

Academic Text, Example 3

Use the strategy of Reading Academic text on the following text:

WHERE IS SCIENCE LEADING US?

by Sir Julian Huxley

If man is responsible for the future of this planet, he must pay more attention to ecology - the science of relations between organisms and the resources of their environment. Human ecology involves finding out what resources are available in our environment and how to make the best use of them. We have to think first of all of material resources - minerals, water-power, soil, forests, agricultural production - but we must also think of the non-material or enjoyment resources of the habitat, such as natural beauty and solitude, interest and adventure, wild scenery and wild life.

The two types of resource are interlinked. Thus in eastern Africa, the unique community of splendid large mammals and birds is one of the world's unique enjoyment resources. But it is of immediate financial value, through tourism, to the local inhabitants. It is also of physiological value. Large areas of the dry savannah lands of the region simply de generate and lose their productivity if cultivated or used for grazing cattle. If they are properly managed, their communities of wild animals yield large amounts of "wild protein" for human food - more than can be obtained from domestic stock; while wrong use, for instance by over-grazing, can convert a glorious wildlife habitat into semi-desert in a dozen years, as I have seen with my own eyes in Kenya.

I have also seen how, in the artificial conditions of today's National Parks, protected beasts like elephants and hippos can start destroying their natural habitat. Man is in a sense a protected beast: and during much of his evolution he has been busily engaged in ruining his own habitat. We have been doing so in Britain, for instance, by polluting our rivers. The Thames was once a fine salmon river. Today, almost its only abundant animal is the little red worm Tubifex, which specialises on survival in dirty oxygen-poor mud. A new ecological threat of man against his own habitat has recently appeared, in the shape of pesticidal chemicals, both insecticides and herbicides.

Scientific ecology gives the basis for good land use. I have already pointed out how important a proper land-use policy is in underdeveloped countries like Africa. It is equally important, though for other reasons, in overcrowded and highly developed countries like our own. In Britain, for instance, we have an actual shortage of space, and there is constant pressure on the land's surface for a variety of different and even conflicting forms of use - for house- building, for communication, for industry, for military purposes, and for enjoyment. Somehow or other these different forms of land use must be amicably adjusted and coordinated, so that one form of use is paramount in one area, another in another. Proper land-use planning is applied human ecology.

Man lives in three kinds of habitat, the planetary, the social and the psychological. The planetary habitat, the concern of ecology in the ordinary sense, I have just been discussing. To deal with the problems of the social habitat, which we have created ourselves, and in which we live as members of society, we need a science of social ecology.

The outstanding social habitat is the city. However, cities are now becoming self-defeating; so, if the growth of human civilisation is to be fostered and not frustrated, it will be necessary to devote more and more attention to the social ecology of cities. Thus, mere increase of size and numbers beyond a certain point brings its own problems of traffic congestion, commuting, and general frustration, and bad planning in the past necessitates so-called urban renewal in the present.

Lastly, we come to psychological ecology. We must explore the inner space within our skulls as well as outer space. This, of course, includes the exploration of our own individual minds and their operations. As regards our own individual minds, the main aim must be to canalise their development so as to reconcile or transcend conflicting drives and impulses, and to develop effective psychological bonds with other individuals and with the nature around us.

A quite different aspect of human ecology is economics. Our present economic system is geared to the supposed need for a steady increase in production. This is leading to over-exploitation of resources that ought to be preserved, to excessive concentration on saleable products, rather than on healthy and happy living, and to the dissipation of much talent and energy in non-productive channels.

(from *New Scientist*, 27th June, 1963)

References:

Using English for Academic Purposes in higher education, "university of Exeter"