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## The image of Gaia in «The Ecologist» magazine

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**Bondarenko T. The image of Gaia in «The Ecologist» magazine.** The article analyzes the image of Gaia in the radical ecological publication of the UK «The Ecologist». It was concluded that there is a plurality of interpretations of Gaia, who is considered as a biological being, the spatio-temporal cybernetic system, super organism capable of self-regulation, evolution, «centre of man-made and primitive worlds combating».

**Keywords:** *biosphere, coevolution, evolution, Gaia, hierarchy, primitive society, technosphere, teleology.*

**Бондаренко Т. О. Образ Геї в журналі «The Ecologist».** Проаналізовано образ Геї в радикальному екологічному виданні Великої Британії «The Ecologist». Зроблено висновок про множинність тлумачень Геї, що розглядається як біологічна істота, просторово-часова й кібернетична система, суперорганізм, здатний до саморегулювання, еволюція, «осередок боротьби техногенного й первісного світів».

**Ключові слова:** *Гея, телеологія, первісне суспільство, еволюція, техносфера, біосфера, ієрархія, коеволуція.*

**Бондаренко Т. А. Образ Геи в журнале «The Ecologist».** Проанализирован образ Геи в радикальном экологическом журнале Великобритании «The Ecologist». Сделан вывод о множественности толкований данного образа, рассматриваемого как биологическое существо, пространственно-временная и кибернетическая система, саморегулирующийся суперорганизм, эволюция, «средоточие борьбы техногенного и первобытного миров».

**Ключевые слова:** *Гея, телеологика, первобытное общество, эволюция, техносфера, биосфера, иерархия, коэволюция.*

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Modern social and communication studies on ecological journalism are focused on preparation of ecological materials and on specification of ecological PR and communications [1–4; 10–11; 14]. Some ecological media is not currently the subject of detailed consideration of the scientists. However, the study of «green» media, especially those which provide an alternative view of the world, actualizes due to the global ecological crisis.

Through constructing own models of social organization, in many cases designed not only to solve global problems, but generally to change the consciousness of society, ecological journalists refer to mythological images, one of which is Gaia — the embodiment of «living mother earth image» that «overlaps with the ancient cosmology that existed in almost all cultures of the Earth that recognized the Earth as a living being...» [13]. According to scholar A. B. Kazansky, «the metaphor of ancient Greek goddess itself has a strong influence on the deep consciousness of people causing many associations, including religious ones...» [9].

Despite the fact that the image of Gaia appears in Ancient Greek mythology, in ecological journalism it is often associated with the name of the modern British scientist James Lovelock, who in

the 1970s developed the «Gaia hypothesis» promoting in this way the development of the contemporary variant of the systematic Earth science — geophysiology. In Ukrainian mass media the edition that slightly deals with the image of Gaia is «Humanitarian Ecological Magazine» [7; 13] that for the first time in the post-Soviet area began to cover the various aspects of ecological ethics and theology, presenting not only the materials of the native authors, but also little known, and translated works of foreign scholars. More popular image of «living Earth» gets in foreign ecological media (Resurgence, Ecological Ethics, the Deep Ecologist etc.). One of these editions is a radical ecological magazine «The Ecologist», coming out in London since 1970.

Individual articles dedicated to the analysis of «The Ecologist» [23–30], are focused primarily on highlighting of the political and scientific issues of the edition, of the so-called «Monsanto case» and also on the study of political opinions and activities of the edition's founder Edward Goldsmith. At the same time Gaia as the central image of the magazine is barely explored. In particular, S. Thompson [28–29] only mentions that Goldsmith «defends Gaia hypothesis, according to which Mother Earth can wreak vengeance upon a

violation of her order» and funding «Gaia Foundation» in London. E. Krebbers [25–26] resorts to a critical examination of the features of the suggested by E. Goldsmith model of «sustainable society» that «must be organized under the laws of Gaia, or Mother Earth — a single order and a single set of rules for all organisms». G. Jekely [24] explores the features of teleological concepts in the magazine that is only partially related thereto. N. Hildyard resorts to critical analysis of Edward Goldsmith's views, describing his concept as «Gaia's sociobiology» while studying the problem of modern ethnic conflicts [23].

This article analyzes the image Gaia presented in the pages of the British edition, particularly in materials of E. Goldsmith [15–22], who for over thirty years led «The Ecologist» in the spirit of his beliefs and for whom the Gaia hypothesis (the leading idea of ecobiocentric direction in ecological ethics — «deep ecology»), along with Eastern religious philosophies, has become a fundamental concept upon which he formed the ideological approach of the magazine on current ecological situation in the world and the ways of its further development.

Although E. Goldsmith declares himself as a supporter of these radical currents, he is not its apologist, considering that the criticism by other scientists of some principles of «deep ecology», including its very definition, is entirely constructive. The founder of «deep ecology» A. Naes considers it as a forum for those who share the same views on the relationship between man and nature «and not as clearly articulated world-view and cosmology». Instead, E. Goldsmith believes that humanity requires a clearly articulated view of the processes happenings, because «only it can be a trigger for a comprehensive strategy that guarantees the preservation of what remains of the biosphere, and in accordance the survival of humanity» [15].

Despite the fact that most of the ideas of Gaia hypothesis E. Goldsmith borrowed unchanged, some of them are partially modified. First of all it concerns the hypothetical character of the concept. Given that Gaia is a complex system with many unexplored components, J. Lovelock continues to call the Gaia hypothesis and even considers it to be a «lifestyle for agnostics» [9]. Some scholars, including renowned evolutionist Robert Dawkins believe that Gaia hypothesis is a useful metaphor, which, on the one hand, encourages scientific thought, and on the other — generates numerous errors. The concept of E. Goldsmith Gaia, on the contrary, pretends to be a fact, an established worldview, «a hieroglyph that offers a new organizing principle on which a

different outlook is basing», «the image with which it is possible to describe the world order and change... the understanding of Earth and its connection with man» [13].

Gaia presented in the magazine «The Ecologist», partly differs from the mythical Gaia, «Mother Earth, ancient preolympic deity, which played an important role in the creation of the world» [8]. Like the Greek goddess of the same name, Gaia appears in «The Ecologist» as a sole leader of the world, «a living organism capable of self-healing and self-regulation» that is considered a living being, but come first of its biological characteristics: commitment, hierarchy and so on. Gaia in «The Ecologist» arises primarily as a biological being, total «spatio-temporal system», a cooperative enterprise that is perfectly organized in space and time, and consists of a hierarchy of different levels: molecular, biological organisms, local communities and ecosystems.

The main characteristic of Gaia as a biological being in the concept of «The Ecologist» is its hierarchy, according to which every little natural system is a part of a greater one and is it composed of smaller systems. The author of the hypothesis J. Lovelock believes that «the image of Gaia occurs when we imagine our planet from space, when it is regarded as a multi-level, multi-layer living organization... Russian matryoshka is a strong symbolic image of Gaia» [9]. The mentioned characteristics brightly represent the ambivalent, dual nature of natural systems that can simultaneously be part of larger systems and contain smaller ones in themselves.

«The Ecologist» represented the referred «duality» in the form of two-faced Roman god Janus, whom a scientist A. Koestler named code, or symbol of Gaia [15]. E. Goldsmith's appeal to the image of Janus, together with the image of Gaia, is not accidental. In light of this concept Janus, looking both to the past and future, not only is the characteristic of natural systems, but also the embodiment of resistance of primary and technospheric worlds: the past — the primary world to which E. Goldsmith seeks to restore industrial society, and the future — the technosphere, which appears as a «dead-end» version of development that will inevitably lead to death. Thus, using the image of Gaia in order to give the Earth a separate status, first single and unique «supersystem» E. Goldsmith embeds it into the modern global ecological context in which Gaia is seen primarily as a center of the struggle between two worlds — the man-made («Ecological pretender», «an artificial world») and primary, activities of which are consistent with the order of the ecosphere and maintains its stability [21]. In this regard a prob-

lem of finding the perfect system that can ensure maximum stability of the planet actualizes.

A model of the new system in «The Ecologist» is traditional, localized society that demonstrates the most perfect model of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. However, while notably idealizing structure of primitive society, E. Goldsmith does not consider the negative side of its life, noted by many scientists. For example, a scientist V. Gryschenko the author of numerous articles published in the «Humanitarian Ecological Magazine» refers to the activity of primitive society about the nature of «true blitzkrieg of a man against ancient megafauna»: «As the excavation of Maori station showed... for several decades, people have destroyed all the biggest moa, and with them easily accessible seals and penguins... Later they had to hunt for smaller species moa... eat dogs, fish and shellfish. <...> It is likely that most primitive hunters are guilty in the disappearance of the pygmy hippo in Cyprus, Hawaiian geese, Fijian land crocodile. They disappeared when men appeared on these islands» [6]. According to E. Goldsmith, nature in primitive society, by contrast, was a fundamental principle of human existence — any challenge was always held on the edge of life and death «because of this fear to the forces of nature, the realization that the destruction of the environment is a sin, and then the harmony of primitive man and nature (and Gaia in general)» [20], are important characteristics for a transition of the industrial world to the traditions of the primary. V. Gryschenko calls «the harmony of primitive man and nature» a myth: «We should not idealize their (ancient people — *T. B.*) relationship to nature, especially to transform it into a myth. <...> Awareness of being a part of nature (on which Goldsmith insists apologetically — *T. B.*), respect to it, and the protection of individual species do not mean real harmony with the ecosystem. The result is achieved by actions, not intentions» [6]. Although V. Gryschenko does not reject the idea of worshiping of an ancient society to nature (evidence of this are numerous examples of magic rituals with the «honor» of animals in the article — *T. B.*), he questions the special «spirituality» of primitive man, explaining less impact primarily on the nature of fewer opportunities and needs, rather than «some philosophy»: «Neither the magnitude nor the rate of change caused by ancient man on nature can be compared with what is happening now. Only in this way can we assume that the situation was more or less prosperous then... <...> Do not forget that... the relative balance of primitive tribes with nature was often explained due to the fact that they were

continuing bloody wars with each other, and the population growth was almost absent... They did not destroy nature just because they were destroying one another...» [6].

Despite the disadvantages discussed above, inherent in primitive society, in the concept of E. Goldsmith it is a model for the reconstruction of (or rather — deconstruction) of technological society that does not belong to the list of components of the planet because of its «artificial» origin and specific «behavioral model». In fact, the perception of the technosphere as opposed to the natural organisms of the system, whose development is contrary to the development of Gaia, reduced to the image of the enemy which must be fought and which should be overcome in order to restore order on the planet.

Stability and ecosystem order, according to E. Goldsmith, are provided by the functioning of natural systems as separate cybernetic systems. In this regard, Gaia is also seen as cybernetic system that can act as an independent unit, the purpose of which is maintaining their own stability, or homeostasis. These features of Gaia brightly emerge in comparison with its «evolutionary iceberg» [15], the top (surface part) of which is the biosphere (the world of visible things), and the other part (underwater, the largest in volume) — information that is passed from generation to generation, reflecting the experience of spatio-temporal system. The similar comparison is found in the concept of J. Lovelock whereby Gaia is associated with «cross-section of a thick wood, where living part is a thin cambium layer under the bark (biosphere), and the main mass of lifeless wood — a product of the continuous activity of this multi-layer» [9].

The model of Gaia as «evolutionary iceberg» or «cross-section of a tree» dwells upon the interaction experience of the past and present, from which it is possible to create a synthetic model of interaction between human society and nature. For E. Goldsmith the search of constructive solutions to the ecological crisis is inextricably linked to the experience and traditions of ancient societies preserved in the modern world only in a few indigenous economically underdeveloped societies where «the past still controls the present, therefore, from the point of view of cybernetics, still exists» [15]. Reliance on the traditions of the past to Goldsmith is a further argument of the need to focus on the behavioral model of indigenous society, as only it can provide meaningful cultural experiences retransmission of social and natural interaction: «Primitive society operated according to traditional laws, which corresponded to the laws that governed Gaia... were installed by

ancestors and were considered sacred and inviolable... Primitive society is considered to be «gerontocratic» (because it is managed by ancestors), but more accurate to call it «nekrocratic» (because it is managed by physically dead, but, in terms of cybernetics, still existing ancestors that control the behavior of their offspring)» [15].

Thus the analysis showed a multiplicity of interpretations of the image of Gaia presented on the pages of Western ecological publication «The Ecologist». Summarizing, it should be noted that Gaia appears in the magazine, firstly, as image,

with the help of which we can describe the global structure. Secondly, it is imagined as a biological creature, a total «spatio-temporal system», composed of a variety of living organisms, arranged in a hierarchy. Thirdly, Gaia is the focus of the struggle between two worlds — the man-made («Ecological impostor») and the primary, which is considerably idealized by E. Goldsmith, despite the numerous disadvantages mentioned by many scholars. The study of largely in many points «utopian» concept of «The Ecologist» magazine is a promising area for future research.

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