

About the First Principles of Philosophical Anthropology

Nickolay Omelchenko

Department of Philosophy
Volograd State University
2d Prodolnaya Street 30
400062 Volograd Russia

Abstract

We need a metaphysics of respect for nature in order to establish the foundation for a humanistic philosophical anthropology. A metaphysics of respect for human beings will assist us in overcoming the human crisis. Genuine metaphysical respect for nature and for humans needs no supernatural substance. Matter is realized as *causa sui* and can be also defined as *Natura sapiens*. Humans are not the only intelligent life forms in the universe. Man is primordial a creative being: *Homo creans*. The predestination of philosophical anthropology consists in clearing and co-creating the essence (*logos*) of human being.

Introduction

Telling about adventures of ideas, A.N. Whitehead (1937:3) noted correctly that "theories are built upon facts," but "the reports upon facts are shot through and through with theoretical interpretation." In his opinion, the concept of history does not exist without aesthetic predilections, beliefs in metaphysical principles, and cosmological generalizations. The concept "pure history" is a result of imagination; it is invented by historians. Historical explanation depends on "premises taken not obviously." Whitehead's idea can be applied to all cases. Any theoretical and practical activities of humans depend on such fundamental premises which are not naturally a subject of daily interest. Analysis of initial postulates is the matter of philosophy. Therefore, when people begin to reflect upon the foundations of their existence, they are willy-nilly becoming philosophers. The need for periodical appraisal of fundamental principles is in particular connected with the level of efficiency for scientific investigations, and also with a demand for truth. Truth appeals to philosophy where it hopes to find itself.

At the beginning of this century, Max Scheler (1928) had been originating his interpretation of philosophical anthropology. Using phenomenological methodology, Scheler tried to develop a new theory of humanity based on the achievements of science as well as on religion. Shortly before the closing of this century, we are faced with a more diverse metaphysical and scientific understanding of humankind. It becomes mandatory that we revise the discussions about first principles of understanding, not only in the field of anthropology but also within philosophical anthropology. Some of these principles are examined in this paper. They include: (1) there is a necessity for a humanistic philosophical anthropology; (2) man is not alone in an endless universe; (3) humans are primordial creative beings: *Homo*

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creans; (4) the predestination of philosophical anthropology consists in clearing and co-creating the essence (*logos*) of human being.

The Need for Metaphysics of Respect for Nature and Humans

The study of nature inevitably seals one's anticipation for understanding social phenomena: the psychology of power and emotions, society, history, politics, and morality. In the past, many scholars believed that nature represents a passive reality that requires an external active principle. In this view, nature itself was seen as not able to create its own evolution. Aristotle's idea about active form and passive matter represented such a dichotomy that continued to occupy science for a long time. Nowadays we are starting to understand the consequences of that view which deprives nature of its dynamic basis.

Vittorio Hösle (1992) noted in his Moscow lectures that the main illusion of modern metaphysics is "the weakening of the principle of being owing to the strengthening I." In his opinion, the philosophical disparagement of nature leads finally to an ecological crisis.

Since current scientific theories are still embedded in our traditional views of nature, Hösle calls on us to learn a "metaphysical respect for nature": "it is required [for science] to stop and to return the growing subjectivist transformation of nature" (Hösle 1992:170).

The concept of a passive nature gives rise to similar images about society and humans. From this view, for instance, it requires heroic personalities, talented managers, prominent intellectuals (all of which are endowed with the spirits of creation by someone) that can and must give people true values, grant them genuine happiness, make history and reconstruct inert life. Even George Berkeley's idealism can be seen in the context of passive matter: "If the world be granted to consist of matter tis [sic] the mind gives it beauty & proportion" (Berkeley 1948:14).

The same principle of passive nature applies at the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, where, for example, La Mettrie examined man as a machine (*L'Homme machine*). Two centuries later, the scientific picture of the world had changed considerably. Even though nature is still perceived in parameters of matter, science can offer dynamic theories for a complex reality. Despite the sophistication of plain materialism, statements such as "I am not a computer" (Walter 1993) reflect both the protest against the modernist identification of man with a machine as well as the disagreement with methodologies that deprecate nature.

There is ample historical evidence that an inadequate understanding of nature also leads to misinterpretations about humanity (there is a reverse dependence too): the humiliation of nature through scientific conquest also provides the occurrence of ideologies that humiliate humankind. Therefore, we must revise metaphysics towards a metaphysics of respect for nature, in order to establish the foundation for a humanistic philosophical anthropology.

A first indication for this *philosophia prima* is the absence of a transcendent absolute. Genuine metaphysical respect for nature and for humans needs no supernatural substance. Infinite nature itself is conceptualized as *causa sui*, as a capacity of the absolute with reference to infinity. When we use terms such as "absolute truth," "absolute time," or "absolute space," etc., their more appropriate

interpretation signifies "infinite truth," "eternal time," or "endless space," etc. This shift in the understanding of "absolute" towards "infinity" will enable us to develop theories that liberate nature from the yoke of human humiliation. Let me explain the present idea.

The concept of *Natura naturata* expresses the co-dependency of reality with an external absolute—all modes of existence are created, i.e., any manifestation of humankind is created, and so is all suffering. Nature is seen as subordinate to the absolute; it is not free and so has not the sufficient ground to respect itself. If the absolute is conceptualized as being some transcendent Spirit in charge of creation, nature itself becomes a second-rate product, since Spirit will always excel nature. The concept of creation evolves in us a genuine metaphysical respect only for "something beyond." Of course, we could also force ourselves to esteem nature, but our respect for it will bear a strong resemblance to our condescending treatment of a defective reality. For instance, the rules of good conduct can demand a master's respect for his slave. However, notwithstanding that the master has to obey the artificial regulation, a slave will remain the master's slave.

Thus, subjectivism (its extreme version is presented by Berkeley) and spiritualistic objectivism (as the concept of idealism by Hegel) provide for a chronic inferiority of nature, and hence for nature's primordial humiliation. Within the parameters of this paradigm, man gets easily accustomed to the disdainful, careless treatment of the environment. Ultimately, this habit leads to such grave consequences that human life itself comes under threat of extinction. Any pleas for the necessity of respect for nature remain unheard since the philosophical tradition leading to the humiliation of nature gives rise to only an appearance and illusion of such esteem. However, the severity of the ecological crisis requires us to become free from such illusions. It is necessary to part from our fancies, since nature is about to lose its patience and bring to life Goddess Nemesis. The ecological crisis is nature's *testimonium paupertatis* about the intellectual tradition of humiliated being.

Vittorio Hösle considers correctly that subjectivism underrates the external universe and leads, in practice, to its destruction. Trying to find a way out, the philosopher is founding his own version of objective idealism supplemented with the theory of intersubjectivity. In Hösle's (1992:164) opinion, "only the absolute can serve as the basis of nature-mind unity." It is correct that objective idealism eases the tensions regarding the ecological crisis, but it does not remove the very problem of nature's subordination to the supernatural absolute, and hence it does not liberate nature from its created and suffering state.

Hösle does not doubt the mind's superiority to nature and claims that it is easy to prove with transcendental arguments: namely mind but not nature is able to raise the question of the very attitude of mind to nature.

(Hösle 1992:164)

I propose two reasons to question the accuracy of his "easy proof." First, a mere capacity of human reason to raise philosophical questions does not signify any superiority to nature. Second, nature thinks *itself* by using human reason, and inquires about itself by contemplating upon subjects such as the problem of the mind's attitude towards nature. Nature gives rise to reasonable civilizations in order to confirm its being and to understand itself. Infinite nature is becoming that which

it is becoming. Therefore, its knowledge is rooted in the desire to know itself. Human intellect is one of many simultaneously presented cosmic reasons by means of which matter is knowing itself. In this context, matter can be defined as *Natura sapiens*. This idea expresses another thesis for a metaphysics of respect for nature.

Supposing that Cosmos is endless, we may assert that there is a countless number of worlds in the infinite. Similarly, civilizations are generally to be found at different levels of their development: some civilizations are at an early stage of their development, others are about to secede, while others have reached their highest proficiency. This alludes to the possibility that reason is an attribute of matter which constantly thinks itself. Nature cannot exist without mind, nor even lose it for a moment. In other words, as long as one living intellectual unit is present at any moment of the everlasting time stream, an endless universe thinks itself constantly by means of such units; but, of course, these units cannot be seen in earthly categories alone.

Now I would like to mention a common justification for the proposition, "reason is an attribute of nature." Let us assume the correctness of Berkeley's metaphysics. Namely, that the objective world exists for me because of my consciousness. In other words, an individual sees external reality by the light of reason. Without this light, a person will find himself in total gloom; he will be plunged into non-being. There is hope that other people will remain and will observe the natural and social life, but if we imagine that the whole of humankind is deprived of reason, then who will be able to certify the world's existence? Given the idealist tradition, there is no witness left. There is no object without subject, no event without witness. Hence, all being, all nature, is meaningful only in the context of earthly intellect. The lack of human reason is understood as the coming of great Nothing.

It requires a broader outlook to overcome such a logic. I suggest that we assume a plurality of worlds and a constant self-reflection of nature. From this point of view, if at some point in time humankind ceases to exist, Cosmos will cease to exist with reference to humans alone. However, as long as at least one thinking unit exists in the universe, nature cannot be reduced to nothing. Matter gives rise to new and reasonable civilizations in order not to die. Nature produces reflective structures again and again; it cannot exist without them. Nature argues and confirms its being with the birth of every new intellect in the universe. The presence of mind in the world proves the existence of matter. *Homo sapiens* is only one of the witnesses of material existence; man is one of many intelligent beings created by an endless *Natura naturans*. Therefore, humankind cannot be represented as the only intelligent manifestation of Cosmos. I believe that some day the anthropocentric picture of the world will be changed by a voluminous view; i.e., a view that allows us to identify intellect outside the parameter of organic matter.

The need for a metaphysics of respect for nature is clearly identifiable, in particular, by the occurrence of ecological destruction which threatens human life. The current ecological crisis is nature's protest against our careless treatment of it. Matter is suggesting that man respect it. A metaphysical respect for nature presupposes that the infinite material world is realized as an absolute, as *causa sui*. In this case, the existence of Cosmos needs no supernatural substance which gives birth to suffering beings. Besides, when matter is defined as *Natura sapiens*, reason is

recognized as an inalienable property of space. This reason displays itself differently in the various points of an endless universe.

The philosophies of humiliated nature are continued in the doctrines of humiliated man. Speaking of irrational and religious conceptions, Albert Camus (1955:17) wrote, "The tradition of what may be called humiliated thought has never ceased to exist." If the nurturing of a metaphysics of respect for nature helps us to get out of the ecological crisis, the simultaneous development of a metaphysics of respect for man (humanistic philosophical anthropology), will assist us in overcoming the human crisis. If the paradigm "man is a master of nature" is outdated, it can be supposed that in due course the opposition of master and slave will also compromise itself in interpersonal relations. The idea of freedom through respect is a great idea of the twenty-first century. Apparently, the principle of reverence for any life as proposed by Albert Schweitzer must be expanded to a metaphysics of reverence for all beings: natural, social, and individual.

Human as *Homo creans*

Cosmos is an endless, creative being: it manifests itself through creation which is the norm of being, its rule, rather than its anomaly or exception. Cosmos renovates itself permanently. Nature could say of God's words about itself: "I am becoming that which I am becoming" (cf. Fromm 1956:69).

The human is a microcosm, a child of *Natura naturans*; and so s/he is primordially not only a creature but also a creative being—*Homo creans*—whose creative work is none other than the continuation of space creation. Of course, the routinization of social life can block the creative qualities of a person; that is why the creation of mechanical realities is a most restraining enterprise.

In a letter to R.J. Humm dated July 10, 1938, Herman Hesse remarks, "I believe in human as some wonderful possibility that does not extinguish [erlöschen] even in large filth." Indeed, humans are a "wonderful possibility," since we possess a creative principle which interacts constantly with surrounding elements. Since future results of this interaction are not predetermined, women and men contain always some mystery that is open for reason, cognition and self-knowledge. If human self-creating has no limits, the study of ourselves will be a boundless process. There are no final predictions about *Homo sapiens*, since human knowledge changes in relation to the creative transformations of human existence. Humans are becoming that which we are becoming.

There is a whole spiritual tradition which splits the human into two. Dualistic philosophies place humans into passivity and suffering, while activity and creation is given only to superhuman existence. This is the tradition of humiliated mankind (for example, as in Christianity or in Friedrich Nietzsche's conception). From this point of view, humans themselves do not present an objective value, since we are thought of being creatures, but we are not thought of as creators.

Indeed, if there is only a passive condition for humankind possible, then we would find ourselves forever confined as suffering beings that arouse only compassion. The questionable remedy that is offered for humankind is a transformation either into a God-human existence, or into an *Übermensch* as Nietzsche perceives it. In any case, humans must stop living with reference to old perceptions. This appears to be

a contradictory reasoning: we must die to transcend, to evolve. Some people perceive a higher humanism in this "transcendence." I question whether respect can be born from humiliation. Human evolution relates to the awakening and the cultivation of intellectual, emotional and practical creation. Such a process signifies the becoming of mankind, but it does not signify the arrival of a superman. A lack of ability for creation is undesirable for human evolution.

There are wonderful words in Plato's *Symposium* (206e): "To the mortal creature, generation [birth] is a sort of eternity and immortality." However, not only the reproduction of life but creation itself can be interpreted as a birth. Plato explains (205c):

All that causes the passage from non-being into being is a 'poesy' or creation, and the processes of all art are creative; and the masters of arts are all poets or creators. (Plato 1953:537)

Creation is seen as the birth of new ideas, feelings, images, and human activities. Therefore, we may see creation as an immortal principle for mortal creatures. Because of creation, people are, so to speak, godlike.

Erich Fromm argues that human passions and needs are rooted in the peculiarities of one's existence. Among such needs, Fromm emphasizes transcendence through creation or destruction. In his opinion,

the ultimate choice for man, inasmuch he is driven to transcend himself, is to create or to destroy, to love or to hate. [...] They are both answers to the same need for transcendence, and the will to destroy must rise when the will to create cannot be satisfied. (Fromm 1955:37f)

Here I would like to make another reference to Plato's dialogues. While creation is "the transition from non-being to being," destruction, on the other hand, brings forth a reverse process: the transformation from being to non-being. When unfavorable conditions repress human creativity, we remain only within a condition that is connected with passivity and suffering. Such qualities bring us closer to non-being, promoting death. A suffering being progresses into nothing. Nothing is the *entelecheia* of suffering that is charmed by death. Nothing is a limit at which passivity is naturally aiming. Suffering is akin to nothing and so it "ennothings."

As Agathon says in Plato's *Symposium* (196e): "No one can give to another that which he has not himself." Humans are destructive when their creative principle is repressed. They destroy not from their greatness, but from the nothingness of their spirit. Nonentity is able to expel from itself only non-being, i.e., death. For instance, terrorists blasting discotheques or politicians exterminating people represent a similar principle: they overflow with nothing. Their activities are emanations of death. By this, such political leaders can build concentration camps, wipe off cities from the face of the earth, and establish genocide. But they cannot create human life.

1. Thus, it can be said, "the instinct of death" is contained in passivity, in the created state. Those who cultivate passivity and suffering in a society are the gardeners of death; they grow non-being. In contrast, "the instinct of life" is in creation. Thanks to creation, we gain "part of immortality and eternity." The creative will of humans excludes irreparable and hopeless fatalism. There is no aim in the future which would magnetically attract human evolution. Humans themselves come towards the future by creating it within the limits of their power and their

objective possibilities. However, the weaker one's reason and practical creation is, the stronger becomes the fatalism and absurdity which is apparent in history.

Cosmos did not evolve humans for achieving some special goal. In this sense, *Homo sapiens* is not a minion of Cosmos, and we cannot gratify ourselves with such an illusion. Everything is far more prosaic. Any mother gives birth to her children for life, but not all of them find themselves lucky and prudent. Just like this planet of people is not the only abode of reason; the creative work of Cosmos has not started with Earth and will not end with it.

Why must we believe that humankind represents an optimistic program for progress? There are reasons to believe that nature by giving rise to humanity says: "Here one more creation of mine in the infinite. If you are able to survive—live and keep living the good life. If you are not able, you have only yourself to blame. You had a chance...." None can foresee the end of human evolution. Man has neither hell nor paradise before him. People themselves establish either hell or paradise for themselves. The changing collection of opportunities is ahead of humankind, our destiny is behind us.

Thus, our options are clear: either humans will become a responsible participant in evolution by taking part in the creation of an infinite Cosmos, or mankind will tend to annihilate itself. What we will choose depends on ourselves.

The Predestination of Philosophical Anthropology

The concept of logos can help us for an analysis of this question. To my mind, "logos" gives us epistemological advantages for our understanding of human beings and for the advancement of philosophical anthropology.

The concept of logos has a rich history. Besides the ancient tradition also Russian religious philosophy elaborated on this idea (cf. Ern 1991). Höslé shares with platonism (including Hegelianity) the persuasion that the theory of intersubjectivity is doomed to a crash without the absolute in the capacity of its foundation; the attempts of doing without the absolute show clearly where the foundation as general Logos is absent, there only mutual hostility remains (Höslé 1992:156). In other words, the idea of a "general Logos," a logos as the absolute, maintains its attractiveness as before. Meanwhile this graceful concept may have, so they say, the more natural interpretation.

Matter (nature) consists of the infinite multitude of discrete objects with the diverse relations between them. These objects are perceivable through our senses while intersubjective relations are comprehensible by human intellect. The concepts of law and essence are connected with that relation. Let us assume that the laws form "the ideal aspect of nature" (Höslé 1992:166). But why is there a need to place this "ideal aspect" outside the limits of Cosmos? In metaphysics, we still prefer to separate the sensible from the intelligible spheres, and to isolate the latter from nature.

Cosmic logos can be defined as an aggregate of the steady world relations. In this sense, nature has logos as its own essence. Logos is a gist of being, its law, a tendency of its changes. Logos exists objectively, not before things and not after them, but together with them.

When Aristotle attempts to define the concept of soul, he states in *De Anima* (412 b11) that it is a substance with respect to its formula (definition); i.e., the

essence of such-and-such a body. Further, he elucidates (412 b19-22):

If the eye were an animal, its vision would be its soul; for vision is the eye's *substance* with respect to [the eye's] formula. The eye itself is the matter for vision; and if [vision] departs, there is no eye any longer, except equivocally, as in the case of the eye in a statue or a painting. (Apostle 1981:20)

If Cosmos were a living creature, its soul would be its logos. If logos fails, there is no Cosmos except in an equivocal sense. However, nature has existed and will always exist together with its logos. Nature is impossible without logos; it needs no supernatural principle to activate logos. Becoming is a major property of logos which displays itself all the time and in every thing, in different laws and in steady relations. Human reason and language are forms of existence and are expressions of a cosmic logos. *Dicta* such as "at the beginning was the word" are inapplicable to everlasting matter. At the beginning are matter and logos.

Reason does underlie philosophy, but philosophy is something greater than, say, Hermann Hesse's "glass-bead game." Reason constitutes philosophy, and in its turn, earthly reason finds itself; it becomes itself thanks to reflection upon philosophical truths. The evolution of reason unfolds philosophy, and the development of philosophy enriches human intellect, makes it more keen, wise, and humane. In the end the philosophical work is self-knowledge of Cosmos.

When Heraclitus attempts to explain the nature of logos, he states (Sextus Empiricus, adv. math. VII, 132):

Of the Logos which is as I describe it men always prove to be uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it. (Kirk 1970:33)

The predestination of philosophy consists in clearing and co-creating the logos of being. Philosophy maintains the existence of the natural, social, individual being by investigating its essence and by taking part in creating through logos. The demise of philosophy is the extinction of reason; and the decline of human reason means the end of humankind. This planet of people will become blind without philosophy. Asserting the rights of reason, philosophy ensures humankind to become firmly established on Earth and in Cosmos. Humans can be not only the object, but also the subject, of their own lives and destinies.

This general description is also true for philosophical anthropology. Its purpose is to restore humanity, just like the restoration of the original texture of an ancient painting. The philosopher also restores carefully; exposing all inconsistencies, he approximates the genuine appearance of human logos. This process is, so to say, a lightning, a transformation into reality unlocked by human reason. Besides, since human beings are continuously evolving, an anthropologist writes the ethnography for a continuous event. Defining the parameter of humans, scientists take part in this creation. But if the definitions are too narrow, if any cognition by mistake takes precedence, humans are exposed to false realities which obstruct their development. The increase of illusions leads people into a blind alley. Thus, philosophers carry a burden of responsibility for their truths. For instance, when theorists suggest a social ideal, they influence the lives of generations.

Sometimes intellectuals exaggerate their own significance and begin to imagine that the whole world is developing under their directions; that it is they who create

social life and its laws. If such practice persists, people will sooner or later find themselves in an Orwellian 1984. In this novel a leader of the so-called inner party explains:

We control matter because we control the mind. Reality is inside the skull.... You must get rid of those nineteenth-century ideas about the laws of nature. We make the laws of nature. (Orwell 1984:268, emphasis added)

Here we have a fine illustration of the kind of metaphysics that George Berkeley developed for us. Orwell's world, after all, is not as far-fetched as is generally thought.

Against subjectivism, I believe that a philosopher does not create all being but merely participates in the co-creation of its essence. Nature, life, or societies by themselves possess enough internal powers for self-creation. A person can simply take part in this process. For human beings should listen to and hear the voices (logos) of natural, social, and existential presences and act in accordance with them. From this point of view, an individual is not the only master of his or her destiny, as it is supposed by Jean-Paul Sartre (1968). His idea, "existence precedes essence" would be true if humans had no history. However, the hoary antiquity of centuries of history stands behind our shoulders. Humanity is part of history. Every one of us is carrying the burden of the past and the greatness and sins of our ancestors. Any individual is a representative for all humankind. Thus, humans possess both essence and existence from the very days of their birth. But human existence is not a mere representation of an innate program, and our essence (logos) is not an eternal constant. Clearing the logos of human beings, philosophical anthropology contributes to its becoming.

Conclusion

An analysis of the first principles of philosophical anthropology demonstrates clear results: the mere existence of an infinite material world needs no supernatural substance. Reason is an attribute of matter which is defined as *Natura sapiens*. Humans are not the only intelligent life forms in the universe. Humans are created and creators at the same time: *Homo creans*. A full understanding of this principle leads us necessarily to the acceptance of one's responsibility towards creation. Clearing the parameters of human essence (logos), philosophical anthropology participates in this creation. Science will benefit in productivity if anthropology clarifies the need for a metaphysics of respect for humans.

Notes

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