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ECO-VALUES AS A PLATFORM OF UNITY OF PROFANE AND SACRAL IN THE CONTEXT OF ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

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Abstract

This paper builds on basic results of surveys targeted on analyzing the relationship of EU citizens to natural environment. We anticipate that EU citizens get an increasing amount of information about natural environment and that this information comes from diverse sources. Among the most common sources and types of information are publicly available scientific data, activities of ecological clubs and associations, as well as educational activities that are part of all levels of education. This brings to the conclusion that educational activities conducted at the level of university education as part of Ecological Ethics' curriculum (or as the content of specific Ecological Ethics courses) are highly relevant today. Given their academic nature, these courses have the potential to help students reflect deeply on the content and significance of ecological values. We hold the opinion that ecological values may be understood as a platform of unification of the profane and the sacral in the life of a human as well as the whole society. We point out and interpret the inspirational influence of an important representative of the 20th century intellectual milieu, the French thinker Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. The paper introduces his reflections on the relationship between man, nature and God, on the unity of a »religion of the Earth,« and »religion of Heaven.« This way of thinking has the potential to become a source of a deeper understanding as well as a better realization of ecological values that unite believers with unbelievers.

Keywords: Eco-values, Ecological Ethics, »Religion of the Earth,« »Religion of Heaven,« Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, our global culture faces a series of challenges having unprecedented scope in almost every area of human activity: whether economics, politics, ecology, or science, religion, art and philosophy. All these areas are confronted with the need for a radical reassessment of the essential values. We can see more and more frequently that, for example, the increase in new knowledge and opportunities in many areas of human activity brings a number of problematic aspects. It is often manifested by the fact that in unilateral materialistic and consumer-oriented human activities there is no stable basis for ecological, spiritual, moral, aesthetic and other values. One easily becomes a victim of a utilitarian and narrowly pragmatic thinking that reduces human motivation to earthbound egoism. Nature and the world become just a set of objects for man, and nothing prevents even the greatest treasures of our natural and cultural heritage from being transformed into the means of »pathological« consumption and excessive waste.

In spite of the socially proclaimed tendency to live a consuming way of life that is considered to represent a kind of well-being and happiness, there appear voices that point not only to the shallowness (superficiality) of such a way of life and its long-term unsustainability, but also to the radical need for a change. It threatens many spheres in the lives of individuals and society. And the most important of them is the area of the basic preconditions of our existence, i.e. the natural world, the space we call the environment.¹

The issue of environmental understanding is thus directly related to our ecologically favorable or unfavorable way of life, i.e. a sustainable or unsustainable way of life. Many current sociological studies are hopeful that people are more and more seriously dealing with environmental issues and finding the right way of life, which includes not only consumption and well-being, but also the relationship to the environment.² Information on the state of the environment, both global and local (national states or local communities), is becoming more desirable, helping to create new value preferences of people.

In our paper, we will build on some of the results obtained in the research of the relationship between EU citizens and the environment. Based

¹ Now we will not deliberately differentiate the term environment in the sense of natural and cultural, but we will understand it as the natural environment we share with other biological species, though often at their expense.

² The kurent Works of the sociologist Hana Librová are important in this respect. Hana LIBROVÁ, *Pestři a zelení. Kapitoly o dobrovolné skromnosti*, Brno, 1994; Hana LIBROVÁ, *Vlažní a váhaví. Kapitoly o ekologickom luxusu*, Brno, 2003.

on the assumption that the environmental information is gained by citizens from different sources, not excluding scientific knowledge, the activities of environmental associations and ecological movements, as well as various educational activities, we will mention some of them. We will try to introduce in a very brief way the educational activities within higher education through environmental (ecological) ethics courses that can clarify the place of ecological values in human life. We will also attempt to introduce ecological values as a platform for the unification of the profane and the sacred in the life of man and society. In this respect, we will point to the extraordinary inspiring influence of a prominent 20th century figure, the French thinker Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. His reflections on the relationship of man, nature and God, on »dynamic« and »static« morality, on the unity of »religion of the Earth« and »religion of Heaven« can serve as the basis for understanding the need to acquire ecological values. These can bring together not only believers and unbelievers, but also seekers and dwellers if we use the terminology of Tomas Halík, referring to the sociologists of religion Robert Wutnow and Charles Taylor.³

1. Selected opinions of EU citizens in relation to the environment

The relevant research into environmental issues carried out most recently in the EU in September / October 2017 concerned several areas. It explored both the general attitude and the concerns of Europeans about the environment and the current behavior and priorities of citizens in relation to it, the importance of the influence of information resources about the environment, the impact of environmental issues, and the impact of plastic products and chemicals, ways of taking action to tackle environmental issues, the role of the EU in environmental protection, awareness of and attitudes towards ecolabels, perceptions of air quality and ways of tackling air pollution and the need to protect the environment and the responsibility for it, as well as the need for the EU's preferred activities in relation to the environment.

The report was published under the title *Special Eurobarometer 468. Attitudes of Europeans towards an environment* by the Directorate-General for Communication (2017). »This report presents the results of the Special Eurobarometer public opinion survey on the environment in the 28 European Union countries. This follows three previous Eurobarometer surveys on the

³ Tomáš HALÍK – Anselm GRÜN, *Svět bez Boha. Ateismus jako druh náboženské zkušenosti*, Praha, 2017, 104.

environment: Special Eurobarometer 295 (November-December 2007), Special Eurobarometer 365 (April-May 2011) and Special Eurobarometer 416 (April-May 2014)«. ⁴ It was attended by 27,881 respondents. They were respondents from different social and demographic groups, and they used their mother tongue in the survey. The methodology used was the Eurobarometer survey method.

Overall, the survey showed the following: »More than nine in ten respondents (94%) say that the protection of the environment is important to them personally, and among these more than half (56%) say it is very important. The findings have remained broadly consistent over the last ten years, although it can be observed some shifts in the proportions of those describing environmental protection as 'very' rather than 'fairly' important to them. Since the 2014 survey, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of respondents saying it is 'very important' (+3 percentage points) and an almost equal decrease in the proportion saying it is 'fairly important' (-4 pp). This reverses the trend seen between 2007 and 2014, in which the reverse shifts occurred. Just 5% of respondents do not regard environmental protection as important to them, a proportion unchanged since 2014... The proportion of respondents who say that protecting the environment is important has increased since 2014 in 12 countries«. ⁵

The results of several Eurobarometer surveys concerning environmental attitudes of EU citizens, moreover, reveal that there is wide public support not only for environmental legislation at EU level, but that EU funding should be allocated to support environmentally friendly activities and developments. ⁶ We can add to the above-mentioned statements that, although the survey revealed the need to promote environmentally friendly and ecological activities and future developments, it would not be easy at all without rigorous educational work on environmental values. That is why we will try to justify such values so that a predominant majority of the population prevails over consensus and considers the protection of the environment to be important. There is an opportunity to link the interest in protecting the environment with the acquisition of key environmental values which have a major impact on the formation of environmental thinking, feelings and behavior of the population.

⁴ Available at: https://www.minambiente.it/sites/default/files/archivio/allegati/reach/ebs_468_en.pdf

⁵ Available at: https://www.minambiente.it/sites/default/files/archivio/allegati/reach/ebs_468_en.pdf

⁶ Available at: http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2008_81_3_416

2. Briefly from the history of ecological thinking

If we wanted to at least briefly recall European history, we would find out that historical records of ancient times can be used to refer to ecological (environmental) minded individuals or groups of people⁷. The beginnings of the modern environmental movement date back to the first half of the 19th century, when formal groups emerged that exposed the public to the consequences of the destruction of the environment⁸. The main consequences were mainly new diseases caused by water and air pollution. »The 20th century saw the rise of ecological science, and the related study of nature as composed of interacting natural systems, but the case for preserving systems such as rivers and forests had to await the publication of Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949). Leopold advocated extending ethics to encompass ecosystems, but philosophers and ethicists (Leopold was neither of these) remained unimpressed.«⁹ In the 20th century, especially since the 1960s, what may have served to change the atmosphere was Rachel Carson's work *Silent Spring* (1962).¹⁰ And the beginning of the 1970s can already be regarded as the true emergence of environmental philosophy and ethics and the attempts to apply it to environmental concepts and problems.¹¹ Environmental protection becomes a subject not only of ecological (in the strict sense of protection) but also of a special scientific approach and of some philosophical and political directions that reflect the problem of environmental destruction and strive to protect it. We could say that there appears a wide range of environmental-oriented disciplines and practical movements that are becoming known for many of their activities in the world. However, they do not create a single stream of ideas. There are differences between them in terms of ways of implementation of how to protect the environment, or the definition of what this protection is all about

⁷ Among philosophers, Plato (in his dialogue *Critias*) was one of the earliest to be aware of soil erosion and deforestation.

⁸ In the 19th century for example George Perkins Marsh (an American diplomat and philologist) came to regard nature as significantly vulnerable to human activity, and at the same time human life as vulnerable to nature and its changes. His book *Man and nature* (1864) had a great impact in many parts of the world.

⁹ Robin ATTFIELD, *Environmental Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, University Press, 2018, 25.

¹⁰ Rachel Carson, now regarded as the mother of the environmental movement, in her book presented the negative impact on the environment to the public.

¹¹ Foundational contributions to environmental ethics have been made by several authors: John Passmore and his *Man's Responsibility for Nature* (1974), Arne Neess and his groundbreaking paper *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary* published in the philosophical journal *Inquiry* (1973), Holmes Rolston III and his early essay *Is There an Ecological Ethic?* (1975) etc.

and, in particular, what methods should be used. Although many goals are common, forms of »struggle« are different. The basic division of the environmental (ecological) movements is thus on the axis distinguishing radical and moderate, violent and non-violent, and legal and illegal practices.¹²

In principle, every change that is required today in accordance with the question of an ecologically sustainable future, the life of society and the individual is also associated with a certain loss of our material comfort. Therefore, expecting that every resident on Earth in any society will want to give it up would be absurd. If we want to set out on a path of legal and non-violent ecological action, we can find several options. One of them is, for example, the conclusion of international agreements on a global scale as well as the adoption of environmental laws in individual countries. Another possibility is to support the activities of non-radical environmental movements, and it is possible to consider the educational activity as prospective and strategically most successful in the long term. The Education can be implemented at all types of schools, both in the context of environmental, but also religious and ethical education (especially at elementary and secondary schools). Higher education institutions can develop a more demanding way of education in this area, through the introduction of eco-ethics courses, respectively eco-philosophy and eco-theology which we shall mention now.

3. Environmental education in higher education – a course on Ecological (Environmental) Ethics¹³

The main objective of the course of on ecological (Environmental) Ethics is to provide students with a deeper understanding of the relationship between nature and man, which is also characterized by the ecological crisis. It is important to work on the assumption that man's own view of nature (and the world as such) and its place in nature is crucial. It is true that our worldview is not just the way we look at the world (nature and society) but it is also the way we relate to the world, how we adopt it and how we create it. Let us add that this

¹² From the radical organizations we could mention some activities of *Greenpeace*, *Earth First!* or *Animal Liberation Front*. To moderate environmental movements belong e.g. *Friends of the Earth International*.

¹³ We would like to incorporate this issue into this contribution on the basis of our 20 years of experience with introducing an Ecological (Environmental) Ethics course at Comenius University in Bratislava. We are not going to describe the content of the two-semester course, but we will try to outline the main objective of the course.

view ultimately affects our own spiritual, mental and physical experience and the basic patterns of our interaction with the world.

Ecological Ethics is a course that helps to clarify the relationship between man and nature, clarify basic ecological values, and thereby shape the ecological thinking of man (and young student in particular). Ecological ethics is based on the underlying premise that in the present world and the problems that exist in it, it is possible to live morally and at the same time not to be indifferent to the fate of nature. Its endangerment (endangering stability and functionality, depletion of non-renewable resources) must be considered a serious problem affecting the lives of every contemporary inhabitant of the Earth as well as future generations.¹⁴

Ecological ethics can also be understood as the basis for the *ecology of the spirit* of every person. And fostering the *ecology of the spirit* means taking into account not only the knowledge of different scientific disciplines, but also religion and philosophy. Ecological ethics can thus be one of the pillars of contemporary eco-philosophy and eco-theology.

In the first place, we consider it important to draw attention to the need for a change in the understanding of *ecology* itself. From the purely scientific (biological) understanding of ecology as a science of the relationships between organisms and the environment, a science about ecosystems and subsystems, their structure, organization, and the changes that take place in them, it is now necessary to move to an interdisciplinary understanding. This means that ecology should be defined as an integral discipline including also social and humane dimensions.

If we proceed from the etymological root of the term »ecology«, we find it coming from two »mysterious« words of ancient Greek: *oikos* and *logos*. Let us recall that the term *logos* is already at the beginning of John's Gospel: »In the beginning was the Logos.« The term *logos* can mean not only the »Word of God (Logos)«, but also the »story«, »meaning«, »sense« or »mystery«. The term *oikos* refers us to a house, home, place of the deity or temple of the spirit. If we try to understand the association of the words *oikos* and *logos* in these

¹⁴ The basic philosophical literature for students in this course are works of many foreign and domestic authors, e.g. Henrik SKOLIMOWSKI, *Eco-Philosophy: Designing New Tactics for Living*, Boston, London, 1981; Arne NAESS, *Ekologie, pospolitost a životní styl*, Tulčák, 1993; Hana LIBROVÁ, *Pestíři a zelení. Kapitoly o dobrovolné skromnosti*, Brno, 1994; Erazim KOHÁK, *Zelená svatozář. Kapitoly z ekologické etiky*, Praha, 1996; Bill DEVALL – George SESSIONS, *Hlboká ekológia*, Tulčák 1997; Hans JONAS, *Princip odpovědnosti*, Praha, 1997; Henrik SKOLIMOWSKI, *Ekofilozofia ako strom života*, Prešov, 1999; Dušan ŠPIRKO, *Základy environmentálnej filozofie*, Bratislava, 1999; Al GORE, *Země na misce vah*, Praha, 2000 etc.

multiple levels of meaning, we can point to a deep connection between the *sacredness* and the *profanity* of the term *ecology* itself. In fact, it means a space, a home of the spirit, a life in a house that is sacrosanct in its profanity. And all that is sacred is worthy of respect and protection. This short etymological note is of great importance to our present. Based on it, we can admit that ecology is an interdisciplinary science that provides theoretical and practical knowledge to solve environmental problems where man plays a decisive role. He is the only creature that recognizes the basic ecological principles and values necessary to preserve the natural balance and therefore the pre-conditions for further sustainable development and existence of future generations of humankind.

If we live ecologically, we are aware that we are a part of the whole of life, members of one large family of the global ecosystem in which everything is interconnected and not separated. If we live ecologically, we also look after our soul, the temple of our spirit in the bosom of the »spirit« of nature with which we are connected. That is why scientists, economists, agriculturalists or farmers, as well as theologians and philosophers have something to say about ecological issues.¹⁵

In fact, we can also talk about the need for such a value orientation whose center will be eco-values. What environmental values are in the center of the attention?

4. The need for eco-values

The basic assumption of the following considerations is a simple statement: human life is linked to *values*. When considering values, value structures, or simply the world of values, we also address the whole spectrum of evaluation issues, different valuation models, value attitudes, value judgments, and so on. However, in the context of the above-mentioned assumption, we focus only on

¹⁵ In this context, it is also possible to recall the encyclical of the Pope St. Francis - *Laudato si'*, which also deals with the current issue of man's relationship to nature and the environment, as well as the issue of ecological spirituality and the care for our »common home« and talks about the need for our »ecological reversal«. In particular, he reminds us of the model of St. Francis of Assisi. But we would also like to draw your attention to the fact that the Pope also mentions the contribution of Teilhard de Chardin, which will be discussed below (see: Holy Father FRANTIŠEK, *Laudato si'*, Trnava, 2015, 130, 52). A detailed analysis of this encyclical from the point of view of the ethical attitude of the person, community and society was presented by Michal Valčo (Michal VALČO, *Základné etické postoje v živote osoby, komunity a spoločnosti v kontexte encykliky Laudato si' pápeža Františka*, in: *RAN* 19 (2016) 1, 37-48).

reflecting the fundamental relationship of values with respect to certain horizons of human life. To a great extent, these horizons, as we already know, are connected with many globalization tendencies and their ambivalence.

If we have stated that human life is bound to values, we can add that it is linked to a whole range of most diverse values. This value spectrum includes a number of values of material and spiritual character, but what is important to realize is that this spectrum is not unchangeable, but rather dynamic, forming, changing, endless, and thus open to new possibilities. Value orientations are therefore one of the main problems of our lives.¹⁶ It is connected not only with our knowledge and our ability to reflect the world, but also with our experience, our feelings, beliefs, prejudices, aspirations, hopes, with all the complex psychological, social and cultural links (including religious, ethical, aesthetic) entering our way of life.

In addition, we are witnesses of new and often unexpected changes in many spheres of the human being on a daily basis, so the changed situations place more demands on us in order to properly decide and prefer adequate values. It is more and more obvious that our »traditional« schemes of well-established »patterns of behavior« and respect for the rankings of values are inadequate, that even traditional problems have begun to globalize, thereby »questioning« or at least »faltering« the value status of many things. However, the upcoming trend cannot be stopped. We can perceive this as a new challenge that we should not resign unless we want to give up the value orientation. It is worthwhile to realize the following: Value changes in our lives are subject to acceleration due to the accelerated pace of our lives and the world, despite the tendency to maintain a relatively stable attitude to some value conservatism.¹⁷ But because the rapidly changing world requires quick (or even faster) development of our adaptation strategies, it offers a whole range of, let us say, *proclaimed saving values*, whose acceptance »guarantees« not only a carefree and simple but also a successful and happy life. It is very challenging to get oriented in these presented, offered and proclaimed values. Sometimes the resignation of thinking is incredibly appealing; it saves time that is no longer »our friend«, but on the contrary, the enemy driving us forward, but at

¹⁶ An insightful analysis of value orientation issues is provided by a publication of Vladimír BROŽÍK, *Hodnotové orientácie*, Nitra, 2000.

¹⁷ Although not all values change and some are constant in our lives, we still live in a liquid world, as Z. Bauman points out. According to him we have moved away from a »heavy« and »solid«, hardware-focused modernity to a »light« and »liquid«, software-based modernity. This fact, he argues, has brought profound change to all aspects of the human condition. Zigmund BAUMAN, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge, 2000.

the same time towards the unknown. »And this trend will probably continue. People's situations are changing more and more rapidly, and they are getting a whole new dimension.«¹⁸

With the right amount of security, we can see these dimensions from the perspective of the globalization process and the current ecological crisis. We must therefore admit that the axiological and ethical reflection of this process must reveal its causes and possible consequences. Responsible reflection must necessarily be present in the formulation of environmentally oriented axiological and ethical theories and specific eco-values.¹⁹

In accordance with H. Skolimowski, we understand the basic eco-values as those which are connected with the basic idea of the *sanctity of life*. »The acceptance of the sanctity of life prompts us to protect other forms of life, prompts us to protect threatened habitats, as well as human environment in which life is in peril.«²⁰ We can state that all environmental protection activities are ultimately based on the deeper conviction of the sanctity of life. From this idea follows the ethical imperative of reference for life, which was also formulated by A. Schweitzer (for A. Leopold it was the sacredness of the land). According to Skolimowski, reference for all life establishes itself as the chief eco-value and belongs to intrinsic values. »To postulate intrinsic values does not mean to postulate either absolute values or objective values, but values that bind us together as a species endowed with certain attributes, propensities and common imperatives.«²¹

All intrinsic values are associated with our axiological consciousness and there are no intrinsic values beyond our consciousness as a species and independent of it. Intrinsic values are also species-specific and in this sense are trans-subjective, ergo inter-subjective.²² Based on the ideas of A. Schweitzer

¹⁸ Vladimír BROŽÍK, *Hodnotové orientácie*, Nitra, 2000, 10.

¹⁹ In this context, we consider very inspiring works of one of the founders of eco philosophy in the world, Henryk Skolimowski with whom we have been cooperating for over 20 years. He also gave some lectures at Comenius University in Slovakia and students can learn about his philosophy in our Environmental Philosophy course. We have also written several studies about him. The latter is especially a study that reflects sustainability issues based on Skolimowski's ideas and thinking of P. Teilhard de Chardin. See: Zlatica PLAŠIENKOVÁ – Lucio FLORIO, *Sustainability of the Living Planet in the Context of Eco-philosophical Thinking: Teilhard de Chardin and Henryk Skolimowski's Perspectives*, in: Vir SINGH – Zlatica PLAŠIENKOVÁ (eds.), *Philosophy for Living in Evolution. Light, Life, Lumenarchy and Lumenosophy*, Detroit, 2016, 132-154.

²⁰ Henryk SKOLIMOWSKI, *Living Philosophy: Eco-philosophy as a Tree of Life*, Arkana, 1992, 208.

²¹ *Ibid*, 209.

²² *Ibid*, 209.

and A. Leopold, we can – as H. Skolimowski also does – create a set of other intrinsic values that represent basic ecological values.²³

The second eco-value is *responsibility*. »Responsibility is as an ethical principle in the sense that if we understand the unity of the life, and the fact that we are a part of it, and one with it, than we must take responsibility for all life.«²⁴ We cannot exercise reference without responsibility. It is a part of the meaning of reverence and they co-define each other. Skolimowski thus defines responsibility as *reverence in action*. It means taking responsibility for all beings, for future generations, and also for our own life. »To live as a human being is to live in the state of responsibility. To live in the state of responsibility is the first condition of living in grace... Responsibility, as a peculiar power of human will and spirit, is a crucial vehicle in maintaining our moral autonomy and in repossessing the Earth.«²⁵

Frugality is an ecological value, a positive virtue of our existence, which follows both from responsibility and our sense of reverence. It is a specific mode of responsibility. It can be said: »Frugality is grace without waste. Frugality is a pre-condition of inner beauty. Frugality is majesty of simple means. Frugality is a joy of living simply. Frugality is a judicious and discriminate use of resources.«²⁶ These characterizations of frugality inform us that it does not subtract from our lives, but rather it adds to our lives.

It is important to recognize that eco-values do not exist separately: they are connected to other values and together form a whole, and it is also a changing whole. Value connection is particularly distinct, because a threat or a destruction of one value can negatively affect the collapse of the entire ecosystem and can seriously disrupt the perspective of a further development process of the future of our Earth and future generations.

In contemporary ecological philosophy and theology, we find an emphasis on the need to link traditional values with eco-values. We have written several studies on this topic, in which we also reflect on eco-values such as biodiversity, justice for all, eco-wisdom, and so on. At this point, we would like to mention one more value: the value of the world (nature), which can be understood in the environmental context as the *home* of man and his life on Earth.

²³ The three main eco-values that we will discuss in more detail are: reference for life, responsibility and frugality. But there are other eco-values (justice for all, biodiversity, bio-wisdom etc.)

²⁴ Henryk SKOLIMOWSKI, *Living Philosophy: Eco-philosophy as a Tree of Life*, Arkana, 1992, 212.

²⁵ Henryk SKOLIMOWSKI, *A Sacred Place to Dwell. Living with Reverence upon the Earth*. Published by Element Books Ltd, 1993, 93.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 36.

The world (nature) as the home is, however, a value that is at the same time »full« of values. This home can be perceived as a certain horizon of human existence seen in its evolutionary perspective. Attempts to articulate the home with traditional and nontraditional means, namely to retrieve, to localize spatially, or only metaphorically express or point to its enigmatic character are dominant in contemporary philosophy. This follows in many ways the rich tradition of the history of European thinking. It turns out that developing the concept of home value is possible in a number of ways. It is possible both within the Aristotelian and Augustinian traditions of the »natural place« (although they both diverge). Conceptualization changes in modern tradition with its self-confidence and faith in man, based on the power of reason and will. Gradually, alienation sneaks into the sphere of home as a natural place or sphere of human living (in the context of secularization and desacralization tendencies); the emptiness of the era of nihilism, the period of failure of the Christian culture, and ultimately the sense of radical distrust of all transcendental and metaphysical values.

The present time of the ecological crisis, the time of consumption, but also the time of »new spiritual« needs and horizons is once again calling for the question of home value. It turns out that a person can no longer accept the idea of home only as a »stereotype« of living in ordinary, everyday fulfillment of his purely consuming way of life, but must develop something that also reveals the »spiritual dimension« of home value.

The ecological value of home can thus imply the challenge of acting so that our world (nature) becomes a real home, a place of hospitality for all good values, that is, values that have not only a material, but also a spiritual dimension. It is only then that our idea that home is also a place of respect and protection can also be fulfilled. A place that is sacred, within and outside us, which is the intersection of both physical and metaphysical understanding, the unity of the profane and the sacral. Home is the only place that is the center of the centerless world, the ecological constant and the variable at the same time in the spirit of the defined understanding of the term *ecology* in the introduction.

The last mention in this paper will be the effort to point to the possibility of linking a physical (material) and spiritual (metaphysical) approach to the environmental issue that we can bring into line with the understanding of incarnation in the context of the sacral and the profane, as inspired by the French thinker Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.²⁷

²⁷ We analyzed the work of this thinker in dozens of separate studies as well as in co-authored monographs, so we will build on them. See: Zlatica PLAŠIENKOVÁ – Józef KULISZ, *Na ceste s Teilhardom de Chardin*, Trnava, 2004.; Zlatica PLAŠIENKOVÁ – Michal

5. Inspiration by the work of Teilhard de Chardin in the context of the dynamism of the »religion of the Earth« and the »religion of Heaven« as the unity of the profane and the Sacral

When we now attempt to get inspired by the work of Teilhard de Chardin, we can use many of his studies. Although Teilhard did not write any separate work dealing particularly with ecological ethics, some of his ethical opinions are scattered throughout his work. Above all, we have in mind the issues of the interpretation of *dynamic* and *static morality*, the problem of the *good* and *evil*, *freedom* and *responsibility* of man for the world (especially from the ecological perspective). These questions can best be understood in Teilhard's concept of the unity of the »religion of the Earth« and the »religion of Heaven«, which is based on the underlying premise of the unity of *love for the world* (for man, nature and the whole universe) and *love for God*. At the same time, in our view, he points to the issue of the incarnation of the Logos in the context of understanding the unity of sacredness and profanity. From a certain point of view, it is just a reflection of the dynamism of the *religion of the Earth* and the *religion of Heaven*, which explains how the history of the Earth (in the sense of a partial expression of the history of the universe) is dynamically associated with the history of Heaven. This interpretation is also expressed in the concepts of Parousia (the Second Coming of Christ) in the theological language.

In the following section we will only mention some of Teilhard's chosen considerations. In particular, it is his understanding of morality as a phenomenon being an expression of the need not only *to live well* but *more than to live*. This perspective of the morality is based on the imperative *to be more* (not on the imperative *to have more*). In order to accept this imperative, it is important to point out some other factors.

From an evolutionary point of view, the morality of Teilhard is reflected in the »coming« of human thinking, although its foundation is where space and time begin. It therefore has a cosmic and biological basis. Thanks to human thinking, morality is reflected in order of the duty. It is an obligation *to be* and *to act*. In this sense, it guarantees man the »ideal« rightness of expression of freedom and allows him to achieve goals. These goals, however, must be understood by Teilhard in relation to the general good and new spiritual requirements that are associated with human progress on Earth and the devel-

BIZOŇ, *Antropológia normativity v myslení Pierra Teilharda de Chardina a Martina Bubera*, Bratislava, 2016.

opmental perspectives of the whole universe. From this perspective, he then distinguishes *dynamic* and *static* morality.

Teilhard defines *dynamic morality* as a coherent system of practical activity that is consistent with the spiritual perspective of the evolution of the universe in the process of its *becoming* and *growing*. This morality is based on the correct use of *all human energy*, and we can also characterize it as a *morality of movement*, a morality that constantly respects developmental tendencies. Thus, it requires from the individual human as well as from the whole of humanity a strong active involvement in *the formation of the Earth*, in the increase and growth of *global spirituality – the spirit of one Earth* - and in the cooperation on the work of *the completion of the world*.

Teilhard's interpretation of dynamic morality thus results in a project that has not only an *existential*, but also a *universal, global* character. It is a project that is based on the modern awareness of tremendous dimensions of the developing world on the one hand and the reflected connection of *human efforts* to build the Earth within the convergent evolution of the universe on the other. This dynamic moral understanding is very important in the context of ecological ethics. It points to the vast amount of *untapped human energy* that is not oriented in the right direction and is often simply lost.

This is the case, for example, of static morality, in any of its secular or traditional religious form. We can characterize *static morality* as a *morality of balance of rights and duties*, but only in terms of the relationship of the individual and society or the relation to God, but not to nature. With this role of static morality, however, the visible loss, the obstruction or the wasting of great amount of shared spiritual energy that could be realized is associated.

This is also due to the fact that many people often resign, isolate themselves and are subject to false realism. By such an influence, they cannot believe in the future of human unification, in bringing all races, peoples and nationalities into one super-organism with a single coreflective mind and one *global spirituality*. Raising to the idea of integral human effort means, according to Teilhard, taking into account such morality that is based on the *duty of man to the whole universe*.

This is the above-mentioned moral imperative of life *to be more*. This imperative, in other words, means, according to Teilhard, *to see more, to know more, to unite more, to love more, to adore more and to divinize more* the whole universe. As part of this interpretation, we can admit with Teilhard as if the entire history of the universe is working to create *perfect eyes, brain, and heart*. Therefore, within the *noosphere* as the spiritual envelope of our Earth, it is necessary

to form common »one eyes«, »one brain«, »one heart«, »one passion and enthusiasm«. And all this is related to our responsibility for the future development we have in our hands, says Teilhard. Moreover, this responsibility is also related to *the belief in the future*, i.e. the expected future (this is also the question of Parousia).

If we admit that man has evolution in his hands, he also faces the possibility of an alternative choice. From a methodological point of view, it must be borne in mind that these Teilhard's claims cannot be interpreted independently from those where he points to the connection of human history with natural history and the emphasis on the fact that history does not begin only with the appearance of man. Teilhard always talks about the history of the universe, about the manifestation of cosmic evolution on the individual stages of development, and the realization of this evolution on man's level as a human species.²⁸ This awareness means that mankind takes evolution into its hands and is more and more responsible for it.

One remarkable Teilhard's study from the year 1950, dedicated to the question of responsibility, is entitled *L'Évolution de la Responsabilité dans le Monde (Evolution of the Responsibility in the World)*.²⁹ If we tried to evaluate its inspirational moments from the ecological perspective, we could conclude that it would affect primarily the individuals who are not apathetic about solving the ecological crisis.

Teilhard portrays the phenomenon of responsibility at two levels. The first is the level of legal-social form of responsibility (which is a moral responsibility from a philosophical standpoint). The second level is represented by a biological form of responsibility, which is connected with evolution, independent from metaphysical theory and is expressed in the form of »sense for responsibility« (*Le sens de la Responsabilité*).³⁰ This sense for responsibility is a term of disposition of the evolving universe according to Teilhard. Because the sense for responsibility is a part of evolution, we cannot separate it from evolution. On the level of humankind this sense of responsibility is connected with phenomenon of freedom and reverence or respect for the life and universe.

²⁸ We have to add that Teilhard actually talks about the process of cosmogenesis, anthropogenesis, noogenesis and christogenesis at the same time.

²⁹ Pierre TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, *L'Évolution de la Responsabilité dans le Monde*, in: Pierre TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, *L'Activation de l'énergie*, (VII ed.), Paris, 1963, 211–221. In this context, it would be very interesting to compare Teilhard's reflections on responsibility and the work of H. Jonas *The Principle of Responsibility*, but the scope of this study does not allow it.

³⁰ Pierre TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, *L'Évolution de la Responsabilité dans le Monde*, 213.

We are the shepherds of all being and therefore responsible for destiny of the whole planet, of the whole universe. Thus, responsibility is emerging as the main mode of our being and thinking.

Teilhard's view of the phenomenon of responsibility has gained new dimensions: a planetary feature and contours of the horizon of the future. Accepting this kind of responsibility does not stop us, conversely it allows us to consider Teilhard's concept of responsibility as one of the inspirational sources of the contemporary ecological thinking. In other words, this responsibility can create a foundation of the new earthly (planetary, universal) ethics, which is accepted in the frame of the evolutionary picture of the world.

We can conclude that Teilhard's ideas about the place of man in nature derive from an understanding of the process of the entire evolution of the universe, in which the Earth appeared, and then life and man, too. Man, with his reflective thinking, has taken the highest position in nature in terms of his reflection and responsibility.

From the standpoint of ecological issues, Teilhard's concept is not a sort of an arrogant anthropocentrism, keeping humans at the center of all things and as a measure of all values. His concept of anthropocentrism is connected with »biocentrism«, seeing humans as species being part of natural resources and planetary life system, a part of one great unit of creation. Moreover, his concept of anthropocentrism relates to the cosmocentrism and Christocentrism as well.

Teilhard, however, perceives the phenomenon of man and human species as a creative factor of the whole reality, creating a new, thoughtful, spiritual noospheric cover of the Earth. This Teilhard's belief in the power of human reflection that elevates Earth on its evolutionary path, transforms its dimensions, extends its chances of surviving spiritually, is a faith that respects and does not disturb the biological assumptions of this development. The human race thus forms part of the cosmic event, the process of »becoming and growing« and the direction towards the ultimate goal of the evolution of the universe, but the necessary condition is to preserve biological laws, or to »integrate« them into higher stages of development. We would say it is a development from organic to superorganic (but not inorganic), that it is a development from natural to supernatural. And it is the fact that we live in a world that is still being built, growing and developing, that implies our duty to participate in the creation of this world. It means to participate in the work of evolution, leading to the completion. From this point of view, there is a great deal of responsibility required from man that we have already mentioned.

From this angle, it is reasonable to claim that in Teilhard's thinking there is a clear rejection of the paradigm of man's superiority over nature and its replacement by the paradigm of man's responsibility for nature; the rejection of the paradigm of man's separation from nature and its replacement by the paradigm of unity of man and nature; the rejection of the paradigm of the realization of love for the world based on the rejection of the love of God or vice versa and their replacement by the paradigm of realizing these two loves on the basis of their mutual conditionality; the rejection of the paradigm of the separation of the »religion of the Earth« from the »religion of Heaven« and the replacement by the paradigm of unity of »the religion of the Earth and Heaven«.

And these are valuable sources of inspiration, the message of which is not negligible today, if we also want to better understand the issue of incarnation with regard to the issues of sacredness and profanity of eco-values. In this context, Teilhard's thinking is an inspiring source for creating new ecological evolutionary ideas and interpretations of divinity and spirituality concepts, theology of hope, environmental ethics, etc.

Conclusion

We could conclude that the current time of pluralism, democracy, the search for spiritual orientations, ways of protecting the environment, new lifestyles, and so on, really provides a lot of room for thinking about values if we really care about them. The results of opinions of EU Citizens in Relation to the Environment show that today's people really care about them in our European space. And regardless of whether they are faithful or not, rational or emotionally based. The important thing is that people are »ecologically tuned«. In any case, we are convinced that despite much confusion in our daily value orientations, ecological values can be those that can unite the joint efforts of individuals, communities, nations, states and even humanity across the planet to join in the name of the sustainable future. Our problems will not be solved by anyone other than ourselves. It is therefore necessary to act responsibly at a personal, as well as local and global level.

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Sažetak

**EKOLOŠKE VRIJEDNOSTI KAO PLATFORMA
JEDINSTVA PROFANOG I SVETOG U KONTEKSTU EKOLOŠKE
ETIKE**

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Ovaj rad ima svoje postavke na temeljnim rezultatima istraživanja usmjerenih na analizu odnosa građana EU-a prema prirodnom okolišu. Predmnijevamo da građani EU-a dobivaju sve veću količinu informacija o prirodnom okolišu i da te informacije dolaze iz različitih izvora. Među najčešćim izvorima i vrstama informacija su javno dostupni znanstveni podatci, aktivnosti ekoloških klubova i udruga, kao i obrazovne aktivnosti koje su dio raznih razina obrazovanja. To nas dovodi do zaključka kako su obrazovne aktivnosti provođene na razini sveučilišnog obrazovanja kao dio nastavnog kurikula Ekološke etike, ili pak kao sadržaj specifičnih kolegija iz područja ekološke etike, danas vrlo relevantne.

Uzimajući u obzir njihovu akademsku narav, ti tečajevi mogu pomoći studentima da duboko promisle o sadržaju i značenju ekoloških vrijednosti. Držimo kako se ekološke vrijednosti mogu shvatiti kao platforma za objedinjavanje profanog i sakralnog u životu čovjeka kao i cijelog društva. Nadalje, ističemo i tumačimo inspirativan utjecaj važnog predstavnika intelektualnog miljea 20. stoljeća, francuskog mislioca Pierrea Teilharda de Chardina. Članak donosi njegova promišljanja o odnosu čovjeka, prirode i Boga te o jedinstvu tzv. religije Zemlje i religije neba. Taj način razmišljanja može postati izvor dubljeg razumijevanja kao i boljeg ostvarenja ekoloških vrijednosti koje ujedinjuju vjernike s nevjerujućima.

Ključne riječi: ekološke vrijednosti, ekološka etika, religija zemlje, religija neba, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.