

The Enlightenment Assumptions of the Brundtland Report

Oświeceniowe założenia Raportu Brundtland

Andrzej Papuziński

*Uniwersytet Kazimierza Wielkiego, Wydział Humanistyczny,
Instytut Nauk Politycznych, ul. ks. J. Poniatowskiego 12, 85-671 Bydgoszcz, Poland
E-mail: papuzin@ukw.edu.pl*

Abstract

The material subject of the paper is the philosophy of sustainable development, which was presented on the basis of the Brundtland Report. Yet, the formal subject are the Enlightenment assumptions of the strategy elaborated in this report. The purpose of the paper is to reconstruct and characterize these assumptions as constitutive elements of the philosophy of the Brundtland Report. At the beginning of the first part of the paper the state and main directions of the research on the philosophy of sustainable development conducted in Poland were discussed (the country where such discussion is exceptionally extensive). Based on the recounted characteristics, it was described as a version of the Enlightenment philosophy, and new arguments were provided to confirm this thesis. The second part of the paper presents the Enlightenment assumptions of the Brundtland Report. The discussion was limited to the assumptions of anthropology, social philosophy and historiosophy, such as human rationality, progress, and risk.

Key words: the Brundtland report, sustainable development, assumptions, the Enlightenment, human rationality, progress, risk

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem materialnym referatu jest filozofia zrównoważonego rozwoju, którą przedstawiono na podstawie Raportu Brundtland. Przedmiotem formalnym są natomiast oświeceniowe założenia strategii rozwiniętej w tym raporcie. Celem referatu jest rekonstrukcja i charakterystyka tych przesłanek jako elementów konstytutywnych filozofii Raportu Brundtland. Na początku pierwszej części referatu omówiono stan i główne kierunki badań prowadzonych w Polsce nad filozofią zrównoważonego rozwoju (w kraju, w którym ta dyskusja jest wyjątkowo bogata). Na podstawie zreferowanych charakterystyk opisano ją jako wersję filozofii oświeceniowej i dostarczono nowych argumentów na potwierdzenie tej tezy. W drugiej części referatu przedstawiono oświeceniowe przesłanki Raportu Brundtland. Omówienie ograniczono do założeń z zakresu antropologii, filozofii społecznej i historiozofii, jak: racjonalność człowieka, postęp, ryzyko.

Słowa kluczowe: Raport Brundtland, zrównoważony rozwój, założenia, oświecenie, racjonalność człowieka, postęp, ryzyko

Introduction

On 20 March 1987 the United Nations announced the World Commission on Environment and Development Report, so-called the Brundtland Report. The strategy of sustainable development, by all accounts a cutting-edge one, was presented there. The innovative character of this document is a result of extending international environmental cooperation

to other spheres, and above all, taking into consideration the relations that connect the environment, resources, people and development (*Our*, 1987). In three decades since the publication of the Brundtland Report, the reality has changed in a way that the authors of the document could not foresee. The end of the Cold War, globalization, a reduction of an economic function of the country, a decay of the welfare state, neo-liberal economic changes, a possibility of

transnational capital allocation, international terrorism, etc., echo in subsequent interpretations of the idea of sustainable development.

Nowadays, many different concepts and theories of sustainable development are competing for recognition. As Michael R. Redclift assesses: *Since the path-breaking deliberations of the Brundtland Commission, the expression 'sustainable development' has been used in a variety of ways, depending on whether it is employed in an academic context, or that of planning, business or environmental policy. As a result, during the last twenty years we have been confronted with several different discourses of 'sustainable development', some of which are mutually exclusive* (Redclift, 2009). According to Karl-Werner Brand, opinions on sustainable development have been polarized as a result of differences in viewpoints on a need to modernize the economy supported by the Brundtland Report, especially restructure it in well-developed countries. There were many fierce discussions on issues ranging from a definition of sustainable development to the perspective of an analysis of sustainable development. The aspects of justice, a division of the world's riches and borders of existing forms of economic regulation (Brand, 1997) were brought to the forefront of the debate. For this reason, learning the philosophy on which the Brundtland Report strategy was based has not only historical significance. Reconstruction of a set of philosophical assumptions of this document drives the centre of the current discussion on sustainable development. The emphasis on the Enlightenment parentele of the philosophy of the Brundtland Report provides analytical tools necessary for understanding fundamental problems of today's debate and specificities of the positions and the value of arguments of the parties involved.

1. State of the research on the philosophy of sustainable development in Poland

It cannot be expected that the philosophy described on the basis of the content of any political document on sustainable development will, at its theoretical level, be equal to the philosophical treatises. It is only, as described by Zbigniew Hull, the reconstruction of philosophical content – its ontological, historical, axiological character, etc. – which is hidden among the leading ideas and values of various programs, strategies and policies of sustainable development (Hull, 2003). As a reconstruction made on the basis of deduced assumptions, at most it can approximate the philosophical issues involved, without claiming to provide ready-made solutions. The philosophy of the Brundtland Report expresses the general way of thinking in these matters, approaching them cautiously, without the necessity of accuracy and reasoning, it lacks in coherence and unity, and the order of discursive thinking, full of the logical and substantive loopholes that need to be plugged.

Because of such a form, it is a challenge for every description, which necessarily, with no outrage on the material collected, cannot be precise and coherent. Still, the effort of the best possible characterization of this philosophy makes sense. It allows the localization of its constituents on the plan of the aspects of the problem discussed in the philosophy, the assessment of their conceptual maturity and subject absoluteness, and above all, identifying and confronting them with the current philosophical streams of Euro-Atlantic culture. Therefore, reconstruction of the philosophy of the Brundtland Report should lead to a comparison of its philosophical content with solutions adopted in philosophy and end up emphasizing the propositions and aspects that are closest to it.

Philosophical assumptions of the concept of sustainable development have often been the focus of Polish philosophers. Among the publications on this subject, Leszek Gawor's publications should be distinguished, which address this issue explicitly (Gawor, 2004, 2010). Gawor detailed a number of philosophical theses written in political documents and studies on sustainable development, which – as he legitimately claims – give grounds for speaking about sustainable development. Other texts on sustainable development philosophy address philosophical assumptions of the concept of sustainable development indirectly. Their authors – Tadeusz Borys, Zbigniew Hull, Dariusz Liszewski, Zdzisława Piątek, Barbara Piontek, Adam Płachciak, Antoni Skowronski, Włodzimierz Tyburski and Włodzimierz Zięba – write about philosophical assumptions of the concept of sustainable development in very different contexts. It often goes about a project. In such a case, the assumptions are reconstructed on the basis of the objectives that were included in one or other authorial concept of sustainable development. Of course, the focus are only assumptions of one type, namely those that contribute to the values of sustainable development. Studies of this kind are characterized by the desire to ascertain the axiological premises as fully as possible. In descriptive and reconstructive studies, however, the problem of the assumptions of the concept of sustainable development is perceived by the prism of various leading issues. Most often it is about sustainability and education. The first approach leads to a focus on the assumptions underlying the social, economic or environmental aspects of the concept of sustainable development; the second one - to forming sets of values that are consistent with the given, historically and socially defined, educational system and to adoption of assumptions of a pragmatic character that influence the success of educational activities.

A brief discussion of the Polish philosopher's works, as far as philosophical assumptions on the concept of sustainable development are concerned, shows that the problem has already been outlined from many points of view. Why then come back to this issue?

First of all, because none of these presentations provided the grounds for the first version of the concept of sustainable development, which was developed by the Brundtland Commission. Gawor presented the issue on the basis of a variety of political documents and philosophical and scientific papers from a later period. It cannot be ruled out that he discussed a later state, modified due to attempts to adapt the UN concept of sustainable development to the post-Cold War conditions and the launch of a new global war with world terrorism. This can also be referred to other papers mentioned. In addition, some of them are of a general nature, detached from the specific background of political documents in which the concept of sustainable development was defined, and involves more or less successful attempts to add new objectives and principles to this concept, not necessarily consistent with the initial ones. Polish achievements in the philosophy of sustainable development fully support the above-mentioned Redcliffe's opinion.

Because of the task set out in this paper to indicate the philosophical tradition to which the philosophy of the Brundtland Report belongs, it is important to point out Gawor's identification of the historical type of philosophy that, more or less consciously, served as a benchmark for building a sustainable development strategy and for justifying its action programs. This is undoubtedly, as the author maintains, a contemporary version of *the Enlightenment social thought, marked out with such names as Turgot, Condorcet, Herder, Fichte, Kant, and forthcoming: Comte or even Marx* (Gawor, 2004). Such a case is supported by an exceptionally rich and varied set of goals of sustainable development, an academic, or that of planning, business and environmental policy, unknown in the Enlightenment. All, like in the lens, focus at one point. These are *ways in which global development can continue uninterruptedly* (Our, 1987), providing humane living conditions and self-reliance. Extending Gawor's arguments with new elements, it is worth noting that the best evidence for the Enlightenment filiations of the philosophy of sustainable development is its relationship with the strategy to guarantee global stability. It shows that the most important tasks of this philosophy are to overcome axiological dualism between the values desired with regard to reason and the values actually respected in society, which was a prominent theme of the Enlightenment philosophy. Without departing from the pre-Renaissance paradigm of culture, in which a vision of the best reality out of potential worlds dominated, without recognizing a possibility of a contradiction between the values that are in accordance with reason and values actually respected by men, this philosophy could not serve to build a strategy for solving social problems. We can talk about a social problem only when the divergence between desirable social values and social reality is found and defined. The philosophy of sustainable de-

velopment is therefore a contemporary version of the Enlightenment philosophy primarily because it is the basis of the theory of solving social problems, which in another intellectual atmosphere could not even be set up. It is also because it is not limited to appeals to individual morals and its solutions are based on the reform of the system of basic social institutions, that is, a complex of the most important political, economic and social devices that define the rights and duties of people and determine their life prospects. The philosophy of sustainable development is a contemporary version of the Enlightenment philosophy of reasoning, a confrontation of an ideal full of humanity with reality, mutilated human existence, knocked about by anonymous powers, ruling it out of the depths of economic and social relations, especially those of an international character. The philosophy of sustainable development matches the Enlightenment through criticism of existing *status quo*, criticism aimed at harmonizing various spheres of life, under the cover of sustainability.

2. Philosophical assumptions of the Brundtland Report

An assumption is an accepted without justification statement that constitutes the basis for the further argument – in other words, it is a condition of a derived theorem. Assumptions in a given theory are part of a paradigm driven by a particular community of a discourse. As an analogy for the Kuhn's concept of the paradigm of science, one can say that they are a set of discourses of beliefs and prejudices typical of a certain community, both instrumental, theoretical and metaphysical ones. The system of philosophical premise of the sustainable development strategy, which was presented in the Brundtland Report, falls within the paradigm of the Enlightenment. Below you will find the assumptions most strongly associated with this paradigm. The group of assumptions that need to be discussed is numerous and varied. It includes ontological assumptions (monism, metaphysical naturalism), epistemological (genetic empiricism, critical realism), methodological (holism, determinism), anthropological, historiophantic and social philosophy. Due to editorial limitations, only the assumptions of anthropology, social philosophy, and historiography, which are most important to the specificity of the philosophical foundation of the Brundtland Report strategy (rationality of human existence, progress, risk), will be addressed. They will not only be identified and located within the structure of branches of philosophy, but also shown in the light of issues considered in contemporary philosophy and social thought.

2.1. Rationality of human existence

Among ideas incorporated by the Enlightenment into the veins of Euro-Atlantic culture is the most striking one, rationalism, which expresses full confidence in

human reason and the ability of a man to use their own reason. It is not rationalism in the style of the preceding century, a priori, based on the belief that reason itself contains the nucleus of knowledge, opposed to empiricism. It is related to the philosophy of the 17th century with only one Cartesian conception of reason known as the measure of knowledge. But another use was made of it. Rationalism of the seventeenth century belongs to the theory of cognition; Rationalism of the Enlightenment is more a part of anthropology and social philosophy. It settles disputes between the content of human consciousness judging which of them are relevant and which are not – also in the world being a social creation. Such an understanding turns into the supreme tribunal in terms of the conditions of human life and defines completely new rules of discourse in social, economic and political aspects. From that point on, they began to talk about the standards of conduct that they have accepted or demanded, whether they are rational or not, and therefore are or are not worthy of human endeavour, deserve to be realized and fixed or to be rubbed off. In the philosophy of Enlightenment, reason took over the powers of absolute rulers, who in the previous century embodied the idea of sovereignty, which Jean Bodin had already presented in the Renaissance. He was therefore a judge, who delivered judgements, what is relevant here, according to the rules defined by himself. He acted in the name of the progress of mankind (Nicolas de Condorcet, Adam Ferguson) and to control chaos in the context of social relations (Voltaire) as well as international ones (Immanuel Kant). He was a sovereign who needed autonomy in order to rule effectively. An expression of all these ideas was a notion of emancipation of reason out of all external constraints. The position of the Enlightenment on the sovereignty of reason transformed the old idea of human rationality completely. The concept of rationality is ambiguous and defined in a number of different ways. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that rationality is a positive characteristic of a man. Since ancient times it has been synonymous with the ability of logical thinking, which upholds the certainty of knowledge, finding the truth about the natural and social reality and a way of right conduct. Under the influence of enlightenment, a rational person in this sense is a man who respects the scientific knowledge of the world and follows it in his conduct.

Based on the assumption that a man is a rational existence in the above sense, the authors of the Brundtland Report referred to the theories of science derived from the philosophy of Enlightenment. Apart from descriptive, explanatory, and predictive functions of science, it includes additional functions: educational, persuasive and cultural ones. The inclusion of an educational and persuasive function in the

list of academic functions expresses a conviction of the essential role of scientific knowledge in the justification of social and economic reform projects; adding another cultural one – its huge innovative potential. As a result, the report is characterized by numerous qualities of scientific research. First of all, developing the sustainable development strategy presented in it is based on both the latest research results of those years as well as scientific models of the analysed aspects of reality. Secondly, the argument for the need for a rapid implementation of the sustainable development strategy is based on scientific predictions for further degradation of ecosystems and a biodiversity loss, depletion of energy and natural resources, an industrial and urban growth as well as demographic and food prospects, and so on. Thirdly, proposals indicated in the report to solve global problems have a nature of a scientific action strategy, which sees in learning an engine of the desired civilizational and cultural transformations. The strategy presented there is a translation of the results of scientific research into practice, into the activity of rational entities. In other words, one of the main tasks of the Report is to educate people as rational actors: The people are the target audience for this report. The changes, we ask for, in human attitudes depend on a wide educational action, from discussion and common participation (*Our*, 1987).

Reconstruction of the assumption on the rationality of human existence, which was adopted in the Brundtland Report, sets them on the side of a minimalist approach. Such theories are characterized by separation of human rationality from a particular worldview, from each material concept of good and all ethical expressions. As in John Rawls's¹, theories, it is about breaking the ethical tradition, in which rationality is transformed into a tool for realizing one or another competitive conception of good and involved in endless disputes about them. In the Brundtland Report, as in the works of the American philosopher, rationality means human ability to formulate their own life plans and openness to their criticism. Just as there, it is inseparable from the sense of justice, understood most simply as an ability to accept and practice the principles of justice. And in lockstep it has regard for maximizing good, including moral good. It characterizes an entity identified in the Rawls's philosophy with a moral subject (Rawls, 2001). In this way, a rational person is a *creative resource* – as it is called in the language of economics – whose potential is necessarily to be used for sustainable development.

2.2. Progress

Progress is a basic category of the history of the Enlightenment. It is a process of transformations leading to successive, higher and more perfect stages of

¹ The shown convergence is not accidental. Both Rawls and the authors of the Brundtland Report perform the same task. It involves elaboration of general justice theories, so

that different historical experiences and different cultural values do not hinder its acceptance.

existence. It embodies a promise of continuous development and improvement of humanity in intellectual, moral, social and welfare terms. The Brundtland Report is an expression of faith in the progress, belief in the possibility of continuing progress and a description of the ways in which the progress can be made. It is also a formula for the sustainability of the process of progress. Finally, it is also an expression of the will to spread progress among all the people. In this document, progress has been made in terms of controlling the disease decimating the poor in developing countries, tackling hunger and poverty, increasing life expectancy, eradicating illiteracy, better education, controlling uncontrolled growth of human settlements, especially slums, gender equality, dissemination of more effective and cleaner technologies, effective protection of nature – in general – improving the quality of life of all people in the world, especially the poorest. The way in which these issues are dealt with, especially in terms of achieving these objectives, shows that the idea of progress, which the Brundtland Report's authors pursued, is far from its eighteenth-century pattern. Progress is perceived differently, although on the basis of the aforementioned regarding the rationality of human existence, the relation between human rationality and scientific knowledge is seemed to be stuck with old ruts. Thus, this is not the same idea of the progress that Georges Sorel, a perceptive critic of historical determinism (Sorel, 1969), opposed to a long time ago. But above all it is not an idea of progress, which was criticized by Zdzisław Krasnodębski. It does not mark the equality between the development of cognition and the elimination of the spontaneity and chaos of human life, the elimination of this spontaneity and a rise in the sphere of human freedom and, finally, between a rise in the sphere of freedom and ethical development of humanity in individual and collective dimensions; It does not allow thoughts of the existence of some automatism between development of knowledge and improvement of the overall balance of happiness (Krasnodębski, 1991). It is rather a vision of progress weighed by the doubts that Theodor Adorno implicated after the Second World War with his disturbing question of the possibility of philosophizing after Auschwitz, a question that exposed the whole naivety of an original idea of progress. Despite this, the Brundtland Report vainly sought traces of technical and instrumental reasoning, which in response to this question was taken up in German philosophy by Herbert Marcuse and Max Horkheimer. The Brundtland Report is by no means a manifestation of contestation of prevailing political and economic relations based on this philosophy (Papuziński, 2010). Compared with the ideas of the ideologues of the 1960s counter-cultural movements, the Report shows restraint. At the very outside, echoes of such understanding of technology, voiced by Hans Jonas, are reflected in it. *The internal ambiguity of the technical action*, which Jonas em-

phasizes, with a view to a justified use of the technique, i.e., the use made of it in good faith to meet human needs (Jonas, 1997), is timidly voiced in the technique's enunciations and long-term consequences of its application. In the light of the discussed document, technical and instrumental understanding serve false needs and improper values. Excessive anthropopression, waste of energy and raw materials, high emissivity of harmful substances, a diverse access of different regions of the world to modern technology are the most important international and societal challenges that require an axiological adjustment of technology. This seemingly simple solution, however, presents serious theoretical difficulties. From the perspective of the Enlightenment tradition, which the Brundtland Report refers to, the choice of value lies in the competence of scientific reason. From the point of view of post-war criticism of scientific reason – as a technical and instrumental reason - reason is in the strings of wrong values. Together with the illusions of the Enlightenment theory of progress, institution able to make a right decision disappeared from the Report.

The Brundtland Report is an expression of faith in the possibility of scientific reasoning, but this faith does not include the ability of the mind to play a role of a locomotive of progress. Then, where among the hidden assumptions of the document can we look for what is considered to be a trigger of progress? Among the conditions that guarantee a man freedom to use their own reason. On one hand, this statement is supported by the Report on the philosophy of the Enlightenment, since it refers to the main social slogans of that period. Reconstructing an initial situation which is assumed in this document tacitly in the process of deduction on the desired institutional order of the world, leads to the conclusion that the constitutive character of a situation in which a person has a chance for good use of their or her reason are freedom, equality and brotherhood (global solidarity). Freedom is a condition of progress because, as David S. Landes argues, it revives the spirit of innovation (Landes, 1999). In the Brundtland Report freedom means autonomy of sovereign countries regarding the use of its natural resources, elimination of debt, and effective control over the operations of international corporations within their territory. On the other hand, equality is an access to the global market on the same basis for all. Global solidarity consists in the fight against world poverty, provision of international economic support and, consequently, abolition of a division into developed and developing countries. Yet, the noticed connection between progress and the main social values of the Enlightenment includes the Brundtland Report into the current of philosophical discussions on emancipatory reason. Emancipatory reason is both the opposite and continuation of the demythologized scientific reason. As the opposite, it does not perceive scientific knowledge as a tool for the transformation

of the world; as the continuation, it carries out the task of emancipating a man from the constraints of their beliefs. Progress is therefore such an assumption of the Brundtland Report, which guides this document in the search for a way to liberate mankind from mental limitations of the social world: all the cognitive stereotypes that were confirmed in reality different from ours; economic models that had proven themselves in already non-existent conditioning of the economy; standards of social behaviours that had passed tests in the currently non-existent world of isolated communities. The principle of sustainable development is a proof of progress in terms of emancipation: at the axiological level it proposes a revision of the existing system of perception and evaluation of social relations, at the level of strategic actions, it a proposal of alternative scenarios for economic growth and social development (Kopfmüller, 2001). It signifies emancipation from any constraints that existing, socially and culturally established goals and norms of action on impose on choice. It plays an emancipatory role in a sense of a reflection on human activity, revealing its conditioning and considering its possibilities, showing what it could look like meeting certain criteria, as Robert Kwaśnica writes about the emancipatory function of reason (Kwaśnica, 2007).

2.3. Risk

The risk category has recently been introduced into the language of philosophical discussions, as well as historiosophy (Douglas, Wildavsky, 1992), but the problems it regards refer to the Enlightenment discussion about progress as a state of rational thinking over the chaos of events and contingency of human fate. The Enlightenment philosophy of emancipation of reason is a program of risk reduction to zero. The risk it concerns has a universal dimension in the sense that it concerns every society in the history of mankind, and a particular dimension in the sense that every form of social life has its own, typical of itself risk portfolio. Similarly, we can say about the Brundtland Report. Risk is not a category used to describe the issues covered in the document. But it is there what the war is declared on each time it comes to the threats to sustainable human development. As each of them translates into global and local problems, both aspects of risk, i.e. universal and particular one, are taken into account in this document. Historically, risk related to modernization is a key one. This topic is covered a lot in the Brundtland Report. It comes out when a negative impact of modernization on health and life of plants, animals and people, as well as on their serious social, economic and political consequences are spoken about. Pioneers in risk research have also drawn attention to the social nature of risk perception, acting like a screen, which only allows some of the information about actual threats and their real causes to be known to human consciousness. The paradox of contemporary risk, as

they were diagnosed in the early 1980s, lies in the need for rational management of a powerful technological instrument in the absence of sufficient knowledge and uncertainty about the ecological, and hence the social and economic ones, results of decisions and their significance for the future. With this paradox in mind, they claimed that together with positive experiences each social system maximizes the risks that disappeared in the glow of previous successes. Adopting the assumption of risk makes reversed relations between economy and the natural environment approached in a described way in the Brundtland Report. Drastic reduction of ecosystem, species and genetic biodiversity, deforestation and disappearance of other natural areas, desertification, climate change, ozone depletion, etc., are reflected in the prism of harmful consequences of lack of criticism in assessing the effects of industrial revolution and the rules of economic development established at that time.

Context in which the Brundtland Report speaks about risks imparts unique features to this issue. One of them is a result of linking the issues of risk and justice. The specificity of this document lies in the loud claim of equity in the distribution of benefits and losses associated with risk. The Brundtland Report shows that existing global risks are a price that all humanity pays for activities that bring benefits of an ever-smaller handful of people. It also stresses that a lot of negative effects of global risk have been shifted to the shoulders of these people or social groups, who mostly have a negligible share in making decisions regulating their production, including technologies used in the economy (*Our*, 1987). Another feature that determines the specificity of risk coverage in the Report is related to its approach to the relations between risk and progress. For many, such as for aforementioned Beck, an increase in risk in social life is a crowning evidence for a crisis of the idea of progress (Beck, 1986). However, for the Brundtland Commission, it is a signal to mobilize all forces and resources to defend progress. Beck announced his theory of *risk society* in 1986, when work on the text of the Brundtland Report was coming to an end. His thesis did not manage to influence the shape of the document, but it does not seem likely to be otherwise. Modern society as a society of risk is, as Andrzej Kiepas presents Beck's opinion, *a society of stakeholders, where social solidarity is not a result of a unity of poverty and a pursuit of wealth, but a unity of fear and anxiety about dangers of modern development. Civilization* (Kiepas, 2000). Then, the contemporary society referred to in the Brundtland Report is a society of many global threats that act as a magnifying glass, signaling and highlighting the world's divisions. The Brundtland Report is a study of a society infected at various levels by the bug of inequalities – between developed and developing countries, between large landowners and rural workers, between men and women, between transna-

tional corporations and their employees as well as population living within an area of their influence, etc. It is a society divided according to all possible criteria of class differences such as wealth, participation in power and education. The emphasis put on social divisions in this document effectively prevents this text from being reconciled with Beck's position on the dominance of the wealth logic by the logic of risk production (Beck, 1986). The relation between an emphasis placed on the promotion of positive solutions and the play on human fear and anxiety, which is the foundation and the bond of the *community of fear*, which Beck writes about, also argues against an imposition of a conceptual framework of risk society on the Brundtland Report. A conclusion that Helena Ciążela derived from a comparative analysis of the theory of sustainable development and Hans Jonas's theory of *heuristics of fear* relates to the position of this German thinker at full length. It allows Beck's theory to be recognized as a position that excludes the possibility of rational management of human development, which is incompatible with sustainable development projects (Ciążela, 2006). An interpretation of the risk, which was included in the assumptions of the Brundtland Report, is characterized by an autonomy and originality being a result of fidelity to the traditional approach to risk and progress.

Conclusions

The Brundtland report is an expression of optimism. It spreads the Enlightenment faith in the ability of human reason to overcome the chaos of social life, progress as an improvement in the quality of life of all people, and an ability to restrain the risk of decision-making in a situation of incomplete knowledge of the place of the subject of the decision in the network of social, economic and environmental interconnections. In general, the Brundtland Report, as Michael von Hauff legitimately observes, confidently looks at possibility of such *sustainable growth*, in which technical progress is reflected in growth, social development and preservation of natural conditions of human existence (Hauff, 2014). Despite such close links with the Enlightenment, searching for sources of this optimism in the philosophy of that period is in vain. There is no sign of faith in an automatic transfer of learning achievements to the level of progress, there is no connection with the theory of historical determinism. According to aforementioned Beck, the premise of this optimism could rather be found in the field of collective experience, a contingency of historical, social and cultural determinants. As a result of a peculiar chain of circumstances of the post-World War II reconstruction period, strong ties between technical innovation, increased productivity, economic growth, egalitarianism of consumption and social progress seemed to be confirmed (Beck, 1986). Today, however, this pe-

riod is past. Then, is this optimism a dud? Not necessarily. Zdzisława Piątek legitimately points out that history of open opportunities meets optimism of a sustainable development strategy (Piątek, 2007). A supporter of such an account of history, Karl R. Popper, presents it in short: *Neither history nor nature can tell us what we should do. It is us who place a purpose and meaning into the world of nature and the world of history* (Popper, 1992). This conviction is the most important element of the Enlightenment acquis, after sorting the wheat from the chaff of the ideas of that period by the present. The Brundtland Report takes advantage of this heritage. It is an attempt to make sense of nature and history by setting a goal. This goal is continuous socio-economic development and prospects of future generations to meet needs on an analogous level to ours.

The authors of the Brundtland Report undoubtedly needed optimism. Developing and promoting a sustainable development strategy would be pointless without it. But it has its price. The sustainability theory and strategy outlined in this paper pay for this optimism with partial blindness for new research approaches to the problems they encounter. Consequently, they underestimate the risks that are associated with the processes of economic decision-making and application of powerful technical instrumentation, even when accompanied by good will and the widest possible knowledge of the subject and its place in the network of natural, social and economic interdependence. For the same reason, it does not explicitly account for a difference between responsibility as self-responsibility and corporate responsibility, i.e. responsibility of an individual to their own conscience and responsibility of economic, social and political institutions to so-called external stakeholders.

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