

Zdzisława Piątek, *Ekofilozofia [Ecophilosophy]*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2008.

Currently, we live in times when ecology is very popular. Such increasing interest is based on transformations in human consciousness which are connected mainly with the realization that a human being is responsible not only for himself but also for the surrounding natural environment. In general, ecology is defined as a science of the structure and functioning of nature, investigating relationships between organisms and their environment and between the organisms themselves. Ecology investigates connections between the biotic community and the abiotic environment based on different types of interaction, communication and information. The discovery of these phenomena has taken place from ancient times to the present but ecology as an independent science developed generally in the 19th century. Ecology is not a science indifferent to the existence of nature and human beings, thus in colloquial discussion it is identified with zoology and philosophy. In general, ecology is a science concerned with order and disorder in nature and the consequences resulting from this for the existence of the biosphere and the human being. For philosophical and utilitarian reasons the term „ecology” is nowadays used with a wider meaning. The terms *ecology*, *ecological* are often used in colloquial language in a wide and sometimes imprecise semantic sense, sometimes not related to ecology as a science. They often refer to zoology, i.e. a science concerned with environmental protection or to environmental protection itself, or even to ecological philosophy (ecosophia), social or artistic activity.

In her work *Ecophilosophy*, Prof. Zdzisława Piątek from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, has undertaken the very interesting task of developing an ecophilosophical theory in the spirit of biocentrism. In order to realize the project, the author makes reference to different theoretical conceptions. After presenting the goal of the theoretical investigations in the first chapter of the work, the author presents the conception of ethics of Kazimierz Twardowski, creator of the Polish Lviv-Warsaw school. Describing his conception, Z. Piątek discusses its applicability in the theoretical development of her own conception. With a distance typical of her, she critically evaluates it, showing what can be used during the construction of her own proposal. In the next chapter, the author reconstructs the conception of ethics as reverence for life, presented by A. Schweitzer. During the reconstruction of this theoretical proposal, the author pays attention to the difficulties connected with „reverence for life”. She states that the conception proposed by Schweitzer can be used in the determination of her own proposal, but only partially. In the next chapters, with reference to natural science, the author reconstructs a specifically understood metaphysics of life and, in the last chapter, undertakes a discussion of issues of sustainable development. However, a central place is occupied by the idea of biocentrism promoted by prof. Piątek, to which I would like to pay more attention.

According to prof. Piątek, nowadays ecology means mainly the reconstruction of a responsible interaction with the natural environment. Thus, it is a kind of moral

approach to the natural world and natural resources. In the modern era and up to the 20th century, philosophers were interested in morality only as a relation between people, completely omitting beings other than human and living in different natural ecosystems. However, this approach has changed because of certain events that occurred in the 20th century. In this century, called by scientists „*a century of civilisation*”, the development of science, technology, biotechnology and industry was very expansive. It made people aware of an important problem – maybe it is necessary to extend the limits of human responsibility in order to include forms of life other than the human. It was noticed that the activity of *homo sapiens* has become a danger for nature. Based on an idea of titular reign over nature people used methods of brutal exploitation of natural resources. The awareness of this fact was a result of the many types of environmental philosophy and ecophilosophy developed in the 20th century. These philosophies paid attention to the fact that previous theories omitted the relation between human beings and nature, or even if they did not, they explained it in the wrong way – always from the anthropocentric point of view. Nowadays, in the 21st century, the ecological problems are particularly important. More and more theoretical efforts are made in order to build an integral model of environmental philosophy or ecophilosophy that would show an adequate relation between *homo sapiens* and nature considered as autotelic, as having value in itself.

Biocentrism is a perspective and approach to nature opposite to the anthropocentric one. In the anthropocentric perspective which was dominant for ages, the Archimedean point of nature and the end of all ends (as Kant said) is the human being (Piątek 2008). Understood in an extreme sense, anthropocentrism leads to a situation in which the human being is considered to be the Lord of nature who can exploit it according to his will. An ethics of responsibility was built based on anthropocentrism understood in this way. It resulted from a conception of the theory of morality understood as a relation between people. A good example illustrating such way of understanding morality is Immanuel Kant's theory.

The end of moral activity is the human being, who is an end in himself and demands absolute respect. He takes the first place in the kingdom of ends. The human being is the end of everything and takes a privileged place in the world of nature. Kant forbids the treating of the human being as a means for the realization of ends, something that would insult his dignity. This is, in my opinion, a valid appeal but limited to one form of life only. This insuperable limitation results from assuming the anthropocentric vision of morality. In the 20th century, anthropocentrism was transferred to the development of technology and industry which was considered as good from the human point of view. However, was it advantageous from the natural world's point of view?

In the biocentric perspective the problem of responsibility looks totally different than in the anthropocentric model. This new way of understanding responsibility is a consequence of determining a new relation between the human being and nature, or other forms of life. Modern anthropocentrism broke the primeval bond between the human being and nature. It caused the separation of the human being from na-

ture. Biocentrism tries to recover this union. Nature cannot be understood as something to be exploited by the human being. Biocentric theory does not say that nature evolved for the human being or that the human being is the lord of nature. It refutes the main doctrine of anthropocentrism that the human being is the centre of nature and introduces a new hierarchy of dependence and axiological order. Biocentrism does not single out human beings as the goal of nature, as Kant suggested. One can say that nature and everything belonging to it is a subject, an end. Every living being is considered as an entity deserving respect. In the biocentric perspective there is no basis for glorifying the human being, as was the case in anthropocentrism, because biocentrism assumes the main assumptions of the theory of evolution and the human being is not a privileged being in nature. Evolution has not happened for the human being and evolution did not aim to „produce” the human being. He is, like any other organism, an effect of evolution which began billions of years ago from the evolution of space and then transformed into biological evolution. Although the complexity of the human being differs from that of other beings, this does not authorize us to treat the human being as the end in itself, the end of all ends and to make him the „Lord of Nature”, who became its tyrant in anthropocentrism. Such ideas came mostly from philosophers who had trouble with admitting that the human being is a part of nature. Prof. Z. Piątek is right in writing: „However, philosophers love illusions. Maybe that is why in Western-European philosophy the dignity of the human being is defined with features that have nothing to do with his biological nature, by what separates him from nature, that nature which, because of the human being, becomes less important and receives a minor, instrumental value. Nature becomes something valuable because of the human being, because it is something to which the human being has a right as a thinking entity having internal value and being an end in itself” (Piątek, 2008, p. 139). An ethical consequence of biocentrism is, according to prof. Zdzisława Piątek, a respect for forms of life other than the human and even something more – a fascination with their difference which is never to be fully understood by the human being: One does not have to be a mystic in order to experience the miraculous phenomena of nature (Piątek, 2008).

In what way does this extension of limits take place? At first, through making the human being aware of the fact that he is only a part of nature. Philosophers, as prof. Piątek said, very often build an image of the human being as free of his natural heritage, and this leads to the building of fictional images that do not take into account an ontological fact: the human being is a being created from nature and even the most lofty philosophical theory cannot shatter this. For some philosophers speaking about the human being in biological terms is insulting even today. Maybe they are afraid to admit this about themselves. Nevertheless, whether one wants it or not, the human being is a part of nature because he evolved from it. The biocentric perspective says that the human being does not occupy such a high position in the world of nature. He is not as perfect as he is sometimes presented to be. According to prof. Z. Piątek „biocentrism is meant to make people conscious that frogs, by being descendants of amphibians that colonized the lands, have their unique value

in the evolution of life coming from water onto land. Frogs are hundreds of millions of years older than *hominids* and taking into attention what they are representing in adapting to the water – land existence, they deserve respect and leaving them at least small part of their natural environment [...]” (Piątek, 2008, p. 142). Thus, the human being has his honourable ancestors who should be respected while undertaking activities. This aspect of life, with a significant dose of radicalism, has already been underlined by Schweitzer.

In the biocentric perspective, nature with its resources is a value in itself. Thus, it is not valuable because of the human being and his needs. Sometimes one can find approaches in ecology which say that we should save nature, which is in danger, but we should save it because of human beings. Although the postulate of saving nature is right, it is based on the anthropocentric perspective. The human being is the last criterion because of which nature is saved. Formerly, nature was being destroyed in order to allow the human being to develop because he was the Lord and today we save nature to save the human being because he feels endangered. While it is good that the human being has evolved to a stage at which he is wiser and aware of the fact that his attitude towards nature is disturbed by excessive exploitation, nevertheless the point of view is still anthropocentric. Also the form of responsibility standing behind such a solution is not a responsibility for nature but for the human being, because he, poor and threatened, needs help now. Such a perspective reveals the human being as a primitive being calculating profits and losses. Formerly it was beneficial to exploit nature as much as possible and now it is not so advantageous because it can cause global catastrophe for the human being, and thus nature requires respect. In such calculation nature and its value is not taken into account. What is good for nature does not matter. All the time the only thing that matters is the human being, who is threatened in this case.

Rejecting the axiological perspective of anthropocentrism which leads to the instrumental treatment of nature, one can, according to Z. Piątek say that „biocentrism is intended to create a foundation on which *homo sapiens* can build a new ethics, taking into account its very complex relations with the natural environment [...] Assigning internal value to the living entities and ecosystems whose functioning sustains the existence of life on earth, obliges moral entities to treat them as ends and not only as means. On the other hand, the nature of the life that have evolved in this part of the Universe, involves the necessity of instrumentally using other living entities in order to live. This limitation causes moral dilemmas which can be found in the arguments of many philosophers propagating ideas close to biocentrism”. (Piątek, 2008, p. 147) On the basis of biocentric ethics „Biocentric ethics understood in such a way would be an open system because adjudging moral dilemmas has to be performed in confrontation with real situations in an environment that is constantly changing. Adjudging moral dilemmas should be performed after a recognition of the necessity of Nature and of the needs of the culture.” (as above, p. 149). Thus, Nature has to be protected not only for human beings but also for itself, for its inalienable good and for other beings living in it, e.g. polar bears, wolves or small rodents. The extended version of responsibility in the biocentric

perspective is based on admitting that nature as a whole, together with everything having an internal value, is valuable in itself and not in relation to the valuating entity (the human being). Thus it is not a utilitarian or instrumental value as followers of the anthropocentric model think.

In this new point of view this responsibility includes not only living entities as elements of different ecosystems. It also includes natural resources as fundamental goods of the Earth, which are a condition for the existence of many species. The argumentation presented by prof. Piątek seems to be correct. The only things that is left is the question whether this extended version of the responsibility for nature, professed by Z. Piątek, does not blur the ontic difference between human beings and the world? While reading work by prof. Piątek one often has the impression that it is so. In my opinion, this issue should be elaborated in a more detailed way.

The book *Ecophilosophy* is an innovative and original attempt at building a concept of ecophilosophy, based on the results of the natural sciences and philosophy. This concept is a theory which recovers the balance between the human being and the environment from which he came. *Ecophilosophy* is written using clear and precise language. The author wanted to be as precise as possible while expressing her thoughts. She also avoids repetition, which is really difficult for every writer. Reading this work by prof. Piątek is a real education in clear, expressive and communicative ways of describing the difficult problems of modern ecology. The work can be characterized as coherent and logically consequent. The author justifies her theses in a critical way, with high methodological consciousness in showing how to interpret scientific facts in a philosophical way. Nowadays, one cannot build philosophical-ethical theories without taking into account scientific data. A significant advantage of the work is the ability of the author to connect philosophical arguments with the natural sciences.

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Józef Bremer and Josef Rothhaupt (eds.), Ludwig Wittgenstein „przydzielony do Krakowa” [Ludwig Wittgenstein „assigned to Krakow”], Wydawnictwo WAM, Krakow 2009.

Undoubtedly, Ludwig Wittgenstein is one of the greatest and most influential philosophers of the 20th century. He belongs to that group of philosophers who are currently at the focus of attention. This attention is focused not only on Wittgenstein's thought itself but also on his personality and the interesting lifestyle which gives his thought an even more amazing dimension. Also his style of writing philosophy, vague, sometimes metaphorical, hard to decipher unequivocally, is so attractive for some that their main goal is to *solve* his thought like a „Rubik's Cube”, a task

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