

Topic #4, Tetsuro Watsuji

Environment is the movement that objectifies human existence; but by so doing, the human understands him/herself. We can call it self-discovery through one's environment.

INTRODUCTION

Further in this essay I'll try to think of the statement the author proposes by pondering questions, using pluralistic way of thinking and, of course, searching for the answers to these questions. In conclusion I'll try to explain why I agree or disagree with Tetsuro Watsuji referring to my previous arguments and counter arguments.

PART 1. ANALYZING THE QUOTATION

- 1) To write an essay we should first examine the topic. To my mind, this short statement is extremely difficult and complex and I'll explain why. First of all, we should admit that at least two types of the so-called environment exist: the natural environment and the human one. Further I'm planning to think of both of them.
- 2) By Watsuji, Environment influences a subject (I mean a human-being in this case) by objectifying it and, in the author's opinion, it (objectivation) helps a person to understand him/herself.
- 3) The philosopher says "we can call it self-discovery" in this case , and, to my mind, we probably can no longer claim about something "self-" after we objectify it.

PART 2. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

1. So, let's first deal with the Nature environment. As I have said in the very beginning of my essay, my view on this quotation is pluralistic, so I'll try to deal with some theories of human-nature interacting. In this paragraph I would like to touch upon the way how Eastern philosophers see human in nature. Judging by their philosophy and style of life (I mean buddhists, hinduists, sinthoists and others) a human is a part of nature. And we cannot grasp human-beings apart from the Nature. And from these points of view we would agree with Watsuji, but there is a big "BUT" called "Western philosophy".

2. 1.To be honest, there are many streams in both Eastern and Western philosophies. And I'll describe several of them. The postmodern French philosopher Foucault, for example, thought, that in the West people are trying to "leave" their wild nature and he thought of the concept of panopticon – a prison without cells for the prisoners but with a tower for the guards. The thing is that the guards are not seen for the prisoners but the prisoners feel a constant pressure so they don't commit some "forbidden" things. By Foucault, there is a panopticon in every person's consciousness and, to my mind, we have it our mass-consciousness (it actually helps us to build a community). So, a human PARTLY belongs to the Nature but there is something that suppresses us from being FULLY "natural".

2.Another Western philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche claimed that Human evolves in spite of the Nature laws, so it means, we, somewhere in the past, built a border between the rest of the Nature, and became separated "non-natural" species in the natural world. It then means we cannot now perform self-discovery through the natural environment.

PART 3. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Of course, we live in society which is full of constructions that can help us to call in Environment. The laws of the Human environment are a bit different from the laws of the Natural environment, to my mind.

I doubt if nowadays we can talk about self-discovery after the objectifying. Why? Let's discuss the most evident example of a situation when a subject becomes an object – pop-culture. We see in our everyday life models, actors, musicians that become an object. I doubt all of them care not only about their object features such as appearance, money and expensive real estate, but also about self-discovery. Maybe such people don't even need it because it is really convenient to live as an object than as a subject. On the other hand, some poststructuralists claimed that subjects influence objects the same as objects influence subjects. Anyway, pop-stars become a kind of a product in the eyes of their fans. And I'm not saying it's good or bad ,of course.

Maybe we can understand ourselves when we look at somebody being objectified or when somebody looks at us being objectified. But the author of the quotation says that environment objectifies everyone which means we won't see the difference between ourselves and another people, so we won't be able to come to self-discovery.

The counter argument to my position is, again, one of the postmodern theories of language and literature. By saying it I mean the Death of the author (Barth). So, when people read the most objectified text they feel the strongest emotions. Probably it happens because the reader adds subjective emotions into the text which helps him to subjectively build the emotional structure of a work of art. And maybe it can help to find a way to the process of

understanding him/herself. In my opinion, we can only call it “process” because when we try to look at ourselves from outside we may see that we are actually another people that we thought of ourselves earlier. So using this concept we only may understand one of our personalities.

PART 3. NATURE + HUMAN

After I had thought about Human and Natural environments separately I asked myself a question : do we exist (in many senses of this word) separately in these “worlds”? Human environment influences Natural environment and vice versa. We still have biological needs which are a part of our Natural environment and we invented machines to help ourselves in coping with those biological needs. Sometimes the co-work of our Environments has a positive influence on ourselves, but sometimes it turns into wars, conflicts and etc. And the same happens when we use our Natural side to reach our Human goals. For example, an ambitious dictator wants to conquer another country. He uses the brutal force of the soldiers to invade that country and kill people, but the soldiers are using weapon which was invented not necessarily for conquering something but maybe for protecting something else.

Existing in both Natural and Human environments creates a lot of problems without the solution in our life. As for me, this mutual working of these environments doesn't lead us to anywhere, because we stay in the space between Natural and Humane for all the time. One thing causes another which causes another which...and so on. But the thing is that it's very hard to escape from this kind of panopticon that doesn't allow us to show neither our Natural features nor our Human features completely.

And I wonder if self-discovery is possible while we're at the crossroads of our feelings, instincts, intellect and so on. That is why I propose to look at this problem from one more side again.

PART 4. RHIZOME

Famous French postmodernists Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze suggested a definitely new theory (they didn't create it, because, as Deleuze said, philosophy is different from other disciplines because we cannot invent something, we are to catch the ideas that are already here and use them). As Rhizome is a postmodern term, I would like to give a definition(s) to it so that you can understand what I mean in this case. This term was taken from biology (to be precise, from botany) and in that discipline it means a root system of a plant, but the philosophical Rhizome is also a kind of a root system BUT it doesn't create a stalk or a trunk. So no continuation of the Rhizome is needed. And that's the biggest difference between the biological Rhizome and the philosophical one. We also can call the philosophical Rhizome a labyrinth without Minotaur in its centre and without Ariadna's thread.\

And we can say that Rhizome reproduces our life. So, every event is unpredictable and is caused by other random events. If a car accident happens and a person dies, it's Rhizome, if a car accident happens but a person stays alive, it's Rhizome, if a car accident doesn't happen at all, it's also Rhizome. So we can say that random events push the walls of this labyrinth so that it changes its structure and, therefore, changes the life of a person. But by changing one person's life it changes another people's lives so we can't actually define the structure of Rhizome and its shape, and we cannot say if there's one Rhizome or there are many of them.

And now I'm going to explain how is Rhizome relevant to our topic. This theory disproves Tetsuro Watsuji's statement because environments (both Human and Natural!) are formed (if we can say so about this term) by Rhizome. All our instincts were built after random factors of the Nature which we cannot predict (volcano eruptions, earthquakes, water poisoning and so on). It means we cannot really discover anything because even if we discover something it will cause the altering of all the topics and moments this discovery touches upon. So our conclusions about a subject will be only partly correct, because our previous discovery won't allow us to think about a new one not counting the previous. I'm not sure if the so-called self-discovery is something that could be made immediately or if so it provokes many new changes and alterations in a personality of a human.

PART 5. LAZER STRUCTURE

I think we can use lasers to describe another variant of how we can or how we cannot reach self-discovery. Lasers work because of the interaction of photons and atoms inside a "box" with a kind of mirrors. So when a photon flies near an aroused atom, there's a big likelihood that the atom will produce a new photon. Photons exist only when they move. AND when we make a gap in a box (open it), the light flies away from it. So by this metaphor I tried to explain one more version of how we can or cannot reach self-discovery by the objectivation (when an atom produces photons we can say that he is being somehow objectified). And when photons ("the objectified") fly out of that box, maybe it can be called a way to self-discovery. But it can only exist if they are moving, so it means we are unable to reach self-discovery but we can try to change ourselves to strive for it.

CONCLUSION

I'd like to say that I agree with Watsuji but only partly. To my mind, his statement needs adding some details to make it more suitable after the arguments and counter arguments I proposed earlier. I would write this statement like this: "Environments are the abstract constructs that change human existence; after these changes the human can have illusions that he/she understands him/herself. We can call it illusive self-discovery through one's environment".