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The Changing of Bioethical Conscience – Precondition for Permanent Global Peace and Sustainable Development

Introduction

It is more than obvious that we live in age when humanity wants, or it is forced to attempt to solve the problems of world development i.e. the discomfort and suffering caused by human greed, violence, terror, destruction of nature, indolence towards the big social, economic, technological and political convulsions, the dangers of weapons and the possession of nuclear resources, uncontrolled chemical products, new diseases, scientific indifference to self-control, hatred, hate speech, hostility, of individuals and nations and many more. We became aware that all this has to be corrected, or simply we will not be on this planet anymore. It is about the imperative that rise from the human indolence and which can be encapsulated as "everywhere and in relation to everything."

So, with what have we entered the 21st century? Primarily with the unanimous demand for it to be a century not only of maintainable, but also of permanent peace. But we are also agreed that the 21st century can turn into a century of war, because of two reasons: if the solution for the global warming issues is not reached,¹ and secondly, if the supply of water² as a essential life resource and whose natural cycle of renewal is fundamentally endangered by the greenhouse effect.³

To avoid this, various conditions must be met ranging from changing the ethics of understanding of other cultures and civilisations, to changing the present modalities of material reproduction that corrupt the basic human right of a peaceful and healthy life.⁴ We must stop dreaming and decide what sort of ethics we wish to have.

Precondition for Permanent Global Peace and Sustainable Development

Given the above, ecology becomes the main field on which the issues of relationships will be resolved in the world today, and in the future. But, a few things must change first. Fundamentally, the methods of production which undoubtedly contribute to the approaching ecological catastrophe must be changed. Nobody argues about this.⁵ Demands and efforts on local and international level to do something concrete are louder.⁶ As the Ambassador of Samoa, A. Tuiloma Neroni Sade revealed "The strongest human drive isn't greed... it

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¹ H. GRUL, *Jedna planeta je opljačkana – Zastrahujući bilans jedne politike*, Beograd 1985 (hereinafter referred to as: GRUL, *Jedna planeta je opljačkana*), p. 249.

² V. SHIVA, *Ratovi za vodu – Privatizacija, zagađivanje i profit*, Zagreb 2006, p. 9.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

⁴ R. ATTFIELD, *Environmental Ethics - An Overview for the Twenty-First Century*, Oxford 2003, p. 24.

⁵ I. CIFRIĆ, *Bioetika i ekologija – Bioetičke i ekološke teme u sociološkoj perspektivi*, Zaprešić 2000, p. 42.

⁶ GRUL, *Jedna planeta je opljačkana*, pp. 285-293.

is survival. So we won't let someone to (*sic*) exchange our lands, people and culture for a short-terms (*sic*) economical interest."⁷

But, what is worrying is the fact that everything remains on a declarative level. That this is true confirms, for example, the statement of George Bush in Paris in which he agreed on the project of diminishing noxious gas emission, but only after 2025.⁸ Standing in contrast to his statement are the demands of the rest of the world torn as they are in the dispute between the North and the South about who, how, and to what extent has the right to produce, and with what materials to use.⁹ This only shows that behind this stand lie the economic and political interests of the dominant economies of the world, which have often resulted in conflict. Also they are considered to be as an economic vent the surplus production and for the sale of accumulated war provisions, and also as a way to conquer new markets, thereby introducing a unique model of behaviour in the world. As Zbigniew Brzezinski shows in his book *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*: "How America 'manages' Eurasia is critical. A power that dominates Eurasia would control two of the world's three most advanced and economically productive regions. A mere glance at the map also suggests that control over Eurasia would almost automatically entail Africa's subordination, rendering the Western Hemisphere and Oceania geopolitically peripheral to the world's central continent. About 75 per cent of the world's people live in Eurasia, and most of the world's physical wealth is there as well, both in its enterprises and underneath its soil. Eurasia accounts for about three-fourths of the world's known energy resources."¹⁰

If the previous attitude was just a thing of the past, probably this kind of text would not have been relevant. However, because this is not the case, i.e. conflict still occurs (although admittedly regional and local, and by some commentators labelled as controllable). We, today still discuss the role of ethics,¹¹ or more precisely bioethics as a precursor to the condition for a permanent and maintainable world peace.¹²

Nobody argues that bioethics is one of the key factors in the creation of this conscience. What is questionable is whether and at what extent one wants to change this, because, in most cases, at least when talking on a global level, it is determined by the interests of those that presently dominate the world.¹³ Whilst it this may not be the point at which to enter the political debate, we can talk about bioethics then and only then when, we will have created an educational system in which the main goal will be to educate citizens of the world that, say before accepting a job offer, first to ask whether the company is dedicated to adjusting its policy of production to ecological needs.¹⁴ More precisely, does it and by how much, respect the biosphere and how does it use bio-resources, also how much of the profit is dedicated to protecting the environment.

The foundation presupposes that to make such a citizen of the world, we should ask ourselves at the start about ethics in the economies. It can, as a response to this question, be said that our ethics are similar to our economies: they are either oriented towards the conquest of markets independently or are not.¹⁵ This means that, essentially, ethics by which

⁷ R. GELSPAN, *The Heat is On: The Climate Crisis, the Cover-up, the Prescription*, Boulder 1998, p. 109.

⁸ Global Warming Much Worse than Predicted, *The Independent*, 12.06.2001.

⁹ GRUL, *Jedna planeta je opljačkana*, pp. 262-265.

¹⁰ Z. BRZEZIŃSKI, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York 1998, p. 31.

¹¹ К. ТЕМКОВ, *Етиката денес*, Скопје 1999, p. 11.

¹² I. CIFRIĆ, *Bioetička ekumena*, Zagreb 2007, p. 23.

¹³ Д. ДОНЕВ, *Етичките вредности во менаџерството*, PhD thesis, University "St.s Cyril and Methodius" 2008 (hereinafter referred to as: ДОНЕВ, *Етичките вредности*), p. 209.

¹⁴ As a good example of the model for bioethical education, please refer to the Croatian model, explicitly given by Nada Gosić in her book *Bioetička edukacija*, Zagreb 2005 (hereinafter referred to as: Gosić, *Bioetička edukacija*).

¹⁵ T.R. MACHAN, *The Morality of Business*, New York 2007, p. 119.

economies are guided, is a matter of obviously just formulating the theories that would ultimately justify them. With these, we are going back again in decomposing the Aristotle's model of *oikos*,¹⁶ i.e. the attempt to rehabilitate Richter's practical philosophy which is "falling in water", instead of accepting and developing as a base for our lives three major issues that become vital for our age: in the material order – economics; in the natural order – ecology and in religious order – ecumenism. All of these terms stem from the ancient Greek word *oikos*, meaning *house*, and all three speak about:

- the internal constitution (*nomos*) of the house, in terms of economy, goods;
- recognition (*logos*) of the house, in terms of residence, life surroundings;
- importance of inhabiting the Earth, mutual house of humanity.¹⁷

Consequently, the conclusion may be reached, that the problem does not lie within ethics, but on those who use it to justify what they produce, the way they sell and consume and the habits they create. That is why we need an urgent change of bioethical conscience¹⁸ – for a successful long-range economical development, and also for a fast rebirth of some economies (especially those in and after the transitional period). We need appropriate new ethical principles and assumptions, because "ethical questions are being imposed in many activities and operations of market."¹⁹ The new economic ethics should stiffen the resolve and the ability for economic action, entrepreneurship, skillful management, the working process. The dilemma is not false; success or ethics. On the contrary, only on solid, ethically determined economic relationships is it possible to build long and successful development.²⁰

All of these are necessary because of the imperative that humans have to realise – the essence of its being, which means 'rightful' living with a clear vision for tasks both present and future. Everyone have their own place and role in the world. That place and role must be seen. Man lives and acts in community, the interaction with other peoples. Nobody acts totally selfishly. That is why, ever since Aristotle, humanity has been labelled as *zoon politicon*, a creature that lives in a community and represents part of it. Hegel created his philosophy of law respecting the basic ethical principle that existence means activity and responsibility, so that the previously mentioned human ethical values can be kept and realised.

The Changing of Bioethical Conscience

Everything that has been said before opens the question about what needs to be changed in ethics, economy (production), or the ones who manage it? The answer is clear: ethics does not need to be changed because it is a net of real mutually conditioning universal values that have (with some success), so far enabled humanity to avoid its own holocaust, albeit even on the grounds of fear, from the need to survive, and to become to some point aware that this is not the way to continue.²¹ As for the need of changing the methods of production, and of what is being produced, there seems to be general agreement. The only disagreements are about the ways and means of this change.

¹⁶ An *oikos* (ancient Greek: οἶκος, plural: οἴκοι, English prefix: Eco for Ecology and Economics) is the ancient Greek equivalent of a household, house, or family.

¹⁷ D. DE ROUGEMONT, *Budućnost je naša stvar*, Beograd 1989, p. 199.

¹⁸ See Hans Jonas in his work *Das prinzip Verantwortung – Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*, Frankfurt am Main 1984 (1st Edition).

¹⁹ B. BERNET, *Management, Macht und Moral*, Frankfurt am Mainz-Berlin 1993, p. 72.

²⁰ I. ČEHOK, I. KOPREK *et al.*, *Etika – Priručnik jedne discipline*, Zagreb 1996, pp. 156-165.

²¹ Here we can mention the attempt of UNESCO of creating the concept of Universal Ethics in 1993, and also of the project called "Global Ethics" of Hans Kung in 1991, as a good example of extrapolation of the good nature of the humans.

This shows what needs to be changed first, to be able to reach a situation in which the bioethical conscience will become the regulator of everything. First the conscience of those managing the production must be changed and to be changed in a way that they will stop taking care of the concrete interest of the capital they are managing. They understand that if they do not change the way they produce, they will end up in a situation in which they will have no one to produce for. This is already visible from the change of the managerial generations,²² i.e. from the shift of the managerial point of interest in the management process.

But to reach this, another thing must be done. Each of us, is a user or consumer of the production, and will have to start thinking about how badly and in which way they want to survive as a species. Furthermore we have to think about why and how we have a right to endanger the future for the ones who come after us. This is not a prescription of what should or should not be done. This is pointing out of the fact that ethicists and the shapers of future generations also face the responsibility of how and how much the first graders will be taught that responsibility for this planet is not only for politicians and the owners of the capital, but for every one of us, by the power of rejecting ecologically unjustified and unsustainable production.²³

The word “education” I use intentionally because only proper education can lead to proper ethical conscience for the consequences of one’s behaviour, and also of having control of that field.²⁴ If we manage to understand that the basis of the issues of whether we will or will not have bioethics lie exactly in the change of conscience about the role of education, and in the enabling of each individual to think independently about what he receives as information. In that way we will avoid the situation that happened, for example recently in Greece – manipulation of data and lying. With that we will avoid also the dangers of rigid thinking, self-sufficiency and degeneration of conscience, both social and national, and the dangers of being incapable of contribute to the progress of civilisation, sticking blindly to the chosen mode of production, just because it belongs to us.²⁵ That will help to stop nationalism in taking the deciding role in the relations between countries and peoples. In other words, education, independently of the level of economic progress must enable the understanding of other cultures, other traditions, and in turn, other needs. That enables us to learn from each other, which would lead to mutual respect.²⁶ Mutual respect presupposes respect for the rights of others, which means respect of their freedom of choice. The respect of the freedom of choice means ability to renounce of a part of our proper freedom and subdue it to the mutual interest. Democracy becomes democracy not by a decision made by leaders, but by agreement of the members of the society. This type of contract means choosing togetherness, which means peace. Peace is the space in which the appropriate conditions are created to sit and talk about “Homine quo vadis?”.

From the moment when one asks where mankind is heading, we can start talking about the initial formation of conscience grounded on the universal ethical values which respect humanity as a species and its bioethical conscience.²⁷ The birth of that kind of bioethical conscience will necessarily by itself lead to production of a system of ethics that will enable us to avoid any possible conflict of interests arising from needs of a group-capital that is interested in self-preservation and rule, two factors that have always been the major reasons of conflict.²⁸

²² ДОНЕВ, *Етичке вредности*, p. 27.

²³ D. HODŽIĆ, *Odgovornost u znansvenotehnoškom dobu*, Sarajevo 2008, p. 179.

²⁴ For further reading, see the examples given in GOSIĆ, *Bioetička edukacija*.

²⁵ T. ROBERTS, B. HITE (eds), *The Globalization and Development Reader*, Oxford 2007, p. 247.

²⁶ I. CIFRIĆ, *Moderno društvo i svjetski etos – Perspektive čovjekova nasljeđa*, Zagreb 2000, p. 147.

²⁷ H. JONAS, *Princip odgovornost – Pokušaj jedne etike za tehnološku civilizaciju*, Sarajevo 1990, p. 15.

²⁸ R. WISSER, *Odgovornost u mijeni vremena*, Sarajevo 1988, pp. 7-18.

Conclusion

There is no intention of making a Copernican revolution, or discovering fire, but to clarify that today's economical analysis of ecological and even bioethical problems are based on utilitarian ethics.²⁹ The only goal of my county, has been thoughtlessly adopting certain modalities of production, as a result of the transition, and has been led to a point where economics, instead of being something that raises the quality of life, in fact does the opposite.³⁰ Because of the badly conducted privatisation, and the low ethical culture of the market and managerial behaviour we have come to a point where not only natural resources are being spent, but false ecological laws that demand the capital-owners to care for the environment, without making any actual deeds to protect it are being stipulated.³¹

The case of health-care privatisation and the disintegration of the University Clinical Centre in Skopje can be taken in consideration as examples of badly conducted transition. The conditions to sustain a minimum standard of health-care are endangered since the new process are beyond the means of 70% of the population who live on the breadline.

I underline these facts just as an example that with inappropriate transition-privatisation, production and economy, the biological survival of people is being endangered, which eventually could lead to conditions for social turbulence that could lead, to greater confrontation.

There is no doubt that these are concrete examples of the absence of bioethical conscience of those who manage life. It is a question how and when the same bioethical conscience will once again enter the spotlight.³²

²⁹ D.R. DE ŽARDEN, *Ekološka etika – Uvod u ekološku filozofiju*, Beograd 2006, p. 109.

³⁰ M. SAGOFF, *Economic Theory and Environmental Law*, *Michigan Law Review* 79 (1981), pp. 1393-1419.

³¹ In there sence, it is erudicial for futher reading the book of V. VRČAK, *Druga strana potrošačkog raja*, Zagreb 2010, pp. 11-20.

³² M. SAGOFF, *The Economy of the Earth*, New York 1999, pp. 28-29.