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Philosophical Perspective to Human-Nature Relation

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Abstract. The paper deals with the solution offers of philosophy on the human and nature relation of our era, which comes to a deadlock. In order to see the human – nature relation in history of philosophy, the period from ancient times till today was reviewed with outlines and significant milestones. In this context, the insights that can guide human to re-establish its relation with nature were exposed.

Key words: social ecology, nature, human, philosophy, intelligence, reality, world, domination, union.

INTRODUCTION

"Nature must be observed through creatures that have behaviour convenient with nature not through corrupted ones"
Aristotle, (Politics, Volume 1)

If nature-human relation is to be discussed, it seems that some questions are inevitable: Is human a part of nature? If not, is a creature that stands apart and against nature? If so, what are the reasons that separate and alienate human from nature? When we went through human history, it will not be wrong to say that human is always in a confrontation with nature. The beginning of human to change its natural environment relies on prehistoric times. This desire to dominate over nature and change it has enormously increased with expansion of human knowledge and production of auxiliary tools and instruments, namely technology, along with the depredation of nature by human, especially in the last two centuries. Thanks to technology, human has succeeded to travel to the furthest points in a very short period of time, to change the direction of rivers, to get benefit from water and nuclear power in order to produce electricity. There is no doubt that the advantages of technology have made our life easy in many ways. However, we are obliged to pay a heavy price for our intervention to nature because of our rapacious demands. It seems we will continue to be. Especially the desire of rapidly increasing world population to benefit from all substances of earth compels the natural resources that are already decaying. It is not difficult to foresee that, if population and consumption increase with the same speed, resources of earth will not meet the needs of human.

As a result of rapid development in industry, it is not deniable that, environmental pollution that threatens all of the natural resources and creatures, reaches a dangerous level in some big cities that endangers human life. Human wastes do not only damages Earth but also damages its periphery. Scientists are obliged to think about to deal with idle satellites and rockets in space. Lower Earth is described as the area that covers two thousand kilometers from Earth ground and there are 17 thousands of materials bigger than 10 cm. The possible problem in future is that they may divide into thousands of smaller pieces and the problem grows with additional wastes that increase every day passing. Experts were worried about chain reaction of Kessler

syndrome, which was brought forward by a scientist from NASA in 1978. Hereunder, these pieces create a giant rubbish cloud by hitting one another and make big part of Lower Earth Orbit unusable . If it is considered that devastation of Amazon Forests, which are lung of Earth is proceeding rapidly, attitude of human against nature has changed from Francis Bacon's famous approach "Knowledge is power (Ipsa Scientia Potestas Est)", to see the nature as a "consumption field". Human is not contented with domination over nature but heading towards to demolish nature and so its own kind. The life on earth is facing the greatest massive destruction, which mainly caused by human affects, since sixty five million years ago, the end of dinosaurs' era (J a r d i n s, 2006).

HUMAN-NATURE RELATIN IN ANCIENT TIMES

When we look through relation of human and nature, it seems that there are plenty of things that are to be learned from relation of human with nature in ancient Greek times. At the basis of physics perception in ancient world, there is perception of every single matter is one and comes one identical. This perception of unity is a common characteristic that is seen in almost every Greek philosopher. They looked for an *arkhe* (first reason or principal) which everything is derived from. The first problem that Greek philosophers devoted themselves with full effort is the problem of world. "The reason is, they see the world which seems so diversified, as a unity and complete, with their inner eye" (K r a n z, 1984). Diogenes of Apollonia says that: "Unless everything comes from a single principal, it is impossible to affect one another, for instance cooling of a hot object and getting hot again. Because it is not heat and cold that transforms to one another, on the contrary, the basic matter that lies behind is changing" (B o z k u r t, 1991). Herakleitos also advocates the doctrine unity of opposites, in his own doctrine. Each of opposite pairs creates both unity and plurality. Hence, Herakleitos says; "Descending and ascending paths are one and same" (C e v i z c i, 2000). Although perception of *arkhe* had transformed from monist to pluralist form, the essence does not change. According to Democritus, who is the founder of atomic school, *arkhe* is not single but plural. Unity comes from small and impartible particle of matter, which is called atom, not from a single principal. Everything in nature can be degraded to these componential elements of matter, which are impartible particles. Although it seems, there is uncountable diversity in nature, nevertheless all of these can only be degradable into one single form, named atoms (C e v i z c i, 2000).

This perception that considers human as a part of a whole continues through Hellenistic-Roman period. According to Stoic school, which is one of the dominant schools of period, there is one single power that is source of all powers of nature. This power is, as Herakleitos said, fire that is a hot breathe. This final reason, "God-fire" is nature, soul, idea, basis of Earth, in the same time. According to Stoics, universe is a living unity that each and every single piece is organically connected (C e v i z c i, 2000). In consequence of this perception, according to Stoics, virtue is to live in accordance with nature. End of nature and so human, has begun with giving up of this perception. Stoics had claimed that happiness, which is the aim of life, is derived from virtue, that is to

say from natural life, life in accordance with nature, harmonization of human action with law of nature, and accordance of human will with will of God that is designed as "the soul of nature". Zeno of Citium, who is considered to be the founder of school, became the first philosopher who determines the goal as life in accordance with nature, in his work *On the Nature of Humans*. Chrysippus says in the first volume of his work *On Goals*: "The first thing that every creature has is, its own existence and awareness of its existence", because it is expected nature, makes creature alienates from itself. It only remains to say that nature, which creates it, makes closer to itself (L a e r t i o s, 2003). Chrysippus, again in his work *On Goals*, indicates that, to live in accordance with virtue is the same thing with to live in accordance with the experience of natural events, because our structure is a part of universe (L a e r t i o s, 2003). In Roman world, the view of nature is also based on perception of human-nature unity. As a matter of fact, Cicero, in *De Senectute* says that: "Everything that is in accordance with nature must be considered as good" (B o z - k u r t, 1991).

ALIENATION OF HUMAN TO NATURE

It is difficult to indicate at which part of time the relation of human with nature has broken off. However, it will not false to say that: the alienation of human has begun when human has attempted to change nature for his own benefit instead of understanding it. Is having intelligence the reason of alienation of human to nature? It should be said that intelligence is not reason, when considering successes of Greeks and Romans in philosophy and science. Because both civilizations are the ones that human had succeeded many things by its intelligence. It seems that problem is not having intelligence but the way of using it. Human processed his existence by intelligence, which comes from nature.

The well-known French philosopher J. J. Rousseau indicates that, there is little difference between humans and animals in terms of having intelligence. "Animals have ideas considering they have senses; even animals organize and put in order their ideas to some extent". According to Rousseau, "it is not ability of perception that differs human from other animals but their characteristics of being a free element". Nature orders every animal and they obey. Human also feels the same affect but it is free to obey or resist. Intelligence is not only a distinguishable ability but also the source of all disaster of human.

According to Rousseau, although it is sad to accept it; "it is the same ability that makes the tyranny of both himself and nature in a long period by revealing his knowledge, errors, scandals and virtues for centuries" (R o u - s s e u, 2004). It seems that human has chance to live in accordance with nature by its intelligence and, at the same time, can become tyranny of nature again by using his intelligence. Francis Bacon, who is the first philosopher of modern thought, criticizes the Greek philosophy in his work *Novum Organum* since it is only didactic and argumentative. "Such that, their doctrines almost consist of empty talks and null tales who are told by elder people to ignorance youngsters" (B a - c o n 1999). Bacon, who says that knowledge is power, considers the benefit as essence characteristic of knowledge.

The passion of "dominating nature", which has begun with Bacon was trans-

formed to exploitation of nature by industrial revolution. This passion instigated the consumption economy and eventually both nature and human itself came to the point of depletion (A k a r s u, 1994). It only remains our wastes, which we can not get rid of, notably industrial wastes. It is not false to say that even B a c o n would not foresee us to come with such an end, since he was saying; "it can only be dominated by surrendering" (B o z - k u r t, 1991). He could not foresee that practical use of knowledge, which he mentioned, will be used for exploitation of nature in due course.

SUGGESTIONS

We have begun to count down for the end of the world at the stage of extermination of nature and ourselves. It is time to go over the relation of human with nature. Everyone needs to do something about this issue. There are not just a few scientists, who study how we damage the world less. In addition, there are also many artists who are succeeded to attract our attention to environmental problems and warn us. At this point, philosophers can contribute by going over the concepts of human and nature. In this sense, it seems we have much more to learn from Greeks who regard human as a part of nature. The Great German philosopher of 19th century, Nietzsche had recognized the merit of the "unity" idea of Greeks, for humans. According to Nietzsche, Greek culture is the instance of every culture. Nietzsche thinks Greeks superior than human of New Age, since Greeks had approached existence and problem of life that is connected to existence, more deeply and well-founded than us and advanced it (N i e t z s c h e, 1992).

According to Nietzsche, Greek philosophers before Socrates are not bare logicians. They are people who would like to comprehend universe by not only logic but also entire personality, excitement, power of design and ability to create. According to Nietzsche (Thales and the others), Pre-Socratic philosophers have succeeded to see the unity of existential. "When Thales says "everything is water", human makes away with attempts that sciences had realized one by one and in pain and with this perception human get over the vulgar dependency to lower steps of knowledge. Philosopher tries to sing the tune of universe as a whole and to lead out in the form of concepts" (N i e t z s c h e, 1992). According to Nietzsche, the main source of thought, art, creation and poetry is the nature. It is entity, which surrounds, feeds, in one sense, guides us in actions. To know is: to understand nature, perceive the person himself/herself, to identify the secrets of it in universe. In this sense, art, poetry and philosophy are the common creations, which are fed from same source (N i e t z s c h e, 1994). For Nietzsche, philosopher is not a person who gathers his thoughts in a book. He is the one who regards reality as itself and makes it speak. Nietzsche suggests us to look to the "structure of world" as it is, like in the Pre-Socratic times. The effort of Nietzsche is "in order to survive human, moving it from bare intellectualist civilization and making it to think about what is it itself" (N i - e t z s c h e, 1992), and suggests Greek philosophy, particularly Pre-Socratic thought.

Unless we change our attitude to Earth, we know well that we do not have so much time this planet. However, we still continue to consume and destroy. Consumption culture passing down and becoming a norm. It can be possible to overcome this problem only

by making humans to re-think about their "humanity". We have to review our thoughts about relation of human and nature. When we can see ourselves a part of a whole, a part of nature, we realize that, nature is not apart from us and when we damage and consume it, actually, we consume ourselves. Consulting the wisdom of old times can help us in re-establishing our relation with nature. We can not ignore the lessons that we took from modernity process. We can change the nature with our knowledge for our own interest, however, it does not mean that we dominate it. Nature, firstly, demands to be understood, which also means to identify ourselves. If we would like to have a new beginning, we must stop to intervene nature continuously, yet we know these interventions come with heavy prices. K. Marx indicates (*The German Ideology)* that environment creates humans on the same level, which humans create environment" (M a r x et al., 2004). Therefore, it is not only the nature that is danger but it is also our humanity.

CONCLUSION

It will be relevant to quote a question, which was actually asked to all humankind. In 1855, Indian chief of Dwan tribe asked to the U.S.A. Government, which would like to purchase their land. "How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them? Every part of the Earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clear and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap, which courses through the trees, carries the memory and experience of my people. The sap, which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man...This we know: the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself" (P o r r i t t, 1989).

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