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The Approach of the Exact Sciences and Philosophy Towards the Looming Climate Change Disaster

1. Defining the problem

The question to be looked into in this paper is as follows: What is the attitude of the contemporary philosophy towards the increasingly fundamental problem – traditionally referred to as global warming or climate change, and now more and more often described as a growing threat of a climate change disaster. I intend to analyse this issue in the context of the development of scientific research that defined this problem.

2. The looming climate change disaster as a central contemporary problem

The threat of the impending climate change disaster is having an ever-increasing impact on our reality. The newly published series of reports from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (the first report was published in October 2018 and the final summary report was published in August 2021) leaves no doubt that we are entering a period of rapid climate change – it is the first phase of the impending climate crisis and it defines the contemporary human condition in a qualitatively new way. What was previously perceived as a distant and vague perspective has rapidly started to affect our everyday lives, becoming an urgent matter that requires us to take action immediately, and such actions are taken in various areas of our globe,¹ although they are still insufficient.

This aspect of the contemporary condition is directly related to the second fundamental issue highlighted in the IPCC reports. It is the indisputable recognition of the anthropogenic character of the changes that are taking place, and therefore acceptance as an obvious fact that it is mankind and its economic activity that has triggered the impending catastrophe. Mankind still has a chance to curb negative trends in order to avoid the worst scenarios, which predict that all life on the planet will be destroyed or will revert to such elementary forms that the currently existing world of living creatures, including man, will be annihilated.

As there are no longer any doubts in this regard, more and more efforts are being taken to slow down the upcoming changes by eliminating risk-bearing factors from social life, such as CO_2 emissions in all their varied forms or the use of fossil fuels, or by becoming involved in the protection of forests. It provokes intellectual activity too. There is a growing number of publications that emphasize the importance of problems associated with ecology in its broad sense and it is also more and more frequently discussed by various speakers.²

¹ Aleksandra Kuzior, Marek Staszek, "Energy Management in the Railway Industry: A Case Study of Rail Freight Carrier in Poland", *Energies* 14 (2021): 6875; Aleksandra Kuzior, "Polskie i niemieckie doświadczenia w projektowaniu i wdrażaniu zrównoważonego rozwoju [Polish and German Experiences in Planning and Implementation of Sustainable Development]", *Problemy Ekorozwoju* – *Problems of Sustainable Development* 5 (1)(2010): 81–89; Aleksandra Kuzior, Jan Zozulak, "Adaptation of the Idea of Phronesis in Contemporary Approach to Innovation", *Management Systems in Production Engineering* 27, 2 (2019): 84–87.

² Noteworthy publications that directly deal with the current crisis include: Bill Gates, *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster. Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need*, transl. Michał Rogalski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Agora, 2021); David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*, transl. Jacek Spólny (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, 2019); Tomasz S. Markiewka, *Zmienić świat raz jeszcze. Jak wygrać walkę o klimat (How to Change the World Once More. How to Win the Fight for the Climate)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Czarna Owca", 2021); Guillaume Pitron, *The Rare Metals War: The Dark Side of Clean Energy and Digital Technologies*, transl. Andrzej Bilik (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Kogut, 2020); Peter Walker, *How Cycling Can Save the World*, transl. Weronika Mincer (Kraków: Wysoki Zamek, 2018); Dahr Jamail, *The End of Ice: Bearing Witness and Finding Meaning in the Path of Climate Disruption*, transl. Aleksandra Paszkowska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo

The current debate on environmental issues has gained extraordinary momentum. All major news programmes in the media provide information on these reports and on the crisis. Even TV commentators and weather forecast presenters talk openly about the global warming and the ecological crisis, although 10 years ago they could be heard laughing these problems off – equally openly. The climate crisis is already discussed by children and young people in schools and – what is more – under the leadership of their friend Greta Thunberg, they take active steps to save the Earth.

3. Scientific research as a tool for defining the problem and the consequences of the current state of affairs

It is not difficult to notice that science plays a central role in this breakthrough and in the events accompanying it.³ The research conducted by scientists for many years has clearly shown the nature of the current civilization crisis and, which is extremely important, it has demonstrated its anthropogenic nature.⁴

⁴ A good example of this are research results presented by: Jonathan Cowie, Climate Change: Biological and Human Aspects, transl. Joanna Wybig (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2014); Marcin Popkiewicz, Świat na rozdrożu (The world at the crossroads) (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Sonia Draga, 2012); Mark Maslin, Climate Change: A Very Short Introduction (Original English Language Edition Published by Oxford University Pres), transl. Katarzyna Dośpiał-Borysiak (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2018); Marcin Popkiewicz, Aleksandra Kardaś, Szymon Malinowski, Nauka o klimacie. Obserwacje zmian klimatu teraz i w przeszłości. Mechanizmy działania systemu klimatycznego. Dawne zmiany klimatu – co, kiedy, jak i dlaczego. Obecna zmiana klimatu – obserwacje, przyczyny. Przyszła zmiana klimatu – dokąd zmierzamy. Klimatyczne kontrowersje (Climate Science. Climate Change Observations Now and in the Past. Climate System Mechanisms. Climate Change in the Past – What, When, How, and Why. Current Climate Change – Observations, *Causes. Future Climate Change – Where Are We Going? Climate-related Controversies)* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Sonia Draga, Wydawnictwo Postfactum, Wydawnictwo Nieoczywiste, 2018).

Krytyki Politycznej, 2020); Jonathan S. Foer, *Eating Animals*, transl. Dominika Dymińska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2019).

³ In the paper, I use the plural to emphasize that the concept of science is only a generalization, encompassing various phenomena that can only conditionally be reduced to a common denominator. The use of the term "science", which blurs these differences, proves to be dangerous in practical scientific life. Such an approach is used by the Polish Academy of Sciences as preferable in everyday scientific work, in contrast to the approach used by the Ministry of Science.

Although it can hardly be called a success in a traditional sense,⁵ it should be noted that the present situation is a continuation of the triumphant advancement of sciences and a kind of return to the heroic times when scientific achievements brought victory in the ruthless struggle against the forces of "backwardness and reaction", allowing mankind to achieve new opportunities and to expand the previous horizons.

The *novelty* of the situation is that, perhaps for the first time in the history of sciences, we are dealing with a situation in which exact sciences do not play the role of a discoverer of new opportunities and resources that provide mankind with prospects of increasing human welfare and accumulating wealth. It can be compared to the situation of a mentor calling upon people to come to their senses and pointing to the need to undertake costly corrective measures so that humanity can come out of the very dangerous trap in which it now finds itself. This qualitatively new situation is directly related to a conflict in its new form, brought about by their discoveries and the problematic nature of their previous victories in this new area.

The discoveries of scientists have led to the conclusion that the pre-existing development patterns will cause a catastrophe of the modern civilization and that radical and costly restructuring is required to prevent it. From the very beginning, this diagnosis has sparked off heated disputes and conflicts.

These disputes have not been limited to an academic and public debate. Exploiting imperfections of research techniques in this pioneering research, as well as errors,⁶ inevitable in this case, a real "witch hunt" was

⁵ What gives rise to doubts, however, is that it concerns a diagnosis of the impending ecological catastrophe. The diagnosis has been unequivocally confirmed from the perspective of scientific research, which is a success. From all other points of view, unfortunately not necessarily. It can be compared to a success of a doctor who has established beyond any doubt that the patient has a potentially fatal disease, which, however, forces him to undertake a costly and risky therapy.

⁶ Criticism focused on two items: Paul Ehrich's *The Population Bomb* (New York: Sierra Club / Ballantine Books, 1968) and the first report for the Club of Rome – *Limits to Growth*: Donella L. Meadows, Dennis H. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, William W. Behrens III, *Limits to Growth*, transl. Wiesława Rączkowska, Stanisław Rączkowski (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, 1973). The report is still discussed today. On the 20th and 30th anniversary of the publication of the first edition of that report, its authors published further studies which defend the initial hypotheses of Dennis H. Meadows, Donella L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, *Die neuen Grenzen des Wachstums. Die Lage der Menschheit: Bedrohung und Zukunftschancen*, transl. Hans-Dieter Heck (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1992); Donella H. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, Dennis L. Meadows, Limits to Growth

unleashed, claiming many victims. Although no one was burned at the stake, the campaign of slander and persecution has ruined the careers of many individuals and has led to mental breakdowns and banishment.⁷ Thanks to the funds of the industry that relies on energy derived from fossil fuels, which bear the most responsibility for CO₂ emissions, a dynamic movement of climate change deniers has developed. Climate change deniers publicly dispute the scientific nature of research on the climate crisis.⁸ Over time, these attacks have increasingly centred not so much on the phenomenon of change, but on the claim that these changes occur naturally and independently of human activities⁹. Using radical slogans, the deniers

- the 30-Year Update (Chelsea: Green Pub., 2004). The discussion on Ehrlich's book should also be taken into account as an extremely important context for debate. The way that book was received was greatly influenced by the so-called "green revolution" in agriculture that was just taking place then. David Wallace-Welles points out that Ehrlich's book was published at a time when agricultural productivity increased dramatically, postponing the threat of universal famine that Ehrlich writes about in his book to a more distant future. As he states: "It is possible that it is too early to judge Ehrlich – or even Malthus (Ehrlich's 'godfather') – because all the astonishing gains in productivity over the last century can be attributed to the work of one man, Norman Borlaug [...] who developed (he – H.C.) a new collection of high-yield, disease-resistant wheat varieties that are now credited with saving the lives of a billion people worldwide. Of course, if those gains were a onetime boost - engineered, in large part, by a single man - how comfortably can we count on future improvements?" (Wallace-Wells, The Uninhabitable Earth, 68–69). Helena Ciążela, "'Statek kosmiczny Ziemia' ('Spaceship Earth'). 'Maltuzjanizm' oraz 'neomaltuzjanizm' lat 60. i 70. XX wieku i ich krytycy - niezakończona debata" ("'Malthusianism' and 'neo-Malthusianism' of the 1960s and 1970s and Their Critics – An Unfinished Debate"), Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej. Organizacja i Zarządzanie 123 (2018).

⁷ Nathaniel Rich, *Losing Earth: A Recent History*, transl. Agnieszka Szling (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2020).

⁸ Researchers of this phenomenon point out that deniers follow the example of the campaigns that the tobacco industry has been launching since the 1960s, attacking scientists who proved that smoking was harmful and could be linked to diseases such as lung cancer.

9 Przemysław Mastalerz, Ekologiczne kłamstwa ekowojowników. Rzecz o szkodliwości kłamliwej propagandy ekologicznej (Ecological Lies of Eco-warriors. A Story about the Harmfulness of False Ecological Propaganda) (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Chemiczne, 2000); Vaclav Klaus, Blue Planet in Green Shackles: What Is Endangered: Climate or Freedom?, transl. Zbigniew Krzysztyniak (Warszawa: Przedsiębiorstwo Wydawnicze Rzeczpospolita SA, 2008); Tomasz Teluk, Mitologia efektu cieplarnianego (The Mythology of the Greenhouse Effect) (Gliwice–Warszawa: Instytut Globalizacji, 2009); George Reisman, The Toxicity of Environmentalism, transl. by Bogusz Pawiński, Aleksandra Statkiewicz (Warszawa: Fijorr Publishing, 2015); Roger Scruton, Green Philosophy. How to Think Seriously About the Planet, transl. Justyna Grzegorczyk, have terrorized the public debate for many years, and their influence has proved to be significant, not only with respect to climate issues, but also as radicalizing anti-scientific intellectual culture of contemporary populist movements, which perceive science as a tool of conspiracies against prosperity and interests of most people. In this anti-scientific culture, the fight against the scientific evidence for the anthropogenic character of climate change is only one of the fronts, apart from, for example, the fight against pandemic-related research or against preventive actions in the form of mass vaccination programmes. While the famous "flat Earth believers" remain the symbol of this entire movement, the problem is by no means to be taken lightly, but quite the contrary.

The current victory in the fight for acknowledgement of the threat of a global climate change disaster should be attributed not only to the authority of science, but also to the more and more clearly felt consequences of the changes that are taking place. However, one cannot fail to notice that the current shift in the global politics, stemming from the realization that this catastrophe may really happen and is anthropogenic in nature, opens a new phase of conflicts rather than closing the debate. Supporters of the fight against global warming by no means have achieved a durable success. Their opponents are still a powerful and influential group that has become firmly entrenched in the political life of the modern world under the name of populism. It should be emphasized that the prospect of incurring enormous costs of transformation opens up ground for future conflicts that will determine the future of our civilization. One of the most important factors in these conflicts is the strongly tarnished, but still enjoying considerable public respect, authority of science as a source of objective knowledge about reality.

It is hard not to notice that the world is changing before our eyes in a radical and very profound way. This has provided a new, powerful impetus to the criticism of modern civilization and the search for a new, alternative civilization that ensures survival and possible further development of humanity, resulting in specific "green revolution" initiatives. How this "green revolution" will evolve, however, remains an open question.

Rafał Paweł Wierzchosławski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, 2017); Rafał A. Ziemkiewicz, "Nowa religia – klimatyzm" ("New Religion – Climatism"), *Tygodnik Lisickiego Do Rzeczy* 29/231 (15–21 July 2019): 18–20; Tomasz Cukiernik, "Szaleństwo klimatyczne" ("Climate Madness"), *Tygodnik Lisickiego Do Rzeczy* 29/231 (15–21 July 2019): 22–25; Łukasz Warzecha, "Klimatyzm obnażony. Nauka przeciw klimatystom" ("Climatism Unmasked. Science against Climatists"), *Ty-godnik Lisickiego Do Rzeczy* 19 (10–16 May 2021): 16–19.

4. Philosophy and the Climate Catastrophe – Three Variants of the Attitude to the Problem

It is from this perspective that we should look at the attitude of both philosophers and philosophical circles to these issues, which, as a general rule, have been a faithful companion of mankind throughout its history, without disregarding any of the major events or breakthroughs.

Looking from this very perspective, one cannot help noticing that the current crisis seems to be clearly departing from this seemingly obvious rule. It is true that in the initial stages of the debate on the dooming global catastrophe there were two outstanding philosophers who looked into the issues of the fundamental shift in the relationship between man and nature. None of them though play the role of a key figure in the philosophy of the new era or in its new fundamental issues.

The very discussion on various ecology-related matters seems to place itself on the margins of modern philosophy. The fundamental problem is to what extent the issue of the global climate change disaster falls within the remit of contemporary culture of philosophical reflection.

In my opinion, the attitude of contemporary philosophy to the issue of climate change disaster can be summarized or structured in three ways:

A. Philosophy in dialogue with sciences (philosophy of responsibility)

The leading representatives of this trend, Georg Picht and Hans Jonas are associated with the German philosophy of the interwar period. At some point, both of them were students of Martin Heidegger. Nonetheless, both of them clearly surpassed the horizon of his theoretical research. What is common for their achievements is that they both represent the mainstream philosophy of responsibility.¹⁰ However, their perception of responsibility is quite specific, because both of them focus on the fundamental turning point which is the reversal of the relationship between man and nature in the history of mankind. It is being reversed because the man, previously dependent on nature, acquires powers, thanks to science and technology, that make the further existence of nature dependent on the responsibility of man, who is even capable of unintentionally destroying this nature.¹¹

¹⁰ Jacek Filek, *Filozofia odpowiedzialności XX wieku* (*The Philosophy of Responsibility of the Twentieth Century*) (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2003).

¹¹ Helena Ciążela, Problemy i dylematy etyki odpowiedzialności globalnej (Problems and Dilemmas of the Ethics of Global Responsibility) (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo APS, 2006).

The philosophies of both these scholars are thus built on the awakening of responsibility, the starting point of which is not awareness, but responsibility, which in fact does not depend on our will or decision. It falls upon us because of the circumstances, and it is our task to understand and take that responsibility.

Georg Picht's¹² concept stems from his studies of global problems and aims to lay theoretical foundations for holistic solutions that will enable humanity to survive in the midst of growing threats. This makes Picht's concept more up-to-date despite having been developed earlier that the philosophical theory of Hans Jonas. It must be emphasized, however, that the latter should by no means be disregarded. Building his philosophy in a polemic with the influential German Marxist dissident Ernst Bloch, author of *The Principle of Hope* popular in the 1960s, Jonas proposes the *Principle of Responsibility*.¹³ By focusing on the unpredictability of the effects of technological development, Jonas becomes the most consistent critic of technological optimism, pointing out that the new technological challenges involve enormous risks, including the possibility that life on the Earth may end.¹⁴

In both these philosophies, philosophical reflection on exact sciences plays an extremely important role. Both philosophers emphasize the relationship between science and technology, as well as their fruitful connection that bridges the gap between theory and practice.¹⁵ Georg Picht analyzes in great detail the problem of the prognostic potential of science, as well as the avoidance of making predictive pronouncements about the future in scientific work.¹⁶ For Jonas, the dominance of an optimistic technological mentality becomes the central problem.

One cannot fail to observe, however, that the achievements of Picht and Jonas are marginalized in contemporary philosophical life, not only in

¹² Georg Picht, *Mut zur Utopie. Die Grossem Zukunftsaufgaben. Zwölf Vorträge* (München: Piper Verlag, 1969); Georg Picht, *Courage for Utopia*, transl. Krzysztof Maurin, Krzysztof Michalski, Krzysztof Wolicki (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981).

¹³ Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, transl. Marek Klimowicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Platan, 1996).

¹⁴ Jonas' argumentation is supported by the thesis that in all likelihood we are the only living creatures in the cosmos. Hans Jonas *Principle*; Hans Jonas, *The Concept of God after Auschwitz*, transl. Grzegorz Sowiński (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2003).

¹⁵ Piotr Rosół, Hans Jonas o etycznej odpowiedzialności nauki i techniki (Hans Jonas on the Ethical Responsibility of Science and Technology) (Kraków: Universitas, 2017).

¹⁶ Georg Picht, *Prognose – Utopie – Planung. Die Situation des Menschen in der Zukunft dertechnischen Welt* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1967).

Poland, where these thinkers are practically forgotten. Nonetheless, several decades after the publication of their most important works, it should be said that they possessed an exceptionally insightful understanding of the world in which they came to function, accurately predicting the direction that the reality was to take. However, they were neither noticed nor heard. Perhaps in the history of philosophy written from the perspective of the epoch that is just starting, Martin Heidegger will only be mentioned as their teacher, but that time is still a long way off.

From the perspective of the historical significance of the theory of responsibility, it should be emphasized that one of the most interesting contemporary continuators of Martin Heidegger's thought, Peter Sloterdijk, returns directly to this perspective in his text *The Anthropocene*:

A Process-State at the Edge of Geohistory?¹⁷Although the German author does not refer to Picht's thoughts and only casually mentions Jonas, referring to Richard Buckminster Fuller's concept of "Spaceship Earth",¹⁸ the continuation of the trend of responsibility is direct and obvious.

B. Critical remarks on the axiological foundations of modern sciences (ecophilosophy and related approaches)

From the perspective of the development of contemporary philosophy, the trend most often referred to in Poland as ecophilosophy has gained more significance. In response to the debates on the global ecological crisis, ecophilosophy proposes reconstruction of the axiological foundations of the modern civilization.¹⁹ This trend stems from radical criticism of contemporary civilization with a "New-Left" provenance that accompanied the youth revolution in the 1960s. In terms of its content, it referred not so much to the scientific research of modern sciences, but to the tradition of Rousseau's valorisation of nature, which over time developed into the movement of environmental protection. As these aspirations

¹⁷ Peter Sloterdijk, Antropocen – stan procesowy na obrzeżu historii Ziemi? (Anthropocene – Proces State on the Fringes of the Earth History), in: idem, Co się zdarzyło w XX wieku (What Happened in the 20th Century), transl. Bogdan Baran (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Aletheia, 2021).

¹⁸ Richard Buckminster Fuller, *Instrukcja sterowania statkiem kosmicznym Ziemia*, transl. Marek Oktaba (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2019).

¹⁹ Henryk Skolimowski, Nadzieja matką mądrych (Hope Is the Mother of the Wise) (Łódź: Akapit Press, 1992); Henryk Skolimowski, Filozofia żyjąca. Ekofilozofia jako drzewo życia (Living Philosophy. Ecophilosophy as a Tree of Life), transl. Anna Brzezińska, Jerzy Wojciechowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Pusty Obłok, 1993).

radicalized, a broad intellectual movement emerged, which in its intellectual practice relied on all traditions and worlds of values that provided alternatives to the modern civilization. One cannot fail noticing that this alternative approach also embraced the tradition of practising science. The classics of ecophilosophical thinking Fritjof Capra, Arne Naess and James Lovelock build concepts that attempted to complement them with new content or to extend beyond the current scientific approach adopted in the Western tradition.²⁰

The most radical projects, the so-called "Deep ecology",²¹ have had the greatest impact here. They recognize the need to abandon the anthropocentric attitude towards nature in favor of the biocentric one developed by Arne Naess and the animal rights movement. The best-known representative of that movement is the Australian ethicist Peter Singer.²²

Both movements promote the inherent worth of all living beings regardless of their instrumental utility to human needs and call for a radical reversal of the existing hierarchy of values.

However, the problem is that the contemporary civilization is extremely insensitive to axiological issues. The contemporary man is more easily convinced by the language of facts and down-to-earth scientific argumentation. If anything stands in opposition to these values, it is the values based on the authority of faith and tradition. Ecophilosophy has gone in this direction too, provoking new discussions and conflicts.

As the global warming debate unfolds, this movement has clearly become and is still becoming increasingly marginalized, as even its supporters have realized.²³ The symbolic fact remains that the initiator and

²⁰ Fritjof Capra, The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture, transl. Ewa Wojdyłło (Warszawa: PIW, 1987); Fritjof Capra, The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism, transl. by Paweł Macura (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Rebis, 2001); Magdalena Dziubek-Hovland, Przyroda nie należy do człowieka: sylwetka i ekofilozofia Arne Naessa na tle norweskiej filozofii ekologicznej (Nature Does Not Belong to Man: The Profile and Eco-philosophy of Arne Naess against the Background of Norwegian Ecological Philosophy) (Bystra near Bielsko-Biała: Stowarzyszenie "Pracownia na Rzecz Wszystkich Istot", 2004); James Lovelock, Gaia, transl. Marcin Ryszkiewicz (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2003).

²¹ Bill Devall, George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*, transl. Elżbieta Margielewicz (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Pusty Obłok, 1995).

²² Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, transl. Anna Alichniewicz, Anna Szczęsna (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2004).

²³ Magdalena Hoły-Łuczaj, *Radykalny nonantropocentryzm. Martin Heidegger i ekologia głęboka (Radical Nonanthropocentrism. Martin Heidegger and Deep Ecology)* (Warszawa–Rzeszów: Wydawnictwa UW, WSiZ z siedzibą w Rzeszowie, 2018).

patriarch of this philosophical trend in Poland, Henryk Skolimowski, passed away on 6 April 2018 being almost completely forgotten.

C. Critical remarks of cognitive capabilities of exact sciences. Why are their warnings being ignored? (postmodernism and "philosophy of science")

Although pro-ecological thinking was pioneered by the philosopher Georg Picht in the 1960s, the mainstream philosophy of the second half of the 20th century moved in a completely different direction. For Picht (who followed in the footsteps of Heidegger in this respect), and later for Jonas, the starting point was a world – existing in reality and independently of the subject – whose existence determined the originality of their philosophy of responsibility. The mainstream philosophical reflection steered towards disputing whether it was possible to get to know that world independent of the subject or whether such a world could exist at all.

Culturalism disputed the existence of the natural world as an independent point of reference for philosophical reflection. Postmodernism enhanced these relativistic tendencies, and the premise on which the then prevalent philosophy of science was based was the contestation of its entitlement to explore the objective world.

Without delving into the nuances of the whole wealth of phenomena that make up contemporary philosophy, one cannot fail to notice that the problems of global warming and the climate change disaster prove to be something that plunges this philosophy into a deep crisis. From the perspective of philosophical subjectivism, which accords primacy to subjective experience of the world, science may only comprise competing and contradictory visions, the outcome of which is determined by non-substantive factors.

At this point, however, it turns out that the mainstream contemporary philosophy is unexpectedly getting closer not to the results of scientific research and projects aimed to combat global warming, but quite the opposite. Academic philosophy unexpectedly comes into contact with populist critique of science and a demagogic struggle against its findings.

This unexpected conclusion becomes one of the most interesting observations of Matthew d'Ancona, who made a pioneering attempt to define the phenomenon of the rapidly growing popularity of fake news in social media. Fake news often prevents meaningful debate on public matters and makes the political life increasingly vulnerable to irresponsible and harmful consequences of the so-called "post-truth". In the fourth chapter of his book,²⁴ entitled "The Broken Philosopher's Stone: Postmodernism, Irony and the Post-Truth Age", the American author not only points to the direct relationship of philosophical subjectivism with the deterioration of the quality of public debate, but also expresses hope that neorealist tendencies in contemporary philosophy will reverse this trend, restoring the category of objective truth in public debate.²⁵

The above-mentioned publication refers to phenomena much broader than the impending climate change disaster discussed in this paper. In addition, the publication was issued in 2017, that is before the new debate initiated by the first IPCC report. The question of the debate on global warming and its denial, however, is one of the important topics analysed there.

It is not possible to derive meaningful prognoses or diagnoses concerning the development of contemporary philosophy on the basis of one analysis. One cannot fail to realize, however, that a profound revaluation is needed because of what has been happening in recent years.

A symptom of the crisis of postmodern thought in relation to the climate catastrophe is the most ambitious study of this issue in Polish philosophy – Ewa Bińczyk, *Epoka człowieka. Retoryka i marazm antropocenu*²⁶ (*Age of Man. The Rhetoric and Apathy of the Anthropocene*) in which the concentration on the eponymous rhetoric leads to loops and weaknesses in the arguments, which are revealed, for example, in the confrontation with the much shorter but more expressive text by Sloterdijk mentioned above.

5. The peculiarity of the current state of affairs

Summing up, it can be said that maximalist philosophical projects, which emphasize the autonomy and agency of philosophy in relation to the human world, can be blamed for the fact that philosophy plays such

²⁴ Matthew d'Ancona, *Post Truth*, transl. Michał Sutowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2018).

²⁵ An example of this tendency on the ground of recent philosophy trying to break away from the trap of agnosticism is the study of Quentin Meillassoux, *Po skończoności. Esej o koniecznej przygodności (After Finitude. An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency)*, transl. Piotr Herbach (Warszawa: Fundacja hr. Augusta Cieszkowskiego, 2015).

²⁶ Ewa Bińczyk, *Epoka człowieka. Retoryka i marazm antropocenu (Age of Man. The Rhetoric and Apathy of the Anthropocene)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2018).

a marginal role in the most important debate of the epoch. It is hard not to notice that the maximalist philosophy with its slogan: "In the beginning was the Word" has failed, disregarding the tradition laid by Democritus, who said that "words are but the shadows of actions".

Given the shape of contemporary debate, philosophy should restrain its ambitions to set the laws of science and change the axiological foundations of modern civilization. Instead, it should join the fight for the future, right there where it takes place. Even if this means as in the case of Sokal's provocation.²⁷

I think that philosophy should return to the path of Picht and Jonas. Instead of making far-reaching claims and announcing new revolutions, it should join the debate by supporting scientific authority and promoting real action for the benefit of climate change mitigation.

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Summary

This paper analyzes the attitude of the contemporary philosophy to the problems associated with increasingly radical diagnoses concerning anthropogenic climate changes that may lead the human civilization on Earth to a global catastrophe. One can identify three approaches to this issue in contemporary philosophy: involvement in the breakthrough taking place; evaluation of the change process from an axiological perspective or ignoring the evolving phenomena on the grounds that it is not possible to define them meaningfully from the perspective of theoretical orientations that currently dominate the contemporary philosophy.

Keywords: global climate change disaster, exact sciences, philosophy of responsibility, ecophilosophy, mainstream philosophy