account. They must obtain and teach ecological knowledge and ecological thinking. And they must insist on accepting human responsibility for other ecosystem components. **This is the second thesis of eco-ethics.**

Nature evolves through harsh conflicts. Human societies must avoid harsh conflicts. To keep our complex societies intact requires the wisdom of conflict reduction and the will to reconcile economy and ecology. Both are different sides of the same coin (see below), and both must be measured against moral principles. In order to achieve that, we have to define what is beneficial, good, and what is detrimental, bad, for the development of our economic systems and their ecological bases. And we have to decide how we can best enhance such good and reduce such bad. **This is the third thesis of eco-ethics.**

Survival in our new world requires control of the animal in us. We cannot break ecosystem laws without devising new rules, designed to tame our ancient urges, desires and instincts. Based on nature’s grand designs, we need to develop and to enforce new values, such as self-re-

striction, modesty, responsibility, honesty; to formulate aims, such as peace, freedom, dignity, justice, human rights; to further ideals, such as virtue, altruism, love. Here extends ground common with moral theology and moral philosophy. **This is the fourth thesis of eco-ethics.**

Two principal insights have become more important for the future of humanity than anything else: (1) We can survive only in an intact nature and must therefore protect such intactness from our one-sided egoism. (2) We can no longer accept ethical doctrines that continue to deny or neglect scientifically recognised realities. The role of our species in nature must be critically re-discussed and re-defined without bias. **This is the fifth thesis of eco-ethics.**

In a human world of wars, hunger, poverty, disease and misery for millions of people, is there enough will-power, time and energy for responding to the challenges outlined above? If the answer is ‘no’, *Homo sapiens* will disappear from the stage of life in the not-too-distant future. **This is the sixth thesis of eco-ethics.**

The development and implementation of eco-ethics is the most important prerequisite for attaining and maintaining a harmonic relationship between human requirements and ecosystem carrying capacities, and thus for lengthening the life span of our species. Only through a consequent development and application of eco-ethics can a catastrophe of gigantic dimensions be avoided.

More about economy and ecology

The third thesis of eco-ethics states that economy and ecology are different sides of the same coin. Here we elaborate on the differences.

Economy refers to the activities of a single species, *Homo sapiens*.

Human economies strive to maximize the use of nature’s resources for selfish ends. In the long run, they tend to endanger or even disrupt natural harmony.

Ecology refers to the interrelated activities of many different co-existing species and their environmental ties. Such systems balance out individual egoisms and promote overall harmony.

The working principles of economies are linear. They involve production processes that begin at a natural source but end in materials more or less foreign to nature. Economies remove or isolate resources from ecosystems and transform them into products for human use. The transformations require much energy and result in much waste. Economies sell their products to customers who in the end also transform the products into waste: A gigantic and still growing process of one-sided, unidirectional degradation. Ultimately, such working principles lead to impairments of nature’s capacity to support life.

The working principles of ecosystems are cyclic. Ecosystem members do not remove or isolate resources, nor do they transform these into materials foreign to nature. They transform old resources into new resources, using naturally available energy: a network of multi-sided processes that support life and provide it with evolutionary power.

What are the consequences for ecological ethics?

- (1) Replace as much as possible linear resource degradation by cyclic resource re-utilization.
- (2) Learn more about the working principles of ecosystems and use the insight gained for reconstructing our economies and societies.
- (3) Re-harmonize the human world with the world around us and reduce our detrimental impacts on nature.

(4) Adjust the number of people on earth and their per capita use of energy and matter in accordance with the carrying capacities of ecosystems. This is a task primarily for governmental and inter-governmental bodies. However global application of eco-ethics concepts and theses will provide support for and give additional thrust to these vital issues.

Economies cannot be successful without ethics. **Economic Ethics** ('econ-ethics') comprise, first of all, restraint in exploiting nature, re-integration and respect for healthy ecosystems.

All this can be achieved neither overnight nor easily. Time, knowledge and political will are needed for developing and implementing new concepts, laws and technolo-

gies. But we must begin to act NOW!

If we succeed in approaching eco-ethics and econ-ethics aims we shall be able to satisfy all our essential requirements and lead a pleasant life – without critically deforming nature and without diminishing the chances for future generations.

EEIU: STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS

The EEIU was founded in 1998.

Founders

Prof. Dr. Otto Kinne (President)
Headquarters, Oldendorf/Luhe
Germany

Prof. Dr. Gennady Polikarpov (Vice President)
General Office, Sevastopol
Ukraine

EEIU global and local activities

There are 2 Global Components: Headquarters and General Office, and 3 Local Components: Chapters, Youth Groups and Task Forces (Table 1). The Union strives for a minimum of centralism and bureaucracy, but a maximum of independent brain nuclei.

The first Chairpersons of Local Components are appointed by the EEIU President or Vice President. Later, Local Components can elect their chairpersons, who will then be formally appointed by the Presidency.

We support diversity and independence in reaching our common goals.

Very first steps on a very long road

Several Chapters have been enrolled, others are in the process of formation. Some organizations devoted to causes similar to ours consider joining the EEIU.

Programs and activities of EEIU Components are published on the EEIU web pages (www.eeiu.org).

The EEIU has received worldwide attention and applause. This has encouraged us to proceed with our plans.

Financing

The costs for running EEIU components are hoped to be covered by sponsors. The Founding Sponsor is Inter-Research. Additional sponsors are invited to donate contributions.

Donations are tax deductible. Headquarters will supply the sponsor with appropriate documents upon request.

Unless they instruct us otherwise, sponsors will be listed in our web pages and in our printed communications.

Sponsor donations are used exclusively for supporting Union activities, especially those in Local Components. Information on the use of sponsor money is available from Headquarters.

Fees

There is no membership fee. There are no salaries for Headquarters personnel; we work on an honorary basis.

Publication

The publication media for EEIU affairs are, in addition to ESEP (www.esep.de), our Union web pages, coordinated at Headquarters (eeiu@eeiu.org).

Local Components publish their news, accomplishments, criticisms, proposals, problems, etc. on the Union's web pages. They may elect their own editors. Prior to publication, Local Editors should consult with the Coordinating Editor. For questions please contact the General Office or Headquarters.

Table 1. EEIU Global and Local Components and their main activities

Components		Main Activities
Global Components	Headquarters General Office	Develop, organize and oversee global Union matters and policies. Appoint Fellows, Local Components, Chairpersons and Members. Manage the Union's publication organ: 'Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics' (ESEP) and the Union's web pages. Establish and entertain contacts to related organizations, politics and media
	Chapters	Organise local (e.g. country, city, university, school) Union activities and policies. Develop and teach eco-ethics. Plan and verify own programs. Recruit members. Seek own sponsors. Contribute situation-specific input into the general eco-ethics (and econ-ethics) movement. Report to Headquarters
Local Components	Youth Groups	Learn, practise, develop and promote eco-ethics and econ-ethics. Set up own programs and activities. Recruit members. Seek own sponsors. Hold own meetings. Report on own affairs in the Union's web pages
	Task Forces	Offer critique. Create and provide important new input into the EEIU movement. Teach, practise, develop and promote eco-ethics and econ-ethics. Organise meetings. Seek own sponsors. Publish own affairs in the Union's web pages

EEIU-related activities of Inter-Research include:

Book Series

- **EE Books.** Authored by noted ecologists of our time (laureates of the International Ecology Institute), they present views and facts vital for a better understanding of nature and ourselves, for human survival and welfare, and for the health of ecosystems
- **Top Books.** Written by authors with scientific backgrounds in the form of literature (novels, plays, scripts), Top Books focus on failures, challenges, chances and responsibilities of modern humanity; they address a wide readership
- **ESEP Books.** They highlight essentials of the scope of the ESEP journal and further the Eco-Ethics International Union by discussing, evaluating and deepening its conceptual basis.

Scientific journals

- **Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics (ESEP).** This new journal provides a global stage for developing a new ethical construct focussing on ecological ethics (eco-ethics) and economical ethics (econ-ethics), their bearing on science and politics, and their significance for the future of nature and humanity.
- **Marine Ecology Progress Series and Aquatic Microbial Ecology.** These two leading scientific journals publish important research results on the dynamics of ecosystems, and ecological studies often immediately relevant to eco-ethics.

Inter-Research has presently 30 formally appointed staff members, world-wide more than 1000 honorary associates. For details about Inter-Research please consult www.int-res.com

ECO-ETHICS INTERNATIONAL UNION: SPONSORS

Founding Sponsor: Inter-Research, Oldendorf/Luhe, GERMANY

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- Dr. Maxim B. Gulin (Task Force Chairman), Sevastopol, UKRAINE
- Prof. John and Jean Cairns, Blacksburg, Virginia, USA
- Volksbank Lüneburg, GERMANY
- Lighthouse Foundation, Hamburg, GERMANY (<http://www.lighthouse-foundation.org>)