

PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE

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Abstract. *This paper points out some major aspects of the dynamic of the relationship between man and nature, depending on the psychological development and organization of the former. Two main stages are delimited: a) the passive-reacting stage and b) the active-transforming stage. Characteristic for the first stage is a diffuse consciousness, which sustains the perception and the feeling that man is intrinsically a constituent part of nature. The second stage is characterized by the process of differentiation and specialization inside the consciousness, and by the development of self-consciousness and of individualization. This acquisition has led to the development of man's capacity to systematically create and produce the tools by means of which man could act to change or transform some given conditions of nature. Historically, this process, which has been perfected, became the main psychological factor that influenced the character of the relationship between man and nature, in both positive and negative ways.*

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The relationship between man and nature has evolved following an extremely sinuous and contradictory trajectory, alternating favourable moments and critical ones. The dynamics of this relationship was and still is conditioned by the degree of concordance between man's survival and adaptive needs, on the one hand, and the conditions offered by nature, on the other hand. Because, at the human level, adaptation is achieved by way of mediated behaviours and is dictated by psychic functions and mechanisms, the dynamics of the relationship between man and nature necessarily implies a psychological dimension.

The differentiation and development level of cognitive, motivational, affective and volitional functions determines the degree of complexity and type of adaptive behaviours. Depending on the objective to which these behaviours are subordinated, they can be classified into two groups: a) exploratory-operant (instrumental) behaviours, and b) satisfactory or consuming behaviours. For the dynamics of the general relationship between man and nature, the most important are the latter. These behaviours consist in the investigation of the environment, in discovering and identifying and acquiring the proper "objects" needed to satisfy specific states of necessity. It is obvious that, just as man's psychic organisation and development couldn't attain their highest potential from the very beginning-on the contrary, they had only begun their long journey towards their highest point,-neither could the exploratory-instrumental behaviours take on such varied, specialised and complex forms as they do today.

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