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## "Ekofilozofia", Zdzisława Piątek, Kraków 2008 : [recenzja]

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

**Zdzisława Piątek, *Ekofilozofia* [Ecophilosophy], Jagiellonian University Press, Kraków 2008, p. 197.**

In 2008 a book which was strictly dedicated to the problems of eco-philosophy was published by the Jagiellonian University; this work was written by Zdzisława Piątek. Her extensive dissertation, amounting (with bibliography and index included) to over 200 pages, is divided into eight chapters. Each of these has been carefully planned out, and each provides a comprehensive consideration of a particular aspect of a wider problem or issue.

In the first chapter, Zdzisława Piątek has supplied the reader with a prerequisite introduction to the topic of eco-philosophy. Various definitions of eco-philosophy are presented; the distinction between ecology and ecologism is presented; and, finally, the author indicates the importance of the concept of symbiosis in understanding the holistic process of existence.

In her analysis, the author draws the reader's attention to the crucial importance of the fact of symbiosis among organisms, without which evolution could not have made such extraordinary progress. Had living organisms not interacted with one another, no new species would have arisen, there would have resulted no diversity of species, and the natural world would not be teeming with the variety of life which we can currently observe.

Departing from a holistic treatment of nature, the author comes to formulate her own interesting and striking definition of eco-philosophy. According to Zdzisława Piątek, eco-philosophy is the idea of the reconciliation of man with nature in a context of mutual action: human symbiosis with nature, and the mutual co-existence of these two forms of life in the world.

In the early pages of her book, the author therefore familiarizes the reader with the subject of eco-philosophy. Her personal conviction is that eco-philosophy is a natural consequence of the progression of scientific knowledge, whereby man comes to know his place in the world and that all elements of nature are closely interrelated. This implies a strong holistic perspective. It is worth noticing that the author treats nature in a quite unique way, respectfully even designating it by the use of a capital letter (Nature).

Having perused the book, one may identify one particularly key element of this work: Zdzisława Piątek, in contrast to Krzysztof Łastowski (to whose work she refers), believes that two differing interpretations of eco-philosophy can be compatible. The philosophical and the scientific approach to eco-philosophy are here postulated as complementary, rather than contradictory, perspectives.

The second and third chapters of the work are devoted to Albert Schweitzer's ethics of respect for life and to the scientific ethics of Kazimierz Twardowski, both of which have played a significant part in the author's own conceptions.

As a point of departure for her discussion of her personal understanding of eco-philosophy, the author has chosen ethics, and her definition of eco-philosophy is based around this. This approach, particularly her invocation of Twardowski's ethics, is quite original and striking. As with almost everyone who writes about eco-philosophy, she does not fail to make reference to Schweitzer's philosophy. In so doing, the author juxtaposes perspectives, which might initially be presumed mutually exclusive: that is, she seeks to harmonize Twardowski's markedly scientific ethics with those of Schweitzer, which bear traces of mysticism.

In her fourth chapter, Zdzisława Piątek has catalogued the underlying assumptions associated with the various perspectives of those researchers, who study Nature. Piątek emphasizes that nature is the center from which all our considerations must depart: it provides a necessary point of reference, which illuminates the world around us and allows us to understand it.

Piątek's book is a quite challenging read, and it certainly will not be easy for those who lack elementary knowledge of eco-philosophy. It is certainly not recommended for those who are only beginning to familiarize themselves with the field.

It may also be said that even the most rudimentary knowledge of genetics and biology will expedite the reader's understanding of Piątek's approach, for many of her conclusions are impossible to understand without reference to their sources in these fields. The fourth chapter, which is filled with such subject matter, serves as a perfect example. In it, the author compares the evolutionary paradigm with the naturalistic one, and she reaches a conclusion that the biosphere should always be treated as a whole, thereby according to all the organisms existing within it equivalent consideration: (this is to say that, although from an evolutionary perspective it is possible to describe organisms as being relatively more or less developed, this possible description does not imply that the organisms are 'better' or are 'worse,' seeing as their relevance to Nature always remains the same.) This leads the author to conclude that, seeing as the comparative valuation of organisms is not viable, a new ethic, which avoids this characteristic tendency, is now needed.

Finally, Zdzisława Piątek evokes the idea of sustainable development as corroboration to the observation that human beings have come to appreciate Nature and to recognize their place within it.

The fifth chapter attempts to prove the coherence between nature and culture, as the author seeks to demonstrate that the relation between the two need not necessarily be antagonistic. Piątek seeks answers to such as important questions as: whether eco-philosophy can be considered a human coming-of-age moment in relation to nature, what the real 'nature' of Nature is, and what exactly the nature of culture is. The chapter is replete with discussions and questions, many of which are left unanswered.

In the final chapter the author extensively discusses the prospect of sustainable development in the context of eco-philosophy. At the outset,

Piątek expresses her hopeful and optimistic vision of human wisdom, and provides a view, which is more realistic than utopian. According to her assumptions, Nature can exist as a self-sufficient reality, even in the absence of human beings: mankind is a kind of epiphenomenon, which can form a part of this reality. Humans do not possess a predetermined exceptionality with regards to Nature: they must earn or create their place within it. In short, the author evaluates the idea of sustainable development in her conclusions and endorses this as an existential strategy.

Generally speaking, one may say that the book *Ekofilozofia* by Zdzisława Piątek is full of intriguing thoughts. While the book certainly is a difficult read, a naturalistic concept of eco-philosophy, which is based upon the idea of reconciliation between man and nature, is clearly presented here. The final conclusions of the dissertation are, however, more sobering. The human species, which is not the center of nature, has a limited field of action. Humanity faces the prospect of deciding upon either sustainable development or its own imminent self-destruction.

Reviewed by Anna Oksiak-Podboraczyńska