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## Contemporary threats and human existence

### I – Introduction

The modern human being, who has to fulfil numerous social, professional, and educational roles, exists in various spaces and often adapts to new circumstances and takes multiple decisions in conditions of uncertainty and risk. Threats and conflicts are part and parcel of human lives and of the functioning of organisations, states, and communities.

Humans need both a place and a space. (...) a place is security; space is freedom. We are attached to the one and long for the other<sup>297</sup>.

Safety is a fundamental need of every human being and the necessary condition for our survival and development, and every person has the right to safety. This is connected to every aspect of our lives. One may discuss safety not only in the geopolitical sense, but also in its economic, financial, digital, and individual aspects.

K. Drabik emphasised that one may care about human security only if we take care of the person as a whole.

“The conditions of security, whose nature is mainly individual and specific, are interpreted from the individual’s point of view. We may then talk about security through the lens of the subject’s holistic physical, mental, spiritual, intuitive condition. This is where the sense of security is derived as a subjective perception of the configuration of the individual’s living conditions that he or she considers in the categories of the certainty of existence (security) or threat”<sup>298</sup>.

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<sup>297</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Przestrzeń i miejsce*, PIW, Warsaw 1987, p.75.

<sup>298</sup> K. Drabik, *Bezpieczeństwo personalne i strukturalne w perspektywie filozoficznej*, [in:] *Natura bezpieczeństwa w perspektywie personalnej i strukturalne*, K. Drabik (ed.), AON, Warsaw 2013, pp.35-47.

Contemporary threats and conflicts are mainly of a “hybrid” nature; they take place on various planes, and the traditional military dimension is only one of them. Other dimensions, for which the non-military defence structures of the state are fundamental, are becoming increasingly important<sup>299</sup>.

Here, it is worth referencing the views of A. Toffler: the scientific and information revolution that is currently sweeping the world has completely changed the most important goals of conflict. The focus of competition has shifted from fighting for material resources to the fight for the intellectual and the spiritual. The main game focuses on human awareness. This is a war without front lines. The human mind has become the battlefield<sup>300</sup>. As a result, when we think about the future, we have to break free from “fixed” stereotypes, otherwise we will not be able to overcome the challenges of modern times.

The aim of this study is to point to the main threats to human existence in the space where people exist (the social environment, school, family, workplace, places of leisure, etc.), while defining the methods and dimensions of education for security.

The author has posed the following main hypothesis: properly conducted education for security, both in its individual and institutional aspects, has considerable influence on the security of citizens in all areas of their lives.

The thesis was verified with the use of theoretical research methods: content analysis and synthesis, comparison and generalisation, which proved useful in studying research that discusses both the nature of threats and education for security.

The author is convinced that this subject deserves more attention, because the concept of shaping a sense of security is becoming one of the major challenges of our times, particularly in the context of growing spatial disparities and existential threats to humans.

### **The multi-dimensional nature of the threats to human existence**

Aby In research, a threat is not interpreted in an unambiguous way. The narrow definition of a threat explains this concept by referring to the category of difficult situations<sup>301</sup>. According to this definition, a threat exists when “...a fear of losing highly appreciated values, first of all one’s own life, arises in the human mind”<sup>302</sup>.

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<sup>299</sup> M. Kuliczkowski, *Pozamilitarne przygotowania obronne w Polsce. Próba systematyzacji procesualnych oraz funkcjonalnych aspektów przygotowań*, AON, Warsaw 2016, p.10.

<sup>300</sup> A. Toffler, *Trzecia fala*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 1985, pp. 501-504.

<sup>301</sup> T. Tomaszewski, *Wstęp do psychologii*, PWN, Warsaw 1971, pp. 124-138.

<sup>302</sup> B. Hołyst, *Wiktymologia*, Wydawnictwo Prawnicze PWN, Warsaw 1997, pp.64-65.

In this context, a threat is understood as a situation of which the subject is aware<sup>303</sup>. However, in a wider interpretation, "... threats also include situations that the subject is not aware of"<sup>304</sup>.

As a result of constant civilisational development and progressing industrialisation and urbanisation, the number of factors that may cause direct threats to human life and health, as well as pose a danger to the environmental and cultural environment, has increased significantly. Human beings, in their attempts to control natural reality, have caused, on the one hand, spiritual degradation, and on the other, their own enslavement by artificial products created with the use of technology. In this artificial, man-made world, people are no longer safe; they are beyond any kind of order and not only natural laws, but also any transcendence. One may state that, in the search for security, people have fallen into a trap that they had unintentionally created with their own hands<sup>305</sup>.

Contemporary living conditions carry multiple threats for the mental health of individuals, especially in their interactions with others. This has resulted in the dynamic development of various types of psychological therapies, including interpersonal training, that has become the area of interest for many psychologists.

Social life also carries risks for human health. The interdependence between numerous factors that regulate the life of individuals in society and are often contradictory or mutually exclusive, require people to make decisions that enable them to lead a successful life, so that the individual is happy and lives in compliance with social values.

The rapid development of modern technologies, including genetic engineering, has led to an unprecedented rate of transformation in modern civilisation. This constantly accelerating pace also contributes to the homogenisation and unification of behaviour, although only indirectly. An increasing number of material and immaterial goods are desired by members of society, but the distribution market is characterised by growing diversity. A new phenomenon is the growing gap between the most affluent and the poorest, which refers both to countries and to social groups that represent national structures. Social inequality is also on the rise. The labour market has witnessed multiple trends and manifestations of repetitive behaviour that are proof of the deep dehumanisation of human nature<sup>306</sup>.

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<sup>303</sup> Ibidem, p. 65.

<sup>304</sup> Ibidem, p. 439

<sup>305</sup> A. Peccei, *Przyszłość jest w naszych rękach*, PWN, Warsaw 1987, p.24.

<sup>306</sup> A. Radziejewicz-Winnicki, *Spółeczeństwo w trakcie zmiany. Rozważania z zakresu pedagogiki społecznej i socjologii transformacji*, Wydawnictwo GWP, Gdańsk 2005, p. 8.

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Social disparities, injustice, and the emergence of egotism are notions that inevitably lead to marginalisation. This refers to the existence of relatively permanent groups and social circles that have either accepted or inherited their status of inequality and their absence from the main stream of public life and who treat this as an insurmountable or normal status. These groups limit their activity to exchanging their unequal status for benefits from public charity or the distribution of aid from state institutions<sup>307</sup>.

It is worth noting that marginalisation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and as such, it may be analysed as a facet of the status of the boundaries and the capacity to act of individuals or groups, and their participation in the distribution of goods, in culture, public affairs, and in education. Social marginalisation may also manifest itself in attitudes, beliefs, the assessment of one's living conditions, as well as the chance and possibility to effectively participate in social life.

One of the factors that often contributes to marginalisation and exclusion is helplessness. The notion is not easy to describe or analyse. It is an emotional phenomenon that threatens the proper functioning of the individual. Helplessness is often accompanied by low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, and perceiving one's position as inferior or unequal. It emerges in conditions of poverty, which is often hereditary.

One of the most dangerous among many threats and challenges of modern civilisation are the environmental dangers that are related to the consumer lifestyle, excessive exploitation of natural resources, environmental pollution, deteriorating biodiversity, and, finally, global climate changes.

Failure to cope with one's own emotions contributes to personality disorders, which are yet another threat to human existence. Some examples are the emotionally unstable personality of the impulsive type, or the so-called borderline personality, anxious personality or dependent personality.

Our everyday life is full of increasingly popular attitudes of social passivity and apathy and decreasing involvement in public matters, even on the lowest, social and local community levels.

Contemporary human life is characterised by a longing for unity, depth, and a community. However, people do not find these either in themselves or in existing cultural institutions. Currently, the rational mind has distanced people from nature, their neighbours,

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<sup>307</sup> E. Marynowicz-Hetka, *Pedagogika społeczna. Podręcznik akademicki*, Vol. 2, PWN, Warsaw 2009, pp. 102-103.

and the sphere of sacred. Technological progress has replaced traditional culture together with the values embedded in it<sup>308</sup>. Thanks to rational intelligence, people are healthier and live longer, but they do not know how to make sense of it all. An ever greater number of people are moving from one extreme to another, from excessive or unproductive activity (workaholism and other addictions, neurotic states) to complete passivity (alienation or depression). However, developing one's own spirituality may help<sup>309</sup>.

Another emerging threat to human existence is connected with the pathology of exercising power by the state. In the most general terms, it is referred to as a phenomenon and a process that exists in the functioning of institutions of the state and the behaviour of people who hold the power, which creates a threat to the social and political order in the given social structure and on a given scale. This may refer, for example, to denying or disregarding the accepted social and civil values or violating the standards of public life, which may be considered as an indicator of a non-democratic form of public order (e.g., quasi-democracy, façade democracy or even an authoritarian state)<sup>310</sup>.

The negative consequences of the pathology of power include, among others: decreasing social trust in authority, loss of public support and a decreased turnout at elections, the loosening of social ties between the authorities and the society, the functioning and development of negative patterns of civic attitudes that violate the legal and cultural social order with the approval of the authorities.

One should also note contact (especially by children and adolescents) with IT technologies (regular, long-term contact with the Internet, mobile phone or Facebook), which poses an increasingly serious threat to optimal development and comprehensive activity. This has resulted in impairment of the mental sphere, and impaired social, emotional, and volitional development.

Some other threats to humans include the cultural crisis and a feeling of confusion, which result from the lack of balance between the uneven development of the sphere of the cognitive and the surrounding technical and technological progress. The development of modern technologies has not been accompanied by a growing cultural awareness. This leads to

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<sup>308</sup> Ch. Taylor, *Etyka autentyczności*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 1996.

<sup>309</sup> M. Kapała, T. Frąckowiak, *Duchowy rozwój człowieka-między biernością a aktywnością*, [in:] *Bierność społeczna. Studia interdyscyplinarne*, A. Keplinger (ed.), Wydawnictwo Psychologii i Kultury, Warsaw 2008, p. 89.

<sup>310</sup> A. Olubiński, *Aktywność i działanie jako forma edukacji do samorealizacji czy zniewolenia? W świetle założeń edukacji humanistycznej i krytyczno-emancypacyjnej*, Wydawnictwo Impuls, Kraków 2018 pp. 97-98.

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an ironic paradox, where people are unable to catch up with their own inventions, as if they have not matured enough to use these inventions properly yet<sup>311</sup>.

### III The educational space for shaping human security

The presence of people in a particular domain has become active participation, characterised by cognitive subjectivity. This was expressed by the famous Polish sociologist and philosopher, Florian Znaniecki, who claimed that:

“Humans do not experience an objective, quality-free, unlimited space, but various qualitative spaces that are limited, assessed in a negative or positive way, located in (...) a specific position in reference to any person, that usually have a specific value for people”<sup>312</sup>.

In the field of psychological thought, education is perceived as the sphere of human activity where the process of education takes place. S. Juszczak defines it as: “the area, in which the individuals acquire permanent elements of knowledge, ways of acting and thinking, shape their attitudes and beliefs, in mutual interactions”<sup>313</sup>.

An important element of this are mutual social interactions within education, which were noted by I. Surina, who defined educational space as: “a relatively rational, uniform structure of order of social life and social activity based on the subjective and objective perception of social reality, which is founded on the basis of the educational system and educational activity, whose main aim is to form personality”<sup>314</sup>.

The educational space for shaping human security is connected with people’s activity in the environment where they exist. A specific trait of human activity is participation in changing the natural, social, and cultural environment to suit human needs, goals, and ideals, as well as shaping a sense of security.

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<sup>311</sup> A. Pieczywok, *Działania społeczne w sferze bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Ekonomii i Innowacji, Lublin 2018, p. 109.

<sup>312</sup> F. Znaniecki, *Socjologiczne podstawy ekologii ludzkiej*, „Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny” 1938, Vol. 1.

<sup>313</sup> S. Juszczak, *Dydaktyka informatyki i technologii informacyjnej*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2004, p.16.

<sup>314</sup> Surina I., *Rozważania o przestrzeni edukacyjnej - od teorii do praktyki edukacyjnej*, [in:] *Przestrzeń edukacyjna wobec wyzwań i oczekiwań społecznych*, I. Surina (ed.), Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2010, p.14.

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The educational aspect of human security may be analysed in terms of multiple social groups and locations. Education on every level has always had a spatial and temporal dimension: it takes place in a certain place and at a certain time. This place and time are the main organisational, formal, and substantive conditions for the designed solutions that may be introduced in various institutions and groups.

The space that is created in the pedagogical perspective is linked to the specific environment of human upbringing.

This space created in pedagogical terms will be mainly related to the environment of children and school pupils. Because of this, the physical and natural, social, and cultural aspects of education should be taken into consideration. As far as institutions that develop and create security are concerned, we may distinguish: the family environment, peer groups, school, the local community, and the workplace.

Recent years have brought the awareness that the time has come for a form of education that will focus on humans once again and help them establish new bonds with others. The shift towards people and their problems and the shift of focus from the universe to the sphere of values is something new after the era of positivist paradigms and opens new space for reflection. No wonder that there is a growing interest in *paideia* and humanism, which has served the formation of human consciousness well<sup>315</sup>.

Education is expected to be a vehicle for progress and to stimulate change. Hence, a need emerges for a more radical search and implementation of a creative and flexible model of human upbringing to face the challenges of the information society.

The education of individuals, and thus also of society, has gained a new dimension recently. It is becoming the essence of the meaning of human life and a condition for shaping a cognitive, knowledge-based society, so that people have the opportunity to become actual subjects that consciously decide their own *status quo*. Educators, who are responsible for the dissemination of educational ideas (on the European scale), are seeking to give education a new status, which is referred to as lifelong learning, that enables education in three dimensions: the vertical, horizontal and in-depth dimension. This gives individuals the chance to acquire

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<sup>315</sup> Jaeger W., *Paideia. Formowanie człowieka greckiego*, Wydawnictwo Fundacja Alethei, Warsaw 2001.

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education on the following stages: from preschool through school to university and postgraduate studies, and, at the same time, the possibility to learn about various areas of life, knowledge, and widely understood culture and to shape the attitude based on intellectual openness, self-learning and the ability to skilfully combine free time with various forms of activity<sup>316</sup>.

Modern education is more than just communicating scientific achievements. It also involves, maybe even first and foremost, teaching the ability to select knowledge and apply it in practice. The social and economic changes caused by the development of modern ICT technologies, in particular the Internet and mobile technologies, have resulted in the need to remodel education<sup>317</sup>.

A particularly important aspect of modern education is to prepare young people to develop their personalities and prepare for their lives as adult citizens, not only to prepare them to meet the requirements that result from the objectives and tasks of teaching specific school subjects. It is not by chance that contemporary problems of education and upbringing remain closely related to a reflection on people and their functioning. They also involve the tendency to respect the continuity of change in education. Because of this, a great deal of attention has been devoted to universal values in upbringing as well as to the methodological procedures of defining the objectives and selecting educational content.

There is a high demand for a comprehensive development of human personality. The model of education for security, that is based only on transferring knowledge (teaching), has to be replaced by a comprehensive education model, as knowledge alone, even if it is perfect and combined with skills and competences, is no longer sufficient.

As a result of contemporary threats, a trend has arisen that has been described by T. Borowska, who refers to the need to educate individuals to be able to cope with various threats, mainly by developing their ability to create their own existence. This author claims that creative

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<sup>316</sup> A. Frąckowiak, J. Pólturzycki, *Tendencje rozwojowe edukacji dorosłych*, [in:] *Edukacja dorosłych w wybranych krajach*, A. Frąckowiak, J. Pólturzycki (ed.), Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, Warsaw 2010, pp.47-48.

<sup>317</sup> K. Borawska-Kalbarczyk, *Kompetencje informacyjne uczniów w perspektywie zmian szkolnego środowiska uczenia się*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, Warsaw 2015.



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power may lie in the moral, cognitive, and emotional resources that *homo construens* may acquire thanks to education<sup>318</sup>.

Confronted with the need to take risks and minimise human insecurity, education should evolve mainly towards making the right decisions. These problems are studied in decision-making theory, which analyses the rational actions of people that lead them towards achieving positive, beneficial results.

The thoughts of Zygmunt Bauman are also part of the social context of education that involves building a proper dialogue and social consensus. This author believes that one of the main challenges for modern education in this aspect is [...] building and reconstructing interpersonal relationships, creating a friendly environment that fosters the cooperation of all people in their attempts to strengthen their self-value, developing individual possibilities, and the proper use of the possessed skills<sup>319</sup>.

#### IV. Conclusion

For security and education, it is extremely important to educate young people and raise them to be responsible, first in the family environment, later in schools and educational and care institutions, at universities, and through mass media, the activities of politicians and culture. Here, one should be aware that, apart from education that transfers ready knowledge, it is possible and necessary to learn through experience, and that these two types of learning should be combined skilfully.

It should be concluded that the research objective was fulfilled, and the formulated hypothesis was confirmed. The presented deliberations, on the one hand, showed a rather complex view of the threats that are connected with the space in which people exist, and on the other hand, emphasised the important role of education for security. Moreover, an analysis of the relationship between the person and the place and uncertainty and threats must become an interdisciplinary task, as the space and place, as well as their connection with shaping a sense of security, are of interest to multiple academic disciplines.

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<sup>318</sup> T. Borowska, "*Homo construens*" – człowiek budujący. Edukacyjne przygotowanie do radzenia sobie z różnymi zagrożeniami, [in:] *Pedagogika i edukacja wobec nadziei i zagrożeń współczesności. Materiały z III Ogólnopolskiego Zjazdu Pedagogicznego*, J. Gnitecki, J. Rutkowiak (ed.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, Warsaw-Poznań 1999, p. 351.

<sup>319</sup> Raport Z. Bauman, *Płynne czasy. Życie w epoce niepewności*, Wydawnictwo Sic!, Warsaw 2007, p. 197.

It was also found that the multi-dimensional nature of social threats remains incomplete, because every type of security involves a rather large group of threats. Apart from that, in every area of human life people are exposed to crisis situations, which generate threats permanently.

The field of education for security should enable people to acquire important practical competences related to counteracting threats. An important part of this education should involve courses in the form of classes and workshops, during which the citizens (children, young people, and adults) would acquire the practical skills necessary for self-defence through case studies that describe real problem situations, strategic games, and simulations.

There is a need to provide society with security education and environmental education. It is also necessary to systematically raise awareness of potential threats and to prepare people both for predictable and extraordinary, unpredictable situations. Therefore, it seems necessary to maintain a well-developed, efficient system of civil defence as an important element of security for all circumstances. Considering the national nature of such defence, it should be noted that even today, it is based on the coordinated activities and resources of all ministries, local public and self-government authorities, and other organisational units that were established specially for this purpose.

#### **Streszczenie:**

Obecne czasy przyniosły wiele różnorodnych wydarzeń, gdyż XXI wiek to era wielkich przemian i postępu we wszystkich sferach życia człowieka. W wyniku pojawiających się zagrożeń pogarsza się poczucie bezpieczeństwa obywateli. Dlatego kształtowanie świadomości i edukowanie ludzi może znacząco pomóc w przeciwdziałaniu takim zagrożeniom. Artykuł składa się z czterech części: wstępu, rozdziału poświęconego wielowymiarowości zagrożeń egzystencji człowieka, kolejnej części opisującej edukację kształtującą bezpieczeństwo człowieka oraz zakończenia.

#### **Słowa kluczowe:**

Przestrzeń, zagrożenia, egzystencja człowieka, świadomość, edukacja

#### **Keywords:**

Space, threats, human existence, awareness, education

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