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Karol Dąbrowski

ENVIRONMENTALISM AND ROLE OF THE SOCIETY FOR ENSURING OF GLOBAL JUSTICE

(Marvin T. Brown, *A Climate of Justice: An Ethical Foundation for Environmentalism*, Springer, Cham, 2022)

The climate changes provoke discussion in many disciplines. The Marvin T. Brown's book *A Climate of Justice: An Ethical Foundation for Environmentalism* places in law, philosophy, and theology. The Author tries to present a multi-layered approach to the climate change problem and his main thesis is, that if we want to stop the destruction of the Earth we need to change our social relationships. They are deeply rooted in historical injustice. He analysed American culture and mentality. He reinterprets the facts from American history and questions American myths, especially mythos of the American prosperity. He wants to change the social climate of injustice to social justice for the environment. He believes that social mechanisms firmly rooted in Western and Anglo-Saxon traditions are to blame for environmental destruction. American ethos in contrast to ethos of the indigenous peoples damages the planet.

For him the discovery of America was Atlantic calamity: 400-year relationships among the undeserved misery and the unearned prosperity. The discovery of America was an occupation and ethnic cleansing and genocide. In his opinion white American civilization was built at the expense of slaves and indigenous peoples. This dependence on a climate of injustice, pushes us toward an unsustainable future. In his view Western history is the story of the enslavement and exploitation of people, appropriation and degradation of the Earth. Just like in the past American dream was based

on the genocide of indigenous peoples and slavery, so now the climate is a victim of prosperity: consumption destroys nature, exploits workers, poisons families, and pollutes the biosphere (vii). Sustainability is possible only when we change the social climate from a climate of injustice to a climate of justice. In this way, he argues for the ethical foundation of environmentalism.

This philosophy gives him the chance to tell another story and counter-vision. He suggests four-stage interpretative framework: sustainability (Earth is not a commodity but a living system), humanity (without racialized hierarchy with white patriarchy males on top), social location and position (society not isolated individuals), civic realm (civilian civic not militarized civic).

The people and Earth have the same interests: Earth and people need protection for their dignity, because they are vulnerable to exploitation and violence. We are only a small part of the whole planet. Therefore to the building of the ecological awareness we need to reject the dehumanization and domination. Throughout the “white” history “Earth became a thing that could be manipulated to produce more by increasing the use of fertilizers and pesticides, destroying its vegetation, clear-cutting its forests, sterilizing it, and covering it with concrete” (p. 21).

M.T. Brown wrote, Western individualism is false, because we live in the society and on the Earth. The genesis of individualism he explained based on the philosophy and neurobiology: Antonio Damasio and Daniel Siegel. These theories are the weak point of this book, but that way he justified that “our humanity that are grounded in our body and the chemical/neurological processes of human relationships” (p. 43).

In his opinion, we live in the social worlds: we exist in relationships. So we need to remember social and environmental costs of the growth. American prosperity is not a normal state and the American social world is not the only one on the Earth: is only one of several worlds. In his opinion: “social worlds not only are a source of our diversity, but also of various social divisions” (p. 53). The example is the housing segregation and thus: unequal distribution of well-paying jobs, drug trafficking, incarceration, pollution, and unsafe shopping areas.

Housing segregation is one of the elements of the climate of injustice and creates social conflicts. Acute social conflicts lead to social rifts: creating relations of hate and fear and writing off one of the groups. Social exclusion reminds damnatio memoriae. Elites are disconnected from reality and they promote a new form of feudalism. The control of the media and society causes that common people think that the degree of inequality is much less than it actually is.

M.T. Brown rightly criticised philanthropy, social stratification and increase of poor people. Fewer and fewer average Americans financially support social organizations, so they rely more and more on donations from the richest. In this way, more and more of the poor are dependent on a smaller and smaller percentage of the richest. Charitable foundations are non-transparent, are guided by undemocratic criteria, give a tax break for the richest, and exacerbate social inequality instead of reducing it.

He links social limitations to the environmental limitations and he writes about “World of Limits”. In his view there is no invisible hand of the social systems: they do not balance themselves and “the rich just get richer and the poor get poorer without human intervention” (p. 73). Therefore we need justice and effective rule of law. Only recognizing and responding to the vulnerability of civilians can create a climate of justice.

Criticizing the American system he thinks, the racialized humanity is continued and infects politics and culture. It causes white supremacy, incoherent social relationships, militarized civic and climate of war. M.T. Brown does not address the problem of gun availability and violence embedded in the daily lives of Americans. He refers to Reinhold Niebuhr’s philosophy and history of the American social conflicts but he doesn’t describe the labour problem.

He disagrees with “Manifest Destiny” and for him this idea was one big mistake. Earth is not a “thing” that one can commercialize, exploit, and destroy (p. 117). The perception of the Earth as a commodity is a result of the liberal English philosophy, common law and practice. English landlords did the same mechanisms with the peasants (enclosure), Irish and in America. He presents Spanish-Portuguese practice in South America in opposition to the Anglo-Saxon worldview and politics. He aptly emphasized that even the reserve is not owned by the natives incarcerated there. It is not their land, but land “reserved” for them. For him land and property have social function, like in the Léon Duguit’s legal theory, but made no reference to the cooperatives. He described the conception of the sharecropping and reciprocity, but describing the reparations he idealized Germans after the Second World War.

In his book he develops theology of civilian empowerment. The three great religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam ignore indigenous tradition of seeing the Earth assacred. Therefore Earth is something to subdue and conquer by males. M.T. Brown opts for balanced relationship between people and planet. He writes: “It does not belong to us. We belong to it” (p. 140). He believes in humanity and possibilities for changing of attitude, mentality, character. Proof that it is possible is granting of rights in international law to human beings regardless of religion. This happened despite

social nature, social dimension of religion and social limits of religious language. In this respect he uses ethic of Paul Louis Lehmann's ethic, philosophy of Edward Hobbs and Jeremy Rifkin's theory of empathy.

The citizen has an important role in the creation of a climate of justice. In M.T. Brown's opinion "The problem is that living in a social climate of injustice allows us to accept broken relationships and not to expect that injuries can be repaired" (p. 150). Importantly he does not ignore achievement of Elinor Ostrom and idea of common using of land.

He ended his monography with an invitation to a civic dialogue about justice. In his opinion we need to create a transnational, Atlantic community, because in the future we will all suffer from devastating hurricanes, floods and droughts. He believes that it is necessary to invite different social groups. He described his experience, when he was a student he was invited to the manifestation organized by Martin Luther King. If he had not been invited, he probably would never have taken part in it, and in this way his life was changed. His message and his book are deeply humanistic, at times idealistic, but it certainly deserves attention.

Adresa autora
Author's address

Karol Dąbrowski
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin
Faculty of Law and Administration
karol.dabrowski@mai