

Summary

Since the 1960s, it has been clear that our civilization has devastated the Earth in a way that is unparalleled in history. Humankind has become a global geological force; in this sense, it is justified to refer to the current geological epoch as the Anthropocene. The situation has worsened in recent years, especially regarding global climate change, which may have catastrophic consequences. This publication provides analyses of the views of several personalities who have made a significant contribution to clarifying the relationship between philosophy and the contemporary environmental crisis.

In the chapter “Values and the Earth. Notes on Rolston’s Concept of Environmental Ethics”, Rudolf Kolářský analyzes the concept of environmental ethics created by the American philosopher and theologian Holmes Rolston; he developed the idea that nature has its own value which is independent not only of usefulness in relation to human interests, but also of human evaluation. According to him, the objective intrinsic value of nature is the philosophical basis of environmental ethics, because it permits the justification that we have moral obligations to nature.

According to Rolston, the origin and development of environmental ethics is part of the environmental turn in philosophy, triggered by the current ecological crisis; this crisis has revealed that ethical thinking focused only on human relationships is burdened by a selfishness towards terrestrial nature. Environmental ethics cannot therefore be a mere application of the ethics of interpersonal relationships, as is the case, for example, with medical ethics or business ethics. Environmental ethics, which deals with moral relationships to plant and animal species, to ecosystems, and to the Earth, broadens the subject of ethics as such. At the

heart of Rolston's conception of non-anthropocentric environmental ethics is a conviction based on a belief in the goodness of creation: terrestrial nature is valuable because it is a source of values.

The chapter "Responsibility and Sustainable Development" by Rudolf Kolářský is a contribution to clarifying the relationship between morality and the sustainability of society and its development. The continuing devastation of the Earth and the associated escalation of social conflicts testify to the unsustainability of development, which threatens its own environmental and social preconditions. Sustainable development is usually understood as improving the quality of life of all people without compromising future generations or the integrity and diversity of the biosphere. The concept of sustainable development is thus necessarily linked to the concept of responsibility. Given the global climate crisis, the question remains as to whether sustainable development is still possible, or whether the only possibility is sustainable retreat (J. Lovelock). The notion of sustainable retreat helps to clarify what the unsustainability of development may mean. This chapter analyzes two concepts of moral responsibility – in Hans Jonas' "Ethics for the Technological Age" and in the discourse ethics developed by Karl-Otto Apel. Jonas saw the criterion of responsible action in the compatibility of its consequences with the permanence of genuine human life on Earth, which includes the conviction that we should take care of terrestrial nature not only when it is beneficial to us, but also because terrestrial nature is already a value as it is and how it is. Apel considered the realization of an ideal communicative community in a real communicative community to be a criterion of responsible action. Apel's discourse ethics makes it possible to concretize Jonas' concept of genuine human life; such a life necessarily includes the recognition that anyone who is able and willing to substantiate their claims has

the right to participate in discourses that permit an explanation on how to achieve a fair sharing of co-responsibility, and whether criticism or even the transformation of social institutions is necessary in this context.

Vlastimil Hála, in his chapter “Ideal Ethics in a Non-ideal World. Assumptions and Starting Points of Ecological Philosophy in Dieter Birnbacher’s Concept” interprets the ideological bases of Birnbacher’s ethical concept in their basic philosophical meaning, in application to the ecological sphere, and in the context of seeking out practical ways to promote the desired relationship of people to nature. Birnbacher does not explicitly deal with the opposition of anthropocentrism and biocentrism, but his basic perspective is always based on the long-term – and therefore connected to nature – interests of man (humankind) and can be understood as a variant of cultivated anthropocentrism; in his philosophical concept he builds on the difference between “ideal” and “non-ideal” ethics, he is convinced that ideal postulates can always be applied only in a partial way. He has also long dealt with the issue of the consequences of human behavior, both in general and, in an ecological context, as highlighted by the current manifestations of the climate crisis, especially in relation to the lives of future generations. The long-term perspective is the vanishing point of a solidary relationship toward future generations and a desirable relationship between people and nature.

On a practical level, Birnbacher considers it decisive whether – and which – moral principles apply in the legal and political spheres. According to him, this requires institutional support in the form of the establishment of independent legislative institutes – such as a special chamber of parliament or the institution of the ombudsman for environmental issues – which would defend the vital interests of future generations by preferring long-term perspectives. The social aspects

of environmental issues are complemented by references to other authors (e.g. Richard Sťahel) or documents (Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

The chapter “Nature and Spirit. On the Ecological Concept of Vittorio Hösle” by Vlastimil Hála focuses on the interpretation of ontological, axiological, and ethical components in Hösle’s work. Hösle’s approach is based on a universalist conception of ethics, which is significantly influenced by Hegel’s philosophy; in his reinterpretation, however, nature is ontologically full-valued in relation to the spirit. From this dialectically contradictory unity of nature and spirit, he then derives concern for nature, which belongs to man as an individual and as a social being. Concern for nature, therefore, is not understood as something external to man, but as something that belongs ontologically to man. Unlike Birnbacher, Hösle places hope in the executive area, outlining the idea of merging the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Economy. Hösle also addresses the issue of refugees, which he anticipates as a result of the advancing climate crisis.

In Hösle’s approach, it is necessary to emphasize primarily the thematization of social aspects of ecological issues. These are examined both in the context of relations between developed and developing countries, together with the search for ways to eradicate poverty, and in the context of relations between different social strata within individual states. The author of the chapter complements Hösle’s analysis with references to the peculiarity of the situation in “post-communist” countries which have not yet reached “Western” (and, according to Hösle, unsustainable) living standards.

Overall, one can say that a clarification of the relationship between philosophy and the current environmental crisis assumes this: to think through the his-

tory of philosophy under the perspective given by the environmental crisis, and to rethink issues to which the environmental crisis gives impetus. The environmental philosophy has, in principle, a pluralistic character. The diversity of answers to the question of the relationship between the current crisis of the environment and philosophy is given by the diversity of contemporary philosophical thinking and philosophical traditions.

This also applies to this publication. The interpretations of the concept of environmental ethics by H. Rolston, "Ethics for the Technological Age" by H. Jonas, and the discourse ethics by Apel are focused on the critique of anthropocentrism and, in this context, with the question of whether the current ecological crisis is an incentive for a fundamental transformation in philosophical thinking. D. Birnbacher's interpretation of environmental ethics and V. Hösle's philosophical concept of the ecological crisis are guided primarily by the question of how to develop anthropocentrism so as to make it compatible with a friendly relationship toward nature; the starting point here is a philosophical tradition that emphasizes the active role of the subject in the cognitive and value relationship of man to the world; attention is focused on the possibilities of promoting the goals of environmental policy within the framework of pluralist democracy. Non-anthropocentric and anthropocentric views are considered in this publication to be complementary rather than opposite.

When asking whether philosophy can help to remedy a global environmental crisis, it must be borne in mind that the solutions to the problems posed by the current environmental crisis are largely independent of philosophy. Without philosophical reflection, however, it is not possible to give a comprehensive answer to the question of in what sense the current ecological crisis is an incentive to transform thinking and action.