

BOOK REVIEWS

MAŁGORZATA KACZMAREK

**A NEW NATURE OF PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY:
DIALOGUE AND ETHICS AS CONSOLIDATE
INTERDISCIPLINARY CONCEPT OF *SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT***

A review of a book by Andrzej Papuziński (ed.), "*Sustainable Development: From Utopia to Human Rights*", Branta Publishing House, Bydgoszcz

One of the most important topics which appears in political and scientific discussions for the several recent years is the concept of sustainable development. It implies a broad view of human welfare, a long term perspective of the consequences of human activities, and global co-operation to reach projects and alternative solutions. The most famous definition of this issue has been proposed by the Brundtland Commission (1987): "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*". The philosophical implications of the sustainable development are of crucial importance since they are a source of the possibilities for practical realizations of this conception. They are based on a holistic approach to the aspects of human activities: economic, ecological and social. Because of the global ecological crisis, it is no longer possible to treat each area of the human life

separately, as if it was isolated from other factors. All aspects of life are in feedback, starting from the structure of a living organism, ecosystems, the relations between society, economy and the environment. The idea of sustainable development is not just a proposition of a new way of resource management or politics at local and global levels. This is a new look at the environment, understood as everything around us. The sources of this conception are such terms as ecology, society and economics (including the economy and politics), but in the new scientific trends sustainable development concerns not only the problems of the environmental resources management, but it is a conception of a balanced way of life. The source of such approach lies in a belief that a human is not able to create a desirable relation *human – the environment* as long as there is no full synthesis and balance in the relation *human – human*, including the relation of a human to himself. An important issue for a human, which follows from the above considerations, is to bear the responsibility for the Earth and its natural environment. By the responsibility we mean giving rights to future generations to use natural resources. The responsibility is the main argument for a cultural change of the modern civilization. The question about the responsibility is in fact a question about the possibilities of practical applications of the conceptions of sustainable development. The proper levels of consciousness and knowledge, and a dialogue between the social, ecological and economical aspects of sustainable development create the possibilities for practical applications of the ideas presented in the book.

The concept of sustainable development is still in Polish society more a word – watchword than a lifestyle. It has its reflection in the law, but the practical approach is insufficient. The book edited by Andrzej Papuziński „*Sustainable Development: From Utopia to Human Rights*” is one of the few works written in Polish treating the subject of sustainable development in a form acceptable for a common reader, but on the other hand this is a comprehensive source of knowledge. The book is a set of papers grouped into three chapters, according to the most important aspects of sustainable development, namely philosophical and legal, social and economic, and political. The authors of the papers are the leading specialists of the Polish research institutes, working in such fields as philosophy, sociology, economy, political science and law. As the editor Andrzej Papuziński indicates, the authors of the papers suggest that the idea of sustainable development requires a creation of such an economic model which is harmless for the underlying ecosystems. In other words, sustainable development is a development able to eliminate threats to economy and society and assure a constant economic growth.

Part one is entitled “*Philosophical and Legal Aspects of Sustainable Development*”. The articles in this section concern the ontology of environmental protection policy, philosophical basis of the concept of sustainable development, perspectives to execution and consequences of the choice of applying the conception of sustainable development, orientations and interpretations of these concepts. Andrzej Papuziński in his paper entitled “*Sustainable development vs. a contemporary ecological problem: the ontology of environmental protection policy*” takes note, that principle of sustainable development is a new component of social being and its specification follows from the categorial references which are linked on the ground of the ecological problem as a social problem. „*Environment’s protection policy realised by the state and international governmental institutions. (...) In connection with this, a necessity was signalled to complete scientific knowledge based on empirical research, with ontological reflection based on categorial*

analysis and involving a theological moment on the being". Moreover, the chapter describes an approach to the problem of sustainable development which includes its law aspects. Whether we want it or not, sustainable development is a topic of increasing importance. The human laws follow not only from the social aspects, but also have ecological sources.

Part two, entitled "*Socio – Economic Aspects of Sustainable Development*", discusses the problems from the economic point of view, including the strategies of local development, social problems connected to the environmental protection policy and a social dialogue. An important issue of the social aspects of the sustainable development is planned to be public participation in environmental decision making. This suggests a conclusion that it is necessary to combine the knowledge from several areas like sociology, philosophy, social communication, since such an approach guarantees a success of local sustainable development projects.

The third part of the book, entitled "*Political Aspects of Sustainable Development*" deals with the political aspects of environment protection in the European Union and in our country. The author also discusses the subject of ecological education and points out some problems in this field in Poland. Some programs and tools do exist, but the society has still a very poor knowledge about the concept of sustainable development. The responsibility for the environment still seems to be out of the interest.

The aim of the book is a theoretical and practical approach to the topic of sustainable development, starting at the basis of the outlook, through the draft of the problems and ending at pointing the fields where major modifications are necessary (including propositions of the solutions). The book satisfies its assumptions also under those criteria, since it gives an interdisciplinary approach to the problem. This work is a contribution to the discussions concerning the main issue. The meaning of this fact is very important, because this is a next step in creating the new consciousness, forms many directions for the future works connected with sustainable development, and suggests some threads in a discussion about the human place in the world. This creates a space for a cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, interpersonal (including intergenerational) dialogue where the arguments of a philosopher are the arguments of an economist and the arguments of an economist are the arguments of a sociologist and so on. Finally, all of them become the arguments of each person.

The editor of the book, Andrzej Papuziński, is a well known specialist in the field of sustainable development. He promotes in his research the ideas of this conception, especially the ideas concerning the philosophical and ethical aspects. Professor Papuziński is the head of Department of Philosophy of Sustainable Development and Ecological Policy at the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz.