



Reflections on the fundamentals of Geoethics

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Geoethics is a relatively new entry in the world of geosciences and in the last years has found a receptive forum in scientific congresses and publications, since there is an increasing recognition that it raises important and crucial issues. In spite of this growth of interest, there is a lack of foundational concepts defining its role and scope. This work presents thoughts and reflections on the foundation of Geoethics, and proposes answers to basic issues such as: Has it to be viewed as an independent science, at the border between geosciences and ethics? Is it one of the many branches of geosciences, or rather a branch of ethics? Is it a social science? What are the main themes of Geoethics? There is a need for a systematization of Geoethics, avoiding that different experts speak different languages or use the same words with different meanings.

To answer the above questions, it is useful to consider the development of Bioethics, that is a discipline that had its foundation well before Geoethics and that at the beginning of its history was affected by analogous problems of disordered growth.

While waiting for a definition of the status of Geoethics, here it is stressed, that Geoethics has to mark a cultural progress in the way geoscientists see their role and their responsibilities, at a scale from local to global, to ensure that today's and future societies are built and grow with the knowledge and awareness of opportunities and constraints provided by the basic processes of Nature.