

Sustainable Development's Issues in the Light of Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II's Political Philosophy and Theology

Problematyka rozwoju zrównoważonego w świetle filozofii i teologii politycznej Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła II

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Abstract

Philosophical and theological thought of Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II was also concerned with ecological issues. Generally, it is a part of his ethical and moral consideration, becoming important element of his political philosophy and theology. Personalistic hermeneutics is a key for understanding his sustainable development conception. It sees a fundamental criterion of ethical and moral evaluation of diverse forms of activity in human being. Firstly, pro-ecological activity means directing human being towards good. Pope John Paul II noticed many dangers for man and environment. He was convinced that whole international community should be involved in finding solutions.

Key words: John Paul II, social philosophy, political philosophy, sustainable development, Catholic social doctrine, personalism

Streszczenie

Myśl filozoficzna i teologiczna Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła II obejmuje również problematykę rozwoju zrównoważonego. Wpisuje się ona generalnie w jego rozważania etyczne i teologiczno-moralne, stanowiąc w istocie ważny element jego filozofii i teologii politycznej. Kluczem do zrozumienia jego koncepcji rozwoju zrównoważonego jest hermeneutyka personalistyczna, która podstawowe kryterium oceny różnego rodzaju działań widzi w człowieku. Działalność proekologiczna zakłada przede wszystkim nakierowanie na dobro osoby ludzkiej. Papież Jan Paweł II dostrzegał liczne zagrożenia tak dla człowieka, jak i środowiska naturalnego. Uważał, że w ich przeciwdziałaniu powinna być zaangażowana cała wspólnota międzynarodowa, co jest wyrazem realizacji dobra wspólnego w jego najszerszym, to jest uniwersalnym wymiarze.

Słowa kluczowe: Jan Paweł II, filozofia społeczna, filozofia polityczna, zrównoważony rozwój, Katolicka doktryna społeczna, personalizm

Introduction

The issues related to sustainable development are among the key issues of the contemporary intellectual discourse (Papuziński, 2006; Udo, Pawłowski, 2010; Wosińska, 2010). They are reflected in the popular culture as the fashion for ecology. At the same time, however, in the background of the pop-

cultural ecological trends, a serious philosophical discussion is held between the worlds of culture and nature. The sustainable development idea is often treated as a domain strictly related to philosophy or political ethics. The issue is also present in the research conducted in the field of political science, either as an important element of the so-called *public policy* or a *branch of global science and interna-*

tional relations (Brand 2010; Gao 2009; O’Riordan 2009; Pietraś, 2000; Potulski 2011; de-Shalit 1995; Thompson 2008; Valentine 2010).

This article is devoted to the ecological thought and the idea of sustainable development as present in the political philosophy and theology of Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II. Where does this interest in Karol Wojtyła come from? He occupies a prominent place among the contemporary Polish social and political thinkers. His position is determined by both his intellectual potential – as he is regarded as one of the leading philosophers of the Polish Catholic Church, combining in his thought both Thomism and Phenomenology – and by dissemination of his ideas, especially his papal teaching, among billions of people in the whole world. The latter makes him probably the most recognised Polish intellectual in the world. Although he is more commonly perceived as a religious or spiritual leader, he also proved to be a distinct and skilful participant of intellectual debates.

Eco-philosophy or eco-theology?

The philosophical and theological ideas of Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II – on the subjects related to sustainable development (eco-philosophy and eco-theology respectively) are particularly visible in the works he wrote as a pope. Nevertheless, the sources of these ideas may be traced back to such early works as his academic papers on moral theology, ethics and anthropology, in which Wojtyła specified his approach to the relations between the human and the nature and pointed at the consequences of these relations both in terms of ethics and morality.

It is our opinion that the issues of ecology and sustainable development in Wojtyła’s papal, philosophical and theological writing do not constitute an autonomic section of philosophy or theology – neither in terms of problems nor in terms of methodology. As mentioned above, they are an integral part of Wojtyła’s ethical and anthropological thought. They are embedded in the general context of social, civilization, cultural, political and international issues. Therefore, we treat them as an element of his philosophy and political theology, including the philosophy of international relations (Modrzejewski, 2009). They are predominantly normative (the ethics and theology of morality) but they also include diagnoses of the current ecological, social and economic problems. The issue of eco-development and sustainable development is also an important part of the *civilisation of love and life*, which the Pope postulated (Dołęga, 1997).

At this point, we should draw attention to an important methodological issue. In Wojtyła’s writing, philosophical and theological contents intertwine, sometimes so close that it is difficult to separate philosophical speculation from theological reflection.

Therefore, his idea should be treated as philosophical and theological at the same time, as it is often the case that his philosophical speculation, which originates in reason, is accompanied by theological interpretation of the reality, which takes its origin from Divine Revelation. Wojtyła perceived both the natural environment and the human person through their ultimate relation to God – the Maker. He was convinced that the harmony of nature reflects the perfection of the Absolute, which was confirmed in the incarnation of God’s Son. It revealed the perfection of the creation, of the material world, including the natural environment (McFarland, Taylor, 2007). The Pope pointed at the foundations of the Christian faith, emphasizing that the death and resurrection on Christ brought reconciliation between mankind and the whole world. This leads to a theological interpretation of the devastation of nature – as a result of *the original sin* (John Paul II, 1990) Referring to the biblical message (and indirectly also to Stoicism), Wojtyła’s thought approaches at times *apocatastasis*, which assumes the ultimate return to the state of original perfection from the times before the fall of the first human. The eschatological aim of the whole creation is to achieve, thanks to the sacrifice of God’s Son, the *lost paradise* (Hryniewicz, 2006).

Wojtyła’s ability to combine philosophical and theological content was visible as early as in his PhD thesis, which was devoted to the ethics of Max Scheler (Wojtyła, 2008). From the perspective of methodological strictness, the above comment could naturally be seen as an objection (Bartoś, 2008). Notwithstanding, Wojtyła’s approach gives a holistic presentation of the reality. The philosophical approach he represents is described as Christian philosophy, so any reference to God and theology seem to be natural, as a complement of strictly philosophical reflection. The predominance of theological contents over philosophy can be seen in his homiletic and catechetical writing. He often spoke not as a philosopher but as the highest prelate of the Catholic Church, a priest and a theologian. This area of his writing includes numerous references to ecological issues and issues related to sustainable development, which are usually embedded in a broader context of social, political and international problems. This is the most visible in such documents as encyclicals¹ *Redemptor hominis*, *Evangelium vitae*, social encyclicas *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, *Centesimus annus* and, indirectly, also in the previous *Laborem exercens*, in apostolic exhortations

¹ We use commonly accepted abbreviations and numbers. The abbreviations applied for the encyclicas: RH: *Redemptor hominis* (1979); LR: *Laborem exercens* (1981); SRS: *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987); CA: *Centesimus annus* (1991); VS: *Veritatis splendor* (1993); EV: *Evangelium vitae* (1995); the abbreviations for apostolic exhortation: FC: *Familiaris consortio* (1981); ChL: *Christifideles laici* (1988); EAs: *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999).

and Apostolic Letters, as well as in homilies and addresses (as the Pope's message for the World Day of Peace in 1990, which was devoted entirely to broadly understood ecological issues).

From this perspective, John Paul II can be regarded as the follower of the intellectual heritage of his two great predecessors on St. Peter's throne – Pope John XXIII and Paul VI. They both concentrated on social and ecological consequences of the moral degradation of the human beings (Sebesta, 2007).

Personalistic hermeneutics

Personalistic hermeneutics is the key to understand the philosophy of Karol Wojtyła. His philosophical concept emphasises the life of a person – *being a person* – as the highest value and the criterion for ethical and moral evaluation, also with respect to political decisions, including those which lead to pro- or anti-development actions. It is, in its essence, ethical universalism in which the common measure of evaluation is the good of the human (Bartoś, 2008). This personalistic universalism reaches the deepest anthropological layers, the essence of the human and humanity, searching for ontological bases for the universality in the phenomenon of *being a person* (Półtawski, 2011).

Personalistic prerequisites also lead Karol Wojtyła to the idea of the world community of people. The community is not defined by the common species in its biological sense – it is a conscious community of persons, manifesting itself in common actions for the common good, which takes the form of the general human good (Modrzejewski, 2011).

How does Wojtyła understand the common good? He opposed reducing the notion to the theologically understood *good of the community*, as he considered such approach too limited and superficial. At the same time, he put emphasis on a more empowering approach to the problem. For him, the common good was connected with participation as a quality of both the person and the act. It is participation that develops in people the *empowered community of action*, creates common good through cooperation and is a manifestation of the empowerment of the human. He understood the common good first of all as *the principle of proper participation, thanks to which an individual, through their cooperation with others, can perform authentic acts and through them achieve self-realisation* (Wojtyła, 1994). In terms of axiology, the common good leads to the creation of the conditions of common existence and action. They are most visible in those communities which *appreciate the stability of pure existence*, i.e. in a family, nation, state or in a religious community. Therefore, those groups in which *immediate* common goods are achieved are not the main area of Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II's social interest. He concentrates on the communities which he calls natural. In *Person and act* Karol Wojtyła

wrote: *everyone expects that in those communities of existence (...), they can choose what others choose and because others do it – as their own good, leading to their own self-realisation. At the same time, on the basis of the same ability to participate which constitutes the essence of existence and cooperation with others, in communities founded on the common good one expects their own acts to contribute to the good of the community, sustain and strengthen it. In such an axiological system one is open to sacrificing their particular good to the common good. Such sacrifice is not 'against human nature' as it appeals to the need for participation, present in each person, and this need leads such a person to self-realisation* (Wojtyła, 1994).

In the philosophical concept of Karol Wojtyła, the common good is superior to individual goods but it does not stand in the opposition to the ontological superiority of an individual over the society. His philosophical concept includes the so-called *existence paradox* law. This involves sacrificing individual goods for the common good; naturally, not under pressure but out of free will. Such sacrifice has positive effects for the human being allowing for their fuller self-realisation. *Working for the common good, one ultimately one saves also themselves, as the good they contribute to – even if the contribution is hard – is the good through which they consolidate their own being, the good which defends also their own existence* (Galarowicz, 1996). Karol Wojtyła thought that existing and acting within a human community gives one a possibility to realise all one's abilities which distinguish a given person from others, so in the end – it emphasizes the person's individuality and uniqueness.

The common good is also a manifestation of the realisation of a community. A community, whether it is a marriage, a family, a nation or an international community forms itself through the common good and the awareness and fulfilment of the common good. Karol Wojtyła thought that the common good *unites a number of entities into one 'we'* (Wojtyła, 1994). It is therefore *the good of many* and in its fullest dimension – *the good of all*. The size of the *we* depends on the kind of community. It can be a married couple, several members of a family, thousands and millions people in a society, billions in the case of the whole mankind (Wojtyła, 1994).

Such an ethical and anthropological approach implies a specific view on issues related to sustainable development.

First of all, the person is always the greatest value and the person's good is the essential aspect of political, social, economic and ecological activity. The person here means both a concrete human being (every person) and the universal human in spatial terms (people living on the whole Earth) and in terms of time (the present and the past genera-

tions). Hence, the pro-development activity will always mean concentrating on the good of the person, which means creating conditions for the person's fullest self-realisation. This, in turn, determines such issues as taking care of the cultural and natural environment, eliminating ecological threats, creating proper conditions for the material and spiritual development of the human.

Secondly, the issues of sustainable development suit the postulate of the fulfilment of the common good. The common good is superior to the immediate and individual interests, which could generate various threats for the natural and human environment.

Thirdly, each individual is responsible for the realisation of the common good. The process of repairing the world should start inside an individual. As the human is responsible for their acts they should not harm other people or the natural environment in the course of their self-realisation. Moreover, the human's causative acts should be aimed at creating better living conditions for the community, which at least indirectly assumes acting for the improvement of the quality (both material and spiritual) of life and the condition of the natural environment.

From autonomy to personal development

What must be emphasized is that the personalistic thought of Karol Wojtyła stems from experience and theoretical reflection (Merecki, 2006). As an philosopher who for many years lectured at the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), Wojtyła held a constant dialogue, or even a kind of dispute, with the intellectual heritage of Europe (Karol Wojtyła – Johannes Paul II, 1981). As early as in his *Elements of ethics* (1957-58) he tried to define what humanism consists in from the perspective of the greatness of human life. The basis is always the irreducible value of human life and the autonomy of the person. It has already been mentioned above that the fullest interpretation of sustainable development can be found in Karol Wojtyła's papal teaching. The Pope himself experienced the system of social utopia, which in theory focused on development but in reality led to the pollution of the natural environment and the sphere of culture, which prevented comprehensive human development. The greatest mistake of totalitarian utopians lied in reductionism, especially with respect to the human nature, and in the pragmatic approach to moral norms. Therefore, those societies with adopt reductionist assumptions prevent the integrated development of people and communities. The scope of freedom is limited for ideological reasons. Seeking solutions to various types of shortages and in the face of increasing competition, a reductionist society is doomed to overexploitation. Each type of totalitarianism ignores the real human nature and its personal dimension; each interferes even with such areas

as art and religion, in order to *bend* the reality to suit its ideological assumptions. This was Wojtyła's personal experience from his own country, which constituted a stable context for his anthropological analysis.

John Paul II believed that achieving a planned goal and development requires a balanced approach. The human nature itself is *potentiality* which, experiencing the recognised truth, aims at its realisation for the sake of goodness. This is due to the transcendent aspect of the human nature. It is in the analysis of the human act where Wojtyła sees this human nature. People aim not only at satisfying their basic needs and find self-realisation not only in temporality. The human is focused on the absolute good. And so is the human culture – in spite of all its faults and all the confusion. The pursuance of the absolute good, however, must be reasonable and responsible, and – as a result – sustainable in the process of all kinds of development. The basis for activity is the act of recognising the truth about existence, the criterion of justice and love. Otherwise, the criterion of activity is limited to temporary utilitarianism. For Karol Wojtyła the notion of *use* stands in opposition to his understanding of *love* as a focus on goodness. The significance of moral values in the fuller realisation of empowerment and the criticism of utilitarianism can be found in one of his works – *Love and responsibility* (1986).

The Pope took into account the integral development of the human being, meaning his physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and religious development. Integrated development should be understood as a process leading to such efficiency which means not only gaining a certain quantitative or qualitative characteristic but also allows for better, more aware and freer living. Thus, it is about the autonomy of empowerment and not about being a link or an instrument in social and production structures. Empowerment as the foundation for dignity cannot be reduced. This is indicated by the ability – or in other words – disposition of self-determination, self-possession and self-control. The realisation of these dispositions implies a sphere of freedom, irrespective of individual conditioning. Moral skills, on the other hand, which must be constantly improved and the differences in the realisation of the dynamics of nature and the person only facilitate the process. *A human being can never be treated as an instrument to be used to achieve goals hardly related to the human being's development (...). That is the teaching of the Church* (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes* 1966, no 24). As it has already been mentioned, Wojtyła reached these conclusions through the analysis of the human act. This brings the aspect of cooperation, social co-dependency and co-responsibility, as it appears that integral development is only possible through cooperation within a community. Karol Wojtyła

wrote: *the human – as an individual representative of a given species is and never ceases to be human, regardless of any systems of interpersonal or social relations; at the same time, the human as a personal entity may be alienated in those relations – in a sense ‘dehumanised’*. Thus, participation as defined in *Person and Act* – primarily as the quality through which people, existing and acting in community with others, i.e. in various systems of interpersonal and social relations can be themselves and achieve fulfilment. The reflection of this kind of anthropological thinking was constantly present in Wojtyła’s papal teaching: *therefore, not rarely are we the witnesses of frightening examples of the progressive auto-destruction of the human. Some reigning opinions seem to be telling us that there is no moral value anymore which should be regarded as indestructible and absolute. The disrespect for the human life is manifested in front of us all – the life conceived but not yet born; the basic rights of the human person are constantly violated; goods necessary for the human life are meanly destroyed* (VS, no 84). The Pope argues with postmodernist trends and points out that all of them are wrong in *deconstructing* the subject and trying to read the truth about the existence while at the same time denying and preventing integral development. Moreover, in his previous writing Wojtyła blamed both totalitarianism and individualism for the alienation of the human. He adds that alienation prevents people living in such kinds of communities from achieving *self-fulfilment* understood as development at all the levels of activity. *While participation implies such a structure of human ‘we’-groups – societies, nations or states – and such an order in them which allows all those who exist and act within such ‘we’-groups to be themselves and to fulfil themselves, alienation is the opposite of this structure and such an order* (Wojtyła, 1994). Thus, in his analyses of the human essence Wojtyła tries to combine the conditions necessary for development, which are possible and compatible in the structure of the subject and the social system. This philosopher from a Polish town of Wadowice always saw the human in the centre of his analysis and practised philosophy with the aim of its practical use. He focused on *human self-fulfilment* (Buttiglione, 1996), which should be understood as achieving the maximum personal development. Wojtyła reveals the conditions for acting and existing in creative acts of love, which are the fulfilment of the person and of the person’s development. The human exists among other people and *in community with others* – this is the precondition for human development. John Paul II confirms this belief even when he talks about *the person’s social instinct*, as there is a real threat that the human can be used by various forms of social organisation and in particular – by various forms of production and consumption. And it is not only about the kind of development understood as

technological progress, but also about the self-improvement of the human. A free act aimed at such improvement is a basis for self-fulfilment. This is a dimension of auto-theology. People fulfil themselves not as means – they shape themselves, set themselves goals and achieve them. This leads to their improvement and better efficiency. This makes them *persons* not *things*. As usual in the writing of John Paul II, the leading thought stems from the right concept of the person, which means that anthropology is the foundation for creating development’s goals and for taking actions (CA, no 11). The sources of this kind of thinking may be found in the specificity of the Cracow school of anthropology, in the creation and development of which Wojtyła participated. Its characteristic features include: sensitivity to freedom, values, norms and human dignity (Kupczak, 2009).

Solidarity as common development factor

The basis for solidarity according to Karol Wojtyła is the fact of *living with others*. The good of the community, as well as its development, is conditioned by the development of particular people. To develop means both to participate in good opportunities and to realise one’s own capabilities, accepting the support of others. According to John Paul II, sustainable and thus ecological approach always takes into account all the relations, connections and, co-dependencies of various elements, often seemingly unrelated. Ecological balance breaks down in extreme, partial or unbalanced approaches and actions which ignore the common good and the human nature. These are, in general, anti-solidarity actions.

Co-participation means the dynamics of decisions and actions which encompasses a chance to oppose and to enter into a dialogue. Karol Wojtyła confronted the social philosophy which he practised and taught his Polish experience. Hence, he was aware of the fact that opposition can also be a confirmation of solidarity and a sign of remaining within the community and a manifestation of will of cooperation. Wojtyła gives the example of parents, who – in the name of responsibility, co-participation and creating opportunities for development do object, especially in relations with their children. Naturally, the position of constructive opposition is different at various levels of co-participation in contemporary communities, whether political, vocational or national. A community which prevents the expression of rightful opposition is not able to realise the common good, does not allow for dialogue and provokes deeper conflicts, tensions and antagonising activities. Integral development, especially in the personalistic perspective, is possible exactly in the situation of overcoming difficulties in dialogue and solidarity. This means respecting the person’s rights understood in terms of human tran-

scendental dimension, although in practice various accidents do happen, an example of which is plain conformism (Wojtyła, 1994). Common attitudes of consumerism, materialism, and utilitarianism lead to ignoring the truth and consequently – the common good and the duty of solidarity. It is plain to see that neither the abundance of goods and services itself nor the size of consumption guarantees happiness. Therefore, the Pope takes care to speak to his contemporaries to explain what development consists in. The *economist* concept itself is a road to nowhere. *As a consequence, also the access to various real goods, which in recent years have been provided by science and technology, including the IT technology, will not bring liberation from different kinds of human slavery. On the contrary, the experience of the past years has shown that if the whole mass of resources and opportunities given to people is not directed by moral sense and oriented at the real good of mankind, it easily turns against human and becomes a kind of slavery* (SRS, no 28). These are important comments, also in the context of sustainable development. Once again, we should point at the indispensable ethical dimension which overcomes the areas of underdevelopment, social exploitation and injustice. According to John Paul II, solidarity and cooperation are real methods to be applied to overcome the *civilisation of consumption*. Solidarity in this respect is a personalistic approach to the development of the social life. People depend on one another and John Paul II rhetorically asks: *can the world – a great and constantly growing human family – exist and develop among rising opposites between the West and the East? The North and the South? And such are the divisions in the contemporary world; such are the discrepancies in it. Can a better future arise from differences and opposites growing in the course of mutual fight? The fight of one system against another, one nation against another – and finally, one human against another?* (John Paul II, 1987/1990). This principle of solidarity expressed in words *all with all* and *all for all* is for the Pope the most rudimentary dimension of people's union. This principle is in accordance with the general principle of sustainable development included in the report from 1987 entitled *Our Common Future* and emphasizing the need for solidarity of all people and all generations.

The awareness of co-dependencies between people has a moral dimension and a dimension of personal duty. It is not sympathy but courage and a will to engage, an awareness of conscience and responsibility of all and for all: *thus, it is not only vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people – both close and distant. On the contrary, it is 'a strong and durable will' to engage for the sake of 'the common good', i.e. the good of all and everyone, as we all are really responsible 'for everybody.'* This will is based on the funda-

mental conviction that preventing the full development is caused by greed and desire of power (SRS, no 38). John Paul II was convinced that the awareness of the co-dependencies will grow and he himself thought and presented problems in the global scale of the universal look into the future. The common good and the development of communities may be secured when it is part of the development of people, although in the personalistic perspective a community may never be more important than the good of the person. The theological and philosophical perspective of thinking allowed the Pope to see the whole of the creation as an extremely rich *symphony of existence* and a never-ending change and development. Since it is not only about technological development, the human in this vision develops the most – the human is the first and most important aim of the creative development. It is, however, necessary for the human to find the most adequate place for their activity in their whole life. The place should be found first of all in the closest community but finally in the solidarity of greater human communities. Such reflexion allowed the Pope to formulate *the environmental problem in a broader context* (*theological anthropology – RH, theology of development – SRS, theology of 'the quality of life' – CA, the morality of human life – EV*). Nevertheless, the broadest presentation of the environmental problem can be found in John Paul II's message for the 23rd World Day of Peace in 1990. The Pope indicates the close connection between the ecological approach to the natural environment and constructing conditions for peace. In the opinion of Tadeusz Ślipko, the aforementioned message is a *small summary* of the holistically approached environmental problem. Without the coherent and moral approach to the participation in the commonness of the human fate and the fate of the world it is impossible to make a rational attempt to solve conflicts and problems, and to fulfil the needs necessary for integral development. Only such moral approach encompasses the question of the immeasurable value of the human in the face of trends concentrating on seeking economic profits; in the light of scientific achievements and the use of state-of-the-art technologies which may interfere with the respect for life. Civilisation progress made by people affects both the environment and people themselves. Therefore, the Pope drew attention to the rules that cannot be ignored. Those issues alone require adducing to the principle of the harmony and order of the universe. Participation requires common sense and a broader perspective on various connections and dependencies. All goods constitute a common heritage to which everybody is entitled. In this respect, the principle of justice and necessary savings and limitations on predatory behaviour are particularly important. There is a need for international agreement and cooperation for the sake of ecology. This does not mean that economic and

social reforms are not needed. On the contrary, we should fight poverty and shortages in resources. However, political actions and decisions must have the character of moral choices and dilemmas. The Pope formulates direct moral and pragmatic directives, calling for: *a genuine conversion in the way of thinking and acting*. The necessary qualities include: *self-restraint and moderation, internal discipline and a spirit of sacrifice, so that all the people do not have to bear the consequences of the negligence of the few* (Ślipko, 1999). What stands in the way is hedonism, consumerism, the lack of balanced social policy and the lack of readiness to altruism for the good of a broader community. In the cooperation of responsibility for sustainable development respecting the natural environment everybody should find their place. This concerns both political and religious organisations, economic entities and intellectual circles. The programme requires a proper status and the recognition of the irreplaceable role of the family, where the human learns the values and responsibility, as well as solidarity. The cooperation raised to the international level is in the Pope's teaching *a moral necessity for new solidarity*. It is a genuine manifestation of *the general social sense of environmental responsibility*. The Pope presents his views basing on *anthropological and normative assumptions* and it is a real proposal of sustainable development which takes into account the good of the human (Ślipko, 1999). All the economic processes and the impact on the broadly understood environment must be subordinated to the good of the human. In this approach, solidarity excludes extreme individualism and unlimited exploitation of natural resources. Naturally, the realisation of the programme proposed by the Pope requires immense moral effort and agreement of conscious people acting for the common purpose.

Human development as measure of progress

For John Paul II economic development was not an aim in itself. Reducing development to purely economic categories leads, in the Pope's opinion, to subjecting the human person and the deepest human needs to the *requirements of economic planning or pure profit* (SRS, no 33). Therefore, economic development in the social thought of the Polish Pope was subordinated to the more general category, i.e. the development of the human and was just one of the elements of this development. In encyclical *Centesimus annus* the Pope clearly states: *development cannot be understood only in its economic sense, but also in an integrally human sense* (CA, no 29). The basic aim of all the activities should be the integral development of the human. In the Pope's opinion, this integral development means genuine and common progress, contributing to the lasting peace in the world. Progress assumes

the holistic vision of the human, i.e. the vision taking into account the human nature in its spiritual and material dimension, of which the world of the human spirit constitutes the superior value, as it is the source of culture and as it determines the human as a person. Hence, economic development appears as a struggle for providing the human with decent conditions of living. It is, however, subjected to cultural development, leading to satisfying the spiritual needs of the human, which of course may adopt a materialised form, such as a work of culture, but which essentially express the human spirituality. In encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* the Pope pointed out that *the gathering of goods and services itself, even if it is to the benefit of the majority, is not enough to guarantee human happiness* (SRS, no 28).

The human needs something more than just the improvement of the economic conditions of living. People need an integrated balanced vision of development, ensuring their decent living, allowing for their self-realisation as subjects of culture and for the satisfaction of their spiritual needs. Finally, in order to live decently and safely, the human needs unpolluted natural environment. In other words, sustainable development in the philosophical vision of John Paul II assumes balance between economic development and the need for the protection of the environment – both human (culture) and natural.

Human ecology

Especially the human environment has always been a subject of the Pope's special attention. In the Pope's opinion, the problems related to the human ecology are marginalised in the contemporary public discourse, as more attention is devoted to the problem of the protection of the natural environment. John Paul II thought that the natural environment required special attention, which was still insufficient in the global scale. Nevertheless, the Pope perceived the destruction of the human environment as a more dangerous phenomenon which had to be confronted with determination. Discussing the protection of *moral conditions of the genuine 'human ecology'*, he used mostly theological arguments. He claimed that *the human is a gift for himself received from God and therefore must respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been equipped* (CA, no 28). In the opinion of John Paul II, social institutions may either support the moral development of people or lead to their moral degradation, turning into the so-called *the structures of sin*. The most important institutions of social life as well as *the first and the most fundamental element of 'the human ecology' is family*, where people for the first time encounter the notion of truth and goodness, and where they learn love (CA, no 39). However, the Pope understood that there were families unable to fulfil this vocation

and their social mission for reasons both internal (i.e. the egotism of the family members, leading to the total disintegration of the family and the devaluation of the family ties), as well as external (related to the pauperisation of the family or, in the contrary, to excessive concentration on material matters: to the *civilisation of consumption* (CA, no 39; FC, no 6).

John Paul II opposed especially the ideology of consumerism subjecting the vision of development to consumption growth. This is an important context, also in the discussion on sustainable development. The Pope thought that such approach causes depreciation of the human and other negative social consequences, while at the same time leading to the degradation of the natural environment. Consumerism reduces the human person to the role of a consumer whose ever new needs are stimulated by experts in advertising and social engineering. This results in the sense of *radical insufficiency*. The human tries to satisfy artificial needs, which gives him new things he often does not really need in life. This happens according to the principle that *the more you have the more you want to have*. At the same time, the deepest human desires – spiritual ones – remain unsatisfied, as the satisfaction of them would negatively influence the micro- and macroeconomic ratios. Therefore, both companies and governments support the high level of consumption of goods and services, ignoring the long-term risks it involves, concerning the mental and moral sphere of the human existence and his relations with other people. They ignore the negative effects of unrestrained consumption to the natural environment (also with respect to the growing consumption of nearly depleted natural resources and the growing level of environmental pollution). What counts is only the immediate economic goal, which in the micro scale is defined by the profit of the company, whereas in the macro scale – the level of gross domestic product.

For John Paul II the real development meant the moral development of the human, in their personal and social dimensions (Kowalczyk, 1995). Its measure is the focus on the human perceived holistically, i.e. in a way which takes into account his material and (first of all) spiritual needs. The human has the right to the resources which ensure his good living. Nevertheless, subjecting the human person to material values is abuse. The Pope emphasized the difference between *being* and *having* giving superiority to the personal existence of the human, i.e. the value of *being*. Nevertheless, he did not preach the idea of total poverty and denial of material things. He claimed that: *evil does not consist in 'having' per se but in such type of 'having' which does not take into account (...) the quality and ordered hierarchy' of the goods possessed. 'The quality and hierarchy' which come from subjecting the goods to human 'being' and using them*

respectively (SRS, no 28). He was convinced that human dignity and respect for the human life, which includes such *being* was *the basic principle of healthy economic, industrial and scientific development* (John Paul II, 1990). The Pope's thought inevitably leads to the question of the protection of human life from conception to natural death. This aspect of his considerations, highly controversial in the contemporary philosophical and scientific discourse, is strictly integrated with the problem of development. In the Pope's opinion there are two variants of civilisation. In metaphorical terms there is *the civilisation of life*, synonymous to *the civilisation of love*, in which the most important value is human life in all its manifestations. The Pope confronted it with the development of *the civilisation of death* or *the civilisation of consumption*, which is the antithesis of the first notion (SRS, no 28; EV).

In fact, this is where John Paul II touched upon the problems of demography. During his pontificate, Pope called for the start of well-thought and moral actions aimed at solving the demographical problem, at the same time opposing the idea of demographic growth an obstacle in the way to social and economic development. He claimed: *just like the statement that all the difficulties come from the demographic boom is not proven, it has not been proven that every demographic growth must stand in opposition to planned development* (SRS, no 25). With this respect, the Pope's approach was ambivalent. On the one hand, he opposed reducing the global problems of today's world to the enormous demographical growth, at the same time regarding all birth control tools, whether mechanical or pharmacological, as immoral, with abortion as particularly so and viewed as murdering of the unborn. On the other hand, he rejected the ideas of irresponsible reproduction of humans on the Earth, claiming that *the demographical growth has to be taken into account* (John Paul II, 1994; EV, no 13).

Natural environment protection as international responsibility

Much as the human person was the main object of ecological reflection and care of the Pope, he did not ignore the questions of environmental science. He paid attention to both the growth of ecological awareness in societies and to the increasing degradation of the natural environment, seen a source of social tensions and even international conflicts. He spoke highly of the increasing environmental awareness. During the much-quoted message for the 23rd World Peace Day he said: *in the face of the common degradation of the natural environment, people understood that we can no longer use the world resources in a way we used them in the past. The phenomenon of environment degradation worries the public and politicians, whereas experts in various areas of science investigate its causes. This*

shapes environmental awareness, which should not be thwarted – on the contrary, we should facilitate its deepening and maturing, so that it can be manifested in various concrete programmes and initiatives (John Paul II, 1990).

The Pope sees the sources of the devastation of nature in an anthropological mistake. Selfishly disposing of the natural earthy goods, the human acts against God's plan for the Earth. He claimed that such approach is first of all *a manifestation of the poverty or mediocrity of the way of looking at the human, driven by the desire to possess things more than by a desire to approach the truth, lacking the unselfish, noble and sensitive approach to aesthetical values which is born from elation at life and beauty, and which allows you to read the invisible message from God inscribed in visible things he has created* (CA, no 37). Instead of being the *master and guardian* of nature, the human becomes its *ruthless exploiter*, unable to see meanings of the natural environment other than those which serve immediate and individual interests, which is characteristic for utilitarianism and consumerism (RH, no 15). In the philosophical thought of Karol Wojtyła nature is understood as a gift from God and as such it must be respected. Human approach to nature is characterised not only by surrendering to biological rights but first of all – due to perceiving the problem in theological categories – to moral rights (ChL, no 43; EAs, no 41). In one of his addresses to the faithful the Pope said: *some elements of the current ecological crisis prove that it is a moral problem* (John Paul II, 1990).

The challenges related to the ecological crisis which humanity has to face require coordinated actions at the international level. John Paul II noticed that *the problems of the natural environment in many cases cross the borders of countries, which means that also solutions to those problems cannot be found within one country*. Among the problems mentioned by the Pope are: the pollution of land and water as a result of industrial activities and the use of chemicals in agriculture, air pollution and the hole in the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, over-exploitation of mines and forests, as well as – difficult to foresee at this moment – effects of genetic modification of animals and plants. Pointing at ecological threats, the Pope refers to the questions described and commented in the world media, reports of ecological organisations and debates of intellectuals (John Paul II, 1990). Naturally, he did not conduct or commission scientific research in the field but he based on commonly accessible information. His intention was not to comment on chemical, physical or biological effects of the natural environment degradation, but to evaluate them from the perspective of ethics and morality. Hence, his conclusions are general calls for taking responsibility for the natural environment and taking concrete actions to improve the present situation. And alt-

hough he noticed that the *recent promising progress in the field of this desired international cooperation*, he also saw that *the existing tools and organisations still do not meet the requirements of the implementation of a coordinated action plan. What gets in the way is political issues, extreme nationalism and economic interests, not to mention some factors which impede or even entirely prevent the international cooperation and taking long-term efficient actions* (John Paul II, 1990). However, despite those tendencies, the economic crisis emphasized, in the Pope's eyes, the need to create an international environment protection system based on the principle of solidarity. This means first of all the solidarity which developed countries should show to the developing ones. Cooperation in the field of natural environment protection between countries of various levels of technological development should not be limited to imposing restrictive ecological standards on developing countries. According to John Paul II, developed countries should be the first ones to take on themselves the effort of implementing those restrictions. Moreover, making environmental problems international does not exempt particular countries from individual pro-ecological activities. He thought that governments were obliged *not only to implement standards approved in cooperation with governments of other countries but also to take care of their own social and economic order, including in particular sensitive areas of the social life. Each country should protect its own territory against atmosphere and biosphere pollution though – among other measures – strict control over the results of technological or scientific discoveries. Each country should also protect its own citizens against the exposure to toxic or other harmful substances*. In relation to developing countries, John Paul II postulated that they should fulfil their moral obligation of avoiding the mistakes made in the past by developed countries. He firmly added that the countries cannot *continue destroying the environment with pollutants, cutting out the whole miles of forests and exploit without limitations the richness that will one day be depleted* (John Paul II, 1990).

Instead of conclusion

Among the participants of the world ecological debate there are definitely many intellectuals whose erudition exceeds the ecological knowledge of Karol Wojtyła. Nevertheless, exploring the writings of the Pope and studying his philosophical, theological and literary works allows to see in him a thinker not unfamiliar with contemporary global problems, including environmental issues. He analysed and interpreted them not as an ecologist or environmental scientist but first of all as an ethicist and moral theologians. This broader view is in accordance with the idea of sustainable development. That

is why his works will definitely not provide us with detailed solutions concerning pro-environment activities but they will give us ethical and moral guidelines, which are to a large extent political and international. Hence, they may be treated as an element of philosophy and political theology, as the human – the discoverer of so many natural secrets – must redefine his place in the wholeness of the universe and in the social life.

The originality of the ecological thought of John Paul II consists in referring to personalism and making the ecology of the human a fundamental eco-philosophical and eco-theological problem. As it is always the case with such great and integral visions of development, our presentation of the Pope's teaching is a proposal for further research. In the light of the contemporary discourse on sustainable development in the world of philosophy and political theology, the thought of the Pope is consistent and worth all the attention.

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