

VALUES OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN BUILDING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

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Purpose: This paper analyses the value system proclaimed by environmental ethics, emphasizing that it plays a key role in integrating and unifying the thinking and activities of each and every member of Earth population around the overriding common goal of protecting and defending the natural environment. It builds and strengthens a moral community focused on protecting and defending the primary values - life and the health of the planet, emphasizing the significance of responsibility, community, a culture of moderation, solidarity or justice

Design: The structure of the study relies on descriptive and comparative analysis of views and opinions dealing with the topic quoted in the paper's title.

Findings: In a divided world, where vested interests take precedence over the interests of humanity and the Earth, below presented values show the communal support on which intercultural dialogue should and can successfully be based, consolidating people concerned about the fate of our civilization and striving to build a new beneficial relationship between the world of humans and the world of nature.

Keywords: environmental ethics' values, life, health, responsibility, intercultural dialogue.

Category of the paper: Conceptual paper.

Introductory remarks

Environmental ethics, like eco-philosophy, grew out of concern for the ever-deteriorating condition of the world of nature. It focuses its interests on disclosure of the moral relationship between man, society and the natural environment. It not only analyses these relationships in moral terms, but gives them moral status. Unlike traditional ethics, it broadens the scope of morality, going beyond the world of interpersonal relationships to include the non-human world. It strongly criticizes traditional beliefs emphasizing the exclusively utilitarian-instrumental nature of human-nature relations. It recognizes that the category of moral good and evil plays a significant role in evaluating man's relationship with his natural environment, that moral evaluation is an important criterion for valuing anthropogenic activities in the world

of nature. Thus, it rejects the centuries-old conviction that the sphere of morality concerns only the human world, and that relationships beyond this world are taken out of the realm of moral rationing. In turn, this way of thinking occupied a monopolistic position in the positivist-technocratic paradigm that dominated the modern era. It drew a firm line of demarcation between the world of humans and the world of nature, recognizing that only the former is subject to defence and protection, while the latter is subject to exploitation and use.

Environmental ethics has two fundamental tasks: 1. the defence of the natural environment against human aggressions and destructive activities, and 2. the defence of humans as individuals and as a species against the negative consequences of their aggressive activities in the environment. Therefore, it advocates the defence of both natural assets and of goods of man, and does so in the firm belief that the good of the human world and the good of the natural world are integral values serving the good of both worlds. It believes that the mental error of modern civilization was the belief that it was possible to fund an increasingly superior future for the mankind regardless of the condition of the non-human world and, as it soon turned out, at its expense and degradation. How misleading this belief was we are already finding out almost first hand. We are witnessing the constantly deteriorating state of the natural environment and are becoming increasingly aware that its poor condition is already clearly limiting the development of many regions of our planet, and in the near future will become an effective barrier to the continued existence of our civilization. Environmental ethics, together with other disciplines committed to ecology, diagnoses this dramatic situation in which man acts as the perpetrator of the world's extremely difficult ecological situation, but also becomes a victim of his reckless, aggressive activity in the environment. The man can reasonably be said that it is both a perpetrator of emergency situations and an object experiencing the harmful consequences and effects of its activities on the environment. And the main victim of this situation is the steadily deteriorating quality of life on our planet, including both human and natural life.

We know perfectly well that there is an urgent need to overcome the conflict between man and nature, dramatic in its effects, and to build a reasonably peaceful relationship between the two worlds. Environmental ethics makes a significant contribution to the process of repairing what has been damaged and devastated over the centuries. In carrying out this task, it is taking advantage of those opportunities at its disposal. It is primarily on its foundation that the world of moral values is built, and it is these that will determine the model of axiological preferences in the relationship between man and the environment. Axiology, which represents grounds for many human activities and endeavours, plays the role of a kind of signpost, gives a general orientation and directs thinking and action towards what is elementary and at the same time valuable and momentous. If, therefore, we recognize - which should not raise doubts - that human thinking is programmatically oriented towards the world of values, it certainly seems right to believe that axiological issues should be in the heart of considerations concerning the formation of desirable thinking and action also in the board area of human-nature relations.

A clearly defined and articulated order of values does not allow a person - if one may say so - to get lost in the essential aims of his world-shaping activities. A badly recognized or even false value system contributes to mistakes and wrong solutions. A properly designed value system is undoubtedly an important factor in strengthening and fostering order and integrative activities around common and accepted goals in both theory and practice. It also performs the function of correcting original inappropriate or erroneous proposals and solutions. Therefore, environmental ethics places such a strong emphasis on its system of values, as it is able to unite thinking and action in a great community-based effort to attain what is key from the environmental ethics perspective - the good (protection and defence) of the world of nature in its richness and diversity of life and the welfare of the human being who lives in it. In the programme formulated by environmental ethics for the consciousness reconstruction in the spirit of ecological awareness, axiology takes priority because:

1. values carry a certain knowledge of the basic, essential goals and objectives of environmental ethics.
2. Values are evaluative in nature; from their perspective, a particular theory and programme and their practical implementation can be assessed both holistically and on a piecemeal basis - thus they can have a corrective function.
3. The respected values that one is clearly aware of always encourage, mobilize, put obligations not only on the individuals, but also on the societies and the entire states. On the grounds of environmental ethics, values take on a universal dimension.
4. Clearly and distinctly articulated values allow to resolve, or at least tone down, conflicts between the human (society) economy and the natural environment, and breed choices that do not violate the fundamental interests (well-being) of man, society and the world of nature.
5. Values provide rationale for their imperative counterparts (codes, norms and rules of conduct), which regulate human relations with the natural environment. Environmental ethics builds a normative system of principles and rules of conduct, and in acting in this role it becomes deontological ethics.

One must therefore agree with Henryk Skolimowski when he states that the values proclaimed by environmental ethics become "the guardians of nature's goods, they become ecological values to the highest extent" (Skolimowski, 1991, p. 71), when he insists that "the solution to environmental and ecological problems lies in the matrix of our values. As long as we are unable to enter deeply into what values we recognize and how they determine our behaviour, in other words, as long as we are unable to establish a new reasonable, sound and supportable basis in the form of the relevant values, all brilliant expertise (based on a limited and fragmented vision) and technical considerations will be futile" (Skolimowski, 1993, p. 189).

This demand has been realized in the form of a catalogue of values constituting the axiological dimension of environmental ethics. At its core the following fundamental beliefs are present.

Firstly: it recognizes (which places it in the opposition to traditional approaches) that the world of non-humans has intrinsic value, and this in turn causes us to think of them as those beings who are entitled to their due obligations and moral significance (P.W. Taylor).

Secondly: as a consequence of the previous one, that the world of man's relationship, with the natural environment, is not limited to an instrumental-utilitarian relationship, but has a deeply moral dimension. This imposes obligations and, at the same time, moral responsibilities on man for his activities in the environment (good or bad).

Thirdly: in the catalogue of values formulated by environmental ethics, it introduces a division between primary values and values used to protect and defend them.

Fourthly: it includes among the primary values the most fundamental ones determining the well-being of the entire natural environment, i.e. life in a universalistic sense and health as a desirable attribute of every form of life.

Fifthly: environmental ethics points to those values, respect for which promotes the good of the supreme values, in effect protecting and defending the environment. Among these values, it comprises responsibility, community, a culture of moderation (consumer restraint) solidarity, justice and others.

It is impossible at this point to provide an extensive characteristics and in-depth exegesis of the values mentioned. Such was presented someplace else (Tyburski, 2011, 2013). Here, we will limit ourselves to a few introductory remarks only outlining the meaning and understanding of selected contents that make up the above-mentioned values of environmental ethics.

Primary values of the environmental ethics

In the catalogue of values formulated and promoted by environmental ethics, the value of life is the primary value. Facing this value, the man accepts the obligation to defend and protect it and is willing to bear the consequences of his actions and omissions. Environmental ethics proclaims the demand for respect for life, with which comes the fundamental belief that non-humans have the right to live and to have their lives protected. This postulate was vividly formulated by Albert Schweitzer and developed in an ethical programme that the author himself called "an ethic of reverence for life". It proclaims that "the good is the preservation of life, the promotion of life, giving the highest values to a life capable of development; the evil is the destruction of life, harming life, pushing down a life capable of development" (Lazari-Pawłowska, 1976, p. 44). In formulating such a definition of good and evil in the context of

life, Schweitzer is aware that dramatic conflicts between human interests and those of non-human beings are unavoidable, that the lives of some beings must come at the expense of others, and therefore, he insists, when I harm a life, I must be sure that it was necessary, and anyone who follows an ethic of reverence for life, harms life and destroys life only out of necessity, which he cannot avoid, and never out of thoughtlessness.

Schweitzer's views reverberated around other thinkers and penetrated the consciousness of a wide audience of them. Among other things, the ecologist and philosopher Jean Dorst refers to them when he says: "we must incorporate into our rules of behaviour and recommendations respect for all forms of life, for they are all us, since we derive from a common source" (Dorst, 1987, p. 199). The environmental ethics, seeking to resolve difficult, sometimes unavoidable conflicts, wants to help us by providing criteria according to which we can make the right choices. H. Skolimowski believes that the direction of evolution itself indicates the criterion of the value of different forms of life. What is more perfect and complex in its design deserves more intensive protective measures. Such, he says, is nature's *modus operandi* and the resulting ecological imperative.

Utilitarianism interprets the problem of the value of life from a different perspective. It argues that the pursuit of multiplying pleasure in the world and minimizing suffering is a basic moral imperative. From this perspective, life becomes valuable according to the extent in which it allows to increase the sum of pleasures and decrease the sum of sufferings. We value life and desire to live as it enriches us with desirable goods; it loses its value as a state of distress and suffering builds up. And when it comes to the world of non-humans, according to utilitarians, beings capable of experiencing suffering should be protected. The right to protection is granted proportionally to the degree of development of the nervous system of a living being. The higher an organism is developed, the more valuable its life becomes. Therefore, the life of lower animals is not covered by the protective standard. This way of thinking faces strong criticism from the supporters of respect for all forms of life and their inviolability. They point out the communal nature of life, that higher beings are unable to exist in separation from the rest of the world (ecosystem), that failure to protect every form of life, in the nearer or longer term, actually threatens with annihilation of the entire complex diversity of life.

It should be noted that the demand for the defence of all forms of life acquires new and important meanings in the face of those civilization processes that have proved particularly dangerous to many forms of natural life. As a result of the spontaneous, predatory exploitation of vast amounts of natural resources and the rapid degradation of living standards, the entire populations of animals and plants are being rapidly annihilated. Man's astonishing carelessness has wiped off a huge number of species of flora and fauna from the face of the Earth. And the loss of each species means not only a reduction in population diversity and the loss of a unique genetic makeup, but also a weakening of the stability of entire ecosystems. In the face of exponentially growing and extremely dangerous phenomena, the demand for protection of

all forms of life takes on a new very specific meaning. As it were, until recently, a utopian idea is transforming into a real, deeply grounded imperative.

Inherent in the category of life is another fundamental value of environmental ethics, which is **health**. We are increasingly aware that the health of humans and all living organisms depends largely on the extent to which we are able to respect the laws of the natural world, read and understand its inherent rhythms and survival mechanisms. We also know that in the name of preserving this value (the good health of the planet and its various regions), it is necessary to take decisive action in the name of maintaining the ecological balance, taking care of the purity of air, water and soil, etc...

This kind of knowledge is not only shared in modern times, as the awareness of organic connections and dependencies between human health and the good state of his natural surroundings was close to people of different eras and cultures. This fact was already pointed out by Hippocrates (460-377 B.C.), when in his treatise *On Airs, Waters and Places* he argued that "we cannot comprehend the body without knowledge of the whole of things". Bucolic themes were a constant theme in Virgil's idylls (Arcadia), and his work inspired authors of later eras. During the Renaissance, the idea of the dependence of health on environmental conditions was particularly vividly exhibited by Paracelsus (1493-1541). He called for respecting nature's order and harmony, as they are the manifestation of its health, vigour, exuberance of life, slumbering healing power.

The relationship between nature and health was articulated even more widely and vividly in Eastern philosophy. The health and even happiness and prosperity of a person were linked there to the conduct following the rhythm of nature and living in harmony with it. The need to respect the universal laws of nature were proclaimed and the man was perceived as a particle of the universal system whereas the human body was conceived as a miniaturized image of the universe. The man cannot be separated from nature, as the man is an integral part of it, and his health is organically linked to the health of nature. This is how this relationship is understood on the grounds of Taoism, which conceives the health of man and the health of the natural world as a state of equilibrium, and the mutual balancing of the opposing factors of yin and yang is supposed to safeguard this state. Thus, any imbalance in the natural world, caused by anthropogenic activities, is seen here as a great threat to human health.

The fact that health is universally and extremely highly valued in the public consciousness of the present day can be a key argument in favour of mobilization of environmental protection efforts. We are much more aware that in the effort to remain healthy, how we relate to other animate entities and the entire natural environment is extremely important. This was pointed out more than once by a prominent physician and environmentalist Julian Aleksandrowicz when he stressed that our struggle for health begins with the realization of this truth, that certain environmental relations are responsible for every life process. They are the ones that "condition health as well as disease and premature death" (Aleksandrowicz, 1980, p. 61). Therefore, in long-term health care programmes, "the search for new rational proposals to make a higher

form of treatment come true, i.e. nature conservation-based prevention, is justified" (Aleksandrowicz, 1980, p. 61). The implementation of prevention understood in such manner is facilitated by the development of cultural patterns of behaviour "which, by combining biological knowledge of the environment with ethical knowledge of its protection, will form the grounds for the science of survival" (Aleksandrowicz, 1980, p. 61).

Recognizing health as a distinguished value in ecological thinking significantly promotes efforts to protect the natural environment. On the grounds of environmental ethics, these actions gain a moral dimension and are subject to moral assessment.

World Health Organization (WHO) documents emphasize that health is conditioned by three basic parameters: individual, social and environmental. The first is determined by the behaviour of individuals, striving for the quality of their own health; the second is related to the organization and functioning of public institutions responsible for the state and quality of health care; and the third - the one of most interest to us here - the environmental context - concerns the values, norms and actions that secure well-being, health and the natural balance in nature. We are informed about the significance of the environment significance for health by the so-called Belgrade Report of the Fourth European Environmental Assessment, which states that globally up to one-third of the diseases that occur are caused by the environment condition. "This highly disadvantageous situation", reads the aforementioned Report, "is further enhanced by the growing number of victims of extreme weather phenomena, whose growing intensity is the result of negative human impact on the global environment and the lack of adaptation measures.

The fact that health is one of the most highly cherished values can lay important foundations for integrating environment-oriented thinking and activities, including on a global scale, efforts targeted at maintaining conditions conducive to human health being in harmony with the well-being (health, balance) of the natural environment.

Let us note that in the discussions around the problems of globalization, there are proposals that refer to the values analysed above - which are life and health. It is pointed out that the breakdown of faith in the success of globalization is due to the fact that, as Zdzisława Piątek argues, "the liberalization of trade and the free flow of capital, i.e. the global free market, has been adopted as the basis of globalization, which by its very nature leads to the polarization of conflicting interests, and thus to the intensification of what divides people rather than what unites them (Piątek, 2005, p. 123)". Therefore, Z. Piątek believes that the development of a new global socio-economic order can and should be oriented at the common health and life values. These values bring people together by teaching them how to tolerate things that divide them. The lady author believes that in addition to the free market model, it is worthwhile to consider another globalization model, coupled with life and health, while its advantage is that it makes it relatively easy to define common goals, allowing all Earth population to work together in the field of health care and living in a healthy environment" (Piątek, 2005, p. 123).

Values of environmental ethics supporting activities oriented at life and health of the world of nature

Let us focus on those values referred to by environmental ethics that divert us to thinking and acting in accordance with the nature well being. Here we have in mind the values inherent in traditional ethics, which environmentalism reveals in man's interactions with nature. It turns out that human beings can be connected with the natural world by many values and emotional acts, such as responsibility, restraint, justice, community, solidarity, beauty, contemplation, harmony, love, peace.

From the catalogue of values proposed by environmental ethics, let us list here and in brief remarks comment on such as responsibility, solidarity, community, moderation, justice. Respecting them significantly promotes the good condition of those values we have deemed paramount (life, health), consequently protecting and defending the natural environment.

We know that **responsibility** is generally viewed in individual or group dimensions. The entity's responsibility is to the area it can have positive or negative environmental impact. Traditionally the environmental ethics covered the area of an individual's interpersonal relations, but, on the other hand, it advocates the individual's responsibility for his environmental activities. According to Hans Jonas, responsibility has become "the basic imperative of civilization" (Jonas, 1996) and should be an inalienable criterion for evaluating anthropogenic activities in the environment.

Meanwhile the group responsibility, here rather presented from generation perspective, is that it is our collective moral duty to leave the environment in such a condition that we do not diminish the chances of survival of future generations. J. Feinberg believes that the responsibility of the modern generation involves "a duty to our posterity, and it has a right to do so. Our unborn descendants will have interests that can already be represented on per procura basis, so it makes sense to talk about their right to inherit the world in a certain shape and our present obligations to preserve the world in such a shape" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 35). Therefore, we do not have the right to solve, our social and economic problems at the expense of future generations. The resources of the world of nature are the capital, that we as trustees rather than owners should manage, its substance must not be depleted. Our responsibility for future generations is that we must act today so that future generations do not have to take drastic measures to survive on this planet. Based on environmental ethics, the ecological model of thinking, referring to the principle of responsibility, proposes such a strategy of action in accordance with which nature must first be protected. in order to then be able to benefit from it.

Proclaiming the idea of **community**, environmental ethics seeks to build a sense of community between the human world and the natural world. This idea, which is an important component of modern ecological thinking, is borne out by natural knowledge and the biocenotic

worldview that has grown out of it, which makes it sufficiently clear that we share a common dependence on the Earth with all species of life. Not forgetting the obvious differences between us and other species, we should bear in mind the fact that we, along with other beings, are in a certain relationship with the Earth's ecosystems. The laws of genetics, natural selection and adaptation apply on equal footing to all living beings as biological systems. From such a perspective, we should perceive ourselves in unity with others, realize this community of life, rather than treating ourselves and others as two separate worlds, completely opposed to each other without community bridges. Such a dualistic vision of the world dominated the thinking for many centuries of modern European civilization, whose philosophical rationale was supposed to be the Cartesian concept dividing the world into *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. The vision perpetuated over the consecutive centuries, it deepened the division of the world and drew an increasingly thick demarcation line dividing the world of man and the natural world into two opposing realities, eliminating the manifestations of communal thinking, treating the world of nature in purely instrumental-utilitarian terms. Meanwhile, the practical manifestation of this thinking was the dominance in the sphere of activity, manufacturing and production of the positivist-technocratic paradigm.

In the cultures and religions of the East, the idea of a bond connecting man with everything around him was constantly alive and found numerous supporters. The issue of identity and unity of man with the world and also the idea of co-sensibility is emphatically emphasized by Buddhism, as well as Taoism. On their grounds, man is not outside the circle of nature, but is its integral and most important component. Nature and man are an inseparable unity, held together by a divine bond. Fraternity, community and affinity were used to derive demand for respect and protection of everything that exists: humans, animals, plants and all the rest of the natural world.

The idea of community with the natural world, as proclaimed by the environmental ethics, has not only a normative-persuasive dimension, targeted at changing our relation to the natural environment. It also goes to a certain concept of the development of civilization, namely one that would take into account the interests of the non-human world as well, treating them as community interests. This is because there is no doubt that any sensible concept of the development of civilization must take into account the axiom of the commonality of the fate of man and nature. In this context, it is right to recall the words of Hans Georg Gadamer in which he argued that nature can no longer be viewed as an object of exploitation, "it must in all forms of its manifestation be experienced as a partner" (Gadamer, 1992, p. 20).

There are many arguments today in favour of the view that environmental protection cannot be effectively implemented without consciously self-imposed restrictions on the use of all that the world of nature around us has at its disposal. Mineral resources, water, soil, forests, clean air are not inexhaustible and unlimited. Policies inspired by the environmental ethic take into account the fact of the rapid depletion of nature's resources and strongly advocate the view that the environmental crisis cannot be solved without a viable programme of self-restraint in the

wide consumption of produced and natural goods. The threat of impending disaster calls for a change in our consumption habits toward **sustainable consumption or eco-consumption**. There is a need for a fundamental change in the philosophy of life and behavioural patterns, a reevaluation in the hierarchy of values and lifestyles, a decisive curbing of exuberant consumer appetites (where they clearly come to the fore) and restraint in the use of nature's goods. The need for intensive efforts directed at building what can be called a culture of moderation is emphasized. At the same time, it applies to individual development (self-restraint, voluntary simplicity, sustainable consumption) and socio-cultural development (culture of restraint, moving away from the ideology of growth) Note that the idea of moderation and restraint is not an invention of our time. In the historical development of culture in the West and East, there was a concept inherent in the culture of moderation. Do not overdo anything, *meden agan*, the right measure, the golden mean, virtue the middle ground between extremes - this is in Aristotle, Stoic autarky and apathy, Roman "Ne guid nimis" - nothing in excess, medieval "asceticism", simplicity according to Gandhi, the idea of moderation in Taoism and the rule of "taro wu shiru" - Shintoism. These concepts were meant to promote a lifestyle that enabled the realization of some other value, usually related to the man himself or transcendence. Aristotle's rule of the golden mean (do not exaggerate with anything) was to lead to a wise, rationalized, dignified life, stoic autarky allowed to achieve perfection, excellence, asceticism to free oneself from the pressures of carnality and matter and focus on what is most important, the sphere of spiritual life, moderation in Taoism - the realization of several of the already mentioned values, this modern understanding of moderation is directed at protecting the health of non-human, the natural environment, indirectly also the well-being of man. It is a response to modern civilization, which abandons all the aforementioned understandings of moderation and restraint focusing attention on the sphere of economic values, disregarding the fact that their unconditional acceptance leads to the development of various patterns of consumption beyond actual human needs, consumption of excess, prestige, ostentation, hyperconsumption. The forms of consumption that are based on violent and irrational overexploitation of the environment, are opposed by the model of pro-environmental consumption built into the environmental ethics.

It should be noted that it is necessary to distinguish, (sometimes equated erroneously) such concepts as moderation, restraint or self-restraint from such concepts as resignation, renunciation, asceticism.

There are four types of green consumption models, eco-consumption, ethical consumption, sustainable consumption and anti-consumption" (El-Jai, 2011, p. 35). Eco-consumption boils down to the use of goods and services that satisfy basic human needs and raise the quality of life, but at the same time minimize the consumption of natural resources, the production of waste and pollution protecting the needs of future generations. The ethical consumption is emerging as a result of raising consumer awareness and focuses on the importance of ethical choice, which refers to how and to what extent one satisfies one's needs. Almost every decision,

for instance, about purchases (but also about production, new investments) is in some sense a moral decision, since it determines to a larger or smaller extent man's relationship with the natural environment. Thus, the processes of manufacturing, acquisition and product consumption implicitly involve, in each phase of the process, certain moral responsibilities of manufacturers and consumers. Sustainable consumption is part of the underlying assumptions of sustainable development and is intended to respect the requirements for the implementation of this very concept. It seeks to bring about an order in consumption that would ensure that the sector functions in concert, in harmony, as an integral component of the sustainable development agenda. Prospectively, it is about satisfying the needs of the present generation in such a manner that it does not reduce the ability to meet the needs of future generations. Anti-consumption is the most radical model of consumption, indeed the one with the fewest supporters. It advocates limiting the consumption of goods and services to those quantities "necessary for survival" (El-Jai, 2011, p. 35). This type of consumption serves the supporters of the model of unlimited consumption and enhanced production to criticize, often violently attack, the model of environment-oriented consumption model in all the versions presented here, as if the critics were unable to distinguish between these models, the concepts inherent in them and the proposals behind them. They wrongly equate the idea of moderation and consumer restraint with the concept of resignation, renunciation, prohibition.

Meeting of eco-friendly consumption demands requires a change in awareness, attitudes and behaviour. It is to be marked - broadly speaking - by a shift from more to enough, from quantity to quality, from desire to need. At the same time, it is a style of thinking that is a reaction to a model of life based on prestige consumption, ostentatious consumption, hyperconsumption. The latter are born on the grounds of specific sociocultural and production-technological premises. The question of needs plays a fundamental role here. Theodor Adorno writes about true and false awareness in the area of needs. "Needs", he argues, "are a conglomeration of truth and falsity; (...) if the theory according to which needs are to be read not on the basis of some natural condition but on the basis of a so-called cultural standard is accurate, then social conditions, together with their bad irrationality, are also part of that standard" (Adorno, 1986, p. 13).

The postulate of sustainable consumption speaks in favour of the elimination of false consciousness in the needs. This, in turn, requires both a change in consumption patterns and also a change in mentality. Numerous studies and observations provide sound rationale for the thesis that the postulate of moderation, restraint, self-restraint is unfortunately, extremely difficult to implement in practice (for the vast majority of consumers). It comes across numerous obstacles not only of a psychological nature. After all, we are very strongly attached, in general, to our permanent habits, tastes and consumption preferences. And we rather rarely give them up voluntarily.

Who are the addressees of the call for restraint and moderation in consumption. Despite the widespread opinions, which give such attitudes a maximally general dimension, in the sense that they include the principle of moderation and restraint in the philosophy and ethics of the planet, and therefore in the philosophy and ethics of everyone, of almost every inhabitant of our planet, I believe that this postulate actually has a quite specific addressee. In fact, it is directed at those societies that live in conditions of relatively high levels of productive forces and consumption, where exuberant consumer appetites that go well beyond high levels of need satisfaction are realized, where consumption of excess or hyperconsumption reigns supreme. I am not in a position to address the call for restraint and self-restraint, especially renunciation, to people and societies suffering from poverty, experiencing ordinary poverty and deprivation in terms of satisfying the most elementary needs. It is difficult, even on an individual level, to come up with a call for restraint for a person who is struggling to make ends meet. The analogy can be drawn with the entire societies in e.g. Central Africa or Latin America, because such behaviour and appeals seem to be pure hypocrisy. On the other hand, in accordance with the principle of sustainable development philosophy i.e. the principle of solidarity - these countries should be aided economically, our achievements should be shared with them, so that they reach the level of satisfying the standard needs of their populations, while making sure that such aid, e.g. investments, takes into account the rules and standards of environmental protection, so that these communities, while striving to improve their economic position, do not do so at the clear expense and through excessive exploitation and destruction of the natural environment.

The idea of solidarity proclaimed by environmental ethics formulates the need to extend the meaning of 'I' 'we' not only to other human groups and their cultural contexts, but also to non-human sub-classes. It is a universal virtue because it brings new groups and sub-classes into the community by giving the bond between them a distinctly moral dimension. It presupposes concern for the community's well-being and benefits and reminds us that our duties towards other beings are no less important than our own rights and claims. The solidarity idea is an important component of contemporary ecological thinking, finding its justification in natural knowledge and the biocentric worldview that has grown out of it. It is not merely exhausted by means of a postulate of a communal understanding of the interests of mankind and the natural world. It speaks loudly about the need for solidarity in addressing common environmental issues, pointing to at least two understandings of it. The first is expressed in the call for solidarity between peoples, in adherence to the conviction that only by making a joint effort can stop threatening or existing dangers such as adverse climate change. This principle is violated by those countries that, although they protect their natural resources, such as forests, but exploit their economic advantage, making unrestricted use of the resources of other countries, usually lagging behind in their development, sometimes exploiting their natural resources in a barbaric manner. Secondly, the postulate of solidarity indicates the need to think and act also in terms of intergenerational solidarity. It is a question of ensuring that our generation manages the assets and resources of the world of nature in such a manner that the

interests of future generations and the conditions and options for their survival and development are also safeguarded. The man's solidarity with the world of nature, solidarity between nations in solving environmental problems and intergenerational solidarity make up what is increasingly referred to as global solidarity, treating it as one of the most constitutive components of new line of thinking and action. It should be emphasized that the idea of solidarity runs across political, professional, cultural or generational divides. It is the idea which, against the existing divides, differentiates people and societies spiritually unites them - it is their communal core.

Popularizing and implanting the idea of solidarity in the public mind is a fundamental task of education dealing with sustainable development. The idea of solidarity, guided by a sense of community, reinforces any action in favour of sustainable development, but it should also be borne in mind that action in the name of sustainable development contributes to the reinforcement of attitudes of solidarity and community. Therefore, "education for sustainable development is one of the essential mechanisms aimed at restoring the trends inherent in human nature to self-organization and to act in solidarity for the common good" (Piątek, 2007, p. 14). The idea of solidarity as well as the attitudes and actions stemming from its spirit are undoubtedly a powerful ally of any sustainable development efforts, and action taken in the name of sustainable development stimulates and reinforces the natural human trend towards community action, self-organization and solidarity-based activism.

Justice - is another value of environmental ethics. It is analysed in at least two main contexts. Its intra- and intergenerational dimensions are most often pointed out. The first dimension concerns the demand for the eradication of poverty, and the need for economically lagging countries to reach the development standards of developing and developed countries is also pointed out. It is also about equitable access to natural resources (e.g. clean water) for all people and nations. The principle of justice puts an obligation on developed countries to help less developed countries achieve equitable development standards. The aim should be, and this is the second postulate of intra-generational justice, that as many people as possible should have an opportunity to satisfy their basic needs. It is therefore compatible with the goal of intra-generational justice to strive to bring the least well-off consumers closer to the average of needs satisfaction. The demand for intra-generational justice proclaimed by environmental ethics will be implemented when the position of the poorest is systematically improved.

In the case of intergenerational justice, it is about the right of future generations to make fair use of their common heritage so as to safeguard basic natural resources and good environmental values for future generations as well. According to John Rawls, the elementary condition of justice is that each generation "receives from its predecessors what is rightfully due to them, and produces for those who come afterwards what is fairly due to them" (Rawls, 1988, p. 400). This elementary condition of justice imposes an obligation on us to leave the environment for the future generations in such a condition that their chances of survival are not diminished. After all, they too will certainly need the raw materials from clean forests, healthy air, water and soil.

Conclusions

By developing and justifying axiological programmes defining man's relations with the environment, environmental ethics immeasurably enriches all attempts to answer the fundamental question: how should man behave towards his natural environment and why should he do so? It proposes a model of axiological preferences, so that the values it represents constitute an important criterion governing man's relationship with nature. These values can significantly influence the toning down of possible conflicts between acting man and nature, and enable making choices that are conducive to maintaining an ecological balance when the man interferes with the world of nature. The environmental ethics focuses its interests primarily on those values that promote the preservation of life and the balance and harmony of ecosystems, with a strong emphasis put on the relationship between theoretical reflection and practical expectations. The theory aims at building and justifying a specific system of values defining the right relationship between the man and the world of nature, which environmental education then seeks to inscribe in the sphere of individual and social awareness, aiming in consequence to shape such attitudes and behaviour that would have a positive impact on the whole of man's practical relations with the natural environment. We will just remind you that the aim of environmental ethics is not exhausted at the point of value system development. Its second part is concerned with building a normative system of principles and rules of conduct, which are the imperative equivalents of these values. While pursuing the aforementioned aim, the environmental ethics takes the form of deontological ethics. Its examples are the 'ecological imperative of H. Skolimowski or the set of rules and principles contained in Paul Taylor's ethic of respect for nature. The deontological dimension of environmental ethics is a topic for a separate paper.

We are convinced that the aforementioned values undoubtedly stimulate and strengthen the natural human inclination towards community, self-organization and solidarity-based activities. They mobilize to protect and defend the natural environment and encourage responsible, solidarity-based activities by all members of population living on our planet. They are able to gain universal approval regardless of our worldview, cultural and linguistic preferences and economic status. They unite all those concerned about the well-being of the mankind and the world of nature. They fulfil such a role in defiance of political and economic divides and particularisms, which in the modern world so often prevail over the general human and global interests. The preservation of life becomes a universal value as we become more aware of the communal nature of life on the planet, as we focus our thinking and action more strongly on the defence of this so universally understood value, as we become aware that human life and the lives of non-humans have a community dimension, and that it is impossible to imagine human life in a void deprived of the lives of other beings. I believe that this kind of argumentation, skilfully presented, can be successfully accepted by people of different cultures, traditions and worldviews regardless of the various differences and divides that separate them.

A similar status is held by the second of the mentioned guiding values of environmental ethics, which is health. It is the protection and preservation of health that can provide a strong basis for integrating environment-oriented thinking and activities on an individual, collective and global scale. It is a strong inspiration for actions and efforts aimed at maintaining and sustaining conditions conducive to human health in harmony with the health (well-being, balance) of the natural environment. Health as an overriding value is becoming an important part of building a new global civilization.

Values such as responsibility, community, restraint (culture of moderation), solidarity and justice, which build and strengthen a moral community aimed at protecting and defending life and the health of the planet, can play an integrating and unifying role for the entire Earth population. Both overriding values and those committed to them to their benefit are characterized by the fact that they unite and group thinking and activities around overriding common goals. In a divided world, in which particular interests prevail over universal and global interests, these values provide a common ground on which intercultural dialogue can successfully take place, bringing together people who are concerned about the fate of our civilization, striving to build a new relationship between the world of humans and the world of nature that is beneficial to both.

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