

МУЛЬТИКУЛЬТУРНАЯ ФИЛОСОФИЯ

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Cultural Interaction in Respond to Common Challenges*

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Any culture contains both an orientation towards harmony between man and nature, and an orientation to rule over natural forces, an orientation towards intrusion into them. It would be erroneous to bring the crops to any single alternative axiological orientation. The “share” of each orientation varies in different cultures and in different historical periods of the same culture. Plurality of axiological orientation makes culture multidimensional, dialogical, allows the latter to transform itself, moving to the periphery that was yesterday dominant in the culture. The tense relationship between the axiological orientations, entering among themselves in the relationship of mutual criticism, rejection, support, dialogue, constitutes the life of the culture and could be most productive in the construction of the ecological civilization.

Keywords: global challenges, ecological civilization, culture, nature, axiological orientation, dialogue

It is well known that cultural communication has been always helpful in promoting mutual understanding and, if not in eliminating, than at least in reducing tension and hostility between the representatives of different cultures. There is no doubt that it has also resulted in mutual enrichment. History records countless testimonies of that.

The new global developments have brought ahead a new reason for a vital need of cultural cooperation. This urgency results from the actuality: the humanity is truly going on through the processes of globalization and hence there is a certain category of phenomena that requires worldwide participation. There are two kinds of problems: local and universal which are the problems of humanity as a whole. Poverty, wars, new technologies, ecology have turned into global challenges. They demand for their solutions collective efforts, which can be undertaken only if certain values are commonly accepted.

Let us take just one example – ecologic challenges which could be solved only by the contribution on behalf of the people representing different cultures. The variety of attitudes toward nature is endless. We trace the evolution of the attitudes through the different stages of human history. Roughly there have been four main phases.

At the first phase, associated with polytheism, human beings were not conscious of Nature as something distinct from them and did not contrast themselves with it.

At the second phase people practically ignored Nature or even were hostile to it. The monotheistic teachings made them to believe that only humans could grow spiritually while Nature, on the other hand, is “stagnant and static; it is amoral and irrational; it is under the power of the demonic” [Andreev, 1993, p. 40].

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The third phase is connected with age of scientific supremacy. It is characterized by a strictly utilitarian view of Nature when the latter is to be looked at as an object of rational (scientific) research and its resources are to be exploited for human use.

The people had to enter the age of the metropolis in order to experience a longing for Nature. People in large cities, separated from Nature as never before by great distances and missing its warm embrace, have begun returning to it. They carried the seeds of a new, more mature relationship with Nature. This turn had been prompted and even forced by the challenges caused by ecological crisis and a danger of the global catastrophe. That is the fourth phase during which we are living.

One should keep in mind that the variety of attitudes to Nature is entrenched in ontological foundations of culture as such. It is quite obvious when we compare anthropocentric understanding of human nature and its provisions in this world along with Faustian spirit of the European Renaissance and Enlightenment (the prerequisites for which existed already in classical Greek and Roman thought) which prevail in Western culture with the approach typical for traditional cultures (Asian, African, etc.) strongly committed to antropocosmism.

The key-notion of traditional Chinese ontology was codified as early as in the *I-ching* (*Book of Changes*), which had a paradigmatic impact on the whole Chinese culture. As it is well known, the basic structure of the *I-ching* system is formed by the eight trigrams (*pa-kua*), combinations of three lines. According to Chen I-Chuan (1033–1107), one of the renowned commentators of the *Book of Changes*, “in ancient times, the sages instituted the system of the Changes in order to follow the principle of nature and destiny... (Each hexagram) embraced the three powers (Heaven, Earth, and Man)...” [Selection from Remarks on Certain Trigrams, 1963, p. 269].

The unity of human being with Nature (Universe) was in particularly emphasized in Taoism. Its adherents consider the human being to be ideal if he or she manages to make the true nature predominate over the false. “The sage-man learns of Heaven and follows nature. He should not be tied by convention nor enticed by the sophism of man. He looks to Heaven as father and to Earth as mother” [The Tao. The Great Illuminant. Essays from Huai Nan Tzu, 1933, p. 58].

What Confucius advocates as the “benevolence” is not only to love your family and people, but also to spread your love to every creature of the world. Since humans and all other creatures are integrity, all belong to the world. Mencius said: “To love your family, then love the people, and then love the creatures”. Zai Zhang said: “People are my compatriots, things as well”. Yi Cheng said: “People, sky and earth are integrity”. Such sayings are countless. All have the same meaning: human and creatures are of the same kind, are equal, and should build up harmonious relationship.

Related to the consciousness of eco-ethnics and eco-philosophy, there is also eco-aesthetics consciousness in the traditional culture. Chinese ancient artists mostly stressed to embody the liveliness of the creatures. Gai Wang of Qing Dynasty said in his *The Secret to Drawing Fish*: “To draw fish is to draw its liveliness, just like it is swimming”. Chinese artists never draw dead fish or dead birds. The flowers, birds, insects, and fish under the pen of Chinese artists are all vivid, filled with liveliness. The image world of flowers, birds, insects and fish, drawn by Chinese artists is a world of life, containing human and everything, and so embodies Chinese eco-consciousness.

There will be equally true to acknowledge a strong eco-consciousness in traditional Indian culture. The first thing that ‘baffles’ a Western person reared in the spirit of the Enlightenment is the seeming nondetachment of human beings in the Indian tradition from the world of all other living creatures. This statement could be justified only partly, because the sacred texts attribute to a human being an exclusive right to conduct rituals and make sacrifices, thereby recognizing the particular bond between the human and Divine. The fundamental difference between human beings and animals lies in the former’s capacity to follow dharma, or the “moral law”.

According to the conventional idea predominating in India the world was created in order to realize the moral law of dharma. Cosmogonic processes are not related to the arbitrary rule of gods, no to natural mechanical causes, but rather to moral principles – or to be more precise, to the moral state of the creatures inhabiting the cosmos. According to the epic cosmology of the Indians, the “decline” of the dharma at the end of the each cosmic cycle leads to *pralaya*, a period of “cosmic night” during which the world disintegrates while souls reap the fruits of their past actions.

One should not draw hasty conclusions from the above, and assign the exclusive role of nature’s ‘king’ to human beings alone. There are many Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain texts recognizing the involvement of not only human beings but also of animals in the maintenance of dharma. It is quite significant that though one of the most widespread synonyms for the word ‘man’ in ancient Hindu texts is *manusya*, a derivative from the verb ‘to think’, some of the texts point out that access to knowledge is not an exclusively human ability: “True, humans are knowledgeable, but they are not the only ones; for even birds and beats all have knowledge of some sort” [cited from: Chakrabarti, 1999, p. 260].

The metaphysical basis for eco-consciousness is deeply rooted in one of the central philosophical concepts of Indian culture, religion and philosophy – *sansara* (in Sanskrit – “passing [through a sequence of states]”) which means a rebirth, reincarnation, transmigration of souls. *Sansara* in combination with the idea of *karma* is often referred to as the law of moral causation: rebirth is a moral retribution for *karma*: good deeds cause a favorable rebirth, bad is bad. Each of inhabiting space creatures reborn during 8400 thousands (*mahakalpa*) equal to 432000 million human years, and at the end of this period, automatically reaches *Nirvana*. Then the cycle resumes.

Recognition of karma and samsara as the natural mechanism of ‘evolution’ of all living things entails a number of problems. Among the first one is value relativity of any individual existence: for through infinite time of rebirth each will have chance to be a rich and a poor, a parent and a child, an executioner and a victim, a teacher and a student, a good and an evil person, a man and a woman, an animal and a God.

Atman by transiting from one existence to another one, only changes its ‘shell’–‘body’. Atman itself is not subject to sansara. The *Upanishads* distinguish three possible kinds of rebirth: “the way of the gods”, leading to Heaven where there is no returning to the Earth; “the way of our ancestors”, leading to the Moon, where did the soul, turning into rain, falls to the ground, humidifying plants; a person or an animal eats plants, its seeds penetrates into the human’s seed bringing by this way a new life (cf. cycles of substances in nature). The third way is mainly ‘reserved’ for insects (these include lice, fleas, flies, worms, etc.) or to everything which holds exclusively negative karmic impulses. They are condemned to be reborn in the same position as for the launch of transmigration, you must have at least a minimum of Dharma is a virtue.

Buddhism, unlike Hinduism considers heaven and hell, not as a ‘transit point’ between the old and the new birth, but rather as a place where this rebirth actually takes place. In Buddhism six ‘directions’ of reincarnation are recognized out of which four are bad. These are Hell, Kingdom of animals, dwelling of hungry ghosts and *asuras*. As to the two good ‘directions’ they are the human world and the Heavens.

It is these believe in rebirth which makes quite possible reincarnation of a human soul in a ‘body’ of other creatures that has driven another very important concept of Indian culture – *ahimsa*. Ahimsa (in Sanskrit – non-harming) means to avoid killing and injuring by action, word or thought to all beings. It is the fundamental, the first virtue of all Indian moral systems, the first stage in ethical training. One of the most famous references to ahimsa is contained in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (III. 17.4) where it is one of the five virtues (along with pursuits, generosity, honesty and truthfulness). However, the initiative of making ahimsa the first and most important virtue belongs to those who opposed Brahmanism, that is to Buddhism and Jainism in which sacrifice of animals was considered to be improper, incompatible with the principle of ahimsa.

For the Buddhists and the Jain ahimsa is the first requirement in the morally behavioral training. Under the influence of Jainism and Buddhism ahimsa became the most important virtue in Hindu epics. Thus, according to the *Mahabharata*, as the traces of all animals dissolve into the elephant trail, all other deeds of Dharma dissolve in ahimsa; a human being, who practices it, becomes immortal and by protecting all living beings, follows the highest way of self-perfection (XII. 237.18–20). In the lists of virtues in *Dharmaśāstra* ahimsa often hold the first place, followed by truthfulness, honesty, cleanliness, generosity, restraint and patience (Manu Smriti X. 63).

In the reformed form the ideal of ahimsa has received recognition in Indian in the age of the national liberation struggle. Mahatma Gandhi's own life was an example of an untiring, bold and decisive experiment with ahimsa.

Gandhi's experiments were basically different from those which are known in Hindu, Buddhist or Jain traditions. They are not limited only to the internal world of man. They are conducted in the broad social context.

Gandhi was repulsed by the machine-domination because of the destruction of man's links with nature. True civilization, in Gandhi's view, must be based on the principles of conscious and voluntary self-restraint. In the economic field, this means relying on the villages and cottage industries. It was no accident that Gandhi chose the spinning wheel as the symbol of the national freedom movement. He looked upon the spinning wheel as an instrument of national regeneration. The spinning wheel could revive handicrafts and free the Indian people from dependence on colonial imports of cloth, ensure mass employment, and in this way remove unemployment in the country.

Gandhi's world outlook fully reflected the attitudes of the other opponents of machine-civilization, so well expressed by Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev: "Technology radically changes man's relationship to space and time. It is inimical to all organic bodies. In the technological period of civilization man stops living among animals and plants. He plunges into a new cold-metallic atmosphere, in which there is no more animal warmth, no blood. The rule of technology leads to the weakening of emotionality in human life <...> Technology kills all that is organic in life" [Berdyaev, 1990, p. 219].

Of course, N. Berdyaev was not the only Russian whose thoughts were in harmony with the views of Gandhi. It was Leo Tolstoy whose ideas on non-violence were at the most corresponding to those of Mahatma. Gandhi repeatedly acknowledged Tolstoy's name among three personalities who had made the greatest impact on his own thoughts and ideas (the two others were Henry David Thoreau and John Ruskin). In Gandhi's own words, during the first years of his life in South Africa he made an 'intensive' study of such of Tolstoy's works as *The Gospels in Brief* and *What to Do?* But it was *The Kingdom of God is Within You* which made the strongest impression on him. [See: Gandhi, 1994, Vol. I, p. 212, 373].

In October 1st, 1909 Mahatma wrote his first letter to the Russian writer in which he drew the attention of Tolstoy to "passive resistance" in Transvaal and asked his opinion about it. [The Correspondence of Leo Tolstoy with M.K. Gandhi, 1939, vol. 1, p. 340–342]. In his last letter to Tolstoy in August 15th, 1910 Gandhi informed him about founding of the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa "for the needs of the non-resisters and their families" and promised "to make every effort to live up to the ideas which you (Tolstoy. – M.S.) have so fearlessly placed before the world." [Ibid., p. 347–348]. In the same letter Gandhi explained that the farm was named in Tolstoy's honor as a stimulus to further efforts to achieve the same ideals "which the writer had put forward before the world" [Ibid., p. 347].

The two great men were in tune in their non-violent attitude to nature in general and to the animals, in particular. Gandhi wrote that if animals could talk, their story on our crimes against them would shake the world. It is just what Tolstoy made by writing his story about man's cruelty to a horse in his famous story *Strider*. Those people who knew Tolstoy said that it seemed as if he understood what animals were thinking about.

Each culture encloses in itself the golden rule of ethics: “Treat others as you wish to be treated”. In the beginning of the XX century, marked by the greatest violence towards the humans and the nature, Tolstoy and Gandhi added to that rule: “Treat as you wish to be treated the other human beings and the animals”. Ecological crisis which we face nowadays tells us to expand the impact of the above mentioned rule on the whole nature by making the golden rule of ecology.

The views of the proponents of non-violent civilization might appear to the majority of people to be utopia. In fact, Gandhi soberly assessed the prospects for realizing his design of a non-violent civilization. Two years before his death, he wrote: “I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid’s point, though incapable of being drawn by any human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for the mankind to live” [Gandhi, 1947, p. 112].

Utopian have been considered the views of those who belong to that trend of thought which is called ‘Russian Cosmism’. It is based on holistic worldview and it is characterized by a sense of universal unity and codependence. Russian cosmists are in search of the place of humans in space. They try to perceive the relationship of space and terrestrial processes. They recognize man as the microcosm and the universe as the macrocosm, and insist that there is the need to balance human activity with the integrity of this world. Cosmists ideas have been shared by some scientists like the founder of cosmonautics Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857–1935), Vladimir Vernadsky (1863–1945), who worked on the concept of noosphere, biophysicist Alexander Chizhevsky (1897–1964), world known paleontologist Ivan Efremov (1908–1972) philosophers like Nikolay Fedorov (1829–1903), Alexander Syhovo-Kobilin (1817–1903), Peter Uspensky, religious thinkers, artists, poets, writers, etc.

Some philosophers find the consonance of the main principles of the philosophy of cosmism with many fundamental ideas of modern scientific picture of the world and their positive potential for the development of a new metaphysics as the philosophical foundation of the new development stage of science. The adherents of cosmism see the relevance of their ideas in solving challenges, such as the problem unification of humanity in the face of the ecological crisis. They consider cosmism to be the original fruit of Russian intelligence, rooted in unique Russian archetype of ‘universal unity’ (*vsejedinstvo*). There are at the same time many critics of the above mentioned trend of thought which is evaluated as occult, non-scientific, too vague, etc.

Every culture has its own utopias because people can not live without dreaming or hoping about an ideal society. There are different kinds of utopia: political, social, economic, religious, technologic, etc.

The most widely-known utopias are socio-political like Plato’s *Republic* and Thomas More’s *Utopia*. As to ecologic utopias they deal with new ways in which society should relate to nature. Among the Western authors of ecological utopias one may call the writings of Thomas More, Henry David Thoreau, Peter Kropotkin, William Morris, Ebenezer Howard, B.F. Skinner, Aldous Huxley, Ernest Callenbach, Murray Bookchin, etc. [See: de Geus, 1999].

Little is known about Russian poet and thinker of the middle of the XX century Daniel Andreev (1906–1959). His best known book is called *The Rose of the World* (“*Roza Mira*”). For Daniel Andreev, the Rose of the World is a flower each petal of which is an image of the great world religions and cultures. The Rose of the World it is a project of unification of the humanity based on the merge of the cultures. However, in his view, the traditional doctrines and cultural essentials should be critically rethought. They are to be reformed so that to put the end to disrespect towards nature which is to be converted into the Garden. A special place in the Rose of the World should be given to a reverence for nature; the temples of *stihias* (elements of nature) will hold in it the central place. The construction of ecological civilization is similar to the scheme of growing the ‘Rose of the World’ since the two projects could be brought in the life only by collective efforts.

Much less are known to the Eastern ecologic utopias like Chinese *The Peach Blossom Spring* – a prose written by Tao Yuanming, also known as Tao Qian (365–427), a poet of the Six Dynasties period (c. 220–589 CE). The narrative goes that a fisherman who sailed upstream a river and came across a beautiful blossoming peach grove and lush green fields covered with blossom petals. Entranced by the beauty, he continued upstream. When he reached the end of the river, he stumbled onto a small grotto. He squeezed through the passage and discovered an ethereal utopia, where the people led an ideal existence in harmony with nature. He saw a vast expanse of fertile lands, clear ponds, mulberry trees, bamboo groves, and the like with a community of people of all ages and houses in neat rows. The people explained that their ancestors escaped to this place during the civil unrest of the Qin Dynasty and since that time had no contact with anyone from the outside. Thus, the community was secluded and unaffected by the troubles of the outside world. Eventually, the Chinese term *Peach Blossom Spring* came to be synonymous for the concept of utopia.

Any utopia, as inversion of an existing society transformed by the author's imagination, not only foretells but also diagnoses the need for the correction of a social order. It opens up new possibilities, offers options for changes. Utopia is not an antagonist to history *per se*, but a protest against its inescapability. The utopist could be compared with an artist who creates a picture of the future by using not so much the abilities of his/her reason as by imagination, intuition.

Any culture contains both an orientation towards harmony between man and nature, and an orientation to rule over natural forces, an orientation towards intrusion into them. It would be erroneous to bring the crops to any single alternative axiological orientation. The 'share' of each orientation varies in different cultures and in different historical periods of the same culture. One should not forget about the existence in western culture the orientation which approves values of love and non-violence. Suffice is to recall the views of Francis of Assisi, of the Christian mystics, of Thomas Aquinas, P. Abelard, P. Teilhard de Chardin, A. Schweitzer. Just as it is mistaken to reduce oriental cultures to "symphonic unity of man and nature" (A. Schopenhauer), forgetting the parallel existence in those same cultures focus on violence in social relations.

Plurality of axiological orientation makes culture multidimensional, dialogical, allows the latter to transform itself, moving to the periphery that was yesterday dominant in the culture and putting forward that what responds to the needs and demands of the new times. Let us use these plurality by believing in our great capacities as the human beings: "We Are Born to Make a Fairy Tale Come True!" These are the lines from a very popular Soviet poster (painted by Valentin Viktorov). The lines appear to be tailor-made for the dawn of the Space Age; yet they were written in early 1920s, they come from the Aviation March, the official marching song of the Soviet Air Force. The dream to conquer space and vastness is becoming true with the fast development of the Space age started by the first human space flight in April 1961.

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Культурное взаимодействие в ответ на глобальные вызовы

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Вызовы, порождаемые процессами глобализации, носят, в одних случаях, локальный, в других – глобальный характер. Надежды на построение экологической цивилизации в ответ на кризисы, вызванные бездумным и безответственным отношением человека к природе, могут иметь какую-либо перспективу только в случае культурного взаимодействия. Роль незападных культур в этом может быть особенно существенной.

Ключевые слова: глобальные вызовы, экологическая цивилизация, культура, природа, ценностная ориентация, диалог

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