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ARTISTIC COMPREHENSION OF NATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETICS

The article deals with the way for the essence of the nature to be understood by art community, the activity of the latter aimed at harmonizing human-nature relations and setting out on the path to resolve the ecological crisis of nowadays. The author has considered the ecofactors that led to rethinking and re-evaluation of artistic comprehension of the world, the genesis of art and its functions, as well as analyzed the characteristics of modern bioart and formation of environmental aesthetics as a discipline. The issues of conceptual and categorical apparatus formation in environmental aesthetics, as well as definition of its subject, method and research tasks have been discussed. Environmental aesthetics refers to nature as to the model for a person to navigate at during the creative process. The concept of ecological aesthetic beauty of nature, or of beauty in nature, is the central one. Being a factor of ideology, values and behavioral patterns of various age groups and social strata representatives, environmental aesthetics carries a significant educational potential, while remaining relatively new and insufficiently developed area of domestic philosophical studies.

Keywords: *environmental crisis, aesthetics, environmental aesthetics, artistic comprehension of nature.*

Articulation of the issue. Historical and humanistic mission of a creator, – either a writer, an artist, or a musician, – is to raise the fundamental issues of human existence in his or her creative work. This thesis was precisely and succinctly formulated by Lina Kostenko as follows: "A poet is a medium of history" [6, p. 550]. Nowadays, artists are meant to draw people's attention to the contradictions of globalization, while anticipating problems in advance, acting ahead and allowing scholars, politicians, experts, and public activists to reflect on the topical issues being raised in advance. Accordingly, for both writers and artists, the challenges of environmental crises in their anthropological dimensions cannot be ignored. Analyzing phenomenology and hermeneutics in the structure of philosophical and humanitarian education, V. Kebuladze assumes that the crosscutting idea of the main work by Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, is that truth can reveal itself before us not only as a result of application of a scientific method, but through other spiritual practices as well: "For Gadamer himself – it is historical experience and art" [5, p. 52-53]. For this reason, today there arises the question of the role of art in understanding nature, as well as of the artistic reflection on ecological crises and search for ways of harmonizing the connections between humans and nature.

Research objectives setting. With due consideration of the above-mentioned estimations of the reality role, in this article there has been made an attempt to accomplish the following objectives:

– to examine the attitude of representatives of the humanitarian sphere, including artists, to the current environmental crisis, and outline the peculiarities of understanding and conceptualizing the environmental challenges of the present;

– to analyze the contribution of artists to understanding of nature and connections between a man and the natural world, as well as the ways to overcome the environmental crisis;

– to outline to what extent the humanitarian and artistic understanding of the causes and consequences of environmental crises, as well as the ways of overcoming them, can be used in development of the concept of environmental education.

Finding and analyzing the answers to these questions is an important aspect of the study of environmental issues, since perceptions of the causes of environmental crises and finding the ways to

overcome them are always pluralistic. It follows, firstly, from the fact that the environmental crises themselves are conditioned upon a whole cause system; secondly, any complex and multilayered problems, which include environmental problems of the present, imply the need for consideration and testing of various ways of overcoming them. They cover scientific, technological, economic decisions (approaches), as well as an environmental view from the standpoint of moral, ethical and aesthetic values [12, p. 23].

Presentation of the basic content. According to the research topic, we are, first of all, interested in artists' contribution to understanding of the environmental crisis as a factor that opposes cultural cultivation and destroys a person, as well as to understanding the ways of overcoming the environmental crisis as a condition of mankind and culture preservation.

It is known that nature is one of the greatest sources of artistic inspiration. Therefore, when such a source fades or shoals, it cannot but concern an artist, without leaving him or her indifferent.

In that way, at the end of – early centuries, in Europe there clearly demerged the groups of people who raised their voice in defense of nature, which was rapidly collapsing under the pressure of industrialization and urbanization, and who were concerned about depletion of natural resources, declining of the natural and cultural heritage, what became the cause of the internal crisis of a person, discomfort, loss of the meaning of being. Among them, there were writers, natural scientists, public figures, artists who suggested nature to be considered "the source of harmony and stability, able to withstand the destructive power of industrial civilization that was rapidly changing the world". These voices not only contributed to the formation of idealized beliefs about the natural order, which should be kept in public life, but also urged society to take dynamic action to protect the archetype of pristine wildlife, as well as natural and cultural heritage [1, p. 15].

"The essential feature of art, – S. Grabovsky stated, – is the possibility of non-rational supplement of rational projects, rational orientations of worldview search" [2, p. 196]. Such projective determinants as a dream, hope, faith in the future, ideal, expectation and aspiration, the researcher assumes, can concentrate around itself the spiritual, sensual, value-artistic pursuance of a person of the future development, of the prospects of mankind and its destiny. S. Grabovsky calls them a peculiar artistic "cluster". "As a specific product of spiritual and practical development of the world, – S. Grabovsky further develops his opinion, – the art reacts resiliently to changes in the field of human activity, shifts in the orientations and needs, consciousness and mentality of people" [2, p. 196]. Correspondingly, among the social-cultural roles of art, there is understanding of the spirit of time, the discerning and finding the typological worldview of the epoch, the prognosis of social prospects. Consequently, the researcher concludes, art is "an extremely sensitive barometer to detect sprouts of something new in the social life, to find the problems that humanity has yet to resolve" [2, p. 196].

Thus, the need to supplement the rational knowledge of the laws of the nature functioning through both understanding the meanings hidden in it and their interpretation (according to Blumenberg) is actualized; it should contribute to deeper understanding of both the inner world of a person and the world in which he or she lives. One way of such an understanding of nature may be to "read" nature the way a book can be read.

"Curbing passions, which were associated with the natural power, – O. Pavlova writes, – was the task of the whole logocentric philosophy. The impossibility of the full control over feelings in a rational way has caused despair among enlighteners. Although, in their rationalistic aspiration critically to make their minds absolute, they did not realize that art has become not only a technique for developing, cultivating feelings, but also for controlling them. For control being not so much in the sense of "purifying the senses" (Aristotle) and giving them moral, didactic content (as the representatives of classicism hoped to manage), but also because the aesthetic absolutization leads to desolation of feelings, as aestheticism ("Garden and Romantics") proves" [7, p. 129].

As a result, a person remains defenseless in front of "the abyss of his or her feelings" and cannot rationally define their correctness. Therefore, this function is taken upon by art: "Art not only forms universal models of the world-feeling experience, but remains the only way of such an experience in the civilization process" [7, p. 129].

Nowadays, humanity faces a number of challenges, which, on the one hand, form new demands for art, create a new social discourse and new projections of their artistic understanding; on the other hand, art itself changes, generating just as new directions, styles, forms of art, so philosophical reflections on them.

Creation of new trends, forms and styles of art is associated with two fundamental factors of our time: rapid development of science, engineering and technologies, them insinuating into all spheres of being, modifying the nature, the surrounding world and human life, including art; degradation of environment and destruction of landscapes, loss of plant and animal species, rapid development of urbanization processes, displacement of natural with artificial. All this carries such consequences as disturbance of balance not only in nature, but also in a person's state of health, violation of his or her emotional and psychological balance.

The art also responds sensitively to human conditions in a "depleted" artificial environment, while trying, on the one hand, to redress the lost balance, attracting attention of a person and society to ecological crisis situations by means of art, and thus appealing to the sensory-emotional sphere of a person; on the other hand, to perform a compensatory function, trying to compensate the lost connections between humans and nature resorting to artistic means.

Philosophical reflections on these tendencies that concern the change of the role and functions of art, reveal themselves in rethinking and overestimation of the artistic understanding of the world, nature of art and its functions.

In order to illustrate the above statements, we are to refer to bioart and ecological (environmental) aesthetics.

Having begun to develop and progress from the late 1980s, bioart represents the school of artistic practices of living organisms and life itself being manipulated by means of the scientific and technical tools of modern biology. Its development is closely connected with the development of biotechnologies, which not only extend the range of human transformation activity and provide new control range of biological processes, but also excite the philosophical idea of "critically redefining the vision of life and the permissible limits of manipulating it from the positions that a person determines in this world" [4, p. 246].

Studying bioart, the Ukrainian philosopher Y.A. Ischenko believes that an artist, approaching to biotechnology, assumes the mission to help investigating probable models of the future through use of new visual means. Contemporary bioart directly manipulates living organisms, being unsatisfied with the traditional "commentarial" practices of visual art (painting, photography, screen and digital art). The basis of bioart is the desire to understand the phenomenological aspects of manipulating life by practical consideration. If the artist is actually a seer, then some of these artists, as Y.A. Ischenko presumes, "prepare society for future changes in the field of biotechnology", or for liquidation of "Vedism" [4, p. 247], that is the inability to predict all the consequences of scientific development of the progress and development of biotechnology in particular. He also states that biological/evolutionary laws are now becoming the object of studying not only by scientists but also by the artists considering the achievements of modern biotechnology a "fresh palette for artistic expression" [4, p. 247].

Bioart provides an opportunity to demonstrate and, therefore, feel, understand and experience the consequences of the man-made creation, and at the same time to understand them as "an echo of human imagination caused by indigenous musings about life and sphere of living organisms" [4, p. 247].

A great stir among the public was caused with a bioart project by Eduardo Kac called «GFP Bunny» – a green fluorescent rabbit Alba which was developed using transgenic method, namely by microinjecting the gene of a jellyfish, which controls the synthesis of green fluorescent protein, into the DNA of a rabbit [9]. The rabbit's fur was shining green under the ultraviolet light. Bioart idea was to bring a numerous beliefs of people in various bizarre creatures that do not exist in nature to life. In addition, in response to the stir among the public and media Eduardo Kac created a series of drawings, photographs, sculptures and digital images of «GFP Bunny». Nevertheless, the author of the project stressed the need to be careful creating new life forms, to respect and love the new creations. Although ethical issues always follow the artist's work, in bioart they arise with particular relevancy. It also enhances the interactive nature of bioart.

Eduardo Kac himself even speaks of emergence of transgenic art as the new kind of art that falls back upon genetic engineering techniques to transfer synthetic genes or genes of the same type into a genetic apparatus for "the creation of unique living creatures". The essence of these new "works of art" is defined not only by the emergence of the new forms of plants and animals, but, firstly, by the connections that arise between the artist, his creation and the public, the audience. Moreover, bioart, according to E. Kac, may serve

to increase global biodiversity [13]. In contradistinction from bioart, ecological (environmental) aesthetics treats nature as an example, which should be followed in a creative process.

It is difficult to deny that nature in all its diversity: natural landscapes, mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, plants and animals, has a significant aesthetic impact on a person. Against the background of environmental and humanitarian crises, interconnection and interdependence of which are already quite obvious, researchers are increasingly turning to the theme of expanding the methodological tools of scientific and natural knowledge and the application of methods of the liberal arts. As an example, ecological or environmental aesthetics can be mentioned [11]. A.Yu. Guseva, a Russian researcher, believes that environmental aesthetics is an organic and integral part of modern "humanitarian and ecological discourse" [3].

As any new field of research, environmental aesthetics undergoes the stage of formation of the framework of categories and concepts and definition of the subject, method and tasks of the research. First of all, it is evident that there is an absence of a single concerted term describing this area of research in national science, where, along with the term "ecological aesthetics", such concepts as "aesthetics of nature", "environmental aesthetics", "aesthetical ecology" are widely used. However, the specifics, the formation of their content, the range of the issues described by them and the specifics of their functioning have not explained [8].

In particular, ecological aesthetics is defined as the aesthetics of the real world, comprising natural environment, cultural environment and engineered environment, that is, the environment that was formed under the influence of human activity. The term environmental aesthetics is usually used in English-language sources. The English term of environmental in Ukrainian is translated both as "ecological" and as "environmental". Some scholars use these concepts as synonymous, but usually prefer the term "ecological".

A number of authors distinguish these concepts by associating the concept "ecological" with nature and natural environment, and "environmental" – with the environment that has undergone transformation as the result of human activity. So that during the 20th century the term "environment" has become widely used not only in natural science, but also in the scientific-social, common cultural, socio-political lexicon, where the concept "surroundings", "environment" acquires various meanings. In the context of exacerbation of environmental crises, the concept "environment" is not so much associated with nature as comprises it only as a particular element, and is even opposed to it. The environment is also understood as a transformed nature, and in the conditions of rapid deterioration of the condition of natural ecosystems, the concept "environment" becomes synonymous with the destroyed, distorted nature [1, p. 60]. Those who associate the environment with nature insist on the need to preserve it in a "clean" flawless form, thus keeping human interference in such an environment to a minimum.

The counterposition is that social relations and human activity turn nature into the environment (urbanized, anthropogenic, social and cultural, recreational, etc.). Accordingly, the environment actually comprises just as the elements of nature and natural ecosystems so a human being and artifacts of human activity. The adherents of this approach emphasize the need to improve the "ways of reproducing the environment, control it and mitigate the negative effects of human activity" (soil pollution, water pollution, air pollution, deforestation, etc.), relying heavily on the opportunities of progress in science and technology, the improvement of public institutions, information distribution, education and enlightenment, etc. [1, p. 61].

During an analysis of the concepts "environment" and "nature", Dale Jamieson states that, considering the extremely broad meaning of the concept "environment", modern environmentalists are primarily concerned with the protection of nature. He also draws attention to the fact that very often these concepts tend to be used as synonyms, although, in fact, the origins and history of each of them are significantly different [12, p. 1].

Acceptance of the differences between nature and the environment will be the basis for us to use the terms "ecological aesthetics" and "environmental aesthetics" and their appropriate distinction. In those cases when this refers to aesthetic estimation of nature itself, we will use the term "ecological aesthetics" and when the issues is related to the aesthetics of environment that has suffered anthropogenic influences, we will use the term "environmental aesthetics". However, while analyzing the general principles of this area of research, we will define it as an ecological (environmental) aesthetics.

Ecological (environmental) aesthetics to some extent opposes the imaginary world of art, although the borders between them are sufficiently conventional. The subject of the study of environmental aesthetics is beauty of the environment [14, p. 17]. Yu. Sepanmaa considers environmental aesthetics as a part of environmental or ecological philosophy, which is the branch of philosophy, it being reflected both on the natural science environmental research, and on the social and cultural aspects of the interaction between a man and the environment [14, p. 27]. This implies that it is impossible to understand the beauty of the outside world and to develop aesthetic standards of the human environment organization in accordance with the laws of beauty without understanding the beauty and harmony of its natural element.

E. Brady defines the ecological (environmental) aesthetics as a subdiscipline that belongs both to the branch of aesthetics and environmental philosophy [10]. She states that although the first significant philosophic discussions about natural aesthetics spread out in the 18th century, aesthetic estimation of nature and landscapes (scenery) played a prominent role throughout the history of mankind.

The central category of aesthetics, as known, is the category of beauty, which is understood as an objective relationship between an aesthetic object and a subject that perceives it. In such a case, the aesthetic experience of a person plays an important role here. Therefore, the question about the need to define the concept of aesthetics of nature arises [3, p. 209]. A.Yu. Guseva proceeds from the definition of aesthetics not simply as "the philosophy of art" but primarily as a philosophical discipline on "sensually perceived form of expression"; in other words, the subject of aesthetic study is not only art, but also the entire sphere of axiological familiarization with the world, targeted on its estimation through the category of beautiful, by a person. This approach allows us to analyze all diverse and expressive forms of the environment as aesthetically significant objects. The researcher also states that collective consciousness perceives particular beautiful natural forms that lack an author (unlike works of art), as the aesthetics of nature, and therefore they should be estimated in and of themselves or as a manifestation of "supernal loveliness" [3, p. 210].

The formation of ecological aesthetics as a discipline (or subdiscipline) coincides with the 1960s. Although discussions about the aesthetics of nature began much earlier, exactly in the 19th century due to the development of ecological movements, there were created the appropriate context and conditions, by virtue of which the need for a philosophical understanding of the connections between the aesthetic values of nature and their meaning in understanding of environmental problems was admitted. From the standpoint of philosophy, ecological aesthetics analyzes how aesthetic issues are related to the environment, natural objects, phenomena and processes (unlike works of art). Although ecological aesthetics considers the natural environment as its main subject, its field is constantly expanded by including it in a modified environment, that is, the one that has suffered human interference. That is why the subject of ecological aesthetics is also gardens, environment of everyday human existence, industrial objects, etc. The issue of ecological aesthetics is divided into three main directions [10]:

- aesthetical estimation of nature;
- theoretical and practical discussions about landscape design and aesthetical estimation of scenery, including romantic literature and poetry;
- essays on nature conservation and nature descriptions (nature writing).

Ecological (environmental) aesthetics seeks to define the criteria of "naturalness" of the environment, compared to the purposeful human activity. In his or her work, a person relies on the idea of harmony, style and form, and uses these categories to determine the success or failure of an artistic work, thus giving it a certain aesthetical estimation. It dramatically distinguishes human creativity from the processes taking place in the natural environment.

Many examples of implementation of the potential of applied ecological (environmental) aesthetics can be given relying on the experience of forming the urban environment, development of tourism industry, organization and management of national natural parks and other conservation areas.

Ecological (environmental) aesthetics also has a significant teaching and educational potential as a factor of the mindset formation, a system of values and stereotypes of behavior of people of different age groups and social strata.

Conclusion. In order to find the ways for overcoming the ecological crisis of the present, researchers are increasingly appealing to the artistic comprehension of nature and artistic reflection on environmental crises.

The environmental challenges of the present, on the one hand, form new demands for art, create new social discourse and new projections of their artistic comprehension; on the other hand, art itself changes, generating both new directions, styles, forms of art, and philosophical reflections on them. These issues fall under the competence of a new discipline, ecological (environmental) aesthetics.

Ecological aesthetics undergoes the stage of formation of the framework of categories and concepts and definition of the subject, method and tasks of the research. Ecological (environmental) aesthetics treats nature as an example that should be followed in a creative process. The central concept of environmental aesthetics is the concept of beauty of nature, or the beautifulness in nature.

It also should be noted that ecological (environmental) aesthetics is a quite new and insufficiently developed direction of the philosophical research taking place in the national territory. However, quite a wide range of aesthetical estimation of nature and the environment, in general, has been actively investigated in Ukrainian philosophy both in the context of the philosophy of culture and in the context of ideological issues and spirituality.

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