



Nature of Culture or Culture of Nature In Approach to Constructive Realism

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Abstract

This paper concerns on the scientific approach to Nature; especially in general mean as a part of universal knowledge. Through this paper it is perceived that the Constructivism started a critical argument on the western scientific traditions. Constructivism specter in approach to Nature perceives interconnectivity between Nature and Culture. This is one of the facts that Constructive Realism tries to face by using an approach to culture and scientific proposition that shows extensively in universal means any proposition could only achieve to its ideal conception when it is strangified to different culture. So it comes to the state in which there is no exact answer to the questions which related to the value of Nature; and reminding that nature could not be regarded as a knowable norm. So if we do not know the structure of the Natural world any attempt to replace it or a part of it with any artificial world could be a dangerous enterprise. Those ideas are followed in sample study of rice production and the rites and related ceremonies in Japan.

Keywords: envirmment, culture, nature, artifact, strangification, constructive realism.

فرهنگ طبیعت یا طبیعت فرهنگ در رویکرد به واقعیت‌گرایی سازنده

شاهین کی‌نوش

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چکیده

این مقاله در پی تحلیل رویکرد علوم دقیقه در شناخت طبیعت، و نگرش فراگیر آن در ارزش‌گذاری طبیعت و پاره‌ای از اثرات تحدید کننده آن می‌باشد. علوم دقیقه و نگرش علمی حاصل از آن در قرن گذشته، همواره سعی در بازشناسی طبیعت به عنوان یک نورم قابل فهم را داشته است. لذا تعمیم گزاره‌های علمی در قالب نگاهی فراگیر به طبیعت فارغ از بستر فرهنگی و رابطه آن با مفهوم جهانی طبیعت، وجه نامتعادل و گاه متعدی را به طبیعت از بشر به نمایش در آورده است. امروزه جهان علم در تعاقب نقد علوم دقیقه به ساحت تازه‌ای از نگاه علمی قدم گزارده است. این نگاه که در ادامه مکتب ساختارگرایی وینکشتاین و پارادایم شیفت کوهن قرار دارد؛ با نام واقعیت‌گرایی سازنده مطرح گردیده است. در این نگرش فهم یک گزاره علمی تنها زمانی به شکل جامع ممکن است که در پارادایم متفاوتی از پارادایم مولدش درک و بررسی گردد که این فرایند را بیگانه‌یابی نامند اما این فهم زمانی به عمق نهایی می‌سد که نه تنها در پارادایم متفاوت علمی بلکه در بستر متفاوت فرهنگی به وقوع بپیوندد و به اصطلاح بیگانه‌یابی شود. این بدین معنی است که فلسفه علم از این درجه به ساحتی تازه‌ای از رابطه طبیعت و فرهنگ در فهم محیط و رابطه محیط مصنوع و طبیعی دست یافته است. این مقوله و چگونگی دستیافتن به ساحت مذکور در این مقاله مورد بحث قرار گرفته و در نمونه‌ای از مراسم کاشت و تولید برنج در ژاپن به تصویر کشیده شده است.

کلید واژه‌ها: محیط، فرهنگ، طبیعت، مصنوع، بیگانه‌یابی، واقعیت‌گرایی سازنده.

Introduction

What do we know about nature? Nothing, or Not-Enough?

What's our perception about nature? Do we conception?

What's our role? Are we ruling it?

Those are some questions that cross my mind through the words of "A. Krebs"; when she describes the etymology of "Nature" from Latin "*nasci*"=to be born, to arise, to develop. "Nature" may be defined as that part of our world which has not been made by human being, but comes into existence and vanishes, changes and remains constant in virtue of it self."(Krebs,1999). This document is not concentrating on Philosophical arguments on Nature; although there are bunch of valuable and various ideas for conception Nature and human relation to it. But from cognitive point of view we may cross through the Epistemological and Anthological layers to catch our title. In this cross way this paper concerns on the scientific approach and it would have to notify the three main conceptions in philosophy of science.

Those three tried to answer the question upon on the relation between human life and western philosophic scientific traditions; which are known as:

1. Positivist issues such as Husserl.
2. Pragmatist issues such as Dewey.
3. Poetic issues which is generated by Heidegger.

The Heideggerian and pragmatist are reactions to this familiar "scientific" answer,—and Heideggerian sees Husserl's "*faith in the possibility of philosophy as a task, that is in the possibility of universal knowledge*" (Rorty, 1991).By the way even we focus on the positivist conception (which seems to be the most objectivist conception) and has the less mental and passive but the most physical and aggressive action in relation to the nature. In this process we would face to non-robust claim of scientific norm that could only suit the exact science, but could guides to the constructed roots of general science. Science in general mean as part of universal knowledge that now a day is believed as a most extensive, global and

universal construction that has ever made by human mind. That was why some of the thinkers like to mean this success of constructivism to some extend of this word that there would be no more philosophy (of science) after them, but they avoid it because that would be the end of the history. However the fact is, the constructivism started a critical argument on the western scientific traditions.

General View

The western scientific traditions have been extensively occupied the cognitive approaches and based them generally on positivistic conception during the modern era. It affected not only the human view about nature but also her/his behavior vs. it. Modern paradigm has the conception of controlling the Nature. So the methodological aspect of this paper is denoted to the territorial behavior of human being in relation to Nature. This is the very criticism cause of the scientific inversion in western scientific traditions now a day. Modern science applications in relation to the Nature have been reconfigured through the recent decades. It tries to understand the whole Environment denoting to human culture and itself as a part of it. This is why the philosophy of science is moving from exact paradigm and paradigm shift concept to the strangifying proposition in different paradigms and further in different cultures. This new school of philosophy which we are concerning on, is known as Constructive Realism.

Constructivism

The constructivistic inversion in the philosophy of science was held in 1960's. the Whereas there were a great inversions in science itself(like....). It was a less radical world view than the parallel views which were held in those decades.(such as Marxism). In fact it was forming after a famous quotation from 19th century that leads to the presence spiritual situation in Europe, which says: "*a specter is haunting Europe!*" So Constructivism has developed out of number of different areas of European culture. Although

Constructivism seems to be born on Wittgenstein but the majority of constructivists brief it could not be limited to one particular school; but it would be difficult to attain any idea of what Wittgenstein had in mind until we follow the program and task of Vienna Circle which each provides many different types constructivistic idea and established it in the philosophy of science, since 1980's.

In one word Constructivism changes the scientific reasoning by defining knowledge as a construct, and it brings the capability of interpretation to the interconnectedness of science.

But what is all about? What is knowable about Nature and Culture?

Constructive Realism Approach

The very important misunderstanding about constructivism that has to be avoided of, is this argument which says: *a certain conception of, nature in which nature, just as all constructivistic endeavors, is presupposed and yet at the same time knowable, i.e. nature is regarded as a knowable norm* (Walner, 2000). This argument shows the very lost means of Constructivism which is declared in Constructive Realism. This is the very fact which is lately followed by constructivists that; no construction of knowledge could be existed without concerning its cultural bases. So the nature even as construction could not be understood as a knowable norm because of the differential culture of human being. The western culture for instance understand itself only on the level of the instrument functioning of mutual links; as Wallner ever says, and no longer is in a position to explain its own products. So as a result so it may destroys other cultures on this ways. But Constructivism specter in approach to Nature perceives interconnectivity between Nature and Culture. This is one of the facts that Constructive Realism tries to face. So Constructive Realism shows different aspects of a cultural inversion also uncovered the demand for a new concept of knowledge. It shows that any scientific proposition could never be totally

undrestood if only it shifts to a different paradigm and then returns to its home paradigm with a memory of the mentioned shift. Constructive Realism called this process as Strangification (Wallner, 1996).

Extensively in universal means any proposition could only achieve to its ideal conception when It is strangified it self in to different culture. This is more fabulous when we propose this argument to the construct itself. This knew approach will clear the full aspect of cultural inversion in which the Nature could no more considered as a knowable norm.

An Instance Proposition for Strangification.

Let's see how this approach could deal with a scenario of Nature and Culture. For instance we can start with the famous proposition of LeCurbosier about the house, which defines a house as a machine for living. As mentioned before the western culture understand itself only on the level of the instrument functioning of mutual links, and the last century it have tried to reduce human being to the level of machine conception. But what would happened if we strangify this very proposition to the eastern culture in which the whole universe is a giant inteligant, conscious and wise system (machine) that perfect men (such as Buddha) are connected to the center of this source of knowledge. This culture tries to raise the machine conception to the level of human mentality. So from this perspective there would be a different result for the Le Corbusier proposition "*house - as a machine for living in*" (Trachtenberg, 1986). Although there is no claim about any purposes in Le Corbusier mind denoting to eastern thinkers, but this fact could show how the whole aspect of a robust proposition could not be understand without strangify it in other culture not only in different paradigm.

In other hand this could arise this argument in which this very machinery proposition could generates a new non-mechanical perspective of the Nature and Culture relation. It could show that even we consider this proposition as a base of our hypotheses we could still believe in Nature as non-knowable norm. In the

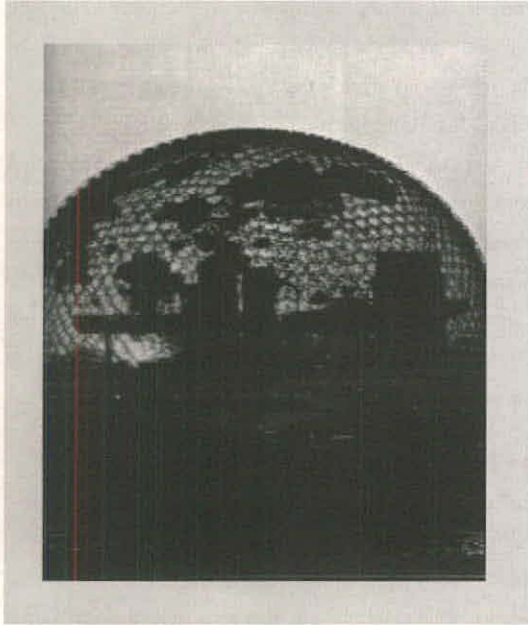


Figure 1: Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome, built to house the US exhibition at Expo'67. A similar dome two miles in diameter could provide a controlled environment for a city of the future (they claimed) (Falkus, 1973)

mentioned perspective it is possible to follow our new scenario, it could generate so many different ideas for house from Anthropocentrism to the Physiocentrism, which could hardly ever be joint in the European scientific traditions. (figure 1)

Conception of Nature and its Value

That was why I do believe, there is no exact answer to the questions which related to the value of Nature; neither from Anthropocentrism perspective nor Physiocentrism. In other hand there is the sense of Artifact in opposite of Nature, in many terminological observations in temporary literature. It clears the conception of divided subjective fact as polarized mind in approach to environment. But there isn't any exact borderline between these two, while you connote the cultural borderlines¹ between two polar countries. (figure 2) It is the between space of differences and it seems fuzzy and inexact (Kasko, 1993).

As Wittgenstein noted in his Philosophical Investigation:

"If I tell someone –stand roughly here- may not this explanation work perfectly? And cannot every other fail too? But isn't it an inexact explanation? Yes, why shouldn't we call it –inexact-? Only let us understand what –inexact- means for does not mean unusable..." (Krebs, 1999)

So we have to be more restrictive in our definition; both nature and artifact are interest to environmentalism and environmental ethics, while we still continue to concerning Culture as the main context for Strangification.

Wallner has noted this in the following words;

"It is precisely the traditional scientific formula – the better the science, the beter for nature- that now must be challenged as being both completely wrong and even dangerous in its very consequences. That why it is necessary to seek out the hidden presupposition of conviction that the human mind is capable of solving the puzzle of Nature" (Wallner, 2000).

Science seems to be unable to claim knowledge of the world, and in other hand it would also be unable to claim knowledge of the relation between the artificial world which it creates and attempt to substitute for natural world and the natural world itself. If we do not know the structure of the world (as Wallner says) any attempt to replace it or a part of it with any artificial world could be a dangerous enterprise, in all dimensions and aspects.

Sample Study

As we simply mentioned Environment could not be understood without its cultural content. For example the rice and the global sphere in which it use to be produce in Japanese culture. The rite of bringing down rice seeds in *Ise Shrine* and sowing them in the divine fields, such fields present a model of the Japanese agriculture. The mentioned rite is of ancient origin; it is described in oldest ritual of regulations. In two sequence it shows up:

First, the attending priests and farmers with boxes containing the seeds offering and ritual tools, are



Figure 2- A sacred rock formation marked by Shimenawa at Futami-no-ura, a place of ancient sun worship near Ise
(Nitschke, 1993)

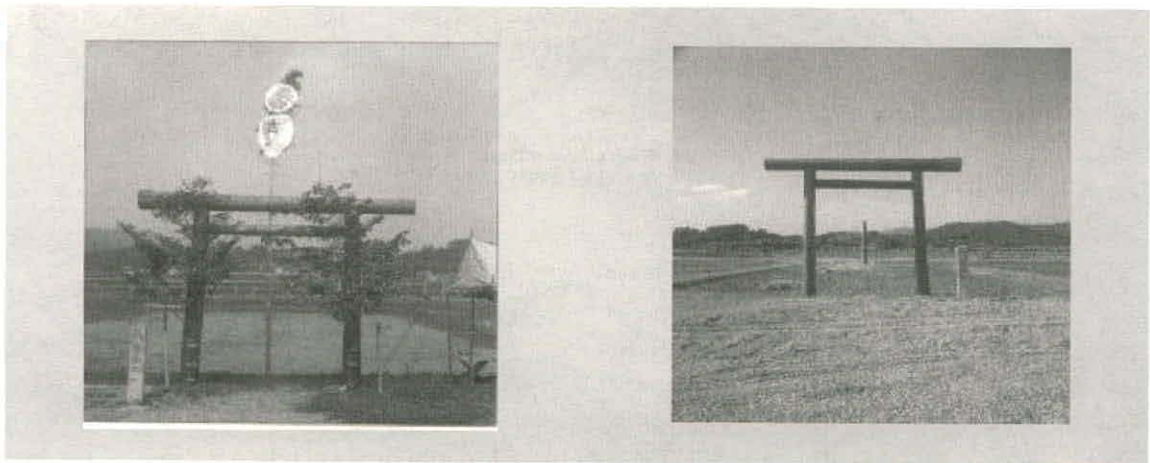


Figure 3- Shinto Gates
(Nitschke, 1993)

purified at the foot of the mountain. Second, food and a Shinto prayer are offered to the mountain deity at the place of festival which believed as the mouth of mountain. This festival is *Daijosai* the indigenous rite of renewal of divine kingship and it is tied up to ancient Japanese harvest general festival; the ceremony in which the local guardian deities which lives in mountain are brought down in spring to energize and protect the fields. The natural and artifact elements of environment are clear: mountain, water, fields, Troji (bird roost) and the trade mark of the Shinto gate which separate the whole environment

from the world of human settlement. (figure 3)

One of the robust samples in the annual rice production in Japan is connected to the transplanting of the young rice shoots in to the paddies. The ceremony begins by the priests, farmers and the fishermen as the attendants, it concludes with the actual transplanting of the rice shoots by rows of festively dressed maidens. The magnificent point of this ceremony is not only bringing the fields spirit to the plants but also each fisherman which could capture a piece of the pole will proudly fix it to the centre of his boat as the boat spirit. (figure 4) (Nitschke,1993)



Figure 4- Rice Transplantation
(Nitschke, 1993)

What originally came down from mountains in to the fields, would be a symbol of power, which is not separated from religious and the politics; but it shows the environment of those fields could never be understandable out of sight of the content of its culture. The following poem which belongs to Emperor Tenchi describes what we really mean:

*"Autumn rice fields'
hut made of sheaves of grain
the scruff of the rush mats,
my robe's sleeves
with dew becoming dewy".(Nitschke,1993)*

How could those words be understood without the precise and clear views of the eastern construction of knowledge?



How could the "exact science" propositions describe all those principles of rice production?

Final Comment

The consequences of the realization that science should be understood in relativistic manner face as a shock to the many scientist, experts and philosophers. The state of being relativistic means that science has to give up all claims to knowledge. For the European culture maybe counted as a loss of many philosophical traditions in first step, but it extends the new vision for perceiving other cultures as the context for the extension of knowledge. It means that the human mind could shared all its capabilities with its Environment to understand the structure of Nature, meanwhile he is conscious of it self as a part of Nature and this fact that he has lost is hidden presupposition in relation to Culture of Nature and about the Nature of Culture.

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