

THE ENVIRONMENT AS AN ONTOLOGICAL PREREQUISITE OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Summary. *Human behaviour is commonly explained through biological, psychological and social determinants, whereas the ontological status of the environment itself has received comparatively little philosophical attention. This paper examines the environment as the ontological condition of human behaviour and argues that behaviour cannot be understood independently of the context in which it emerges. The study employs philosophical analysis, comparative historical inquiry, systems analysis and conceptual modelling to investigate the interrelationship between the environment, the subject and time. On this basis, it develops a conceptual model in which behaviour is interpreted as the manifestation of the subject over time under the continuous influence of the environment. The proposed formula, $B = f(E \times (S/T))$, is introduced not as a mathematical expression but as a heuristic device intended to represent the structural relations between the principal components of the model. The paper concludes that the environment should be regarded not merely as an external influence on behaviour but as one of the ontological conditions of its possibility, thereby providing a basis for further interdisciplinary research in philosophy, social theory and the human sciences.*

Key words: *Human Behaviour, Environment, Social Ontology, Subject, Time, Philosophical Anthropology.*

Introduction. The issue of the nature of human behaviour has been a constant feature of philosophy throughout its history. In different eras, it has been the subject of research in the fields of ethics, psychology, sociology and the natural sciences. Despite the differences in approach, most theories sought to explain behaviour through internal personality traits, biological factors, social relationships or specific external factors. However, despite the wide variety of existing research, the issue of the environment itself as a fundamental condition for the emergence of human behaviour is raised far less frequently.

The current stage of society’s development makes this issue particularly relevant. Information technology, global communications and the constantly changing cultural environment are having an impact on people more rapidly than ever before. Behaviour is increasingly viewed as a set of psychological reactions or social practices, whilst the environment itself is usually understood as merely one of many factors influencing the individual. In my opinion, such a view prevents us from seeing the deeper pattern that underlies human existence.

The environment is referred to as an ontological condition not because it is more powerful than a subject, but because without it, the very existence of behaviour as a phenomenon would be impossible. Just as space is a prerequisite for motion, and time is a prerequisite for change, so the environment is a prerequisite for behaviour. Behaviour cannot manifest itself outside the environment, since any action is always directed towards something, takes place somewhere, and only acquires meaning within a specific system of relationships. It is precisely this proposition that forms the philosophical basis of this research.

This research is based on the premise that the environment should be regarded not as an external accompaniment to human life, but as its ontological prerequisite. In other words, the issue is not the extent of the environment’s

influence, but the impossibility of considering human behaviour in isolation from the reality within which it arises and develops.

The issue of human behaviour has repeatedly been the subject of research in philosophy, psychology and sociology. Kurt Lewin viewed behaviour as the result of the interaction between the individual and the environment, thereby laying the foundations for our modern understanding of their interrelationship. Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated how the social environment reproduces itself through a system of habits and cultural practices, thereby shaping stable patterns of behaviour. Albert Bandura substantiated the importance of social learning by showing that people acquire a significant proportion of their behavioural patterns through observation. Carl Gustav Jung focused on the deep structures of the psyche and the collective experience that influences the development of the personality. Martin Heidegger, in his exploration of human existence, demonstrated that it is impossible to understand human beings apart from their being-in-the-world. Despite the differences between these approaches, they are united by a desire to explain various aspects of human behaviour. This research does not aim to review or criticise them. On the contrary, it stems from a recognition of their significance, proposing that the environment be regarded as an ontological prerequisite without which human behaviour itself would be impossible.

The object of this research is human behaviour.

The subject of the research is the environment as an ontological prerequisite of human behaviour.

The purpose of the research is to develop a philosophical model that explains human behaviour through the interrelationships between the environment, the individual and time.

To achieve this purpose, the following tasks were identified:

- to analyse existing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding human behaviour,

- to define the concepts of environment, subject and time within the framework of the proposed concept,
- to investigate the influence of the environment on the formation of responses, choice and decision-making,
- to highlight the role of the information environment as a new form of cultural heritage,
- to substantiate a philosophical model of behaviour expressed by means of a conceptual formula.

The methodological framework of the research comprises philosophical analysis, the comparative historical method, elements of the hermeneutic approach, systems analysis and conceptual modelling. The interdisciplinary nature of this paper makes it possible to compare data from philosophy, the history of science, psychology and sociology in order to identify general patterns in the development of human behaviour.

The scientific novelty of this research lies in the fact that the environment is regarded not as one of the factors influencing behaviour, but as its ontological condition. The proposed model describes behaviour as a process whereby the subject manifests itself over time under the continuous influence of its environment, and is expressed by means of a conceptual formula intended not for quantitative calculation but for a philosophical description of the interrelationships between its key elements.

This paper does not set out to develop a universal psychological theory of personality, nor does it examine the physiological mechanisms of behaviour. Its goal is to provide a philosophical understanding of the conditions within which human behaviour becomes possible.

It is for this reason that further research begins not with an analysis of the individual, but with an examination of the environment within which all human thought, activity and behaviour arise [9].

Environment as an ontological prerequisite. The desire to understand the nature of things has accompanied humankind throughout its history. It is most often the natural sciences that seek answers, yet every scientific discovery begins not with an experiment, but with a question posed by the researcher. A question never arises out of nowhere: it emerges within a specific context that shapes a person’s way of thinking and the limits of their understanding of the world.

Any experiment requires strictly defined conditions. In physics and chemistry, the result depends on temperature, pressure, the accuracy of the instruments, the composition of a substance and a host of other factors. A change to even one condition can lead to a completely different result. If the same experiment were to be carried out in outer space or in a vacuum, not only would the conditions under which it is conducted change, but so too would the very properties of the phenomenon under study [14].

The history of science has repeatedly demonstrated this kind of relationship. Thus, James Clerk Maxwell (Maxwell 1873), drawing on mathematical calculations, proposed that light has a wave-like nature. Subsequent experiments by Thomas Young (Young 1804) and Heinrich Hertz (Hertz 1893) confirmed the possibility of interference and the propagation of electromagnetic waves, thereby significantly changing the scientific understanding of the nature of light. However, this raises the question: would these discoveries have been possible if the researchers themselves had been educated in different historical, cultural or educational contexts? In other words, is it possible to completely separate a scientific idea from the context in which it arose?

At first glance, it might seem that discoveries are the sole preserve of outstanding individuals. However, it is impossible to consider the individual in isolation from the circumstances of their development. Every researcher is not only the author of a discovery, but also the product of a vast array of influences: the era, education, language, culture, social relationships and accumulated experience. It is for this very reason that the subject of this research is not the

individual, but the environment as the fundamental prerequisite for the emergence of human behaviour and human thought [2].

The environment is like the tree Yggdrasil from Norse mythology. Its branches and roots permeate all worlds, binding them together into a single whole. In the same way, the environment quietly accompanies a person throughout their life. It is not always recognised, as it is a constant prerequisite of existence; yet it is precisely within it that values, beliefs, ways of perceiving the world and patterns of behaviour are formed.

For example, it is impossible to consider guilt in isolation from the moral framework within which a person was brought up. A cause of deep remorse in one culture may be regarded as an acceptable or even approved norm in another. Consequently, behaviour is determined not only by the individual characteristics of the subject, but also by the system of relationships within which these characteristics develop [3].

It is for this very reason that this paper proposes that the environment be regarded not as one of the factors influencing behaviour, but as its ontological prerequisite. If philosophy seeks to explain human beings, then it is first and foremost necessary to understand the space within which human existence itself and any form of behaviour become possible [5].

If the environment is considered as an ontological prerequisite of human behaviour, it is required first to determine how it exerts its influence. To do this, it is not enough simply to analyse a person's actions. We should turn to the more fundamental aspects of his existence: reactions, choices and decision-making. It is here that the gradual influence of the environment becomes apparent, an influence that often goes unnoticed by the subject itself [1].

Carl Gustav Jung wrote about the need to explore the deeper foundations of the human psyche. Following this line of reasoning, the present research aims to examine not an individual human action, but the conditions that make such an action possible in the first place. Any human reaction appears to be instantaneous

only on the surface. In reality, it is preceded by a lengthy process of the subject's formation. If we picture a young man brought up in Ancient Sparta, it becomes clear that his ability to react instantly to danger is not an innate quality, but the result of many years of training. Constant discipline, physical training and a specific cultural environment gradually turned a certain type of behaviour into a natural response [8].

Reaction, choice and decision. A similar process can be observed in modern society. Healthcare workers, military personnel, emergency services staff and firefighters make decisions much more quickly than someone without training. However, this pace is not a random personality trait, but rather the result of prolonged exposure to the professional environment [1].

That is why the proverb “constant dropping wears away a stone” takes on a philosophical meaning here. Time, in itself, does not change a person. It merely allows the environment to exert a continuous influence on the subject, gradually shaping stable patterns of perception and behaviour. Consequently, a reaction is not an instantaneous phenomenon, but the result of a prolonged interaction between the subject and the environment [9].

The problem of choice is considerably more complex than the problem of reaction. People usually take their own freedom for granted. We tend to think that every choice is entirely a matter of our own free will. However, this view warrants a more in-depth analysis [5].

An interesting example can be found in the works of Jacques Fresco. Regardless of one's views on his philosophical ideas, many of his arguments demonstrate just how significantly social organisation can alter human preferences [7].

The history of the XX century also reveals a similar pattern. After the First World War, the United States was faced with the consequences of the Great Depression. The economic crisis has changed public expectations, given rise to new political movements and forced millions of people to rethink their own

beliefs. Many people joined various political parties, believing that they were making a completely independent choice. However, their decisions arose within a specific historical context, which had already defined the range of possible responses to the problems at hand.

Later, the political situation changed. Some ideas had become dominant, whilst others had been deemed socially unacceptable. As the environment had changed, so too had the range of acceptable choices.

An important conclusion follows from this. Choice does not exist in isolation from its context. It always takes place within a specific historical, cultural and informational context. It is the environment that determines the range of possibilities within which the subject is able to carry out their own decision.

It therefore seems more accurate to say not that the environment makes a choice on a person’s behalf, but that it creates the conditions within which a particular choice becomes the most likely.

Just like Neo in the film “The Matrix”, people are constantly faced with the problem of choice. However, the very possibility of choice arises within a particular system. “The problem is choice”, as the Architect says. This research proposes taking things a step further: the problem lies not only in choice itself, but also in the environment that defines the boundaries of what is possible even before a decision is made.

If we combine reaction and choice into a single system, it becomes possible to view a decision as the natural outcome of a prolonged interaction between the subject and its environment. Such a statement is not a dystopian idea or a denial of human freedom. On the contrary, it represents an attempt to identify recurring patterns that can be found both in sociological research and in the historical experience of many generations [14].

The problem is not choice itself. The problem lies in the circumstances in which choice arises.

That is why, in the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, the researcher should try to look "beyond good and evil". This approach makes it possible to avoid making moral judgements about phenomena and to focus on identifying the causes behind them. The objective of this work is not to justify human actions, but to understand the mechanisms that make them possible [12].

Information environment. If we are to examine the influence of the environment in greater detail, we must consider not only its external manifestations but also the internal structures that accompany a person throughout their life. They cannot be seen directly, yet they are constantly present, much like gamma radiation: whilst remaining invisible, they continue to have an effect.

The most enduring form of such influence is the social environment. A person is capable of changing their place of residence, profession, social circle or political views. However, it is considerably more difficult to change the ways of thinking instilled by the family, culture and society within which one's development took place [3].

The social environment has an unusual characteristic: it reproduces itself. Each generation passes on to the next not only knowledge, but also ways of interpreting the world, values, standards of behaviour and patterns of communication. This is why many of our fears, aspirations and forms of resilience are not merely random personal traits, but a historical continuation of the environment in which we grew up.

If we look back at human history, we can see that the transition from the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic Revolution changed more than just the ways in which people organised their livelihoods. It laid the foundations for the continuous transfer of knowledge between generations. From that moment on, the environment ceased to exist solely as a set of natural conditions and became a cultural heritage that constantly reproduces itself [15].

That is why thinkers from different eras did not appear by chance. Over the centuries, Christian Europe had fostered a culture of reading, theological debate

and philosophical reflection. Many future philosophers initially studied religious texts, and only later developed their own ideas about freedom, logic and human nature. Even a dispute with tradition is only possible if the tradition itself exists.

Consequently, the thinker is not an exception to the influence of the environment, but one of the forms of its historical development [15].

Whilst in earlier eras people were shaped primarily by their family, religion and immediate surroundings, modern society is increasingly shaped by the information environment [2].

The Internet has become one of the greatest transformations in human civilisation. In terms of its impact, it can be compared to the discovery of fire, the emergence of writing or the dawn of the Industrial Age. It did not merely speed up the flow of information but changed the very mechanism by which opinions are formed [11].

The algorithms used by digital platforms create a sense of freedom of choice by offering users content tailored to their interests. However, at the same time, they shape new preferences, gradually altering the very scope of a person's interests.

This is particularly evident in the phenomenon of internet memes. At first glance, a meme is a form of entertainment. In reality, however, it becomes a vehicle for cultural transmission, enabling values, behavioural patterns and ways of perceiving reality to be disseminated extremely rapidly. The deeper the cultural context, the more the meme becomes understandable only to a narrower circle of people, evolving into a kind of language specific to a particular social milieu [2].

That is why the information environment is neither good nor bad in itself. Like any tool, its value depends entirely on how it is used. A weapon can be used for both attack and defence. Similarly, digital technologies have the potential both to restrict people's independent thinking and to expand their capabilities, provided they are used as a means of learning rather than as a substitute for thinking for oneself.

Consequently, the modern information environment is becoming a new historical stage in the development of human behaviour, whilst retaining the same underlying principle: human beings continue to be shaped by an environment that they themselves often fail to notice.

New ideologies, behavioural patterns and ways of perceiving reality are emerging from these digital spaces. They are capable of intensifying aggression, fostering pacifist views or altering a person's attitude towards themselves. However, it is not the content of the information itself that proves decisive, but the way in which it is conveyed and perceived.

Information does not have an inherent moral connotation. The same ideas can be a source of creation or destruction, depending on the context in which they are interpreted. That is why myths have continued to be a part of human life for millennia. (Jung 1959)[8] Not only do they explain the world, but they also inspire people far more than a mere presentation of facts. History shows that it is often the images themselves that prove to be more enduring than the events that gave rise to them [12].

Consequently, one of the most important objectives for people today is not the accumulation of information, but its meaningful sorting. The world of the XXI century generates such a vast amount of knowledge that the key skill is the ability to distinguish between what contributes to one's personal development and what merely absorbs one's attention.

To summarise our discussion of the environment, we can draw a fundamental conclusion: the environment is not a passive backdrop to human life. It constitutes a continuously operating framework within which reactions, choices, decisions and ways of thinking take shape.

That is why human behaviour cannot be explained solely by a person's inner traits. Any behaviour constitutes a manifestation of the subject within a given environment.

That said, the extent to which the environment influences the subject also depends on the subject itself. One person strives to integrate fully into society, whilst another consciously limits their involvement in social processes. However, even an attempt to distance oneself does not mean that the influence of one's environment disappears. It continues to exert its influence through language, culture, memory, habits and ways of thinking, which have already become part of a person's very being.

Subject and time. Having examined the environment, it is required now to identify the second component of the proposed model, i.e. the subject.

In this research, the term "subject" does not refer to a common-sense conception of the individual, nor to a set of social roles. The subject refers to a person's internal constitution, comprising their biological characteristics, the properties of their nervous system, memory, accumulated experience, cognitive abilities and individual ways of perceiving the world around them.

However, the subject cannot be regarded as a static construct. It exists solely in time, constantly changing under the influence of its environment. That is why a human being is not a complete system. A person's inner state is constantly evolving in tandem with changes in the world around him [5].

In this sense, the concept of time takes on particular significance. Albert Einstein demonstrated the relativity of time in a physical sense. This research uses this idea as a philosophical analogy. Time is understood here not as a physical quantity, but as a measure of the duration of the subject's interaction with the environment [4].

It is the duration of this interaction that determines the extent to which a person's inner traits are revealed.

Let us imagine a person with impaired memory or a reduced ability to learn quickly. In a calm, supportive social environment, such characteristics may pose virtually no obstacle to his development. Conversely, in a society built on constant

competition and strict discipline, these same characteristics become a serious constraint [1].

Consequently, it is impossible to assess a person outside their environment. The same subject is capable of exhibiting completely different qualities depending on the conditions of its existence [9].

This pattern is particularly evident when analysing crime. A criminal is not born a criminal in the full sense of the word. His or her abilities might have developed quite differently under different circumstances. Someone with an exceptional understanding of hacking techniques has the potential to become a talented engineer, an information security specialist or a designer of complex security systems. However, the lack of a suitable environment often causes those very same abilities to be channelled in the opposite direction [1].

That is why punishment in itself does not always address the root causes of criminal behaviour. If, following their release, a person returns to the environment that gave rise to their initial patterns of behaviour, the likelihood of them repeating those patterns increases significantly. Consequently, the subject cannot change without a change in the environment within which it continues to exist.

Having examined the environment and the subject, we can now move on to the third element of the proposed model, which is time.

It is time that allows us to see what remains hidden when analysing a person's individual actions. The environment does not have an immediate effect. It shapes the individual gradually, day by day, transforming random impressions into established ways of thinking.

Let's imagine a person who has spent a long time amongst people who are passionate about floristry. Gradually, they begin to distinguish between different types of plants, understand the characteristics of their growth, and appreciate the beauty of the structure of their leaves, flowers and stems. This knowledge does not come all at once. They are the result of prolonged exposure to a particular environment.

Any ideological environment operates in a similar way. If a person finds themselves surrounded every day by people who share the same views, they gradually begin to regard those views as natural. This does not mean a complete loss of the ability to think critically. However, without alternative examples, it is much more difficult for a person to look beyond the worldview they have already internalised [14].

Conclusion. Consequently, human memory is shaped not only by individual experience, but also by the duration of interaction with the environment. In the decision-making process, the subject inevitably draws on patterns of behaviour that have already been learnt. Just like a player shuffling the cards in their own deck, a person does not choose from an infinite array of possibilities, but primarily from those that are already part of their life experience.

Thus, time is not an independent cause of behaviour, but rather a measure of the cumulative effect of the environment on the subject.

The research carried out enables us to propose a different philosophical model for understanding human behaviour. The environment is not merely an external backdrop to human life, but an ontological prerequisite of the subject's existence. It is within this that values, ways of thinking, behavioural patterns and the scope for choice arise. The subject, for its part, is not a complete and unchanging entity. Its internal characteristics only become apparent over time, through constant interaction with its environment. Consequently, behaviour can be defined as the process by which the subject manifests itself over time under the continuous influence of its environment. It is this proposition that forms the basis of the proposed model.

The formula:

$$B = f(E \times (S / T))$$

is not a mathematical law and does not claim to be capable of quantifying human behaviour. It is a philosophical model that provides a concise way of expressing the interrelationships between the key elements of the research,

where:

B – behaviour,

E – environment,

S – subject,

T – time as a measure of the cumulative interaction between the subject and the environment;

f – the mechanism underlying the emergence of behaviour, reflecting the interrelationship between all the elements listed.

This model does not provide a means of manipulating people. On the contrary, its purpose is quite different — to reveal the prerequisites within which human behaviour becomes possible.

Understanding one’s own environment does not take away a person’s freedom, but makes it more conscious. The better the subject understands the mechanisms by which the environment influences it, the more opportunities it has to engage with it in a meaningful way.

It is for this reason that the purpose of this research is not to seek a universal method for changing people, but rather to demonstrate that personal development cannot be considered in isolation from one’s environment, time and historical experience.

Every person is a unique manifestation of the long-term interaction between biological nature, cultural heritage, the social environment and their own life journey. That is why human dignity lies not only in one’s individuality, but also in the ability to recognise the circumstances of one’s own development. As early as Plato, in his dialogue “The Laws”, regarded inner self-control as the highest form of human triumph, contrasting it with defeat at the hands of one’s own passions [13].

The proposed model does not provide a definitive account of human nature. On the contrary, it opens up the possibility for further philosophical analysis of the environment as a fundamental prerequisite of human existence.

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