

PROTECTING BIOS IN THE NEXT MILLENNIUM: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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The new millennium will begin in less than 2,000 days. The period of the post-industrial society in the Euro-American region will soon be over and a new era, perhaps that of the ethics of bios will start. With the beginning of the next millennium, a whole list of questions emerge, related to the future and the further existence of bios on this planet. Marx once said that, "Philosophers have only explained the world until now, but now it is necessary to change it." Our world has changed significantly in the last hundred and fifty years. Philosophers should now think more about the problem of how not to go on changing the world, but rather how to maintain bios and the environment in optimal condition, within the limits of sustainable existence and, in line with, the principles of intrinsic ethical values and the essence of life. Since the present existence of bios is based on specific philosophies and styles of thinking, it is philosophers who are responsible for the triumphs and pitfalls of our society.

A New Order of Bios

How do we answer the question in this the title? To think seriously about the question of protecting bios in the next millennium, from the point of view of philosophy, is to come up with the very provocative answer that, it makes no sense to answer it at all. If the catastrophic scenarios are fulfilled, it would no longer be within human capabilities to protect bios. These scenarios, for the development of the world and the existence of bios, were reached not only by fundamentalists, ecological organisations and movements, but also by groups of scientists from different fields, including ecologists. Ecology also, paradoxically, agrees with this provocative answer to the given question but, it is necessary to bear in mind that both ecology and philosophy have different reasons and different points of view, which can lead to the same answer. F. Fukuyama (1992) published a very interesting study, *The End of History and the Last Man*. This book summarises current opinions on the sense and aims of the history of human beings. As the title already suggests, the author comes to the conclusion that the culminating phase of fulfilment, according to teleology, has already started and that the next millennium will complete it definitively. This example can be used to show that, from this point of view, further discussion on the protection of bios in the next millennium has lost any meaning.

In terms of both ecology and history, the same problem has to be solved, a problem that can be understood from different professional points of view. The existence of bios and its surrounding environment in the next millennium is not predictable on the basis of the latest developments of knowledge in ecology. This brings us back to teleology: for the first time the final aim is understood as the goal of the history of mankind, for the second time, as the final stage of the development of bio-systems. The answer, according to philosophy, is known in the first case, and all the symptoms document the final goal, but in the second case, the real forms of bios and environmental development, according to ecology, cannot be predicted for the future and the answer is unknown. From the strictly logical point of view of the concept of the goal, the answers are given a priori to the unprecedented eco-biological questions. This paper presents the stage when, while looking for the answer to the question of the protection of bios in the future, the merely traditional concept of the problem - reality and the objective truth equal objectivity - is no longer sufficient.

In our opinion the problem of the protection of bios in the future, from the point of view of ecology, is a trans-disciplinary problem. This means transferring from a formulation in one field of discipline to a formulation in another. The concept of trans-disciplinarity does not end solely with scientific disciplines but continues, by the formulating of bios protection in symbols, i.e. as language, institutions, or cultural and social milieu. This concept of trans-disciplinarity differs from interdisciplinarity in that the problem to be solved is not understood as a focus of various scientific disciplines, as a limited area between different scientific subjects but, as an idea which penetrates these subjects in the form of a certain basis of ideas, which helps to formulate these subjects. The difference between a similar concept of a paradigm and the trans-disciplinary approach is based on the hypothesis that this formulated basis of ideas is not the result of scientific knowledge but only an idea, more or less, anticipated and expressed by the majority of the population. A trans-disciplinary approach to the solving of the problem of protecting bios is not created automatically, only on the basis of empirical facts, and it is not possible to reveal it with the help of classical rational scientific methods. The solution to this problem is not given subjectively, on the basis of the endeavour and the wish to solve it. A reasonable solution lies in the contact of two approaches, two worlds, the sensuous and the rational. In this connection, Patocka's phenomenology leads to a similar model of the natural world (Patocka, 1992). There are three possible basic steps for a trans-disciplinary

approach to solving the problems of bios protection:

- Dialogue, as an approach to the solution of bios existence. To understand the dialogue means to understand the logos. The logos can be imagined as a whole that is included in every single thing. There is a similarity to the syncretic branch of Renaissance thinking (Comenius, 1968.) A dialogue reveals the truth (harmony of the whole), on the basis of the contact of two forms of logos. We have information from empirical research at our disposal, showing the way to understand order, nature and humankind as a whole. It is necessary to maintain this whole as a harmonious unity and not to intensify the differences of individual components. Considering the problem of bios protection only from the point of view of competition and market economy is not a dialogue but, a monologue.
- Redefinition and reconstruction of humanity's relationship to bios and the universe. In the process of dialogue an individual identity arises. It is possible to document the attitude and relations of marginal groups in society with different types of morality toward nature (farmers, foresters, teachers, engineers etc.).
- Redefinition of the relations of humanity. Individually, this redefinition with bios and the universe, is a very complicated process in industrially-developed countries which often consider as definitions, bureaucratic, technocratic and political aims.
- The alternatives for the development of bios and society, as criteria and tools for possible future management. It is necessary to realise ecological analogies between natural and social systems for the fulfilment of this goal. Without preserving the alternative of the social system development, it will not be possible to speak of the alternatives of bios and environmental development.

To identify the most important factors endangering the existence of bios:

- increasing violence, aggression and contempt for the right to live, intolerance, fanaticism and fundamentalism
- increasing preference for purely materialistic interests over spiritual ones and lack of humility, tolerance and responsibility for individual deeds
- lack of effectiveness of political and economic instruments and international government organisations in solving growing conflict situations
- exponential growth of population, especially in developing countries
- unjust and unequal distribution of wealth; bi-polarity, North - South
- increasing deterioration of the environment and accelerating exploitation of non-renewable natural resources

The lifestyle and behaviour of human society is determined by the hierarchical system of values, by the political and economic system and by cultural, educational and ethical standards. It seems that one-sided scientific rationalism leads to the worship of consumption and material values and to greed and evil. Even if science solves many of the problems of humanity, at the same time, it creates many more new ones, so that it enslaves society, after all, and ends in self-destruction. Humanity is drawn into a network of its own conceptions and becomes a victim of its own avidity and egotism. The solution does not lie in acquiring more scientific knowledge, technology and in increasing progress, in the sense of technical civilisation. The post-industrial epoch is coming to its end and a further continuation of this effort would only lead to catastrophe. The only possible future method might be in the direction of developing cultural and ethical values, of penetrating the order of life and bios. Only this way can lead to the development of universal, creative, cultural and harmonious bios. The formation of the new individual mind, according to Higgins (1978), is probably one of the possible ways of realising bios protection.

Our suggested concept of bios protection might seem to be merely a theoretical construct but, this is not the case. The general expectation of a specific "turning point," revealing a changing attitude to bios is quite real, however, as is the appearance of certain symptoms indicating that this turning process has already started. A similar basic "turning point" was reached in the Renaissance era. It was a characteristic of this era that the ideas arose outside official structures controlled by the State, as well as outside the schools and church of that period. We think it is necessary to create similar conditions for the development of a real process of change. This process will have an impact on the "natural world" of humanity (Patočka, 1992). Informal, open organisations of a similar type to Biopolitics could play an important role in this process.

References

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