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## **EVERYDAY LIFE – BETWEEN RATIONALITY OF ACTIONS AND AUTHORITY. AN EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL DIAGNOSIS BY ERICH FROMM<sup>1</sup>**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Everydayness accompanies people throughout their lives. It is different for everyone, even if it is described in the same words and experienced in the same place. It is often monotonous, uninteresting, even banal, and thus unnoticeable. It is hidden in small items, in details, and enters the cracks of our lives<sup>2</sup>. In relation to life-long processes, the category of everyday life is very capacious and its boundaries blurred. However, these boundaries delineate mundane, ordinary and everyday life<sup>3</sup>. In the broadest sense, everyday life is a way of showing man in the entire changing and historical social world, which is known beyond the theoretical point of view. Therefore, everyday life is not discussed; the

<sup>1</sup> Originally published: Iwona Paszenda, “Życie codzienne – między racjonalnością działań a autorytetem: na przykładzie diagnozy społecznej Ericha Fromma”, [in:] *Codziennosc jako wyzwanie edukacyjne*, Vol. 1, ed. M. Humeniuk, I. Paszenda, Instytut Pedagogiki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2017, p. 62–79, <https://repozytorium.uni.wroc.pl/publication/84051> (available: 1.06.2020).

<sup>2</sup> See J. Brach-Czaina, *Szczeliny istnienia*, Kraków 1999, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> See K. Ferenz, “Edukacyjne dylematy codzienności”, [in:] *Kultura i edukacja. (Konteksty i kontrowersje)*, ed. W. Jakubowski, Kraków 2008, p. 13.

truth of life is experienced<sup>4</sup>. As a result, everydayness is practiced and needs no definition<sup>5</sup>. Still, depending on what elements of the social world we highlight, everyday life consists of practices, discourses and culture. Under these conditions, the concept of everydayness is identified with everyday life, which refers us to the daily rhythm, to what happens during the twenty-four hours of our life, in a spontaneous and nature-compliant way. A person who is active in the world of everydayness given to him or her must find his or her own world. This calls for a construction of senses, the understanding of which is based on an analysis of the constitution of the senses initially offered to the individual<sup>6</sup>. The basis for interpreting the world is a set of one's own and others' (parents', teachers') experiences, which are a reference system in the form of everyday knowledge<sup>7</sup>. The world of everyday life should be understood as the intersubjective world that existed long before our birth and was already experienced by our ancestors as organized. It is now subject to our experience and analysis. In this context, everyday life is this always pre-determined social construct of the world already constituted in various ways in its specific history.

According to Alfred Schütz's concept of the world experienced, the world of everyday life is both a stage and an object of action and interaction of the individual who must both control and change it in order to realize his own intentions, within this world and among others<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, man not only acts within the world, but also influences it. One's behaviour propels the world by modifying or changing objects belonging to it and their interrelations. On the other hand,

<sup>4</sup> See J. Jastrzębski, "Odkrywanie codzienności", [in:] *Codziennosc jako miejsce i źródło uczenia się*, ed. E. Kurantowicz, M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz, *Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja*, Wrocław 2003, special issue, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> See R. Sulima, *Antropologia codzienności*, Kraków 2000, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> See R. Grathoff, "Codziennosc i świat przeżywany jako przedmiot fenomenologicznej teorii społecznej", [in:] *Fenomenologia i socjologia. Zbiór tekstów*, ed. Z. Krasnodębski, Warszawa 1988, p. 428.

<sup>7</sup> Everyday knowledge means all the social rules and norms that enable people to act in the social world. It is practical knowledge that is assessed on the basis of its effectiveness. Such knowledge is acquired through the process of socialisation and is the absolute reality of every human being's actions and imparts significance to all events. See A. Schütz, "On Multiple Realities", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 1945, Vol. 5, No. 4, p. 534.

<sup>8</sup> See *Ibidem*.

these objects resist the actions of the individual, who can overcome or otherwise must surrender to them. In these conditions, the pragmatic attitude, which consists in a realistic assessment of reality and taking only such actions that guarantee effectiveness, becomes essential. The above description shows that the natural attitude of an individual towards the world of everyday life is governed by rationalism. In this perspective, man has to change everydayness through his actions and at the same time everydayness modifies his conduct<sup>9</sup>. A common-sensical person is primarily interested in that part of the world of everyday life that is within his reach and that is concentrated around him temporally and spatially. Events occurring in his external world impose questions about ways of operation to be chosen from, which limits his possible accomplishments. Consequently, the individual manifests his or her pragmatic interest in seeking solutions to his or her personal and private problems arising from his or her existence within the world system he or she calls his or her environment<sup>10</sup>. In these circumstances, the problem of rationality and rational action in the social world becomes increasingly important.

Therefore, the purpose of this text is to answer the questions whether a person in everyday life acts rationally, that is, whether he or she is reasonably guided by his or her own needs, desires and goals. What role does authority play in this process?

The theoretical basis for the deliberations is the concept of rationality as put forth by Robert Kwaśnica<sup>11</sup> and a social diagnosis conducted by the American psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm<sup>12</sup>. Why Fromm's diagnosis? First of all, because it allows us to understand human tensions, both internal and external, manifested in social groups, from normative positions. Additionally, it is a diagnosis whose characteristics we can transfer to Polish society.

<sup>9</sup> See *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 571.

<sup>11</sup> See R. Kwaśnica, *Dwie racjonalności. Od filozofii sensu ku pedagogice ogólnej*, Wrocław 2007.

<sup>12</sup> See E. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, London, New York 2002.

## BETWEEN RATIONALITY OF ACTIONS AND AUTHORITY – THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF REFLECTION ON ERICH FROMM'S SOCIAL DIAGNOSIS

Among numerous discussions on rationality carried out within the social sciences, the approach of Kwaśnica fits perfectly well the objectives of this article<sup>13</sup>; the author reads human *rationality* as human experience that sets the structural framework within which the individual interprets the world and his own existence<sup>14</sup>. Rationality as understood in this way is an individual concept in which each individual experiences the world separately: what one sees as rational i.e. justified by his understanding of reality, can be found by others to be irrational, i.e. not motivated by their project of experiencing the world. Rational behaviour is the conduct of a person in which we are dealing with the anticipation of actions through reflection on the aims and effects of actions and their meaningfulness<sup>15</sup>.

According to Kwaśnica, contrary to common belief and the well-ingrained positivist philosophy of science, we should refer to two alternative rationalities of experiencing the world. There is the adaptive rationality (instrumental), founded on the logic of the relation of the aim and the means and the other, emancipatory rationality (communicative), based on the logic of a communicative action<sup>16</sup>. Both these types are a kind of permanent orientation, enabling a person to organize everyday life and to experience and organize knowledge about reality. Each of them, as Henry A. Giroux points out, is responsible for

a specific set of assumptions and social practices that mediate how an individual or group relates to the wider society. [...] The knowledge, beliefs,

<sup>13</sup> See R. Kwaśnica, *Dwie racjonalności*, op. cit. More on the category of the rational especially in the following texts by: M. Weber, *Racjonalność, władza, odczarowanie*, Poznań 2004; H. A. Giroux, L. Witkowski, *Edukacja i sfera publiczna. Idee i doświadczenia pedagogiki radykalnej*, Kraków 2010; J. Habermas, *The Theory Communicative Action*, Vol. 1 *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Cambridge 1986.

<sup>14</sup> See R. Kwaśnica, *Dwie racjonalności*, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 11.

expectations, and biases that define a given rationality both condition and are conditioned by the experiences into which we enter<sup>17</sup>.

The values to which adaptative rationality directs man come from the axiological perspective of instrumental action. Following Jürgen Habermas, Kwaśnica stresses that each instrumental action aims to expand the technical control over objects, people including, or to maintain the earlier level of control over them<sup>18</sup>. The results of instrumental action can be observable directly, i.e. evident as changes occurring in the world of objects. Evaluating on their basis the value of an action, it is enough to compare it with its goal, i.e. with the previously assumed idea of what should be achieved. Thus, the criterion which establishes the logic of an instrumental action is the convergence between the effects and the intention. In these circumstances, it is reasonable to proceed in such a way as to achieve an observable, measurable and verifiable outcome according to the external criteria of intended use<sup>19</sup>. The above description implies that the approach of a person towards the world and the life priorities in this perspective are justified by the goods which, as Kwaśnica indicates after Jadwiga Mizińska, prove indispensable for supporting and continuing man's existence<sup>20</sup>. Their use is a prerequisite for maintaining and gaining satisfaction from the fact that a person can function efficiently in the existing circumstances. The world seen in this way allures one with the perspective of a comfortable, prosperous and peaceful life. Submitting to it gives a person a sense of stability and security. All the goods contained in it seem to be at one's fingertips; they are visible and accessible to everyone who takes enough effort to get them. These benefits are quantifiable and measurable, not only in economic but also in social terms. It is possible, for example, to compare and evaluate the assets and wealth of a person, but also his or her position at various levels of the hierarchy: power, science, professional

<sup>17</sup> H. A. Giroux, "Critical Theory and Rationality in Citizenship Education", [in:] H. A. Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education. A Pedagogy for the Opposition*, Massachusetts 1983, p. 171.

<sup>18</sup> See R. Kwaśnica, *Dwie racjonalności*, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> See *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 84–85.

and non-professional life. Accepting participation in such a world is synonymous with the approval of the existing culture and of an attitude to consumption and/or, possibly, to the reproduction of the goods contained therein.

An example that expresses well the actions of adaptive rationality is the irrational authority based on prohibitions, noticed by Fromm in the social space<sup>21</sup>. This authority is not a characteristic to be “had” in the sense of possession or physical features. This is a kind of control where a person is subject to the standards, values, orders, messages, and persons they recognise. In this context, the notion of *authority* may be relevant to understanding the relationship between people when one person looks down on another<sup>22</sup>. The source of irrational authority is always the physical or mental power over others. Power on the one hand, and fear on the other, are the two pillars of irrational authority. Authoritarian ethics understood in this way formally denies man the ability to independently discriminate between good and evil. The one who sets norms is always a superior authority. The person who recognizes authority is fearful of it and aware of his own weakness and therefore does not refer to his own knowledge and reason but uncritically submits to imposed principles. Materially, i.e. content-wise, authoritarian ethics answers the question of what is good or bad from the point of view of the interest of the authority, not the interest of the individual. Examples include situations that often occur in school and in society. “Good” is what you are praised for, “bad” is what you are criticised or punished for by social authority or community. The terms *good* and *bad* are linked to usefulness. A thing is called *good* if it is suitable for the person who uses it. The same yardstick of value can be applied to a person. The employer deems an employee valuable provided the latter is useful. The teacher calls a pupil *good* when he or she is obedient and does not cause trouble. In Fromm’s opinion, the formal and material aspects of authoritarian ethics are inseparable. An authority that does not want to exploit a person does not need to dominate it. For the sake of his own interests, however, he demands that “obedience to be the main virtue and disobedience

<sup>21</sup> See E. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, New York 1969, p. 186.

<sup>22</sup> See E. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, New York 1966, p. 90.

to be the main sin”<sup>23</sup>. For Fromm this distinction is similar to Weber’s ideal type. In reality, he claims, there is invariably a mix of authorities. Meanwhile, it is important which factor prevails in the life of a person. An example of the functioning of rational and irrational authority is the 19th century social character. In the 19th century, Western society was characterized by a mixture of these two species of authority. What they had in common was that they were both overt authorities. Man knew who was giving him orders and prohibitions: father, teacher, boss, king, priest, God, law, or moral conscience. An individual could either obey an authority or rebel against it, but he always knew who was who and who should be an authority, what it required of him and what the consequences of the obedience or rebellion would be.

The character of authority in the mid-20th century is different. At this time, an overt authority is replaced by an anonymous authority, an authority of opinion and the market<sup>24</sup>. It is an invisible authority, because apparently nobody demands anything; neither a person, nor an idea, nor a moral law. Nevertheless, everyone is subjecting themselves to the same way as people in an authoritarian society were subjecting themselves. According to Fromm, the disappearance of an overt authority can be seen in all spheres of life. Parents often do not give orders to the child, instead they suggest that the child will “want to do it anyway”. Due to the fact that they themselves no longer have any principles or beliefs, they try to lead the child in accordance with the expected laws of conformism. This also applies to business and industry<sup>25</sup>. Here, too, orders are not issued and instructions are not given, but one is encouraged and manipulated. As long as there was an overt authority, there was conflict and rebellion against irrational authority.

<sup>23</sup> E. Fromm, *Man for Himself. An Inquiry into Psychology and Ethics*, Routledge 1999, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> See E. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>25</sup> In both examples – the previous and the next one – the reader may get the impression that in each case it is as if there are no orders but rather manipulation and persuasion. This is not a correct assumption, nor is the one that there are no open authorities at all. This is rather a generalisation of the main tendencies emerging from the perspective of the diagnosis of the whole society. In other words, Fromm seems to be mindful of the mass character of a certain tendency – among sociologists of that time – of taking interest in the mass society, mass production, industrialisation and their consequences are a certain norm (see D. Riesman, N. Glazer, R. Denney, *The Lonely Crowd. A Study of the Changing American Character*, New Haven, London 1989 or J. Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, Notre Dame 1985).

In this dispute personality developed, and especially the sense of the “self” was formed, because man doubted, protested and rebelled.

The mechanism through which an anonymous authority operates is conformism. A person thinks: I have to do what everyone has to do, I have to adapt, not to differ, not to stand out, I have to change according to the modifications of the pattern; I cannot ask if I am right or if I am wrong, but only if I am well-adjusted. “Nobody has power over me, except the herd of which I am a part, yet to which I am subjected”<sup>26</sup>. This situation illustrates that a person’s self-esteem depends on external factors: their success and the assessment of others. For this reason, a person is subordinate to the general public and his sense of security stems from conformism, from never straying away from the herd. Thus, the individual is not afraid of an overt authority, but is driven by the fear of an anonymous authority of conformism. Admittedly, he does not submit to anyone personally, but he does not have his own beliefs, almost no individuality, no sense of his own “self”<sup>27</sup>.

In this account Fromm shows the person as two contradictory yet supplementary incarnations of the “to have” approach which intensify the fear: the *homo faber* – a maker, creator, a man of labour, a deft master who is the slave of his own activity and his own income, and the *homo consumens*, who treats life objectively and wants to buy as much as possible for the money he has earned, experiencing an increasingly nagging inner unrest<sup>28</sup>. Fromm recognises the will to have as a major source of human activity<sup>29</sup>. To his mind, most people perceive possession as a natural or in fact the only acceptable way of life<sup>30</sup>.

According to Fromm, man chooses a world of “to have” values because they live in a society founded on private property, profit and power. The norms according to which society lives and which shape the social character of its members are not insignificant. These norms include: the desire to acquire property, to retain it and to multiply it,

<sup>26</sup> E. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, op. cit., p. 139.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 96.

<sup>28</sup> Fromm’s reflection on the topic are expounded esp. in such texts as: *Escape from Freedom* (op. cit.), *The Pathology of Normalcy* (New York 2011); *The Sane of Society*, op. cit.; *On Being Human* (New York, London 2005); *To Have or to Be?* (New York, London 2008).

<sup>29</sup> See E. Fromm, *To Have or to Be?*, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 24.

i.e. to make a profit. As a result of this principle, people who possess property are admired and envied. Those who do not have goods are seen as inferior. Consumption is therefore a value for many people. A particular example of the phenomenon of excessive buying, according to Fromm, is most likely a private car. For those who have it, it seems to be a necessity in life, for others it is a symbol of happiness<sup>31</sup>. Fromm believes that it is the pressure of the outside world that makes the individual

to give up most of his or her autonomous, genuine desires and interests, and his or her own will, and to adopt a will and desires and feelings that are not autonomous but superimposed by the social patterns of thought and feeling<sup>32</sup>.

It is worrying that people are unaware that their decision-making is conditioned and manipulated. Most people believe that they are acting according to their will. This image of society shows that 20th-century capitalism “needs people [...] who want to consume more and more, and whose tastes are standardized and can be easily influenced and anticipated”<sup>33</sup>.

Fromm’s analysis of how new authorities operate (mass culture, fetish of goods, the alluring power of consumption) indicates that they only too easily subject humans, who are not reflexive enough. Fromm sees the reasons for this phenomenon in education, and more specifically in the inadequate education process. In his opinion, compulsory education in all developed countries is aimed at preparing young people for work. The aim of education is the social utility of the individual rather than his individual development or the extraction of his potential (in line with the etymology of the word *e-ducere*, i.e. extract)<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, as he stresses, “our system of higher education in a relatively small degree triggers critical thinking and impacts character development”, while “students remain to a small extent only influenced by the teacher’s personality and at best gain only purely

<sup>31</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 60.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 64.

<sup>33</sup> E. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>34</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 301.

intellectual knowledge”<sup>35</sup>. Paralysis of critical abilities leads to dependence on others for decision-making and support. This disappearance of creative attitudes occurs when the dominant

type of activity based on submission to or dependence on an authority. The authority may be feared, admired, or “loved” – usually all three are mixed – but the cause of the activity is the command of the authority, both in a formal way and with regard to its contents. The person is active because the authority wants him to be, and he does what the authority wants him to do. This kind of activity is found in the authoritarian character. To him activity means to act in the name of something higher than his own self. He can act in the name of God, the past, or duty, but not in the name of himself<sup>36</sup>.

The crisis of norms and values led man to abandon the hope and slogans of the Enlightenment era, which allowed him to believe that he could trust his own reason. Growing concerns about human autonomy and reason have created a state of moral chaos<sup>37</sup>. Authoritarian ethics determines what is good for it and sets the standards of law and conduct. In the humanistic ethic distinguished by Fromm, in opposition to the above humanistic ethics, man himself is both the giver and the subject of norms. His real problem is what kind of authority he should have. This is where the question arises of the *struggle* of the external authority against the internal authority, which manifests itself as a duty, a conscience or the Freudian *superego*<sup>38</sup>. From the time of the religious Reformation, the external authority (persons, institutions, social norms) have supplanted the internal authority, the Freudian *superego* (conscience). Contemporary human *conscience* has lost much of its weight. It seems that neither external nor internal authority plays a significant role in the individual’s life. Everyone is free provided they do not violate the rights of others. Although authority seems to be fading nowadays, this disappearance is only apparent. Rather, authority is invisible, anonymous (public opinion, science, mass media), does not exert pressure but mild persuasion. Importantly, an

<sup>35</sup> E. Fromm, *The Pathology of Normalcy*, op. cit. p. 105.

<sup>36</sup> E. Fromm, *Man for Himself*, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>37</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 4–5.

<sup>38</sup> See E. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, op. cit., p. 188–189.

anonymous authority is more effective than an overt authority, few suspect that it is underpinned by an injunction and an expectation of obedience. The case of an external authority is different. It is clear here that an order has been issued and we know who issued it.

The aforementioned realities reveal that the structure of society affects man's everyday life in two parallel ways: man becomes more independent yet also more isolated, lonely and terrified. He finds himself in a situation where much of what he thinks and says is thought and spoken by everyone else. This means that a person has not yet reached the ability to think independently and autonomously. On the one hand, he has freed himself from external authorities, ordering him what to do and what not to do. On the other hand, he forgets about the role of anonymous authorities, such as public opinion, which owe their enormous influence to the willingness of the individual to adjust to the expectations they have set for themselves and to the fear of standing out from the crowd<sup>39</sup>.

In these conditions,

The feature common to all authoritarian thinking is the conviction that life is determined by forces outside of man's own self, his interests, his wishes. The only possible happiness lies in the submission to these forces<sup>40</sup>.

However, as Fromm observes, every authority exists in so far as it is recognised. If people do not realize the motives behind its recognition, it becomes an *objective* force to which they submit. This forced conformation causes them to flee from the individual *self* and grow into something external in order to gain the strength they feel the lack of. In this way, they give up freedom and flee from it. As a consequence, people attached to power/authority expect them to protect, care for and take responsibility for their lives<sup>41</sup>. This, in turn, provokes the need to have a "magical assistant". This situation is dangerous for man and culture, because he feels the need to succumb to the comfort of being exempt from thinking, making decisions and dealing with the discomforts of everyday life. This dependence results from the inability to exist

<sup>39</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 125.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 194.

<sup>41</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 196–197.

independently on one's own and to fully exercise one's capabilities<sup>42</sup>. This mechanism makes the individual cease to be himself and adopt the kind of personality offered by cultural models, thus making himself similar to others. The individual becomes what others expect to see. In this way the gap between the "self" and the world is wiped out and so is the fear of loneliness and powerlessness<sup>43</sup>. These conditions prove that man can nourish thoughts, feelings and desires that he subjectively feels as his own, and yet these have been imposed on him from the outside; they are alien and are not what he really thinks, desires and feels<sup>44</sup>.

What Fromm writes about in his works about human thinking and feeling also applies to acts of will. As he points out, "Most people are convinced that as long as they are not overtly forced to do something by an outside power, their decisions are theirs, and that if they want something, it is they who want it"<sup>45</sup>. Fromm believes that

A great number of our decisions are not really our own but are suggested to us from the outside; we have succeeded in persuading ourselves that it is we who have made the decision, whereas we have actually conformed with expectations of others, driven by the fear of isolation and by more direct threats to our life, freedom, and comfort<sup>46</sup>.

People think that they are making decisions and wanting something, but in reality they succumb to internal or external coercion that commands them to want what they are to do<sup>47</sup>. In these circumstances, culture fosters a conformist tendency and gives a sense of illusion of individuality. Consequently, man is a lifeless automaton who harbours an illusion that he knows what he wants, while in reality he only wants what is required of him. Fulfilling the expectations of others causes the loss of identity. Man could change this if he knew what he wanted, what he really thought and felt, yet he does not know it<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 198–199.

<sup>43</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 208–209.

<sup>44</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 212–213.

<sup>45</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 223.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>47</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 224–225.

<sup>48</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 278–282.

The other alternative manner of experiencing rationality distinguished by Kwaśnica is emancipatory rationality (communicative). As the author points out, in principle, in order to describe emancipatory rationality, it would be enough to reverse the characteristics of adaptive rationality. However, the fundamental difference between them is due to a system of values that cannot be described in the same way as adaptive values. The order of the emancipatory value results from the axiological perspective of the communication activity. They cannot be named, enumerated or indicated, because they reveal themselves on an ongoing basis, during a dialogue, as emancipatory possibilities. Emancipation is understood here as a search for the possibility of liberating oneself from the previously created and accepted world<sup>49</sup>. The specificity of emancipatory rationality as compared with adaptive rationality is expressed primarily in the diversity of the axiological perspective. The axiological difference is caused by transcending the earlier interests of an individual, focusing on the categories of the state of possession and dealing with the factors of widely understood change<sup>50</sup>. Departure from previous values changes the attitude of man to culture, other people and his own knowledge.

Under these circumstances, culture is not treated by man as adaptation, but as emancipation. Other people are no longer seen from the point of view of the benefits or risks they can pose on the road to success, but as partners in a dialogue. On the other hand, self-esteem is established on a similar basis as the relation to other members of society. This means that life is not treated as an instrumental value, because one's own person is not the means to achieve successful results. In this perspective, the person is aware of his own spiritual freedom, which gives him the opportunity to choose and to create his own world in his own way and is considered a condition for the fulfillment of his humanity<sup>51</sup>.

This understanding of the community and communication perspective changes the relationship between man and his own knowledge. In this perspective, "knowledge is not understood as a ready-made

<sup>49</sup> See R. Kwaśnica, *Dwie racjonalności*, op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>50</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 99–100.

<sup>51</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 101–102.

tool, but as an endless process of learning about the world”<sup>52</sup>. Knowledge is not supposed to instruct people how to act. It can help them in this, but the final decisions must be made by an individual on their own. Its natural purpose is to enable the understanding of the world. In this context, no belief can be accepted solely because other people consider it right or sufficient for their own purposes. Acceptance of these beliefs requires a person to accept them independently, critically and reflectively and to consider their accuracy from the point of view of one’s own value and one’s vision of the world<sup>53</sup>. Under these circumstances, the changes occurring in human knowledge are not imposed but intentional. Man himself is looking for the weak points of his erudition. He constantly verifies it and goes beyond its previous findings. Every day the individual, reflecting on himself and his life, becomes his own philosopher. For it is up to philosophy to ask questions about the meaning of existence, about the values that impart order in the human world<sup>54</sup>.

Emancipatory rationality in the social sphere is exemplified by what Fromm diagnosed as the rational authority<sup>55</sup>. This type of authority allows people to make their own opinions, but it also requires constant inquiries and criticism from people who are subordinate to it. In these conditions, the individual can rely on his or her understanding as a guide to action and judgment, which is conducive to his or her development. In this way he strives for “positive freedom”, “he can relate himself spontaneously to the world in love and work, in the genuine expression of his emotional, sensuous, and intellectual capacities; he can thus become one again with man, nature and himself [...]”<sup>56</sup>. This approach corresponds to the human system of values of the “being” type. Fromm understanding “being” as “the mode of existence in which one neither has anything nor craves to have something, but is joyous, employs one’s faculties productively [...]”<sup>57</sup>. Regrettably, as Fromm indicates, the society we live in is overpowered by the desire to possess. For

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem, p. 102.

<sup>53</sup> See Ibidem.

<sup>54</sup> See Ibidem, p. 106.

<sup>55</sup> See E. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, op. cit., p. 92–93.

<sup>56</sup> E. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, op. cit., p. 161.

<sup>57</sup> E. Fromm, *To Have or to Be?*, op. cit., p. 16.

this reason, it is rare in everyday life to see a witness to an existential experience of “being”<sup>58</sup>. As a consequence, the *mode* of “being” is hard to define. However, there are some differences between them. Possession refers to things that can be measured, counted and described. On the other hand, “being” is connected with experience, and as Fromm stresses, human experience is inherently indescribable<sup>59</sup>. The essential characteristic of “being” is independence, freedom and the ability to think critically. The spiritual development of man comes to the fore here, his spontaneous self-expression, transcending the previously isolated self, his own self, which phenomena are impossible to describe<sup>60</sup>. Man’s orientation to values of “being” type calls for rejecting egocentrism and egoism and requires “poverty”. Unfortunately, as Fromm stresses, for most people rejecting the possession drive seems too difficult. This situation fills them with fear and a loss of safety. The fear and anxiety inherent in the risk of losing what one possesses is absent in the life of an individual who professes the values of “being”. A man thinks then: “If *I am who I am* and not what I have, nobody can deprive me of or threaten my security and my sense of identity”<sup>61</sup>. While “possession” is based on things, “being” develops through practice. This includes, for example, the ability to think, to create intellectually and artistically, which develops in the process of human expressivity. The only danger for an individual who believes in the values of “being” is the danger that lies within himself: the loss of faith in life and the strength of his own reason, inner laziness and the desire for others to arrange his life<sup>62</sup>.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The above reconstructed assessment of the impact of various kinds of authorities on the rationality of actions in the everyday life of societies, presented on the basis of the social diagnosis of Erich Fromm, shows a pessimistic picture of human crisis. Although the researcher’s

<sup>58</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 24.

<sup>59</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 71.

<sup>60</sup> See *Ibidem*, p. 72–73.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90.

<sup>62</sup> See *Ibidem*.

analysis concerned American society more than fifty years ago, it is emphasized today that the everyday life of most people is dominated by thoughtlessness and lack of concern for their own humanity<sup>63</sup>. Today's human choices and actions are not rational because they are reduced to automatic habits and routine. An individual engrossed in a race to achieve the highest possible position on the scale of social benchmarks, does not have time to think about his or her own life. Usually he does not consciously interpret the world around him because he lives in an everyday life in which time has exploded<sup>64</sup>. As a result, he knows little about himself, is not aware of what he really wants and of what he thinks and feels. His knowledge about his own needs, goals and desires is not clear because the main criterion for his choices and actions is the pressure of the outside world. His feelings and desires are less important than what is ordered by an anonymous authority (mass culture, fetish of goods, seductive power of consumption). It is also dangerous that most people are ignorant of the fact that their will is conditioned and manipulated. Many people believe that they are acting according to their will. Many people live like automatons that have not achieved the ability to think independently; others prefer to remain silent not to lose social recognition. In a situation where contemporary culture has stripped of any value all that is not marketable, economics becomes the only climate of existence. This unique "market orientation"<sup>65</sup> of everyday life leads to most people wanting to have those qualities that are valuable to consumers. For this reason, they do not have their own beliefs, their own individuality, their own sense of self.

Fromm sees the root causes of this phenomenon in the incorrect organization of the teaching process, which insignificantly stimulates

<sup>63</sup> L. Witkowski, "Codziennosc i jej pedagogiczne przekleństwa", [in:] L. Witkowski, *Między pedagogiką, filozofią a kulturą. Studia, eseje, szkice*, Vol. 3, Warszawa 2007, p. 290.

<sup>64</sup> See T. Szlendak, "Co się dzieje z czasem wolnym? Od codziennego znoju i odpoczynku do codzienności, w której czas eksplodował", [in:] *Barwy codzienności. Analiza socjologiczna*, ed. M. Bogunia-Borowska, Warszawa 2009; P. Michoń, "Nie rozdwoję się przecież! Konflikt czasu jako przeszkoda w osiągnięciu równowagi pomiędzy pracą a życiem prywatnym w Polsce", [in:] *Relacje praca - życie pozazawodowe: drogą do zrównoważonego rozwoju jednostki*, ed. R. Tomaszewska-Lipiec, Bydgoszcz 2014.

<sup>65</sup> This is one of the orientations of character distinguished by Fromm next to one oriented to the art of life (see E. Fromm, *Man for Himself*, op. cit.; E. Fromm, *The Art of Being*, New York, London 1992).

critical thinking and affects character development. His diagnosis remains valid today, too. Although the ministerial documents regulating the work of the school still mention increasing educational opportunities, supporting the development of the individuality and subjectivity of students, independent thinking is dying out at various levels of education, including tertiary education<sup>66</sup>; formalism, subjugation and subordination are growing<sup>67</sup>. The teacher is enslaved by the principal, the principal by the superintendent, the superintendent by the minister. This yoke is often passed on to students. Literature provides examples for the argument that higher education and academic diplomas become a commodity that can be exchanged for a suitable place on the labour market<sup>68</sup>. The market discourse promotes a model of education where the students want to *have* a diploma rather than *receive education*<sup>69</sup>. The phenomenon of paralysis of the ability to think critically and reflectively leads to dependence on others and search for support. As a result, the individual appears as a *homo consultans* who sometimes seeks advice from others in order to facilitate and shorten the independent process of reaching solutions<sup>70</sup>. In this way, he avoids responsibility by fleeing to freedom. Such a situation is dangerous for both the individual and culture. It indicates that a person has the need to succumb to the comfort of being exempt from thinking, making decisions, difficulties in dealing with everyday life problems independently, otherwise than under the caring care of someone who will do it for him. Such organization and management of life makes a person

<sup>66</sup> See M. Magda-Adamowicz, I. Paszenda, *Treningi twórczości a umiejętności zawodowe*, Toruń 2011.

<sup>67</sup> See M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, "Emancypacja w codzienności i przez codzienność. Egzemplifikacje edukacyjne", [in:] *Wychowanie. Pojęcia, procesy, konteksty*, Vol. 5, ed. M. Dudzikowa, M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, Gdańsk 2010, p. 110.

<sup>68</sup> See Z. Melosik, *Uniwersytet i społeczeństwo. Dyskursy wolności, wiedzy i władzy*, Poznań 2002; T. Bauman, "Zagrożona tożsamość uniwersytetu", [in:] *Uniwersytet między tradycją a wyzwaniem współczesności*, ed. A. Ładyżyński, J. Raińczuk, Kraków 2003; D. Hejwosz, *Edukacja uniwersytecka i kształcenie elit społecznych*, Kraków 2010.

<sup>69</sup> See M. Molesworth, E. Nixon, R. Scullion, "Having being and higher education. The marketisation of the university and the transformation of the student into consumer", *Teaching in Higher Education* 2009, Vol. 14, No. 3, p. 278.

<sup>70</sup> See A. Kargulowa, "O potrzebie badań poradniczych. Ku antropologii poradnictwa", *Studia Poradnicze* 2013, No. 2, p. 99–100, <https://opub.dsw.edu.pl/handle/11479/40> (available: 7.07.2015).

flee into impotence. As a result, the individual loses his critical awareness, freedom of thought and central position. Instead, he becomes a tool which is lonely, lost, uncertain and alienated; his life is meaningless. These psychological effects of alienation have led to a situation where the person withdraws to a “market orientation”, ceases to be productive and loses his self-esteem. He becomes dependent on the approval of others, tends towards conformism, and at the same time does not feel safe. He is dissatisfied, restless and devotes most of his energy to attempts to compensate or hide this anxiety. “His intelligence is excellent, his reason deteriorates [...]”<sup>71</sup>.

Fromm, reflecting on ways to improve the situation of a man enslaved by mechanisms of anonymous authorities, proposes a version of emancipatory pedagogy. He calls for concern for the quality of the development of subjectivity and creative autonomy. He indicates the need for in-depth research on the growing domination of anonymous mechanisms. At this point it is worth mentioning that Lech Witkowski, the author of the most important work written so far on how authority operates in the public sphere, takes a different point of view<sup>72</sup>. Instead of Fromm’s emancipatory rhetoric, the author proposes to launch processes that provide the ability to creatively address the claims and needs related to the very presence of authority. Witkowski believes that Fromm’s emancipatory rhetoric is in open conflict with the vision of “rational authority”, which is always temporary, and as Fromm stresses himself, “requires constant scrutiny and criticism of those subjected to it”<sup>73</sup>. According to Witkowski, “We cannot merely stress the rationality of an authority (as an intentional attribute); there must be a rational (creative) attitude towards any claim to be an authority on the part of the addressee”<sup>74</sup>. The problem of the operation of authority in social space, as Witkowski points out, could be solved by educators. Unfortunately, this issue is ignored by them and neglected in scientific research or reduced to trivial questionnaire surveys, without the opportunity to approach the sphere of ethical, and not only cognitive, concerns<sup>75</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> E. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, op. cit., p. 237.

<sup>72</sup> See L. Witkowski, *Wyzwania autorytetu*, op. cit.

<sup>73</sup> E. Fromm, *Man for Himself*, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> L. Witkowski, *Wyzwania autorytetu*, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>75</sup> See *Ibidem*.

Insufficient preparation of pedagogues to deal with such issues may be an obstacle here. It is evident that the currently binding curricula of teaching young pedagogues are dominated by the strategy of adjusting the educational process and education to the expectations of employers. As a result, graduates of pedagogical studies are equipped primarily in professional competences. This in turn contributes to the deficiency of other competences, existential one that prepare one for a reflective life in society. In these circumstances, in order to avoid errors and pathologies, which are often pointed out with respect to educational institutions and practices, a broader and more insightful reflection on the implementation of processes bringing the ability to creatively and critically relate to the current reality is justified. This issue could be more comprehensively included in the emerging subdiscipline of knowledge, i. e. the pedagogy of everydayness or the pedagogy of everyday life<sup>76</sup>. It allows us to look at everyday life, find in it what escapes our attention, discover its unknown facets, and learn about its new senses and meanings<sup>77</sup>. Unfortunately, so far, the pedagogy of everyday life has been rarely noticed in the educational process. There is also no doubt that with the current curriculum, the existential aspects of education would be difficult to integrate into a single pedagogical discipline. There is nothing to prevent them from being included more broadly in general pedagogy. Although it is impossible to draw final conclusions here and now without in-depth studies and analyses, it can be assumed that the formation of creative and critical abilities to address claims and needs related to the presence of authority in the social realm could create important conditions for their achievement.

<sup>76</sup> See Z. Melosik, "Pedagogika życia codziennego. Teoria i praktyka", [in:] *Edukacja a życie codzienne*, Vol. 1, ed. A. Radziewicz-Winnicki, Katowice 2002; A. Radziewicz-Winnicki, E. Bielska, "Wprowadzenie", [in:] *Edukacja a życie codzienne*, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> See M. J. Szymański, "Problematyka codzienności w badaniach społecznych i pedagogicznych", [in:] *Codziennosc szkoły. Uczeń*, ed. E. Bochno, I. Nowosad, M. J. Szymański, Kraków 2014, p. 24.

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**Abstract:**

In accordance with the sociological concept of the world by Alfred Schütz, the world of everyday life constitutes the object of activities and interactions of given individuals, who – in turn – have to gain control over it but also modify it in order to accomplish their own goals, within the framework of such world and amongst others. In such a context, it comes across as particularly interesting to recognize whether the contemporary man acts according to their own needs, desires and goals, and what role authority has in their own activities. This article attempts to answer these questions on the basis of the social diagnosis carried out by the American psychologist and sociologist Erich Fromm. Fromm reveals aspects of everyday life from a dramatic perspective, emphasising the issue of an increasing dominance of anonymous authority which an individual voluntarily and otherwise succumbs to. In such circumstances, everyday life is like a battlefield whose stake is to preserve the human ability to reflectively reference the claims and needs linked to the presence of authority within the social area. Shaping such skills and abilities can be accomplished within the framework of the emerging sub-discipline and field of science, i.e. pedagogy of everyday life. Unfortunately, so far, this category is absent, underestimated or even omitted in the process of education. Nonetheless, this issue undoubtedly deserves to be treated as a pedagogical challenge.

**Keywords:**

authority, everyday life, Erich Fromm, pedagogy of everyday life, rationality