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Moral eco-pedagogy

PH.D. THESIS SUMMARY

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Key-words: ethics, virtue, vice, experiential learning, sensibility, closeness, sustainability, holistic approach, nonviolent communication, empathy.

Summary

My aim for this paper is to present the moral eco-peadagogy, a holistic approach on environmental ethics considered as a moral education for sustainability, trust and care, developed in relationship with other moral agents and the moral patients which populates the natural world. I wish for this research to be seen as an Archimedean point for what it means to develop a sensuous enjoyment and self-enjoyment in the biotic community, moving away from defensiveness and unjustified fears. In the context of risk management and long-term strategies for protecting and preserving the delicate equilibrium of life on Earth, environmental virtue ethics represents a necessary and helpful tool, based on interaction and on a focus on the process, discovering the miracle of being aligned with the rhythms of nature. This paper is designed to stand up against the instrumentalism and the dominant egoistic attitude of being above nature, trying to replace them with the attitude of fitting into nature with curiosity, simplicity and serenity. Using the model of moral eco-pedagogy (experiential learning about, for and from the environment) and non-violent communication, I will show that the individual begins to become

that self that one truly is, a process of self- realization and engagement with an impact on how he relates to the moral patients and the natural world.

The subject of moral-eco-pedagogy brings together contributions from moral psychology, biology, ethics, biology and antropology, being strongly anchored in the modern approaces of behavioral researches on experiential education. I consider there is a strong need for an experiential approach of moral pedagogy in environmental ethics because investing in closeness to nature is an investment in our own moral, emotional and spiritual conformation of the self. The ignorance is capable of building a huge wall between the personal self and the world which it belongs to, and leads to an unrealistic view on our importance and role in the holistic image of the Cosmos. The closeness to nature is capable of healing the cultural and social autism individuals manifest stronger and stronger, a dysfunction defined by the feeling of isolation and loss, alienation and the decrease of sensory receptivity, the decline of emotional resilience and capacity of taking risks.

The crisis of our perception on the world as a whole refers to the instrumentalist, mechanistic and reductionist way we divide the living elements of biodiversity in order to fit our needs. The perspective on human being should be, maybe, a more comprehensive one. Man is in essence an emotional, relational, contextual and ambiental being, belonging to both human and biotic community. Ecological consciousness is not based only on rationality and an account of costs- benefits short-term scheme, but also on emotional intelligence (care, compassion, empathy, love and respect). On this line, it is really important to rethink about the role of emotions and values in the process of taking decisions and on the relation between ecology, economy and ethics, following a direction of real sustainable societies, not just slogan- ones. As long as we perceive ourselves as being consumers and having the right to discretionary aggress biodiversity, we will still be caught in a trap and we could tragically remain stuck in it.

Sustainable development and an assumed, genuine management on the way we live our lives involves a change from dependence to autonomy, from consuming to produce food and smart ideas for present and future. It seems that we often find convenient excuses for not being change factors and we neglect the negative impact of the social sedentariness. People should take action and start to develop a more sustainable and healthy philosophy on how they perceive the link between goods and the space from which they come. We are consumers, but we also can be

producers. The value of work should not be underestimated, especially when it comes to food. The genuineness employer who gives us food and a safe place for personal and societal evolution is the Earth, the Sun, the mountains, the rain, the ground, and the authentic personal freedom should guide the individual to destroy the separation from the others and to inspire him to cooperate, to teach him how to value life or to teach him to recognize the value of work, friendships and solidarity. A healthy economy is one in which the people are producing in a sustainable way, based on their necessities but not on all their whims and hedonistic, materialistic pleasures. The rush for pleasure is the one that always keeps us unsatisfied. Education should make the individual being capable of taking decisions based on facts and a critical judgment of their way of goods acquisitions, to teach them the importance of integrity and to accept and assume the responsibility for their choices. Unhappily, we are making this tasks incredibly difficult for ourselves.

This paper is also a challenge for the pedagogical and philosophical research in environmental ethics for taking back the ability to create a safe space for listening our emotions, to integrate our needs in a healthy economy of using the resources and to learn how to integrate our intellectual awareness (defined in terms of curiosity, compassion, gratitude, the use of intuition and moral imagination, love) in action. A change of perception requires an attention on the state of awakesness (presence, attitudes, reactions, fluidity of the self and flow) and awareness (noticing the world and understanding how it works, in order to properly integrate oneself into the dynamics of life). Most of the people are scared of nature and feel confused when it comes to establishing a profound connection with it.

Caught in the tyranny of immediate interests, we can hardly retrieve ourselves in a free nature, with a preoccupation towards our self as a symbol for the love and care we have for the Whole we are organically identify. Accepting the fact that the interconnectivity connections are incorporate in the structure of our lives, then every part of this huge whole could be relationally defined through interrelated connections with the other parts, as long as the Whole has an ontological priority. This way, the care we manifest for ourselves and the natural world surrounding us identifies itself as a preoccupation for the natural world in its entirely complexity. My thesis is that in the key of environmental ethics, we should have a more liberating life process, searching for an exit from static ways of perceiving life, and to rejoicingly reconnect to

its organic rhythms and dances. Contemporary man is often unable to recognize the intrinsic value of nature (recreational, aesthetic, scientific, therapeutic and spiritual value) or its instrumental value (in terms of genetic diversity, symbolic and historic value) and finds himself alone, violent and selfish.

The environmental embodied education (or environmental experiential education) and the virtues related to nature has to have the capacity and the power to awake the thereness, a term that defines the constant availability to be close to nature in order to protect and restore it when it needs to. This is the meaning for values in actions and it is essential for social hygiene both as individuals and as a community.

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