

## Foreword

### Ecopedagogical Thought in Poland<sup>1</sup>

The current issue of the “*Studia Ecologiae et Bioethicae*” journal provides an overview of problems addressed by contemporary researchers of Polish ecopedagogical thought. We will notice not only sensitivity towards environmental issues and instances of care for nature, but also the awareness of many constraints, both cultural and systemic, that characterized Poland in the 20th century and which greatly limited possibilities to implement the idea of sustainable development in local education. At the same time, we can see the development of a community of Polish researchers who demonstrate a deeper awareness of the necessity to implement changes in the entire education system.

We start with gardens as places endowed with the potential for revealing the identity of a person remaining in a deeper relationship with the earth, plants, insects, and birds. Thus, a person taking advantage of garden’s properties, becomes a fully conscious gardener – a concerned host of the place. In this context, there appear categories of person’s dynamism typical of Polish philosophical thought, analyzed from an ontological and axiological perspective. This analysis seems necessary in the process of restoring the tradition of school gardening as a form

of preparing Polish children and youth for active care of their immediate surroundings.

The forest is another “pedagogical medium” approached by researchers. An interesting parallel is drawn here between the dominant form of afforestation in Poland, namely, “pine monoculture”, cultivated for economic purposes, and the phenomenon known as “educational monoculture”. We will recognize them in Polish kindergartens, schools (universities by default) and public playgrounds. Researchers discuss here the resulting habits and mental barriers among teachers and candidates for this profession, which hinder the implementation of the idea of sustainable and diversified development, set outside the currently dominant paradigm. Anthropomorphizations of nature, typical of Polish students of pedagogical faculties, appear as a manifestation of the limited ability to perceive and experience this nature more deeply.

In contrast to the numerous reported problems occurring in the country on the Vistula River, we learn about the mature ecological thought of the Scandinavian countries, rooted in four local philosophies (Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish). Here we are reminded of the pre-war pedagogical thought, initiated at the time of Poland regaining its independence (1918-1939) later

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<sup>1</sup> The question “Polish Ecopedagogical Thought – Does it Exist?” served as the keynote of the 2nd International Scientific Conference, organized at the forest kindergarten in Lubniany near Opole. The conference arose from the grassroots initiative of Katarzyna Sowa, the founder of “Bajkowy Las” and the initiator of involving increasingly wider circles of scientists: educators, psychologists, foresters, zoologists, and therapists from Poland and abroad, emphasizing the importance of pre-school education in the process of ecological transformation.

interrupted by the processes of subsequent Sovietization and Westernization. However, we learn that local philosophies (foreign and native) can still be a vital source for the contemporary transformation of ecological thinking and acting in Poland.

Finally, we return to the forest as a therapeutic medium in the face of the consequences of COVID 19, pointing to the properties of the forest ecosystem as an environment for the revitalization of the human condition affected by the pandemic.

The content presented in this issue of the journal constitutes only a sample of eco-pedagogical sensitivity, but it indicates the fact that Polish teachers and educators – so far absent from the ecological discourse – are now getting into the game more boldly. Our readers thus gain an insight into new research areas and the prospect of further research and applications of ecology in education.

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