

PETER SINGER: THE CONCEPTION OF THE HUMAN NATURE

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Abstract:

Human nature, but to a large extent determined by the bio-human can be to some extent shaped and changed. People are different from animals that are able to understand and analyze their own lives, and therefore they may try to make them morally better, that is laudable in terms of ethics.

Key-words: *Peter Singer, human nature*

To understand the concept of human nature, which Peter Singer accepted, is not only necessary to refer to the concept of ethics, but also to his views about the origin of ethics, which largely are associated with human biological heritage. Singer is inclined to the view that the source of the ethical behavior and feelings are social mammals.

„The separation from all that we observed in our closest animal relatives, ethics owes to the fact that at some point we started to use the ability of reasoning to justify our behavior in front of other group members. If you're going to apologize in front of a tribe or nation, our morality will probably tribal or national character. However, if the communications revolution will lead to the creation of a global community, we may feel the need to justify our behavior to the world” [1]. Not irrelevant at this point to add that for Singer morality or even having a supranational global nature means a higher level of development than the morality of a nation or tribe. It includes a larger number of beings therefore more meets the requirements of versatility. The consequence of this reasoning is to incorporate ethics into our thinking about the other sentient beings, or animals. This is an element of moral attitude which, according to Singer should be turned into a universal morality.

The thesis that the source of the ethical behavior and feelings are social mammals, it is not entirely new, because it expresses the position adopted by the nineteenth-century scholars from the circle of evolutionary thought, to which a hundred years later joined the disciples of sociobiology. According to the position of a man shares some behaviors and

dispositions of the animals and the fact that people "have created morality", shall separate us not so radically from the animal world. By Mary Midgley animals also "are able to live together, and sometimes also cooperate in such important matters as hunting, building, common protection and the like, simply because they have a natural disposition to love and mutual trust" [2]. This way you can come to the conclusion that "social features, such as parenting, or foraging cooperation and mutual kindness, clearly show that these creatures are not, in fact, cruel, selfish absolute, but beings who have developed a strong and specialized motivation needed to form and maintain a simple community " [3]. The position that the functioning of human societies and the innate dispositions and inclinations of the people are in principle the same as in other animals is the foundation of sociobiology, the discipline created by E.O. Wilson in the 70s of the twentieth century. Sociobiology approach is based on the belief that all social behavior, including human, have a biological substrate and belong to the evolutionary process by which they are selected some genes or groups of genes [4].

There is a dispute concerning the interpretation and the consequences of assumptions sociobiology; the attitude of the participants in this dispute can be very simply described as critical or approving. Representatives of the critical position reject the thesis of sociobiology mostly because of their deterministic implications. They argue it this way: if human attitudes and behavior, including attitudes and behavior-relevant from the point of view of morality, would have caused only human biological heritage cannot be assumed

that the individual human being is the author of his moral life. Morality in this case would amount to an empirical discipline that can rationally explain all human behavior, and even bring it to a readable pattern. The only task for ethics would recognize the scheme, which identifies the reasons causing the corresponding effects. Opponents of this view of the nature of morality usually rebel against him, because they do not see it as a space for freedom, which according to them is a necessary condition of human moral choices. Empirical arguments of them are not the ultimate determinant of rights, which should be guided by morality.

The proponents of sociobiology also frequently take their accuracy mostly due to the fact that they are supported by empirical arguments about the origin. According to them, sociobiology thesis is true, because they have been placed under observation either biological processes, either human or animal behavior. For example, altruism towards other individuals or the whole group is observed not only in human societies, but also in animals. Its intensity is higher in relation to the next of kin, and also in relation to those for which altruistic behavior may bring the unit greater than the expected benefit of selfish behavior. Acts of selflessness and kindness, therefore, do not translate by referring only to the moral sentiments, but also by reference to rational calculation that the individual can perform. Rational calculation is kind of a contractual term, because in many cases (especially when it comes to animals), this process is more biologically built-in mechanism than the actual logical calculation. If animals are fed young that are not their offspring, we should not expect that they do so as a result of the previously considered the pros and cons; perhaps in humans similar mechanism occurs with the difference that people can notice it and interpret. Supporters of sociobiology also take their deterministic implications for real, regardless of whether they believe that there is reason for optimism or pessimism regarding the view of human nature.

To pessimistic conclusions reached John Gray, claiming that the fact that a man is burdened with biological, animal heritage, making its nature destructive and more predatory than animal life, because the man has a lot more inventive, which is used in a manner

unworthy of praise [5]. Citing research that showed that the action takes place earlier than the start of the brain activity responsible for taking decisions, Gray said that the freedom of man in this context is a fiction. Mechanisms of our behaviors are not based on free choice, but are determined by biological factors. For the same reasons, however, derive a conclusion can be optimistic, which presents Peter Singer. On the one hand, admits he is right that the assumptions sociobiology discovers least glorious social mechanisms: aggression, male dominance, competition, action focused on self-interest, the fight for territory, social divisions in a few rulers and many subsidiaries, the double standards of sexual morality, and many others. On the other hand, sociobiology does not necessarily mean the biological determinism - describes what are the facts, which is not equivalent to that postulates that the way it should be. Singer draws the opposite conclusion: "because we are beings able to recognize the consequences of our actions and the right choice, we can play tricks evolution. Sociobiology can contribute to the success of our cunning in that it make us aware of what's up evolution; them to better understand the evolution, the more we can outsmart " [6]. According to Singer also sociobiology, like the Darwinian concept of evolution does not imply the valuation of human nature. These theories explain to us the existing mechanisms, talk about it, "as is", and do not take up to vote on this, "as it should be."

The concept of human nature, which is taken by Singer is also not based on valuation. Its essence is contained in the division on fixed and variable factors, that is, susceptible to modifications. You can replace the three categories of elements influencing human behavior, and thus on the structure of human nature [7]. The first category includes factors that are easy to change and which quite often are modified. These include: a method of producing or obtaining food (gathering, hunting, cattle breeding, cultivation of grain, etc.), led lifestyle (nomadic or sedentary), the economic structure of society, the types of religious practices, forms of government (but not the very existence of government or group of leaders, because this fact seems to be universal and unchanging). The second category includes

factors that can be changed only to a certain degree. These are primarily sexual interactions, but also need to identify the ethnic and its worst features: xenophobia and racism. It would seem that these are relatively easily modifiable factors, while the opposite is true. Although in different cultures, there are different models of marriage (monogamous, polygamous, and even, though rarely, polyandric, a constant factor is the formalization of the institution of marriage and the consequent social or legal restrictions imposed on the sexual acts performed outside of marriage. No matter what the rules are and what marriage such restrictions meet the individual use of sex outside of marriage, infidelity and sexual jealousy seem immutable characteristics of human behavior. Similarly, constant feature is the need to identify the social group to which it is a member. Behaviors that are based on the basic emotional needs of people (such as the need for approval, the need for belonging, security, etc.) Or that result directly from the emotions are very difficult to change or even universally consistent. Therefore stereotypes that are built on the social emotions and prejudices are so durable. A society in which there is a perception that the unfaithful woman dishonors her partner will be more likely to accept violence against women than people with a high degree of sexual tolerance. Similarly, if in a given society entities outside the homogeneous groups (ethnic, religious, etc.) are considered to be inferior, disgusting, dirty (a common epithet given to someone considered to be foreign, other), the level of aggression towards otherness will be much higher than in societies tolerant, open to diversity.

Finally, the third category includes constant or variable elements in a very small extent. These factors result from the fact that we are social beings - we do not live alone. We take care of offspring, we are ready to establish cooperation with other bodies, respect the principle of reciprocity. The existence of a hierarchy, and social roles grading system is a universal element in all human societies. Sex roles also show little sensitivity to shape and change - women almost always play a major role in the care of young children, while men much more than women are involved in physical conflict, both within their own social group, as well as wars between groups. Men

have a greater tendency to fight for leadership (political or otherwise) than women.

The finding that some of the features of human nature are fixed or difficult to change, does not necessarily imply a deterministic conception of human nature. Singer believes that both Darwin's concept of evolution and sociobiology subsequent arguments are very useful for ethics. Allow us to better understand ourselves, but do not dictate the method of valuation. If we know the conditions under which a person is prone to destructive behavior, the easier it will be for us to find a prescription for avoiding such behavior. Singer argues that the desire to raise the ethical standards and put them into an easy task, but it also does not consider it as mission impossible. However, to start with incorrect assumptions exclusion. The first of these is the concept of the perfection of human nature, taken by utopian thinkers who believe in the fact that it is possible to build a perfect society based on equality of all people. This concept is best known in the form of various versions of socialism and communism, it is impossible to achieve, because it is incompatible with human nature. The second assumption is erroneous to assume that the condition may be the subject of ethics of scientific discovery - an assumption made by both the nineteenth-century philosophers of science, as well as contemporary sociobiologists. According to Singer, from the fact that modern science describes how the moral life of man looks like, it does not follow the thesis that this science will provide us with the question of how we should live. This type of error made J.S. Mill, assuming that ethology is a prelude to a full system of logic, moral and social sciences. This error was also the main reason why he failed to create the intended system. With scientific claims cannot be derived ethical directives, and the values are not derived from the facts. This is an old problem already considered by D. Hume, who stood helpless when trying to derive the duty of the facts (no ought from is) [8].

To the problem of the relationship between the requests and sentences as evidence of the facts Singer comes in a rather unusual way. The debate on the relationship between ought and is well on the definition of morality considered too extensive and focused on the

problems that arise from the differences in terminology existing between the parties to the dispute. Singer divides the parties to the dispute, taking into account the criterion of how they understand the source of moral obligation (ought). Distinguishes between two opposite poles of the dispute - subjectivists attitude, which is called neutralists, and the attitude of naturalists, which is called descriptivist [9]. Neutralism first attitude lies in the fact that the principles and moral directives are neutral as to the form and content, in other words, each accepted principle can gain the status of moral principle. Whether the principle part of the canon of moral principles, determines the relationship between said base and the procedure resulting therefrom. This is the sole determinant of whether one accepts the policy to be superior to others. If the entity is complying with the rule, we can presume that it is a moral principle. Descriptivist in turn put different types of requirements as to the form and content of moral principles, making it possible to apply the correct reasoning by which the sentences of the facts to the type „ought to” sentences, but the relationship between the moral and the procedure is broken. In this view the adoption of a moral principle does not guarantee that we will follow the rule derived from it.

According to Singer practical importance is the question of how the views of the facts are related to premises activities, not the problem of how the views of the facts are related to the moral courts. The dispute about whether the sentences for statement of facts arise moral judgments, it is important from the point of view of logic, but at the same time it is only a dispute about the meaning of words and in contemporary philosophy suited him too much importance. Ethics, in addition to being a theoretical discipline, according to Singer, above all should serve as a practical, that is, to give an answer to the question "how to live?". In this sense, it is the art of life as intended by J.S, Mill. Answers to the question of how life Singer does not present in the form of a priori assumptions, but rather it seeks to rely, at least in large part, on the findings of the empirical sciences. It is important to find an adequate description of the nature of man, because it can become a basis to improve our way of life, in the direction of making it more "ethical" (in the

ordinary sense of the term). If the discovery of socio-biology indicates that the nature of man is to maintain different forms of inequality in society, it does not mean that this discipline glorifies and promotes the status quo. It also "does not mean that existing inequalities are inevitable and should be accepted; is contained in the other hand the suggestion that any movement toward greater equality will have a price. Sociobiology argument is actually a replacing the old thesis of the political right that equality and freedom do not go hand in hand. Equality is not a natural state of human society; hence it can be achieved and maintained only through rigorous monitoring and continuous improvement of inequalities that arise. This theorem is a statement of the facts. Says nothing about whether the cost is worth incurring equality" [10].

With the concept of human nature adopted by Singer is not clear how one should behave in life. However, his ethical doctrine is based inter alia on the claims describing the qualities of human nature. Preferences related to the implementation of interest due in large part to the characteristics of human nature, so you should know that nature. Biological (resp. Animal) sources of human social behavior are not the reason for Singer to ensure that the rest of the world people are subordinated to the demands of their own species, but on the contrary - they are proof that a person should valorize the animal world and try to consider the interests of animal life. This involves a complete remodeling of existing ethical categories.

Singer's ethical system, like JS Mill's, is built on assumptions derived from the model adopted by their human nature. This model in each of these philosophers is different, even though they have many common elements. The Singer's ethics can be divided into three main features. First, empiricism conceived as a way to justify both the source of ethics, as well as individual moral directives. Singer, like Mill, wants his ethical system was based on data taken from the experience instead of a priori assumptions. Hence his conception of human nature does not refer to the metaphysical experience – extrasensory inaccessible knowledge. Second, the utilitarian moral judgments the grounds. For Singer's action is

worthy of approval from the moral point of view, if fully realizes the essence of preferences in the context of equal consideration the preferences of other beings. The end result of this bill is similar to the balance of the total amount of happiness, within the meaning of classical utilitarianism, with the difference that the contemporary utilitarians do not want to equate happiness only with the presence of absence of pleasure and pain. The first feature is linked to the concept of human nature in such a way that Singer recognizes people as a special case of animals, and thus denies the existence of the elements beyond the empirical form of, for example, the divine element, guaranteeing people a unique moral status compared to other beings. The second characteristic is related to the assumption that man, like other creatures, strives to achieve the objective (or rather a particular purpose), which is happiness achieved through the implementation of properly understood preferences. The third feature is particularly noteworthy because it can best be expressed in the difference between humans and the rest of the animal world. It is the advancement of human nature and understood as a potential opportunity to change for the better. Human nature, though largely determined biologically may be human, to some extent shaped and changed. People are different from animals that are able to understand and analyze their own lives and can therefore try to make them morally better, which is commendable from the point of view of ethics. Singer's ethical system is not only based on the

description of the existing state of things, but on the assumption that we should strive for ethical progress. It also tries to answer the question, but in practice it might manifest our commitment to ethical progress.

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