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FROM MESOCOSMOS TO COSMOS: MAN IN SEARCH OF HIS *OIKOS*

1. Introduction

The present study draws on the cybernetic concept of the living being's presence in the natural environment formulated by Jakob von Uexküll. It is expressed in the so called "function-circle" and implies that the living being perceives only a small section of its surroundings. The perceived characteristics of the surroundings are, in turn, reported to the effecting organ which exerts a reverse impact on the carriers of the perceived features[1].

The cognitive bases of the living being's presence of in the surroundings comprised by the "function-circle", point to its subjective nature, because the living being transforms its surroundings into its environment, i.e. a world of average measures, called mesocosmos, which is optimal for its survival[2]. Thus understood, mesocosmos is synonymous with both the ecological and cognitive niche of the living being. Consequently, it can be said that living beings, in their characteristic pursuit of a better world, find only such a world, which corresponds to their cognitive abilities and behavioral skills which are closely correlated with them. This means, in turn, that the scope of knowledge about the reality gained by entities belonging to various species, is typically defined by the utilitarian character of that knowledge; in this respect it is genetically determined and is, therefore, a function of a given species' efforts to survive in the mesocosmic environment. In this context, the uniqueness of man, who due to his remarkable cognitive abilities is able to transcend the mesocosmos, becomes clearly evident. This human transcendence is achieved, in particular, through scientific knowledge which is, in a sense, unlimited and implies that human environment comprises, in fact, the whole universe.[3]

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[1] Conf. J. Uexküll, G. Kriszat, *Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen. Ein Bilderbuch unsichtbarer Welten* [Sammlung: Verständliche Wissenschaft, Bd. 21], J. Springer Verlag, Berlin 1963, p. 28.

[2] Conf. G. Vollmer, *Mesokosmos und objektive Erkenntnis – Über Probleme, die von der evolutionären Erkenntnistheorie gelöst werden*, in: *Die Evolution des Denkens*, ed. K. Lorenz, F. M. Wuketits, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, München-Zürich 1983, pp. 51-59.

[3] Conf. ibidem, p. 45.

2. From the Concept of the Function-circle to the Concept of Natural Environment

The work of J. von Uexküll, referred to in the introduction, provided an inspiration for the numerous scientific studies conducted in the early twentieth century, particularly in the area of zoopsychology and ethology, i.e. a comparative study about the behavior of living beings. According to Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, the full significance of J. von Uexküll's research achievements was first discovered by Konrad Lorenz, now almost universally recognized as the father of modern ethology[4]. An extensive inductive base of his own observations allowed him to create a coherent synthesis of the data, which nowadays provides the foundation for comparative research on animal behavior. In the first period, the majority of that research concentrated on innate behaviors of living beings. Owing to that, Lorenz could ascertain that the behaviors of living beings are inherited, and thus are subject to biological evolution and can be studied on the basis of the same methods which, since Charles Darwin's discoveries, have been applied to the morphological characteristics of the species[5]. The study of innate behaviors also allowed him to lead in-depth studies on the relationship between drive and instinct as well as on the very nature of instinct. Cooperation between Konrad Lorenz and Erich von Holst played a significant role in these studies, since it enabled Lorenz to abandon the reflexological theory of the behavior of living beings and turn to neurophysiology. Subsequently, Lorenz pointed out the dependence of certain behaviors on key stimuli and started research on the phylogeny and ontogenesis of innate behaviors of living beings. In the next step, in a model of crossing instinct and taming, Lorenz presented the nature of mutual interactions between innate and acquired components of behavior, and in the phenomenon of imprinting (*Prägung*), he discovered a particular importance of an innate predisposition to learn[6].

As a result of research launched before the Second World War with Nikolaas Tinbergen on the gray goose and its characteristic rolling of eggs to the nest, Lorenz was also able to work out the basic concepts of ethology. The cooperation between K. Lorenz and N. Tinbergen, apart from consolidating and developing the fundamental for ethology discovery on the homologous nature of living beings' behavior, led to elaborating the ethological theory of instinct[7]. This, ultimately, allowed to define with precision the research area of ethology and its adequate re-

[4] Conf. I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Grundriß der vergleichenden Verhaltensforschung. Ethologie. Sechste und überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage*, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, München-Zürich 1980, pp. 25-26.

[5] Conf. K. Lorenz, *Vorwort*, in: K. Lorenz, *Über tierisches und menschliches Verhalten. Aus dem Werdegang der Verhaltenslehre. Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, Band I, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, München-Zürich 1984, pp. 9-10.

[6] Conf. I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Grundriß der vergleichenden Verhaltensforschung*, pp. 26-27.

[7] Conf. A. Festetics, *Das „Du" zwischen Mensch und Tier*, w: *Nichts ist schon dagewesen. Konrad Lorenz, seine Lehre und ihre Folgen*, red. F. Kreuzer, Piper & Co. Verlag, München-Zürich 1984, pp. 77-78.

search methods. Due to that, moreover, ethology found an enduring place among numerous branches of evolutionary biology. On this basis, we can talk about ethological paradigm of behavioral research, which characterized the ethological School of Lorenz-Tinbergen[8].

The range of issues defined by the title of this study becomes the object of research conducted by many philosophizing biologists, while the results of that research are accounted for by representatives of various philosophical centers. A majority of scientists refer more or less directly to the achievements of the ethological School of Lorenz-Tinbergen as well as to the scientific output of the Austrian Institute of Konrad Lorenz. They also generally share the opinion of I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt that ethological analyses of animal behavior condition understanding of man, since research achievements of ethologists allowed to formulate a well-grounded theory of biological determinants of the profound uniqueness of man in the world of living beings[9].

Reflection on the issues defined by the title of this paper directly touches upon the thought expressed in the title of Karl Popper's book *In Search of a Better World*, which sums up the epistemological position of the scientist[10]. This title sums up the results of numerous observations, according to which every living being strives for such a world, which will secure the survival of its species represented at the moment by an individual entangled in a particular environmental situation. This thought was continued by many researchers among whom special attention is due to philosophizing natural scientists. In their view, every living creature functions in an environment which is appropriate for its species, a world of "average measures", called "mesocosmos". The living being plays in this world the role of an active participant of life processes and constitutes the main factor of the development of thus understood living space[11].

At this point, it must be emphasized once again that the isolation and study of the mesocosmic living space is nowadays possible owing to the concept of the "fuction-circle" formulated in the early twentieth century by Jakob von Uexküll[12]. According to that theory, the living being perceives only a limited scope of its environment, whose characteristics are reported to the effecting organ which, in turn, feeds back the effect on the carriers of the perceived environmental features. In this context, special attention is due to a book by J. von Uexküll *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere*[13]. It provides a philosophical justification of biology as a science of ani-

[8] Conf. A. Sut, *Paradygmat poznawczy etologicznej Szkoły Lorenza-Tinbergena*, Seminare 36(2015)2, pp. 61-62.

[9] Conf. I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Verhaltensforschung*, p. 27.

[10] K. Popper, *Auf der Suche nach einer besseren Welt. Vorträge und Aufsätze aus dreißig Jahren*, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, München-Zürich 1984.

[11] Conf. G. Vollmer, *Mesokosmos und objektive Erkenntnis – Über Probleme, die von der evolutionären Erkenntnistheorie gelöst werden*, pp. 51-59.

[12] Conf. A. Pobojewska, *Istota żywa jako podmiot*, Studio Wydawnicze KARTA, Łódź 1998, pp. 13-75.

[13] J. von Uexküll, *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere*, Springer Verlag, Berlin 1909.

mate nature. Thanks to this seminal work, as noted by A. Pobojewska, the term "environment" (Umwelt), hitherto unused in everyday language, gained the status of terminology. Henceforth, it was possible to make a proper distinction between "surroundings" (Umgebung) and "environment" (Umwelt) of an organism, since the first one encompasses living beings as objects, whereas the latter conceives of them as subject which participate in its shaping[14]. Such a relationship of living beings to the environment, results in the fact that each of them is identified with its environment. The boundaries of a living being are not determined by its outer surface (skin) but by the scope of its ability to perceive as well as by the scope of its activity in space and time. In line with this approach, a living being cannot be perceived in isolation from its environment. This means that, for example, the spider comprises also its cobweb and the cobweb is a reflection of the behavioral picture of its future prey. On this basis, J. von Uexküll contends that each animal has its own special "subjective" time and its characteristic "subjective" space. In this sense, an given animal's external world (Umwelt) corresponds to its inner world (Innenwelt), which consists of the world of perception (Merkwelt) and the world of action (Wirkwelt). Those two worlds of the living being are linked in a feedback loop, defined by J. von Uexküll as the "function-circle"[15].

3. Mesocosmic Picture of the Environment

The work of J. von Uexküll is reflected in numerous theories put forward by philosophizing natural scientists on the relationship of living beings to the environment in which and through which they can survive, and which is perceived in its multifaceted aspect. For example, Klaus Michael Meyer-Abich claims that every species possesses a key which is different from the one of other species, and each of their kingdom has a lock which is different from the one of other species[16]. Hubert Markl expresses similar views when he states that "every form of life in nature has its definite limits of survival. While space and time can expand infinitely in the universe, the space and time of the species' and biological specimens' existence is finite and limited"[17]. Consequently, the concept of an ecological niche should not be understood as space allocated for given species to live, but as a place secured by this species, since in nature there is an ongoing rivalry among living beings for its energy and information resources. In other words, the success of a given species in this rivalry means at once the success of its being able to adapt to the life in a particular environment[18].

[14] Conf. A. Pobojewska, *Istota żywa jako podmiot*, p. 52-53.

[15] Conf. J. von Uexküll, G. Kriszat, *Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen*, p. 28.

[16] Conf. K. M. Meyer-Abich, *From the Environment to the Connatural World*, transl. M. Armstrong, The White Horse Press, Cambridge 1993, p. 4.

[17] H. Markl, *Natur als Kulturaufgabe. Über die Beziehung des Menschen zur lebendigen Natur*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart 1986, p. 358.

[18] Conf. K. Popper, K. Lorenz, *Die Zukunft ist offen. Das Altenberger Gespräch. Mit den Texten*

The statements of K. M. Meyer-Abich and H. Markle cited above, allow to conclude that the phenomenal theory of the natural living environment should also refer to the concept of an ecological niche. It is because, this ecological niche is the natural space to which every living being is matched (adapted), i.e. the niche is determined (specified) by the behavioral repertoire of a given living being, and, conversely, the behavioral repertoire is determined by the appropriate ecological niche[19]. According to J. von Uexküll, each animal, from the simplest to the most complex is in its own, characteristic way perfectly adapted to the environment. This means that simple organisms require simple environment, while complex organisms need complex environment. That general recapitulation of numerous observations of the animal world is the core idea of the book published in the late twenties of the last century by J. von Uexküll, entitled *Theoretical Biology*[20].

The ecological niche includes physical objects, defined both by their inherent features, as well as by the medium (e.g. water) in which these objects exist. This niche must, therefore, be organized in a specific structure of reality: it has its own characteristic frame of time, space and kind, through which the multidimensional multiplicity of sensory qualities experienced by animals (colors, sounds, smells, etc.) is combined into a meaningful whole. Construction of a given niche is determined, above all, by a number of challenges that it contains which motivate a given living creature to adequate behavior. The reality at which it directs its acts of perception, has the structure of a complex layered construction. Atoms at the microscopic level are linked in molecules, molecules in cells, cells in leaves, leaves in trees and trees in forests, etc. Time processes, beginning with neuronal stimulations at the microscopic level up to historical events at the macroscopic level, are also hierarchically interrelated in the same way. Due to evolutionary adaptation to objects and challenges, every living being is assigned a special place in this hierarchy. This results in spontaneous adaptation between animals and behavioral niches conjoined with them, as well as with the accompanying them object niches, i.e. smells, voices and mimicry. In other words, the niches and the behavioral repertoire of a living being are in case of such a spontaneous adaptation closely correlated[21].

The existence and scope of such a correlation is confirmed by research conducted by biologists studying animal behavior. On the basis of that research, it can be argued that the picture of the world which is perceived through diverse cognitive apparatuses of various species, although real, is at the same time simplified in an utilitarian way, since the cognitive apparatus developed only because of those aspects of the world whose noticing serves to maintain the life of a given species. According to Konrad Lorenz, utilitarian simplification also applies to the

des Wiener Popper-Symposiums, R. Piper GmbH & Co. KG, München-Zürich 1985, pp. 20-25.

[19] Conf. B. Smith, *Ontologie des Mesokosmos*, Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung 52(1998), pp. 521-540.

[20] Conf. J. von Uexküll, *Theoretische Biologie*, J. Springer Verlag, Berlin1928.

[21] Conf. J. J. Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems*, George Allen and Unwin, London 1986, p. 101.

human world: "The efficiency of our cognitive apparatus is similar to the knowledge that an uncouth, primitive hunter of seals or whales may possess about the essence of his prey, namely, he knows only those facts which have a direct impact on his own interests. Still, this little bit of knowledge, which is made available for us by the organization of our organs and of the nervous system passed the exam of eons! As long as it suffices our needs, we can rely on it. For we must, of course, accept that what exists-in-itself, has many other aspects which, however, are not vital for us. We do not have any "organs" for them, because in the development of our species, there was no compulsion to adapt to them. We are obviously deaf to all the numerous "wavelengths" to which our "receiver" is not tuned - we do not know, we cannot know, how many of them there are. We are "limited" in the literal and figurative sense of the word."[22] This means, that the most basic scope of the knowledge about the reality that can be achieved by diverse species, is typically defined by its utilitarian character; in this respect it is genetically determined and is, therefore, a function of the species' efforts to survive in the environment, and relates to the world of average measurements, i.e. the mesocosmos. Further scope of cognition and activity is characteristic only of man who is equipped with extraordinary cognitive abilities or the ability of conceptual thinking and producing syntactic speech. It expresses human desire to go beyond his cognitive and behavioral mesocosmos. This happens due to scientific cognition which, as such, exceeds mesocosmos and is, in a sense, unlimited. Such a dynamics of the scope of human cognition seems to indicate that human environment can, in fact, comprise the whole universe[23].

4. Mesocosmic measure of Humaninty in Man

Pointing to the cognitive and behavioral aspects as the basis on which the living being determines its mesocosmos, allows for the identification of that mesocosmos with both the cognitive as well as the ecological niche of the living being. We might, therefore, say that in the course of the pursuit of a better world which is so characteristic of living beings, they attain only such a world, which corresponds to their cognitive and behavioral abilities and thus secures their biological survival. Against this background, the uniqueness of man in reference to non-human living beings becomes evident. While non-human beings aspire to a world which secures the minimum conditions for their survival, man is in this respect a maximalist and, to put it in a negative light, is never fully satisfied in that pursuit of a better world. By seeking to know the whole universe and, therefore, radically exceeding the biologically measured mesocosmos, man clearly shows that his me-

[22] K. Lorenz, *Odwrotna strona zwierciadła. Próba historii naturalnej ludzkiego poznania*, transl. K. Wolicki, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1977, pp. 38-39.

[23] Conf. G. Vollmer, *Mesokosmos und objektive Erkenntnis – Über Probleme, die von der evolutionären Erkenntnistheorie gelöst werden*, p. 45.

socosmos comprises (can comprise) the entire cosmos. Although, it is a measure of human success, an expression of his profound uniqueness in the world of living beings, it is, at the same time, a measure of the challenges facing man as *Homo sapiens sapiens*, i.e. a biological subspecies. Man's desire to extend his mesocosmos to the entire cosmos is closely associated with the danger of his undertaking actions without respect for human nature, which was formed in the conditions of his biological mesocosmos, i.e. the mesocosmos of a hunter and gatherer. Scientific and technical transgression of the human mesocosmos, can lead to the phenomenon, which Lorenz defined as destruction or "regression of humanity"[24] and which results from accumulation of processes defined by him as the "mortal sins of civilized mankind"[25] The deadly threats to civilized humanity identified by Lorenz forty years ago, are today confirmed by the results of recent observations made by Franz M. Wuketits, a prominent representative of the Austrian Institute of Konrad Lorenz. The research conducted by that institute draws upon the intellectual heritage of Konrad Lorenz, the awarded by the Nobel Prize founder of modern ethology and recognized analyst of the determinants precipitating the crisis of the civilized humanity[26].

Taking into account the civilizational possibilities that allow man to transcend his own biologically determined mesocosmos, F. M. Wuketits speaks of the "civilization in a blind alley"[27] and warns against its characteristic indifference towards the civilizational processes that break human nature, or, as Lorenz would put it, hamper it with a "civilization straitjacket"[28]. Hence, the dramatic appeal made by F. M. Wuketits for respect for the human nature in the process of realizing civilizational aspirations of humanity. And, hence as well, the appeal for man to, in the face of the limitless possibilities, pursuit his own *oikos* up to his own nature, understood in the twofold sense of the word, i.e. as his the biological and spiritual nature[29].

This demand, however, should lead to considering the possibility of shaping human *οἶκος*, i.e. the today's living space, in such a way that it could meet the demands of the heritage passed on to us by the Stone Age man still inherent in the contemporary man. At the same time, it is not the question of a romantic desire to portray the world and life of our prehistoric ancestors. It would, first of all, be inadvisable, because inconsistent with the facts. Rather, it is the question of realistic reference to facts that show that today's behavioral, intellectual as well as emotional and volitional abilities bear the traces of such behavioral strategies which have been

[24] K. Lorenz, *Der Abbau des Menschlichen*, Piper & Co. Verlag, München-Zürich 1983.

[25] Idem, *Die acht Todsünden der zivilisierten Menschheit*, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, München-Zürich 1984, pp. 19-106.

[26] Conf. Z. Łepko, *Od etologii zwierząt do ekologii człowieka*, Studia Ecologiae et Bioethicae UKSW 11(2013)3, pp. 9-27.

[27] F. M. Wuketits, *Zivilisation in der Sackgasse. Plädoyer für eine artgerechte Menschenhaltung*, Mankau Verlag GmbH, Murnau a. Staffelsee 2012.

[28] Conf. K. Lorenz, *Der Abbau des Menschlichen*, p. 148.

[29] Conf. F. M. Wuketits, *Zivilisation in der Sackgasse*, pp. 10-12.

embedded in man over the eons of years and which our ancestors evolved in the service of the survival of our species. That bio-psycho-spiritual acquis of *Homo sapiens* for its contemporary representatives constitutes a kind of unwritten commitment to work towards its protection, or an attempt to survive in a human manner[30].

5. In Lieu of a Conclusion

Ethological studies on the behavior of living beings in the natural environment inspired by the concept of the "function-circle" developed by J. von Uexküll, constitute an important contribution to the attempt at providing an answer to the bottom-up questions about the nature and essence of man. Although these questions include the full spectrum of classic anthropological research on the origins of man, his current position in the world of living beings and his future, they are, nevertheless, specified by taking into account the data of natural science about man and, in particular, the data on the various branches of human biology. It should be added, though, that the specifics of those bottom-up questions about the nature and essence of man, in no way limits the efforts to provide them with full answers. Namely, they do not focus on the numerous and obvious similarities of man to animals, but on his specificity understood in the broadest sense, which is most fully revealed in his outstanding cognitive abilities, i.e. in his conceptual thinking and syntactic speech[31].

The results of that research, in a way confirm the heuristic topicality of the biological discussion on the place of man in the world of living beings initiated by Linnaeus in 1758. A little over one hundred years before Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, Linnaeus, in the final version of his *Systema Naturae*, characterized man as *Homo sapiens*. In this way, he pointed, on the one hand to the natural relationship of man with the world of living beings and, on the other, to his qualitative uniqueness. While he characterized the animal species known to him at that time, by a number of quantitative criteria, he addressed man with merely the Socratic *Nosce te ipsum*. Thus, Linnaeus initiated a specific cognitive tradition in biological research on the essence and nature of man, which has preserved its topicality till nowadays. For, it must both warn researchers against making hasty statements about man, and protect him against various attempts at formulating reductionist statements on his profound presence in the world of living beings[32].

Recognition of his own virtual uniqueness in the world of living beings is a precondition of man's awareness committing him to combine the unlimited possibilities of realizing his extraordinary cognitive abilities with respect to the natural conditions of his existence. The essence of the human search for a better world in

[30] Conf. ibidem, pp. 198-199.

[31] Conf. K. Lorenz, *Odwrotna strona zwierciadła*, p. 278.

[32] Conf. St. J. Gould, *Niewczesny pogrzeb Darwina. Wybór esejów*, selection, annotation and preface by A. Hoffman, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1991, p. 242-243. See also: E. Winkler, J. Schweinkhardt, *Expedition Mensch. Streifzüge durch die Anthropologie. Mit einem Vorwort von Konrad Lorenz*, Karl Ueberreuter Verlag, Wien 1982, pp. 27-28.

the entire cosmos consists, therefore, in an attempt at finding such a world which would not quell the human nature of man, in its deepest layer formed in the conditions of his natural mesocosmos. This undertaking must be guided by the conviction that human nature cannot be fooled. Consequently, it is necessary to respect its needs before human nature stands up for itself in an extreme situation, which is often induced by unsurmountable threats to the survival of *Homo sapiens* in a human manner. Only then, there will arise realistic possibilities to meet the demands for a decent human life in a world full of technocratic challenges[33].

This means, first of all the need to give serious consideration to the widely understood knowledge of man, namely, to take into account a number of basic data about our species developed over the last few decades by such scientific disciplines as evolutionary biology, ethology, sociobiology and anthropology. As long as the decision-makers of social, economic and political structures persist in neglecting that data, it will not be possible to stop the process which is, as if, programmed in the framework of the technocratic civilization and which consists in the further loss of both biological and spiritual "humanity" of man and leads to unpredictable consequences for individuals, the whole populations and, finally, for the entire subspecies of *Homo sapiens sapiens*[34].

FROM MESOCOSMOS TO COSMOS: MAN IN SEARCH OF HIS OIKOS

Summary

This study draws on the cybernetic concept of living beings' presence in the natural environment formulated by Jakob von Uexküll, which points to the cognitive basis for the presence of a living being in its surroundings. In this perspective, living beings are perceived as subjects, since they transform their surroundings into an environment which is optimal for their survival in the world of average measurements, called mesocosmos. Thus understood, mesocosmos is synonymous with both the ecological and cognitive niche of a living being. Consequently, we can say that living beings, in the course of their characteristic pursuit of a better world, find only such a world that matches their cognitive and behavioral abilities. This, in turn, means that the basic level of knowledge about the reality achieved by living beings expresses the utilitarian nature of that knowledge; in this respect, it is genetically determined and is, therefore, a function of a species' aspiration to survive in the mesocosmic environment. In this context, the uniqueness of man, who due to his remarkable cognitive abilities is able to transcend the mesocosmos, becomes clearly evident. This transcendence is achieved, in particular, through scientific knowledge which is, in a sense, unlimited and points to the fact that human environment comprises (can comprise), in fact, the whole universe

Keywords: man, mesocosmos, cosmos, *oikos*, Jakob von Uexküll

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[33] Conf. I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Wider die Mißtrauensgesellschaft. Streitschrift für eine bessere Zukunft*, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, München-Zürich 1995, p. 9-20.

[34] Conf. F. M. Wuketits, *Zivilisation in der Sackgasse*, p. 200-220.

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OD MESOKOSMOSU DO KOSMOSU: CZŁOWIEK W POSZUKIWANIU SWOJEGO OIKOS

Abstrakt

Niniejsze opracowanie nawiązuje do stworzonej przez Jakoba von Uexkülla cybernetycznej koncepcji obecności istoty żywej w środowisku naturalnym. Wskazuje ona na poznawcze podstawy obecności istoty żywej w otoczeniu. W tym ujęciu istota żywa jest podmiotem. Przekształca ona bowiem swoje otoczenie w swoje środowisko, czyli w optymalny dla swojego przetrwania świat średnich miar, zwany mesokosmosem. Tak rozumiany mesokosmos jest tożsamiany zarówno z niszą ekologiczną istoty żywej, jak i z jej niszą kognitywną. Można więc powiedzieć, że w charakterystycznym dla istot żywych dążeniu do świata coraz lepszego, znajdują one tylko taki świat, który odpowiada ich zdolnościom poznawczym i zdolnościom behawioralnym. Oznacza to, że podstawowy zakres poznania rzeczywistości przez istoty żywe wyraża jego utylitarny charakter; w tym zakresie jest ono uwarunkowane genetycznie, a więc jest funkcją dążenia gatunku do przetrwania w środowisku mesokosmicznym. Na tym tle ukazuje się wyjątkowość człowieka, który dzięki niezwykłym zdolnościom poznawczym jest w stanie przekraczać mesokosmos. W szczególności dokonuje się to dzięki poznaniu naukowemu, które w pewnym sensie jest nieograniczone i świadczy o tym, że środowiskiem człowieka jest (może być) cały wszechświat.

Słowa kluczowe: człowiek, mesokosmos, kosmos, oikos, Jakob von Uexküll