

THE EXISTENTIAL PROBLEMS OF HUMAN SECURITY

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Abstract. The universal issues of human security with related concerns are the main topic of this article. The main objective is to analyze the basic factors that influence human existence through this perspective. The author is searching for correlations between the nature of personal and structural security and the human identity understood holistically. Against this background, there are presented numbers of individual and social factors that influence the existential security of a person. Security is perceived here as a way of development of human abilities and desires. It is a process of active and creative adaptation to the generally understood life circumstances, behaviors and activities in the social environment playing important role in establishing the feeling of safety on the individual level.

A man exists, lives, acts and develops in social relations and organizations. A relatively permanent system of components of the surrounding, which are significant for human life and behaviors, is known as the environment. Individual components of the environment, like the human being as such, are subject to various changes. Therefore, apart from the notion of environment, the term „situation” is often used as well. Under the circumstances, in which the mutual components of the situation are adjusted to the abilities of the actor, we speak of a normal situation. If the normal situation is thrown out of the internal balance, we are dealing with a difficult situation. A difficult situation, which is associated with emergence of an obstacle that hinders the achievement of goals, means a violation of the structure of the normal situation. It results in a conflict in the processes of regulation of relations between humans and their environment. Difficult situations that last for a longer time may result in a permanent disturbance of functioning, or even in pathological changes.

In our lives, we are often exposed to situations, which increase the probability of deterioration of the existing conditions, losing balance between the system of values and human capacities. These situations influence greatly the existential security of humans.

The specific dramaturgy of our times is deepened by the civilizational shock, resulting from the opening of Poland to modern communication technologies. Among many processes that reflect the modern reality, one seems to be particularly dominant. It is the process of globalization. Its inevitability and extent can

be observed not only in the sphere of production and trade¹. It also encompasses such fields of existence as IT, finances, demography, environmental protection and education.

On one hand, the state is required to increase the freedom of consumers: privatize the use of resources, lower the taxes and public expenditures. On the other hand, it is required to do more to deal with the social consequences of compliance with the postulate of protection of order and the rule of law².

It seems that the modern world generates challenges other than only the harmful and dangerous physical, chemical, biological factors that result in occupational diseases or accidents at work. Occupational diseases, which have been associated with various forms of physical disability, are now associated increasingly often with emotional instability, fear, depression. We live in a world of permanent and quick changes, in a world that offers freedom, closer contact with other people – mainly thanks to the fast communication network and the extraordinarily rapid development of mass media – at the same time, however, we live in a world, which takes away our sense of security³.

Security, according to a linguistic definition, means a state of lack of threat, calmness, certainty. This term can be found in many sciences and it is difficult to define. In the most general sense, it is the state, in which an individual, a social group, an organization, a state does not sense a threat to its existence or basic interests. A secure situation is a situation, in which there are formal, institutional and practical warranties for protection. In this sense, security can be perceived in emotional, personal, public, financial, economic, social, international terms⁴.

In literature, safety of work is most often associated with hygiene, understood generally as a set of conditions that have a positive impact on human health⁵. While, as this understanding of occupational safety is quite general, it may contain both the physical and the emotional component, the Occupational Training Teacher Reference Dictionary focuses on a rather technical definition of this term. We read that occupational health and safety is "... a set of means and utilities: technical, sanitary and hygienic, socioeconomic and organizational, which, through elimination or limitation of harmful and dangerous physical, chemical and biological factors,

¹ The globalization process has been presented suggestively by J. Naisbitt and F. Fukuyama, *Mega-trend*, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 1997, p. 80-105; F. Fukuyama, *Globalizacja bez końca*, „Gazeta Wyborcza” 25-26 XI 2000, p. 23; G. Dryden, J. Vos, *Revolucja w uczeniu*, translation by B. Józwiak, Zyski i S-ka, Poznań 2003, p. 49.

² Z. Bauman, *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień*, Sic, Warsaw 2007, p. 30.

³ Cf. J.A. Pielkowska, *Pedagogika społeczna wobec zagrożeń współczesności*, (in:) M. Płopa (ed.), *Człowiek u progu trzeciego tysiąclecia. Zagrożenia i wyzwania*, vol. I, Elbląska Uczelnia Humanistyczno-Ekonomiczna, Elbląg 2005, p. 61.

⁴ Cf. <http://leksykony.interia.pl/haslo?hid=173930>

⁵ Cf. M. Szymczak (ed.), *Słownik języka polskiego*, vol. I, PWN, Warsaw 1978, p. 147, 740.

exerting impact on employees in the process of work, ensure the conditions of work and the environment, which eliminate the possibility of occurrence of occupational diseases and accidents at work (...)”⁶.

Two perspectives of safety can be distinguished:

1. „Narrow” – as opposite to threat – presented as lack of threat, focusing on analysis of impact of the subject for the purpose of protection against threats to significant internal values.
2. „Wide” – treated as shaping of conditions that enable attaining of a high level of probability of survival, possession and freedom of the subject to develop. A rather significant aspect here is the creative activity of the subject, its ability to open up and to cooperate with the environment⁷.

At the macro level, security is treated as the real condition of internal stability and sovereignty of the state, which reflects lack or existence of any threats (in the sense of satisfaction of the basic existential and behavioral needs of the society and treating of the state as a sovereign subject in international relations)⁸. In the past, the issues of security were limited to political and military aspects. The modern notion of state security includes the economic, environmental, social and ethnic aspects. Still treated as valid are such threats to personal and structural security as violation of the economic, political, moral and legal order in the society and the internal harmony of man, lack of understanding and compliance in the lives of individuals, nations and states of the rules of justice and moral and legal norms, relationships between people being shaped rather by emotions than by reasons, aiming at satisfaction of particular interest at any price instead of taking into account the common good. Many of these threats have not been eliminated, and they may still pose a potential threat of new conflicts and wars that ruin the economy, culture and security of humans⁹.

Human existence is significantly connected with our attitudes and values. Therefore, it is impossible to be really ourselves without the proper relation to the world of values. We live through values and for values. They make up the source of our happiness, they are the reason for our sacrifice and struggle. Higher values are the basis and source of sense of our existence in this world. Thus, any education must be based on a certain coherent system of values. Education is efficient if it leads to a meeting that results to acceptance of something through an act of will. This

⁶ E. Goźlińska, F. Szlosek, *Podręczny słownik nauczyciela kształcenia zawodowego*, Institute for Technology of Operation, Radom 1997, p. 10.

⁷ M. Cieślarczyk, *Spółeczeństwa i społeczności na przełomie wieków – od bezpieczeństwa kultury do kultury bezpieczeństwa?* (in:) *Bezpieczeństwo w perspektywie socjologicznej*, WBBS, Warsaw 2001, p. 31-32.

⁸ Cf. Dworecki, *Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa*, (in:) *Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, AON, Warsaw 2002, p. 16.

⁹ R. Rosa, *Filozofia bezpieczeństwa*, Bellona, Warsaw 1995, p. 232.

“something” are values. An educator does not create the objective of education, but accepts it, recognizing the existence of values independent of the will of individuals.

A paradox of a critical educational situation is the fact that independence, resulting from a strongly emphasized bringing-up for independence and personal responsibility, or, to a certain extent, an autonomous education, may also lead to isolation. In such case, autonomy as a duty towards self to comply with the general norms will disappear, resulting in abuse. The cases of such “independence”, such strong focus on self are observed, when the process of education is dominated by the tendency to focus on self.

A substantial impact on the quality of the process of education in many social environments is exerted by the IT revolution, which, on one hand, has brought so many valuable things into our lives, and, on the other, has resulted in a deep cultural crisis. It seems that a great myth of our era is the human right to free expression of personality. This myth is often turned into the rule of: everyone can do anything, but not everyone and not anything.

The most typical human behaviors are intentionally initiated activities aimed at achieving certain results. These preparations end naturally with reaching the destination or achieving the goal planned. A man's goal is not only initiated by them, but also organized accordingly through selection of the appropriate means and preparation of a detailed schedule of planned actions. It is also significant that the structure of activities may change depending on the conditions.

A modern man – as Erich Fromm has put it – only seems to know what he wants; in fact, he wants what he is required to do... As a result of this process, he loses his identity, without which there is no real security of a free individual. Loss of one's identity, on the other hand, intensifies the need to adapt to the obligatory models¹⁰.

One of the factors that dehumanize social life, which threatens human existence, are disturbances in satisfaction of one's basic needs. These disturbances in terms of the need for security and stabilization, according to the experts in the field, lead to weakening e.g. of the sense of cause in life, which may result in obsessive-compulsive neurosis, reduction of the higher need to focus on issues associated with the sense of order, a tendency to get support in someone or something characterized by permanence.

In assessment of the situation, fear plays a significant role, since it allows us to decide whether given event will bring us benefits or only negative effects. However, the assessment is not always accurate. Persons anxiety, qualify various threats as being more menacing in comparison with persons with a stabilized level of fear.

¹⁰ E. Fromm, *Ucieczka od wolności*, Czytelnik, Warsaw 2000, p. 236-237.

However, some of the threats are assessed on the same level of riskiness, regardless of any differences in the intensity of fear between individual persons. Drugs, terrorism, a bomb attack usually result in strong fear and are assessed as risky events, while recreational activities, such as skiing, swimming, horse riding are usually referred to as relatively safe and not posing a substantial risk. Assessment of a risky situation is influenced greatly by the degree of familiarity with the tasks entrusted, which had not been encountered before. In such situation, no preventive measures are known, which could allow us to avoid the negative effects of threats. A person, who fears failure upon completion of a given task, usually overestimates the associated risk.

Human behaviors have been the basic object of observation since the beginning of our history. They are the themes of legends, as well as topics of everyday communication in the society. Also poets, writers, as well as authors of song lyrics, both historic and modern ones, describe people in various situations. They analyze behaviors, pointing to general patterns and they search for causes of our deeds. This is the source of valuable knowledge on humans. However, it is subjective; sometimes it refers to individual cases, which serve as a basis for rather unjustified generalizations; sometimes, quite contrarily, it contains generalizations, which are sets of postulates of the desirable human behaviors.

The scope of issues, defined in this way, cannot be free from cognitive deformations, associated with the nature of human perception or determined by ethic attitudes. Understanding of human behaviors often requires a change of one's views. This, on the other hand, as the psychologists have pointed out, is very difficult, and sometimes even impossible. Therefore, we are doomed to multiple views of the human nature, implying explanations of human motives in various situations. This multitude of views is also caused by the fact that humans are subject to interest of various sciences. It can be examined by theology, philosophy, biology, social anthropology or evolutionary psychology. These various points of view serve as a basis for formation of various concepts of human existence.

It seems, nevertheless, that the modern society, which is the source of the culture of individualism and relativism, only facilitates the emergence of narcissistic individuals. This term has not been used accidentally, because, as it has been stated by Ch. Delsol, „(...) a modern individual, even an adult, remains an unstable youth, characterized by incoherent desires, conflicting opinions, (...) irresponsibility”¹¹.

In a society of fluent modernity, individual achievements do not make a permanent property, since assets turn into liabilities in the twinkling of an eye, and advantages turn out to be weaknesses. The circumstances of action and the subordinate strategies of action get old quickly and they become outdated. Taking advantage of experience as a source of knowledge and referring to strategies and tactics that

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 91.

had proven efficient in the past is thus unreasonable, as the tests of the past did not take into account the sudden, usually unexpected changes of the circumstances. Forecasting of future tendencies on the basis of past events is even more risky and usually misleading. It is increasingly difficult to get reliable calculations, while unfailing forecasts have become simply unimaginable¹².

Passiveness is one of the most typical and yet pathological characteristics of men in the modern society. A man wants to be fed, but fails to move, show initiative, even to digest the food supplied. A man is not creative towards his heritage – he only gathers or consumes. Remaining passive, a man does not attempt to find his place in the world and he is forced to give up his ideals and their demands. Therefore, he feels powerless, lonely and full of anxiety. He finds it difficult to self-define and his sense of integrity is low. Conformism, which seems to be the only way to avoid the unbearable fear, often turns out to be insufficient¹³.

Apart from passiveness, another factor, which often influences the safety of man is obedience and submission. Today, obedience has become a somewhat forgotten virtue. Obedience is a questioned value, because the term is not understood and it is often confused with submission. This confusion between obedience and submission is one of the most dangerous mistakes made in modern upbringing. Submission means giving up freedom, capitulation. On the other hand, obedience is disposal of self in accordance with the established hierarchical order. Obedience is exercising of one's freedom, but not against the superiors, it is a selection of an attitude of cooperation with one's superior (educator). They are the ones appointed to organize the lives of their pupils. Those, who are responsible for discipline, also need a positive reply to their actions from their subordinates – they need obedience. Without obedience, there is no normal education, it is impossible to organize any kind of work or a normally functioning community. Therefore, upbringing in the spirit of the appropriately understood obedience is the basic way to build a free society.

Passiveness and submission are not the only symptoms of the illness of the modern man. To understand his condition, it is also necessary to put emphasis on the deepening gap between the intellectual action and the emotional experiences.

The gap between thoughts and emotions leads to an illness, a light chronic schizophrenia, which is typical for the new man of the technological era. In sociology, it is fashionable today to state that human problems can be analyzed without referring to emotions associated with them. It is assumed that scientific objectivism requires the opinions and theories pertaining to men to be free from any emotional bonds.

It should be emphasized that in Poland, we are dealing with a cultural vacuum – on one side, there is the sense of freedom, on the other – material degradation of many

¹² Z. Bauman, *Płynne życie*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2007, p. 6.

¹³ E. Fromm, *Rewolucja nadziei. Ku uczłowieczonej technologii*, Rebis, Poznań 2000, p. 64.

families. Moreover, in many Polish families we can observe the phenomenon of the so-called inheritance of poverty, intensification of pathological behaviors (suicides, addictions, aggression, abuse). A modern family means the increased divorce rate, relationships that have not been formally confirmed. Acceptance of betrayal, open marriages, entered only for some time. I am free, and so you, my children, are free, too. Everyone has the right to live the way they want to, so do what you want, you will have no obligations towards me and I will have none towards you – this rule of education is encountered increasingly often in open and democratic societies.

Negation of religion and the Church is getting deeper, and life orientations are becoming different. Religion, ethics – these seem to symbolize backwardness and they hinder progress. The modern society is „facing a specific crisis of humanity”, which is marked by increasing lack of confidence in own human traits, in the very sense of existence. In many circles, we observe the disappearance of a “universal” – or universally educated – man.

What many years ago was perceived as a rare abnormal behavior, is everyday reality now. We are afraid of aggression, and despite the corrective measures undertaken, despite the numerous forms of therapy – aggression at school and outside school, often emphasized by the media, is not decreasing. Worth mentioning is the brutality and abuse that is often seen by young people on television and on the Internet. There are numerous incidents of vandalism, destruction of common good, inscriptions on the walls, broken desks, graffiti, demolished toilets in the schools.

There is no faith in success, because there have been no significant changes for the better or improvements. We are dealing with a moral crisis, which cannot be fixed with ineffective educational activities.

Human safety is also influenced by the problems of the modern world. The most serious of these include disproportions in economic growth, social inequality, overpopulation and migration, civilizational backwardness and degradation of the natural environment, terrorism etc. These are global problems, which require cooperation of the entire international community. Chances for humankind should be sought in the possibilities of social development, in scientific and technical progress, intermingling of cultures, social movements and integration processes.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger in Germany fears the commencement of the era of civil wars (he has listed about forty such wars, which can be observed in all parts of the world, from Bosnia through Afghanistan to Bougainville). Alain Minc in France warns us against the new era of the Dark Ages. In Great Britain, Norman Stone asks whether we have gone back to the Middle Ages with its beggars, plagues, explosions of passions and superstitions. Of course, it remains an open question, to what extent these opinions are justified or exaggerated – only time will tell¹⁴.

¹⁴ Z. Bauman, *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień*, op. cit., p. 45.

„Summing up, it can be said that humans not so much „are” as „come to be” during their existence. In becoming, in which our entire existence is engaged, our subjective-personal being and activity are of particular significance. In their own way, humans are open and creative: becoming and fulfilling themselves. The multidimensionality of being, becoming and self-fulfillment indicates the possibilities of these processes, which, in their basic function, are evolutionary, but which may also be subject to destruction and degradation”¹⁵.

Establishment of the right hierarchy of values is a very significant task. Values, which are recognized as the most significant, determine the direction of human activity for achievement of ultimate goals and not only the partial objectives or stages. The right hierarchy of values brings order into our lives, shaping the ability to order issues according to their significance and to systematize our lives as necessary.

A significant component of a mature human personality is the objective attitude towards self. It is the ability of self-reflection. A human being with a mature personality fully accepts self, knows his or her strengths and weaknesses, is not bashful towards others but does not want to dominate, either. Such human is full of hope for better times. A man of hope is emotionally stable, bright and happy with his life. He is able to face challenges, to draw constructive conclusions from the mistakes made. A man, who brings hope, is emotionally mature. A man of hope combines emotional balance with a sense of security of his existence. A man of the 21st century must be able to manage his life, to experience the internal freedom, moral and esthetic development, he must be intelligent, of good health, have a strong will, a loving heart and a good intuition.

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¹⁵ Cf. K. Popielski, *Pytanie o człowieka*, (in:) *Człowiek–wartości–sens. Studia z psychologii egzystencji*, ed. K. Popielski, KUL, Lublin 1996, p. 15-17.

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Egzystencjalne problemy ludzkiego bezpieczeństwa

Streszczenie. Bezpośrednim tematem artykułu jest ogólna problematyka procesów ludzkiego bezpieczeństwa. Tym samym celowo podjęta zostaje tutaj analiza podstawowych problemów wpływających na bezpieczeństwo samej egzystencji człowieka. Autor stara się odnaleźć korelację pomiędzy naturą indywidualnego i strukturalnego bezpieczeństwa oraz ludzkiej podmiotowości. Na tym tle rysują się zaprezentowane jednostkowe i społeczne wymiary relacji określających egzystencjalne wymiary bezpieczeństwa człowieka. W tym sensie bezpieczeństwo jest postrzegane jako droga potencjalnego rozwoju ludzkich możliwości i pragnień. Wyraża się w procesach aktywności i kreatywnej adaptacji w relacjach do ogólnych życiowych przypadków, zachowań oraz aktywności ludzkiej w społecznym wymiarze działań.