

# Is our contemporary approach to environmental issues a sign of a new humanism?

**Maya Jreissati**

*Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Philosophy, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Jounieh, Lebanon*

## SCOPE

It is commonly believed that humanism - that is, the valorization of man by man - has consisted above all, over the course of time, in placing man in a strictly technical, utilitarian and therefore destructive relationship with nature. This common idea, whose philosophical source goes back to Heidegger, specifies that modern man thinks of himself as the only living being endowed with intelligence, giving him power over all that is. At least economically, we can easily understand the heideggerian analysis of the modern man's history. The logic of modern capitalism brings with it damages to what we call "nature". But can man do otherwise than move forward? Can we not produce, not desire, not innovate, not create, not develop our techniques and mastery of things in the world? Therefore, are we condemned to live our relationship with nature in a destructive way?

## METHODOLOGY

What is the specificity of man's relationship with nature? In fact, there is not "one" relationship but "several" existential relationships with nature. The scientist's relationship with nature, the poetic relation to nature, the metaphysical relation to nature and the economic relationship with nature are different ways to relate to nature. What relationship do ethics and politics have to nature? Ethically and politically, it seems that man has understood that he must act against nature to preserve human dignity. In nature, the strong eat the weak: yet do we, in our societies, allow the weak to die of their weaknesses? Through each position in the world, nature is perceived in a different way.

## RESULTS

We can see that the relation of man to nature is not univocal and it is not necessarily conflicting even if it is sometimes. In fact, there is not a single way of comprehending nature. We can also see that man, among all living species, is the only one who does not rely on nature, as is, to exist, but he has the vocation and the capacity to transform nature in order to create his own world. Of all living species, only man is capable of innovating. What differentiates man from animals is precisely that man has the capacity to create a nature for himself, to change his nature. Indeed, it seems that modern man has asked himself an existential question, how to reconcile two realities that are normally conflicting and yet, both profoundly human: on the one hand, the need to innovate and transform nature to increase the well-being of mankind, and on the other hand, the need not to destroy the environment and more generally, "nature", the matrix of humanity?

## CONCLUSIONS

Does man's awareness of this double necessity lead him to develop a new humanism? Humanism today is creative and innovative, one that counts on human creativity to ensure the survival of our species. A humanism which marks a new approach to ethics: man has realized that he must not lose sight of man. Man values humanity, he values the continuity of humankind; rather, man has lost his traditional benchmarks, where the sacred was always transcendent and independent of him; he could now make sacred what *He* is, that which will remain beyond his individual existence, the *humanity he carries within*. This is worth the sacrifice and worthy of respect and this is why he consents to make sacrifices to preserve nature.