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Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe), 2024, 14 (1–2), 114–123 DOI:10.2478/ebce-2024-0002

The changing of environmental philosophical thinking in the Czech Republic

Slavomír Lesňák[1]

Abstract

The ecological crisis affects every person and place on the planet. Environmental thinking reflects on the causes of this crisis, the diversity of its consequences, as well as its solutions and their perception by individuals in the past and present. The presentation of local contexts of perceptions and solutions to the crisis emerging from lesser-known traditions helps to complete a holistic picture of a human and to find answers to the question of how to act rightly. Even Czech environmental thinking emerging from specific Central European traditions (J. Hus, J. A. Comenius, T. G. Masaryk, V. Havel) has the potential to enrich the image of a human and the perception of the morality of existing proposed solutions. In the following text, the author will present the prehistory of environmental thinking in Czech lands, the development of this thinking, and the most important authors of the last 30 years. The presented research results are based on historical and research methods, the most important monographs, and scientific articles in the field of philosophy, history of philosophy, ethics, and sociology. Topics covered include the introduction and problems of evolutionary ontology, the importance of philosophy and environmental philosophy in times of ecological crisis, the issues of communities of people of voluntary frugality, the socio-ecological approach, ecological rationality, etc. The article points to the dominance of ecocentric views on the ecological crisis in Czech thinking, as well as to the causes of the limits of environmental thinking in the Czech environment.

Keywords: environmental philosophy, Czech philosophy, ethics, history

Introduction

The aim of the article is to present a brief overview of the most important authors and concepts of environmental ethics and philosophy in the Czech lands from its prehistory to the present. For a better understanding, the article also introduces the local historical, political and philosophical context that has influenced Czech environmental thinking up to the present day. In the first part, I mainly draw on the history of environmental thinking in Bohemia and Slovakia through Petr Jemelka's unique work *Reflection of environmental issues in the history of Czech and Slovak philosophy* (2016). In the second part, I present an overview of current environmental thinking in proportion to its influence based on my research.

Before diving into environmental thinking in the Czech Republic, let us briefly consider the local historical and philosophical context. Czech philosophical thought reflects the history of the Czech lands (Hussitism, resistance to the German Empire, the defeat of these ideas and efforts at *Bíla Hora* in 1621, etc.) to a large extent. Therefore, the so-called Czech question, i.e. the question of the meaning of Czech history – the question of the self-evident existence of the nation, has resonated quite strongly in Czech philosophical thought for the last two hundred years. Especially the philosophical answer of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937) transcended the nationalistic dimension of the ideal of "Czechness" (1895). His ideal arises from the Czech Reformation tradition (fraternity and universal humanism; a reference to John Amos Comenius). Masaryk also follows the idea of the need for a moral politics of the nation (inspired by the national revivalists of the 19th century – Karel Havlíček: 1821–1856; František Palacký: 1798–1876). From the question of the image of Czech history, he creates and promotes a political program in the Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1939). This value framework was interrupted by the totalitarianisms of Nazism and Communism, but it was not silenced. In 1968, the philosopher Karel Kosík (1926–2003) presented the idea that "The mere existence of a nation cannot constitute the program and meaning of a nation" (Zouhar, 2001, p. 29). Jan Patočka (1907–1977) formulated these ideas very explicitly in the 1970s: he distinguished

[1] Masaryk University, Brno (Czech Republic); email: lesnak@ped.muni.cz; ORCID: 0000-0003-3525-0475

between so-called small and great Czechness. Small Czechness focuses only on its own (local) problems, great Czechness is oriented towards solving the problems of the world. (Patočka, 2007). In Czech philosophy, we witness a rethinking of the spiritual orientation of the small nation in Central Europe towards broader thought and history (Zouhar, 2001, p. 33). The Czech question is a specific local context that has influenced and is influencing the formation of environmental thinking in Bohemia and Moravia in the past and present.[2]

Prehistory and history of environmental philosophical thinking

The most comprehensive history of ecological and environmental thinking in the Czech and Slovak space so far was presented by Petr Jemelka (2002; 2015; 2016). The author maps both the direct reflection of environmental issues and evaluates its prehistory. In his interpretation, he (rather) cautiously intervenes also in older periods, which provide remarkable impulses, especially in the field of reflection on nature. Petr Jemelka states that "some of these authors are so remarkable for the originality of their ideas that they can rightly be described as the first pioneers of environmental, philosophical thinking, who in many ways were many decades ahead of their time" (Jemelka, 2016, p. 57), but as he adds, they did not find successors.

It is worth mentioning the allegorical interpretation of morality in the encyclopedia of the medieval polymath Pavel Žídek (1413–1471), who includes man among the animals. Within the prehistory of environmental thinking, Petr Jemelka also includes the first systematic botanical works of Tadeáš Hájek (1525–1600), Adam Zalužanský (1555–1613), as well as the synthesizing experiments concerning national history and geography of Bohuslav Balbín (1621–1688). In the 19th century, Jemelka notes the Hegelian Augustin Smetana (1814–1851), according to whom human history is a continuation of nature (*Reflections on the Future of Humanity*, 1848); both can be understood only in their mutual connection, man belongs to both the animal and the ideal (Jemelka, 2016, pp. 35–36). Jan Evangelista Purkyně (1787–1869), a physician and physiologist who worked for a time also at the University of Wrocław, transcends the herbartianism of his time towards a premonition of vitalism (*Excerpts from the notebook of a deceased naturalist*, 1910) and an appreciation of Darwinism (acknowledging the external influence on the development of organisms). Typical of the time is the presentation of nature as a field of human action (what we would nowadays describe as man's masterly relationship to nature) (Jemelka, 2016, pp. 39–43). It is worth mentioning the thinking of Josef Durdík (1837–1902), Czech philosopher who drew attention to the importance of protecting forests (*Attention to Woods!*, 1874). Durdík argues for the usefulness of forests (their stabilizing, health-preserving and also aesthetic factor). His anthropocentrism and adherence to contemporary herbartianism is characteristic of him (Binka, 2015, pp. 9–25).

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, environmental content was brought into Czech philosophy by voluntarist inspirations: Jemelka notes the compassion for animals as a tool for overcoming degenerate humanity in Ladislav Klíma (1878–1928), as well as a misanthropy stemming from the destruction of the beauty of nature due to the boom of human civilization in the painter and writer Josef Váchal (1884–1969). The poet and writer Otokar Březina (1868–1929) wanted to transform nature into a perfect construction, to overcome and surmount it, so that in the end, the fulfillment of the work of mankind would lead to the pacification of the universe and ultimate peace. Eva Pammrová (1860–1945), an ecofeminist, maintained written communication with Otakar Březina. She lived a Rousseauian return to nature: she retired to the countryside, where she supported herself and shunned society. The masculinist distortion of the world must be overcome by the realization of true humanity. The future will be saved by

[2] For the readers that are not familiar with the situation in Central Europe, it is worth mentioning that Czech philosophy is culturally, personally, and institutionally profoundly intertwined with Slovak philosophy. The common state of Czechs and Slovaks lasted more than 70 years. Intensive cooperation took place even before and after the establishment of this state.

a woman, not subject to carnality and men, by giving birth to a new human unencumbered by selfishness towards other living beings. From today's point of view, her thought could be described as being especially close to deep ecology and feminism. (Jemelka, 2016, pp. 90–104).

In the 1950s, the problem of the environment was not addressed in philosophy; in the 1960s, Radovan Richta (1924–1983) reflected on technology as a tool of progress in the elimination of human alienation (*Civilization at the Crossroads*, 1966). The opposite view on technology is evident in the work of Josef Šafařík (1907–1992) published at the end of the 1960s – an existential reflection on the alienation of man in the age of machines (*Man in the machine age*, 1969).

We close the decade with a short performance of the drama *Minister of Food* (1970) by the underground writer and philosopher Egon Bondy (1930–2007).[3] The author draws attention to the inhumanity of dictatorship in technical civilization and speciesism: in the search for sufficient food resources, the world's Ministry of Food is switching from mass farming of animals to their gradual mutilation (in order to save on energy expenditure due to their faster growth). Farmed animals become mutated, living pieces of meat that are accessories to the machine. Interference in the development of farmed animals takes place by means of mutation with the help of chemical substances, which also affect the health of their consumers, but in percentage terms, the numbers affected are 'statistically within the norm'. Finally, the Earth is discovered by aliens, who generously promise to help humans in matters of nutrition: they will feed all humans if they don't mind humans being made into food for their pets. The aliens have only one condition: humans won't spend too much physical energy... (Bondy, 2007a). In one of the most famous novels, Bondy draws attention to the power of consumerism, which suppresses any values, religion, or ideology (Bondy, 2007b). In another literary work, Bondy presents a lost faith in man: he is capable of destroying the world (and all life and potential) because of consumerism, primitivism, and innate aggressiveness. The world is saved from destruction at the last moment by artificial intelligence, creating nature reserves for man (*The Untold Story*, 1983, 1994).

In the 1970s, the first sociological researches related to environmental issues were published (Hana Librová, Josef Vavroušek), and the first philosophical reflections on the environment appeared in the *Filosofický časopis* [*Philosophical Journal*] (1977; 1979). In these, the authors point to the possible more objective character of environmental problems (Karel Bouček, Reinhard Mocek). A reflection on the approach to the environment can also be found in Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays in the philosophy of history* (1975).

In the 1980s, the impact of the socialist regime's harsh industrialization on the environment was visible, and this was reflected in events in both official and unofficial circles. In 1983 an analysis of the situation, prompted by the government, was made in the document *Rozbor ekologické situace v Československu* (*Analysis of the ecological situation in Czechoslovakia*), produced by the staff of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. The document was not published because of its sensitive nature, but it was obtained by the activists from Charter 77, who published it. The government, therefore, adopted an official strategy to address the unsatisfactory situation, and environmental issues were subsequently addressed more in dissident circles (the *Ecological Committee of Charter 77* was established, the *Ecological Bulletin* was published, and apartment seminars on environmental issues were held, etc.). However, P. Jemelka assesses the dissent's interest in the topic as low (Jemelka, 2016, pp. 191–194). In October 1989, a monothematic issue of the *Philosophical Journal* was devoted to environmental problems (Vol. 37, No. 5). The authors criticize the virulent attitude towards nature (Josef Mužík), present ecocentric viewpoints of solutions (Rudolf Kolářský, Josef Šmajs), state the necessity of international cooperation (Václav Mezřický), present basic

[3] Egon Bondy published from the 1940s until the end of his life - his work is not divided in the text for the sake of preserving of clarity.

environmental concepts from the world (Stanislav Hubík), the responsibility of the individual towards future generations (Radim Bureš), the connections between ecology and ethology (Jan Kamarýt, Rudolf Steindl), and the *oikia* in Greek philosophy (Milan Mráz).

In the free environment of the 1990s, more attention was paid to the topic of the environment – even the first democratic president Václav Havel drew the attention of Czechoslovak citizens in his speeches to the desperate state of the environment. He also presented the idea of a socially and environmentally friendly economy at a world forum. This idea was unfortunately never realized.

In the following lines, I will present the main authors dealing with environmental problems philosophically, ethically, and sociologically (I will try to arrange them chronologically, although this is difficult due to the relatively short period and their parallel work).

2. The most important authors

Erazim Kohák (1933–2020) was the author of the first and most popular survey of environmental ethics for university students (*Green Halo. A Bird's-Eye View of Ecological Ethics*, 1998, which was also published in English in 1999; he also co-edited the anthology of environmental thinking in 1996). Erazim Kohák spent half of his life in the United States, where he studied and taught at Yale University and Boston University. His life story can also be likened to Henry David Thoreau when he lived a similar life in the state of New Hampshire. According to Kohák, the ecological crisis is a spiritual crisis – a crisis of our civilizational orientation (Kohák, 2000, p. 781). The civilized person does not orient himself only to his own social group but understands people from diverse groups – and, moreover, other living beings – as fellow human beings (his statements are reminiscent of the approach of St. Francis of Assisi). The ethical rules resulting from reciprocity leave out of our moral action those who do not influence us and do not have an effect on us. "An age that is in thrall to the logic of its own technology can no longer afford to experience nature as a living community. Empathizing with the feelings of cows or trees is threatening to jobs. The consumer age protects itself by reducing nature to the position of entities that do not evoke compassion or empathy – reservoirs of raw materials" (Kohák, 1995, p. 907). Europe in the 17th century chose a Cartesian path based on control and dehumanization of the world instead of the path of respect and harmony (the path of Comenius) (Kohák, 1991). The Golden Rule or even social contract theories leave out people on the other side of the world or other living beings. However, this does not absolve us of responsibility for our actions, the consequences of which are even more intense with the development of technology. Only the man who is not influenced by the behavior of others but by his own inner principles, and at the same time is not subject to the commonplaces of life, is responsible to himself and to God. It is time to end the accumulation of deferred accountability (for example, the romantic proclamation of a return to nature) (Kohák, 1997). As can be seen, Erazim Kohák does not deal with ecological ethics in isolation; it belongs to the general relationship of man to the whole. Kohák's ethics is based on his ontology, which is manifested in ecological ethics by the promotion of a systemic conception where culture and nature are not in opposition; culture is based on and dependent on nature (similar to Josef Šmajs). Kohák shares with Šmajs a similar view of rejecting the objectivity of the natural sciences, which leads us to indifference. The task of humans is to care for existence and help its self-realization and to care for the natural and cultural diversity that strengthens this self-realization (Trnka, 2020, pp. 108–127).

The most important concept of ecological and environmental thinking in the last 30 years could undoubtedly be the concept of evolutionary ontology, which has many supporters in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. According to Josef Šmajs, the founder of the concept, everything around us is either original – natural, or transformed – artificial. The artificial – cultural has, by its very nature, an inherently anti-natural character; it has no choice but to transform itself from

the natural environment. The huge issue is that culture is out of the control of humanity and continues to evolve in an unwanted direction. According to Josef Šmajs, culture as a sum of people's cultivation activities has become a separate entity, an individuality with its own information system, capable of its own action and direction (development) (Šmajs, 2006, pp. 94–105). In his book *Endangered Culture*, Josef Šmajs points out that culture, through this uncontrollable anti-natural predatorial process, does not threaten nature as such, but primarily itself. The evolution of nature will continue even after the current culture has collapsed. The goal of Šmajs' efforts is not just to redescribe the ontic systems around us but to modify them so that a new biophilic culture emerges. The neglected social sciences, in particular, are meant to serve this purpose: culture, after all, cannot be changed by the natural and technical sciences, which focus on learning about and controlling (destroying) the natural world (Šmajs, 2013).

Šmajs is not only a theorist but also an engaged intellectual who tries to change the world by popularizing, persuading the public, and formulating manifestos – e.g., *the Earth Rental Contract* (2005), *the Declaration of Dependence* (2011), *the Earth Constitution* (2015), etc. In the philosophical conception of his constitution, the creativity of the Earth is superior to the creativity (and rights) of humans. Protecting the Earth from the selfish expansion of predatory culture, Josef Šmajs and his supporters intend to enforce it by all necessary measures. Also, because of this last point, Šmajs is criticized for his modernism (Lesňák, 2019; Šíp, 2014). In a study on the concept of *the Earth Constitution*, contributing lawyer Vojtěch Vomáčka points out that nature as a subject of law is not an uncommon phenomenon. In the *Constitution of Ecuador* (2008), he finds a conception of the environment as *Mother Earth-Pachamama*, where it is guaranteed respect, existence, restoration of its cycles, structure, and evolutionary processes, and the state is obliged to apply preventive actions and prohibitions. The rights of *Mother Earth* were also declared to be in the public interest by law in Bolivia (2010); in turn, some natural areas were also declared to be subjects of rights in the *New Zealand-Maori Agreement* (2012); in Belize, a coral reef was awarded compensation and restitution in 2012; in India, the Supreme Court in 2012 did not accept the primacy of human interests over environmental protection, but instead declared natural interests as independent (Vomáčka, 2015, pp. 31–37). As even the *Constitution of the Earth* has already indicated, Josef Šmajs is as dismissive of the growth economy as the deep ecologist Arne Naess; he, in turn, comes closer to Karl Marx and Erich Fromm in his critique of alienation and the meaninglessness of work, and he shares an evolutionary approach with Konrad Lorenz. Anti-natural culture does not only destroy nature; it also goes against the nature of *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Humans today work in conditions to which they did not adapt thousands of years ago, which is the source of both the unemployment and unhappiness of contemporary humans (Buchtová, Šmajs and Bolebocký, 2013).

Among the most prominent figures of Czech environmental thinking is the sociologist and biologist Hana Librová (1943), who has been researching the lifestyles of households founded on voluntary modesty for three decades. Although after the regime change, the overwhelming majority of society was oriented towards a consumerist way of life, there were also those who chose a modest life in the countryside instead of a career and material prosperity in the cities. Librová visited the communities, interviewed them, and published her findings successively in three books. In the book *The Colourful and the Greens. Topics in Voluntary Modesty* (1994), Librová presents the reasons and motivations of the voluntarily frugal: she refers to those who choose to live frugally for ecological reasons as the Greens, and those who choose to live frugally for other reasons (meaningful employment, solitude, art, family, etc.) as The Colourful (Librová, 1994). This life, of course, entailed practical problems (poverty, transportation problems, homeschooling – disconnectedness, and so on), which Librová noted in her book, *The Half-hearted and the Hesitant: Chapters on Ecological Luxury* (2003). From voluntary poverty, the Greens and the Colorful have moved to better security by mothers leaving for jobs

and by asserting themselves in their (meaningful) work as farmers, artists, etc. The Greens and the Colorful have improved, which has been reflected in higher consumption, but also in persistence in their intentions – not succumbing to opportunities. The Colorful and the Greens have gained luxury that other people do not enjoy (Librová, 2003). In the most recent time-series research, *The Faithful and the Reasonable, Chapters on Ecological Foolishness* (2017; 2021), Librová and her colleagues noticed that the children of the Colourful parents returned to the cities (study and employment), but they did not compromise their values (Librová et al., 2021). The authors also pointed out the presence of ecological grief resulting from the continued decline of nature, the unending transformation of society, etc.

Rudolf Kolářský (1945) has continuously worked on environmental ethics since the 1980s. In his article *The Ecological Context of the Needs and the Need for Philosophy* (1984), he considers how philosophy can help solve the ecological crisis. He refuses to consider pollution only from an anthropocentric perspective; the ecological problem is a problem of a misconceived relationship between society and the biosphere, which has severe consequences for living beings and the free development of human personality: "Ecological needs are at the same time needs of security and needs of free development of personality; ecological needs are natural and social, as well as material and spiritual... Ecological needs problematize every need and system of needs from the point of view of the question of what relation they have to the balance between society and the biosphere" (Kolářský, 1984, p. 47). In the 1990s and after the turn of the millennium, Kolářský reflects on both anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric philosophies of the environment. He defends the non-anthropocentric concepts as they face intense criticism in the Czech environment. Kolářský notes the permanent challenge to reflect on the instrumental approach to the Earth, the courage to view humans as part of a biotic community, the impulses to further develop human life, etc. (Kolářský, 1997; Kolářský, 2000). The advantage of anthropocentrism, in turn, is that it is directly related to Western culture, the ideas of human rights, freedom, and dignity. It offers a sober and substantive approach without making impossible demands that lead to moralizing or indifference to the environment. On the other hand, anthropocentrism overlooks man's unique position in nature, reducing him to a creature who merely makes clever use of nature. By implication, according to Kolářský, contrived anthropocentrism even falls into contradiction with itself (Kolářský, 2011, p. 112). Like other authors, he blames this on biocentrism, which fails to rid itself of the human gaze. Both concepts are internally contradictory; one passes into the other and vice versa: "In the sense of the intentions that are contained in these concepts, we can say that they are in principle identical" (Kolářský, 2011, p. 115). Environmental philosophy is essential because the philosophical concepts that emerged before the ecological crisis do not bring sufficient solutions to the new situation. Environmental philosophy directions have this potential – they bring plurality and diverse argumentation of alternative perspectives. This contributes to a critical perspective (on the ecological crisis). In this sense, Environmental philosophy is a continuation of the Enlightenment philosophy – it contributes to the autonomy and self-determination of humans in solving the problems of the environment (Kolářský, 2011, pp. 125–132). This does not mean that philosophy "has to be" present in the solution: legal, technological, and economic measures do not need further ethical justifications, and generally, shared moral values will suffice. The ecological crisis is, therefore, not a philosophical crisis; it is a crisis of man – one must accept as part of its identity its earthliness, its belonging to the place that constitutes its home (Kolářský, 1998; Kolářský, 2011).

Oleg Suša (1947) and Vlastimil Hála (1951) collaborated with Rudolf Kolářský at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Understanding the ecological crisis is impossible without social, political, and cultural contexts, Oleg Suša wrote in their joint book *Philosophy and the Contemporary Ecological Crisis* in 1998. The lordly manner toward the world manifests itself in the fact that the exercise of political power and interventions in the

environment is taken as a technical matter and not sufficiently reflected morally. The current ethical foundations of economics, technology, science, and politics should be harmonized with the needs of society and sustainable development (ecological carrying capacity). Thus, a broader social and ecological rationality should be applied in science, technology, economics, and politics (Kolářský & Suša, 1998, pp. 161–162). To articulate our relations with nature ethically is a practical and effective task of the philosophy of ecological crisis (Kolářský & Suša, 1998, p. 166). The social critique is continued by Oleg Suša also in his next publication (2016). Neoliberalism has conceptualized sustainability in terms of rising resource prices, which, however, have not led to a reduction in extraction, but on the contrary, to an increase in it. This is a further increase in inequality in a global society – consumers ultimately pay higher prices, and the profits of the extractive business continue to grow. The cause of both environmental problems and unemployment is, therefore, a minority depleting the planet's resources, reproducing risks to exploit profits (Suša & Sťahel, 2016, pp. 72–73). This state of affairs supports the perpetuation of the ideology of consumerism, which is falsely presented as a universal cultural ideal. This ideology leads to further social and economic inequality, poverty and exclusion concerning poor and rich countries (Suša & Sťahel 2016, p. 78).

Vlastimil Hála, in the 1990s, criticized the path of voluntary modesty, also outlined by the former Minister of the Environment Josef Vavroušek (1944–1995), as both utopian and ineffective (ecologically shaken and conscious people are silent in society and therefore their interests are drowned out by the consumerist majority). Change must be political – ecological goals must be justified pragmatically and in an utilitarian way (the advantage of a long-term view, the necessity of nature, Masarykian social policy, etc.) (Hála, 1997). The reliance on green capitalism and voluntary modesty is also reflected in the last work *Philosophy and the Endangered Earth* (together with R. Kolářský 2020). The current expensive green regulation of the economy helps to perpetuate the disparity between prosperous Western and poor economies. While citizens of rich economies keep their comfortable lives, citizens of poor economies have to give up consumerism (Vittorio Hösle's critique). Thus, the non-consumptive citizens of developing countries (and the partially saturated citizens of post-socialist countries) will again be left at the gates of consumerism. It is easy to be moral if we have the means to do so, and at the same time, "nothing burns us". Maintaining the widening of the scissors of inequality and wealth cannot be described as fair, concludes Hála (Hála & Kolářský, 2020, pp. 103–119).

Milan Valach (1956–2013), an ethicist from the Department of Civics of the Faculty of Education of the Masaryk University in Brno, a promoter of direct democracy, took a neo-Marxist approach to the topic of the ecological crisis. He criticized biocentrism in depth in the book *The World on the Boundary. On the Political and Moral Crisis of Capitalism* (2009). He saw it as totalitarian (like Plato: for him, the community was more important than the individual, for biocentrism it was nature, life), conservative (reproducing old unjust orders), theoretical (life in general), unreflected egocentric (not admitting to an anthropocentric position), pseudo-religious (the sacredness of God replaced by the sacredness of nature), misanthropic, hierarchizing (elitist) and fascistic (Valach, 2009, pp. 228–255). He considered sustainable development as a starting point, in which the ecological aspect of companies is ensured by ownership by employees living in the locality of the firm's operations, which is the reason for the company's socially and locally responsible actions. The participative enterprise allows equal access to all its members, helps to eliminate alienation at work, and motivates greater participation in solving local environmental and governance problems (the ideal of direct democracy). The project of humanistic Marxism, which helps man to reorient himself from a one-dimensional consumer materialist to a self-realizing being feeling his connection with the world, was unfortunately brought to an untimely end by Valach's death (2013).

Peter Jemelka (1962), a younger colleague in the same department, is a philosopher, ecologist, biologist, and bioethicist, who has long been involved in reflecting on the history of environmental thinking in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (see the introductory historical section of the article). Instead of the irrationality and sentimentality of biocentric conceptions, Jemelka values philosophical rationality, which can help to constructively overcome the fear of the future (instead of the flight from the responsibility of biocentrists) (Jemelka, 1997; 1999). However, he also expresses concern that an abstract account of the categories of nature or culture may not sufficiently fulfill the necessary biophilic cultural and educational role. As one of the few authors on the Czech scene, he points to the importance of literature in the transformation of anti-natural culture into a biophilic one: "The field of beautiful literature (and in it natural prose) is only a small, yet important means of bringing the general values of life and beauty and the importance of nature in a more concrete representation closer to a wider circle of readers than philosophical or ethical texts can do" (Jemelka, 2022, p. 23). He proposes to supplement the missing ethical dimension of evolutionary ontology with non-utilitarian consequentialist ethics of social consequences developed by Slovak authors from the University of Prešov, with whom he has long collaborated (Jemelka, 2018; 2017).

The ethicist Bohuslav Binka (1973) is particularly noteworthy for his critical analysis *Green Extremism: Ideas and Mentality of Czech Environmental Movements* (2008), which refuted the unjustified labeling of Czech environmental organizations as extremist. Binka examined the documents and approaches in the media of the organizations criticized (*Hnutí Duha; NESEHNUTÍ)* and found them to be neither dogmatic nor non-argumentatively radicalized. (Binka, 2008). Binka also took an analytical approach to the history of Czech environmental thinking, refusing to approach environmental thinking in the 19th century with superiority or a reductive calculation of facts. He argues that a better way of contemporary understanding is to compare authors from the same period in addressing the same problem, and in this way, we can avoid our blind spots (Binka & Jemelka, 2015). Bohuslav Binka is one of the critical advocates (pressure on a premature expansion of the ready evolutionary-ontological approach, 2013) and scientific organizers of both the concept and the "school" of evolutionary ontology. Binka ranks the concept of evolutionary ontology among the more moderate of the radical environmentalist concepts (Binka, 2013, p. 836). While also denouncing "traditional" philosophy and "Cartesian" science, Šmajs (but also Jemelka), based on its own rules, transcends the setting of Western thought from within (which is not the case for biocentrists and ecocentrists, who often deviate from rationality and science (Binka, 2013, p. 838).

Conclusion

In the article, I have described the prehistory and present of environmental and philosophical thought. In summary, it can be concluded that the strongest current within philosophical thinking is ecocentrism (Šmajs, Kolářský, Jemelka, Binka) or even the affiliation or proximity of social ecology (Suša, Valach). The center of environmental thinking in the Czech Republic could rightly be described as the Brno intellectual milieu, where Librová and Šmajs gathered followers who were continuing the efforts they started. The close academic cooperation between Czech and Slovak philosophers helps to complement each other's missing streams of environmental thinking (e.g., missing ecofeminism or ontological anchoring of ethical concepts) or to create a formal space for cooperation (for the last 30 years no scientific journal for environmental, philosophical thinking has been established in the Czech Republic, the *Journal of Medical Law and Bioethics* is a journal for bioethics conceived in a more narrow medical sense; the journal *Envigogika* is focused on environmental education).

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