

REVIEW

of Leonie Overbeek's dissertation work "Ethical foundations of human-nature interaction" for awarding the educational and scientific degree Doctor of Philosophy, PD 2.3. Philosophy (Philosophy taught in English)

REVIEWER: Prof. Dr. Dobrinka Stancheva Peycheva

Basis for participation in the Scientific Jury - order of the RECTOR of SU "KL.OHRIDSKI"

1. Applicant data

Leonie Overbeek is a doctoral student in the Department of Logic, Ethics and Aesthetics and History of Philosophy and is directed for an official defense of the dissertation and work on the basis of Art. 7 of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", by decision of the Faculty Council, protocol No. 4/14.10.2023 and by order of the Rector - RD 38-619/20.11.2023

Leonie Overbeek is from Johannesburg, South Africa. She completed her BA and MA at Stellenbosch University, South Africa

He has many years of experience teaching and preparing materials in English in Bulgaria, Korea, the USA, etc. She has been a member of the Korean International Organization KOTESOL since 2009 and the American International Organization TESOL since 2010. Being an environmentalist, she has had and has had deep interests in ethics and environmental ethics for years.

In Bulgaria, she is a doctoral student of independent training at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University "St.Kl. Ohridski", Department of Logic, Ethics and Aesthetics and History of Philosophy " with academic supervisor Prof. Dr. Nikolay Mihailov.

2. General characteristics of work

The dissertation work is developed within 170 pages and includes all the required elements – purpose, tasks, scientific thesis, introduction, 5 chapters, conclusion and used literature.

The purpose of the dissertation work is to place respect for animals, plants, birds, for the earth, forests, water, etc. - all earthly diversity at the basis of the long-lasting existence of the planet

Several philosophical tasks have been developed in a scientifically extensive and empathetic way toward everything present in nature:

The first task is based on a broad disclosure of the implications and rethinking of the fact that any carbon-based life depends on the ingestion of other life forms that are also carbon-

based. In other words, the interdependence and interdependence of everything that functions on the planet

Based on the fact that, in addition to humans and animals, plants also depend on the decay of fruits and other plants, as well as on the decay of animals and insects, for the supply of vital nutrients - carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals, and water, the dissertation puts into consideration and rethinking the possibility of ethical behavior towards creatures that will be killed and eaten

A second task, which is also extensively developed in the dissertation work, is to bring out the question of absolute power/sovereignty, which is thought both about those in power in a vertical section from top to bottom towards people and nature and in a horizontal one - regarding individual behavior towards people and nature

The third task is related to revealing the dimensions of responsibility, to responsible behavior towards the consequences of non-ecological actions, and to the search for those values and ethical ecological norms that will change people in the direction of equality with everything else on the planet as well as awareness of their interdependence and the ethical attitude towards everything created on the planet.

The third task is directed to the future - to delineate approaches to change, to a new environmental ethic, and to create programs for a balanced and ethical treatment of every being. In deriving his thesis, the dissertation proceeds from his observations that Humans tend to think of themselves as sovereign/authority over the natural world, whether in terms of individual corporations, governments, or individual actions regarding available resources in their interactions with the environment. and plants, excluding ethical rules and values towards them, but also towards considering the inorganic resources of the earth as replaceable and available for use. Not to be overlooked is the fact that not infrequently in life one reaches "unbridled sovereignty", tending to brutality and waging wars for access to resources, where humanity "turns into nothing more than a mindless consumer of an unbridled production and progress"

That is why the scientific thesis of the doctoral student is:

"Respect is a fundamental value on which the responsibility for life rests. Respect is demonstrated in respecting every phenomenon as valuable and appreciating all things, even if they are not considered attractive. Respect is an attitude that does not accept wasted lives and resources. Respect looks not only to the present, but to a future that cannot be seen or predicted, but which can be extrapolated from history, and for which one must be responsible. Simply put, humanity must abandon the concept that it stands apart from or over nature and take responsibility for being part of it and influencing it through the use of technology. The

consequences of not accepting that ethical interactions with nature are not just empty words, but urgent ethical calls to adopt lifestyles and habits that can change for the better in the course of future events, would perpetuate harm and destruction

Methodology

The methodology of the dissertation is presented as an epistemological explanatory construct in which the predominantly interpretive approach to the development of the dissertation by the author is justified.

An inductive method was used, allowing his initially selected reading materials on Jacques Derrida and Hans Jonas to direct him to other related materials and in an analytical and interpretive plan, revealing how humans and nature interact ethically, to suggest additions and to compose the main dimensions of the new environmental ethics, linking it to responsibility (ethics of responsibility), and positioning himself, as he himself points out, to the interpretive camp of social scientific research

In the first chapter, the doctoral student relates the Introduction. In-depth and extensive, the chapter plays the role of a general theoretical framework in which the methodological foundations - ethics, values, and morals - are explained. The chapter attempts to pose those important questions of ethics that guide the interaction between humans and nature based on the concepts of sovereignty and responsibility.

The second chapter of the dissertation is a lengthy articulation of the purpose of the dissertation – Hans Jonas's Imperative of Responsibility. By presenting references to numerous authors' definitions of responsibility, from various philosophical angles, including etymological definitions, it is revealed that responsibility, like many philosophical questions, is "answer to", and "promise in return" The dissertation interprets responsibility as a responsibility towards other beings that is borne by individual individuals. In this chapter, knowledge about the environment and acceptance of ecological values are presented as a prerequisite for ecologically positive behavior, and Responsibility is positioned as an important carrier of ecologically positive behavior. The subsections of this chapter reveal with philosophical insight and scientific concern the objects of responsibility and every day their manifestations, including the attitude towards everyone else and the "impersonal" or unborn.

In chapter 3, "Nature and Derrida", the dissertation draws on Jacques Derrida's concept of sovereignty, as well as the claims in his seminars that love, friendship, death, and even suicide are not immanent only to humans, but to all in nature, referring of the poem "The Snake.

From Derrida's first volume, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, the dissertation articulates the nature of the sovereign as expressed and sustained through fear, fear of the animal, and how fable and

history construct a Leviathan and sustain it. Citing De Vil, he points out that these seminars arose after the 9/11 attacks and points out how fear was used by both the US and its attackers to justify and defend their actions. Fear of other people is often extended to fear of nature full of dangers. The beast and the sovereign are intertwined as inseparable, like one coin, as well as views of the ethical calls for interaction between man and nature

In the fourth chapter "Resources and discussions" the dimensions of ethics in general, environmental ethics and possible manifestations, environmental changes, reactions and everyday behaviors, myths, and applied methodology are presented and discussed independently.

Chapter 5, entitled "Discussion, Contribution and Conclusion", discusses and summarizes the results and contributions of the development of the second and third chapters, in which the main research questions of the dissertation are set.

My assessment of the individual chapters is that the ethical questions raised have received a relevant answer and are accompanied by proposals for a balanced assimilation and development of all beings on the planet.

In Conclusion, the Ph.D. student specifically appeals to how to act responsibly for what is consumed, bought, and used, including using our sovereign power to act responsibly and with respect, respect as an expression of valuing the uniqueness of others and their contribution to life on the planet. Appeals to use local produce and support farms to buy fresh rather than processed food, to not be a slave to fashion trends that persuade people to switch healthy items and throw them in landfills

3. General characteristics of scientific and scientific applied achievements

In the dissertation, the need for a new ethical basis for the interactions between man and nature is argued. Following in detail the theorizations and arguments of Hans Enas and Jack Derrida about the full power of people and about taking responsibility as the only ethically responsible behavior from each individual to others, the doctoral student arrives at not only approving what they have achieved but their theoretical-applied complementation, argumentation, etc., make appeals, future action programs, etc.

The use of the fear heuristic is cited by the dissertation as one of the main appeals for taking responsibility for overcoming or mitigating potential unintended consequences.

Another significant appeal raised is the linking of accountability to sovereignty by inferring respect as a binding mechanism

"The link between sovereignty, where responsibility is a primary consideration when it comes to interactions between a subject and any other subjects or objects, is respect for life and the

means of preserving it and for those who share it with people, respect for the place that a person lives in nature, as a part of it, not apart from it.

A third critical aspect of life that the Ph.D. student emphasizes is the presence of many common things that all living things need for the planet to exist. It reveals important arguments that every living thing on the planet consumes nutrients obtained from the death of living things and that this is true for humans, plants, and animals alike. In attempts to conceptualize, the dissertation affirms that "sovereignty, exercised responsibly, is a respect that values all beings as ends in themselves and not merely as means to the ends of one's human comfort and pleasure, as well as concern for the well-being of all the things that surround us.

The next point is the argumentation of environmental ethics as the true ethical behavior between man and nature "If normative ethics lays down a standard used to judge between good and bad, in terms of environmental ethics and interaction between man and nature, such behavior is pro-environmental behavior, pointing to energy saving, recycling, water conservation, zero-waste living, and so on, as the ethical standards for judging nations and individuals (47).

Placing an emphasis on environmental ethics and citing numerous theoretical and empirical arguments, the dissertation, following Hans Jonas emphasizes and brings out additional grounds for launching the idea of a new ethics to be developed based on the interaction of people and nature for this. A sense of responsibility towards the earth and other living and plant creatures that inhabit the human space is what is the building material in the position and for a new ethics related to careful consideration of actions. "Taking responsibility - says the doctoral student - the sovereign becomes the wise ruler, creating worlds where life goes on and this responsibility extends to each individual and must be based on respect and appreciation of every other thing in our world, whether animate, inanimate, organic or inorganic.

Movements such as permaculture, which are based on the ethical postulates of caring for the earth, for people, and sharing abundance, as particularly significant perspectives, have been brought forward as an important approach to minimalist consumption, stewardship, and a more virtuous attitude towards nature.

The Ph.D. student convincingly emphasizes that to save some kind of future for life, the ethics of Hans Jonas must be developed in his imperative of responsibility, that even when life often depends on killing to survive, if all that is respected we touch, assemble, disassemble, cut, trim, pick, use waste, etc. and if things are approached with gratitude, care, and respect, we will act ethically. Throwing out waste in all its forms - concludes the author, is disrespectful to the item and to all those who would participate in its recycling and reuse, and on the other hand, it is a kind of self-forgetfulness of rich people and countries.

The doctoral student proposes the development of programs and forums that show how to live with minimal waste (from nose to tail)

Emphasizes that by being ethical towards nature, we must mean that our ethical actions must include all life and especially life that is vulnerable to the decisions we make every day as consumers, that only then by taking responsibility does the sovereign turn into a wise ruler, continuing life in general, and under respect - selfless appreciation and care for the world of which we are a part.

4. Contributions

1. By articulating pro-environmental behavior to be based on values and ethics, and on dialogue within environmental ethics itself, the dissertation contributes to rejecting the human-only focus of ethical considerations, moving it to the future of humanity itself, to such a future, in which humanity can progress along with all other beings on the planet and appreciate them properly. Planning articles by the author, in which these ethics are related to daily life, habits, and environmental projects, to be written and published in the coming years, is more than indicative.
2. By uncovering and placing multiple world movements that include permaculture, farming, nose-to-tail nutrition, the healing power of nature on the human spirit, etc. in the trajectory of the ethics of respect, the dissertation proves that it is not only theoretical a construction based on the imperative of responsibility of H. Jonas, but also a phenomenon growing in strength and territory on the planet with various ecological manifestations. His concrete pragmatic own contribution to putting the theorizations into action, he directed the building and maintenance of an apiary, in which twelve colonies of bees are now grown in the old-fashioned way, based on which to organize seminars. to demonstrate that beekeeping can be streamlined by returning to a more natural environment for the bees and providing a less labor-intensive hive to care for
3. Linking Jonas's ethics to Derrida's deconstructivism and positioning them in a new direction in environmental philosophy, the dissertation sees that their combination presupposes the use of "one as a lens to study the other." He places the ethics of responsibility on such a plane that man must bear in mind not only his innate drive toward selfish, comfort-seeking behavior but also recognize that the unique position in which he is placed must be accompanied by a profound respect for all that is given by and through nature to support their interaction. Instead of focusing on the differences between male and female, human and animal, nature and technology, the author's central idea is that "life is valuable in every form, that all phenomena are worthy of respect not because of their utility, but because of their very an essential essence to participate in the substratum of the earth, the infrastructure that allows man to be part of an interconnected network in which he, despite his numbers and strength, remains part of a cog'.

5. Notes and recommendations

I recommend printing the paper and continuing the work on this important topic for the future of humanity in various forms;

For its future preparation, I recommend that the author enrich the text with numerical data on the state of affairs in the world and in a comparative plan, which would strengthen the impact of the text much more.

I admit that for me, the dissertation had a very strong impact on me and almost made me a supporter of the environmental movement.

6. The abstract corresponds to the content, although it is presented in a synthesized form, uniting the five chapters of the dissertation into three, probably to organize even better the logic and integrity of the dissertation text

The dissertation student knows and uses **specialized literature** on the subject. 186 scientific literary foreign sources in English, published in prestigious editions, and one Bulgarian woman with a publication in English - Diana Ivanova, was used.

The language in which the dissertation is written is both academic and, in a certain sense, campaigning-pathetic. The personal commitment of the doctoral student to the problem has allowed such an interweaving, without of course considering it a drawback

Publications. Leonie Overbeek has 3 scientific articles in English and 6 popular science articles.

Everything positive written so far gives me a reason to express my positive attitude towards Leonie Overbeek's dissertation work "Ethical foundations of human-nature interaction" and to declare that I will vote "Yes" for her to be awarded the educational and scientific degree of Doctor of Philosophy, PD 2.3. Philosophy.

Reviewer Prof. Dr. Dobrinka Peicheva

23.02.2024

Sofia