

# PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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The history of mankind and the related history of the philosophy of nature demonstrate that, throughout centuries, people have always focused on the pursuit of understanding the world which they live in as well as the laws that govern it. The traditional philosophy concentrated on ontology and metaphysics, but with the development of civilisation as well as scientific and technical progress, it significantly expanded. The development of civilisation and its growing needs resulted in the increased anthropopressure on the natural environment, which caused significant changes. Civilisation and environmental threats, which mankind began to be aware of as late as in the last century, have also become the subject of considerations of contemporary philosophers. The pro-environmental and pro-ecological ideas that emerged in response to these threats often have their origins in philosophy. One of such ideas, which has now been firmly established legally, politically and socially, is the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development for modern human is not only an idea, but it forms the basis of specific laws, policies and actions aimed at the survival of the human species.

This paper presents examples of philosophical views on the idea of sustainable development - its origin, development, extent and perspectives. The review nature of this paper determined the selection of the research methods, such as a query and synthesis of selected secondary source materials, the choice of which was dictated by an attempt to broadly cover the issue of environmental protection and the related idea of sustainable development.

Sustainable development is a term originally derived from forestry. It was a method of forest management allowing for logging without forest destruction. The author of this term was a high-ranking official of Augustus the Strong - Hans Carl von Carlowitz, who also defined the long-term use of nature, with a simultaneous emphasis on activities aimed at preserving its resources. Currently, this term was first used and redefined in the report *Our Common Future* prepared by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) led by Gro Harlem Brundtland. It was applied in practice during the Earth Summit which was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, by signing an action programme for the 21<sup>st</sup> century known as Agenda 21.

Sustainable development is aimed at the development of human civilisation while maintaining good condition and proper functioning of the natural environment. It is to be facilitated by complying with environmental aspects when planning and implementing regional, national and even global socio-economic development. This will require changes in the current way of thinking and taking account of activities carried out in order to visibly and permanently improve the condition of the natural environment, affecting the quality of life not only today, but also for future generations. This should be implemented thanks to the growing, broadly understood, ecological awareness and the re-evaluation of the existing materialistic priorities of the development of civilisation. The very concept of the idea of sustainable development and its potential effects became the subject of numerous philosophical disputes from the very beginning of its implementation.

The idea of sustainable development is a kind of postulate of a qualitatively new civilisation, and its philosophical implications lead to a new stream of social philosophy with an almost global reach. Its main thesis is ontological monism, which requires the perception of reality as a dynamic ontic unity. Man, together with the social world he has created, cannot be treated as autonomous and independent from the natural world, because he is an integral component of the biosphere and has built asymmetric, close and inseparable relationships with it throughout history. This thesis is complemented by the thesis about the rationality of human nature, which is manifested in the progressive process of learning about the principles of functioning and the complexity of the world. This results in the increased level of education, technical and technological progress and a new approach to moral issues. Simultaneously, global awareness is stimulated and an imperative is formulated regarding responsibility for the present and future condition of the natural environment affecting the quality of life for future generations. In addition, the philosophical assumptions of sustainable development are axiologically enriched with values related to three spheres of development - social, economic and environmental ones. These spheres frequently merge or penetrate each other, creating conditions for better stimulation and greater range of activities carried out within them.

The concept of sustainable development is therefore based on values that are rudimentary for the human social world (pacifism, freedom), teleological values for all forms of life (dignity, egalitarianism, life, justice) and instrumental values in achieving the assumed goals - community, responsibility and moderation. The presented philosophical premises and the resulting values constitute a strong theoretical background and provide specific arguments confirming the necessity and the effectiveness of the implementation of the concept of sustainable development by enriching social and economic development with environmental aspects.

One of the arguments in this discussion is the implementation of the idea of sustainable development. This concept is based on supporting socio-economic development with environmental aspects and it aims to improve the quality of human life in the context of improving the condition of the natural environment. The activities carried out within this concept are strongly supported in its theoretical basis by philosophy, mainly by its trend referred to as ecophilosophy.

The philosophical doctrines and theories developed as part of ecophilosophy turned out to be very useful in implementing the concept of sustainable development and carrying out its practical activities. Their development and multiple aspects prove the complexity of environmental problems faced by modern man, challenges that the entire humanity is facing and what may await it in the future. From this perspective, on the one hand, the proposed concept of sustainable development is purely ideological or even utopian, but on the other hand, it becomes a concrete and necessary task for humanity, which is slowly beginning to be implemented.

