

## THE ROOTS OF SLOVAK CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTALISM<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** This study focuses on the foundations of Slovak critical environmentalism laid by work of Juraj Kučírek, who is also the author of the first ever monograph focused on the philosophical reflection of the causes and possible consequences of the global environmental crisis in Slovakia. Kučírek pointed out the need to combine reflection on subsequent solution of the global environmental crisis with the problems of social inequality and oppression. This unconventional approach in the context of the Slovak public and academic discourse of the 1990s he termed as environmental anthropocentrism. Thus, he had a critical approach to biocentric concepts, which gained a dominant position in the Slovak environmental discourse. His work was followed by Ivan Dubnička, who extended Kučírek's position to include cultural, political, and religious aspects of the causes of environmental devastation. His research was focused on the relationships of sociobiological and sociocultural determinants that shape human behaviour as a result of biological and cultural evolution. Based on evolutionism and anthropocentrism, he developed the concept of environmental pragmatism. Concepts of both are characterized by the critique of biocentric egalitarianism principle and the emphasis on democratic and human rights aspects of environmental devastation, as well as social and political causes of these phenomena.

**Keywords:** Slovak critical environmentalism, environmental anthropocentrism, environmental pragmatism, environmental crisis, evolutionism, political philosophy, environmental philosophy

### Introduction

The foundations of Slovak critical environmentalism were laid by the work of Juraj Kučírek (1955 – 2000) who is also the author of the first monograph focused on philosophical reflection of the causes and possible effects of the global environmental crisis in Slovakia (*Ekofilozofia včera, dnes a zajtra* [Ecophilosophy yesterday, today and tomorrow], 1st ed. 1995). Kučírek pointed out the need to combine reflection on subsequent solution of the global environmental crisis with the problems of social inequality and oppression. He himself described

his unconventional approach as environmental anthropocentrism by which he adopted critical stance to biocentric concepts which gained dominant position in Slovak environmental discourse. His work was followed by Ivan Dubnička (1961 – 2014) who extended Kučírek's position to include cultural, political and religious aspects. They both worked at the Faculty of Arts of the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, where J. Kučírek founded the Department of Political Science and until his death he worked there as the head of the department. I. Dubnička led the department from 2007 until his death in 2014. The work of both was left unfinished. This is also the reason why their – at least in Slovak context – literally groundbreaking concepts have not yet been noticed neither in Slovak nor in international environmental discourse.

### Kučírek's environmental anthropocentrism

Juraj Kučírek was in the early 1990s actively involved in discussions regarding ecophilosophy which were a part of the first wave of philosophical reflection of devastation of the environment and its consequences<sup>2</sup> in the new economic and political environment<sup>3</sup>. This began with the first reforms adopted in the early 1990s, and from today's perspective it is clear that this new economic and political environment, which in the early 90s of the last century was not in the Slovak (and Czech) public discourse customary to call capitalism, was not and it is not much more environmentally friendly or considerate than it was before 1989. Kučírek quickly identified these development trends so his approach to reflection of the relationship of the human society to the environment was considerably different to then predominant biocentrism, which was almost exclusively interpreted by the works of international, mainly western authors. Moreover, Kučírek's approach was interdisciplinary and he was one of the few who dared to point out that the solution of the environmental crisis needs

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<sup>2</sup> More on history of philosophical reflection on the environmental problem in Czech and Slovak thinking after 1989 see (Jemelka – Lesňák – Rozemberg 2010) and also (Jemelka 2016).

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. (Kučírek 1992; 1993).

a change of economic and political system, so not only a change in approach and values of individuals as was preferred and to some extent still is by the biocentric environmental thinking. Kučírek's assertion that the causes of the global environmental crisis have social character was in Slovak environmental thinking of the 1990s pioneering<sup>4</sup> as well as provocative because it challenged then uncritically accepted concepts of society and processes of dismantling the welfare state already in progress. In his environmental thinking, Kučírek wasn't afraid to point out the deepening discrepancy between concepts favouring the ethical transformation of the individual and the wave of consumerism massively supported by new domestic elites, mass media and heralds of the necessity of reforms in the spirit of neoliberal ideology in its historical triumph, who came from the same "West" as biocentric concepts.

He introduced his concept in a comprehensive form in the above mentioned monograph *Ekofilozofia včera, dnes a zajtra*. There Kučírek critically analyses not only philosophical roots of the modern industrial civilization but also environmental thinking itself. He points out that "ecophilosophy shortly after its formation split up into two directions: biocentric and anthropocentric" (Kučírek 2008, 55). However, these two directions diverge only seemingly. Both see the cause of the environmental crisis in extreme anthropocentrism which puts man and nature against each other. Both directions also point to necessary change of the value system and way of thinking, and thirdly, according to Kučírek, even biocentrism hasn't really been able to abandon the anthropocentric position, because it, despite its proclaimed biotic equality of all living, attributes to man a unique position among all living creatures. This follows from the requirement that a person or mankind should take responsibility for preserving life on the

planet. And it is this discrepancy – discrepancy of the principle of biocentric egalitarianism and the principle of responsibility in environmental ethics or in the concepts of moral ecology – that J. Kučírek criticised. At the same time, he also pointed out the need to turn "from irresponsibility to responsibility of the human race for the environment" (Kučírek 1993, 160). The responsibility cannot lie with a person degraded to the level of an animal species, but only with a person with an exceptional position in the community of all life. This exceptional position stems from the fact that "man is the cause of the current environmental crisis and only he can and must solve it and avert it. An exceptional place also means a high degree of responsibility. The ideal of the modern industrial society – freedom of the individual – must be limited by the recognized need to save life of Earth" (Kučírek 1993, 166).

J. Kučírek responded to the criticism of the authors of the concept of moral ecology looking for the causes of the global environmental crisis in anthropocentrism by claiming that "current ecological problems do not and cannot have their origin in anthropocentrism as such, but only in its too narrow technocratic and vulgarized understanding" (Kučírek 2008, 56). He considers the biocentric romanticism looking for the "culprit" of the global environmental crisis in anthropocentrism and offering a solution of this crisis in elimination of it to be a stage in the development of the environmental thinking which did focus the attention to ecological aspects of all human activities but owing to its own internal discrepancy cannot be a source of necessary changes (Kučírek 1993, 161–166).

Kučírek's position is therefore intentionally and programmatically anthropocentric, but it is an environmental anthropocentrism. And it is, according to him, "based in the polycentrism of nature and exceptionality of man on Earth" (Kučírek 2008, 84). According to Kučírek "anthropocentrism as a philosophical reflection of human existence expresses his self-awareness, which is a prerequisite for the inner noetic revival and self-transformation of man, his thinking and action, his system of values in favour of the philosophy of survival and sustaining life in the broad-

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<sup>4</sup> In his investigation of the causes of the global environmental crisis, J. Kučírek thus came to almost the same conclusion as the founder of social ecology, Murray Bookchin, came to in the 1960s. However, an examination of the roots of Kučírek's thinking so far has not shown that he is familiar with M. Bookchin's concept of social ecology. Kučírek's concept can therefore be considered the result of his own efforts to philosophically reflect the key development tendencies of modern society.

est sense" (Kučírek 1992, 118) and therefore the philosophical reflection "as such cannot be anything else than *anthropocentric and environmental at the same time*" (Kučírek 1993, 165). From this viewpoint he also interprets the concept of the reverence for life of Albert Schweitzer, which is according to Kučírek necessary to interpret in the context of the whole Schweitzer's work. From this point of view, he sees Schweitzer's work as an anthropocentric reflection of not only the "will to live", but also of the "senseless cruelty of nature" and also of the "humility before life", and only man is capable of this as well as of the reflection of these phenomena. In that regard, it may also be noted that Schweitzer, as a doctor who has always and everywhere sought to save human lives, may have had difficulty in taking the biocentric attitude which is often attributed to him. Schweitzer's reflections then can be understood as an inspirational source of environmental anthropocentrism. Kučírek wrote that "Schweitzer's ethics rejects the technocratic anthropocentrism of Cartesian philosophy and at the same time in time and content advance overcomes the ecosophistic biocentric inconsistency of environmental anthropocentrism" (Kučírek 2008, 74).

According to Kučírek, the current state of the relationship between man, society, and the environment therefore leads to the need to conceive environmental anthropocentrism, which "consists in recognizing that the normal life of the human individual depends on the society to which he belongs and the ecosystem in which he lives" (Kučírek 1992, 118), which means that "environmental limits determining human activities are introduced into the philosophical system" (Ibid.). Therefore, thinking about environmental problems and threats is inextricably linked with thinking about social problems and threats, even that the key to tackling the environmental crisis lies in the social sphere. "The social problem of man seen on an environmental level becomes a central problem enabling to proceed to the solution of global problems" (Kučírek 2008, 58).

According to Kučírek, the lack of attention to the social dimension of the causes of the environmental crisis is

another aspect of biocentric concepts. He therefore also criticized biocentrism that "... it prioritises the responsibility of the individual and takes the social environment into account only marginally. By individualizing the approach to solving the environmental crisis and not seeing or underestimating the social level as content-creating, it reaches a dead end. The appeal to change man, without changing society, is at best a set mirror of our evil conscience and in most cases only an emotional cry without a real resonance of humanity" (Kučírek 2008, 69).

According to Kučírek, "the primary threat to contemporary humanity does not result so much from its negative impact on the ecological balance of the Earth and the catastrophic devastation of the environment, but from its inability to solve and manage its own social events" (Kučírek 2008, 85). The acute environmental crisis is thus a consequence of the social crisis (Ibid.). The main risk is therefore the deepening of the social inequality, because "humanity is not facing an impending ecological catastrophe "united" and operational precisely for social reasons ... The vast majority of people live in such conditions that it is completely irrelevant to them what will be, figuratively speaking, tomorrow. These people have trouble surviving today and no prospects for a better tomorrow, literally living in genetically determined hopelessness and misery" (Kučírek 1998, 4). And it is this misery in the utmost form of lack of water and food that is the main source of a growing number of conflicts, mainly in developing countries. Therefore, Kučírek states, "More than the threat of nuclear war the world and human society today is threatened by "the ticking of a social bomb". The detonator is poverty, which is the fruit of deepening inequalities within and between states. Poverty and hunger are hidden behind numerous civil wars, which outwardly appear as ethnic or religious wars" (Kučírek 2008, 88). Kučírek thus autochthonously came to almost the same conclusions as Ulrich Beck pointed out with his concept of a global risk society. The events of the last decade confirm that social inequalities become the cause or detonator of conflicts when they are exacerbated by acute water, land and

food shortages, whether due to prolonged drought and climate change, population growth, or, most often, their combinations. It is these factors that deepen religious, ethnic and social conflicts that may have long been overcome or latent. The response to the existential threat that water and food insecurity undoubtedly is often takes the form of fundamentalism, a return to the “roots” of ethnicity or religiosity, allowing for a closer grip and thus a more effective struggle of the endangered community for resources. It seems that the generosity and tolerance of an open society allows only a sufficient resources or surplus of them.

In the early 1990s, Kučírek pointed out that it is necessary to “make a critical analysis of the philosophical foundations of western civilization in terms of environmental limits and try to change the common and on the whole world imposed hierarchy of values in these intentions” (Kučírek 1992, 118). At the same time, it was supposed to be a truly fundamental change, even in philosophy itself, in which it is a “shift from the philosophy of world change to the philosophy of its preservation” (Kučírek 1993, 165). He saw in this the essence of his concept of environmental anthropocentrism. At the turn of the millennium, however, he stated that due to the continuing devastation of the environment, “environmentalism must gradually move from finding and defining a new value system of humanity to choosing a real way to solve the problem” (Kučírek 1998, 2). Environmentalism “must be able to solve the problem of responsibility of man and society for the condition of the environment on both interconnected levels – environmental and social” (Kučírek 1998, 3).

In the mid-1990s, when the processes of dismantling the welfare state and desocializing the economy, along with the curtailment of social rights, were just beginning, but at the level of public discourse it was virtually impossible to thematize these themes or even criticize them without risking stigmatizing their author as a posthumous child of the former regime, or so-called “old structure”, he was able as one of the few Slovak thinkers reflecting on the deepening environmental

crisis, to point out not only its globality, but above all its inseparability from the social crisis, emphasizing their complexity and interdependence, which allowed him to interpret them as a crisis of humanism. In this context, he states that we have reached “a borderline where the crisis of humanity, manifested as the inability or unwillingness to solve centuries-old social problems, blocks the possibility of solving catastrophically accumulating environmental problems” (Kučírek 2008, 78).

He pointed to the need to change society, but not towards the deepening of social inequalities, which was the development of Slovak and global society as a result of neoliberal reforms of the 1990s. Kučírek persistently emphasized that it is social inequalities and their deepening that play a significant role in the devastation of the environment at the planetary level. He rejected the uncritical adoption of the ideas and approaches of the founders of ecophilosophical and ecosophical thinking, which often took place in the Slovak environment in the 1990s. He termed his concept environmental anthropocentrism, thus introducing into environmentalism on the one hand a critique of extreme biocentrism and on the other hand a critique of social inequalities, both the causes of their emergence and their accelerating deepening. At the same time, however, he understood anthropocentric environmentalism as an “practical wisdom” or philosophy of Aristotle, that is, not only as a theoretical reflection without the ambition to influence the environmental as well as the social situation of mankind. According to him, “If the environmental level is not connected with the social level, there is no solution in real practice. Mankind’s inability to solve basic social issues escalates environmental problems. Environmental and social is mutually conditioned in time and content in the given process” (Kučírek 2008, 78). That is why he was looking for ways to reflect the knowledge from the reflection on the causes and nature of the environmental crisis in environmental education, in citizenship education or in, thanks to him, the Slovak political science which he helped to build. Ivan Dubnička significantly enhanced the starting points sketched by Kučírek.

### Dubnička's environmental pragmatism

Ivan Dubnička was one of the most important representatives of Slovak environmentalism. His concept is based on a comprehensive analysis of the causes and manifestations of the global environmental crisis, in which he sought to combine cultural, political and philosophical approaches to the issue. His research was focused on the relationships of sociobiological and sociocultural determinants that shape human behaviour as a result of biological and cultural evolution. He held the position of environmental pragmatism, evolutionism and anthropocentrism.

He defines his attitude as anthropocentric<sup>5</sup>, because according to him, man, with all his evolutionary physical and mental equipment, is “destined to think anthropocentric” (Dubnička 2003, 246). Moreover, if he did not think so, he could not even think ethically, not yet to be held accountable for his actions. From this point of view, therefore, he considers biocentrism in environmental thinking to be internally contradictory, and therefore theoretically and practically unsustainable. In particular, the principle of biocentric egalitarianism and the principle of responsibility in environmental ethics, or concepts of moral ecology are in contradiction. Biocentric egalitarianism, as one of the main principles of moral or deep ecology, presupposes the equality of human and non-human, at least animal life. However, this attitude practically excludes the possibility of taking responsibility for non-human life or even for the preconditions of life on the planet in general. “Being just one of many species and being responsible for them is philosophically inappropriate. Responsibility for something, in this case for the world, for nature, for animals, is a confirmation of superiority, a confirmation of sovereignty and ownership, even if enlightened” (Dubnička 2011c, 41 – 42). Concepts working with the principle of biocentric egalitarianism thus unwittingly fall into positions that are subject to concentrated criticism, because they consider

them to be at least one source of the global environmental crisis. According to Dubnička, the authors of moral ecology “make the main mistake in confusing anthropocentric thinking with biocentric and, being held by this mistake, try to solve the crisis in society and in the environment. The crisis caused by the species *Homo sapiens* wants to be solved by the same species *Homo sapiens*, but with a changed identity. They think very little about our nature, about our evolutionary conditions” (Dubnička 2011c, 43). That is why Dubnička pays great attention to evolution – biological and cultural and, last but not least, anthropology. In this context, he literally writes, “An analysis of the global environmental crisis is not possible only from the positions of philosophy or ethics, but also an anthropological view is needed. Only at the roots of human nature can one look for a solution (if there is any) to the current state both in nature and in society” (Dubnička 2011c, 43).

Moreover, according to I. Dubnička, man is human also thanks to culture, and it is always anthropocentric – created by man, in his image and for his needs. I. Dubnička understood culture as an adaptive means of the species *Homo sapiens*, as its evolutionary strategy in the struggle of man as an animal species for survival (Dubnička 2011b, 51). Adaptation to the external environment is material culture, adaptation to the internal environment is spiritual culture (Dubnička 2011b, 52). However, man and his culture are at the same time a part of nature, man, and thus also his culture, is therefore existentially dependent on nature, for example only by the sheer necessity to eat regularly. According to I. Dubnička, this fact shows that the way of subsistence determines culture, i.e. also mythology, cult, magic and morality, and finally its theoretical reflection, ethics. Therefore, we can talk about the culture of hunters, fishermen, shepherds or farmers (Dubnička 2011b, 56). Moral rules are always part of this culture, including relationships with animals or nature in general.

Dubnička examines the ability to think ethically and to act morally from the point of view of evolutionary anthropology, because, as he emphasizes, man is not

<sup>5</sup> In this context, he openly refers to the ideas of J. Kučírek.

only subject to biological but also to cultural evolution. He therefore considers the relationship of man to animals and to the whole of nature to be an important aspect of cultural evolution, through which it is possible to examine the ethical relationship between man and animal and through it the broader relationship between man and nature. However, Dubnička's examination of this relationship as an essential aspect of the global environmental crisis is not limited to the industrial era of human development, as is the case with many authors examining this issue, or seeking reasons and a possible way to overcome the global environmental crisis in the field of ethics and morality, but also takes into account the previous stages of development of human societies – he examines the ethical attitudes of hunters and gatherers as well as shepherds and farmers.

I. Dubnička analyses the metamorphoses of the human-animal relationship (and through it the human-nature relationship) through the prism of how animals are depicted and what importance is attached to them in totemism, mythology, various religions<sup>6</sup>, but also in heraldry, modern state symbolism, ideologies and finally in current marketing. In all these cultural forms of man's relation to animals and nature, he shows that the predominant ethical attitude of man to animal species and nature as a whole is pragmatism and often even cynicism<sup>7</sup>. This is what allows Dubnička to point out the problems of environmental ethics, especially that which refers to the allegedly harmonious, non-conflicting relationship of pre-industrial societies with the environment. At the same time, he challenges all theoretical concepts

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the rise of Christianity, but also of other monotheistic religions is associated with pastoralism. According to Dubnička, they could have originated only in pastoral cultures and are therefore to a large extent their expression, i.e. the expression of the way of obtaining food and the adapted way of life. Not only do they use metaphors associated with pastoralism, but also the value system, the system of organization of society and family (patriarchy) are fully subordinate to nomadic pastoralism and the associated life experience.

<sup>7</sup> He points to a repeating cycle, in which a species was first systematically exterminated and only then, when it actually disappeared from a region or was completely extinct, was it promoted to a heraldic symbol or in modern times declared a legally protected animal or used in marketing in the form of a company name or brand or product name.

looking for the causes of the global environmental crisis in the field of morality or failing ethical theories. According to Dubnička, humanity has been systematically increasing the selection pressure on the environment for a long time, since the dawn of its history. At the same time, humanity can always find a moral justification for such actions. Dubnička points out that the moral principles of hunters-gatherers no longer prevented the hunting or extinction of many animal species, not even the sacred or totem species, i.e. those species from which individual tribes derived their origin or identity. The extinction of animal species, as one of the most serious phenomena of the current global environmental crisis, is not only a consequence of the way of production in industrial society, but apparently occurred 20 – 40 thousand years ago, when mankind was still innumerable and subsisted only on hunting and gathering. Despite the technology of the Stone Age, mankind, through hunting<sup>8</sup> and landscaping<sup>9</sup>, significantly contributed to the extinction of many animal species, millennia before the Neolithic, long before the industrial revolution. Even the ethical and religious ideas of hunters and gatherers, who from today's point of view were much closer to nature than modern man, by considering themselves as an integral part of all living things, "appear as a means to adapt to their own subjective world" (Dubnička

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<sup>8</sup> Hunting was aimed either directly at obtaining food (meat) and other raw materials (skin, tendons, bones, horns, tusks or antlers of hunted game) needed to sustain human life, or was (and still is) a way of physically disposing of specific animals or even whole animal species that endanger or compete with humans. In this connection, I. Dubnička points out, referring to the amount of archaeological evidence, that prehistoric hunters often used hunting techniques in which whole herds perished (e.g. were driven to a high reef) and hunters could not use the amount of game caught in any way, which does not indicate harmonious, gentle, or balanced relationship to nature, which is often assumed about Stone Age hunters. After the domestication of the first animals and the emergence of agriculture, man-farmers not only changed the country, where there was less and less space for native, non-domesticated species of animals and plants, but also systematically wiped out species that either hunt economically interesting game for humans (domesticated and non-domesticated) or graze on pastures on which humans graze economically interesting species. This process actually continues to the present day – every time a wolf or bear attacks a reared sheep or a after "raid" of wild boars in the fields, the affected farmers always demand the shooting of these "pests".

<sup>9</sup> E.g. by burning forests.



2007b, 73), and thus were not primarily a way or instrument of nature protection.<sup>10</sup> In the relationship between man and animals, moral rules and taboos thus prove to be secondary, even in hunter-gatherer communities, and this mode persists in peasant and industrial societies. According to I. Dubnička, in all periods of the development of human cultures, what protects human property is considered ethical, or even more precisely, what protects the property of the members of society who possess property. Thus, ethics is determined by the predominant way of subsistence and the dominant form of ownership.<sup>11</sup> In other words, the content of morality is determined by the way of life, or way of reproducing society, not the other way around.<sup>12</sup>

Dubnička's attitude to the possibilities of environmental ethics to reverse the destruction of the environment is therefore sceptical. Relying on ethics as a means of overcoming the global environmental crisis means there's a lack of understanding of its real causes. Moreover, as I. Dubnička emphasizes, "moral imperatives do not capture the crowd" (Dubnička 2007a, 399), especially if they are in conflict with the way of earning a living, or rather contradict the basic life strategy, which has been reflected in the economic-political imperative of growth. This imperative of growth can be identified in most institutions of contemporary global industrial civilization. According to I. Dubnička, "this means that agreements, regulations, laws, i.e. systemic measures will be more effective" (Dubnička 2007a, 399) than any well-founded

environmental ethics.<sup>13</sup> According to him, ways to overcome the environmental crisis should therefore be sought in the area of political, economic and cultural norms rather than moral norms. Thus, in his view, the global environmental crisis is not a crisis of morality or ethical theory, but a crisis of culture as an evolutionary strategy of human self-preservation (Dubnička 2007b, 193).

He considers the primary evolutionary strategy of the species *Homo sapiens* to be the production and accumulation of overproduction (Dubnička 2007a, 20), which originally allowed overcoming periods of scarcity and population growth in periods of abundance, but now causes such devastation of the planetary environment that the very preconditions for maintaining human cultures and global civilization are threatened. The main cause of the global environmental crisis is not anthropocentric morality, but "the production of overproduction, its accumulation and consumption" (Dubnička 2007a, 20), i.e. the evolutionary strategy of humanity (Dubnička 2009, 90), applied since the dawn of human history with increasing intensity according to possibilities, provided to humanity by in those times available technology. The application of this evolutionary strategy currently encounters the finiteness of natural resources and the ability of nature to absorb the pollution caused by the production and consumption of overproduction. This strategy "is independent of time and space and also of the stage of cultural development, as well as its consumption" (Dubnička 2009, 86), which, according to I. Dubnička, also document various forms of destruction of property, i.e., overproduction, recorded in North American indigenous cultures, which have often not reached a

<sup>10</sup> Although many myths of indigenous tribes also contain an environmental-ethical message (to catch or collect only as much as can be used), as I. Dubnička shows, in reality the effort to extract as much as possible from natural resources often prevailed. The rituals were then to ensure the apprehension of spirits (forests, animals, seas, etc.), or to put the blame on someone else for violating such prohibitions, e.g. on an enemy tribe.

<sup>11</sup> According to I. Dubnička, this helps to explain not only the ethical apology of racism, social inequality, but also war killings and genocide. Already J.-J. Rousseau pointed out the hypocrisy of the morality of a "civilized society" that not only accepts but also protects abysmal social inequality and the unequal distribution of basic resources, "so that some die of malnutrition and others of surfeit" (Rousseau 2010, 110).

<sup>12</sup> I. Dubnička for example draws attention to the fact that the cult of wilderness, unspoiled nature or wild animals arises only where none of this already exists and thus does not hinder the "civilized" way of life of human society.

<sup>13</sup> In this context, he also argues with Christian environmentalism and its central idea of a reasonable steward (Dubnička 2011b, 209). He criticizes Christian environmentalism for its internal contradiction resulting from the effort to maintain the basic premises of Christianity, postulating the superiority of man or more precisely a Christian over nature and all living things, which is a consequence of the biblical concept of man and the world (man as the only creature which has the soul and the promise of salvation and the concept of all living as created, or at least made available to man as the crown of creation) which is a clear anthropocentrism, and at the same time proclaiming the need for biocentrism in the approach to the environment (Dubnička 2007b, 194 – 211).

higher level of economy than hunting and harvesting. Whenever it was possible, “man gathered, stockpiled more food than he could consume at any given time” (Dubnička 2013b, 35). This strategy made it possible to survive periods of crop failure, prolonged drought or rain and subsequent floods. “The production of overproduction was caused by the existential need to preserve the species” (Dubnička 2013b, 35), so it primarily concerned food<sup>14</sup>, but relatively quickly it also began to cover all means of obtaining, transporting and storing food. Mankind has never abandoned this strategy, but has extended it to all kinds of goods and services. In addition, it has built up a psychological dependence<sup>15</sup> on the growth of overproduction and its consumption. However, overproduction also makes it possible to continue the growth of the global human population, which results in the need for further growth in production.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The need to provide sufficient food determines the material and spiritual culture. According to I. Dubnička, in myths, as well as in religions, the emphasis is always on food and the way of subsistence, the way of obtaining food. Most prayers and sacrifices, as well as images of the afterlife in any religion, lead to food. Prayers and various rituals or sacrifices were to be provided by rich hunting grounds, eternal green pastures, rain, water or, as in Christianity, by “our daily bread”. From this point of view, religions are “a barometer of the biological needs of *Homo sapiens*” (Dubnička 2011b, 66). It is questionable to what extent they are able to give relevant answers to the threats facing humanity with their conceptual framework.

<sup>15</sup> I. Dubnička talks about the dependence of humanity on the growth of overproduction, which he compares to the addiction of a drug addict. Just as an addict needs an increasing dose of his drug at all costs, so does humanity need an increase in the amount of overproduction, even at the cost of self-destruction through the depletion of natural resources and the devastation of the environment. This self-destructive cycle stems from the fact that “the larger and more modern production is, the more natural resources as well as energy are needed, resulting in more and more overproduction to be consumed” (Dubnička 2011a, 61), but redistributed beforehand, so with the growth of material production and its efficiency, social inequalities and thus the conflict potential in human societies are also growing. In addition to the social and environmental consequences of this development, civilization thus faces the fact that there are no longer enough natural resources for further growth in production and consumption.

<sup>16</sup> However, I. Dubnička’s hypothesis needs to be supplemented at least by the phenomenon of trade, the significance of which was already reflected by Rousseau (Rousseau 1978, 186). It was overproduction that enabled the emergence of trade, which is key in several respects. The production of overproduction, i.e. the accumulation of stocks, can also be observed in some animal species, but trade and long-distance transport are created, organized and technically secured and continuously improved only by humans. And trade, on one hand, accelerates the pro-

Dubnička’s knowledge of the realities of life of the indigenous people of North America<sup>17</sup> allows him to avoid in environmental thinking a frequent romantic view of the life of indigenous tribes as idyllic in harmony with the needs and possibilities of nature. On the contrary, he points out that many of the indigenous tribes faced very similar problems to that of modern civilization before the arrival of Europeans. Population growth has forced these tribes, but also civilizations that originated in the Indian subcontinent, either aggressively expand their territory at the expense of other tribes, or formulate and enforce strict rules of birth control if the tribal territory could not be further expanded (Dubnička 2007a, 153 a 159). Many of these, from today’s point of view cruel and unimaginable mechanisms of birth control, or population size, however, still persisted in relatively complex state units in antiquity and in many cases such mechanisms are documented in modern times e.g., discoverers, or rather conquerors of America. However, I. Dubnička does not interpret the origin of these practices as a consequence of the feeling of environmental

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cesses of division of labour and deepening of social disparities, on the other hand, it allows humans as a biological species to circumvent the limits resulting from climatic conditions and raw material resources of specific areas. Therefore, man could populate and live for a long period in areas that did not and do not provide the opportunity to produce a sufficient amount of renewable and non-renewable resources necessary for the life of human communities. Thus, trade makes it possible to at least mitigate the immediate determination by specific natural conditions, even in prehistoric times. The biological species *Homo sapiens* has long managed to circumvent population growth limits, which do not allow any other animal species to grow long-term and globally. Whenever an animal species exceeds the limits set by a particular habitat to feed on it, the overpopulated population dies out. However, thanks to trade – except for local fluctuations – man has been able to circumvent this basic limit given by biological origin for a long time. At present, thanks to trade and transport technologies, there is a number of countries that do not have enough of their own resources and raw materials for their own populations and industries. However, from a global perspective, trade and transport have become not only major causes of economic, social, political and environmental crises, but also of a number of conflicts. See (Suša – Štáhel 2016).

<sup>17</sup> The first book by I. Dubnička (with co-author B. Šikulinec, 1998) *Prírodný svet Indiánov* [The Natural World of Indigenous Americans] is written as a cultural and anthropological study of the life of the indigenous people of North America. In this work, he already notes the key role of the environment in the formation of cultural and social institutions, but also the impact of the application of these institutions on the environment, which multiplies with the growing population.



responsibility resulting from a truly ethical, i.e. selfless relationship of natural nations (tribes) to the country and animals living in it, but as a sign of environmental pragmatism which results from hard-won experience of recurring famines and the associated disruptions, or often collapses of societies. From the point of view of environmental pragmatism, according to I. Dubnička, it is possible to explain not only the differences of individual religious systems in the approach to meat<sup>18</sup>, but also to many other phenomena of family and social life or even the very forms of religiosity, and associated rituals and cultural norms.<sup>19</sup>

Dubnička's environmental pragmatism is much more a description of approaches applied universally – i. e. in all cultures – in relation to the environment, respectively to resources that can be extracted from nature at a given time and place and regarding available technologies, rather than consciously applying environmental pragmatism as philosophical concept. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify precisely those approaches in Dubnička's texts which, according to Emil Višňovský, are characteristic for this part of pragmatism, respectively for environmental philosophy inspired by pragmatism, which is "analysis of socio-cultural practices and their corresponding normative orders" (Višňovský 2014, 69). However, Dubnička's approach is also in line with philosophy of pragmatism – it seeks ways or arguments that would allow environmentalism to be applied in practice. In his understanding, should be environmentalism a practical philosophy, not just an academic theory that is not interested in the possibility of its application in practice. Višňovský's characteristic of environmental pragmatism, which, in addition to solving theoretical problems, tries also to "focus on the contribu-

tion to environmental policy" (Višňovský 2014, 78) could be applied to Dubnička.

One of the sociocultural practices that Dubnička pays attention to is genocide. On the side-lines of supposed European humanism, which was supposed to manifest itself in more "civilized" behaviour, I. Dubnička recalls the practices of systematic extermination of the indigenous people of North America used in the 19th century, which was publicly defended and even publicly funded, with an excuse that immigrants<sup>20</sup> coming from Europe need the land (Dubnička 2007b, 130–144). European colonial expansion was thus driven by the same motives and needs as the self-destructive conflicts of the natives – the pursuit of land as a basic resource, as a precondition for life and development of any community. I. Dubnička therefore states that "land is fought for always, everywhere and against all" (Dubnička 2007b, 133), not only against the original population, but also against those animal species which in their way of livelihood competed or compete with the livelihood of the given society.<sup>21, 22</sup> It is in this context that Dubnička points to

<sup>20</sup> In connection with the settlement of the American West, N. Chomsky talks about "settler colonialism", which is "the worst of all, because it eliminates the original population. Other kinds of imperialism exploit it, this one eliminates it" (Chomsky 2013, 9). In this connection, A. M. Lause points out that the expulsion, expropriation and often the extermination of the indigenous population, which took place in parallel with wiping out the wildlife, in particular bison, did not end the struggle for land. Small farmers were gradually expropriated by cattle breeders, often as violently as the indigenous people, so that originally independent farmers became (at best) dependent on rental work. Subsequent fencing of large farms together with the construction of railways made it impossible for small farmers to manage, so that dramatic changes in the social structure of society continued even after the expulsion, or rather extermination of indigenous people (Lause 2016). Livestock farming and the relocation of multi-thousand herds over hundreds of kilometres have often devastated the environment more than small farms. At the same time, fenced large farms and railways prevented not only the free movement of settlers and cattle drivers, but also the free movement of wildlife, thus preventing the seasonal movement of herds. This coincidence of environmental and social devastation is key to understanding the real causes of the environmental crisis and formulating possible ways to overcome it.

<sup>21</sup> Dubnička's research makes it clear that genocide is relatively common against various animal species as well as against other human communities. The genocide of Native Americans, carried out for centuries by farmers and governments, is relatively well documented. I. Dubnička points out that it took place not only in the form of direct killing or intentional spread of infectious diseases (e.g., smallpox spread by distributing infected blankets

<sup>18</sup> Environmental pragmatism is in his view also the gradual transformation of Indian cultures into lacto-vegetarian ones, as due to the rapid growth of the population it was no longer possible to produce enough meat for the entire population in the Indian subcontinent and geographical factors very significantly limited the possibility of territorial expansion. The original Vedic and Buddhist texts not only do not forbid the consumption of meat, but take it for granted, as well as professions associated with them, e.g. butcher. (Dubnička 2012a, 125).

<sup>19</sup> I. Dubnička elaborated this aspect of his concept in his last work *Šamani, mesiáři, proroci a reformátori* [Shamans, Messiahs, Prophets and Reformers] (Dubnička 2013a).

the elasticity of moral norms or ethical cynicism, as the genocide of animal species and ethnic, national or religious groups is almost always justified, or sometimes even adored by ethical, religious or ideological arguments. (Dubnička 2007b, 120, 140 – 141). Using a number of examples from history, I. Dubnička documents that the perpetrators of genocide often have no problem offending and invoking their “moral right”, or even “moral duty”, to proceed even more uncompromisingly and harder when their victims oppose them. From an anthropological, political, cultural, philosophical and, last but not least, environmentalist point of view, it is therefore important to note that genocide is not a discovery of the 20th century, but is at least as old as humanity.<sup>23</sup>

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to Indigenous people), but also in the form of systematic devastation of the environment (pasture of game, game itself, e.g., bison, crops in the fields, etc.), which enabled the life of indigenous tribes (Dubnička 2007b, 127-144). In this context, Dubnička also notes the similarity between the practices of hunting carnivores (mostly wolves) and humans (Indigenous people), in both cases for decades for remuneration paid from public funds, as well as motives (mostly economic) and their ethical and legal justifications.

<sup>22</sup> However, the American philosopher F. Jameson emphasizes that even “today it is all about land”, whether it is sources of water, raw materials, deforestation, construction of highways, power plants, water reservoirs, destruction of monuments by developers or the rights of natives, it is always a struggle for land and its use. At the same time, he adds that “all these struggles are the result of land commodification” (Jameson 2016, 13). In short, land is a basic non-renewable resource, the availability of which is declining only due to population growth.

<sup>23</sup> This finding is particularly important in the context of discussions of biocentrism and anthropocentrism, because if one has repeatedly committed genocide since ancient times, it means that even interspecies altruism is not the absolute norm for him. This is also pointed out by less drastic, but in human history prevalent forms of human relations such as slavery, servitude, or colonialism, and many other forms of oppression of one social group against another. From this point of view, the requirement, or even the assumption of interspecies altruism, which is one of the central premises of biocentrism, appears to be fictitious or utopian, or in the words of J. Kučírka romantic. D. Špirko in connection with the demand for interspecific altruism and biotic egalitarianism even points out that “slavery could be born in its earliest forms only in the conditions of such a socio-ethical concept, which did not yet separate man from nature and make him equal with other living creatures” (Špirko 1996, 109). According to Špirko “it was the non-anthropocentric ethics that was the prerequisite for the emergence of social inequality and unfreedom” (Špirko 2011, 15), because “slavery actually appears immediately after the domestication of some animal species and perhaps at the same time” (Špirko 2011, 14). In contrast, it was “anthropocentric humanism that represented the path to the emancipation of man to man” (Špirko 1996, 110). Z. Palovičová also states that: “Interspecies altruism, which is the essence of Earth’s ethics and deep ecology, has not been proven” (Palovičová 2012, 53). This also has

“Genocide pursued a very specific goal – territorial gain, i.e. the acquisition of property in the form of land, which is the basic material unit in the production of overproduction” (Dubnička 2007a, 236). This strategy was not only a specific feature of European complex societies, because “the age-old wars were fought between, for example, Eskimos and subarctic Indians, the peoples of Polynesia, etc. In environmental terms, wars have always been waged in order to obtain resources. The food and raw materials that these resources represent are a guarantee of existence”<sup>24</sup> (Dubnička 2007a, 247). The indigenous people of Polynesia and America simply did not have the technical and organizational skills to apply this strategy to other continents. Finally, it can be stated with I. Dubnička that “civilizations arose from war nations, which drove peaceful hunters and gatherers to the periphery of the world” (Dubnička 2007a, 261). This is an important finding for the political and philosophical reflections of global civilization, because “in today’s technical and global world, “territory”, i.e. resources, is fought for not only with neighbours but also on another continent” (Dubnička 2007a, 261).

With the continuing devastation of the environment and the spending of final resources, without which not

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consequences for the possibility of resolving the environmental crisis in the form of a new environmental ethics. If even classical anthropocentric ethics has not been able to eliminate genocide in interpersonal relationships, it is only illusory to assume that environmental ethics could succeed in eliminating humanity’s predatory relationship with living beings, or even the environment as a whole.

<sup>24</sup> This is quite evident in the retrospective view of the settlement of America, Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, but also many areas in Africa by people from Europe in the 19th century. The Nazi attempt to acquire habitat (land and other resources) a century later, carried out with almost identical methods and justification as the settlement of the American West, was morally and legally condemned only after its military defeat. This enabled the emergence of international law, which outlawed genocide and aggression. However, the erosion of this system in the first two decades of the 21st century resurrected the threat faced by small or less developed human societies from prehistoric times: those who do not defend themselves have no right to property, land, and ultimately their own existence. Given that populating of the Earth was completed more than 10000 years ago, except for a few remote areas, especially the islands of the Pacific Ocean, it is therefore necessary to be very sceptical about all concepts considering the possibility of building a new society “on a green field” – for a few millennia, this must have been preceded by the expulsion or genocide of indigenous peoples and often indigenous species.

only overproduction but also basic reproduction of society is impossible, it is becoming increasingly clear that the struggle for resources will not only continue but will also become increasingly ruthless. Today's civilization is existentially dependent on oil, because "almost everything works on oil energy and what doesn't, is made from oil" (Dubnička 2011a, 59). And it is this mass use of oil, or fossil fuels in general, that is a major source of global pollution and a cause of climate change. At the same time, however, a civilization dependent on oil is threatened by its possible lack. Mankind "spends energy from fossil fuels a thousand times faster than nature stores in an underground bank, and these resources are not bottomless" (Dubnička 2011a, 68). In this context, I. Dubnička points out that a peak oil will endanger not only the functioning of industry and transport, but also the production of food and the distribution of drinking water. This would mean not only a crisis of industry and transport, but especially food crisis, which has great potential to threaten the stability of the social and political systems and thus, ultimately, global civilization because "if once fossil fuels run out, and humanity has not migrated to other, equally effective energy source, 90% of the population of our planet will be completely without resources" (Dubnička 2011a, 71), which would only further deepen the already dangerously large inequality between people and countries. Thus, Dubnička, like Kučírek, also thematizes the social dimension of the meaning of the concept of environmental crisis and the possible political consequences arising from it.

However, Dubnička's study of the development of the relationship between human communities and the natural environment, which enables their existence, also makes it possible to outline the periodization of history, which depends on the way of subsistence which predominates a particular historical period. From Dubnička's viewpoint, hunting and gathering, agrarian and finally industrial societies can be distinguished according to the determining method of overproduction production. However, I. Dubnička shows in several examples that the sequence of these types of society is not one-

way, and even, it is not clearly conditioned by technological development. When some Native American tribes, originally subsisting on agriculture, were given horses and later firearms by Europeans, they abandoned the settled way of life and replaced agriculture as the dominant means of obtaining food by hunting bison. They thus returned to hunting culture, but this development cannot be clearly described as a regress, because, as Dubnička points out, new technologies have made hunting a much more efficient and even safer source of food than agriculture could have provided to the tribes at the time. In addition, hunting was less strenuous and time consuming than the previous exclusively manual cultivation of not very fertile fields. From this point of view, the decision of these tribes can be understood as a manifestation of environmental pragmatism. Other tribes were forced to return to the lifestyle of hunters and gatherers by the expansion of Europeans, who pushed them out of their original tribal territories, where many of the indigenous tribes had established permanent settlements as well as agricultural land. When these original sources of their existence were lost, the choice of harvesting and hunting as a way of obtaining food was again a manifestation of environmental pragmatism.

I. Dubnička also developed his philosophical concept in the reflection of the phenomenon of culture and those aspects of human evolution which were key to its constitution. He thus formulates the evolutionist philosophy of culture, which is beneficial precisely by its anchoring in the reflection of the global environmental crisis. Material and spiritual culture, in his opinion, therefore deals primarily with the solution of two basic problems, which are food and sexuality (Dubnička 2012a, 23). He considers the production and consumption of meat to be a key phenomenon, which has significantly contributed to both the biological and cultural evolution of man. It convincingly proves that the claims about the nature of vegetarianism, with which some biocentric concepts work, contradict the findings of evolutionary anthropology and culturology. He points out the very close connection between human sexuality and meat consumption and, to some extent,

their interdependence, which is most evident in the oldest human communities, but is present, albeit in much more sophisticated forms, in contemporary cultural and social institutes. In addition, in most past and present cultures, the availability and possibility of meat consumption is considered a sign of higher social status, which also affects the choice of a life partner, or rather the possibility of procreation and rearing offspring. For most of human history, vegetarianism has been more a sign of environmental necessity, i.e. lack of meat food, or the impossibility of its production, than the conscious choice of individuals or entire communities. Even in this case, according to I. Dubnička, it is possible to use environmental pragmatism as an argument. From the beginnings of humanity to the present, most people prefer meat or at least do not exclude it from their diet and give it up only if its production or availability is limited. He concludes that “ecological conditions dictate the way of subsistence which subsequently determines spiritual culture,” and extends it with an assumption that “all decisive external determinants and biological laws which influenced the phylogeny of *Homo sapiens* are transformed into spiritual culture, into traditions, customs, and religions” (Dubnička 2012a, 24). I. Dubnička thereby assumes that biological and cultural evolutionism is connected, which allows him to examine meat not only as a form of food, but also as a cultural and social phenomenon.

The consumption of meat has been a privilege of elites for most of human history, which had and still has socio-cultural as well as economic and political causes and consequences. Access to meat is still an indicator not only of social status, but also of quality of life. The rising standard of living in the world’s most populous countries is also reflected in an increase in meat consumption. However, trying to meet this growing demand has serious global environmental and social consequences, as “one hectare of land will feed only one person eating meat, but the same area of land can feed up to 50 people eating plant food” (Dubnička 2012a, 125). The continuing growth of the world’s population and the parallel increase in the consumption demands of the

inhabitants of the world’s most populous countries make the phenomenon of meat consumption a fundamental environmental as well as a philosophical and political issue.<sup>25</sup> Despite this fact, according to Dubnička, vegetarianism cannot be considered as a starting point for finding alternatives to face deepening social inequality, “or for finding alternatives to face the global environmental crisis” (Dubnička 2007b, 190-191), because even in India, which is 80% vegetarian “there is violence, crime, religious or ethnic intolerance, and, which is very important from an environmental point of view, India is one of the countries with the highest population mortality from malnutrition” (Ibid.). A closer look at the quality of life and the state of the environment in India shows that even the prevailing “vegetarianism doesn’t bring about the desired environmental reconciliation” (Dubnička 2007b, 191). The popular search for ethical or even biocentric attitudes and solutions to overcome the global environmental crisis in Eastern religions, or cultures is therefore, according to I. Dubnička, extremely problematic.

In his concept, Ivan Dubnička identifies the causes of the global environmental crisis in the very evolutionary strategy of humanity, i.e. much deeper than conventional environmental thinking is willing to admit. This usually finds them in monotheism, modern rationalism or utilitarianism and subsequent industrialism, and especially in anthropocentrism. But according to I. Dubnička, all these phenomena are only a development or improvement of the basic evolutionary strategy of humanity – to produce and consume overproduction. If the global environmental crisis is a consequence of the evolutionary strategy of humanity, or rather the failure of this strategy due to the overpopulation and effectiveness of technology that mankind has created to fulfill

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<sup>25</sup> Its urgency is exacerbated by the fact that livestock farming is extremely demanding not only on the amount of feed consumed, which could otherwise be used for direct human nutrition, but also on drinking water consumption, and also contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, especially methane, which effects climate many times more than the gases produced by burning fossil fuels.

this strategy, then the global environmental crisis is also a crisis of this strategy, i.e. a crisis of culture, a crisis of humanity as a whole, not just modern, Western or industrial civilization. However, without a proper identification of the real causes of the global environmental crisis, the proposals derived from them to overcome the threats facing humanity as a result of environmental devastation cannot be effective either. Following J. Kučírek, I. Dubnička therefore refuses to see the causes of this crisis only in the anthropocentrism of monotheistic religions or modern secular humanism, as well as biocentric concepts seeking a way out of the crisis in the rejection of anthropocentrism. Dubnička points out not only the internal contradictions of biocentrism, but also suggests the problem of transforming biocentric concepts into economic and political reality. His reflection on the global environmental crisis thus not only has a purely theoretical character, but also has a considerable practical aspect, practically in the sense of Aristotle's understanding of practical philosophy. It is from this point of view that environmental anthropocentrism, as understood by I. Dubnička, can also be considered pragmatic, in terms of seeking not only the causes of the global environmental crisis, but also a thought and argumentation framework to influence real social, political and economic institutions<sup>26</sup> so that their functioning

ceased to jeopardize the preconditions for sustaining human life on Earth.

It is from this point of view that the position of anthropocentrism, or more precisely environmental anthropocentrism, seems to be key. Indeed, if environmental thinking is to have a chance to influence the development of society and, above all, the current economic and political system so that human life is sustainable in the long term, including the system of constitutional democracy

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the fact that Slovak voters are not quite clear where in the classical political dichotomy left – right to place the Greens, or rather environmentalism, to which the majority of Slovak green activists, who after 1989 tended to the political right, made a very significant contribution. Some even to the extreme forms of neoliberalism, or market fundamentalism, which they have become open heralds and apologists (Dubnička 2010, 273), ignoring the fact that “environmentalism has been characterized by criticism of capitalist society since its inception” (Dubnička 2016, 486). Elsewhere, however, Dubnička states that “because environmental attitudes are not state-forming in any political regime, they become a welcome tool for opposition parties and movements, regardless of who is in power” (Dubnička 2012b, 310). This is one of the reasons why several protagonists of the post-November regime were involved in the environmentalist movement during the previous regime, but they quickly forgot about their environmentalist “past” in the new regime. He sees the second reason in the low social level of people mainly from the lower social class, which causes that “all their interest is focused on job opportunities and other existential problems” (Dubnička 2016, 489). The third reason, which I. Dubnička considers anthropological, is, according to him, the tendency of a person to behave like a consumer, which is based on his knowledge that the primary evolutionary human strategy is the production of overproduction and its consumption. Moreover, according to Dubnička, this tendency was given unprecedented space precisely as a result of massive propaganda and at the same time uncritical acceptance of the idea of consumerism after 1989, which was essentially a logical consequence of one of the causes of the collapse of the pre-November regime. I. Dubnička sees this in agreement with J. Keller in the fact that the regime of real socialism failed to meet the consumer expectations of the population (Dubnička 2016, 490-491), which it directly and indirectly evoked. The calls for voluntary consumption restrictions posed by various environmental movements are thus still identified in the current regime as restrictions on freedom of consumption, which is considered to be one of the crimes of the former regime. It turns out that e.g. freedom of movement, i.e. the possibility to travel, regardless of the environmental consequences of mass tourism and the air transport associated with it, is still one of the pillars of the legitimacy of the post-November regime. At the same time, this freedom of movement is understood not as political freedom, but above all as freedom of consumption. Even the fact that the economic transformation has devastated Slovak national economy to such an extent that around 300,000 citizens have had to leave the country due to a lack of jobs is presented as an achievement of a new regime that has brought people the freedom to travel. At the same time, the catastrophic consequences of the fact that so many people of active working age left to work abroad not only for environmental, but also for demographic and subsequently social and political sustainability, or rather basic reproductive ability of Slovak society, are ignored.

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<sup>26</sup> In one of his last texts (Dubnička 2016; the text was published posthumously) I. Dubnička also reflects the factual failure of the ideas and organizations of the Slovak environmental movement, which before 1989 and during the breakthrough events at the end of 1989 was among the most vocal critics of the pre-November regime. This is evidenced not only by the marginal position of the Green Party in the Slovak political system, which in no elections since 1989 alone won enough votes to enter parliament, but also by the de facto collaboration of the Green Party with political forces promoting a neoliberal economic and political system, when the party was in 1994 and 1998 elected to parliament as a joint candidate with right-wing political parties. The reforms, which during this period were approved by the parliament also with the votes of the deputies elected for the Green Party, made it possible to intensify the exploitation of the environment and citizens, thus contributing to the devastation of the living and social environment in the country. The ideologies of growth and consumerism were implemented into Slovak public discourse and state policies, at least with the tacit support of the Green Party. The results of the political activity of Slovak environmentalism are both in clear conflict with the basic premises and goals of environmental ideology, both in the environmental and social field. I. Dubnička sees primarily three causes of this condition. The first is



and civil rights and freedoms, it must remain anthropocentric. Only anthropocentric arguments can reach a sufficient part of the population in the limited time left to humanity before the devastation of the environment and climate change reach a level that will make it impossible for human life to continue on its current scale. Without the democratic consent of at least a part of the human population, the necessary changes to the current social, political and economic institutions will be possible only by suspending democratic principles and rules for the adoption and enforcement of legislation. In short, anthropocentrism has a better chance of reaching enough people than biocentric concepts. If it turns out that even a relatively understandable anthropocentric humanism for a large part of the population is not sufficient for real changes in the redistribution of natural resources, as evidenced by deepening social inequality and persistent hunger in many parts of the world, it can hardly be expected that biocentric arguments<sup>27</sup> succeed in support of substantially more extensive changes to current institutions. If so, certainly not in the limited time humanity still has to make fundamental changes.

For environmentalism to really become the main political movement of the future and replace the ideologies of the 19th century (liberalism, conservatism, socialism), as announced by H. Skolimowski (Skolimowski 2006), or rather so that at least climate change and its impact on human society can mitigate while the democratic framework of the organization of society is still maintained, it will be necessary to obtain the consent of the majority in a relatively short time. If the value reorientation of humanity based on biocentric arguments, the transfor-

mation of traditional anthropocentric morality into biocentric morality, a change in the civilization paradigm, or a change in the mentality of individuals of future generations of mankind had a chance to succeed because of the evolutionary cognitive and psychic equipment of humanity, these changes would take a long time. It would be a process that would literally take generations. However, the speed of climate change, population growth and the devastation of the global ecosphere shows that humanity does not have that much time.

### **Conclusion**

Kučírek's and subsequently Dubnička's critique of biocentrism and Christian environmentalism in many ways anticipated the attitudes and arguments that began to appear in environmental thinking in an effort to philosophically reflect the causes and possible consequences of the anthropocene. The current state of the global environment, devastated by the growing human population and its increasing consumer expectations, practically doesn't allow for another possibility in the relationship between man, or humanity as a whole and the planetary environment, as the relationship of a sensible steward or administrator to the limited and vulnerable resources enabling life (Planetary Stewardship). Thus, in the interests of self-preservation alone, mankind must begin to view the environment and the resources that this environment provides to man as something so rare and limited that it must be not only managed, but also handled very sensibly in any other way. The question is how to formulate arguments in favor of such an attitude so that it is truly universally, i.e. across the social, national, and religious lines dividing contemporary humanity, acceptable. However, it is possible to agree with Dubnička that remaining in religious positions (conceptually, argumentatively and terminologically), which arose in a completely different cultural, knowledge and climatic environment than the current humanity is exposed to, does not provide the arguments needed for the necessary global consensus.

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<sup>27</sup> From this perspective, biocentrism appears as a relatively elitist concept, able to address only a very small circle of highly educated and at the same time relatively well-situated individuals. A person struggling for survival – enough water and food for every day – cannot afford a biocentric attitude – they see everything in their surroundings only as a potential source of food or heat or as a building material. The key to tackling the global environmental crisis will be how humanity manages to deal with the social crisis – deepening social inequality and the growing number of people worldwide who do not have access to the basic resources of life – water, food or shelter. Of course, this also means the need to address the problem of global human growth.



As the current and critical environmentalism also appears in connection with how intensive natural scientists involved in the refinement of the anthropocene concept point out that the cause and thus the potential possible solution to the global devastation of the environment is in the field of economic-political and socio-political relations, which is one of the central theses of critical environmentalism. J. Kučírek outlined it already in the 1990s, i.e. at a time when the current extent of climate change, extinction of plant and animal species, deforestation and many other negative phenomena could still be prevented. However, even in our public discourse, the ideas of industrialism, consumerism and the need for continuous economic growth prevailed, which are incompatible with the need for social and environmental sustainability. In accordance with Dubnička's environmental pragmatism, the priorities of the economic and political system of global industrial civilization should be adapted to changing climatic, biological and social conditions so that humanity does not exceed the limits of the planetary ecosystem, as it has been doing for decades. Tribes and local civilizations that did the same in the past, mostly devastated their environment to such an extent that they eventually disappeared. There is no reason to believe that the same fate will not await global industrial civilization if it does not radically and quickly reconsider its basic imperatives.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the Slovak critical environmentalism is characterized primarily by an anthropocentric basis, or the position of environmental anthropocentrism and environmental pragmatism, critique of the principle of biocentric egalitarianism and emphasis on democratic and human rights aspects, or rather on the consequences of environmental devastation, as well as the social and political causes of these phenomena. At the same time, the basis is the fact of the existential dependence of any social, economic, and political system on the environmental conditions available in a particular region in a particular historical period. In their work, they were sketched by J. Kučírek and I. Dubnička. However, they are also further developed by D. Špirko (See for example

Špirko 2011 a 2013) and also (Šťáhel 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2020 a Suša – Šťáhel 2016).

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