

Araştırma Makalesi
Research Article

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Humanism: A New View on an Eternal Problem

Abstract

The article reveals that the main socio-philosophical doctrines: 1) approach social development mainly in an abstract way, regardless of human nature; 2) do not take into consideration the factors of vagueness and self-organization which are an integral part of human being's vital activity; 3) do not adequately inquire into the role of cultural facts in a historical perspective. Cataclysms in the modern world, socio-economic, ecologic and other crises appear in a different light if considered in the context of conceptions about human nature. A move of society towards genuine humanistic existence depends, to a great extent, on the prospects of all round development of a human being, his/her personal moral qualities. It is highlighted that the inability to reasonably manage social processes, which are determined by the archaic human nature, causes danger to humankind. The human mind has its own history and many traces of the previous stages of development are imprinted into the psyche. The unconscious recreates our original nature, its instincts and a special mode of thinking. One cannot give up the idea of existence of aggressive instinct rooted in our contemporaries. This factor poses serious threats for civilization in the context of unprecedented increase of technical equipment within the community. Awareness of the necessity to redirect aggression along with a geographically widespread implementation of this global program may become a turning point in the history of humankind.

Keywords

Humanism, Human Nature, Society.

The 20th century turned out to be a period of great scientific and technological achievements and unprecedented human tragedies. At the beginning of the century, the idea of using atomic energy, disclosure of human genome, and space exploration seemed fantastic. Nobody could surmise the emergence of information technologies (IT) and intensive development of other communication means that changed the existing concepts of social space and time. Humanity is now on the way towards high tech that will change even more people's life-style, giving way to creating alternative and more refined possibilities to use nature.

But all these epochal achievements of human intellect haven't affected human nature. Human beings are accustomed to violence and murder since earliest times and continue this practice nowadays. Moreover, scientific and technical achievements in their majority are motivated and supported by military and defense requirements. Two World Wars and numerous local wars, as well as countless conflicts, lead the dramatic leitmotif of scientific and technological progress. In the near future we could hardly expect any changes to occur in the character of social relations, if people would not wake up from their carefree slumber.

H. Bergson, on receiving the Nobel Prize, wrote that in the 20th century that gave a powerful spur to development of technical gadgetry, it was surmised that the said gadgetry would raise the moral level of humankind. But experience proves that "development of the available technology cannot automatically bring members of the community to moral perfection; expansion of material means could be even dangerous if not seconded by the corresponding spiritual effort."¹

The founder of the "Roman Club" Aurelio Peccei, an Italian scientist and public figure, 50 years after H. Bergson emphasized: it is retardation in cultural development that makes the real problem of humankind, because it doesn't fit the changes of reality initiated by society. It results in people's inability to adapt to the new state of things and the new conditions that are underway. Therefore, changing "human quality" and creating a new culture become quite indispensable objectives.²

The UN Conference on environment and development that took place in 1992 in Rio-de-Janeiro highlighted the issue of creating the *culture of sustainable development*. The main axis of the culture of sustainable development is awareness of the fact that people exist on the Earth not just for their own sake; they are to fulfill their special biospheric function. If culture as a social phenomenon and man's creation has always been opposed to nature, the culture of sustainable development must become the means for harmonious catenation of humans and nature, based upon the knowledge and developing understanding of the essence of nature.

The concept of sustainable development is aimed at solving contradictions between human society and nature, but it also aims at solving social contradictions by developing mutual understanding both between individuals and between nations. This twofold approach is supported by the words of K. Marx who insisted that interpersonal relations eventually determine people's attitude towards nature. *Therefore, to really*

¹ H. Bergson, Selected Works: *Consciousness and Life*. M.,2010, p. 293.

² Ref.: Peccei A., *The Human Quality*. M., 1980.

reach the objectives of sustainable development we should first establish social harmony, justice and a conflict-free world. That is why the true implementation of the “sustainable development” concept is a difficult task to fulfill and its realization is moved to the far distant future by the realities of the present world.

Originally, the concept was defined by the UN as “Order of the day in the 21st century.” Considering everything, one century will be too short a period for its complete realization. In this case, the humankind is confronted with fundamental ambiguous problems of existence, which in this or that quality were put in the forefront by great thinkers of the past.

But the well-known social, philosophical, and economical approaches explore social development 1) mainly in an abstract way, without any connection to human nature; 2) they do not take into account vagueness and self-organization factors in the dynamic of a human’s vital activity; 3) they do not adequately inquire into the question of the role of cultural factors in the historical process.

Cataclysms in the modern world, socio-economic, ecologic and other crises appear in a new light if we examine them in the context of conceptions about human nature and the humanizing function of culture.

Culture reveals the major ability to self-development of a human being and the whole humanity, which makes possible the development of human history. Thinkers of the New Age considered culture as the major means for correcting *natural human vices* and preventing social cataclysms. In this respect, the works of J.J. Rousseau and I. Kant are convincing sources. Defining the proper moral principles of human society, Rousseau spoke of a “natural man” uncorrupted by civilization; while Kant, on the contrary, based his view on a real man trying to morally justify and shape his future.

In this case, Kant’s philosophical discovery lies in the fact that he considers cultural development as *the necessary condition for moral improvement of the human race that ultimately would permit human beings to realize the eternal peace between nations*. Kant has never been under illusion of reaching the great objective predetermined by him before long. He expected the realization of his project within a certain historical time and emphasized that even small signs of its approach in each period are very important.

Since Kant’s time, humanity does not seem much advanced in this direction. During the past two centuries human aggressiveness has not decreased. Conservative and inertial human nature, including human consciousness (sub-consciousness) was theoretically confirmed (owing to development of genetics and psychoanalysis). There is a standpoint that human nature, man’s ethos, kindness and wisdom, are not susceptible to development. The progress is going on in the spheres of human knowledge, technology, and creation of prerequisites for new human abilities; but not in human substance³. It should be noted that this thought was advanced by many philosophers of the New Age.

³ Ref.: Jaspers K., *The Meaning and Purpose of History*. M., 2000.

Nevertheless it seems to be a fact that human nature is prone to changes, though throughout an extensively long time period, within the millennia scale. In the course of history, the human being is slowly clearing himself from his or her natural animal instincts⁴. But until now, the process went on spontaneously, being only indirectly influenced by different structures of public conscience – religion, morality, law... Now is the time to purposefully manage this process that is so much important for humanity. The society's move towards true humanistic state depends on prospects of multisided development of the human beings, of their moral qualities.

The idea about the need of improving human beings to perfection is not new. In his time F. Nietzsche insisted on the need to ennoble a human being. According to him, to hit the target a human being needs an ability to restrain himself. On the top level of such self-perfection he saw a superman excelling his contemporaries by his moral and intellectual qualities. An individual is “a tight rope between animals and a superman - a rope stretched above the precipice”⁵.

The evolutionary doctrine confirms that humans and animals are of the same origin and we all are guided by the same instincts that prevailed in our pre-human ancestors. The question is: *how could one master and manage these instincts?*

According to the just assertion of the Nobel Prize winner Konrad Lorenz, danger threatens modern human beings not so much as the consequence of their ability to wield power over physical processes, but more as their inability to wisely direct social processes that in many ways are conditioned by the archaic character of the human nature.⁶

Many thinkers of the past made attempts to comprehend the human nature, the content of the human soul, its inherent and acquired qualities concealed from direct scrutiny. They were concerned about such issues as: “Is a human being good or bad by nature?”; “What direction is taking human activity: that of creation or destruction?” According to Plato, within the soul of each human being invisibly slumbers something like a wild and beast-like original self which under the influence of satiety and intoxication, casting away all shame and intellect, desires for satisfaction of its passions. Even those who at first glance seem reasonable, temperate, and virtuous, conceal in themselves “some scary, unlawful and wild kind of desire that precisely reveal their dreams.”⁷

Freud surmised that all manifestations of human activity (deeds, thoughts, feelings, aspirations), being determined by the powerful instinctive forces, especially by sexual and aggressive instincts, are subject to concrete laws. Freud's appeal to the “dark” side of the human soul served the base for many commentators of his teaching about the image of a man as originally evil.

But Freud adhered to the opinion about the initial unity of evil and good within human beings. This issue acquired a new unexpected coverage in the fundamental

⁴ Ref. Orudzev Z.M., Human nature and the meaning of history. M.2009.

⁵ Nietzsche F., Also Sprach Zarathustra//Nietzsche F.Werke,B.2,p.9.

⁶ Lorenz K., Aggression (the So-Called «Evil»).M.,2009, pp.284-285.

⁷ Plato, The Dialogues. M: Mysl,1986.

works of K.G. Jung and the followers of his teaching about archetypes and collective unconscious. According to these works, in addition to our direct consciousness and personal unconscious, there exists another psychical system of collective nature. *Collective unconscious is inherited; it could not be developed individually. The system of archetypes is to certain extent a "genetic code", the activity and development program.* Therefore, the human mind has its own history; and the human psyche keeps in store many traces of man's previous stages of development. The unconscious recreates our original nature together with our instincts and our specific way of thinking.

Our knowledge of subconscious shows it to be a natural phenomenon embracing all sides of human nature: light and darkness, beautiful and ugly, good and evil, wisdom and stupidity.⁸ The content of the subconscious exerts a shaping impact on the human psychic setup. Collective unconscious is a part of psyche that keeps and transmits the general psychic heritage. This knowledge has so little to do with the human beings of nowadays that the latter are unable to self-reliantly comprehend and master it.

It should be mentioned that while studying symbols, Jung came to the conclusion about the unity of archetype foundations of culture. In myths of different nations, in dreams, children's drawings and fantasies we meet identical symbols. The doctrine about archetypes substantially contributes to solving problems concerning mutual understanding of people with different cultural background.

Our knowledge about instincts in general and aggressiveness in particular, allows us to unambiguously affirm that we have to take into consideration the fact of existence of aggressive instinct in our contemporaries.

In the environment of the unprecedented growth of technical equipment within the community it turns out to be quite a dangerous factor for modern civilization security and could in reality lead to a global catastrophe. At the same time, appeals to get rid of the aggressive instinct through guidelines of social Darwinism or directed eugenics are inadmissible.⁹

It seems that the methods of regulating human aggressiveness must come to the foreground of theoretical and practical activities of the modern society in the near future. It is a striking fact that until now the human society has not been concerned with this issue systematically and purposefully. It is only contemplation, interpretation and even romanticizing of the consequences of aggressiveness that keeps on and on. Human history is a history of wars, prone to different interpretations. The history of criminalistics is a history of violence and subject to its explanations. One might be under the impression that humankind has humbly accepted its lot. The task of eradicating aggressiveness from human life as the main cause of human tragedies has never been put forward. Meanwhile, *the philosophical problem formulated by I. Kant in his work Perpetual Peace could nowadays transform into a scientific problem.*

Within the human society, all contradictions should be solved in a non-violent way. Awareness of the necessity to re-orientate aggression and extensive

⁸ Jung K.G., Some Instances of Subconscious //A man and his symbols, p.104.

⁹ Lorenz K., Ibid, p. 335.

implementation of such a global program could doubtless become a turning point in the history of humankind and mark the beginning of the noosphere epoch.

World religions came into existence owing to promotion of humanism. True, it was a limited humanism, not beyond one confession; it beats its purpose in attempts of expanding the religion. *At present, humanity is able to accept a multisided activity program of the highest level and to start creating the new, true humanism.* This process could be actually launched by a resolution of a special UN conference of state leaders; UNESCO could be the coordinating center in establishing the new social reality.

Creating a new form of humanism looks feasible in a foreseeable future, if we take into account the presence of corresponding theoretical and practical prerequisites for it. The essence of this program consists in re-orientation of aggression.

In this case the awareness factor becomes a key-factor. Awareness appears as the means to overcome the cultural and temporal gaps that exists in the modern society.

Here we have a huge unexplored field of activity for institutions of socialization. Socialization of a human being starts at the moment of his or her birth and continues throughout the whole course of his or her life. It is realized by the system of education, all means of communication, art, literature, and cinema. Sports, tourism obtain in this connection a new *socially harmonizing* meaning.

In this process, interaction of cultures is of particular importance. It is known that the knowledge of culture and mentality of others promotes mutual understanding between people and helps to the reduction of probable social conflicts. Moreover, awareness of one's own cultural values expressed in works of art, artifacts and other creations is possible through comparing them with those in other cultures. This issue could be adequately approached by means of an intercultural dialogue enabling us to see the image of our own culture reflected in the mirror of the other mentality.

Strange as it may seem, the whole process of socialization of an individual in the modern world is chaotic, possessing no wholesome effective policy in this sphere. Well-reasoned and well-considered guidelines on harmonization of cultural life, advanced by UNESCO, are of a non-committal, recommendation nature.

Nevertheless, move to a new kind of humanism is not a utopia. If we consider it, all great ideas seemed at the beginning utopian, but in the course of time they came to be the implemented and defined logic of the human history. Earlier, the great ideas were substantiated and advanced by geniuses who in their turn were misunderstood and often maltreated by their contemporaries. Implementation of these ideas could take centuries. Now the situation is different; new ideas are expanding promptly world-wide. Only one item remains unchanged: they have to meet the challenges of the time and be accessible to mass consciousness.



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Hümanizm: Ebedî Bir Probleme İlişkin Yeni Bir Görüş

Özet

Makale, ana sosyal-felsefi öğretilerin 1) sosyal gelişmeye esasen soyut bir şekilde, insanın doğal yapısını gözönüne almadan yaklaştığını; 2) bulanık olma ve kendi kendini düzenleme etkenlerinin insanın yaşamsal etkinlikler bütününe bir parçası olduğunu gözardı ettiklerini; 3) kültürel olguların rolünü tarihsel bir perspektiften yeterince araştırmadıklarını ortaya koyuyor. İnsanın yapısına ilişkin anlayışlar çerçevesi içinde bakıldığında, modern dünyadaki felâketler, sosyo-ekonomik, ekolojik ve diğer krizler farklı bir ışık altında görünüyor. Toplumun halis hümanist varoluşa doğru yönelmesi, önemli ölçüde, insanın bütünsel bir gelişme olanağına, kişilerin ahlâksal niteliklerine bağlıdır. İnsanın arkaik doğal yapısının belirlediği sosyal süreçleri akıllıca yönetememe, insanlık için tehlikeler yaratıyor. İnsan tininin kendi tarihi vardır ve gelişmenin daha önceki aşamalarından birçok iz taşıyor. Bilinçaltı aslı doğal yapımızı, içgüdülerini ve özel bir düşünce biçimini yaratıyor. Çağdaşlarımızda kök salmış saldırgan bir güdünün bulunduğu düşüncesinden vazgeçmek mümkün görünmüyor. Bu etken, topluluklardaki teknik donanımın daha önce hiç görülmemiş artışına bakılırsa, uygarlık için büyük bir tehdit oluşturuyor. Bu küresel programı coğrafi olarak yaygın bir şekilde gerçekleştirmekle, saldırganlığın yönünü değiştirme gerekliliğinin farkındalığı, insanlık tarihinde bir dönüm noktası olabilir.

Anahtar Terimler

Hümanizm, İnsan Doğası, Toplum.

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