

The practical aims and aspects of the thanatological education for pedagogues and teachers.

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“Trying to grasp the meaning of an infinite and ever-expanding universe has led toward an enormous abyss in human understanding. From the edge of that abyss, we peer anxiously through our telescopes into the fog of the unknowable. If we travel in the other direction - if we turn inward and, with a succession of ever more powerful microscopes trace the process of death down through the level of individual cells and into the molecules and atoms of which they are composed - we come once more to a fog-filled abyss, one that separates the phenomenon we call life from the cold and indifferent physical universe. And we see through our microscope a figure, peering anxiously at us through a telescope....Death brings us full circle.” (Clark 2000, p.11-12)

William E.Clark

Thanatopedagogy, as a sub-discipline has been newly observed in Polish pedagogical thought, mainly due to the popularisation of the hospice movement, as well as the involvement of the students and researchers. The learning contents, which are related to death education, according to the obvious reasons, are the cause of certain anxiety. The issues are conveyed within a more or less broad context during the

psychology classes, philosophy, ethics, theology, anthropology, sociology, culture knowledge or the specialistic pedagogy and geragogy. Therefore, there is a necessity of stating the position of thanatopedagogy¹ and the scope of its contents in the educational programmes for pedagogues and teachers in Poland. Since the foreign specialists' achievements in the field are already known, here comes the possibility of an exchange of experiences and patterning oneself upon the actual solutions.

The thanatology courses constitute an element of the university education on various levels (Santana Santos 2007, p. 289 - 302), as well as the non-governmental organisations and the palliative institutions. However, the compliance of the contents concerning dying within the pedagogy classes schedule still seems to be scarcity, even though the pedagogues could have had a voice in this matter. One of the few alternative pedagogics, which refers directly to death and its circumstances, is the spiritist pedagogy. Its assumptions were compiled in Brazil, on the grounds of the social theory², based on the philosophical concept of Allan Kardec³. The founders of the theoretical basis for spiritist pedagogy are José Herculano Pires⁴, Ney Lobo⁵ and Dora Incontri⁶. The elementary category of “**death education**” for the spiritist pedagogy, as well as, for thanatopedagogy, is a popular subject of scientific interest in Brazil.⁷

Death education is in fact life education. The thought accompanying the education does not entirely concern the decadent period of human existence; the circumstances of dying, death as the terminal line nor the thing that follows. No matter if it concerns the dying person or those who experience / survive. This conceptual category comprises the illness as well as the suffering, which concern people of all ages. Those who directly experience it and those who belong to their families, friends and acquaintances; furthermore, even those who sense an emphatic bond with strangers who happen to share the anxiety and pain due to the profession or pure fondness of helping the others. That sort of approach allows to bring out the issue of thanatopedagogy beyond the eschatological, palliative or gerontological aspect, which is crucial, though undoubtedly narrowed and limited to the area of hospice or house of the dying.

The death education widely understood as the **co-suffering education, co-illness and co-dying**, is

¹ See e.g.: Binnebesel J., (1995), *Eutanatopedagog - czyli ten drugi* In: *Spoleczeństwo Otwarte*, nr 1/1995; Binnebesel J., (2007), *Ku tanatopedagogice – krok pierwszy*, In: T. Żółkowska (ed.), *Konteksty pedagogiki specjalnej*, vol. II, Uniwersytet Szczeciński, Szczecin; Binnebesel J., (2008), *Ku tanatopedagogice - krok drugi*, In: T. Żółkowska, M. Wlazło (ed.), *Pedagogika specjalna – koncepcje i rzeczywistość, vol. III*, Uniwersytet Szczeciński, Szczecin; Binnebesel J., (2007), *Wychowawczo - etyczne aspekty opieki nad starszymi i umierającymi - refleksja ku tanatopedagogice*, In: B. Kromolicka, B. Bugajska, K. Seredyńska (ed.), *Pomoc i opieka w starości*, Wydawnictwo Zapol, Szczecin.

² See e.g.: Beraldi Colombo C., (1998), *Idéias sociais espíritas*, Editora Comenius - IDEBA, São Paulo - Salvador; Fontella G., (1998), *Sociedade, comportamento e filosofia na visão espírita*, Sulina, Porto Alegre; Lobo N., (1996), *Filosofia Social Espírita*, FEB, Rio de Janeiro.

³ See e.g.: Kardec A., *Spirit's book*; Aubrée M., Laplantine F., (1990), *La table, le livre et les Esprits - Naissance, évolution et actualité du mouvement social spirite entre France et Brésil*, J.C.Lattés, Paris.

⁴ See e.g.: Pires J.H., (1985), *Pedagogia espírita*, Edicel, São Paulo.

⁵ See e.g.: Lobo N., (1995), *Espiritismo e educação*, FESPE, Vitória; Lobo N., (1995), *Filosofia Espírita da Educação*, FEB, Rio de Janeiro, vol.1-5.

⁶ See e.g.: Incontri D., (1997), *A educação segundo o espiritismo*, Edições Feesp, São Paulo; Incontri D., (2004), *Pedagogia espírita. Um projeto brasileiro e suas raízes*, Editora Comenius, Bragança Paulista; Incontri D., (2005), *Vivências na escola. A prática da Pedagogia Espírita*, Editora Comenius, Bragança Paulista.

⁷ See e.g.: Fernandes M.L.B., Boemer M.R., (2005), *O Tema da Morte em sua Dimensão Pedagógica*, EDUEL, Londrina; Incontri D., Santana Santos F. (ed.), (2007), *A arte de morrer. Visões plurais*, Editora Comenius, Bragança Paulista; Kovács M.J., (2003), *Educação para a morte: desafio na formação de profissionais de saúde e educação*, Casa do Psicólogo, São Paulo; Kovács M.J., (2003), *Educação para a morte: temas e reflexões*, Casa do Psicólogo, São Paulo; Pires J.H., (1996), *Educação para o Morte*, Correio Fraternal do ABC, São Bernardo do Campo.

in fact the **education of conscious living and companionship** with those who suffer and probably will die, or in other words, will certainly die, as everyone will; however, the moment of death is hard to define. According to the thought, the basis of death and suffering education consists in the idea of constant **care for life and improving its quality** in certain circumstances. The first step towards the opening to suffering, illness and death, of one's own or/and the other person's, is the awareness of the inevitability of the processes, cognition of their matter and circumstances. One should deprive death of the peculiar sphere of the preferable absence, aversion, anxiety and taboo; thus, to some extent, acquaint through the conscious experiencing and living through the processes.

Such approach allows for setting the complex thanatological education programme for the medical institutions workers, volunteers, parents but, above all, teachers and pedagogues working as the academics. Academic teachers play the role of the important others in the lives of their wards, within every possible education forms. Therefore, their opinions and knowledge are significant, especially in the sphere as substantial and inevitable in everyone's life as suffering and dying. A partner-guide-guardian who is appropriately prepared for conveying the knowledge and discussing it, may enrich his wards' views concerning dying and suffering by widening the contents which are usually delivered by theologians or are the subject of common reflection, frequently based on the superstitions and stereotypes stemming from ignorance.

A wider grasp of death and suffering education allows for determining the contents range for the education of pedagogues and teachers in the field of thanatopedagogy, as well as, for the search of ways towards popularising the contents as the indispensable element of the general education. Obviously, it would be naivety to presuppose that everyone should and will be educating oneself in that respect, subsequently pass the knowledge and experience to the others. The concept of curriculum presented beneath is a model, every element of which can be a subject for a discussion. Since we are already dealing with the changes with reference to the dying (the evidence of which is at least the hospice movement), why do not we take attempts to educate, due to which people at the earliest would become more understanding and active in the face of death and suffering. Everyone can be taught how to improve the quality of life, even if there is a horrifying, but close to us by nature and general iconography, individual with a scythe on the cover of a book.

The aim of the thanatological education for pedagogues and teachers is generating and providing them with knowledge, what is more, formation of the competences in the field of:

- searching, accumulating, analysing and conveying the knowledge, undertaking scientific researches focused on the subject of death and suffering;
- conducting and participating in discussion about death and suffering, on various levels of generality and in diverse environments;
- providing substantial support to the people possessing marginal knowledge of suffering and death and to those who seek for the knowledge just on occasion;

- coping with suffering, illness and death in their own life and the lives of their relatives.

Accomplishment of the foregoing aims in the scientific, social and personal perspectives is conducted by reflection and practice in the following **aspects of thanatopedagogy**: interdisciplinarity, interculturalism, improvement of life quality, state of health diversity, age variety, school and teacher's work, public work, law, art and entertainment, formal and organizational solutions.

Thanatopedagogy in the interdisciplinary aspect

Thanapedagogical thought is favoured by overcoming the stereotype saying that thanatopedagogy, or thanatology, is “necessary” only for the dying and their relatives. As a consequence, the bearers of the solely rightful knowledge in this field are the workers of the palliative and religious institutions. The issues connected with suffering, illness and death, with the involvement of individuals and social groups is the subject of numerous scientific disciplines, the specialists of which deal not only with protraction of human life, but also with its conditionality and changes.¹ The approximation of the thanatopedagogical issues to life leads towards a peculiar sense of acquaintance, deprivation of dogmas and the ideology of suffering, illness and death phenomenons and, what is more, revealing their humanistic background. The phenomena become devoid of the eschatological sacrum halo and they are easily acceptable, not only as a scientific subject-matter, but also, due to its commonness, as an ordinary subject of a discourse.

Perhaps, it would be wise to deliberate, following Fritjof Capra², Ken Wilber³ or Stanislav Grof's⁴ thought; whether the thanatological reflection is the occasion to take into consideration the spiritual element of human existence within science. We should not leave it only within the framework of philosophical and theological thought or the ego context of the examined people but make it the object of researches and the element of the therapy calming the effects of suffering and death⁵. Why, it was S. Grof, who within the framework of terminal therapy, preparing the incurable people for death, claimed that it is impossible to adequately master the world or the human being if one negates the spiritual aspect of reality (Dobroczyński 1999, p.29). Sometimes, a dilemma appears among the scientists and teachers who are

¹ Since 1997, Oficyna Wydawnicza Sudety and Wrocławskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, have been publishing an interdisciplinary collection of works entitled *The issues of contemporary thanatology* edited by Jacek Kolbuszewski. Twelve volumes were published by 2008.

² See e.g.: Capra F., (1987), *Punkt zwrotny - nauka, społeczeństwo, nowa kultura*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa; Capra F., (1994), *Tao fizyki - w poszukiwaniu podobieństw między fizyką współczesną a mistycyzmem Wschodu*, Wydawnictwo Nomos, Kraków.

³ See e.g.: Wilber K., (1997), *Eksplozja świadomości*, Wydawnictwo Abraxas, Zabrze; Wilber K., (1997), *Krótką historia wszystkiego*, Wydawnictwo Santorski & Co., Warszawa; Wilber K., (1997), *Niepodzielone*, Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, Poznań; Wilber K., (1995), *Śmiertelni nieśmiertelni*, Wydawnictwo Santorski & Co., Warszawa.

⁴ See e.g.: Grof S., (2000), *Obszary ludzkiej nieświadomości. Raport z badań nad LSD*, Wydawnictwo A, Kraków; Grof S., (1999), *Poza mózg: narodziny, śmierć i transcendencja w psychoterapii*, Wydawnictwo A, Kraków; Grof S., (2000), *Przygoda odkrywania samego siebie. Wymiary świadomości. Nowe perspektywy w psychoterapii*, Wydawnictwo Uraeus, Gdynia.

⁵ See e.g.: Drury N., (1995), *Psychologia transpersonalna. Ludzki potencjał*, Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, Poznań; LeShan L., (1992), *Świat jasnowidzących*, Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, Poznań.

working mainly by means of “eye and lenses”¹, a symbol impersonating the materialistic approach to life; while, personally, off-the-working-hours, they are fervent believers, they pray and experience extra-material sphere of existence. There is no place for such experiences in their professional life and official speeches, at that times, revealing such emotions could have been improperly perceived.

Thanatopedagogy, due to its unique subject, gives the possibility to explore the categories, which are absent or rarely appearing on account of the difficulty with defining, such as love, warmth, concern, compassion, devotion, sacrifice, remembrance of another person. These categories constitute an inseparable element of suffering, illness and dying in various circumstances, and as such, they widen the borders of inter-disciplinarity.

Thanatopedagogy in the inter-cultural aspect

Death and suffering are the phenomena occurring in all societies; however, with regards to diverse level of civilizational development and other cultural patterns perceived distinctively, the phenomena are manifested in a variety of attitudes and forms of behavior towards the living and the dead. Due to globalization, migrations, instant access to the information from places which are distant and exotic, with regard to place and time; the knowledge of the circumstances of the phenomena in other cultures is accessible with no limits. Sometimes the knowledge tends to be a great surprise, cause aversion or even hostility towards the participants of the unusual custom. Such responses are caused by the information concerning rituals of self-inflicted wounding, unusual funerals (e.g. putting to death the deceased’s wife in order to bury the couple together), means of farewell bidding to the deceased (e.g. launching fireworks with the deceased ashes or the jazz funerals in the style of Dixieland), celebrating the feasts (e.g. celebrations and revelries at the cemeteries) etc.² In order to understand the essence of suffering and death in other cultures, it is necessary to form the multicultural attitude and identity.³

Broad cognitive horizons and opening for other cultures conduce the readiness to taking up the researches in the fields from beyond our own backwater, or initiating dialogues with the wards concerning the problems of the Others. The hardest task in this aspect is the ability of crossing the borders of our own world view. Especially in the cases of such delicacy as death and suffering, the pedagogue, and first of all the teacher, has no right to pigeonhole and estimate the knowledge basing on one’s own parochial vision of reality; arbitrarily, to impose the knowledge on others or discriminate anyone due to different values. The partners in the discussion are people having the right to world view distinctiveness and, what is more, non-liability to indoctrination. Due to migrations, the modern classes and lecture halls are more often

¹ See: A. Mickiewicz *The Romantic* translated by W.H. Auden.

² See e.g.: Ariès P., (1989), *Człowiek i śmierć*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa; Despelder L.A., (2001), *The Last Dance-Encountering Death and Dying*, Mc Graw Hill, Columbus; Imieliński K., (1992), *Miłość i śmierć*, Spar, Warszawa; Innes B., (1999), *Granice śmierci*, Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, Warszawa; Kowalski K., (1990), *Eros i kostucha*, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa.

³ See e.g.: Grzybowski P.P., (2008), *Edukacja międzykulturowa - przewodnik. Pojęcia, literatura, adresy*, Oficyna Impuls, Kraków.

filled with students descending from various culture circles. World view analphabetism, especially the religious one, occurs as a serious threat. It concerns some of the pedagogues and teachers who can not even point the festivities and religious values different from their own, not mentioning discussing the attitudes towards suffering and dying, which are binding in other cultures. Therefore, the indispensable part of thanatopedagogical education is broadening the general knowledge through studying the sources about other religions and world views, especially the original ones.¹

Studying in the spirit of inter-culturality allow to prepare for the future contacts with the foreigners for example, during the earning migration or international exchanges. It is hard to predict when such knowledge would be useful, both in the private sphere and in the official relations. Employment of Poles in the foreign caring and educational centers (inter alia in hospices, social welfare and family houses within the frames of individual care), constitutes an opportunity to have a direct insight into information and, what is more, infiltrate the intimate sphere of other cultures. It is also a challenge for the workers and preparation for such contacts becomes indispensable. When the opportunity occurs, it will turn out that the illness, suffering and death have got a universal dimension, regardless of the culture, it will always be the subject of reflection and human drama.

Thanatopedagogy in the aspect of human life quality improvement

What is the value of life, one realizes only when its quality decreases in the effect of illnesses and suffering, life becomes endangered, and until it comes to an end. The aggravating in distinct life periods health condition and death are the inescapable elements of reality, all is left to do is to accept the fact and care for life since it still lasts. The content of thanatological education for pedagogues and teachers is to improve the quality of life.²

The first stage of life quality improvement is breaking the resistance to thinking, speaking or learning about illness and death. Paradoxically, everyone gets ill and dies but hardly anyone can freely talk about it and express the emotions about oneself, as well as, take part in the suffering of the others. Within the European cultures, it is common to suppress the emotions and limit the inclination to participation in the emotional life. It leads to concealment of one's own suffering or disclaiming the suffering in relation to the others. In the face of illness, suffering and dying, factors of life improvement such as: presence (if not constant, let it be at least visiting); giving the time for word sharing; spending time together on doing the enjoyable things; cuddling to one another, touching (holding hands), looking in the face; joint silence, laughing, etc. All those actions are important due to building bonds between

¹ See e.g.: Incontri D., Bigheto A.C., (2008), *Filosofia. Construindo o pensar*, Escala Educational, São Paulo; Incontri D., Bigheto A.C., (2004), *Todos os Jeitos de Creer - Ensino inter-religioso*, Editora Ática, São Paulo, vol.1-4.

² See e.g.: Steuden S., Okła W. (ed.), (2007), *Jakość życia w chorobie*, Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin; Syrek E., (2001), *Jakość życia w chorobie. Społeczno-pedagogiczne studium indywidualnych przypadków*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków.

people, an escape from solitude, forming the relations, not only the compassion. First and foremost, they make people understand the natural behaviors in the situations which are determined by pain, fear, shame, uncertainty, etc. On this basis, illness, especially the one leading to death, and death itself, in the end, are not an individual or ultimate case.

Thanks to participation of the others, the suffering or close to death person is not left alone, does not suffer in solitude and does not pass away ultimately, since partnership within suffering and dying equals building the common heritage. In thanatological education, it is important to highlight the significance of the everyday presence of acquaintances, friends and family in the life of an ill person. If there are no relatives, presence of people who are professionally and voluntarily care taking is also important. Due to the presence, the quality of life improves, not in the material sense, but at least on the emotional level, which is of a great importance for the convalescence and recovery from suffering, also for the farewell to life. At the time, the suffering person experiences love, and love expressed in such a way becomes the element of the therapy for everyone.¹ People who are suffering and dying do not have to, and usually do not want to, live in the atmosphere of drama and mourning when still being alive. They do dream and frequently demand the right to fulfill their dreams, they want the entertainment, accordingly to the possibilities, and they wish to consciously spend the time that remains with others. Some of the dying want to take part in the lives of their relatives even when they will be gone. They write letters, record advices and make films, asking to hand them to someone after they die.

The natural surroundings for experiencing the suffering and death is family.² The contents of thanatopedagogical education are the changes in the quality of family life, in connection with the appearance of an illness, as well as, the preparation for the death of a family member. The problem is that the ill, or the dying person is no longer capable of fulfilling the role of a household member; therefore, the rest of the householders have to adjust and change their previous roles. The attitude towards the process and the reactions in certain aspects also have to be changed:

- taking care of the ill person (the new division of responsibilities),
- material difficulties in connection with the loss of income and the costs of treatment,
- changes in the sphere of free time,
- emotions and attitudes accompanying the changes of the ill/dying person's state,
- experiencing the mourning,
- orphanhood, widowhood, solitude, etc.³

¹ See e.g.: Adams P., (2004), *House calls. How we can all heal the world one visit at a time*, Robert D.Reed Publishers, San Francisco; Siegel B., (2003), *Help Me to Heal. A Practical Guidebook for Patients, Visitors, and Caregivers*, Hay House, Carlsbad; Siegel B., (2003), *How to Live Between Office Visits. A Guide to Life, Love and Health*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York; Siegel B., (1986), *Love, Medicine & Miracles. Lessons Learned about Self-Healing form a Surgeon's Experience with Exeptional Patients*, Harper & Row, New York; Siegel B., (1998), *Peace, Love & Healing. Bodymind Communication & the Path to Self-Healing: An Exploration*, Harper & Row, New York; Siegel B., (1999), *Prescriptions for Living. Inspirational Lessons for a Joyful, Loving Life*, Harper & Row, New York.

² Both in a narrow: a circle of people bound by blood and marriage, and broad sense: a circle of people emotionally bound; relatives, friends, close acquaintances, household members, neighbours, co-employees and others.

³ See e.g.: Bartoszevska E., (2005), *Formy pomocy dziecku nieuleczalnie choremu i jego rodzinie w hospicjum*, Oficyna

The improvement factor in the lives of ill and dying people is also the sense of humour and laughter. Reducing the ill person's situation to absurd and an ability of laughing at it, has the therapeutic effect. Implementing the laughter therapy is a subject of numerous studies¹ and, what is more, it also constitutes a significant element of thanatopedagogical education.

Thanatopedagogy in the aspect of health conditions diversity

Thanatopedagogical education encapsulates the contents connected with the changes of the situation in the lives of a single person and the relatives depending on the health condition. The suffering and the dying function as the characteristic Others, who are distinguished by the specific patterns of thinking and acting. A slightly ill person, whose recovery is predictable, would act in a completely different way than a person in the decadent phase of life. The behaviour and the expectations of a suffering person would change depending on the overall efficiency and the (un)consciousness of health condition, and so would the reactions of the surroundings.

The extreme health conditions require a distinct approach; beginning with giving hope and assistance of the ill person in the process of recovery, through the kind accompanying and supporting, up to the conscious experiencing of the forthcoming death. Each of those situations requires different contents and forms of dialogue, as well as help. Since it is difficult to predict when and with what kind of state we may deal, the element of thanatopedagogical education is formation of a habit consisting in gathering the knowledge on this very subject and acquisition of caring competence for patients in various states.

It is much easier to experience a critical situation, being certain of the acquired knowledge and the caring abilities (even if they are basic), than face the problem which has never been solved before, especially when the stress and time factor are working to our disadvantage. The suffering person requires the explanation of his or her situation and the medical personnel not always has got the time for that; therefore, it is the family or friends who explain and sooth.

The knowledge necessary in the diverse phases of illness and dying relates to the following issues:

- where are the medical care centres situated (the addresses, phone numbers), what kind of documents should a person submit; what are the possibilities of a professional care assurance for

Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków; Herbert M., (2005), *Żaloba w rodzinie. Jak pomóc cierpiącym dzieciom i ich rodzinom*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk; Ogryzko-Wiewiórkowska M., (1994), *Rodzina i śmierć*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie Skłodowskiej, Lublin; Ogryzko-Wiewiórkowska M., (1992), *Rodzina w obliczu śmierci*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie Skłodowskiej, Lublin; Pisula E., Danielewicz D. (ed.), (2007), *Rodzina z dzieckiem niepełnosprawnością*, Wydawnictwo Harmonia, Gdańsk; Walden-Gałuszko K. de, (1996), *U kresu. Opieka paliatywna, czyli jak pomóc rodzinie i personelowi medycznemu środkami psychologicznymi*, Wydawnictwo Medyczne Makmed, Gdańsk.

¹ See e.g.: Adams P., Mylander M., (1998), *Gesundheit! Bringing Good Health to You, the Medical System, and Society through Physician Service, Complementary Therapies, Humor, and Joy*, Healing Arts Press, Rochester; Bokun B., (1974), *Humour Therapy*, Collins, London; Goodheart A., (1994), *Laughter Therapy*, Less Stress Press, Santa Barbara; Haller B., Zarai R., (1986), *Rire c'est la santé*, Éditions Soleil, Genève; Holden R., (1993), *Laughter the Best Medicine*, Thorsons, London; Keller D., (1994), *Humor as Therapy*, Med-Psych Publishing, Wau Watosh; Klein A., (1989), *The Healing Power of Humor*, Jeremy Tarcher, Los Angeles.

the patient (the nursing care, hospice care, therapeutic care, etc.);

- what are and were the potential wards suffering from; on what medicines are they and which drugs they can not take; are they on a diet or may they be allergic to something; what is their blood type; where is their medical documentation;
- what does their illness consist in and what will the treatment look like approximately, about which issues should and should not the ward be informed (e.g. what kind of vocabulary is suitable for describing the illness);¹
- what are the treatments prescribed by the doctors in certain situations and what should be prepared in connection with them;
- what is the use of the medical equipment placed in the medical care centres or in the house of the ward, and how should it be attended if necessary;
- what is the physiology of illness and death; what could be expected of a person suffering physiologically, psychologically and in other ways;²
- what caring activities are joined with the symptoms of illness and death which in every day life are perceived as taboo subjects or cause disgust (fever, sweating, incontinence of urine and faeces, vomiting, sitophobia, salivation, breathlessness, lividity, convulsions, extravasations, screaming, rattling, foam on mouth, etc.);
- on what basis would the ill person come back home and return to the everyday activities; how should the person be supported during the time of rehabilitation.³

In order to make the illness and dying most comprehensible for the co-experiencing people, a dialogue between the suffering, family and friends, doctors, therapists, volunteers and the others, which are involved in the process of caring, is indispensable. The knowledge mentioned above facilitates the dialogue and sometimes is its condition.

Thanatopedagogy in the generational aspect

Illness, suffering and death are perceived differently by small children, teenagers, mature people and those in the decadent phase of life. Therefore, the contents of the thanatopedagogical thought are educational programs covering the subject of suffering and death on the levels corresponding to people in

¹ At some oncology wards the use of word "cancer" is prohibited due to its commonly present connotation with "a death sentence". Patients are instead informed about neoplastic or leukemia, tumour, etc. By the use of improper words, the entire effort of the ward's therapists can be ruined, and the patient devoid of hope.

² See e.g.: Clark W.R., (2000), *Pleć i śmierć*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa; Nuland S.B., (1996), *Jak umieramy*, Świat Książki, Warszawa; Ruffié J., (1997), *Seks i śmierć*, Wydawnictwo WAB, Warszawa.

³ See e.g.: Bréhant J., (1993), *Thanatos: Chory i lekarz w obliczu śmierci*, Wydawnictwo ANCHER, Warszawa; Kessler D., (1999), *Śmierć jest częścią życia*, Świat Książki, Warszawa; Nowicka A., (2001), *Psychospołeczna integracja dzieci przewlekle chorych w szkole podstawowej*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków; Pichler E., Richter R., (1995), *Nasze dziecko ma nowotwór - pokonać chorobę*, Wydawnictwo Zysk i Ska, Warszawa; Walden-Gałuszko K. de, (1992), *Wybrane zagadnienia psychoonkologii i psychotanatologii. Psychologiczne aspekty choroby nowotworowej, umierania i śmierci*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk.

various age.¹ Some of the programs are destined for specific institutions, starting with the nursery schools, through the schools of a diverse degree, up to the Universities of the Third Age. Preparing teachers, parents and other interested people to the realisation of the programs is also a part of the thanatopedagogical thought. It requires the choice of issues which would match the recipients' demands, their acquisition capabilities, the language of the knowledge conveyance, as well as the didactic materials, necessarily with the psychologists cooperation.

It is significant to inform children about the illnesses and distinguish between the insignificant, serious and terminal illnesses, what should be followed by the suitable approach and taking care after the ill person. In the particular phases of growth, child can be shown the nature of suffering in relation to the ill in the family in order to make them aware of that suffering and dying is a normal element of reality. That will happen to all of us and nobody, especially a child, should be blamed for it, while those who are afflicted, should be supported to the best of our ability. The thing is that a child, since the early years of its life, should participate in the lives of the suffering and their problems should become a natural issue. For some of the adults, children's serenity in the face of death seems bewildering; however, it results from the lack of understanding of the situation's seriousness and inexperience in this field. A common study of the language of the ill, including children's and youth's language, is an interesting theme. The language allows them to trivialize the circumstances of suffering and introduce the elements of humour (*Grzybowski 2006, p. 335-341*).²

Teenagers tend to reduce illness and suffering to absurd. On the one hand, youth gets used to them under the influence of brutal computer games, films or conversations with peers but, on the other hand, they intensively experience being ill, while they are trying to find their own place in the family and in the world. In the face of illness and suffering, teenagers flee to the childish serenity or demand to be treated on equal terms with adults and are willing to participate in their relatives' problems. In this case, the educational problem consists in the search of a common language in the dialogue concerning the difficult issues, as well as, the way of defining the role in the drama of life and both, the responsibilities and privileges related to the role.

When it comes to the adults in their decadent phase of life, depending on their life view and health condition, the thanatopedagogical educational projects may include contents which would allow them to enrich the previously possessed knowledge. The education may introduce the elements concerning both their health condition and the issues relating to building bonds with the relatives, shaping the common heritage, being hold in the others memory. The last but not least element is the conscious improvement of

¹ See e.g.: Binnebesel J., (2003), *Opieka nad dzieckiem z chorobą nowotworową: aspekt pozamedyczny*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń; Binnebesel J., (2004), *Dziecko w obliczu śmierci*, In: J. Bąbka (ed.), *Człowiek niepełnosprawny w różnych fazach życia*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warszawa; Binnebesel J., (2004), *Tanatopedagogika – cierpienie socjalne w śmierci dzieci z chorobą nowotworową*, In: A. Kieszkowska, E. Trafiałek (ed.), *Pomoc społeczna i praca socjalna wobec problemów współczesności – wybrane zagadnienia w teorii i praktyce*, Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa im. prof. Stanisława Tarnowskiego w Tarnobrzegu, Tarnobrzeg.

² Children at some oncology wards call blood transfusion "blood pudding", a drip "a flask" and a midline catheter "a butterfly". This is perfectly ordinary for the children and the personnel, but visitors have mixed feelings.

life's quality through participation in other people's lives and admitting them to one's own emotional sphere.

The inter-generational dialogue conducted in a family and focused on illness, suffering and dying is of a crucial importance, since numerous institutions do not admit visitors below sixteen years of age. Especially in the European culture, illness and death, for various reasons, are hidden from the young generation and placed in secluded hospital rooms or hospices; in the effect youth is left uninformed and misunderstand this aspect of life. The inter-cultural educational projects addressed to children, youth, parents and grandparents, assume that people would share the difficult issues and allow to achieve one more aim. They provoke the reflection on passing and, to some extent, prepare for the old age and the changes leading towards the end of life in way that they would not emerge out of the sudden. It is evident that this aspect of thanatopedagogical education is rather extensive and demands a multi-surfaced reflection.

Thanatopedagogy in the aspect of teacher and school work

Suffering and death are the rarely encountered elements within the school life. Due to the thanatopedagogical preparation of teachers, these subjects could constitute a regular element of the education and partnership with student's families. Especially when the relevant discussions are conducted at the school corridors on the occasion of death or mourning of somebody's belonging to the school community; or in the cases of tragic accidents like catastrophes, natural disasters, wars, silent marches, etc. On the one hand, the characteristic feature of school activities is their programmatic predictability in the case of subjects, but on the other hand the changeability of problems, fashions, moods in the particular classes is determined by the current events.

In this aspect, it is worth to use the experience of Brazilian alternative schools, where within the framework of moral education classes, students are taken to hospitals, welfare centres or social centres in poverty stricken districts. The older students are obliged to undergo a training there under the instructions of teachers, in order to get to know the circumstances of life in suffering and illness, learn how to talk to the suffering and the ill, accustom with the possibility of a loss of acquaintances and relatives on account of death, in order to accompany them till the very end.

Illnesses, suffering and death may constitute a curriculum of pedagogical classes. It often happens that such classes take place when a school community is afflicted with an acquaintance's drama, and then such an occasional interest in the discussed phenomena becomes humiliating. The constant presence of the issues during the classes, would enable accustoming with them and would allow for preparation of the school surroundings to the natural reactions like help and partnership, if necessary. A good pretext to commence a discussion might be the current events from the news, latest films or theatrical events which include the motif of suffering and death, or even the readings which eliciting interest within families and

teachers.

Thanatopedagogy could be an interesting subject matter for pedagogues and school psychologists, who after educating themselves in the subject, may support teachers during the pedagogical classes or occasionally conduct a support group and organize lectures for the members of school community. Classes of this kind help not only to cope with problems resulting from the experience of illness, suffering and relative or an acquaintance's death, but also are conducive to integration of the school community.

Thanatopedagogy in the aspect of social activity

A social movement for the benefit of the ill, suffering and dying, should be taken into consideration in the contents of thanatopedagogical education. The movement, usually internally varied and more or less popular in different countries, manifests itself in institutions, volunteer groups, constant or occasional charity projects, courses, support groups, treatment for the needy in various life situations, etc. Due to the possibilities of co-financing from foundations' means, international organisations, donations, tax deduction, etc., the activities take various forms and the awareness of their accessibility, the conditions of functioning, possibilities of cooperation, gaining knowledge and experience in diverse educational enterprises, constitutes a significant element of the educational system.

The hospice voluntary service and the campaign *Hospicjum to też życie (Hospice is also Life)*¹, realized under its patronage, belong to one of the most known Polish social movements. Another foundation named *Mam Marzenie (I Have a Dream)*² takes care of the children afflicted with neoplastic diseases. Among the initiatives with the object of rising the life standards of hospital patients, there are occasional campaigns and a constant activity of the Foundation Dr Clown³, and the action called *Bajka-pomagajka (A Helping Fairytale)* in the Warsaw Institute of Mother and Child⁴. Another well known Foundation called *Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy (The Great Orchestra of Christmas Aid)* which, apart from organizing the annual fund-raising, is engaged in training people in giving first aid⁵.

Teacher's task is to prepare their wards for participation in the works of the institutions mentioned, through informing about the institutions' activities and encouraging to students to cooperate; but also warn against the questionable quality institutions, which playing on the emotions of young people, offer some courses, interpersonal trainings and apprenticeships⁶. In order not to expose the wards to a shock

¹ See e.g.: Drażkiewicz J. (ed.), (1989), *W stronę człowieka umierającego. O ruchu hospicjów w Polsce*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa; Górecki M., (2000), *Hospicjum w służbie umierających*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warszawa; Krakowiak P., Modlińska A., Binnebesel J. (ed.) (2008), *Podręcznik koordynatora wolontariatu hospicyjnego*, Biblioteka Fundacji Hospicyjnej, Gdańsk; www.hospicja.pl (22.01.2009).

² See e.g.: www.mammarzenie.org (22.01.2009).

³ See: www.drclown.pl (22.01.2009). The inspiration for many groups of clown-doctors was the story of Patch Adams, which was popularised by a film by vol. Shadyac: *Patch Adams*, and a reportage about P. Adams and hospital clowns' visit to field hospitals in Afghanistan: David Grieco, Marco Guidone, Giorgio Moser: *Clownin' Kabul*.

⁴ See: ksiazki.wp.pl/wiadomosci/id,35862,wiadomosc.html (22.01.2009).

⁵ See: www.wosp.pl (22.01.2009).

⁶ In many schools one can find leaflets of "psychological companies" established by graduates of various courses, who despite mediocre competence and experience, offer the youth "a broad spectrum of services and courses". Those activities

related to the contact with suffering, illness and death, they should be trained by people experienced in volunteer work and able to convey not only the knowledge about the gained benefits but also about the requirements that the volunteers have to face and the dangers in the sphere of mental and physical health.

Thanatopedagogy in the legal aspect

The legal issues connected with illness and death are unknown or incomprehensible for many people; therefore, there is a necessity of education in this field and preparation for decision making, which would involve legal consequences. The most frequent problems concern health and life insurance, etc. In the case of placing the patient in a hospital or in a care centre, there is a demand of agreement for realization of certain procedures (e.g. transfusion, transplant, resuscitation) or instantiation of the financial issues in case of lack of the insurance. In the face of death appears a problem of death certificate, giving out the body, collecting the organs for a transplant, conveyance of the body, exhumation, or drawing up and realization of the will, etc. Each of those cases is regulated by the law and usually specialised institutions help with arranging them. However, their work is not always honest, thus, the family's knowledge about the rights and possibilities is inestimable. In this context, it is important to warn against cheats offering some "miraculous" medical treatments. Those frauds take advantage of the naiveness of people devastated by doctor's diagnosis and offer help on the basis of illegal practice.

There is a presentation of the laws of the dying, the realization of which is left as a moral issue. Here are the most significant examples:

- *“The right to be treated as a living person,*
- *The right to keep the sense of hope, regardless of the circumstances,*
- *The right to be taken care by the people who maintain the hope, regardless of the circumstances,*
- *The right to express emotions and feelings connected with dying in one's own way,*
- *The right to participate in making all decisions concerning medical care,*
- *The right to be taken care of by compassionate, sensitive and competent people, who make an effort to understand the individual needs,*
- *The right to expect the continuous medical care, even if the «treatment» changes into «bringing relief»,*
- *The right to receive full and honest answers to all of the questions,*
- *The right to spiritual search,*
- *The right to be released from the physical pain,*
- *The right to express feelings and emotions connected with pain in one's own way,*
- *Children's right to participate in dying,*

are all profit-oriented, due to a lack of proper supervision and administrative control, they are frequently organized in the fringes of the law. An example would be a "therapy" given to teenagers without their parents' consent, resulting in psychological harm.

- *The right to die,*
- *The right to die in peace and with dignity,*
- *The right not to die in solitude,*
- *The right to expect that after death, the sacredness of body will be respected.” (Kessler 1999, p. 9)*

There have been discussions in the context of the above-cited laws between the followers and the opponents of certain solutions, such as the right to euthanasia, the medical help for the suicides¹. The discussions are the outcomes of bioethics development, within the framework of which people are seeking the answers for questions concerning the ways of informing the patients about illnesses and the possibilities of human manipulation due to the latest biological and medical discoveries². The discussion sides accuse each other of being ideological and having no conscience. Educating pedagogues and teachers in those aspects is not only about conveying the legal knowledge and learning how to competently explain it to the others, it is also about the reliable expression of arguments to the both sides of the dispute, because their acquaintance is the another right of the suffering and the dying.

Thanatopedagogy in the aspect of art and entertainment

Illness, suffering and death are the subject of numerous works of art. There is no day without them springing up in the media, in the result we may talk about trivialization, or even fouling those phenomena (e.g. in tabloids). Since they penetrated the entertainment sphere, we can find them in comic book, cartoons (e.g. manga) or in computer games, the characters of which possess a magical power of enlivening, death is not a taboo subject any more. It is no wonder that death served like this seems fascinating, especially to young people. As it was pointed by Howard Reid: “*Children visiting the British Museum firstly rush to the Egyptian mummies, and then they necessarily want to see how is the Marshy Peter, who was found in the Lindow Marsh in Cheshire*” (Reid 2002, p. 9). How far can a man go within his artistic work to establish a contact with death, shows the use of human bodies for production of art works produced by Gunther von Hagens and Damien Hirst. We may choose between death on the computer screens and in action films, or death which is rationally acquainted through a multi-cultural dialogue inspired by works of art. In this aspect of thanatopedagogy, selected books and films are of great help when it comes to a discussion about suffering and death in which a proper respect is maintained.

¹ See e.g.: Barnard Ch.N., (1996), *Godne życie, godna śmierć. Wybitny kardiolog o eutanazji i samobójstwie*, Wydawnictwo Jacek Santorski & Co, Wydawnictwo Cis, Warszawa; Biela A. (ed.), (1996), *Eutanazja a opieka paliatywna. Aspekty etyczne, religijne, psychologiczne i prawne*, Wydział Nauk Społecznych Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Akademia Medyczna w Lublinie, Lublin; Fenigsen R., (1994), *Eutanazja: śmierć z wyboru*, Wydawnictwo W drodze, Poznań; Gałuszka M., Szewczyk K. (ed.), (2002), *Narodziny i śmierć. Bioetyka kulturowa wobec stanów granicznych życia ludzkiego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa; Szeroczyńska M., (2004), *Eutanazja i wspomagane samobójstwo na świecie. Studium prawnoporównawcze*, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków; Willke J., Wertham F., (2000), *Życie czy śmierć: stare i nowe tajemnice eutanazji*, Human Life International, Gdańsk.

² See e.g.: Boloż W., (1997), *Życie w ludzkich rękach, Podstawowe zagadnienia bioetyczne*, Wydawnictwo Adam, Warszawa; Gałuszka M., Szewczyk K. (ed.), (2002), *Narodziny i śmierć. Bioetyka kulturowa wobec stanów granicznych życia ludzkiego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa; Gałuszka M., Szewczyk K. (ed.), (1996), *Umierać bez lęku. Wstęp do bioetyki kulturowej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.

Bibliotherapy is gaining growing popularity¹. There are specialistic book series which are published worldwide, the volumes of which are prepared with the assistance of psychologists, pedagogues and other specialists and are a pretext for a serious discussion about being ill, suffering and death². Especially when it comes to working with children, the books which are read together (or looked at, depending on child's age) are priceless and help to introduce children to this difficult subject and integrate the family in the face of suffering (Paiva 2007, p. 185-187)³. Working with books like these is a subject of numerous scientific studies⁴. Bibliography also takes advantage of fiction, reportage, non-fiction literature and studies in the character of diaries⁵

Film works of art appeal particularly to youth, both the artistic pictures, where death is shown in a fairy convention (e.g. Jan Jakub Kolski: *Grający z Talerza (The Plate Player)*) and the masterpieces of reportage revealing the circumstances of death in an extremely serious context (e.g. Jon Jefferson: *Biography of a Corpse. The Body Farm*). However, in the educational work, the most helpful films are those in which the authors ask about the ultimate issues, such as:

- Alejandro Amenábar: *The Sea Inside (Mar Adentro)*;
- Andrzej Wajda: *Calamus (Tatarak)*;
- Ate de Jong: *When I'll be gone (Wenn ich nicht mehr lebe)*;
- Bernard Tavernier: *Death Watch (La mort en direct)*;

¹ See e.g.: Borecka I, Wontorowska-Roter S., (2003), *Biblioterapia w edukacji dziecka niepełnosprawnego intelektualnie. Materiały dydaktyczne dla nauczycieli i bibliotekarzy*, Wydawnictwo Unus, Wałbrzych; Konieczna E.J. (ed.), (2006), *Biblioterapia w praktyce. Poradnik dla nauczycieli, wychowawców i terapeutów*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków; Molicka M., (2002), *Bajkoterapia. O lękach dzieci i nowej metodzie terapii*, Media Rodzina, Poznań.

² See e.g.: *Elf-Help Books for Kids* or *Elf-Help Books for Adults* - book series from Abbey Press Trade Books, or St.Meinard Editions.

³ See e.g.: Brett D., (1998), *Opowiadania dla twojego (nieco starszego) dziecka. Koją, leczą, rozwiązują problemy*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk; Brett D., (1998), *Opowiadania dla twojego dziecka. Koją, leczą, rozwiązują problemy*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk; Brown L.K., Brown M.T., (2004), *When Dinosaurs Die. A Guide to Understanding Death*, Little, Brown and Company, London; Buscaglia L., (2007), *Jesień Liścia Jasia*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk; Erlbruch W., (2008), *Gęś, śmierć i tulipan*, Wydawnictwo Hokus-Pokus, Warszawa; Fuhrmann-Wönkhaus E., (2004), *Spacer po tęczy. Odprężające opowiadania dla chorych dzieci*, Wydawnictwo Jedność, Kielce; Graff-Oszczepalińska M., (2008), *Poczytanka Marzanki*, Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, Sandomierz; Jalonen R. (2009), *Dziewczynka i drzewo kawek*, Wydawnictwo Tatarak, Warszawa; Molicka M., (1999), *Bajki terapeutyczne dla dzieci*, Media Rodzina, Poznań; Molicka M., (2003), *Bajki terapeutyczne. Cz.2*. Media Rodzina, Poznań; Nitsch C., (2001), *Bajki pomagają dzieciom. Opowieści, które uzdrawiają, pocieszają i dodają odwagi*, Wydawnictwo Diogenes, Warszawa; Ryrych K., (2008), *Siedem sowych piór. Pamiętnik mojej choroby*, Cartalia Press, Warszawa; Schaefer C.E., Foy DiGeronimo T., (2002), *Jak rozmawiać z dziećmi o bardzo ważnych sprawach. Dla rodziców dzieci od 4 do 12 lat. Konkretne pytania i odpowiedzi oraz pożyteczne wskazówki*, Media Rodzina, Poznań; Siegel B., (2008), *Buddy's Candle*, Trafford Publishing, Victoria; Stalfelt P., (2008), *Mała książka o śmierci*, Wydawnictwo Jacek Santorski & Co, Warszawa; Stark U., Høglund A., (2008), *Czy umiesz gwizdać, Joanno?* Wydawnictwo Zakamarki, Poznań; Thomas P., (2001), *I Miss You. A First Look at Death*, Barron's Educational Series, Hauppauge.

⁴ See e.g.: Adorno I., (1994), *Conversando com criança sobre a morte*, Editora Psy, Campinas; Bortolin S., (2003), *A morte na literatura infantil*, InfoHome, Londrina; Torres W.C., (1999), *A criança diante da morte*, Casa do Psicólogo, São Paulo.

⁵ See e.g.: Bergendhal-Pauling L., (2006), *Mały policjant, czyli mam marzenie*, Media Rodzina, Poznań; Bohlmeijer A., (2008), *Do nowego anioła*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków; Dražba J., (1996) *Za parawanem powiek*, Media Rodzina, Poznań; Janda K., (2008), *Moje rozmowy z dziećmi*, Krystyna Janda, Warszawa; Mazurkiewicz A., (2003), *Jak uszczypnie będzie znak*, Prószyński i Ska, Warszawa; Panchaud A., (2003), *Ta mort me donne beaucoup de travail. Réflexions et états d'âme autour d'une mort, d'un deuil et d'une thérapie*, Éditions des Écrivains, Paris; Schmitt E.E., (2004), *Oskar i pani Róża*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków; Terakowska D., (2001), *Poczwarzka*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków; Zorza V, Zorza R., (1999), *Sposób na umieranie. Życ do końca*, Media Rodzina, Poznań; Zwierzyńska-Matzke T., Matzke S., (2002), *Czasami wolam w niebo*, Wydawnictwo WAB, Warszawa.

- Bruce Joel Rubin: *My life*;
- Cyril Collard: *Savage Nights (Les nuits fauves)*;
- Denis Arcand: *The Barbarian Invasions*;
- Ed van der Elsken: *Bye*;
- George Miller: *Lorenzo's Oil*;
- Ingela Romare: *The Will of Life (Mod att leva)*;
- John Badham: *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*;
- John Erman: *Who Will Love My Children?*;
- Krzysztof Zanussi: *Life As a Fatal Sexually Transmitted Disease (Życie jako śmiertelna choroba przenoszona drogą płciową)*;
- Marcin Koszałka: *Existance (Istnienie)*;
- Małgorzata Szumowska: *33 Scenes from Life (33 sceny z życia)*.

Willing to inspire the wards with the idea of life quality improvement, it is also worth to refer to the films which tell the story of coping with an illness, disability and suffering in various circumstances:

- Bobby Farelly, Peter Farelly: *Shallow Hal*;
- Irena Kamińska: *Our Children, The Sign (Nasze dzieci, Znak)*;
- Jacek Bławut: *The Abnormal (Nienormalni)*;
- Jaco van Dormael: *The Eighth Day (Le Huitieme jour)*;
- Jerry Zaks: *Marvin's Room*;
- John Duigan: *Molly*;
- Jim Abrahams: *First Do No Harm*;
- Jim Sheridan: *My Left Foot*;
- Jonathan Demme: *Philadelphia*;
- Julian Schnabel: *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly (Scaphandre et le papillon)*;
- Lasse Hallstrom: *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*;
- Lea Pool: *The Blue Butterfly*;
- Maciej Adamek: *Till Death Do Us Part (I nie opuszczę cię aż do śmierci)*;
- Małgorzata Imielska: *The Hospital of the Regained Hope (Szpital odzyskanej nadziei)*;
- Matthew Bright: *Tiptoes*;
- Michael Braverman: *Life Goes On*;
- Paul Greengrass: *The Theory of Flight*;
- Paul Shapiro: *Jewel*;
- Petter Naess: *Elling*;
- Stephen Gyllenhaal: *Promised a Miracle*;
- Thomas McCarthy: *The Station Agent*;

- Tomasz Szadkowski: *The Retreat (Ucieczka)*.

There are many examples of works of art concerning suffering and death¹. Therefore, they are worth the consideration in thanatopedagogical work, especially since their accessibility grows due to the numerous audio and visual carriers.

Thanatopedagogy in its formal and organizational aspects

The popularisation of thanatopedagogical agenda as a support for self education in this field, is possible in numerous forms. The following are the organizational solutions:

- establishing a section devoted to thanatology and thanatopedagogy in university libraries, with a subdivision into a general literature section and a section for didactic materials for recipients in different ages;²
- research and preparation of a collection of books and films for discussion; starting from ideological and biased, to academic dissertations and reportage, to controversial sources, for example those from the borders of science as such, taboo content;³
- work out educational materials such as cinematic and bibliographic guides, available both in libraries and in the Internet;
- giving access to university libraries to people outside the academia, who are interested in thanatopedagogical issues, ie. teachers, volunteers and palliative institution workers, health care workers, non-governmental organization workers, parents, etc.⁴
- introduction of thanatopedagogy as a compulsory course in teachers' education, at least as a form of lectures. Those lectures should also be opened for people outside the academia.
- Establishing cooperation between the institutions for pedagogic practice, academic centres for volunteers and non-governmental organizations, as well as health and social care institutions.
- An introduction of study tours and/or duties in hospitals, old people's homes, hospices and others

¹ See e.g.: Burszta W.J. (ed.), (2004), *Strategie śmierci - formy umierania. Świadectwa literackie i kulturoznawcze*, Wydawnictwo Academica SWPS, Warszawa; Czapliński P., (2001), *Mikrologi ze śmiercią. Motywy tanatyczne we współczesnej literaturze polskiej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań; Kuligowski W., Zwierzchowski P. (ed.), (2004), *Śmierć jako norma, śmierć jako skandal*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Bydgoskiej, Bydgoszcz; Rosiek S. (ed.), (2002), *Wymiary śmierci*, Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, Gdańsk; Zwierzchowski P., (2006), *Spektakl i ideologia. Szkice o filmowych wyobrażeniach śmierci heroicznej*, Wydawnictwo Rabid, Kraków; Zwierzchowski P., Mazur D. (ed.), (2005), *Kino polskie wobec umierania i śmierci*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Bydgoskiej, Bydgoszcz.

² Such a solution functions, among others, in The Institut Supérieur OZANAM in Nantes, France, where materials about death could be found in the pedagogical library, on the shelf with books concerning difficult issues (such as illnesses, holocaust, AIDS, children fears).

³ BARFIE Project realised in Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Portugal, Slovakia, Great Britain and Poland, could be treated as a model example. Polish section of the international Association of Friends of the Book for Young People IBBY also takes part in the project. Within its framework, a catalogue of books including the idea of multi-culture has been prepared. It is an index of one hundred and thirty eight items from the seventeen European countries, where seven of Polish authors can be found. Also see: www.miasto.zgierz.pl/gim3/bonusy/bib/programy.html#BARFIE (22.01.2009).

⁴ The solution consists in facilitating the virtual libraries in the form of pdf files, which would be possible to download from the internet.

as a part of compulsory pedagogic practice for the oldest secondary education students and higher education students.

- Encouraging participation in voluntary activities in the above mentioned establishments and preparation of self-devised educative actions, exchanges, courses, etc. for example as a part of the European *Youth In Action* programme.
- Organising discussion panels on thanatological and thanatopedagogical topics, and giving permission to participate to all interested
- Encouraging students to organise scientific circles that deal with thanatopedagogy.
- Publishing information on university websites and in local press on lectures, discussion panels, and scientific circles' meetings, giving the title of a book or film that is going to be discussed.
- Participation in the creation of a common web portal, featuring links to non-governmental organizations and other institutions, whose work benefits the ill and suffering.

The above reflections show how much remains to be done in the sphere of thanatopedagogical education for educationalists and teachers. We can only hope that similarly to hospice movement, also this field of knowledge shall find numerous followers, that shall contribute to its development. The perspectives are very promising...

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