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The Benefit of Biodiversity – Polemic View of Environmental, Social and Ethical Aspects of Czech Philosophers and Environmentalists

Korzyści płynące z bioróżnorodności – polemiczne spojrzenie na środowiskowe, społeczne i etyczne aspekty myśli czeskich filozofów i ekologów

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Abstract: This text will deal with the issue of the benefit of biodiversity in the polemic context of the works of Czech and Central European philosophers and environmentalists with the essential ideas of selected world thinkers and with environmental practice in Central Europe. To validate this thesis, the authors of this work chose an essay dealing with professional monographs and professional articles on this topic, focusing on the continuity of ideas of the authors of the Central European region. For the comparison, forestry was used as an exemplary major field. Based on the article, the premise can be accepted that the benefit of biodiversity appears as a basic assumption, thesis, or paradigm. We need a new definition of life that is not limited to carbon-based organisms. Humankind does not live in harmony with nature but uses its culture to deplete natural resources in the false belief that man is no longer a part of nature. Environmentalists and philosophers agree on the need for a turnaround to save the environment, maintaining, biodiversity, and life on Earth. But the predatory paradigm of culture may appear to be a temporary condition and perhaps even necessary to cope with that turn. The effort to preserve biodiversity is related to the effort to preserve the life of the human species. Popularization, or environmental education, leading to biodiversity preservation and development and sustainability of life on Earth should coincide from above and below. Therefore, it could be stated that biodiversity (not only the macroscopic one) is beneficial to sustain life as we know it now.

Keywords: biodiversity, environmental ethics, ecological crisis, environmental education, forestry, predatory culture paradigm, sustainability of life

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje problematykę korzyści płynących z bioróżnorodności w kontekście polemiki zawartej w myśli czeskich i środkowoeuropejskich filozofów i ekologów z kluczowymi ideami wybranych myślicieli światowych oraz z praktyką ekologiczną w Europie Środkowej. Na potwierdzenie postawionej tezy, autorzy niniejszej pracy wybrali jako formę esej poświęcony monografiom i artykułom na ten temat, skupiając się na zbieżności idei autorów regionu środkowoeuropejskiego. Na potrzeby porównania jako przykładową dziedzinę główną przyjęto leśnictwo. Na podstawie artykułu można przyjąć przesłankę, że korzyści płynące z bioróżnorodności są przedstawiane jako podstawowe założenie, teza czy paradygmat. Wydaje się, że potrzebna jest tutaj nowa definicja życia, która nie ogranicza się do organizmów opartych na węglu. Ludzkość nie żyje w harmonii z naturą, lecz wykorzystuje swoją kulturę do wyczerpywania zasobów

naturalnych w fałszywym przekonaniu, że człowiek nie jest już częścią natury. Ekolodzy i filozofowie zgadzają się co do potrzeby dokonania przewrotu, który pomógłby uratować środowisko, zachować bioróżnorodność i życie na Ziemi. Jednak drapieżny paradygmat kultury może wydawać się stanem przejściowym i być może nawet niezbędnym w procesie radzenia sobie z takim zwrotem. Wysiłek na rzecz zachowania bioróżnorodności jest powiązany z wysiłkiem na rzecz zachowania życia gatunku ludzkiego. Popularyzacja, czyli edukacja środowiskowa, prowadząca do zachowania bioróżnorodności oraz działania na rzecz rozwoju, czy te ukierunkowane na zachowania życia na Ziemi powinny być ze sobą zbieżne. Można zatem stwierdzić, że bioróżnorodność (nie tylko makroskopowa) sprzyja podtrzymaniu życia, jakie jest nam znane obecnie.

Słowa kluczowe: bioróżnorodność, etyka środowiskowa, kryzys ekologiczny, edukacja środowiskowa, leśnictwo, paradygmat kultury drapieżnej, zrównoważone życie

Introduction

This text will deal with the issue of the benefit of biodiversity in the polemic context of the works of Czech and Central European philosophers and environmentalists with the essential ideas of selected world thinkers and with environmental practice in Central Europe. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, biodiversity is defined as "The diversity of life in all its forms, levels and combinations. It includes the diversity of ecosystems, species, and genes." It is not just the sum of all genes, species, and ecosystems but the variability within and among them, according to the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic. Therefore, in this concept, biodiversity is considered a property of life.

In general, we start from the assumption, thesis, or paradigm that biodiversity is beneficial. However, is that the case? This thesis is generally accepted and considered valid by the current public, politicians, and experts. The usefulness of biodiversity and the need to preserve or restore it (and in that case of which organisms?) is considered one of the most essential bioethical topics (Selinske et al. 2022).

To demonstrate this thesis, we have studied relevant literature. After conducting a thorough and systematic search of the relevant literature, which consisted only of sources from official scientific databases, namely Web of Science, Scopus and Open Access, we conducted a study of selection and comparison of selected sources that supported the research objective and the chosen hypothesis. In the quoted and used sources, professional scientific monographs and contemporary scientific articles are proportionally represented.

Loss of biodiversity, damage to ecosystems, and subsequent changes in ecosystem services lead to deterioration of people's living conditions (Miko and Zaunbergerová 2009).

Biodiversity usually means *biological diversity*. The term *biological diversity* was first used by J. Arthur Harris in 1916: "The bare statement that the region contains a flora rich in genera and species and of diverse geographic origin or affinity is entirely inadequate as a description of its real biological diversity" (Harris 1916).

"Biological diversity means the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems." This is established *Convention on Biological Diversity*, (first adopted 22 May 1992, in Rio de Janeiro).

Biodiversity is divided in different ways, e.g. genetic biodiversity, taxonomic, cultural, ecosystem, etc. However, this is not essential for the purposes of this work. Brief definition biodiversity is: "The totality of genes, species and ecosystems of a region" (Tor-Björn Larsson 2001). For the purposes of this article, the term biodiversity is used to mean diversity of life (as the composition

of words *βίος*, *Bios*, *Life* + Diversity), not just as biological diversity.

Nevertheless, the current public and popular scientific or ecological movements of biodiversity and the fight for it somewhat limit preservation to visible, macroscopic, or higher organisms and their decline (Votýpka et al. 2019), i.e., regardless of the context and complexity of all biodiversity. It is more accessible and interesting for the public to talk about – or protect – organisms we see and know well. Moreover, man has contributed to reducing and increasing biodiversity by transporting species or breeding and using them.

At first glance, the question of the usefulness of biodiversity may seem quite clear, but given its comprehensiveness, a completely different, new point of view is necessary. For this purpose, selected sources of Czech and Central European philosophers and environmentalists, especially the work of Professor Josef Šmajs, will serve us well. His concept describing actual ecology (applicable in practice) could also be called biophilic philosophy, which we describe in detail elsewhere (Lípa et al. 2022).

The contribution of the work is a new, more optimistic point of view on the selected topic in the context of historical development. With the chosen method of searching for answers, both new questions are posed in a new way, and proposed solutions arise in the course of the text.

The authors draw on the Czech philosophers to illustrate the current situation. However, for the first time, they show a more promising future and possible solutions that we already know from history using model situations. For the comparison, forestry was used as an exemplary major field.

1. Methodology

This article presents the authors' authentic view of the issue. This work examines the question of the benefit of biodiversity from the point of view of the article's authors. It seeks an answer to it in the context and polemics of the works of Czech and Central European philosophers and environmentalists (like Keller, Kohák, Librová, Moldan, Šmajs, Vavroušek or Austrian biologist Lorenz, German forester Hartig, etc.) with the essential ideas of selected world thinkers (for example Gore, Jonas, Leopold, Lovelock, Naess, Teilhard de Chardin, Wilson, etc.) and with environmental practice in Central Europe. According to the authors, it represents the essential ideas of the current Czech philosophical scene in the field of ethical values of biodiversity.

Due to the form and thematic focus of this work, which could be classified as Environmental Philosophy and is focused specifically on polemics with the ideas of environmental philosophers from the region of Bohemia and philosophers from whom these thinkers continuously drew, the authors chose the form of an essay. This article compares significant findings of Czech and selected Central European environmental philosophers and experts who influenced the Central European environment with world thinkers and their works. It points out the connections in the practice of environmentalists, foresters, biologists, and other past experts with the possibilities of solving the current and future problems of decreasing biodiversity and replacing it with new species and technical diversity.

An essay is a medium or shorter-length literary professional journalistic genre, a reflection on a particular topic, consisting of thinking about facts and their evaluation. The essay's author assesses the problem in a wider context, comments on current and new solutions, often asks questions and looks for answers to them together with the reader.

The article is written mainly in the reflective method with the support of the descriptive method. This framework is clearly logical for a publication of this kind because philosophy as such is characterized by continuity of ideas (Kleingeld 2023). While philosophy seeks to understand human nature, science tries to determine reality by applying empirical data. Philosophers often focus

on questions concerning how theories work and whether they can be reduced to another (Baxter 2024).

The search for relevant professional literature, its selection, study and logical continuous application of basic ideas was used as the basic research method. This is not an attempt at a complete enumeration of the literature but an authentic overview, a new perspective on the given issue, and historical development. For the comparison, forestry was used as an exemplary major field. Forestry, its status, and development in Europe combine science, philosophy, and practice.

Using the comparative method, it compares essential ideas regarding the ethical issues of biodiversity. With the help of the methods of analogy and substitution, the work looks for and also finds new, innovative solutions in practice verified in other scientific fields. However, it also offers help and philosophical solutions based on the ideas of old philosophers and philosophical trends.

2. Default Assumptions

2.1. Definition of Life

The definition of life, as presented by current theories, is de facto limited to carbon-based organisms, even though findings from submarine and volcanic eruptions suggest that it may be otherwise (Schoenmakers 2023). Changing life's definition would be more appropriate rather than expanding it. This is encouraged by another fact: namely, that organisms living on the surface and below the surface within reach of solar radiation use the so-called optical window in the atmosphere and are dependent on that part of the spectrum (visible with UV edges and partial overlap into IR) that the atmosphere transmits Earth – about 100 nm + 1 micro m or 100 micro m for a partial IR window (Lyu et al. 2018).

However, the Earth's atmosphere has another window, which is even much more extensive. The only species known today that partially uses it is man, but only in the field of radio astronomy and astronautics for observing radio sources and communicating with astronauts in orbit and with probes throughout the solar system. It is the so-called radio window, approximately from 1 cm to 10 m wavelength (Scholten et al. 2006). However, is man really the only creature that uses the radio window? Resp. why do no other organisms also use it? It is much bigger. Or are they using it, and we do not know it, or we do not know them?

2.2. State of the Environment

The current state of the environment is referred to as an ecological crisis (Gore 1994, 14; Keller 1993, 128). On the other hand, this condition has become the basis for an ideology that ignores many facts and selects only some. The planet is warming, and the glaciers are shrinking, but Greenland was only glaciated in the 15th century during one of the so-called Little Ice Ages, and until then, it was green (hence the name). It was inhabited and farmed by the Vikings for several centuries. Planet Earth is viscous (Čadek 1997) and is affected by the gravity of the Sun, planets, and other solar system bodies. Earth moves through space and moves closer and further away from other bodies, which can cause tidal phenomena, earthquakes, and volcanic activity (Métivier et al. 2009), contributing significantly to warming (Zhao et al. 2021).

Man is not the only person responsible for losing biodiversity, which has occurred in waves throughout history, making room for new life forms, although many ecologists suggest this. The so-called force majeure, as defined by lawyers, also comes into play. A person is either not able to control or even notice this. Nevertheless, man certainly has his share in the current wave of extinction. For him, biodiversity is another natural resource, the consumption of which leads to the development of humanity.

If we egocentrically claim that humanity is the only or the leading polluter of the planet, in the future, AI may judge man as

a scoundrel and destroy humanity. Ecophilosopher Šmajs criticizes the state of contemporary society in his work. He points to the current societal, cultural, and political influences and trends. He does not use the term "civilization," which is vague and imprecise, but "culture," i.e., in the historical sense. With his development, man deviates from nature and the natural way of life in harmony with it.

"A culture of needs is emerging, which is largely created and imposed on people by the development of science, technology, and production" (Šmajs 2011, 71). Gradually, with the development of culture and society based on the use of natural resources and the depletion of the planet, the natural diversity of biological life disappears and is replaced mainly by technical diversity.

2.3. The Predatory Paradigm of Culture

One of the new terms introduced and used by Šmajs is the predatory paradigm of culture, the complex systemic form of which is contemporary globalized culture. It is the fact that man does not live in harmony with nature but uses his culture to deplete natural resources in the false belief that man is no longer a part of nature (Šmajs 2011, 71). In this context, natural values are replaced by cultural values.

Šmajs disagrees with current theories about growth indicators, denies the importance and role of the economy, which he sees as one of the causes of the crisis, and proposes to solve the problem by starting to pay nature for resources. He disagrees with the statement that we live on debt but claims we are preparing certain existential problems for our descendants (Šmajs 2011, 83).

Environmental philosopher Kohák says that injustice is at the root of the problem. The ability of over-consuming countries and classes to ruthlessly and unlimitedly exploit the vast majority of humanity leads to senseless overconsumption, the primary source of ecological danger. The desperate spiritual and material impoverishment of the rest of the world drives the second ecological threat, the population explosion. It seems likely to him that global justice could be the key to reducing both overconsumption and overpopulation (Kohák 2000, 160).

Šmajs shows the way "to a new biophilic paradigm, i.e., to the systemic subordination of Earth culture" (Šmajs 2011, 19). Šmajs comes significantly closer to Lovelock's interpretation of the Earth according to the Gaia Theory.

2.4. Labor as a Factor of Production and the Subjectivity of the Earth

Human activity undoubtedly contributes to the ecological crisis (Meadows et al. 1972; Wilson 1995, 92, 357; Jaskólski 2021). A very striking cause that emerged during the development of society is the role of labor as a factor of production. At this point, Šmajs denies labor the added value given to it by, e.g., Marx (1953, 184) and others. Šmajs repeats the equation about energy conservation, with the help of which he explains or hints at the error of exaggerating the importance of labor on the one hand and transformed matter on the other. However, natural resources have value in themselves and not through their processing. Intellectual work also has its role, and a rather significant one – that is, not physical work, but mental work, according to whose program nature is transformed. "If it is left only in the power of market regulation, it will continue to kill living nature unnoticed and will not stop deforming human nature," says Šmajs (2011, 105).

He concludes that the reason for this misunderstanding is the denial of the subjectivity of the Earth or nature as such. Man is traditionally considered the owner of the Earth, although he was far from the first to inhabit and use it, and he does not have a majority population on its surface. Microorganisms have this, so from this point of view, the Earth would belong to them (Lípa et al. 2022).

While any legal entity company has subjectivity for us, we are unwilling to admit

it for Earth. After all, Bolivia, Ecuador, and today, some other states have already recognized the subjectivity of the Earth, if not in general, then at least to a certain extent (Prouza 2013).

2.5. The Need for Turnover

Environmentalists and philosophers agree on the necessity of a turnaround that would save the environment, maintain biodiversity, life on Earth, etc. Sir Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) and Jacques Ellul (1912–1994) are considered to be the authors of the main idea of ecologists (but and economists): Think globally, act locally (Geddes 915, 97; Ellul 2006). It reveals much more to us than it would seem at first glance. We start with ourselves, but we do not deny or force others. The pinnacle of this concept is Engaged Buddhism (Hanh 2017) or Deep ecology by Arne Naess (1973).

The identification of the self and nature can also be found, for example, in the philosophy of Hans Jonas (2010, 4). So, we start from a subjective understanding of the world but do not deny the objective one. Moreover, this point of view is purely ethical because we contribute by our example and do not force anyone, let alone do the opposite, i.e., demand something from others and only conduct ourselves and do nothing for it. This in itself is a turn that both environmental metalism and environmentalism accept. Keller points out that "it is up to everyone to decide how specifically they want to contribute to averting the threats that development has prepared for us" (Keller 1995, 158).

Vavroušek (1994, 81) states: "Within formal organizations and informal movements focused on the protection of nature and the human environment, there are groups that are part of the 'islands of positive deviance,' differing in their ideals, activity, and purposefulness from the mass of the population focused – also under by the pressure of circumstances – mainly on consumerism, passivity, mediocrity, and internal emigration. Furthermore, precisely these 'islands' could become a base not only for improving the quality of the environment but for solving other moral, social, economic, political and other fundamental problems facing our society."

Librová de facto documents this development in her work: in the book Colorful and Green, she talks about the voluntary modesty of the colorful and the ecological activism of the green (Librová 1994). In the book Weak and Hesitant: Chapters on Ecological Luxury, she describes the actions of ecologically active and inspiring elites (Librová 2003). She then skeptically notes the cooling of interest in ecology in the book Faithful and Reasonable: Chapters on Ecological Delay (Librová et al. 2017). In her books, he demonstrates the development of voluntarism from its inception to its decline, but also that voluntarism alone is not enough. Šmajs's approach it similarly with the necessity of approaching from above and below. However, the question arises as to whether and to what extent a turnaround is currently necessary.

3. Old-New Options

3.1. Food Chain

Life on planet Earth, as we define it today (Trifonov 2012), regardless of the number of characters, i.e., whether 5, 6, 7 (Koshland 2022) or more, is characterized in its complex by a food chain (Elton 1927; Egerton 2007), respectively pyramid, as part of metabolism, at least in higher organisms. Moreover, this is on the assumption that the basic unit of all living systems is the cell. However: *Life is a process, not a substance!* (Mautner 2000). No organism, population, or species on planet Earth originated and does not exist by itself. It is only part of the biosphere system (Lovelock 2012, 200). It always has some relation to another. It is always dependent on another, others, or the environment they create. This de facto refutes the fallacy of neutralism. Other interspecific and intraspecific relationships are proto-cooperation, commensalism,

mutualism, amensalism, competition, predation, and parasitism (Andreska and Hanel 2009, 203–211).

Man is currently (apparently) at the top of the food chain. However, man uses and transforms his surroundings more than other organisms. We can introduce an analogy of a food chain – a chain of consumption or a consumption chain, which would otherwise be extended for each organism. For a human, it would be the longest in the linear representation and the tallest with the broadest base in the pyramid representation.

We can start from the premise that every living creature seeks happiness, whether it brings satiation, reproduction, or so-called higher, more permanent, or spiritual happiness up to eudaimonia (Mlčoch et al. 2022, 37) or the nirvana of the East. In that case, however, the question is whether one should accept that organisms eat each other and use their surroundings, including man himself, and begin to consider this nature normal and in order in the Stoic sense.

3.2. Gaia Theory

The Gaia theory is a view of the Earth presented in the 1980s. It sees it as a self-regulating system comprising a collection of organisms, surface rocks, ocean, and atmosphere, which are tightly connected in an evolving system. According to the theory, this system has a goal – to regulate the conditions on the surface so that they are still as favorable as possible for the present organisms. The theory is based on observations and theoretical models and achieves clear results – it produced eight successful predictions (Lovelock 2012, 200). However, many authors do not agree with Lovelock.

Theoretically, it would be sufficient to more consistently conceive the whole Earth as a living organism in the sense of Lovelock's Gaia (Lovelock 2001, 153) or the female deity of ancient civilizations and treat her accordingly. Only the biosphere as a whole, Gaia, is the smallest relatively autonomous system capable of long-term upward evolution in time. All its subsystems, individuals, populations, biocenoses, and culture are temporary and independent, dependent on the prosperity of the biotic whole (Šmajs et al. 2012, 179–181).

After all, the human organism also functions in the same way – individual cells exist by themselves, cooperate or precede others, and have no idea about the overall structure and mental capabilities of the whole. In an imbalance, harmony is then induced through the immune system. Let us apply this analogy to the whole planet: If, however, the planet is alive as a whole (in the sense of the Gaia Theory), as an organism, and the human species is only a parasite on its surface, the planet will deal with it by itself. If man is what he tells himself to be – the highest creature, the pinnacle of development, and development was supposed to be towards him (Teilhard de Chardin 1990, 229; Lorenz 1997, 186) – then everything is fine and the only correct state is the current one, because everything changes, everything develops and even the current state will not be permanent (Prigogine and Stengersm 1984, 2, 214).

Let us remind you that Lovelock is based on astronomy and astronautics, but religions at all times she considered the earth to be alive, worthy of adoration, or even a goddess, Mother Earth... In this way, we are not de facto creating anything new but returning to old, pre-Christian roots and wisdom. These are generally presented to us today as more primitive, but now we can see their effectiveness and timeless wisdom.

3.3. Model Case: Principles of Sustainable Development

For an example of the successful implementation of change and its principles into national and international policies, it is possible to reach into history. These principles were named the Principles of Sustainable Development. Moldan (1997, 11) discusses the Three Pillars of Sustainability: Economy, Society, and Environment. This indicates that the principles of sustainable

development are based on economics, specifically neoclassical, and lead to environmental and ecological economics. Although it may seem like an utterly revolutionary step at the time, which their creation and general support and acceptance was, they were based on older and time-tested practices. The principles of sustainable development were based on the principles of permanence and sustainability of forest management by the German forester Georg Ludwig Hartig (1764–1837) and are 200 years old (Pulkrab 1993, 29–31). On the one hand, it contains the most peculiarities compared to the classical economy. On the other hand, thanks to these peculiarities (such as long-termism, seasonality, etc.), it is much closer to what will subsequently be called the economy close to nature, which, after all, also began to develop first in forestry. Then, it was also taken over by other disciplines.

Europe was almost deforested in Hartig's time. Thanks to modern forestry and Hartig's principles of sustainable development, Europe today has over 35% forested land, and annual logging is lower than growth, so the area of forests continues to increase. The application of the principles of sustainable development derived from forestry has helped in the past to restore devastated forests, just as it is now helping to protect the environment. Forestry is thus one field that has both theoretical and practical methods and mechanisms that help, among other things, preserve biodiversity.

Today, virgin forests are being cut down, and entire ecosystems are being destroyed. The so-called developed world appeals to the ethical side of developing countries and states. However, the developed world cut down the forests and extracted fossil fuel reserves to a large extent to benefit its economic development, well-being, etc. So, is this an ethical position? After all, developing countries want and are certainly entitled to the same.

Moreover, we prefer everything that is nature-friendly and ecological, which is quite expensive. However, we have reached a state where we can pay for ecology with a certain degree of exaggeration (Klaus and Šneková 1991, 76–77) quote. Countries that devastate natural resources want to get there, too. Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919) called ecology the economy of nature. Forestry provides us with further guidance in this regard – just as the principles of sustainable development arose from the felling of primeval forests for the industrial revolution and the subsequent necessary education of forests, its protection and ethical treatment can arise from the use (or rather consumption) of biodiversity. Planet Earth can become its own zoological and botanical garden.

Therefore, we have a new perspective – the predatory paradigm of culture may appear as a temporary condition necessary to cope with that turn. In other words, commands and prohibitions on the edge of ethics will not lead the way. However, Šmajs and Krob (2003, 238) also offer one of the possible paths: "The new biophilic policy needs broad public support. So, part of the available cultural information that can induce the relevant sociocultural change must satisfy two different requirements simultaneously:

1. At a generally acceptable level, it must affect the general public, a specific person.
2. At a high professional level, they must reach the sphere of power — national, regional, and global politics" (Šmajs and Krob 2003, 238).

Therefore, there should be a connection between trends from above and below, as Aldo Leopold (1999, 237–238) already pointed out. Vavroušek proposed Ten principles of a sustainable way of life (Huba 2005, 31). Šmajs, as part of his proposed necessity of a change of direction towards a biophilic ethical culture, together with and in accordance with the recognition of the subjectivity of the Earth, translates the 11 points of the Thesis of the Evolutionary Ontological Minimum for teaching in schools, but also proposes to conclude a seven-point Lease Agreement with the Earth (Šmajs 2008,

409). Later, he presents the Declaration of Dependence (Šmajs et al. 2012, 179–181), a text with 11 points, which again defines the relationship of man to nature in the form in which it should be every person internally identify with. He then presented the Constitution of the Earth (Šmajs 2023).

3.4. We Need a New Definition of Life

The current definitions of life, as seen from above, need to be revised. We need a new definition of life. Astrobiologists Sara Imari Walker and chemist Lee Cronin developed a new concept (Marshall et al. 2021) that calculates that the smallest number of steps needed to assemble any living compound from the building blocks is 15. While some compounds from living systems needed less than 15 steps, no inorganic compound exceeded this limit. Additionally, their hypothesis relies on something other than identifying carbon-based organic materials (Nelson 2023). Nevertheless, more is needed.

However, it is enough to look at the matter from a different point of view. Šmajs essentially calculates and defines three levels of cognition under current scientific findings, such as reading information or decoding (Šmajs 2003, 116).

Of course, this could be the moment we need and would show life even where we cannot see it now and perhaps subsequently explain the problem of that radio window in our atmosphere. Alternatively, on the contrary, he would confirm the possibility of an error in the search for extraterrestrial life using radio astronomy.

"All living systems recognize" (Šmajs 2003, 106). So, they interact somehow with their environment, or at least react to it. This gives us a new, surprisingly brief but precise definition. Previous definitions were based on the assumption that life would be recognizable to us based on them. By this definition, it will not be necessary.

However, we could accept this fact here. We may learn to look at the world outside and inside differently and get to know other cognitive living systems not yet known. Biodiversity will thereby (with our knowledge) expand itself. It would be appropriate to grant subjectivity to the Earth on this basis.

3.5. Negative of Biodiversity

The man has contributed to reducing and increasing biodiversity by transporting species or breeding and using them. However, not all biodiversity and its increase can be beneficial. In most cases, new viruses and bacteria harm humans, so working with them is mainly controversial. Viral, bacterial, and fungal diseases and parasites do not benefit humans.

Invasive or introduced non-native species have not a natural reduction system, as we have evidenced, for example, from forestry. Introduced diversity or parts of it may threaten existing diversity. Fear of them can be justified in many cases. Monoculture vegetation shows reduced species diversity, reduced stability and vitality, and is more susceptible to diseases, pests, and weather effects.

Invasive species have a similar effect on native ecosystems. As an example, we can again cite experiences from forestry. *Pinus strobus* prefers permeable sandy soils with a medium to low degree of fertility, where it has no competition but can grow on practically all types of soil. It tolerates sun and partial shade. It does not freeze, and it is very adaptable to climatic conditions. *Pinus strobus* infested the protected areas of Labské pískovce (Elbe Sandstone) and Českosaské Švýcarsko (Czech-Saxon Switzerland) and displaced the original species (Plantarius 2024). It created a new ecosystem. The man had to intervene and cut down the *Pinus strobus*.

Invasive species are non-native species that have colonised a new area to the point of damaging the surrounding environment and are seen as one of the top five major threats to our ecosystem today… Invasive species are capable of causing extinctions of native plants and animals, reducing biodiversity, competing with native organisms

for limited resources, and altering habitats. However, non-indigenous species also need to be appreciated for their potential benefits and not just the negative impacts they can cause. They can replace lost ecological functions (Hall-Spencer 2024).

This points to the ambiguity of benefit and non-benefit non-native species. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that everything changes over time, everything evolves (Prigogine and Stengersm 1984, 2, 214), and man evolves, among other things, thanks to pathogens (Lodinová-Zádníková et al. 2002).

3.6. More or Less

The last consideration we mention in this article follows from its entire content. Humankind deals with the issue of maintaining the diversity of life, although it cannot be sure that it can know the entire volume of its planet. Its part is considered advanced and presents the devastation of nature and natural resources primarily by developing economies as an ethical problem without offering them an alternative. One can even say: A part of the human population devastates nature, and the majority of the human population benefits from it. On the other hand, a more minor part of the human population criticizes this devastation, but it is the part that has already devastated nature and benefited from it. We could evaluate both as morally perverted behavior.

The ecological crisis is an indisputable fact and an axiom for this work. Then, there is the question of whether we look at the matter correctly. Are we not trying to delay the inevitable? Instead of understanding and accepting change as an eternal law of life and nature, a natural law, we try with all our might to maintain the status quo and impose our way of living and thinking on everyone else. As we can see in the example of the creation and use of principles of sustainable development based on the lack of forests or a new way of thinking about Šmajs's predatory paradigm of culture, humanity still cannot determine the line between good and evil.

Several new questions emerge from our concept, primarily: more or less? That is the level and intensity of ecological activities to date. Or could it be the other way around? We can say that biodiversity is beneficial for sustaining life as we know it. However, the question also arises here whether preserving the diversity of life can be evaluated ethically at our stage of development. Although some success is achieved, as we can see in the example of the Czech philosophers, both ways can be considered immoral and unethical. It will be necessary to go in a different direction. It will be necessary to revise the definition of life because: *Life is a process, not a substance!* (Mautner 2000), and look for life and living conditions otherwise and elsewhere, especially outside Earth, not only in the clouds... We can say where no one has gone before... However, this must be done by more than one state, nation, or economy. For this, all of humankind needs to come together. Nevertheless, this article raises the question of whether humankind is ready for it, i.e., whether it is already sufficiently threatened.

Conclusion

The contribution of the work is a new, more optimistic point of view on the selected topic in the context of historical development. This work examines the question of the benefit of biodiversity. It seeks an answer to it in the polemic context of the works of Czech and Central European philosophers and environmentalists (like Keller, Kohák, Librová, Moldan, Šmajs, Vavroušek or Austrian biologist Lorenz, German forester Hartig, etc.) with the essential ideas of selected world thinkers (for example Gore, Jonas, Leopold, Lovelock, Naess, Teilhard de Chardin, Wilson, etc.) and with environmental practice in Central Europe.

If we talk about preserving biodiversity, we must define it by the moment in which it is to be preserved. However, life is change, says folk wisdom. "Nothing is permanent,

only change," says Heraclitus (2023). Everything changes in time, arises, develops, and disappears (Prigogine and Stengersm 1984, 2, 214). Nothing is permanent or eternal. Everything is compound and dependent. Everything compound is subject to dissolution – sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā (M. 35; Dhp. 277), as the Buddha said in his last words.

A part of the human population devastates nature, and the majority of the human population benefits from it. On the other hand, a more minor part of the human population criticizes this devastation, but it is the part that has already devastated nature and benefited from it. We could evaluate both as morally perverted behavior.

For humankind, biodiversity is another natural resource, the consumption of which leads to the development of humanity. Czech philosopher Šmajs introduces the term predatory culture paradigm (Šmajs 2011, 71). It is the fact that man does not live in harmony with nature but uses his culture to deplete natural resources in the false belief that man is no longer a part of nature. Environmentalists and philosophers agree on the need for a turnaround to save the environment, maintaining, biodiversity, and life on Earth. But we have a new perspective – The predatory paradigm of culture may appear to be a temporary condition and perhaps even necessary to cope with that turn, as we can see in the example of Central European forestry.

We already have the option to change. It is just that everyone has to start with themselves, and they have to come to that on their own. Man clings to the status quo and naturally insists on the status quo because every change hurts. Every change leads to the worse, which, of course, not only for man but for every living creature, enables development by having to adapt (Prigogine and Stengersm 1984, 2, 214). A person needs constant search (also for other life here and outside the Earth) for his spiritual or mental development and development. If it leads to survival, it can be recognized as beneficial. Šmajs talks about the philosophy of survival.

We should find a new definition of life. This could be based, for example, on the argumentation of Šmajs (Šmajs 2003, 106): "All living systems recognize." It would be appropriate to grant subjectivity to the Earth.

Human activity undeniably influences biodiversity, not only in one direction. Human activity eliminates as well as cultivates species. A man copes with new pathogens caused by living organisms (which will undoubtedly increase with the discovery of extraterrestrial life), leading to further development. One must avoid getting stuck in a single point, moment, or state of development. Time moves on, and the world changes regardless of whether the human race likes it. One cannot change that, so it is necessary to accept it and evaluate that it is in order (in the sense of Stoicism) or that it is under the natural law (*lex naturalis*) of Thomas Aquinas. The effort to preserve biodiversity is related to the effort to preserve the life of the human species.

For the comparison, forestry was used as an exemplary major field, from whose research and 200 years of proven methods other significant fields, including environmental philosophy, are based. The application of the principles of sustainable development derived from forestry has helped in the past to restore devastated forests, just as it is now helping to protect the environment. Forestry is thus one field that has both theoretical and practical methods and mechanisms that help, among other things, preserve biodiversity.

Humanity has learned from forestry, its development, and its methods in the past, and we propose to learn from it in the future as well. Popularization, or environmental education, leading to biodiversity preservation and development and sustainability of life on Earth should coincide from above and below.

It is necessary to realize that if we start talking and thinking about the benefit of biodiversity, we are already assuming it. However, not all biodiversity and its increase

can be beneficial. Based on the above, it is impossible to clearly demonstrate the benefit of biodiversity with absolute certainty. Therefore, it could be stated that biodiversity (not only the macroscopic one) is, at least in the context of the works of Czech and Central European philosophers and environmentalists, beneficial to sustain life as we know it now.

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