



The idea of the exclusion of necrophilic attitudes in critical psychology of Erich Fromm

ABSTRACT: Bogusław Śliwerski, *The idea of the exclusion of necrophilic attitudes in critical psychology of Erich Fromm*. Interdisciplinary Contexts of Special Pedagogy, no. 28, Poznań 2020. Pp. 7–20. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 2300-391X. e-ISSN 2658-283X. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14746/ikps.2020.28.01>

The subject of the analysis is the category of the inclusion as a process that does not only apply to people with special developmental or life needs, but also to social sciences, which as a result of the positivist research paradigm have divided and separated from each other. Meanwhile, human upbringing requires the inclusion of biophilic orientation towards life in all social sciences, whose achievements should be considered and applied to improve educational processes. The Author borrows inspiration from the typology of human attitudes of Eric Fromm, because it makes readers aware of the negative effects of necrophilia in interpersonal relationships. The Author analyses Fromm's approach against the background of selected ideas of Polish pedagogical views.

KEY WORDS: inclusion, biophilia, necrophilia, special education, pedagogy, disability

Inclusive pedagogy is, regardless of how it is defined by special education teachers,¹ a pedagogy of a common denominator, a hu-

¹ *Základy inkluzivní pedagogiky. Dítě s postižením, narušením a ohrožením ve škole*, V. Lechta (ed.), Portál, s.r.o., Prague, 2010.

manistic pedagogy that forces the education sciences to integrate knowledge about a human being, their nature, fate, experience and opportunities for the development of their potential, with which he has to live in a relatively civilised world. In the period which seems distant to us, because in 1934 the outstanding Polish educator Henryk Rowid wrote: *In the content of a person there is nothing that can be separated, so it does not consist of elements that need to be added. Therefore, every physiological or mental phenomenon should be considered on the basis of the whole, or a human being.*² In other words, those educators who, because of their concern for disabled people, focus their attention on something that is separated from their structure despite the fact that all personality components are integrally combined, do not operate and are not experienced separately, make an error. Every human being is a multi-unity, *unitas multiplex*, and this means that there are no disabled people as opposed to able-bodied people, because this classification was done only for ideological reasons in the countries of nascent and developing fascism and communism, in totalitarian countries, in order to divide people into better and worse according with the doctrine, exclude them from society, isolate people, among others, because of their race or health.

Meanwhile, any activity of a human being is (...) „*psychophysically neutral*”, that is, *the interaction of physical and spiritual elements is revealed in its limited function, without the possibility of separation or isolation from one another.* (Ibid.)

It is this pedagogy that sheds new light on the problems of human existence experiencing dysfunction for various reasons, in very different circumstances, but also placing it constantly on the outskirts of everyday life-oriented world.

As rightly observed by Victor Lechta, inclusive pedagogy is a new education philosophy of “education for all”, in which each person is treated as an individual with their specific educational needs. It is

² H. Rowid, *Jednostka a społeczeństwo w wychowaniu współczesnym (na tle koncepcji osobowości w Chowaniu Trentowskiego)*, Księgarnia Gebethnera i Wolffa w Krakowie, Cracow, 1934, p. 7.

the modern world that should adapt to people with disabilities, not the other way around. If we really want, (...) *inclusive education to be available to everyone, everywhere and always, then we must understand that meeting this expectation is a difficult and distant task for all the anticipating parties.*³ All subdisciplines of pedagogical sciences need revival thanks to the challenges of inclusion to break the chain of the constantly reproduced circle of indifference, violence, and callousness towards the presence among us of those who do not claim any special privileges because of their disability, but human understanding of extremely different conditions of their life, and support.

Awareness of necrophilic attitudes and activities

It is the world that allows totalitarian, authoritarian and directive pedagogies to promote genocide, as Wilhelm Reich wrote, the continuous, and yet symbolically reproduced, murdering of Christ, leading to the broadly understood destruction of humanity, the holocaust, ethnic cleansing, segregation based on race, gender, physical condition, religion, nationality etc. The progress of medicine, revalidation and rehabilitation, after all, requires permanent work on human culture, so that we do not make each other more spiritually and mentally disabled, increasing the scope and depth of human suffering. The murderers of Christ are everywhere where people are unable to direct their own lives. The prison can therefore be a structurally and morally disturbed family, school, workplace, etc., and therefore environments in which people are caught as in a trap set for them. *The educator who makes education a lucrative business will not be interested in education but in the interest. Let's beware of such educators.*⁴ They will use others in a refined way to their extremes.

³ V. Lechta, "Pedagogika inkluzyjna", translated by Bogusław Śliwerski [in:] *Pedagogika. Subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji*, vol. 4, ed. Bogusław Śliwerski, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk, 2010, p. 332.

⁴ W. Reich, *Mordercy Chrystusa*, Wydawnictwo Jacek Santorski, Warsaw, 1995, p. 25.

It is therefore necessary to be able to recognise in our environment those who speak about the truth and who live in hypocrisy, including us to cooperate, express a clear contempt for us, not recognising what we do if it is not in accordance with their dictate, who draw their strength from those they destroy. It is not easy to verify the real reasons for evil or violence, or whether they arise from the weakness of the will of the malefactor, from not being aware of the nature of evil and its consequences for others, or from the desire to easily, and without any problems affect someone's personality. In the era of environmental destruction, the question arises anew about the role of socialisation and education in this process, the sense of institutional education, so that there is no further degradation of the nature and basis of life of human beings. However, totalitarianism is born in a society full of conflicts, continuous antagonisms, hostility, broken social ties, disintegration in the struggle of individuals for their own pre-eminence, and therefore in a necrophilic atmosphere. *One of the biggest errors in assessing dictatorships was the assumption that the dictator imposes his power on people somewhat from outside, against their will. In fact, every dictatorship only radicalises ideas present in a state, it is enough to lead them to the extreme and gain power.*⁵

For educators searching for the nature and conditions of evil in human life and in economically developed countries, when so many cruel wars are taking place in the world and the martyrdom of societies experienced by Nazism, Stalinism or new forms of fundamentalist terrorism is not able to oppose the uninterrupted chain of violence, Erich Fromm's views on this subject take on particular relevance. How dramatic his question, *Can we not see the lack of humanity of people for each other, in merciless warfare, in murder, rape, in the merciless exploitation of the weaker by the stronger and in the fact that a picture of a tortured and suffering creature so often goes to deaf ears and hardened hearts?* Sounds.⁶

⁵ W. Reich, *Psychologia mas wobec faszyzmu*, translated by Ewa Drzazgowska, Magdalena Abraham-Diefenbach, Wydawnictwo Aletheia, Warsaw, 2009, p. 257.

⁶ E. Fromm, *Zapomniany język. Wstęp do rozumienia snów, baśni i mitów*. Translated by Józef Mędrzecki, PIW, Warsaw, 1971, p. 11.

Fromm attempts to understand the nature of violence, aggression and cruelty so omnipresent among people, explaining them by the inability of a human being to solve the basic problems of their life, by their inability to love others, as well as by the necrophilic orientation of all modern industrial societies, regardless of their political structures. At the same time, he distinguishes two types of violence: reactive violence, which is the reaction of a human being to a threat to their life, dignity, property, etc., and compensatory violence, which for weak, enslaved, powerless people is a kind of universal means to regain a sense of self-power through the use of other violence, domination or strength. According to E. Fromm, compensatory violence of a human being is a derivative of their dominant necrophilic orientation (towards death, destruction, towards Evil) and the progressing bureaucratisation of modern industrial societies.

However, in educational institutions, there is no open hostility, but one of two forms of proximity between subjects of the education process [teachers, teachers and students, teachers and parents of students or between students themselves], which determine the specificity of the development of interpersonal relationships and the condition of "health" or "illness" of the institution, namely:

- submissive proximity, consisting in submission to someone people depend on. It leads to a lack of independence or rebellious tendencies (often unaware) and inhibits the full development of the individual, causing deep conflicts between subordination and rebellion;
- proximity of the total and deepest intimacy between two people, consisting in mature love while maintaining full independence and separateness of individuals. This type of proximity does not inhibit development, does not cause internal conflicts or loss of energy.

Education in relation to violence

Therefore, one can ask Fromm about the nature of a human being in the above relationships, whether they are wolves, and therefore beings that destroys others by nature, use in their everyday life

opportunities for cruelty and sadism in relation to other people, or maybe a human being is a sheep or a submissive being, renouncing their own will, giving up their autonomy, individuality, identity, a person susceptible to external influences? What should the education of the younger generation be aimed at? What role does the structure and organisation of society play in it? Is it possible to defy wolf orientation thanks to education, or maybe through education is it necessary to convince sheep not to suppress their nature of wolves? Finally, how should an educator behave towards destructive elements of social life?

Let's take a look at some destructors to understand what can lead to objectification of people, to dehumanization of interpersonal relationships and to processes of self-reproducing evil, and to become aware how strong these tendencies can be in people. Necrophilic orientation is characterised by a specific human ability to use violence against others, *"to transform everything organic into a corpse"*, to treat life in a mechanical way like objects. It is not an expression of a certain single personality trait, but it represents a holistic way of life, expressing itself in the bodily processes of a person, in their emotional and volitional sphere, thoughts, gestures and behaviour. *Memory, not experience; possessing, not being, is what matters. A necrophilic person can refer to an object, a flower or a person, only if they possess it, therefore the threat of becoming the property of a necrophile is also a threat to the existence. [...] They love order and control, and kill life when doing the order. In fact, they are afraid of life, because by its very nature it is disordered and uncontrollable. [...] Necrophiles can often be recognised by their appearance and gestures. They are cold, their skin looks dead, and the disgust on their face often gives the impression that they feel offensive smell around them. [...] Necrophiles are orderly, obsessive and punctual.*⁷

A necrophile is a person who loves destruction, devastation, believing in the appropriateness of violence, separating and dividing people according to ideological criteria. They are guided more by

⁷ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

the past than by the future, which is unknown to them, uncertain and therefore does not give them support in ruling others. If they hold managerial positions, they administer people as things, boasting about their own privilege and being proud of inflicting pain on others. In order to secure a better situation and change their own living conditions, they try to gain power over others. For a necrophile, power becomes an opportunity to camouflage their own complexes, disappointed hopes, feelings of powerlessness or undervaluation. Thanks to formal domination over others, a necrophile turns away from other people as human entities possessing equal rights, enhancing their ability to do evil, to broadly understood cruelty (violence, exploitation, rape), delighting in their own sadism towards subordinates.

Power in the hands of a person with this orientation demoralises, because it gives control over the mind or feelings of others. *The elite, who must control those who do not belong to the selected group, become a prisoner of their own restrictive aspirations. Therefore, the human mind, both of those who are ruled and who rule, deviates from its truly human purpose of humanitarian thinking and feeling, using and developing the powers of mind and love characteristic of humans, incomplete development of which causes spiritual disability. With this deviation and perversion, the human nature is ruined. Aspirations contrary to the interests of truly human nature begin to dominate them. The forces of love within them decrease, the desire for power over others is born. Their inner sense of security is diminishing, and this pushes them to seek compensation in the passionate desire for fame and prestige. They lose their sense of dignity and uprightness and are forced to transform into a kind of merchandise, drawing a sense of their own ambition from their saleability, from their success.*⁸

If the necrophilic orientation, oriented towards the love of death, destruction, the bureaucratic way of administering people is not stopped in the process of socialization and education, although it is

⁸ E. Fromm, *Zapomniany język. Wstęp do rozumienia snów, baśni i mitów*. Translated by Józef Mędrzecki, PIW, Warsaw 1971, pp. 53–54.

not the primary nature of a human being, it may become for them a relatively permanent life opportunity. Fromm warns against the spread of this orientation among people, which does not have to be expressed in its radical form, but may have a whole range of unnoticeable forms, leading to depriving other people of their own dignity, autonomy, individuality. This is because a necrophile (...) *in an act of destruction proves that they are superior to what they could not create: life. By imposing their unlimited will on another living being, they become gods; they can forget their own sense of powerlessness and delight in their own power. The fascination with death and torture is a reaction of a human being who failed to live; it is an expression of jealousy and feeling the offence towards life; this is the jealousy of a disabled person who would rather see the destruction of life than face their disability.*⁹

Therefore, E. Fromm attaches great importance to assertiveness and defence of own humanum. In the process of upbringing and education, this is expressed by forming defensive ability of a person in reaction to a threat to their life, individuality, causative power or personal dignity, and sublimating necrophilic, destructive tendencies, passion to destroy others or oneself. The art of education is to be not only the art of love, but also to sensitise societies to whether they entrust the future of children to the hands of those who already have "callous hearts". Therefore, education becomes a "war in a human being" and for a human being, a war for releasing in them the strongest potential of biophilic orientation, the nature of which is the love of life.

Biophilic education in the light of the concept of Erich Fromm

The approach of E. Fromm to education would be similar to the idea of functional, anti-authoritarian, personalistic education

⁹ E. Fromm, *Wojna w człowieku. Psychologiczne studium istoty destrukcyjności*, Jacek Santorski &CO, Agencja Wydawnicza, Warsaw, 1994, p. 27.

resulting from the exposure of biophilic orientation over necrophilic one in our everyday life. This is because a biophile is a person brimming over with warmth, cordiality, empathy, a sense of freedom and awareness of the strong points of their own personality and transferring all this the surrounding. They expresses their life orientation in a non-verbal way rather than declaratively.

Biophilia is an aspiration of a human being to protect life, to be creative, to choose joy, openness and prosocial behaviour over pessimism, uncertainty or egoism in interpersonal relationships. *Biophilic consciousness is motivated by the pursuit of life and joy; their moral effort is to strengthen the life-loving side in them. Therefore, a biophile does get lost in qualms of consciousness and guilt, which are ultimately only manifestations of self-imposed constraint and sadness.*¹⁰

What is a result such a dichotomous division of people according to the above orientations? According to the Author, this is first of all, an indication that children and young people should associate with people who love life, not its destruction. This can happen thanks to the freedom from political ties and the freedom to create and to perform creative work, thanks to the freedom of thought and the right to take risks. *Such freedom requires the individual to be active and responsible, to be neither a slave nor a well-oiled cog in the machine.*¹¹ The task of an educator is to expand the margin of freedom and to support conditions favourable for biophilia, and thus orientation towards life. In this process, the educator cannot be guided by the intention of dominating the process of development of their students, exerting on them a certain influence, making a choice for them. However, what they can do is to show them the possibilities to choose in a true and loving way, awakening in them an attitude of energy towards life.

According to Fromm, human nature is neither good nor bad, but it becomes pathological depending on the dominance of necrophilic orientation over biophilic one and on contact with the external

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 26.

world. The influence of society on individuals brings negative elements in the sense that people are interdependent and need each other. The fact that someone is a biophile is not yet a sufficient condition for them to brim over with their love, warmth and joy of life, if social conditions favour the existence or dominance of enslaved people. Insufficient production of material goods and limited access to them for all citizens of a given community means that they are only available to the few, stronger, with greater access to power and associated privileges.

Fromm is concerned that industrial civilisation itself is oriented not on life, but on its structures, mechanisms, and material products. All this is supported by the growing role of bureaucracy and fetishisation of things, numbers, quantitative indicators, the objectification of interpersonal relationships, and the administration of people as if they were objects. *The problem here is not whether they are treated nice and well fed (these things can be treated nice), but whether people are things or living beings.*¹² The role of statesmen, scientists, artists and teachers is not only a critical reflection on whether the principles of a political system and social life are subject to the laws of objectification (reification) or the principles of life, but also the evidence with their own attitude and creativity of love of life, inspiring it and developing it in themselves and others. *Every act of neglecting and rejecting life, indifference to life and wasting it is a step towards loving death. This choice must be made by a human being every minute.*¹³

The main issue is how the idea of biophilia, the idea of true love for another person, or the idea of *homo amans* could come into effect? So, Erich Fromm as a supporter of radical humanism does not opt for an evolutionary, but for a revolutionary course of change. He is against waiting for *bureaucrats or ready concepts* believing that those who advocate universal values of life (love, sensitivity, reason, joy, etc.) should actively negate and fight evil (necrophilia) in every form and shape. All who are faithful to life affiliation should strengthen self-confidence, unite in spontaneous and natural group

¹² Ibid., p. 30.

¹³ Ibid., p. 33.

life, search for solutions to problems related to their existence and transform these ideas into the complete practice of humanism.

This new attitude towards life can be expressed in more detail in the following principles: The development of a human being requires their ability to free themselves from the narrow prison of their own ego, their own greed, egoism, separation from another human being, and hence their own loneliness. This transcendence is a condition of openness and attachment to the world, sensitivity, sense of identity and community. The ability of a human being to rejoice in everything that lives, to radiate their abilities to the world around them, to "be interested" in the word "to be" more than "to have" and "to use" are the consequences of a step towards overcoming greed and egomania.¹⁴

Pseudo-education becomes one of the active reasons for destroying hope of a child (a human being) by "making the heart callous" with appearances, lies, destructiveness and violence. If during school education, natural educators understood in this way will be joined by professional educators who are necrophiles and economically frustrated citizens, because for social or financial reasons they do not have access to the well-being of the majority, education will also become an accelerator of violence and destruction. In this understanding there is a certain paradox that, to be *homo amans*, it is necessary to fight constructively and together with others, allies of common values, with those who care and who are not dominated by things or dehumanising practices of social life.

The decisive element in every attempt to introduce a social change in favour of greater subjectivity, autonomous activity, awareness and emancipatory rationality is hope, which fulfils an important role in the fight of educators with such a widespread and multiform evil. *Hope means a state of existence. It is an internal readiness for intensive, yet inexhaustible activity (activeness). [...] Hope is paradoxical. It is neither passive waiting nor unrealistic forcing of events that cannot happen. It is like a tiger getting ready to jump, which will only jump up when*

¹⁴ E. Fromm, *Dogmat Chrystusa i inne pisma religioznawcze*, Wydawnictwo Test, Lublin, 1992, p. 120.

*the right time comes.*¹⁵ It is high time for special education, comprising inclusive pedagogy to become an integral part of pedagogy in general, that they break the circle of ideologically reproduced violence, social exclusion of some people only because they are to some extent disabled. They are humans in the same way, human entities in the unity of their body and soul. In the era of two totalitarianisms developing on our continent, fascist and communist one, which despised human existence, Henryk Rowid beautifully reminded of the specific system of national pedagogy of Trentowski:

*"The whole" cannot be separated from "the self-contained whole", because it is my "I" or the "I" of the other, which strives for something, desires, thinks, believes, imagines something, wishes something or is touched by something, etc. "The self-contained whole" in a human being is omnipotent over "the wholes" which it creates and rules. If the self-contained whole remains equal and compatible with itself, then the wholes which belong to it can arrange themselves in the most beautiful rainbow colours, create the most perfect patterns of a multi-unity and still have the same harmony. "The whole is an expression of progress, the self-contained whole is a steadfast nature".*¹⁶

The importance of special education for shaping biophilic attitudes

Special pedagogy allows the most significant achievements, schools, approaches, theories, models, orientations and even paradigms, which are also part of the broadly understood inclusion, to be preserved in the heritage of scientific thought of the humanities. It allows us to rediscover in an interdisciplinary manner the many-sidedness of the worlds of people with disabilities. It is this peda-

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 103, 105.

¹⁶ H. Rowid, *Jednostka a społeczeństwo w wychowaniu współczesnym (na tle koncepcji osobowości w Chowaniu Trentowskiego)*, Księgarnia Gebethnera i Wolffa w Krakowie, Cracow, 1934, pp. 5-6.

gogy that forces scientists to perceive significant differences in the functioning of a person affected by misfortune, a specific dysfunction, lack or psychoorganic weakness, and reveals both to them and their life environment the unique value of *humanum*. As Jan Jakub Rousseau wrote centuries ago: (...) *to discover the properties, one must first notice the differences*.¹⁷ It is this pedagogy that allows people to isolate for a moment, in the space of thoughts and practices of everyday life, levels of authenticity of human life. Therefore, it can be stated that in order to learn and understand universal pedagogy, it is necessary to perceive it from the point of view of ANOTHER, a disabled person. It is inclusive pedagogy that is a continuation of humanistic pedagogy, teaching humbleness, modesty and wisdom towards what is given and assigned to a human being in their life, also with their own participation.

The greatest ambition of modern special pedagogy should be to infect politicians and governments with biophilic wisdom to break stereotypes, prejudices against those who cannot even oppose, despite the unique value of their existence, inaccessible to the majority. May this pedagogy perform the inclusion of special pedagogy to broadly understood educational sciences, so that none of the doctrines, ideologies, concepts, trends or schools of education and upbringing deprived people only and exclusively because of some of their feature, of a part of their own integrity, freedom, humanity and divinity present in them. *Whoever agreed to be deprived of freedom, ceased to be a human being and a deity; whoever tears away freedom from others, traces the supreme holiness with their feet, and becomes a Satan who is rebellious against God. Slavery has no justification, because a human being is the ultimate set of all purposes of God. (...) A human being easily discovers their own feeling (sense of dignity) and independence when they are recognised as human beings and treated as if they were human beings*.¹⁸

¹⁷ C. Lévi-Strauss, *Antropologia wobec problemów współczesnego świata* translated by Maciej Falski, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Cracow, 2013, p. 18.

¹⁸ H. Rowid, *Jednostka a społeczeństwo w wychowaniu współczesnym (na tle koncepcji osobowości w Chowannie Trentowskiego)*, Księgarnia Gebethnera i Wolffa w Krakowie, Cracow, 1934, pp. 9–10.

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