

A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Our Attitude Toward Environment In Terms of The Balance of Moral and Aesthetics

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Abstract

There are two axiological elements of philosophy. One of them is moral, the other is aesthetics. While moral describes things as a 'good', aesthetics describes them as a 'beauty'. These both qualifying are including each other in some cases. In my opinion, the one situation emerged in this context is environmental issues. That it can be asked whether our sense of moral and aesthetics are in the origin of our attitude toward environment or is losing its meaning in the ground of ontological unity. For instance, if we accept Plato's theory of mimesis, we encounter art therefore aesthetics as a factual imitation of what is beautiful since it is the imitation of nature. The natural result of this causality is will be 'imitation of imitation'. In this case, aesthetics bound to be in a position of preserving what is existent and its repetition. If it is considered like this, our attitude towards the environment will become conservative to directly maintain the integrity and we as unmediated enter into field of morality that is a first-hand field of activity. In this paper, by the means of having the ideas of 'good' and 'beauty' in the very centre, we aim to investigate the determining of balance of moral and aesthetics concerning our relationship with the environment in the ground of ontological unity.

Key words: Environment, Morals, Aesthetics, Good, Beauty

Ahlak ve Estetik Dengesi Bakımından Çevreye Karşı Tutumumuz Üzerine Felsefi Bir Soruşturma

Özet

Felsefenin aksiyolojik iki temel ögesi vardır. Biri ahlak diğeri ise estetik. Ahlak, değer ifadesi olarak 'iyi' ile nitelerken, estetik 'güzel' ile nitelemeye bulunur. Güzel ve iyi nitelermeleri bazen birbirini tazammun da edebilirler. Bize göre bu durumun ortaya çıktığı alanlardan biri de çevredir. Çevreye ilişkin tutumumuzun kökeninde 'ahlaki' bir telakki mi vardır yoksa estetik kaygılar mı? biçiminde bir soru ontolojik birlik zemininde anlamını yitirir. Örneğin Platon'un mimesisini (taklit) kabul ettiğimiz bir durumda, doğanın bir taklit olması hasebiyle, sanat, dolayısıyla estetik, güzel olanın olgusal taklidi olarak karşımıza çıkar. Bu nedensel ilişkinin doğal sonucu ise 'taklidin taklidi' olacaktır. Bu taktirde estetik var olanın muhafazası ve tekrarı olmak durumundadır. Böyle düşünüldüğünde ise çevreye ilişkin tutumumuz, doğrudan bütünlüğü muhafaza edici bir hâl alır ve böylece doğrudan bir eylem olan ahlak alanına da girmiş oluruz. İşte bu çalışma, 'güzel' ve 'iyi' ideasını merkeze alarak ahlak ve estetik dengesinin çevre ile olan ilişkimizdeki belirleyiciliğini ontolojik birlik zemininde irdeleyip yeni bir alternatif imkânını soruşturmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevre, Ahlak, Estetik, İyi, Güzel

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1. The terms of Good and Beautiful

The two value term in our daily language *beautiful* and *good* respectively are common to be used for moral and aesthetic attributions. In reality the economic, by the social and scientific developments that take place in the period of Enlightenment and after, which at the same time the main components of modernity, human mind faced with such a radical change and fracture. Regarding this new paradigm undoubtedly many characterization can be made. However the most significant property of the said paradigm that is required to be emphasized in terms of our subject is its fragmentary, disruptive, hence fractal nature. What we mean by fractured, is the ontic and ontological rupture of human from its own nature as well as science, culture, civilization, art; briefly in every field related to existent as a result of loss of recognition of human conception towards the integrity of being. Therefore disappearing of the integral structure so much hardens deep and holistic comprehension. Simonnet expresses this circumstance as literary. "*The human of industrial revolution society is a being made uprooted from its own nature buried into the swamp of the culture it has created. A being rough and sculpted, the stubborn; guardian of the self-made prison*" [1]. When it comes to Coomaraswamy states the position of European as such: Directing the conscious and cognizance of Europeans towards things apart from themselves lead to engagement of the superficial things and appearance instead of the essence and in consequence thinking in line of unity of the European minds become *increasingly challenging* [2].

Hence this state that we could evaluate as ontological alienation or fraction reflecting onto aesthetic and moral sphere, even to manifest the most disruptive nature of itself is also natural. For this reason it is more appropriate to go back in our reviews and make an authentic analysis regarding the origin and make evaluations through the perspective we acquire from there. When we interrogate the the matter by remaining within the limit of our issue, we see that the terms of *good and beautiful* in Greek thought have the same meaning. In that era what is not *beautiful* could not be considered as *good* and what is not *good* is not considered as *beautiful* [3]. Almost up till Kant the conception of *beautiful* in philosophy thought together with the conception of morality in the history of philosophy [4]. The term of aesthetic means perception gained through senses (sensitivity) that derived from the word "aisthesis" in Greek, the science of which "mention the

technique of miscellaneous arts that arise out of the nature of art” in today’s meaning perception gained through senses (hassasiyet) is first used by Leibniz’s student Baumgarten[5].

Due to terms of beautiful and good are inseparable from each other, signifies morality and aesthetic hence art seen in the same manner and merge in the ontological ground. What is beautiful is good, what is good is beautiful as well. Therefore without ignoring them being identical it has importance to determine the horizon through the mimesis (imitation) approach of Plato, who has a holistic idea of good, reveals in our relationship with the environment.

The idea of “good” in Plato is an ontological concept that whole existence go under. In this respect first of all making a summary is necessary in regards to Plato’s ontology. According to Plato the domain of episteme, so to speak domain of the truth is in the universe of “ideas.” All beings reflected here by receiving a share from ideas. Hence the universe that is a subject for our perception ‘is not a truth in itself,’ it is a universe of shadows. Our knowledge attached to it naturally does not express certainty in the capacity of supposition (doxa). He articulates this with the famous allegory of the cave: The state of human beings that their hands, feet, neck are tied in the way not even allowing them to turn their back so they just see the cave wall and the shadows of the passer-by in front of the cave that also cast shadow on the wall, portray our situation in this world. If we return to thought of beauty (goodness) of Plato in this ontological ground;

Plato first of all start interrogating what is beautiful, what could be the measures of it. When the apprehension that are still talked about today, after expressing that being useful and give joy cannot be a measure by various arguments [6] Plato, reveals the theory of beauty in compliance with his ontology we cited above. According to him the key term is *eros*.

Eros, is to rejoin the beautiful and attaining giving birth and creation in it. To reach out the creation in what is beautiful originally related to desire of immortality. Gods are immortal, yet there is an instinct of immortality in human existentially. Therefore seeking immortality and seeking beauty derive from the same source and meet in the same source. In this quest human face with two possibilities. First is to reach the beautiful through the body and sustain this beauty and immortality by descendants. Second is spiritually attain immortality and this is probable by the *virtue*. *Eros*, directed to satisfy this desire by the means of education teaching the most supreme

virtues and justice to the young. By bring into most superior virtues moderation and justice to be gained lead to the aim of reaching spiritual immortality of the individual [7].

Therefore, since what *eros* tend to is an object the loved one is what is directed towards. In Plato there has to a hierarchy between the beauties that *eros* is after as a requirement of his ontology. *Eros* that initially inclined to bodily beauty and search for spiritual beauty after, will understand these are relative beauties later on and pursue ‘beautiful in itself.’ Due to what is beautiful as one by one will no more satisfy *eros*, and even *eros* will have contempt for particular beauties. After this stage *eros* will be tend to beautiful in itself that give share to these beauties. This beauty, is a beauty of essence related to the origin of existence that surround whole the being, ‘beauty in itself’ (aut oto kalon). It is no more in and of itself but the true being (ontos on). It take place in the centre of whole being and enlighten all the existence. All the individual beauties arise from this beauty. From the mouth of Plato this beauty is portrayed as: *“Now listen to me carefully. The man taken to where we reach of love now, attain the end of the road that he leaded after seeing all the beautiful things one after another in a certain order and all of a sudden faced with a unique beauty, with the essence of beauty. So all of his efforts were for reaching this. Now this beauty always exist. It is a beauty without birth, immortal, not increase or decrease. It is not in a way beautiful in a way ugly, beautiful in a place ugly in another place, beautiful in someone’s eyes and ugly in another’s. It is such a beauty that, will not reveal itself with face with feet with anything depend on the body, it will be a word, information, it will not be found in a living being or particular being, neither in living beings nor on earth, nowhere. That itself exist, being in itself and always identical with itself. All the beauties have share from it. Itself neither increase or decrease by their shining and fade away, or go under a change”* [8]. Such a beauty is no more humanly, but godly. Since this beauty out of time and space it must be an essence-ontic (ousia) from that time onwards. The person who attains this beauty can only be a human that God loves that create the real virtue and nurture it. The person who reaches out this sole beauty achieve immortality and bliss. In Symposium dialogue Diotima says: *Think of the moment that human face with absolute beauty dear Socrates, then only in that moment human life worth living* [9].

As it is seen who attains beauty in terms of Plato ontology reach out the truth. When truth (aletheia) defined as raising veil of mystery, we encounter truth as a direct ontological comprehension [10]. Human exist in this universe, if seek for the whole that it takes share of, pay respect to what is being genuine and hence the truth.

As S. Kemal Yetkin expressed in Plato's interpretation of meaning, when human fall from heaven to earth bring about a vague remembrance regarding its first maturity and strength. *This remembrance continuously drag in its heart the irremediable grief and the inextinguishable desire to regain the bliss ones attained and lost* [11].

After summarizing briefly the context of beauty in Plato's ontology we can pass onto another title that has significance in terms of our subject that it is imitaton (mimesis) problem and in this respect interrogating the nature of a holistic relationship to be established with environment.

2. From Art to Ecology as Imitation (Mimesis)

Mimesis, as Tunalı stated [12] not just a motive that specify art, at the same time it is one of the main categories that determines a great culture, antique culture. The insufficiency is evident to be able to articulate such a term by a word so we only treat the subject in the context of our issue in the meaning of imitating, another words copying.

According to Plato art is a mimesis, imitation. The object of imitation is the world of objects and appearances (cosmos aisthetos=world of sensation)that surround us naturally as directly from all around of us. However according to Plato it is mentioned above that the real being is in the distance of ideas and worldly reality in the distance of a shadow. According to this the phenomenons that are the object of the art are actually the copies that has no reality as in itself; art, is the copying of an image of ideas. Hence the work of art would be not the copy of the truth or being in it self but the copy of the copy. In this case the activity of imitation/mimesis never attains the real being [13]. In this respect Plato sees art as a bad activity, which does not go beyond imitation. Because it engages people by imprisoning them in the domain of phenomenons that are already a copy each and they deal with the copy of the copy and this is being far from reality. More precisely inhibit human to find the truth. Herein the imitation to be bad, due to Plato who advice to be directed to

what is *beautiful in it self*, establishing other instruments to find *beautiful in it self*. Otherwise it cannot be said the imitation is an action does not work out. On the contrary philosopher is aware of the fact that, he/she eventually get used to what he/she imitates as it keeps imitating and that this habit is changing human nature by effecting the body, speaking and opinions. For this in the context of the guards not to fall into moral frailty in the state when on one hand vilify imitation: on the other hand emphasized if they will imitate in any case they shall imitate bravery, wisdom, pious [14]he refer to pedagogical role of imitation. In that case if the imitation would be the imitation of *beauty in itself* this situation can be accepted, even it is required to be. Hence although it is the imitation of the imitation in due to it is the imitation of beauty in respect of revealing the integrity in the cosmos we think it is important since imitation, have the possibility for doorway to a new imagination. In fact related to Indian art Coommaraswamy express our intention with this determination: “Any work of art that realized in the world is made by imitating the work of art in paradise (ethereal realm).” [15].

This point of view directly conveys us to an integral universe comprehension and provides new opportunities in establishing authentic relationship with environment. Now in this context let’s pass on to the evaluation regarding the environment.

In fact the emphasize that the nature is an integrity is found in many doctrine regarding environment and nature. For example in Darwin’s nature envision all the organisms somehow connected to each other to make a whole. Especially the apprehension that human is a part of only one life tree, commenced two pole debate that deals the effect of the environment on the living beings and connections of the human with the world. Haeckel who is the important name of Darwinist tradition who found science of environment (ecology) defines ecology as such: *Totality of the friendly or the hostile relationships that an animal or a plant establishes with its organic and inorganic environment and with the the other living beings. And Darwin perceives all of this complex relationships as the conditions to challenge for life* [16]. A holistic look, become the concept that frequently expressed in regards to ecology. Even it is stated that the point that separates contemporary ecology from the other many positive science is it uses holism [17].

Although the characterization made such as environmental holism and an integral look at the environment what we mean is not the holism that mechanical relation web constitute, it is an ontological integrity. For this revealing what is meant by the holism have importance. In this manner one of the most significant approaches in the meaning of ontological holism that can be deemed as opposed scientific-mechanical approaches is undoubtedly deep ecology doctrine.

Norwegian philosopher A. Naess conceptualized the idea of Deep ecology. We can state the basic principles of this doctrine that concern us expressed by the term that taken its name from the article that Naess published in 1973. *Humans are not independent and separate organisms from their natural environment, they are part of this environments. All the organisms have 'essence-relationships'. This relationship is fundamental in identification of organisms. Without essence-relationship organisms are not the same as what they were before. This relationship forms the 'total-space' that consist all the organisms including human as well. In holistic life that in a relationship with each other all organisms and life forms have equal significance as human beings. Living and self-realization is the right of all the species. This is named as self-worth. The other relation type in nature should be supported. Instead of challenge for life and powerful to be existed, the common-life and common-existence that already present in nature shall be established between human and other life forms. These three basic principles mentioned in human-nature relationship should be constituted between human communities as well [18].*

According to Naess who seem to be effected by Heidegger philosophy and Mahayana Buddhism phenomenalism our everyday experience with a thing that means to exist for the objects, formed by integrity (gestalts) that organize concrete contents or phenomenons. There are no such things as essence, substance, primary qualities; there is no such thing in this meaning either if we refer to things as the material objects that solid, unchanged and isolated. For this reason 'things' are useful structures due to being in a relationship with phenomenons constantly changing and internally forming experience. This apprehension of Naess and the apprehension of 'no component has core existence' in Buddhism are similar to each other. According to him if no being including human has substance or essence there is no basis remains regarding any final ontological distinction between ego and nature. For Naess there is no such category as an environment and human who are replaced in there. These are the functions of diassociative mental activity that works on the

phenomenons. The environment and people are abstract existences. The scientific approach of nature that stated as matter and energy integrity for Naess and Heidegger, is valid as long as not being directed at absolute ontological claims [19].

When look carefully there is matter of fact which is the removal of all the ontological distinctions between all the species in this ecocentric approach. In this doctrine that only the effects of Heidegger ontology that expresses holism in common denominator of the being, we see that actually in the name of holism made ontological equality of ontological pluralism. The deep ecology approach that understood to be emerged as a reaction to the other environmentalist approaches emphasize cocoon holism of ecosystem as well as the destruction that taking human in center conclude, may not be so functional in our opinion in terms of making human into an ordinary entity although claiming ontological holism or equality. On one hand ontological status equalization on the other hand expecting human and societies to pay respect to environment seem to be an ontological paradox. Since all this reference in regard to environment made to humans. To demand responsibility from human as a being who is correspondent of the said reference, is expressing all by itself the position of human being as well as hierarchical value in this ontology. Human cannot be seen as an ordinary being. To inhibit human to dominate nature and act brutally, equalize the other beings with human or gather into more valuable ontological status cannot go beyond being an ideological/reactional posture. In addition such a doctrine has no way of practicality on the basis of reality. In this situation we can say that there is a need for a different holism interpretation and perception. The basic principle of this new way shall not be the devaluation of human being, but building an integral ontology to rasp the arrogance that leads to human domination.

3. General Evaluation

The environment problem is a modern problem that the modern human caused and make effort to find solution. The perception in progressive, scientific, dominative character of modern times to find permanent solutions to this problem does not seem very realistic. Seeking a moral-based solution to the environmental problem as well as every problem, at the same time means the current situation is also caused by non-moral principles. Hence there is no guarantee that a situation

which cannot be considered as independent from ethical principles at the time, can be questioned again in the context of ethic principles at later time. Like a spider trapped in his own spin net, modern human has to be aware spinning a net to the environment and it is evident this will not be easy. Since on hand value reality on the base of benefit and on the other hand recognizing that reality faced with captured human is almost impossible due to dogmatic a priori acceptance that we try to mention above. By this means the first thing required to be done to achieve brand new conceptional scheme and existence design. This can be assumed possible in theoretical level by a new doctrine that sees human as a holism and replace human in a responsible position in this integrity.

Plato's human who seek absolute beauty that we mentioned above, to be able to have the potentiality to fulfill responsibility against cosmic holism arising all the beauties in nature is possible. However the Platonic doctrine is evident being deficient in terms of state view, class differentiation. The ontological holism principle that it is set forth theoretically is important, however when it is looked as an integral philosophy what it can present to us for a livable world is debatable. In this case a way remains which is necessary that close the gap of Plato as well. We can actually say such a way is present in Islamic civilization. Instead of a viewpoint that nihilism or ontological status mingle with each other in the idea of unity, we can say that the apprehensions of Ibn al'Arabi who sees the universe as great human being (al-Insan al-Kabir), attribute value to human being as the soul of the universe or its glaze due to being compassionate breath of the all mercifull manifestation and many connoisseur of mysticism space door to a much deeper ecosystem and ecology[20]. Human in this apprehension of unity, is not an arrogant immodest being that sees the nature as a material for all the ambitions as the human of Enlightenment; also is not the ideological human of ecology that brought to the position of responsibility as a being that its ontological status is not any different from an object. In addition although it has parallelism with Platonist ontology, it is an idea that replaces Human in Holliness (Hazrat al-Insan) instead of Platon's hierarchic classification in terms of human description. In this doctrine human is a mature being, breath of the mercifull, a glaze or a central being that is in distance of bezel to the ring which is not without universe and universe is not without him/her. We face with a being that is the space of a deep respect and peace herein that ethic merges with aesthetic, the creator manifested through its face,

the created gaze themselves in the mirror of grace. It is requires to say that such a consideration provides the chance not just to establish the deep but the deepest ecology. In a paradigm that a being conception is adopted where the doctrine of Quran is in the centre in the form that all the created ones worship Allah, it is consisted that the protection of balance is possible without destroying moral and aesthetic value. In fact when the etimological connection of the term moral with “creation” and “create” is carefully examined, it will be the revelation that seems to be glazed.

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