

THE WAY BACK TO NATURE LEADS FROM KNOWING TO AWARENESS - ARE WE ABLE TO DO IT?

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Abstract:

We hear very often, that due to our way of thinking and way of life people in modern world are more and more alienated to nature. Does this mean that nature is strange to us? Yes, we could say so. Most of all the principles of how nature works and its laws became strange to us. We act very often in contrast of them, which ends with devastating consequences for the humans as well as for nature. And not just that. We are alienated also from each other. Does this mean we are strangers to each other? Yes, we behave in this way. Homo homini homo/lupus; human is a human/wolf to the human. Humaneness is often not present nowadays. Very often we witness violence among people, discrimination between groups of people and exploitation of people. And sadly this is not all. The alienation gets even greater extensions. We are alienated even from ourselves. Does this mean...? Yes, we are strangers to ourselves. Why? What brought us here? Actually, the reason is simple; we have forgotten the answer to three key questions: Who are we? What makes us human? What is the purpose of our lives? We know that we are humans, but we are not aware of that enough. In the article we think about how people comprehend the concept of knowing and being aware. Two words that derive from the same basis have different meanings. Knowing does not necessary means being aware of things. We believe, that people are too much concerned with the knowing these days and consequently not enough with the awareness. We believe the way back to nature, other people and to ourselves leads from knowing to awareness.

Keywords: *nature, alienation, knowing, awareness*

POT NAZAJ K NARAVI VODI OD VÉDENJA PROTI ZAVEDANJU - ALI ZMOREMO?

Povzetek:

Pogosto slišimo, da smo ljudje v razvitem svetu zaradi svojega načina razmišljanja in življenja vse bolj odtujeni od narave. Ali to pomeni, da nam je narava tuja? Da, lahko bi tako rekli. Predvsem so nam postali tuji principi delovanja narave in njeni zakoni. Velikokrat delujemo v nasprotju z njimi, kar se konča z uničujočimi posledicami tako za človeka kot za naravo. Pa ne samo to. Odtujeni smo tudi drug od drugega. Ali to pomeni, da smo drug drugemu tujec? Da, tako se vedemo. Izrek človek človeku človek danes pogosto ne drži. V svojem okolju smo nemalokrat priča nasilju med ljudmi, diskriminaciji ene skupine nad drugo in izkoriščanju človeka po človeku. A žal to še ni vse. Odtujenost dobiva še globlje razsežnosti. Odtujeni smo celo od samega sebe. Ali to pomeni...? Da, samim sebi smo tujci. Zakaj? Kaj nas je privedlo do sem? Pravzaprav je vzrok preprost, pozabili smo odgovor na tri ključna vprašanja: Kdo smo? Kaj nas dela ljudi? Kaj je namen našega življenja? Vemo, da smo ljudje, vendar se tega premalo zavedamo. V prispevku razmišljamo o tem, kako ljudje dojemamo pojma védeti in zavedati se. Besedi, ki sicer izhajata iz istega besednega korena, imata različen pomen. Védeti, še ne pomeni se tega tudi zavedati. Menimo, da se človek danes preveč ukvarja z védenjem in posledično premalo s svojim zavedanjem. Po našem mnenju vodi pot nazaj k naravi, soljudem in samemu sebi prav od védenja proti zavedanju.

Ključne besede: *narava, odtujenost, védenje, zavedanje*

1 Introduction

We live in the era of “use it and dump it”. The key question at the moment is still not why dump it but where to dump it. Where ever we dump things, they return to us in one way or another just like a boomerang. We are so clumsy that we can’t even catch the boomerang that is why it usually hits us badly. If we were sane, we would ask ourselves, why are we even throwing the boomerang? Haven’t we learned anything from the numerous attempts? Or maybe we are not aware of what we are doing?

In the article we deliberate on the reason for humans’ alienation from nature, other people and themselves. Is it lack of knowledge or lack of awareness? Is it better to look for solution in common sense or full consciousness? We believe that people in modern world give too much attention to thinking and not enough to the awareness. This brought us to unbalance which is shown in our alienation. We see the solution in conscious orientation from knowing to awareness. We believe the only way back to nature, other people and ourselves is a harmonious balance. The question arises by itself: are we able to do it? Do we even want to do it?

2 Our handling under microscope

There were a lot of scientific and expert dissertations written about human relation to nature. Scientists and experts are of the same opinion that people over proportionally exploit natural resources due to their consumer way of thinking. The consequences are devastating for people as well as for nature.

Did you know that for one litre of bottled water the producers use as much as three litres of water during the production process, which ends up as waste water? Or if we put it in another way, if we compare the amount of energy used for the production of one litre of water, with oil, you must know that every time you empty a plastic bottle of water, you also use a quarter of litre of oil. This is just one of the examples how people influence the environment and climate they live in, with their way of life.

Source: Kajfež Bogataj (2010)

According to Kajfež Bogataj (2010) we can say, that we have developed our consumer way of life in the last 200 years. During this time we have reached a 6-times bigger population, 17-times bigger wealth (measured with money), 5-times higher energy consumption, 3 to 4-times more emissions in our environment and we have become 1.000-times more mobile. Under consideration of European way of life we use today as much natural resources as if we would have three planets. Under consideration of American way of life the number rises to five planets. Our consumption of natural resources is according to the scientists and experts beyond all rational boundaries and even more, it is beyond all boundaries of acceptance.

In the last 50 years the number of population increased a lot, we are witness to devastating interference of people to natural ecosystem and dramatical climate changes. In other words every hour the number of population rises for 10.000, every hour we use 1,7 million kilograms of mineral fertilizers, every hour we produce 4 million tones emission of CO₂ and every hour three animal species die out (which is 1.000-times faster than the natural flow of evolution). Stated facts haven’t been just environmental problem for years. This problem became a wholesome problem of the whole society.

The big Indian wise man Mahatma Gandhi has said once: »Mother nature has enough for our needs, but not enough for our greed«. His grandson, Arun Gandhi (2009), who was honourable speaker at the congress World Peace Summit, organised by Sri Swami Madhavananda World Peace Council to the initiative of the great fighter for peace His Holiness Vishvaguru Mahamandaleswar Paramhans Swami Maheshwaranand, told an interesting anecdote that he experienced with his grandfather. He remembers he once threw a pencil away on his way from school, because he thought it was too small to be used. When he asked his grandfather that night to buy him a new pencil, he asked him a lot of questions like, how big was the pencil, where did he throw it away and the like. He could not understand why, until his grandfather put a lamp in his hand and told him to find that pencil he threw away. It took him whole two hours to find it in the middle of the night. Then he came to two important acknowledgements:

- First: Even such a small thing as a pencil is a part of nature. We use natural resources for its production. When we throw something away we also throw away a part of natural resources, which are not endless. This kind of behaviour is violence of people against nature;
- Second: We can buy everything in our modern consumer society. People exaggerate really strong. Our excessive consumption exhausts natural resources while people on the other side of the world live in poverty and indigence. This kind of behaviour is violence of people against people.

Can we recognize our daily behaviour in the anecdote? If we are honest to ourselves and to others, each and every one of us can recognize him/herself in it. We are convinced that in the information society with global access

to information we can hardly close our eyes to that fact with the excuse that we didn't know anything about devastating interventions of people into nature with excessive use of mineral fertilizers in agriculture, with extermination of animal species and interventions in the climate. We knew that with an intervention in one element of the ecosystem we will cause automatic change of other elements. Scientists and experts inform and warn us about it every day. We have the information, we have knowledge, and we know that. A completely another question is, are we also aware of our behaviour. In continuation we establish that knowing doesn't mean to be aware of. We are thinking about the difference between these concepts.

3 Knowing doesn't mean to be aware of yet

It is relatively simple for people to understand the concept of knowing. Knowing means being informed about something, to have the knowledge of something. Acquisition of knowledge is connected to our five senses and reason. We know what we see, hear, smell, taste and feel. Everything is »tangible«. We don't know what we cannot see, hear, smell, taste or feel. Thus knowing is our perception in the mental world, where our will and reason rule. Exactly this is what makes us reasonable creatures.

We have bigger problems with perception of the concept of awareness. If knowing is connected with our five senses then awareness is connected with our sixth sense. The sixth sense is intuition, which gives us the feeling how to act reasonable in certain circumstances. It is a kind of guide in our life. It's the source of human "being". Thus awareness is our perception in spiritual world where creativity and intuition rule. Exactly this is what makes us spiritual creatures.

According to Freitag (1992) intuition is bigger, stronger than any knowledge. It is high above reason. The reason cannot recall it and cannot perceive it. The modern man thinks he may not agree with what his reason cannot explain. Because of that his awareness is narrow oriented reality, which he can perceive only with his five senses. The sixth sense is here excluded.

Bulc (2006) states in his book an interest interview with dr. Janek Musek, which was made by Katja Gonc in November 2005. In this interview Musek warns that it is hard to talk about intuition, because we have to find out first what someone means by the concept of intuition. Even experts do not have the same thing in mind when they talk about it. He warns that we mix the concepts of reason, emotion and intuition too often. We mix up the expressions instinct and intuition, where he does admit their similarity but not equality. He mentions Carl Jung in the interview, who believes that intuition does not work on grounds of concepts and thoughts like thinking, but on grounds of symbols. Intuition is according to Jung that psychological function, which enables us to explain the symbol's meaning and thus explaining of the archetype world.

Despite different perception of intuition and awareness it is important to differ between the concepts of knowing and awareness. De Mello (1993) says that the awareness is about tasting and feeling of truth, not only the knowledge of it. When people get the feeling for truth they change. They do not change if they only know about it.

Maybe it is the easiest way to show the difference on a case from everyday life. I know a man who has smoked all his life. He was a passionate smoker but despite of that lived to a great age. He used to make jokes about his smoking, saying that despite the smoking he is healthy and fit. One day he visited his doctor because he had problems with breathing. The doctor said there is a possibility he had lung cancer by looking at the x-ray pictures. From that moment on, we could say from the moment of being confronted with the truth, he never smoked a cigarette again. What happened? Before that he only knew that smoking could kill him. Now he was aware of that. He was ready to act at once. This is the main difference between knowing and awareness. The awareness changes us.

We are constantly confronted with the question of awareness, every minute, but very often are not aware of it. We encounter an interesting phenomenon: we are not aware of our unawareness. Let's explain it on the example of breathing. Breathing is the most automatic activity of a human, necessary to stay alive, which we perform without think about it. We perform it totally unaware. If we look at the breathing from physical point of view (Sepe, 2001) we supply our body with oxygen with every breath we take, which nourishes our cells, activates neurons in the brain, strengthens our senses and the whole nervous system. If we hold our breath right after we inhale, then our blood has more time to absorb more oxygen. A bigger amount of oxygen has a curative and rejuvenescent effect. With exhaling our body gets free of carbon dioxide and other waste material from metabolism. When we breathe unaware, we seldom totally exhale the air from our lungs and the waste material that stays in our body could become source of an illness. When we get it into our habit to observe our breathing, we see that excitement, stress and fear are always accompanied by shallow breathing. But we take a deep and relaxed breath when we see something beautiful, like a wonderful view.

Let's focus our attention to the word »when we get it into our habit to observe«. Does this mean that before that habit we didn't observe our breathing? Yes, we didn't give our breathing enough attention, so we also didn't know how we breathe. We had no knowing and no awareness. With the observation we obtained the knowledge (knowing)

about our breathing but we didn't react. In stressful situations we have still breathed shallow and in relaxed situation deep. Now we have the knowing but no awareness. Confrontation and inner feeling of truth about how harmful shallow breathing is for our health, awakens our awareness. Awaken awareness means awakening of being aware. We gradually develop the awareness of how harmful shallow breathing is and what positive effect perfect breathing has. Only when we are aware we are ready to change our way of breathing. The awareness changes us, but not the knowing.

The basic problem of modern man is that he limits his perceptions to his five senses and reason. The reason is master of reasonable world; intuition is master of the spiritual world, so reasonable perception of intuition is impossible. Reason cannot perceive or recall the intuition because it exceeds reason by far. Human awareness is thus a narrow oriented reality limited to perception with five senses. The sixth sense is excluded here. And this is in our opinion the main reason for people being alienated from nature, other people and even themselves. With that we can explain people's devastating handling of nature. Namely we live in the era of knowing, where awareness is put aside. In the continuation we reflect on development of knowing and awareness of people. We have named them evolution of sciences and evolution of awareness.

4 Evolution of sciences

People are constantly thinking about meaning of life. They ask numerous questions: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? What is the meaning of my life? Do I fulfil the meaning of life? etc. People who were working seriously on these questions in the past have transferred their knowing one way or another from generation to generation, so a lot of knowledge was preserved till today. We call them sciences.

Through the evolution of mankind sciences were going through evolution as well. From the primary sciences of old civilizations many scientific and non-scientific sciences have developed (e.g. mathematics, physics, technology, business, esoteric etc.). Regardless the area it is all about people's reflection on how they think about nature or society. Despite diversity there are links between sciences. The interacting influence represents the driver of development.

Božičnik and Mulej (2009) have presented interesting parallels between development phases of three sciences, which at first sight have no such evolutionary similarities. They have compared development phases of:

- physics, as basic natural science,
- management/organization as science on coordination of parts of some organization in order to work according to law of sufficient and necessary holism, which is followed by success and
- Systems theory, as a science on holism as a worldview and related methods.

The authors established that what these sciences have in common is that the determinism is gradually withdrawing and gives room to probability and growth of holism, and thus reality and minor unifying of theory compared to practice. They ascertain that in all three sciences the need of universality is shown. The fusion of recognitions, knowledge and principles to "unified theory field of modern sciences" represents extraordinary scientific potentials. According to these authors the universal Dialectical Systems Theory will take over the linking role.

On the evolution path from determinism to non-determinism all three sciences have worked, each in their specific way, on matter first and then on energy. It is interesting that at the end the evolution of these three sciences ends up in the use of information. It becomes evident that information is that natural characteristic which combines all natural and human processes as well as all sciences about them. It is universal and at the same time unique in concrete circumstances. No one has the right of monopoly on it.

Interesting for us is the discovery that in the last phase of evolution of universal Dialectic Systems Theory the ethics of co-dependence is developed. The ethics of co-dependence becomes value only after experts on the grounds of interdisciplinary creative cooperation become aware of their co-dependence in their striving after reaching holism. Besides information (notes: which we connect to knowing), the intuition (notes: which we connect to awareness), is also necessary.

We find similar deliberations with other authors. Bulc (2008) established that there are four key evolution phases in the development of business systems:

- Working environment, when companies create added value with DILIGENCE based on *PRODUCTIVITY*,
- Learning environment, when companies create added value with KNOW-HOW based on *QUALITY*,
- Mental environment, when companies create added value with CREATIVITY based on *INNOVATION*,
- Conscious environment, when companies create added value with *INTUITION* based on *VITAL ENERGY*.

Among mentioned phases there is a logical sequence. Despite higher cycle dynamic changes follow the social and economic logic. In its bases this logic follows the social development of people, their level of liberation, self-awareness and self-realization. We can explain with that why scientists and experts of different sciences come to

similar conclusions. The evolution of human mind indicates that knowing will, with its reasonable principle, resign the central position and give way to awareness, which was pushed away till now, and the principle of which is intuition.

5 Evolution of awareness

Already Socrates already said: »Unconscious life is not worth living«. Modern man lives in era of knowing with low level of awareness. If we want to work seriously on our problem of alienation from nature, other people and ourselves, we believe that we have to gain knowing first and then develop the awareness. The beginning represents people's awareness of own (un)awareness. What can we learn from nature?

Most animals (Mrak, 2009) communicate with their sixth sense. Some animal species are also connected on their conscious level, which enables them to exchange information. We could call this kind of information exchange telepathic communication.

Mrak (2009) says that even Neolithic civilizations had intuitive perception and knew much more about some aspects of nature than we do today. Besides awareness of multidimensionality of humans and nature they also had the awareness of connection and interactive influence of humans with nature as well as everything in nature. This was already thought by teachings of old civilizations. Taoism teaches that nothing can be done by people without having influence on everything in the universe and that nothing can happen in the universe without having an impact on people.

Mrak (2009) gives an interesting historical explanation about the evolution of human awareness. People have long lived in communities which provided security to individuals regardless of their abilities. Some people felt more able in the community than others and started to think that they could have more than others. People who thought like that parted from their communities and started to establish communities, families of their own. They wanted to hide their selfish intentions from the others, so they unconsciously put some sort of wall around themselves. This wall prevented other members of community to perceive their way of thinking. At the same time it prevented receiving and exchange of information from the so called common consciousness. This meant limitation of human awareness to information gained only by means of the five senses. The arisen individual consciousness of people was thus limited only to material dimensions of nature. The telepathic communication was over and humans had to find another way of communication. They invented speech with all its good and bad characteristics.

The consciousness as such means vigilance (Maheshwarannada, 2008). There exists only one consciousness, but our ignorance divides it to individual and broader consciousness, unconscious, subconscious, conscious and surconscious. What is the difference? Love is love, if you have a lot of it or just a little. Poison is poison, doesn't matter if it is just a drop or a whole bottle. Fire is fire, in form of a small fire or a forest on fire. According to author's experiences we only live 20 percent consciously nowadays. Approximately 40% of our lives we sleep, the rest of the time we function unconsciously, automatic. We sleep automatically, we wash automatically. Maybe we start to eat consciously but soon our minds wander off. We behave like that most of the time. We are only aware of the beginning and the end, lots of what happened in-between is lost.

A special meaning for the development of awareness (Mrak, 2009) is awareness of belonging to unity, awareness that on conscious level we are all one and within this one consciousness every being, entity has a certain autonomy (A. Einstein, E. Schroedinger). Because our world is a sort of projection of awareness and because there can be no projection without projector, everything that exists, from the biggest structures in the universe to the basic smallest parts, everything has a consciousness or some sort of awareness. Everything is constantly exchanging information. Our connection with unified consciousness, we also call it universal consciousness or consciousness of the universe, gives us great opportunities, potentials, but it can also cause a lot of troubles, especially if we think negatively.

Albert Einstein once said: "Human being is a part of the whole, called universe, a part, limited in space and time. He experiences his thoughts and affairs as something divided from the rest, and this is optical deception, an illusion of his consciousness. This illusion represents a prison, since it limits us to personal decisions and to feelings to only a small number of people, who are close to us. Our task has to be to free ourselves from that prison and to widen the circle of our emotions, so they can embrace all living beings and the whole nature in all its beauty."

Since we cannot solve problems with the same way of thinking as we have had when we have created the difficulties, the path to solution is the opposite to the path of decay of community. We do not take care only of our own benefit; we can have open personality, which means we do not have to hide behind masks. In order to realize that we have to be positive enough, also in our minds, meaning to have no bad intentions, that we are not jealous, malicious, possessive etc. In the state of broader consciousness we become aware of what kind of influence not only words and actions but most of all our thoughts, personality, consciousness, relation to ourselves, to

other people and the whole nature have to our lives and our environment. We see life in completely new light, suddenly not everybody else, except us, is guilty for our problems, even more: we can actually see how we cause problems to other people without being aware of it.

In the abstract we can say that with the development of individual consciousness people have lost touch with broader, universal consciousness. Their comprehension became limited to the perception of five senses, so only to material dimensions of nature. Without being totally aware of that they became more and more alienated from nature, from other people. They even became alienated from themselves. In continuation we ascertain that the only way from the existing situation leads through people's own awareness, gradual going back from individual to universal consciousness.

6 Development of self-awareness – human's primary task

People (Zohar, 2000) are very concerned today for the situation in the world, especially for the situation of natural environment and decay of community. When confronted with these questions we do not want to see their actual dimensions. We feel our own guilt because of our indifference to these problems.

We often meet someone who says: »I want to devote my life to serve but I don't know how. All I know is I want to be a part of the solution. Not of the problem.« Another one says: »I want to change the world. I do not want to repeat mistakes that the previous generation has burdened us with. What can we do? Shall we join the system or stay outside? « All these imply spiritual problems of our today's people, who ask themselves how to live sensible lives. They long for living their lives in broader sense and significant frame. People did not ask themselves these questions in the past, of course they were not looking for the answers as well. Their lives were set in certain frames. They have had living tradition, living gods, and living communities, working moral principles, problems with known boundaries and set goals.

In modern time we have lost what philosophers call "self-evidence" of life. We found ourselves confronted with living and spiritual problems with the need for development of some kind of intelligence which could deal with our issues. But neither reasonable nor emotional intelligence is enough for that. Times have changed, people's needs have expanded and intelligence has to be lifted to a new level of evolution. Something more is needed. It is necessary to develop spiritual intelligence.

The development of self-awareness is actually searching for answers to three basic questions: Who am I? What makes me human? What is the purpose of my life? The search for sense (Zohar, 2000) makes us spiritual beings. Thus human's search for sense became his primary motivation of life, not only "secondary rationalisation" of instinctive reasons. This sense is unique and specific in the way that a person has to and can only find it himself. Only then it has that meaning for him that will satisfy his striving for sense. And if this deep need for sense stays unfulfilled, we experience our lives as shallow or empty. For a lot of people this need is unfulfilled and the root crises of our time are of spiritual nature.

7 Conclusion

People over proportionally exploit natural resources with their consumer way of thinking. Our consumption exceeds all rational limits and all limits of acceptable behaviour. In modern society, with global access to information we can hardly look away with the excuse that we didn't know about devastating intervention of people into nature, especially with excessive use of mineral fertilizers in farming, extermination of animal species and intervention in the atmosphere. We did know it! Scientists and experts have informed us daily and warned us loudly, that with the intervention in one element of the ecosystem we will cause an automatic change of other elements. We have the information, the knowledge, the knowing. A totally another questions is, are we also aware of our behaviour.

We live in the era of knowing where awareness is pushed aside. Knowing is connected to our five senses while awareness is connected to our sixth sense and intuition. Nowadays people believe we cannot agree with something that our intellect cannot explain. People's awareness is thus narrow oriented reality, which we perceive only with our five senses. With the development of individual consciousness people have lost touch with the broader universal consciousness. Not being totally aware of, we have alienated more and more from nature, other people and ourselves. Evolution of human's thinking shows that knowing will in the future give way to awareness with its intuitive principle, so it can step in the central position.

The way back to nature leads from knowing to awareness through development of human's self-awareness. This means gradual returning from individual to universal consciousness. Human's self-awareness is connected to answers to three basic questions: Who are we? What makes us human? What is the purpose of our lives? Each and every one of us will have to find the answers deep inside ourselves. As an

inspiration we shall consider the thought of R. Kerševan: In hope and work there is great power, in hope and waiting there is none.

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