




Rafał Włodarczyk

University of Wrocław

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8817-2493>

## Utopia of School, Disobedience, and Translation Two Biblical Myths in the Interpretation of Erich Fromm and George Steiner\*

**Abstract:** It can be assumed that two biblical myths – about Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden and about the builders from Babel – are interesting expressions of the utopian imagination, because these myths narrate about two places where projects of sufficiently perfect social order were implemented in two different ways. At present, the school is one of the places that could be understood as the ambiguous effect of an implemented utopia of the industrial revolution era; the school is an education space designed as an important part of the project of a sufficiently perfect social order. Two original readings of the mentioned biblical myths – by Erich Fromm and George Steiner – shall contribute some new themes and outlooks to the discussion of the condition of the modern school and the discourses of critical pedagogy or the pedagogy of resistance and hermeneutic pedagogy.

**Keywords:** utopia, myth, school, Erich Fromm, disobedience, critical pedagogy, George Steiner, translation, hermeneutic pedagogy

---

\* The article is a revised and amended version of the text “Sukces w edukacji. Między mitem a utopią” [Success in education. Between myth and utopia], which was published in the multi-author monograph: *Sukces jako zjawisko edukacyjne*, vol. I. Eds. M. Humeniuk, I. Paszenda, W. Żłobicki. Wrocław 2017, pp. 13–24.

*For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side-effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself*

Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

## 1.

In the Book of Genesis, the oldest book of the Hebrew Bible, we find two passages often cited in discussions about utopias. The first one (Genesis 2:8–3:24) speaks of the Garden of Eden prepared by God and inhabited by Adam and Eve, presumably located somewhere in Babylonia. The inhabitants were able to find there, albeit for a short time only, uninterrupted happiness, perhaps even bliss. However, the secluded place identified with Paradise seems to have had little in common with overseas civilizations, the details of which have been discovered for us since the Renaissance by authors of “a truly golden little books” who followed into the footsteps of Thomas More's. According to Bronisław Baczek: “Paradise and utopias are lands that the cartographers of the imaginary spaces situate as neighbouring lands. However, these are completely different places, as their location and history differ from each other in several crucial respects.”<sup>1</sup>

There is no denying the above statement given the 1516 text by More, paradigmatic for the literary genre, an account of an imaginary journey, “at the end of which the narrator discovers a previously unknown country, which stands out thanks to its institutions and becomes the subject of a detailed description.”<sup>2</sup> Utopia is a remote island, its social order being a result of conscious human effort based on the project of a ruler, which not only to the minds of its inhabitants is far better in terms of political, moral and general wellbeing than other commonly known ways of organizing community life. However, the Garden of Eden is a secluded place prepared by God himself, inhabited by the two people He himself took the effort to create, obliged to obey the existing order. Nevertheless, like the island, it is cut off from the world and offers its dwellers a safe haven, happiness, harmony, and fulfilment. Therefore, the biblical Paradise can still be considered as one of several

---

<sup>1</sup> B. Baczek: *Job, mon ami: promesses du bonheur et fatalité du mal*. Paris 1997, p. 93. See *ibidem*, pp. 93–173; B. Baczek: *Wyobrażenia społeczne. Szkice o nadziei i pamięci zbiorowej*. Trans. M. Kowalska. Warszawa 1994, pp. 72–157.

<sup>2</sup> B. Baczek: *Wyobrażenia społeczne...*, p. 85.

variants of utopia. This is usually the case with educational utopias as well; in line with the assumptions of the literary genre they are projects of a sufficiently perfect social order.<sup>3</sup>

The second of the analysed biblical myths (Genesis 11:1-9) speaks of anonymous nomads who “as they migrated from the east, [...] came upon a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there.”<sup>4</sup> Having mastered the new technology of baking and joining bricks, they decided to build a city and raise a tower reaching to the sky. It is not clear from the text what motivated the builders from Babel to carry out with the project; perhaps they imagined future security, prosperity, social order, and power. Like an island in the sea, a magnificent product of communal human toil finally is emerging in the valley. Ultimately, as the myth has it, the builders suffered defeat as a result of the intervention of the concerned God. Like the inhabitants of the Garden of Eden, they must leave the valley.

The stories themselves will not tell us much about the layout of the garden prepared by God, or of the city and tower designed by the builders. In both of the cases the focus shifts from the images of the places' appearance and the tools that ensure construction to the history of utopia. The fundamental issue in this case is not so much that of the essence but rather of the opaque causes and sources of human failure. In this sense, the said myths are not so much mere representations of utopian projects or goals as stories about their complex fates, and thus they are the philosophies and critiques of utopia. It can therefore be assumed that the biblical myths of Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden or about the builders from Babel are intriguing expressions of the utopian imagination because they tell of places where projects of a sufficiently perfect social order were carried out in two distinct ways. Nowadays, one such place that can be seen as an ambiguous result of the utopia envisioned during the industrial revolution is school, which is a space for education planned as an important part of the project of a sufficiently perfect social order. Two original readings of the above biblical myths, by Erich Fromm

---

<sup>3</sup> See D. Halpin: “Utopianism and Education. The Legacy of Thomas More.” In: D. Halpin: *Hope and Education. The Role of the Utopian Imagination*. London-New York 2003, pp. 45–58; A. Drózdź: *Mity i utopie pedagogiczne*. Kraków 2000, pp. 48–154. See also D. Webb: “Where’s the Vison? The Concept of Utopia in Contemporary educational Theory.” *Oxford Review of Education* 2009, vol. 35, no. 6, pp. 743–760. On the notion and the kinds of utopias see J. Szacki: *Spotkania z utopią*. Warszawa 1980, pp. 10–56.

<sup>4</sup> All Bible quotation in English are from the following online source: <https://www.sefaria.org/texts/Tanakh>.

and George Steiner,<sup>5</sup> will enrich the discussion of the condition of the modern school with new themes.

## 2.

According to Erich Fromm, the myth of Adam and Eve's life in and expulsion from the Garden of Eden is a story of disobedience which marks the onset of human history.<sup>6</sup> The interpretation of this passage which has been prevailing in the West for centuries supports the thesis that obedience should be considered a virtue, since its opposite was the cause of the downfall of people. Fromm points out that also in Greek mythology the "transgression" of Prometheus is presented as the foundation act of civilization, since the titan, "like Adam and Eve, is punished for his disobedience."<sup>7</sup> However, it is not only them who are bound by the sentence. Exile from Paradise and the consequences of the toil of the builders of Babel are, as the exegetes maintain, the legacy we inherited along with the need to atone for the sins of our ancestors. Fromm proposes a different interpretation. He sees in these acts of disobedience the promise of the opportunities opening up to man, and comments on the consequences of the crime of the first humans as follows: "The original harmony between man and nature is broken. God proclaims war between man and woman, and war between nature and man. Man has become separate from nature, he has taken the first step toward becoming human by becoming an 'individual.' [...] To transcend nature, to be alienated from nature and from another human being, finds man naked, ashamed. He is alone and free, yet powerless and afraid. The newly won freedom appears as a curse; he is free from

---

<sup>5</sup> Some of the findings and interpretations of myths contained in this article are taken from my previous publications, see R. Włodarczyk: "Denominacje mitu wieży Babel. Esej o względnej nietrwałości." In: *W literackich konstelacjach. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesor Elżbiecie Hurnik*. Eds. B. Małczyński, J. Warońska, R. Włodarczyk. Częstochowa 2013, pp. 251–272; R. Włodarczyk: *Ideologia, utopia, edukacja. Myśl Ericha Fromma jako inspiracja dla pedagogiki współczesnej*. Kraków 2016, pp. 177–179.

<sup>6</sup> See E. Fromm: *On Disobedience and Other Essays*. New York 1981, pp. 16–17, 46–48; E. Fromm: *You Shall Be as Gods. A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and Its Tradition*. New York 1966, pp. 21–22, 57–58, 70–71; E. Fromm: *Beyond the Chains of Illusion. My Encounter with Marx and Freud*. New York–London 2009, pp. 43–44, 127–128, 137.

<sup>7</sup> E. Fromm: *On Disobedience and Other Essays...*, p. 17. See *ibidem*, p. 48; E. Fromm: *Beyond the Chains of Illusion...*, pp. 127–128.

the sweet bondage of paradise, but he is not free to govern himself, to realize his individuality.”<sup>8</sup>

The banishment from the garden is preceded by the scene of Adam and Eve consuming the fruit of the tree of knowledge, which for Fromm is not so much a scene of people’s downfall but of their awakening and becoming aware of their own independence and the sense of powerlessness stemming from alienation, which in the biblical text takes the form of both the sense of shame about nudity and the Creator’s sentence announcing their future trials and tribulations. In this myth, their alienation is presented as painful but also indispensable, and the emerging challenge of change, which paves the way for possible development, is not shown as a conscious choice, but as a consequence of the human capacity to make decisions.

It can be said that the Garden of Eden is not a state of fulfilment for people, because it is incompatible with their independence, which exposes both its shortcomings and the immaturity of the people living there. In Fromm’s opinion, alienation may end in a fall for the human being, but it may also be a chance to realize and experience one’s own needs and to grow to meet them. The ability to disobey that allows the human being to speak up for their needs and development is necessary for this to happen. It is indispensable in situations where power, authority or other external conditions are at odds with them. Although Fromm regards the act of disobedience as an important condition for development, this does not mean that every act of disobedience equals virtue to him: “If a man can only obey and not disobey, he is a slave; if he can only disobey and not obey, he is a rebel (not a revolutionary); he acts out of anger, disappointment, resentment, yet not in the name of a conviction or a principle.”<sup>9</sup>

Fromm interprets the Adam and Eve’s act of disobedience as a breach of the original harmony with nature which, being an offense of a man and a woman outside the world of nature, initiates the process of their individuation and, at the same time, their estrangement from each other. It also gives rise to a history of human independence and freedom in which people can, and must, find their own answers to the questions of how to transcend the state of alienation, how to develop their own strength in order to realize their humanity fully and in harmony with nature and themselves. Fromm maps out the human

---

<sup>8</sup> E. Fromm: *Escape from Freedom*. New York 1965, p. 50. Fromm reads myths as a symbolic image of the birth of a child, when it leaves, like Paradise, the mother’s safe womb without a possibility of return. See E. Fromm: *You Shall Be as Gods...*, pp. 57–58.

<sup>9</sup> E. Fromm: *On Disobedience and Other Essays...*, p. 18.

history as follows: “Man has continued to evolve by acts of disobedience not just in the sense that his *spiritual* development was possible only because there have been men who dared to say ‘no’ to the powers that be in the name of their conscience or of their faith. His *intellectual* development was also dependent on the capacity for being disobedient, disobedient to the authorities who tried to muzzle new thoughts, and to the authority of long-established opinions which declared change to be nonsense.”<sup>10</sup>

The destination, then, is likewise in a way predetermined. To Fromm, the vision of the messianic era in the prophetic books and ensuing Jewish literature is a symbol and foreshadowing of the fulfilment. Fromm observes: “This new harmony, the new oneness with man and nature, is called in the prophetic and rabbinic literature ‘the end of the days’, or ‘messianic time’. It is not a state predetermined by God or the stars; it will not happen except through man’s own effort. The messianic time is the historical answer to the existence of man. He can destroy himself or advance toward the realization of the new harmony. Messianism is not accidental to man’s existence but the inherent, logical answer to it – the alternative to man’s self-destruction.”<sup>11</sup>

The chronology of the events presented in the Bible is compatible with Fromm’s *historiosophy*;<sup>12</sup> upon expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the abandonment of the state of nature, humanity has entered the path of evolution whose splendid diversity and struggle take place in line with the visions of future fulfilment, whether in this world or posthumously. Human disobedience which precedes leaving the garden in the myth referred to above does not rule out the possibility of humans achieving the state of happiness and harmony; on the contrary, it is a prerequisite for their achievement by the individual.

---

<sup>10</sup> E. Fromm: *Beyond the Chains of Illusion...*, p. 128.

<sup>11</sup> E. Fromm: *You Shall Be as Gods...*, p. 71. See also: E. Fromm: *On Disobedience and Other Essays...*, p. 17. Fromm observes moreover: “In Paradise man still is one with nature, but not yet aware of himself as separate from nature and his fellowman. By his act of disobedience man acquires self-awareness, the world becomes estranged from him. In the process of history, according to the prophetic concept, man develops his human powers so fully that eventually he will acquire a new harmony with men and nature” (E. Fromm: *Beyond the Chains of Illusion...*, p. 44).

<sup>12</sup> See E. Fromm: *You Shall Be as Gods...*, pp. 70–124; M. Pekkola: *Prophet of Radicalism. Erich Fromm and the Figurative Constitution of the Crisis of Modernity*. Jyväskylä 2010, pp. 53–67.

## 3.

Over the centuries, the editors of the Talmud and the Fathers of the Church and their heirs have focused on the story of builders as a narrative on the relation between crime and punishment, rebellion and dispersion, the power of a united community and the plague of confused languages. The motifs of the lack of humility, another fall of people, as well as the original language shared by God and Adam, unhappily lost and binding humanity in Babel, and the unique meaning of universal language permeated modern literature, art and philosophy, inspiring inquiries made in philology and linguistics.<sup>13</sup> We have no reason not to believe that the anonymous nomads who settled in the land of Shinar were a decent, democratic community and that only such a just and internally reconciled community could challenge the world, the future, the living conditions, the sky, or the unknown God. However, He who hides his face, having appeared in the city together with an anonymous group, intends to work on the confusion of the language of the builders. Before they are dispersed all over the earth and stop the construction of the city, they will cease to understand one another.

God's strategy towards the inhabitants of Babel seems to be subtle; at any rate it contrasts with such spontaneous reactions as the flooding of the earth by constant rain or the burning of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah later in fragments adjacent to Genesis 11. In the story, which is placed, as if by mistake, between two parts of Noah's genealogical posterity register, nobody dies. There is no mention of anger or destruction; at best there is astonishment and it is hardly clear whether God's reaction amounts to punishment or prevention. We know from the text in the first book of the Bible that dispersion is something undesirable only from the point of view of builders.

In his study *After Babel*, George Steiner claims that the events do not bring about man's misfortune: "[...] mankind was not destroyed but on the contrary kept vital and creative by being scattered among tongues."<sup>14</sup> Dispersion is not isolation. Multilingualism, occurring be-

<sup>13</sup> See P. Cembrzyńska: *Wieża Babel. Nowoczesny projekt porządkowania świata i jego dekonstrukcja*. Kraków 2012; R. Włodarczyk: "Denominacje mitu wieży Babel"..., pp. 251-272.

<sup>14</sup> G. Steiner: *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation...*, Oxford 1992, p. 244. Steiner's position seems to correspond to the views of the medieval Jewish scholar Abraham ibn Ezra, summarized in his commentary by Rabbi Byron L. Sherwin: "God dispersed people because if they remained focused in one place, they would be more exposed to the natural disasters that threatened them. Dispersion made them safer" (B.L. Sherwin: "Przesłanie opowiadania o wieży Babel, Rdz. 11,1-9." In: B.L. Sherwin: *We współpracy z Bogiem. Wiara*,

tween adjacent and coexisting communities spreading along routes through their linguistically opulent territories, requires translation work. According to Steiner, this kind of effort creates man, strengthens his knowledge, skills and competences to adapt to changes and circumstances, and reveals the disposition of imagination to create alternative worlds.<sup>15</sup> The American literary critic observes: "It is no overstatement to say that we possess civilization because we have learnt to translate out of time."<sup>16</sup>

Steiner makes the act of understanding dependent on the ability to translate; in this sense, interpretation means to him as much as translation. Choosing the right word or phrase to render an original expression is a decision related to the understanding of a given expression in all its complexity and the broad horizon of its linguistic and social context that the translator is able to grasp at a given moment. Repetition and simple rewriting is impossible. Each translation has to define an index of similarities and differences, a balance of profit and loss account. It is something additional that disturbs the initial balance, especially meaning. Its intrusion must be compensated for and harmony restored, which is to be achieved by the work of a translator;<sup>17</sup> this work is essentially an attempt to bridge the gap and restore proximity, to gain insight and in this way remain faithful to the text.

Literature, according to Steiner, is a special case of the hermeneutic act. The work of translation here is an everyday adjustment mechanism, learned and culturally-conditioned, whose efficacy as a rule escapes our attention. Steiner believes that: "[...] a human being performs an act of translation, in the full sense of the word, when receiving a speech-message from any other human being. Time, distance, disparities in outlook or assumed reference, make this act more or less difficult. Where the difficulty is great enough, the process passes from reflex to conscious technique. Intimacy, on the other hand, be it of hatred or of love, can be defined as confident, quasi-immediate translation."<sup>18</sup>

---

*duchowość i etyka społeczna Żydów*. Kraków 2005, p. 140). See also: B.L. Sherwin: "The Tower Of Babel In Eliezer Ashkenazi's *Sefer Ma'aseh Hashem*." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 2014, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 83-88.

<sup>15</sup> See G. Steiner: *After Babel...*, pp. 59-62, 215-247, and G. Steiner: *Real Presences. Is There Anything in What We Say?* London 2010, pp. 62-67.

<sup>16</sup> G. Steiner: *After Babel...*, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> See G. Steiner: "The Hermeneutic Motion." In: G. Steiner: *After Babel...*, pp. 312-435; G. Steiner: *Real Presences...*, pp. 6-11.

<sup>18</sup> G. Steiner: *After Babel...*, p. 48. "[...] translation is formally and pragmatically implicit in every act of communication, in the emission and reception of each and every mode of meaning, be it in the widest semiotic sense or in more



The tensions caused by the existence of an inter-language periphery are therefore not, as Steiner proves, a primary environment of the art of translation. To find out about this, one should go beyond the logic that periphrasis or metaphor deserves less to be seen in terms of translation than inter-language translation or transmutation.<sup>19</sup> Steiner's approach tends to counter this logic: "The affair at Babel confirmed and externalized the never-ending task of the translator – it did not initiate it."<sup>20</sup>

This is also a task of coping with otherness, as the author of *After Babel* stresses. Each language in its temporal facet uses its own topography of memory, they reproduce in different ways the world and determines a different set of possible realities, thanks to the ability to generate counterfactual sentences. This last property is the strongest expression of the difficulties and challenges of social pluralism, but it is a condition for the survival of mankind: "We endure, we endure creatively due to our imperative ability to say 'No' to reality, to build fictions of alterity, of dreamt or willed or awaited 'otherness' for our consciousness to inhabit. It is in this precise sense that the utopian and the messianic are figures of syntax."<sup>21</sup>

As in the myth of Adam and Eve's exile from the Garden of Eden, the stories of the failure of the builders are accompanied by many and

---

specifically verbal exchanges. To understand is to decipher. To hear significance is to translate. Thus the essential structural and executive means and problems of the act of translation are fully present in acts of speech, of writing, of pictorial encoding inside any given language. Translation between different languages is a particular application of a configuration and model fundamental to human speech even where it is monoglot" (ibidem, p. xii). See also: G. Steiner: *Grammars of Creation*. London 2010, pp. 158–169; R. Włodarczyk: "Hermeneutics of Translation – the Fundamental Aspect of Dialogue. Around the Concept of George Steiner." In: *Hermeneutics, Social Criticism and Everyday Education Practice*. Ed. R. Włodarczyk. Wrocław 2020, pp. 47–59; R. Włodarczyk: *Ideologia, teoria, edukacja...*, pp. 31–35.

<sup>19</sup> Roman Jakobson distinguished three types of translation: intralingual (*rewording*), interlingual (or *translation proper*) and *transmutation*, or intersemiotic translation ("an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems") (see R. Jakobson: "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation." In: *On Translation*. Ed. R. Brower. Cambridge 1959, p. 233). See also: G. Steiner: *After Babel...*, pp. 273–275.

<sup>20</sup> G. Steiner: *After Babel...*, p. 49. "[...] inside or between languages, human communication equals translation" (ibidem – emphasis in the original).

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. xiv. See also: G. Steiner: *Grammars of Creation...*, pp. 6–11; G. Steiner: "Hollow Miracle." In: G. Steiner: *Language and Silence. Essays 1958–1966*. New York 2010.

varied visions, accumulated over the centuries, of regaining the harmony once lost in an undefined future. Steiner, in his messianic spirit, refers to one of them in the conclusion of his book: "The Kabbalah, in which the problem of Babel and of the nature of language is so insistently examined, knows of a day of redemption on which translation will no longer be necessary. All human tongues will have re-entered the translucent immediacy of that primal, lost speech shared by God and Adam. [...] shall come a day when translation is not only unnecessary but inconceivable."<sup>22</sup>

It seems that in the consciousness of the builders, who had one language and the very same concepts, dispersion was a state that had to be counteracted. Perhaps this state prevented survival, and certainly, as a result, they interrupted the utopia of the city and the tower, the summit of which was to be in heaven. Their failure to achieve the planned fulfilment is only apparent, however, because it has made enrichment, strengthening and development possible. According to Steiner, both survival and fulfilment were possible not so much in spite of, but thanks to the confusion of language and dispersion.

\* \* \*

We have reason to believe that schoolchildren enter the place of a strong stratification of time. It mainly practices what is to come by illuminating past sparks and adding current inspirations to them. Perhaps it is true, then, that the world exists only because of the pupils' breathing and the city where there are no students will be lost. In the context of the analysed myths the school, and more broadly the educational system as an institution of socialization, resembles the work of an anonymous demiurge from the industrial revolution era, promising in its assumptions and shape that the individual and society will reach a state of fulfilment. In this sense, the school enables the realization of the individual and society within the framework of parallel educational utopias. The situation of pupils in school resembles that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The use of its tools and facilities sets a safe path for self-realization and fulfilment in accordance with the school's ideological vision but also requires subjective subordination. According to the myth in Fromm's original interpretation, this treatment of students limits not only their independence, but also their awareness of themselves and their own potential, the development of which is only made possible by an act of disobedience. Hence, in the context of educational utopias, an important question may arise: Does basing

---

<sup>22</sup> G. Steiner: *After Babel...*, p. 499.

oneself on the project of realization of individual and social potentials provided for in the school vision bring students and teachers closer to fulfilment and is the right way to achieve their full development? Or, on the contrary, does its realization in school impoverishes because it deprives students of their independence and, consequently, of their awareness of themselves and their own potential? Yes and no. If not every fruit but only the forbidden fruit of school knowledge makes us aware of our embarrassing nakedness towards the challenges of the world of everyday life, then the strategy of avoiding fear and alienation seems doubtful. Avoiding eating from this tree, the disciples trust that obedience is enough to experience fulfilment. As Fromm's reading shows, it is a paradise without maturity. Is it right, then, to decide to disobey, to abandon the underlying safe harmony, and to go through a state of alienation? The issue of resistance in school education has been the subject of critical pedagogy for a long time now and reading the issue of educational utopias from the perspective of Fromm's philosophy is only a certain complement. If the alienation stage is necessary, the tension between the vision of fulfilment in the school project and the need for independence of students and teachers can be understood as painful but creative. The state of alienation not only corrupts; a distance towards institutional visions and measures of success may contribute to the crystallization of private utopias and determine their realization, which enriches the world. This can happen, however, if we trust the myth, only outside the borders of the school. Its transformation in accordance with the idea of a given educational utopia may bring fulfilment, but it will not change its status in relation to the students and teachers placed in it as a work of an unknown demiurge, a paradise without maturity. This is not, of course, a praise of the educational system which, by definition, ignores the need of students, their parents and teachers for subjective participation in education, but a conclusion valid on the premise that school, like the Garden of Eden in the myth, was designed to meet also their needs and expectations.

Moreover, we may accept a view expressed by many critics of the modern school that, far from being perfect, the realization of a utopian vision is an unfinished or orphaned project of the industrial revolution and perhaps even a token of pride punished, which brings to mind an analogy with the events told in the second of the myths cited. As in the case of the builders of Babel, after the initial consensus and enthusiasm for the modernization of the school, there was a crisis of confidence in the common ideal that undermined the efforts of the reformers. Conservatives, supporters of feminism, and technocrats now have a different idea of the final shape of education and describe it in different languages. The project itself, born in modernity, for

some time now seems to have been continued by the force of inertia. According to Steiner's reading, in this case the failure to achieve the intended success can be interpreted differently than in the spirit of despair. The dispersion and signs of doubt about the possibilities and mission of the school strengthen alternative education with the influx of educators. In its many variants, the pedagogical utopia of modernity is translated into new formulas in accordance with the expectations of individual ideological factions. Faced with the challenges of a dynamically changing world, such a diversity of forms and multilingualism of education, which requires translation competences, enables people to survive and to develop continuously, and consequently to reform and transform the school itself. If, therefore, diversity enables us to survive, a school that is perfect enough for everyone which is the goal of modernization, could expose us to an unexpected downfall. At the same time, it should be noted, in line with Steiner's reading of the myth of builders, that the ability to translate – the condition for the development and imagining of possible worlds – is shaped in school, although it can manifest itself and be fully realized only outside of it. This raises the question of whether students feel responsible for practicing translating school knowledge into the tasks they undertake in the world of everyday life. Without this activity, which nobody can perform instead of them, there will be not too much flow, not even in one direction, between the different worlds of school and out-of-school. Moreover, if one looks at the school of late modernity as an unfinished realization of the progressive vision of the industrial revolution, one should consider, according to the interpretations mentioned above, that it leaves two instruments of significant utopian potential in the hands of students and teachers: disobedience and translation. Its future fate depends to some extent on their turning away from passivity.

Fromm's and Steiner's readings of the myths of Adam and Eve's banishment from the Garden of Eden and the builders of Babel address two important questions for the discussion of school as one of the possible forms of utopia: disobedience and translation. Of course, they require further study, but nevertheless, although it is impossible to draw final conclusions from the argumentation presented herein, in line with the reading of the myths we can assume that the skills of criticism and translation developed at school are the preconditions for achieving such a success. However, like Viktor Frankl in the quotation that serves as a motto for this article, Fromm and Steiner too seem to state in their interpretations that fulfilment and success can only come "as an unintended side effect."

*Translated from Polish by Marcin Turski*

## Bibliography

- Baczko B.: *Job, mon ami: promesses du bonheur et fatalité du mal*. Paris 1997.
- Baczko B.: *Wyobrażenia społeczne. Szkice o nadziei i pamięci zbiorowej*. Trans. M. Kowalska. Warszawa 1994.
- Cembrzyńska P.: *Wieża Babel. Nowoczesny projekt porządkowania świata i jego dekonstrukcja*. Kraków 2012.
- Dróżdż A.: *Mity i utopie pedagogiczne*. Kraków 2000.
- Fromm E.: *Beyond the Chains of Illusion. My Encounter with Marx and Freud*. New York-London 2009.
- Fromm E.: *Escape from Freedom*. New York 1965.
- Fromm E.: *On Disobedience and Other Essays*. New York 1981.
- Fromm E.: *You Shall Be as Gods. A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and Its Tradition*. New York 1966.
- Halpin D.: "Utopianism and Education. The Legacy of Thomas More." In: D. Halpin: *Hope and Education. The Role of the Utopian Imagination*. London-New York 2003, pp. 45-58.
- Jakobson R.: "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation." In: *On Translation*. Ed. R. Brower. Cambridge 1959, pp. 222-239.
- Pekkola M.: *Prophet of Radicalism. Erich Fromm and the Figurative Constitution of the Crisis of Modernity*. Jyväskylä 2010.
- Sherwin B.L.: "Przesłanie opowiadania o wieży Babel, Rdz. 11,1-9." Trans. W. Chrostowski. In: B.L. Sherwin: *We współpracy z Bogiem*. Trans. Kraków 2005, pp. 136-145.
- Sherwin B.L.: "The Tower Of Babel In Eliezer Ashkenazi's Sefer Ma'aseh Hashem." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 2014, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 83-88.
- Steiner G.: *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation*. Oxford 1992.
- Steiner G.: *Grammars of Creation*. London 2010.
- Steiner G.: *Language and Silence. Essays 1958-1966*. New York 2010.
- Steiner G.: *Real Presences. Is there Anything in What We Say?* London 2010.
- Szacki J.: *Spotkania z utopią*. Warszawa 1980.
- Webb D.: "Where's the Vison? The Concept of Utopia in Contemporary educational Theory." *Oxford Review of Education* 2009, vol. 35, no. 6, pp. 743-760.
- Włodarczyk R.: "Denominacje mitu wieży Babel. Esej o względnej nie-trwałości." In: *W literackich konstelacjach. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesor Elżbiecie Hurnik*. Eds. B. Małczyński, J. Warońska, R. Włodarczyk. Częstochowa 2013, pp. 251-272.
- Włodarczyk R.: "Hermeneutics of Translation - the Fundamental Aspect of Dialogue. Around the Concept of George Steiner." In: *Her-*

*meneutics, Social Criticism and Everyday Education Practice*. Ed. R. Włodarczyk. Wrocław 2020, pp. 47–59.

Włodarczyk R.: *Ideologia, utopia, edukacja. Myśl Ericha Fromma jako inspiracja dla pedagogiki współczesnej*. Kraków 2016.