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## Hugo Kołłątaj's moral philosophy and concept of natural ethics

**Annotation:** Kołłątaj Hugo [1750-1812], the coryphaeus of the Polish Enlightenment in philosophy, was a representative of a popular social Enlightenment philosophy - physiocracy. It became the basis for his formulation of an original theory of morality and the concept of natural ethics (presented in the work entitled *Porządek fizyczno-moralny, The physico-moral order*). In his approach, the discovery of the moral order is based on the analysis of physical relations governing the life of a particular person, interpersonal relations and the relationship between man and all nature. Every human being is subject to the same laws as animals and plants, but also to the laws of the internal order. Within human existence, there is a close relationship between physical and moral laws. It is what creates a physico-moral order uniform for the whole world. Man, according to Kołłątaj, should take this order into account in his practical actions, determined by the inherent rights and duties assigned to him. Hence the natural human morality, sanctioned by nothing but the law of nature. In turn, according to Kołłątaj, normative ethics should be an empirical and naturalistic science, practised like natural sciences, deriving its principles from the laws of nature. A set of preferred values was presented by Kołłątaj in chapter XII of his work: "Prawodawstwo przyrodzenia, czyli zbiór przyrodzonych należytości i powinności" ("Legislation of nature, or a collection of inherent privileges and obligations"). In both the individual and social spheres, this ethics dictates that man act in accordance with, first and foremost, fundamental values: charity and justice.

**Keywords:** Enlightenment, physiocracy, deism, natural ethics, physico-moral order

### Filozofia moralna i koncepcja etyki naturalnej Hugo Kołłątaja

**Streszczenie:** Kołłątaj Hugo [1750-1812], koryfeusz polskiego oświecenia na gruncie filozofii, był przedstawicielem popularnej oświeceniowej filozofii społecznej – fizjokratyzmu. Stała się ona podstawą dla sformułowania przez niego oryginalnej teorii moralności oraz koncepcji etyki naturalnej (wyłożonych w dziele: *Porządek fizyczno-moralny*). Odkrycie porządku moralnego polega w jego ujęciu na analizie fizycznych stosunków rządzących życiem poszczególnego człowieka, relacjami międzyludzkimi oraz związkiem człowieka a całą przyrodą. Każdy człowiek podlega takim samym prawom, co zwierzęta i rośliny, ale i też podlega prawom porządku wewnętrznego. W ramach ludzkiej egzystencji zachodzi ścisły związek praw fizycznych i moralnych. On to tworzy jedynolity dla całego świata człowieka porządek fizyczno-moralny.

Człowiek, zdaniem Kołłątaja, winien uwzględniać ów porządek w swoim praktycznym działaniu, wyznaczonym przypisanymi mu przyrodzonymi uprawnieniami i obowiązkami. Stąd wynika naturalna ludzka moralność, nie sankcjonowana niczym, poza prawem natury. Etyka zaś normatywna, zdaniem Kołłątaja, winna być nauką empiryczną i naturalistyczną, uprawianą na wzór nauk przyrodniczych; wywodzącą swe zasady z praw natury. Zestaw preferowanych wartości został przez Kołłątaja przedstawiony w rozdziale XII swego dzieła: „Prawodawstwo przyrodzenia, czyli zbiór przyrodzonych należytości i powinności”. Tak w sferze indywidualnej, jak i społecznej, etyka ta nakazuje człowiekowi postępować w myśl przede wszystkim podstawowych wartości: dobroczynności i sprawiedliwości.

**Słowa kluczowe:** oświecenie, fizjokratyzm, deizm, etyka naturalna, porządek fizyczno-moralny

### **Моральная философия и концепция естественной этики Хуго Коллонтая**

**Аннотация:** Коллонтай Гюго [1750-1812], корифей польского Просвещения в философии, был представителем популярной социальной философии Просвещения - физиократии. Это стало основой для его формулировки первоначальной теории морали и концепции естественной этики (изложенной в работе: *Физический и нравственный порядок*). В своем подходе открытие морального порядка заключается в анализе физических отношений, управляющих жизнью человека, межличностных отношений и отношений между человеком и всей природой. Все подчиняются тем же законам, животные и растения, но также подчиняются законам внутреннего порядка. Существует тесная взаимосвязь между физическими и моральными законами человеческого существования. Он создает единый физический и моральный порядок для всего человеческого мира. Человек, по Коллонтаю, должен учитывать этот порядок в своих практических действиях, определяемых неотъемлемыми правами и обязанностями, возложенными на него. Отсюда естественная человеческая мораль, санкционированная только законом природы. Нормативная этика, согласно Коллонтаю, должна быть эмпирической и естественной наукой, практикуемой по образцу естественных наук; выводы свои принципы из законов природы. Набор предпочтительных ценностей был представлен Коллонтаем в главе XII своей работы: *Законодательство о рождении, или Набор естественных обязанностей*. И в индивидуальной, и в социальной сферах эта этика требует от человека действовать в соответствии с основными ценностями: благоотворительностью и справедливостью.

**Ключевые слова:** просвещение, физиократия, деизм, естественная этика, физический и моральный порядок

## **I. Introduction**

Hugo Kołłątaj<sup>1</sup> was the leading philosopher of the Polish Enlightenment, along with Stanisław Staszic [1755-1826] and Jan Śniadecki [1756-1830]. His activities in

<sup>1</sup> Hugo Kołłątaj was born in 1750 in Dederkały Wielkie in Volhynia in a noble family. He was educated in Pińczów and at the Krakow Academy, where he obtained the degree of doctor of philosophy in 1772. It was also where he was ordained a priest. He continued his studies in Vienna and Rome, where he earned doctorates in legal sciences and theology. After returning from his studies abroad in 1774, he took the position of the canon of the Cracow Cathedral and quickly became a first-class figure in the Polish science in his era, especially in terms of political thought. After the Targowica confederation and the Second Partition of Poland, Kołłątaj joined the Kościuszko Uprising (1793-1794). After the Kościuszko Uprising, he emigrated from the country. In 1794 he was arrested by the Austrians and imprisoned in Ołomuniec until 1802. During these years he developed his philosophical system. After returning to the country, he tried to put his political proposals into practice under the auspices of Napoleon, but he did not gain much success in this matter. Subsequently, he devoted himself to working on the reform of Krzemieniec Lyceum. Suspicions of cooperation with France (1807-1808) led to his preventive detention by the Russians. He died in oblivion in Warsaw in 1812 (Palacz, 2002, pp. 155-158).

science, politics and education are clear grounds for counting him among the greatest Poles in history. In the field of philosophy, he was above all the author of the original, naturalistic concept of the philosophy of morality and social ethics, presented in the work entitled *Porządek fizyczno-moralny* (*The physico-moral order*, 1811)<sup>2</sup>, which is considered the quintessence of his philosophical achievements.

## II. Physiocracy

The theoretical basis for Kołłątaj's reflections was physiocracy, which was very popular in Europe at that time - a concept of social philosophy established in France in the mid-eighteenth century. Its creator was Francois Quesnay [1694-1774]. Its basic idea was the natural (inherent) order of the physical and social world (Majka, 1982, pp. 17-18). "The guiding idea of physiocracy is to recognise the correspondence between the economic order and the natural order, resulting from the laws of nature. Hence, the physiocrats advocated the principle of full freedom of economic activity, freedom of ownership and personal freedom. In their view, land was the only source of wealth, and agriculture was the sole production activity capable of multiplying this wealth. The land and its management yield pure product, new goods" (*Wielka Encyklopedia medialna*, "Physiocracy"). Hugo Kołłątaj directly drew the idea of a uniform physical and moral order from physiocracy, seeing in it the source of regularities governing the natural and social world. Hence his negative attitude towards fideism.

In his work *Rozbiór krytyczny zasad historii o początkach rodu ludzkiego* (*Critical scrutiny of the principles of the story about the origins of the human race*, 1842), Kołłątaj explained the observed disturbance of the "eternal" order, expressed in the contemporary moral collapse of the humankind, by the biblical flood (described as a natural phenomenon) as a caesura separating the originally good man from the present one, to whom Rousseau's natural goodness no longer applies. The flood changed the surface of the earth and also changed man: "We are not what people were before this terrible calamity; we are what the unfortunate man who had saved himself from it must have been, from whom we took the first rules of moral life. Extraordinary fear, misery, sadder views for the future - all this gave rise to new impressions from which his morality was created and founded the first principles of such a life in which the entire human race found itself later" (Kołłątaj, 1842, p. 289). The concept of the flood enabled Kołłątaj to incorporate moral evil into the characteristics of modern man and, at the same time, to show the need to repair morality.

At the same time, Kołłątaj slightly modified the very concept of physiocracy, believing that there were two sources of wealth: not only land but also work; hence his critical attitude to the physiocratic economic thesis that the only source of wealth is nature alone. He maintained that land throughout the country should be private property, because individual possession complements a legitimate human. The state, on the other hand, should not own land. The consequence of this thesis was the demand for the abolition of serfdom, quitrent and patrimonial jurisdiction - the peasants were

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<sup>2</sup> *Porządek fizyczno-moralny* is not a finished work. This work was published only as a single volume; Kołłątaj described his further plans in this respect in an extensive manuscript entitled *Pomysły do dzieła Porządek fizyczno-moralny* (*Ideas for the work The physico-moral order*, 1810). Both of these works are published in: (Kołłątaj, 1955).

to be subject to the general law and tribunal, not the jurisdiction of the lord. Although, according to Kołłątaj, everyone is equal before the law, not everyone has an equal right to participate in shaping "the government." Only a citizen with private property is entitled to this right. Kołłątaj stressed that despite the equality of all people based on the law of nature, they differ from each other because they are unequally equipped by nature. Although everyone has an equal right to the things they need, the inequality of human forces means that the acquisition and possession of property must be unequal. Therefore, the inequality of property is natural (Kołłątaj, 1955, pp. 122-127). In this context, Kołłątaj discussed the issue of work and the right to property. He maintained that man was forced to purchase things by his own means, i.e. through work. At the same time, he negatively assessed idleness, describing it, literally in the spirit of Calvin, as a state opposite to nature (Kołłątaj, 1955, pp. 69-70).

Kołłątaj spoke about his philosophical system that it was a theory of physiocrats, but improved, enriched and adapted to moral philosophy. In this sense, his thought was the creative crowning of both the original physiocracy and the one developed in Poland (Opalek, 1953) by Antoni Popławski [1739-1799] and Hieronim Stroynowski [1752-1815]. What is particularly noteworthy here is ascribing moral qualification to work and the associated property. In this instalment of Kołłątaj's social philosophy, elements of liberal thought clearly show through. Due to the presented minimalism and cognitive optimism (less of knowledge in both natural sciences and anthropology, but this knowledge is certain), his philosophical views are treated as a kind of a precursor of positivist thought (Skoczyński & Woleński, 2010, p. 213). Above all, however, they provide a theoretical framework for reflection on morality.

### III. Theory of morality

Kołłątaj began his reflection on morality by analysing the human condition in the world. He concluded that the empirical reality that surrounds man is governed by the only, unchangeable and necessary physical laws that rule over all "beings." "After perceiving, for a long period of time, the effects of countless beings, which we can recognise with the help of our senses, we find that all fossil organisms are always arranged in the same and proper shape, and that plants and animals are reborn in one way, not only in the genera and species themselves, but even in their organic parts they also retain the very same form; that celestial bodies always circulate above our heads in the same manner, from which we conclude that all the enumerated entities are subject to certain rules as to their formation, reproduction and movement" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 19).

According to Kołłątaj, God is the source of physical laws. For him, however, God was merely a hypostasis and not an actually existing being. Kołłątaj assumed the existence of one cause, necessary for all things, but did not penetrate its essence. People define this cause in various ways: as Providence, Nature or finally God, but the term itself is in his opinion the least important. The most important thing for him in this context is the opportunity to learn empirically the causal law of nature, which teaches about human rights (*należytości*, privileges) and *powinności*, obligations (duties) (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 23). Nevertheless, in the spirit of Enlightenment deism, Kołłątaj did not deny the existence of God. He ascribed to him the function limited only to the act of creating the world and establishing laws enabling the independent development of matter existing in it. Thus, he rejected faith in God directing the fate of the world, faith in miracles and revelation. He was

a declared anti-fideist. He believed, in accordance with the Enlightenment understanding of religion, that God should be affirmed as the only cause of all "beings" and worshipped, but without the mediation of any church institution or organisation. He ascribed the functions of affirming God to "natural theology." Worshipping the First Cause was the task of the "natural religion" (Chlewicki, 2015, pp. 7-9). In his opinion, these two fields of metaphysics he actually disregarded are connected with moral philosophy in an insignificant way (Kołłątaj, 1955, pp. 146-147).

Therefore, all beings are subject to certain rules; man is no exception in this case; he is also a part of a larger whole and just like other entities is subject to the "physical order." "We see, for example, that man reproduces like animals and plants, that he has the same arbitrary movement as animals, that he maintains his existence through nourishment, that he dies like animals and plants. For this reason, every human being is subject to the same laws that are common to plants and animals" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 27). This approach is far from the religious and theological tradition, which treats man as a distinguished centre of this world, separate from nature, hoping for eternal life after death. As he wrote in *Ideas for the work The physico-moral order*: "Probably a man in his description must be similar to many animals and in the science of the history of nature belongs to the animal genus. However, this is nothing that offends nobility or superiority over all beings on the earth's surface which he obtained with the help of natural forces" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 216). Kołłątaj was partial to the unambiguously monistic, not to say explicitly - materialistic approach to reality.

According to Kołłątaj, a description of the human being "should begin with the scrutiny of the physical state of man, that is, careful thought about the physical laws upon which his existence depends, because the knowledge of this side of man is accessible to our senses, which are the first key to all our information" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 36). Although, according to him, man is an element of the general construction of the empirically cognised world, subject to general physical laws which concern all types of beings, there are specific laws applicable only to him. "However, there are other physical laws specific to man himself: for example the ability to convey his ideas through speech, adopting its refinements to the extent of the participation of mental images" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 27). As an example, he mentions the ability to think abstractly. These rules which in principle only concern man apply to his internal reality. They form an area of human existence parallel to physical reality.

Kołłątaj, therefore, affirms the dualistic construction of some beings, with the animal and, above all, the human world in mind. It is manifested through the separate order concerning the organic body and a relatively autonomous internal volitional force. Nevertheless, he concludes that in man the external (physical) order is closely related to the internal (moral) order. Both these spheres together constitute the "natural order", which determines the most general framework of life for man. Mankind cannot exist beyond this inseparable physico-moral order. For man, "[...] these two kinds of laws are equally necessary, because without the first we could not live and we would not be able to do physical activities, while without the second we would not be able to handle moral matters" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 29). It was only this anthropological perspective (Hinz, 1973b, p. 17) that enabled Kołłątaj to go on to reflect on man subjected to natural (inherent) moral laws.

He included the "power of arbitrary action" among the basic rules determining the moral dimension of human existence. "What should make us wonder more is that

nature has placed man under moral laws that bind him irrefutably, invariably and necessarily. To the same kind belongs the law that we call the power of arbitrary action (*liberum arbitrium*); that is, whatever we do, we do it according to our will, our choice, our permission and we cannot act otherwise; to the extent that anything we would do involuntarily would not be our matter, but would be a result of some foreign force that does not belong to us" (Kołłataj, 1955, p. 27). Freedom of the will is a *sine qua non* condition of morality. It is an "innate ability" which, like the soul, is a simple phenomenon whose existence we observe but do not prove. At the same time, for Kołłataj freedom of the will is a necessary requirement without which moral science would be something artificial and not natural. Man has real freedom of choice - he can act or restrain from action, follow moral laws or act against them. At the same time, Kołłataj indicates that freedom is not unlimited. Freedom cannot be equated with self-will or lawlessness. In the first place, freedom of the will is limited by nature itself, because "[...] the power of our arbitrary action does not extend to the laws of nature, but only to our duties and obligations [...] so far that our freedom in relation to all natural rights is only passive, and is active only in relation to our privileges and obligations" (Kołłataj, 1955, p. 91). This is the first external natural restriction of freedom of the will. Other, internal limitations of freedom are a consequence of the fact that man is a natural being. From within, human freedom is limited by his mental powers, and more precisely by his knowledge of the world, because this knowledge determines the scope of his desires. Similarly, we are limited by our needs and means of satisfying them, by the obligations that rules and commitments impose on us, and by relations with nature and its laws. Nature is governed by its own rules, which man cannot oppose. The rights of others are also an important limitation of individual freedom. Human needs not only limit human freedom, but also stimulate it, because they prompt the will to act, and thus to use freedom. In the light of the above, a lack of freedom amounts to acting against the will and consent, i.e. acting under coercion.

The most important theoretical issue for Kołłataj's moral philosophy is, after taking into account the thesis about the existence of a uniform physico-moral order in the world as well as human freedom, justifying the moment of transition from the physical order to the moral order. The resolution of this question is aimed at demonstrating a way of linking the generally ascertained physical order to the indirectly knowable moral order.

Kołłataj bases this transition on the thesis of universal purpose. This purpose is based on the practical involvement of man in maintaining his existence, which requires the use of the abilities he has been given, as well as reason. Moreover, this thesis assumes that all people have various needs and feelings which, if satisfied, enable them to live or facilitate their lives (Jedynak, 1996, p. 121). In this sense, as Maria Ossowska notes, it is true of Kołłataj that "Ethics [...] should begin with psychology, namely with the identification of human needs, which can be ascertained by observing pleasant and unpleasant 'feelings.' Man's needs identified in this way, such as food, clothing, housing, tools, marriages, family, social life and mutual help are his privileges. Each such privilege has a corresponding obligation, namely the others' obligation to respect that privilege" (Ossowska, 1959, p. 10). The goal of human life is life itself lived by satisfying needs; any attempt to justify human existence or determine its meaning by introducing a metaphysical (transcendent) perspective is, according to Kołłataj, a fundamental mistake. In terms of life processes, man does not differ much from animals. The only difference in

this respect is human reason and taking into account the moral order that really exists in the human world.

On the basis of the above, Kołłątaj introduced the cardinal notions of *należytość* - privilege, and *powinność* - obligation, essential for his moral reflection, which could be otherwise defined as "rights" and "duties." These concepts determine the specificity (uniqueness) of the social human world. Man's inherent privilege is "[...] the opportunity and freedom" given by nature "to acquire and use everything that is needed to preserve life and its comfort, provided that one fulfils one's indivisible obligations" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 57). On the other hand, obligations are conditions, related to privileges, that man "[...] should keep and fulfil, wishing to enjoy these privileges" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 57). Therefore, *należytości* (privileges) are rights (*leges*) which man possesses by nature; it is something that he deserves due to his existence. *Powinności* (obligations), in turn, are duties (*officia*), i.e. what one is supposed to do or what is expected of them. The result of the relationship between the two sides of this internal natural law is delineation of the area of morality: "[...] a moral matter is a deed which is about not violating or violating a privilege, and fulfilling or not fulfilling an obligation, and this with the application of our will, with the permission of our common sense" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 90).

For Kołłątaj, the relationship between *należytości* (privileges) and the corresponding *powinności* (obligations) is substantially the essence of morality. "One of the most important among moral laws is that every human being is born with certain privileges only specific to himself, to which certain obligations are attached, a kind of conditions under which he is to enjoy his privileges" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 29). The writer also defines the nature of these laws stating that: "Laws, or natural laws, work in us, in spite of us or, more clearly, without the application of our will; these are certain abilities, forces and rules inherent to us that cannot be separated and removed from us without breaking our machine as a whole or in part. Privileges are like a blessing which nature has given us through its eternal and unchanging rights, if we wish to use them; obligations are duties which need to be fulfilled if we wish to be faithful to them, so that we can be sure of our privileges" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 31). The practical consequence of this relationship in the context of social coexistence is a moral act. It is understood as the implementation of the moral order. Every human deed connected with the moral law becomes a "matter" and as such is a product of three factors: 1. the intellectual factor, or a cognitive power showing the reason for the moral act; 2. the emotional factor, that is, a stimulus to action; and 3. the voluntaristic factor, that is, free will. The will is decisive in a deed (matter) understood in this manner. This is the reason why Kołłątaj wants to create a kind of "logic for the will" from moral science to show how one should manage one's lusts formed on cognitive grounds. In his reflections on the cooperation between the reason and the will, he tries to reconcile the voluntaristic and the intellectual position (Kołłątaj, 1955, pp. 40-54).

To sum up, the presented remarks constitute the outline of the moral philosophy adopted by Kołłątaj. Its striking features are: 1. placing morality in the naturalistic order of things; 2. a priori assumption of the co-existence of the inherent physical and moral order; and 3. ahistoricism not only in understanding the natural moral equipment of man, but also in practising ethical values Kołłątaj identified. These properties are particularly evident in the naturalistic and social normative ethics he constructed on the basis of moral science.

#### IV. Natural ethics

Koźłataj called the collection of all human *naleźytości* (privileges) and *powinności* (obligations) "Legislation of nature, or a collection of inherent human privileges and obligations" (Koźłataj, 1955, pp. 129-134). He presented them in three groups of moral indications centred around: A. human freedom; B. ownership of things acquired by man and C. the social nature of human existence. Discussion of these principles was preceded by the introduction of the category of a "person", denoting a separate, individualised human being that only belongs to oneself. This clarification served him the purpose of distinguishing "man" as a species name from "person" - always a specific subject to whom the privileges and the corresponding obligations he formulated apply.

**A.** In the first point, among the privileges assigned to the person Koźłataj includes: 1. natural possession of oneself; 2. having needs; 3. having one's own mental and physical powers to meet one's needs; and 4. having free will. Human obligations on this level are: 1. caring for one's life and health; 2. satisfying one's existential needs; 3. satisfying one's own needs by means of one's strengths; 4. moderation in effort and in meeting one's needs.

**B.** Existing among things, man has the right to: 1. use things to meet one's needs; 2. acquire things only by means of one's strengths; 3. personal property acquired by one's own strength. The obligations corresponding to these rights are: 1. acquiring things to meet one's needs; 2. acquiring things by means of one's own strengths; and 3. using and treating things as one's property.

**C.** In the sphere of social life, human rights in relation to other people are as follows: 1. every human being is by nature the only owner of his person; 2. man is the owner of his strengths with the help of which he can acquire the things he needs; 3. the things acquired this way are his property; 4. every man is free by nature (in terms of thinking and acting); 5. everyone can voluntarily conclude an employment agreement and sell or exchange ownership of their property without harm to the interested parties; 6. everyone has the right to defend himself against assault and resist violence by force; 7. everyone has the right to mutual or disinterested help of other people. In terms of commitments in social life, Koźłataj lists as follows: 1. no one should appropriate another person or their personal property; 2. no one should limit the use of other people's strengths and prevent them from acquiring things by work; 3. a thing acquired by others should be respected and cannot be appropriated; 4. no one should limit the freedom of others; 5. voluntary and fair agreements should be kept; 6. violence against others is prohibited, apart from violence used in need of fair defence; 7. no man should refuse to help other people, as long as he can do it.

Koźłataj emphasised that these rights and duties form "[...] a collection of legislation that is eternal and never changing as long as the human race exists" (Koźłataj, 1955, p. 129). Therefore, it was supposed to be timeless. In its content, wording and arrangement of rights and duties, this collection explicitly refers to the Enlightenment civic catechisms, popular textbooks on morality from the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, formulated in opposition to the Catholic catechism<sup>3</sup> (Ossowska, 1985, pp. 280-311). They are clearly a model for Koźłataj's ethics, especially in the points regarding the inherent nature of morality, the presentation of moral principles in three

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Constantine F. Volney [1757-1820], *The law of nature, or, Catechism of French citizens* (1793).



areas: the natural rights and obligations of the individual, the citizen and a member of the community, and the lack of supernatural sanctions. The only moral sanction adopted in these secular catechisms and by Kołłątaj consists in the natural fear of the negative social consequences of incorrect human activity (i.e., activity that is contrary to moral principles) (Kołłątaj, 1955, pp. 135-140). Finally, the values which are present both in civil catechisms and Kołłątaj's ethics are those that could be described as bourgeois or merchant values. These include respecting private property, diligence, respecting contracts, and keeping commitments. They were also connected by accepting universal norms, such as: non-violence, right to justified self-defence, limiting one's privileges with the rights of others, and the necessity of human solidarity (subsidiarity towards those in need). In short, Kołłątaj's "Legislation of nature" is a presentation of specific human privileges and obligations, especially those common sense values that set the canon of Enlightenment axiology.

In *The Physico-moral order*, Kołłątaj also contained many interesting, specific ethical reflections. For example, he offered an interesting psychological interpretation of the problem of conflict between privileges and obligations, and of the question of passion, will and conscience. One can also find in his text original reflections on specific values, such as human "autonomy of self-ownership", moderation in satisfying needs, keeping one's word, limiting greed for material goods, respecting someone else's private property, or treating work as a moral obligation. On this list, the virtues are arranged hierarchically in such a way that they the more they depart from egoism and strive for the general good of humanity, the more significant they are.

Kołłątaj attached special importance to the social nature of his ethics. Therefore, he did not attribute absolute freedom to man. He emphasised that individual freedom always has its limits in the form of the rights of other members of society. Above all, however, two equivalent axiological principles he identified are characterised by their social nature: justice and charity.

The principle of justice imposes an obligation to strictly respect everyone's right to property they acquired by their own work. "According to this, justice is nothing else but an obligation which makes us bound to strictly respect the right which everyone has to his possession of either a person or a thing" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 110). According to Kołłątaj, this is a difficult principle to practice because of the social nature of human life, which gives rise to rivalry and inevitable conflicts; there would be no trouble with it if only one man lived in the world (Jedynak, 1986, p. 90).

The principle of charity, in turn, imposes an obligation to provide mutual assistance. "Charity is a duty that obliges us to support each other whenever we need the help of others or we can give it to someone else. We have an irrefutable privilege of such assistance, we have a clear obligation to support each other, give mutual assistance, not even expecting reciprocity" (Kołłątaj, 1955, p. 111). From a practical point of view, Kołłątaj attributed the greatest importance to this principle. He believed that it was not burdened with the absolute obligation to respect and fulfil it in everyday life (like the principle of justice), but depends on the will and initiative of the individual. Whoever follows it in everyday life shows more moral activity than the one who limits oneself only to observing the principle of justice.

This significance of the principle of charity is particularly evident in one of its forms, namely heroism. "If I see my neighbour drowning in water or engulfed in flame

and put my life in the same danger in order to save him, this is heroism. If I would rather suffer than betray the interests of the community, if I risk my life to defend my neighbour, especially to defend the whole community, it is real heroism" (Kołłątaj, 1955, pp. 120-121). Heroism is therefore one of the personality traits of a human being which consists in the ability to overcome external dangers and obstacles, as well as fear, anxiety and physical suffering in the course of fulfilling moral obligations towards other people.

A clear picture of Kołłątaj's ethics emerges from the above: ethics whose programme is not concerned with the highest good and individual happiness. Since man by nature is destined to live for the community, the criterion of moral conduct should be sought in social coexistence and the value of human acts should be assessed accordingly. Hence Kołłątaj's clear aversion to divine sanctioning of moral acts. According to him, the highest sanction is the "sanction of nature", which keeps man on the path of morality. Violations in this area, consisting in not respecting the natural order, failing to respect rights or failing to comply with obligations, cause a disturbance of the natural state of affairs; therefore, they are human arbitrariness's violation committed towards the world; an expression of a lack of reason that is an insult to man.

### V. Conclusion

Hugo Kołłątaj's work, *The physico-moral order*, is a typical outline of the Enlightenment philosophical anthropology and moral theory, conceptualised in the categories of the "invariable and necessary" law of nature and the rights ("należytości", privileges) of man with their corresponding duties ("powinności", obligations) resulting from this law. It also includes a concept of social ethics based on physiocracy and referring to the idea of natural religion and deism. This "civic ethics" was directed against individualistic ethics, was naturalistic in character and was derived from experiencing the laws of nature. At the same time, it tried to resolve the eternal antinomy between man represented in the form of a simple component of the order of nature and man as a free subject of individual and collective activity, expressed in, among others, moral actions. The idea of natural ethics described in *The physico-moral order* was the clearest and most characteristic expression of moral thought in the period of Enlightenment not only in Poland. "No other [...] writer of that era managed to link the physical and moral order so closely, or to capture man as a biological being and at the same time as a social creature, nor to show to what extent people, despite being a part of nature, are responsible creators of their own world" (Suchodolski, 1978, p. 164).

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