



Perspectives of Human Ecology

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ABSTRACT It can be argued that the science of human ecology is a modern form of anthropology. All living things exist in their environment while their development involves adaptation to living conditions. This principle forms the theoretical basis of human ecology. Human ecology, using the systems theory, is understood as transdisciplinary science of human populations and their cultures, which are both creative and destructive elements of ecosystems. Following a period of uncritical belief in genetic determinism and resultant classifications of human groups into discrete units ("races"), a tendency to negate genetic differentiation among human populations occurred. This is understandable, because earlier ideas of subdivision of humanity were exploited by totalitarian ideologies, but such political correctness results in real genetic differences between populations resulting from adaptations to local conditions being ignored. Human body build and function are related to ecological conditions. Thus on the average, human populations will differ somewhat depending on the ecological conditions in which they originated and developed. The fact that various human groups, originating from various territories differ as to their morphological and physiological properties does not mean that their characteristics have a different value. Each is equally well adapted to its specific environment. The genetic variability of humans, as that of any other animal, is a result of mutations and natural selection producing differences in gene pools. In present-day human populations, genetic variability is greater than that needed for adaptation to the existing living conditions of the 'civilised' world. During ontogenic development the amount of this variation seems to be decreasing. Genetic diversity loses importance in a technological society. Living conditions of present day populations are more uniform than those that occurred during human evolution. The science of human ecology postulates that we should find explanations of all phenomena concerning human organisms and human populations in their relationship to their environments. Moreover, inherited genetic diversity has its source in the ecological conditions of past populations. Nature is seen as a continuous development of organisms in their interaction with the environment. These interactions form a set of feedback loops at a systemic level between landscape, environment and human societies. Stability does not exist and the only possible way to survive is to undergo further developmental changes through adaptation to a constantly changing environment. Human ecology, being a transdisciplinary science, builds bridges between the biological and the social sciences. It views cultural adjustments as an extension of biological adaptations.

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