

## EDUCATION FOR THE VALUE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED CONCEPTS OF ECOPHILOSOPHY

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**Abstract:** As part of ecophilosophy, new thinking and action models are proposed in harmony with the natural environment and the vision of sustainable development. The models contain axiological (eco-axiological) indications often justified by different positions, including anthropocentric and biocentric.

The article presents axiological indications of selected concepts of ecophilosophy and the methods of their implementation into social practice. Particular attention was paid to the issue of axiological education and management of socially important values as important elements of education for sustainable development.

**Keywords:** ecophilosophy, axiological education, management of socially important values, crisis of the sustainable development paradigm.

### 1. Introduction

The concept of sustainable development is an idea of rebuilding the world in which "borders were crossed", resulting not in "separate crises": environmental crisis, energy crisis, development crisis, value crisis, etc., but rather in one holistic crisis. The crisis resulting from a lack of adjustment of human activities to the capabilities of the environment caused adverse changes in earth systems, including a direct threat to life. Ecophilosophy is a philosophical discipline that focuses on, among other things, various civilizational conditions that have contributed to the global environmental crisis. It can be understood as a tool to extract the decisive axioms of our scientific and technical worldview, as well as our instrumental and practical thinking (Skowroński, 2006). As part of eco-philosophy, new thinking and action models are proposed in harmony with the natural environment and the vision of sustainable development. The models contain axiological (eco-axiological) indications often justified by different positions, including anthropocentric and biocentric. In this context, the article will

include an analysis of selected concepts of ecophilosophy and presentation of different ways of their implementation into social practice, mainly through education.

## **2. Axiological implications of selected concepts of ecophilosophy**

Ecophilosophy (ecological philosophy) can be understood in two ways - as general considerations including issues regarding the natural environment recognized as significant and existentially important, and as the source and discussion of philosophical and ethical problems focusing on human relations and relationships (Hull, 2010). It is a young philosophical discipline or "philosophical science concerning the natural and social environment, that is, concerning the terrestrial ecosystem and its surroundings with theoretical and practical aspects" (Dołęga, 2006, p. 45). The subject of the ecological philosophy is "the essence and nature of the socio-natural environment, its quantitative and qualitative properties as well as bilateral causal relationships between the anthroposphere and the environment" (Dołęga, 2005, p. 304). As part of ecophilosophy, it is possible to distinguish views and develop concepts in the field of the existing relationships between man and the natural environment, reflecting certain ontological and axiological assumptions.

Currently, a number of approaches to ecophilosophy can be distinguished, including concepts understood as: philosophy of ecology, independent philosophical science, human ecology, humanistic ecology, deep ecology, ecological philosophy, ecosophy T, philosophy of ecological crisis, outlook with ethical, legal and moral aspects, systemic and informational approach to eco-development, practical philosophy of nature, part of the philosophy of nature, culturalist philosophy of ecology, environmentalism, philosophy of ecological and social security, educational and didactic concept of ecophilosophy, as well as biocentric concept of ecophilosophy. A common and distinctive feature of the specified concepts is "an attempt to replace the paradigm of nature dominating in science and modern culture, treated as the passive, dead mass of matter subordinated to man, by way of perceiving the world that would capture man and nature as a co-existing unity and a whole" (Stankiewicz, 2003, p. 193).

Ecophilosophy includes both philosophical, anthropological, axiological and educational issues. For this reason, it is often considered the basis for sustainable development (Dołęga, 2005). As part of its individual concepts, it addresses issues covering the protection of the socio-natural environment, threats to human health and life, and future perspectives in the current of certain philosophical thinking. It seems that basing on each of the approaches, it is possible to analyze and propose specific positions and formulas for sustainable development with an indication of their ethical and axiological premises.

The three basic questions that bother ecophilosophers are closely related to the issue of sustainable development. The first concerns the search for scientific and technical assumptions that contributed to the emergence of ecological and social threats. The second question is related to the issue of the value of nature and its importance for human life. The third, closest to the idea of sustainable development, concerns the possible solutions and proposals on how to stop the ecological crisis (Skowroński, 2006). The ecophilosophical critical reflection covers axiological and ethical correlations and interactions between man and nature. It also investigates the causes and dimensions of the modern ecological crisis and suggests rational solutions to ultimately shape a new social order that takes into account the requirements of ecology. Therefore, the scientific and technical assumptions that contributed to the emergence of ecological and social threats are identified. The value of nature and its importance for human life are analyzed. In addition, it asks about possible solutions and proposals to stop the ecological crisis.

When identifying the axiological (eco-axiological) indications of individual concepts of ecophilosophy, it is worth noting that they are often justified by different positions, primarily anthropocentric and biocentric. For example, the concept of biocentric ecophilosophy emphasizes the intrinsic value of all living things. Staying together in a network of natural connections, they have their own needs and create a network of adaptive connections, autotelic values. As I. Fiut emphasizes, interpreting the views of Z. Piątek, "their adaptive relativity does not, however, exclude the objectivity of their internal values, so it can be responsibly assumed that every moral entity (human) is able to see in the living beings not only utilitarian internal values, and therefore treats them as real moral objects" (Fiut, 2011, p. 96). As part of this concept of ecophilosophy, it is postulated that men stop treating nature in an instrumental way and show respect as a result of real solidarity with other living beings. This is associated with the rejection of anthropocentrism, primarily in the strong version, according to which human interests and goals are more important than the needs of the rest of nature. Weak (moderate) anthropocentrism, closer to most directions of ecophilosophy, recognizes the intrinsic value of non-human beings, but emphasizes the value of man as incomparably higher than the value of the rest of beings. "Representatives of weak anthropocentrism declare that the healing of man's moral references to nature can be achieved through appropriately modified traditional ethics. Pointing to human dignity, the uniqueness of man in the natural world, and the perception of the features as a salvation for nature, they postulate a correction of the current direction of thinking" (Ganowicz-Bączyk, 2017, p. 63).

Axiological and ethical references appear in ecophilosophical concepts also in the context of the ecological crisis. For example, the philosophy of nature<sup>1</sup> as eco-ethics (practical philosophy of nature) is a concept that studies the relationship between man and nature. It emphasizes practical and ethical issues related primarily to the ecological crisis. That is why, in this approach, the philosophy of nature includes issues of moral values and norms through references to such values as: human life and health, the anthropological system of values, and socio-natural environment as a common good. The issues are closely related to the values that create new morality and ecological sensitivity. This concept was particularly developed by K.M. Meyer-Abich (as a practical philosophy of nature), G. Böhm (as a new philosophy of nature) and J.M. Dołęga (as one of the approaches to ecophilosophy) (Lemańska, 2009). The "practical philosophy of nature" proposed by the German philosopher K.M. Meyer-Abich is associated with the adoption of the physiocentric concept of man and nature. The Homo sapiens species is part of nature, which is why nature will always be perceived on the basis of the human factor. Therefore, nature is somewhat anthropogenic. Similarly, man should be identified with nature and recognized as a special and exceptional representative. He can be fully human if he creates a community of life not only with personal beings, but also with animals, plants and the rest of nature. In order to express the relationship or kinship of man with nature, K.M. Meyer-Abich postulates the replacement of the term "environment" with the term "co-environment". This is one of the basic assumptions of the practical philosophy of nature, setting the direction of axiological decisions with particular emphasis on the issue of responsibility for the natural environment. Care for nature, as understood by K.M. Meyer-Abich, means the protection of both the human species and other entities that make up the "co-environment" (Łepko, and Sadowski, 2017).

A similar position to K.M. Meyer-Abich's is expressed by G. Böhme, who proposes a "new philosophy of nature" due to the growing crisis of the natural environment. The philosophy of nature focusing in a special way on the "dialectical tension between belonging and the transcending beyond nature" (Lemańska, 1997, p. 135). The philosophy of nature in the view of G. Böhm explores not only nature in itself, but also the existence and action of man in it. According to K.M. Meyer-Abich and G. Böhm, anthropologies should be created to promote a friendly approach to the biosphere. It is therefore necessary to stop creating the human species, which ruthlessly transforms the environment to its own needs, as the absolute master of the world around it. However, in the physiocentric concept of man and nature, the unique position and role of rational beings in nature has not been questioned, but only modified and enriched with new content and goals closer to weak anthropocentrism.

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<sup>1</sup> The proposal to place ecophilosophy within the philosophy of nature results from the Aristotelian-Thomist orientation adopting the division of natural philosophy into cosmos philosophy (inanimate philosophy), biophilosophy (philosophy of animated nature) and ecophilosophy (philosophy of the socio-natural environment). J. M. Dołęga, *Ekofilozofia – nauka XXI wieku*, „Problemy Ekorozwoju [Ecophilosophy - science of the 21st century, "Problems of Sustainable Development]", 2006, vol. 1, No 1, p. 19.

Therefore, the axiological problems of ecophilosophy relate to the interdependence and interaction between man and the natural environment, analysis of the contemporary dimension of the ecological crisis, as well as the issue of organizing socio-economic order. It is worth to emphasize the values, norms and imperatives that regulate man's attitude towards his natural surroundings and incorporate them into education, analyzed and designed from the perspective of limiting the instrumental and utilitarian treatment of the natural world, and the acceptance of non-useful goods by natural objects (Papuziński, 1998, p. 69).

### **3. Practical dimension of ecophilosophy in education for sustainable development**

The practical ecophilosophy of Z. Hull should be understood as approaches to the essence, ways of defining and formulating the principles of sustainable development. Moreover, considerations including philosophical assumptions and dimensions of sustainable development (Hull, 1995) constitute the subject of ecophilosophy understood in this way. In the author's view, the philosophy of sustainable development includes "the leading ideas and main values of programs or policies for sustainable development - (most often) consciously or implicitly founded ontological, axiological and historiosophical beliefs determining the way of his understanding and determining his goals" (Hull, 2003, p. 17). The views and theses expressed on this ground do not constitute an independent or coherent philosophical system, but rather justifications for the assumptions and guidelines developed under individual programs, also in the field of education. The philosophy of sustainable development refers to the philosophical reflection focused primarily on practice. By adopting the above assumptions, he placed axiological and ethical analyzes and decisions at the center of his research, thus shaping the theoretical maturity of the idea of sustainable development. The specificity of this philosophy is determined by the questions it formulates, such as: do non-existent future generations have any rights?; is it possible to identify the needs of future generations?; what is meant by socio-economic development? etc. In this way, he strives to create such a model of reality in which the principle of intergenerational justice is crucial (Papuziński, 2007). What is more, the philosophy of sustainable development indicates norms and values that can help mitigate the aspirations of modern man without depriving him of the right to development and progress. In a situation where the tendency to search for permanent structures and values disappears (Szacki, 2002), it is important to create an axiological orientation model and reveal analogies in the form of clear principles and norms. It is increasingly emphasized that for the purposes of education for sustainable development, a common axiological system should be developed and adopted (Kuzior, 2006). Hence ethical decisions are propagated in education for sustainable development to influence motivations, attitudes and behaviors. There are three main

levels of educational activity in the field of ethics: cognitive, which mainly consists in the transfer of knowledge, emotional and volitional, related to stimulating moral sensitivity to world affairs, including nature, and behavioral, relating to the formation of specific beliefs and behaviors (Tyburski, 2017). It is worth recalling the opinion of T. Borys, who believes that sustainable development is defined as an axiological challenge or a challenge for value systems for a reason. Without an indication of value systems, man will not be able to clearly answer the question of what social, economic, environmental, political and institutional order we want to implement. Each value system designs a different order that cannot be identified without axiology (Borys, 2010). For this reason, the concepts of ecophilosophy, especially practical ecophilosophy, emphasize that ethical and philosophical education should be included as often as possible in education for sustainable development. Moreover, they affect the introduction of principles and norms in the practice of life and action. As W. Tyburski notes, human thinking is "program axiological", it refers to a specific system of values, rules and recommendations. That is why this should be taken into account in the implementation-oriented education for sustainable development. (Tyburski, 2011).

There are basically two options for practicing ecophilosophy: ideological and integrative. As part of the first one, we seek a holistic and coherent set of views on universal philosophical issues that may apply to the concept of ecophilosophy. The integration option is a field synthesizing the content of various specific sciences, including natural, humanistic and social sciences. The goal of ecophilosophy practiced in such way is a reflection on human activity in terms of its consequences for the socio-natural environment, assessment of decisions and choices made, and indicating development paths. In this option of ecophilosophy, much more space is devoted to practical issues resulting from ecological reflection than to its typically philosophical consequences (Łastowski, 1997). Specific recommendations are also proposed, e.g. in the field of counteracting the ecological crisis, which can be implemented through education for sustainable development. At the same time, it is emphasized that educational activities concern not only environmental issues but also important social and economic problems. Ecophilosophers developing e.g. the concept of practical philosophy of nature, philosophy of ecological crisis, philosophy of ecological and social security or the aforementioned philosophy of sustainable development point out that environmental ethics should be the key tool for education for sustainable development. It strives for "(...) the awareness of the ecological crisis to find support in the awareness of man's moral obligations towards nature. And in social and economic life, this ethics tends to make the awareness of the obligations woven into the rules of social, political and economic activity" (Tyburski, 2017, p. 210).

Despite the fact that the educational issues of ecophilosophy are very often primarily associated with the philosophical foundations of pro-ecological education or sozological education through formal and informal education, the benefits of the integration option of ecophilosophy are also recognized. In this regard, the benefits for social practice are indicated,

assuming that natural environment problems can also be considered from a socio-humanistic point of view.

#### **4. Axiological education and value management in the context of the crisis of the sustainable development paradigm**

Nowadays, the crisis of the sustainable development paradigm is more and more often talked about when indicating the ineffectiveness in eliminating global problems. Strategies and programs aimed at reducing anthropopressure on the natural environment as well as ways of implementing sustainable development goals are assessed. In view of the "weakness of indicators" of progress in implementing the postulates of sustainable development, opinions are being expressed about "the depletion of the sustainable development paradigm" (Bińczyk, 2018).

So far, the strengthening of the practice of sustainable development, including programs concerning the protection of the social and natural environment, was related to the implementation of education for sustainable development. However, the area of educational activities also points to their ineffectiveness and some neglect. Therefore, bearing in mind the educational failures, resulting also from the implementation of only ecological education at a rather elementary level, it is worth to "humanize" education. This means, for example, enriching educational processes with axiological education, as part of which attention is paid to values in the existential dimension. They are seen as something precious, worthy of desire, which is the goal of human aspirations.

Axiological education can be considered part of humanistic or cultural pedagogy in which values play a significant role in shaping the humanistic development of the world and man. Through axiological education, a person develops the ability to choose values, and then to act in accordance with this choice. Such education is one of the fields of upbringing to values, thus developing the ability to perceive, select, update, realize values, etc. (Olbrycht, 2012).

The relationship between values and action is an important issue in axiological education. Values affect people who respond to them, including through their actions. Some values are so important to man that they urge him to act. Action is reflected in specific attitudes illustrating the human approach to the selected aspect of reality, as well as in behavior. "Values acquire an individual dimension in action, the general slogan becomes a concrete reality, and declarations are transformed into a work" (Żuk, 2016, p. 58). However, this does not happen automatically. Values that are only declared by man do not necessarily affect his behavior in a particular situation. Axiological education can help in the materialization of the declared values in the form of deeds. Declarations express what is important for a particular person, thus representing some potential that can be used in the educational process (Żuk, 2016).

The realization of value is associated with many factors, which include: awareness of the existence of values and the decision or need to realize them. M. Gołaszewska enumerates intellectual will and intention to realize values, as well as cognitive authorities, the ability to think and predict the consequences of one's own actions or the ability to empathize with another person (Gołaszewska, 1990). Values can also be internalized by the individual on a voluntary basis or under social pressure. Even if some values dominate in a given community, they should not be imposed on individuals. Without the individual's decision and sense of value, it is unlikely that even a declared value will be realized.

The educational process should be supported by the management of socially important values, i.e. in this case, values resulting from the axiology of sustainable development. To this end, the preferred concept of axiology of sustainable development is adopted. However, it should not be considered immutable and final. It is impossible to fully develop all values inherent in the content and assumptions of the idea of sustainable development. It is connected with the dynamic nature of values that are subject to transformations within the framework of historical and situational changes. Depending on the conditions, place and time, certain values previously recognized as neutral can become a priority in the process of implementing sustainable development. In the future, their catalog can also be enriched with values whose significance we currently do not see or are not aware of (Hull, 2011). When determining a specific axiology of sustainable development, it is also worth noting that "today's axiological doctrines influence reality through the mobilization of people, that is, by inclining them to adopt a particular attitude. They generally contain three component parts: a far-reaching autotelic goal, an instrumental goal and means for the attainment of that goal. Their power depends primarily on the attractiveness of the goals and the credibility of the proposed means" (Papuziński, 2013, p. 19).

As part of value management, an important stage is the transmission of values recognized in the selected axiology as socially important so that they could be properly reflected in individual values. In the creation, transformation and strengthening of individual values, both governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations are of great importance. Institutions, especially state-owned ones, are an important point of reference in the lives of individual citizens and in the society. They set the direction of human activities, make social undertakings routine and contribute to the strengthening of certain social relations. Institutions can also be helpful in the proper interpretation of the sense of values. They can also strengthen their significance, which is especially important when implementing sustainable development demands.

Nowadays, traditional values are being questioned more and more often and are being replaced by those that have not yet received sufficient social acceptance. Modernity is characterized by the diversity of most areas of life. They lack a holistic vision of the world with universally recognized values and standards. It even happens that there are visible contradictions. Values shared in one sphere of social life (e.g. economy, science, culture,



politics) are not necessarily accepted in another. A feature of today's societies is a constant change that affects the approach to traditional models of morality, usually reducing their significance (Marianiński, 2014). Different sectors of life are oriented towards inconsistent, often conflicting values and systems of meaning. Hence, integrating them into a compact system or effectively urging them to implement certain values, adopting the indicated behavioral patterns or attitudes, is becoming more and more difficult.

"Values reflect a vision of a world that does not exist, even though it should" (Szkudlarek, 2008, p. 133). However, any "repair" of the world depends on the commitment of man, on his transformation; in his actions, he should take into account the values important for his individual existence, but also implement those that serve the common good and future generations.

In order to increase the social activity focused on implementing the values of sustainable development, it is necessary to aim for objective values cataloged for the purposes of building a new socio-economic natural order to be reflected in the attitudes of individuals. Personalized values strongly motivate people to take action and shape their specific habits. However, not everyone perceives a given value in the same way, and not everyone equally assesses the importance and urgency of actions. Hence, education seems to be one of the better tools for teaching how to read values. With the help of education, you can effectively reach the society and promote activities that will bring particular values to fruition. Therefore, in the face of the crisis of the sustainable development paradigm, axiological education should become a priority. Its main principle should be to educate, first and foremost, in the spirit of the value of responsibility, so that this value was not only declared by the society, but also implemented individually. Responsibility can be considered a fundamental and common value for different cultures. Other values should be considered in relation to responsibility (Jedynak, 1999) – for present and future generations.

## **5. Summary**

There is no doubt that the practical implementation of sustainable development postulates is negligible and more common at the local level. There are no effective global solutions or radical limitations behind international sustainable development events. For this reason, there are opinions that we are currently dealing with a crisis of the sustainable development paradigm. However, it is necessary to distinguish the criticism of improperly implemented sustainable development from the criticism of the idea itself, and therefore clearly separate the sphere of theory and practice. When postulating the need for developing a new vision of civilization development, without pointing out the imperfections of the theory of sustainable development, one should be aware that it can be analogous with its implementation.

The extent of human impact on the environment continues to increase, thus intensifying the ecological crisis. The main destructive factors for the natural environment include: population growth, growing consumption and improvement of living standards, as well as environmentally friendly technological development. Everyone has a direct impact on the first two factors, so the effectiveness of implementing sustainable development guidelines depends primarily on environmental awareness, sensitivity to the co-environment and knowledge of global problems. Progress in the field of sustainable development practice is also conditioned by the accepted axiology. This, in turn, should become the subject of education in order to indicate and justify the selected axiology, consistent with the concept of sustainable development. Axiological education should become part of education for sustainable development in order to shape the human ability to choose values while being aware of the consequences of following the preferred values. Today, values are subject to frequent modifications due to historical or situational transformations, which is why it is important to develop the ability to perceive, select, update and realize values. Therefore, man should be taught to perceive both himself and other non-human beings as a result of various networks of relations as well as civilization and environmental conditions. However, only "the interaction of cognition (knowledge) and axiology can result in the desired results in the sphere of practical action and acting" (Tyburski, 2017, p. 207).

Failures in the sphere of praxis of sustainable development are associated with contradictions between the economic goals of society and increasingly clear ecological restrictions. Despite the fact that the state of crisis in the natural environment is permanent, human activity can protect them from final collapse, if only because of the protection of their species.

"Action based on putting values into practice belongs to human tasks, which are an important, creative element of being in the world and transforming the world" (Żuk, 2016, p. 60). Hence the suggestion of axiological education, education for the value of sustainable development and management of socially important values, to shape people's need for realizing them with the help of appropriate means, also ecophilosophical.

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