

## Idea filozofii a eko-filozofia\*

### The Idea of Philosophy vs. Eco-Philosophy

**Andrzej Papuziński**

*Kazimierz Wielki University of Bydgoszcz  
e-mail: papuzin@ukw.edu.pl*

---

\*Artykuł jest anglojęzyczną wersją tekstu opublikowanego po raz pierwszy w: red. Papuziński A., Hull Z., *Wokół eko-filozofii. Księga jubileuszowa ofiarowana Profesorowi Henrykowi Skolimowskiemu dla uczczenia siedemdziesięciolecia urodzin*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Bydgoskiej im. Kazimierza Wielkiego, Bydgoszcz 2001, s. 263-276.

#### **Streszczenie**

Artykuł jest poświęcony filozofii środowiskowej. Został zainspirowany przez dyskusje na temat jej zgodności ze standardami obowiązującymi w filozofii akademickiej. Podjęto w nim próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie o relację między filozofią środowiskową a ideą filozofii. Uwagi na ten temat zostały sformułowane na kanwie jednego z najbardziej znanych systemów filozofii środowiskowej – koncepcji opracowanej przez Henryka Skolimowskiego. Twórca nadał jej nazwę „eko-filozofia”. W artykule postawiono następującą tezę: ekofilozofia jest odnowieniem idei filozofii w filozofii współczesnej.

Wywód mający na celu uzasadnienie głównej tezy artykułu podzielono na trzy części. Część pierwsza dotyczy zależności zachodzących między ideą filozofii a przedmiotem filozofii. Stwierdzono, że trwałym i nieprzemijającym elementem idei filozofii jest postawa krytyczna; że ta postawa polega na nieufności wobec tych wszystkich pewników i prawd, które składają się na każdą konkretno-historyczną postać racjonalności; że owa nieufność przejawia się w postaci nie przyjmowania z góry żadnej tradycji kulturowej jako tradycji wyczerpującej – w formie wartości, stereotypów poznawczych i standardów działania – pokłady ludzkiej racjonalności. Część druga dotyczy kryzysu filozofii współczesnej. Za kryzys filozofii współczesnej uznano marginalizację myśli filozoficznej we współczesnej kulturze euroatlantyckiej. W tej części postawiono i rozwinięto tezę na temat przyczyny tego zjawiska. Stwierdzono, że za taki stan rzeczy odpowiada separacja głównych nurtów filozofii współczesnej od idei filozofii, obecna w tych nurtach tendencja do przeobrażenia filozofii w jeszcze jedną więcej dyscyplinę naukową. Część trzecia dotyczy eko-filozofii jako systemu przywracającego filozofii współczesnej zatraconą przez nią ideę filozofii. W związku z tym podniesiono w niej dwie kwestie. Pierwsza dotyczy charakterystyki pozostałych nurtów filozofii współczesnej jako głosu sprzeciwu wobec głównego kierunku rozwoju filozofii w XIX i XX w. Kolejna – charakterystyki eko-filozofii jako kontynuatorki tego drugiego stylu refleksji filozoficznej i jako systemu podejmującego tę krytykę z punktu widzenia najbardziej newralgicznych problemów cywilizacyjnych i społecznych dzisiejszej doby.

Na metodologiczne zaplecze artykułu składają się dwa elementy. Jednym z nich jest popularna typologia filozofii współczesnej. Zgodnie z nią w filozofii współczesnej należy wyróżnić trzy zasadnicze grupy teorii filozoficznych: scjentystyczną, antyscjentystyczną i światopoglądową. Drugim elementem metodologicznej podstawy artykułu jest twierdzenie na temat źródeł problemów filozoficznych. Mówi ono o tym, że zagadnienia filozoficzne rodzą się w tych sferach życia społecznego, gdzie zaczynają tracić swoją oczywistość powszechnie przyjęte rozwiązania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** filozofia środowiskowa, filozofia współczesna, eko-filozofia, Skolimowski, idea filozofii, racjonalność, racjonalność kulturowa

## Abstract

This article on environmental philosophy was inspired by a discussion on the latter's compatibility with the standards in place in academic philosophy. It seeks to consider how environmental philosophy relates to the idea of philosophy as such, electing to do so by reference to one of the best-known systems of environmental philosophy: the concept Henryk Skolimowski dubbed ecophilosophy (*eko-filozofia*). It is the author's contention that the latter is a contemporary philosophy in which the core idea of philosophy is being renewed.

This main thesis is developed in the article's three parts, of which the first deals with the ongoing relationship between the idea and subject of philosophy. Here it is noted that the critical attitude is the one constant element underpinning the idea of philosophy. This attitude entails reservations as to – or simply a lack of full confidence in – the certainties and truths deemed to make up each and every one of history's concrete forms of rationality. The lack of confidence manifests itself in a refusal to engage in a priori acceptance of any cultural tradition as exhausting the layers of human rationality (in terms of values, cognitive stereotypes or standards determining actions).

The second part of the article addresses with the crisis in contemporary philosophy taken to reflect the marginalization of philosophical thought in today's Euro-Atlantic culture. A theory as to why this is now being noted is presented and developed, the assertion – in brief – being that such a state of affairs has arisen because the main currents in contemporary philosophy have separated from the idea of philosophy, the currents in question tending to seek philosophy's conversion into yet another scientific discipline.

The third part of the article then focuses on ecophilosophy as a system aiming to re-supply philosophy with the idea of philosophy it has otherwise contrived to lose. Two issues raised here are thus the characterisation of the remaining currents to contemporary philosophy – as a voice of protest against the main direction philosophy adopted in the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as the characterisation of ecophilosophy as heir to that other style of philosophical reflection wherein the aforementioned criticism remains a powerful feature, at least in relation to today's most troublesome civilisational and social problems.

The methodological background to the article comprises a popular typology of contemporary philosophy identifying the scientific, the anti-scientific and the ideological as the three fundamental groups of theories present; as well as a detailing of the sources of philosophical issues that points to those spheres of public life in which universally-accepted solutions are ceasing to be self-evident.

**Key words:** environmental philosophy, contemporary philosophy, ecophilosophy, Skolimowski, idea of philosophy, rationality, cultural rationality

---

In the Introduction to the Polish edition of a superb book "Philosophy. Basic questions" edited by Ekkehard Martens and Herbert Schnädelbach, professor Jerzy Kmita raises the question of the role and significance of philosophy in the contemporary world. Thus, he asserts with grief: "here in our intellectual life – or, more precisely, in the *Lebenswelt* of the society which our humanistic intelligentsia forms – the philosophical thought plays no, or hardly any role" (Kmita, 1995, p. 14). And he adds: "Is this state of affairs deplorable, is there anything to regret? This question should be answered rather affirmatively, I presume" (Kmita, 1995, p. 14). The loss of significance of philosophy in a mass society and the atrophy of interest with matters pertaining to philosophy, were bitterly acknowledged by members of the 20<sup>th</sup> World Philosophical Congress in Boston, 1998. One of the Polish delegates, Rev. Prof. Józef M. Dołęga, on his arrival back from the USA, reported on the lack of any mention of the congress in the Boston press. But is it any different in Poland? There is less and less space for the teaching of philosophy on the academic level, including humanistic faculties. Reducing the number of philosophical subjects as well as the number of hours for classes in philosophy, or even eliminating it from syllabi, is common practice.

## 1. The idea of philosophy vs. the subject of philosophy

Is it not a fact, that in recent decades philosophy has renounced the mission, which, over the centuries, had decided upon its cultural and social significance? Has it not resigned from undertaking the tasks that had settled in its favour all kinds of doubts and allowed to deal with its few antagonists easily, just because of the long-lasting appreciation of the importance of philosophical quest? Apparently, yes! At the turn of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, philosophy lost the burden of issues which, owing to Tales and Socrates, had decided its cultural rank and social acknowledgement since antiquity.

Someone might claim that the changes mentioned here are not new in the history of philosophy, as it abounds in subjects given up during its course. Furthermore, it is inevitable for the birth of a new philosophical era that connections with the past are broken.

Admittedly, the subject of philosophy has undergone numerous alternations in its 2500 year-old history. Problems which were consecutively appearing on the horizon of philosophical quest, were also vanishing, making room for more important ones. None of the issues which focused the attention of the greatest titans of thought, has remained

in philosophy forever, although the successors of these titans stuck to them longer than needed. In the epoch emerging at the meeting point of acknowledged philosophical judgements and the pressure of reality transformed by them, often in the melting pot of changes inspired by external forces, from the outside of only relatively isolated cultural space originated by the Greeks, they were losing their meaning irrevocably, only to make room for the others. They were born out of new issues and events. They were accompanied by the emergence of new brilliant minds, able to the intellectual 'taming' of these issues within theoretical frames and the systems of principles, suggestions, norms and values implied by them. Philosophy was changing, but it was also growing and setting firm in a close contact with the issues ingrained in the consciousness of each epoch, as well as a result of being in touch with the events which made the hearts of their participants pound. Its development coincided with the advance of socially beneficial institutions, the growth of moral sensitivity, the increase of spirituality, and the expansion of the sphere of freedom. Obviously, there were also less favourable moments. It slowed down when new models of perceiving the world, new cultural certainties, various 'undeniable' and 'unchangeable' cognitive stereotypes and standards of action were being propagated. On the other hand, it accelerated when cultural rules of exclusion were weighing more and more on society, increasingly oppressed by unintended results of its own 'rational' actions. In other words, it happened so when the second, bad face of Janus's principles was gradually emerging, as an emblem for excluding subjects and trains of thought beyond what could be thought and discussed without ridiculing oneself or being suspected of insanity; thus, the principles deciding about the reason for the questions posed and the problems considered, supervising the boundary between rationality and irrationality, therefore defining a space shared by the true and the false. In such circumstances, the efforts of philosophers were concentrated upon drawing these principles out of the twilight of cultural ignorance and exposing them to the bright light of critical reflection, as well as making clear all the assumptions referring to the way a man perceives himself, his society and the world around, which could be dangerous for the very existence of a given cultural and sociological realm. New issues for philosophical quest emerge out of the intellectual struggle against the principles of exclusion which enclose the society within the framework of a current form of culture, thus impeding its advance. Summing up: the subject of philosophy was changing, thus philosophy itself was changing, too.

In spite of the changing subject, however, the very idea of philosophy had remained intact for the centuries between 5<sup>th</sup> BC and 18/19<sup>th</sup> AD, up to the point of proclaiming 'the death of philosophy' by

August Comte and Karl Marx. That challenged the identity of philosophy and led to the proclamation of the 'scientific philosophy' manifesto (Papuziński, 1998, p. 166-184). In the ultimate period of his work, from which the little book "The crises of European humanity vs. philosophy dates", Edmund Husserl describes this idea as follows: "Philosophy as a form of research and education acts in a two-fold way: on the one hand, what is vital for a philosophising man's attitude is a unique universality of a **critical stance** which involves the decision not to accept any tradition in advance, without concurrently posing a question about what is true in itself, what is ideal, in the whole universum given by virtue of tradition. Nevertheless, it is not only a new cognitive attitude. As a response to the demand to submit all empiria to the norms of the ideal, that is the norms of the unconditional truth, a far-reaching change of all human actions, thus, all cultural life, is taking place. Their norm should, from then on, **be not the naive, commonplace empiria and tradition, but objective truth**" – underlined by the author (Husserl, 1993, p. 33-34). In short, the principal idea of philosophical thinking is the idea of objective truth. In the theoretical domain the idea of objective truth makes philosophers obliged to maintain a critical stance towards all certainties and truths provided by any concrete, historical form of culture, therefore towards all which decides about the rationality of cognition. In the practical domain, as regards the impact on people and the whole societies' way of life, it results in mistrust and reserve towards all values and actions, stereotypes of self-regard as well as the society's and the natural environment's, thus towards what is a guarantee of the rationality of action.

## 2. The crises of the contemporary philosophy

The notion of contemporary philosophy is regarded controversial, which is proved by several suggestions for its definition. However, this will not be discussed (Papuziński, 1999, p. 17-30). Taking the cultural stand as a point of departure, contemporary philosophy should be understood as the philosophy determined by the features which make the current cultural phase distinctive from previous phases of its development. As the present epoch is determined by science, contemporary philosophy, as assumed above – is that part of its history, which gave rise to reflections concerning scientific cognition and has stimulated its advance. This criterion, therefore, enables us to talk about contemporary philosophy since 1830, that is, from the beginning of the positive philosophy, which analysed the specific character of scientific cognition and was modelled upon the sciences. According to different criteria, one should consider the anti-positivist breakthrough (the critique of psychologism) at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as undertaking

scholarly issues as worth philosophical search. This would mean that all the philosophy developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century would be considered as contemporary philosophy. From our perspective, however, there is no need to support any of these extreme standpoints. Taking into consideration the ups and downs of the social meaning of philosophy it can be said that philosophy between 1830 and the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century constitutes the first stage of development of contemporary philosophy. It was undoubtedly characteristic of the educated social classes' optimism and belief in the power of philosophical reflection founded on scientific premises. The second, current stage of the development of contemporary philosophy is characterised by the decline of interest in philosophy, despite a considerable increase of educational standards. As regards the 'science vs. philosophy' criterion, two basic types of contemporary philosophical conceptions should be identified, namely scientific and anti-scientific philosophy. Nevertheless, it cannot be neglected that what is chronologically understood as contemporary may contain some theories which go beyond this criterion. The importance of numerous philosophical trends inspired by Christianity makes it necessary to consider the second criterion, concerning the outlook. It is also indispensable to treat Christian thought as a separate category (Kot, 1989, p. 6-18).

Typically, scientific philosophy tries to correlate scientific rationalism with rationalism in general. Its representatives propagate an outlook based on scientific values and advocate a realistic interpretation of scientific cognition. They also trust in science and its results, at the same time rejecting religion and philosophical speculation (metaphysics). Scientific philosophy continues the Enlightenment's idea of progress and the belief of the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century middle class in science as a cure for all problems, be they political, social, economical, or the ones concerning the future. This trend comprises neopositivism, hypothetism, the philosophy of language, structuralism, and phenomenology.

It may appear paradoxical, but the crisis of contemporary philosophy is related to the greatest successes of its scientific trend. First, scientific philosophy has been incredibly successful because it has rejected the ancient forms of reasonability and has placed philosophy on the new, scientific basis of the paradigm of intersubjective reasonability. It has simply prevented philosophy from getting lost in a world undergoing a sudden metamorphosis. Regardless of some aristocratic trends of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, philosophy avoided getting stuck in the remnants of the realm whose criterion for rationality in thinking and acting was expressed in making life into a work of art, which was typical of Antiquity, or the Renaissance. It also broke the connections with religion, after the specific ration-

ality demanding to make life religious and conform all human activity to the pursuit of redemption, had become parallel to typically secular and materialistic desires. These tendencies were particularly strong in the Middle Ages and in the period of the religious turmoil originating by the reforms of Martin Luther and John Calvin. When religion and art became supportive of the private sphere of human existence, philosophical theories formulated in their jargons lost their right to be commonly acknowledged. They regained this right only after making a reference to the sciences. Thus, scientific philosophy allowed philosophy to self-express up to the standards of a historically new form of rationality. Secondly, scientific philosophy has been successful because it made philosophy scientific.

From then on, philosophy became a specialist subject, on a par with physics, mathematics, or biology. A philosopher has also become a specialist in his field. He is a specialist in Plato, in epistemology, in aesthetics, or many-valued logic. The philosopher is still in the *avant-garde* of the epoch, but... he cannot give philosophical answers which would make orientation in the world any easier for a human being.

In what does the failure of philosophy as such consist? People lost or alienated in a realm of their own making, craving for some orientation in the world of their own material production, turn to philosophy which is in tune with the commonly accepted paradigm of rationality. Inevitably, disappointment is the only thing they find there. As one more scientific discipline, philosophy cannot provide more than not very satisfying, fragmentary answers typical of the sciences. It lost its formerly inherent predispositions, especially the ability to perceive problems from the overall perspective. Just like the sciences which are becoming more and more specialised, out of the well-understood desire to possess a more detailed knowledge, it turns into an absolute knowledge about nothing, as once put sarcastically by Oscar Wilde.

At any rate, the knowledge generated by scientific philosophy does not suffice to come up to the expectations which philosophy as such has met. It is most evident in ethics, a part of the philosophy of Socrates, inherently bound with the question: "how should we act to fill our life with sense?" As modern philosophical systems were literally evincing the relativity of moral notions, the relativity of the good and its dependence on a situation, ethics, as pointed out by Witold Tulibacki, clearly abandoned its "normative genealogy. It was successively becoming capacious as far as the content is concerned, and cognitively interesting, but it remained theoretical, a domain of meta-ethical reflection – a reflection upon the logical fundament of ethical utterances, a knowledge about ethical predicates, a sphere of quest for the scientific criteria of ethics itself. It became self-reflective, self-conscious, a

kind of written down self-knowledge, considerably distant from its primary function, which was formulating clear directives of moral conduct. Therefore, some ethicists who are aware of the theoretical impotence to articulate moral truths, associate this state of affairs with, what they simplistically call, 'the crisis of ethics', or, more subtly, the problem of its 'indeterminacy' (Tulibacki, 1998, p. 9-10).

In order to do justice to the representatives of the scientific trend, it must be added that it is not only them, but also the Enlightenment who bear responsibility for the renunciation of the idea of philosophy; the idea of philosophy has dissipated in the idea of science, which has been elaborated on and spread by philosophy itself. Ironically, the whole philosophical tradition, reaching back to the ancient thinkers, succours that stance. The Enlightenment, viewed as a period in culture and philosophy, recalls a certain type of reflection originated by the sophists, nevertheless worth to be called philosophical, thanks to Socrates. This philosophical reflection is "philosophy as the enlightenment" – as the editors of the already mentioned Philosophy. The basic questions evince (Martens, 1995, p. 52-56). Strictly speaking, the task of the philosopher taking such a stand would be to be preoccupied with oneself. A real knowledge is the one which is referred by the persons possessing it, to themselves. It is therefore referred to the way in which individuals, typically of themselves, perceive themselves and their practical interests. Owing to Socrates, who bound this self-consciousness with the idea of objective truth rejected by the relativistically-oriented sophists, 'philosophy as the enlightenment' can be named so under an essential condition. Namely, it is only philosophy as theory, *theōria*, or 'philosophy as science', which can be called 'philosophy as enlightenment'. In other words, the reason for philosophy renouncing its own idea in the works of scientific trend is also a one-sided approach to theoretical conditions of 'philosophy as the enlightenment'. What weighs heavily upon the idea of philosophy, could be compared to the proverbial Damocles' sword. It was wrong to believe that there was any automatic conjunction between studying the objective truth of the natural, and, successively, social and cultural worlds, and an advancement of an individual referring the knowledge gained by this study to himself, and, by the same token, satisfying his needs and fulfilling his desires.

The crises which affected the 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophers' self-consciousness, made them and their intellectual work prey to all the superstitions of the Enlightenment, contrary to the expectations coinciding with formulating and spreading them. As Ernest Geller claims, it was wrong "to presume that the representatives of the Enlightenment were able to get realised the new, alternative vision, in which violence and superstition would stand for falsity,

and truth would guarantee social equality, freedom, and fraternity, just like the encyclopaedists proposed" (Gellner, 1996, p. 116).

The progress they promoted was to be guaranteed by the rejection of speculative doctrine, spreading the knowledge rooted in the rationality of its sound and sensible representatives, the success of the rational philosophy – that is, closely bound up with the empirical, and finally, empirical sciences revealing the secrets of nature. In fact, such an idea of progress is a modification of Bacon's belief that a conquest of nature is a way back to the lost Eden, and science acts as a compass which allows people to keep to the track leading there.

### 3. Eco-philosophy: The rebirth of the idea of philosophy

The crisis of contemporary philosophy is more and more clearly observed among professional philosophers. Some of them abandon the schools in which they have intellectually grown up, matured, and achieved some significance, in order to start work from scratch. Being aware of the decrease of the importance of philosophy in society, they focus their efforts on preparing a program of research which will be able to meet social expectations as far as philosophy is concerned. It is worth acknowledging, that they are closely connected with its lost idea.

The best example of such a daring philosophical attitude is Prof. Henryk Skolimowski, from whom the idea of eco-philosophy originated. Another philosopher worth mentioning here is Prof Arne Naess of the University of Oslo. In fact, he presents considerably different views on ecological problems in the light of philosophical reflection, but there is a common ground between the two as far as the change of orientation is concerned. They both owe their academic status to scientific philosophy. They have been preoccupied with the logic and philosophy of language for years. Skolimowski is a descendant and propagator of the positivist tradition represented by the Lvov-Warsaw school. Naess, as the elder of the two, managed to establish contact with The Vienna Circle before the Second World War. And now, all of a sudden, being highly successful and acknowledged in their professional environments, they put their philosophical orientation at stake and change radically. Naess is quite concise in explaining his decision, declaring his desire to "live, rather than function" (WaloŹszyk, 1996, p. 228).

What inspired Skolimowski might be inferred from the following: "Most of people who do not refrain from thinking feel the need of a new vision and a new form of co-operation with nature. Professional philosophers, however, are usually closed and isolated in their hermetic niches. (...) They practice exegesis of the previous philosophical

schools. It is amazing and frightening, but they lack any understanding of new ecological and philosophical issues. For what other reason are their minds so highly educated, if not for the understanding of the present state of affairs? Former philosophies tried to make comprehensible the realm of the time bygone. We have to make comprehensible the realm we live in – which is different from the previous ones. This task calls for a new philosophy” (Skolimowski, 1993, p. 7-8).

In Skolimowski’s meditations the idea of philosophy is reborn, with all respect to our times. He focuses mainly on the issue of the environmental crisis, perceived as the crisis of nature, the crisis of society, the crisis of values, the crises of the collective consciousness, and the crisis of the humanism in its up-to-the-present version. Nevertheless, he considers these issues from the point of view of the crisis of the paradigm of rationality bound inherently with the scientific and technical civilisation, treating it as an introduction to the didactic visions of the ‘ecological humanism’ and ‘ecological man’. He declares that our times abound in countless crises and we do not know how to get out of the trap. The best rational minds are suggesting the best rational solutions which only deepen the crises. We should at last become aware that our way of thinking and our rationality fail us. They have become like a double-edged sword which beats us when we try to use it. (...) It should be postulated that a new mode of thinking as well as a new rationality are essential in the present epoch” (Skolimowski, 1993, p. 7).

As Wolfgang Iser claims, the history of reason has always been accompanied by the critique of reason (Iser, 1997, p. 92). In this respect, the contemporary is not any different from the past. The critical attitude towards identifying the scientific rationality with rationality as such, is not unusual in contemporary philosophy. Both the representatives of the anti-scientific trend of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the philosophers inspired by Christianity, are clearly adverse to the leading role of scientific rationality in scientific and technical civilisation. For that matter their reflection can be considered the forerunner of eco-philosophy. Regardless of the multitude of relations between these conceptions and Skolimowski’s work, they are vital for eco-philosophy, for two reasons at least. First, it was they who prepared the ground for the critique of functions performed by current scientific rationality, and threw into question its exclusively positive impact on the fate of the individual and society. Secondly, they bridged the gap between philosophical reflection and the problem of *conditio humana*, with which everybody is familiar in one way or another.

Anti-scientism is a trend in philosophy whose representatives do not identify scientific rationalism with rationalism as such, and repudiate the outlook

based on scientific values, although they may take the stand of realistic interpretation of scientific cognition and proclaim maximum trust in science and its outcome. They do not share the belief in the capability of science to solve all political, social, economical and outlook-generated problems, or the belief in progress, either. This trend comprises existentialism, hermeneutics, and post-hypothetism. A naive trust in the omnipotence of scientific rationality was undermined by existentialism in the first place. Jean-Paul Sartre and his numerous followers used to confront themselves with one and the same problem: how to philosophise after Auschwitz, which had certainly been a most rationally organised death factory? Is philosophy possible at all after Auschwitz, which, as a symbol of evil and tremendous tragedy became inevitably a symbol of a scientific, rational organisation of mass murderers’ work? The answer they provide did not contribute anything significant to knowledge about the science and scientific rationality of our epoch, but nevertheless it is worth bearing in mind, for it restored philosophy’s capability to pose philosophical questions. Two decades of the immense popularity of existentialism prove that there is a close link between the fidelity of the idea of philosophy and the effect philosophical ideas have on society. Hermeneutics is very much alike in this aspect. The more attempts it made to give philosophical answers to the formerly posed philosophical questions, the more its social impact increased. Both the questions and the answers pertained to the pressure of everyday life. They were to free people from this pressure, as well as add more value to human existence, so that it made sense. It is well reflected in the much greater interest of German society in the works of Jürgen Habermas, a neo-marxist, than in the monumental works of Hans-Georg Gadamer. While Gadamer limited the aim of his research to revealing what people understood by ‘existence’, Habermas confronted hermeneutics with science. Hermeneutics was proffered as a means of emancipation of the society, whereas science as serving the purpose of supremacy (over nature and society). As far as post-hypothetism is concerned, it is significant in this context as it brings evidence of the disappointment with the positivistic vision of science and rationality within the positivist tradition. Thomas S. Kuhn strongly opposes the cumulative theory of the development of science, based on the concept of linear evolution of scientific disciplines, and the assumption, that there are universal rules (e.g. logical ones) which govern the whole science. Paul K. Feyerabend, on the other hand, develops the concept of methodological anarchism, based on the presumption that it is impossible to decide whether scientific methodology is objectively valid. His ultimate claim is, that there are no legitimate reasons for the methodological opposition between

scientific and philosophical (or theological) cognition.

Doubtlessly, all the philosophical critiques of reason flourishing on the grounds of philosophical anti-scientism, except post-hipothetism, take part in the critique of reason on the common ground. It is not so much a new, improved conception of reason, as a reaction to the effects of propagating the contemporary, scientific paradigm of rationality. Welsch notes, that "reason is criticised as a principle which is responsible for the catastrophic condition of the world of today. (...) The reason which could work must be free from both main features which have been diagnosed to bring about catastrophic results. These are the connection with power and the drive towards uniformity. Reason should be characteristic of the sense of imagination and pluralism rather than strong and unifying decrees" (Welsch, 1993, p. 92). Skolimowski significantly complements these reflections. Emmanuel Levinas attacked the connection of the contemporary 'reason' with power, Michel Foucault, Nelson Goodman, Jürgen Habermas, and Richard Rorty the tendency to uniformity, whereas Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Martin Heidegger, Jean-François Lyotard were strongly opposed to both. Skolimowski, on the other hand, without renouncing these issues entirely, has brought up a completely new aspect of its domination. He focused attention on the destructive effect of the contemporary 'reason' on the very basic, natural conditions of human existence.

Contemporary philosophy as inspired by Christianity is characterised by its representatives recognising the realm inaccessible to science, propagating an outlook based on the rules of the Christian religion. Moreover, they propagate the need to accept and respect the principles of the Christian faith, and negate the primacy of science in culture. They combine the issue of progress with the subject of individual salvation as well as the salvation of the whole world, and the solution of political, social and economical problems with the organisation of social life according to the evangelical principles. The crux of this trend is, regardless of the confession of its authors, best expressed in John Paul's II encyclical to the bishops of the Catholic Church, "Fides et ratio" (1998). It elaborates on the relations between reason and belief, and evokes one of the ideas of the "Redemptor Hominis" encyclical. The Pope observes, that "one of the most distinctive aspects of our present condition is the 'crisis of sense'. There are so many cognitive perspectives, often of a scientific character, from which one can view the world, that we are actually experiencing a more and more common phenomenon of the fragmentation of knowledge. This is what makes the search for sense so difficult, if not impossible. (...) In order to harmonise with the word of the Lord, philosophy must first of all regain its dimension of

wisdom, constituting therefore the search for the ultimate and entire sense of existence. This basic requirement is, as a matter of fact, vital to philosophy, because it makes it adapt to its own nature. Following this direction philosophy will become not only a critical authority which makes it clear for different scientific disciplines what their bases and limitations are, but also the final instance uniting human knowledge and activity by the fact, that owing to it, they aim at the most important sense." (John Paul II, 1998, no 81). In the following lines John Paul II points out that the dimension of wisdom is indispensable considering the enormous increase of the technical potential of humanity. He also states firmly the necessity to become aware of the most significant values, as they can prove anti-human and destructive if they are not subjected to a purpose which goes beyond the logic of pure utilitarianism. However, there is one more cause which makes his reflection vital to eco-philosophy; it is the belief that human reason deserves its noble name only if the factor of wisdom has been restored to it. It was lost in the twists and turns of the Enlightenment's naive trust in the omnipotence of reason embodied in the form of scientific rationality. Skolimowski's conceptions combine two philosophical traditions. The first, anti-scientistic one, stresses the catastrophic results of the rule of scientific rationality. The second one, much older than the first, has been preserved at the cost of being isolated and separated from the main trends of contemporary philosophy (in the narrow meaning of the word). It is inherently bound with a concrete ideal of life. Moreover, a 'proper' model of rationality providing sense to human existence is a matter of the utmost importance for it. Skolimowski makes it clear that rationality must meet two expectations. Firstly, it must have a positive impact on the reality that serves both humanity and the natural environment. Secondly, it must have a new shape capable of solving or rather cutting the Gordian knot of the problems that people have to cope with as a result of their obedient regard for scientific rationality.

#### 4. Conclusions

Henryk Skolimowski's eco-philosophy lays a new and important contemporary direction of philosophical search. But is it not leading us towards a new utopia? Possibly it is, but in the positive sense of the word. As Georg Picht put it, one needs a courage of utopia to undertake such a task.<sup>1</sup> Eco-philosophy is definitely not a utopia in the negative meaning of the word. Skolimowski's undeniable merit is restoring to philosophy its philosophising role, maintaining at the same time a close contact with scientific

<sup>1</sup> The courage of utopia is the title of Picht's article, which Krzysztof Maurin, the author of the Polish collection of his works, used in the book *G. Picht: The courage of utopia* (Picht, 1981).

knowledge, despite the criticism towards the position of science in the culture of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, there is still more to be mentioned.

Skolimowski belongs to those few philosophers who reinstate the most significant field of philosophical search, namely the issue of rationality.

Skolimowski belongs to those few philosophers who restore the capability of the holistic perception of the world, in which nature, society and human thought turn out to be different aspects of one problem, namely the relations which combine them into one whole.

Skolimowski belongs to these few philosophers who:

- bring back to philosophy a properly understood criticism. This criticism consists of the ability to surpass current patterns of thinking and action standards in order to unveil the very basis of their significance, as well as using it in an effective and beneficial manner.
- make it possible for philosophy to ask philosophical questions about the world. It is a search for new rationality in tune with an individual's good which is inherently bound with the good of the others, as well as with animate and inanimate nature.
- restore to philosophy its normative abilities, that is its abilities to form possibly clear directives of moral conduct.
- view philosophy like a headmistress in the school of life (*vitae magistra*). This means that it is entitled to give advice to people lost in the materialistic realm of their own making which seems to exist only to threaten their well-being.

Eco-philosophy comprises all the above mentioned ideas. It meets the needs and expectations of the contemporary epoch, such as the need to get out of the blind alley of the present condition of culture generated by the uncritical belief in science and, respectively, its form of rationality. It is the first word uttered as far as the environmental crisis – as the crisis of a current norm of rationality – is concerned. Certainly, it is not the last word on the subject, as Skolimowski is being followed by many others.

It is evident, that if it had not been for eco-philosophy, we would be like a patient in the following anecdote: a G. P. is knowledgeable about everything, but cannot do anything; a surgeon can do everything, but is knowledgeable about nothing; it is only a pathologist who is knowledgeable about everything and can do everything, but, unfortunately, it is too late for the patient. Taking into consideration the numerous, but insufficiently effective, efforts to protect the natural environment, one could remark, quite sarcastically, that ecology is the discipline which is knowledgeable about

everything, but cannot do anything. Respectively, zoology – a science of environmental protection – can do everything, but is knowledgeable about nothing, and it is only politics and the law concerning the protection of the environment which are knowledgeable about everything and can do everything, but, unfortunately, their regulations always come too late. Eco-philosophy comes as a dauntless critique of the conventional thinking patterns and action standards, as well as an audacious denouncer of the deficiency of values and the paucity of the arrogant, anthropocentric humanism. Moreover, it comes as a tempting suggestion for a new form of rationality, thus being an opportunity for politicians and lawyers to make use of the great scientific knowledge of ecologists and technical skills of zoologists.

The more frequent such philosophical combats take place, the better for humanity and the environment. The more intellectuals who are ready to support such a form of rationality, the more optimistic one can be about the ecological future of the world. Eco-philosophy is a vital inspiration for it. Firstly, it gains followers, not to mention 'apostles', who ardently promote it. Secondly, it has a disturbing effect, as it makes evident a lot of issues, which badly need to be reflected upon. Thirdly, it annoys its critics, thus making them reconsider the problems which have long appeared to be solved. The collective consciousness of our epoch is forced to wake up from the 'dogmatic nap' in which it fell after it was tranquillised by the illusion of the everlasting effectiveness of science and technology, as well as the whole spectrum of values in dealing with the problems generated by the development of our civilisation. Eco-philosophy is successful in doing so, because it has managed to restore the long-forgotten meaning to philosophy – the meaning contained in its very idea.

## References

1. GELLNER E., Oświecenie – tak czy nie? w: przekład i opracowanie J. Niżnik, *Habermas, Rorty, Kolakowski: stan filozofii współczesnej*, Wyd. IFiS PAN, Warszawa 1996. [Gellner E., *The Enlightenment – pro or contra?* in: translated and drawn up by Niżnik J., *Habermas, Rorty, Kolakowski: the condition of the contemporary philosophy*, published by IFiS PAN, Warszawa 1996.]
2. HUSSERL E., *Kryzys europejskiego człowieczeństwa a filozofia*, Biblioteka Aletheia, Warszawa 1993. [Husserl E., *The crises of European humanity vs. philosophy*, Biblioteka Aletheia, Warszawa 1993.]
3. JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et ratio*, Vatican, 1998.
4. KMITA J., Przedmowa do wydania polskiego, w: red. Martens E., Schnädelbach H., *Filozofia. Podstawowe pytania*, Wiedza Powszechna,

- Warszawa 1995 [Kmita J., Introduction to the Polish edition, in: ed. Martens E., Schnädelbach H., *Philosophy. Basic questions*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1995.]
5. KOT W., *Współczesne orientacje filozoficzne*, PWN, Warszawa 1989. [Kot W., *Contemporary philosophical orientations*, PWN, Warszawa 1989.]
  6. MARTENS E., SCHNÄDELBACH H., O aktualnej sytuacji filozofii, w: red. Martens E., Schnädelbach H., *Filozofia. Podstawowe pytania*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1995. [Martens E, Schnädelbach H., The current state of philosophy, in: ed. by Martens E., Schnädelbach H., *Philosophy. Basic questions*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1995.]
  7. PAPUZIŃSKI A., *Życie – Nauka – Ekologia. Prolegomena do kulturalistycznej filozofii ekologii*, Wydawnictwo Uczelniane WSP w Bydgoszczy, Bydgoszcz 1998 [Papuziński A., *Life – Science – Ecology. Prolegomena to the culturalistic philosophy of ecology*, Wydawnictwo Uczelniane WSP in Bydgoszcz, Bydgoszcz 1998.]
  8. PAPUZIŃSKI A., 1999, Nauki szczegółowe a filozofia współczesna, w: *Humanistyka i Przyrodoznawstwo*, no 5. [Papuziński A., Detailed sciences vs. contemporary philosophy, in: *Humanistyka i Przyrodoznawstwo* 1999, no. 5.]
  9. PICHT G., *Odwaga utopii*, PIW, Warszawa 1981. [Picht G., *The courage of utopia*, PIW, Warszawa 1981.]
  10. SKOLIMOWSKI H., *Filozofia żyjąca. Ekofilozofia jako drzewo życia*, Wyd. Pusty Obłok, Warszawa 1993. [Skolimowski H.: *Living philosophy. Eco-philosophy as a Tree of Life*, Pusty Obłok Publishing, Warszawa 1993.]
  11. TULIBACKI W., *Etyka i naturalizm. Problem naukowego kontekstu etyki*, Wyd. ART, Olsztyn 1998. [Tulibacki W., *Naturalism and ethics. The problem of a scientific context of ethics*, ART., Olsztyn 1998.]
  12. WALOSZCZYK K., *Kryzys ekologiczny w świetle ekofilozofii*, Wyd. Politechniki Łódzkiej, Łódź 1996. [Waloszczyk K., *Ecological crises in the light of eco-philosophy*, Politechnika Łódzka Publishing, Łódź 1996.]
  13. WELSCH W., Rozum i przejścia. O rozumie transwersalnym, w: red. Buksiński T., *Rozumność i racjonalność*, Wyd. Naukowe Instytut Filozofii, Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań 1997. [Welsch W.: *The reason and passages. Of transversal reason*, in: ed. Buksiński T., *Sensibility and Rationality*, The Institute of Philosophy Academic Publishing, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań 1997.]