

7

New Sources of Fear in a Late Modern Society: The Globalization of Risk

Martin Kuška

Summary. – The work examines the notion of fear from an interdisciplinary perspective, while standing at the boundary between sociology and cultural studies and working with the psychological concept of fear. It delineates fear as differentiated from anxiety and examines new sources of fear, which are viewed as the specific socio-cultural stimuli of fear. It is precisely the socio-cultural and also the situational context of fear that plays a key role during experiences of and coping with fear. The main focus of the work stems primarily from the writings of Beck, Füredi and Giddens and centers on the mapping of the socio-cultural causes of fear. It also examines specific perceptions of contemporary risks such as new fear stimuli while also revealing their sources in contemporary Western society, characterized as a world risk society, marked by a specific culture of fear. New fear stimuli are presented primarily by experts through the media. In itself, fear is an attractive commodity (news, cinema) and also has the potential to foment the desired consumer or voter behavior. The individual is ever more subjected to fearful information and is offered coping strategies centered on the purchase of security products and services, insurance, health products, legal services, expert counseling, and motivation towards a preference for politicians that promise to manage these media articulated fears.

Defining fear is far from easy. There are numerous specific definitions of fear, which have emerged on the basis of individual paradigms in which fear can be found. A universal definition of fear, which could be used across the various disciplines, has likely not yet been constructed. One of the more recent attempts

This work was supported by the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR 406/09/0294).

to provide a universal definition of fear ended with the statement, “*It is my pessimistic conclusion that fear is not definable at the present time*” (Matthen, 1998, p. 106). The difficulties associated with defining fear stem from attempts to grasp the concept in an interdisciplinary manner: Matthen comments upon this as a “*clash of methodologies used in the study of emotions*” (1998, p. 105), assuming the perspective of a philosopher weighing, from an evolutionary perspective, the contradictions and paradoxes which emerge during comparisons of the methodologies of ethnologists and psychologists to the notion of fear. The need arises to catalogue fear among biological universals and Matthen ends his particularly thought-provoking text with these words: “*It really is the business of empirical science to furnish the basis of a biological definition of fear, and the result may well not be a perfect fit with the intuitions of philosophers*” (Matthen, 1998, p. 132).

“*Genes and environment, biological and social sciences, the theory of learning and the complexities of drug addiction, hormones and neurons, personality traits and psychopathology*” (Gray, 1987, p. vii) – Thus, it is possible to study fear from all of these viewpoints and perhaps more. Fear is undoubtedly an emotion to which psychology pays relentless attention and names such as Basowitz, Cattell, Freud, Izard, Lazarus, Levitt, Plutchik, Spielberg and Watson belong among the giants of the field and cannot be overlooked during the study of this emotion. Drvota and Vymětal belong among the Czech authors, who have devoted particular efforts to studying this subject. The latter defines fear as “*an unpleasant experience tied to a specific object or situation, which creates a concern regarding peril in the individual. Thus, it is a reaction to known dangers and has a signaling and defensive function. As an experience, the emotion encompasses tension, disquiet, tightness and even paralysis*” (Vymětal, 2004, p. 12).

The likely simplest possible approach to the study of fear is offered by radical behaviorists, who would likely do just as well without the term fear and instead rely on avoidance behavior. Gray (1987, p. 34) notes that: “*the attempt to define fear as avoidance behavior is usually preparatory to the conclusion - very welcome to the radical behaviorists, who want nothing to intervene between stimulus and response - that we have no need for the concept of fear at all, since we can always talk of avoidance behavior instead*”. So is the term fear really unnecessary? So long as we merely study the inter-relationships of the stimulus-response, we can do without the term fear. The basic questions, with which we begin the study of fear, can be described thus: “(1) *what are the conditions which give rise to fear?* (2) *what are the conditions which affect susceptibility to fear, or ‘fearfulness’?*” (Gray, 1987, p. 2). Gray (1987, p. 2) prefers “*to regard fear as a state, not of mind, but of the neuro-endocrine system*” – with which we are in agreement.

Fear is often connected with anxiety. It can be argued that these two terms need not always be differentiated. But how to define the differences between fear and

anxiety? “Fear differs from anxiety primarily in having an identifiable eliciting stimulus” (Öhman, 2000, p. 574). Miceli & Castelfranchi (2005) represent examples of those who have sought to determine the differences between fear and anxiety; they note that “the difference between fear and anxiety lies in their different objects: Whereas the object of fear is a (possible or certain) danger, the object of anxiety is an event which implies a possible and uncertain danger” (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2005, p. 309). The relationship between fear and anxiety has a dynamic, which the authors describe thus: “As negative expectancies increase, anxiety proper is replaced by fear. In fact, ... we assume that if threat uncertainty decreases in the direction of negative certainty, also anxiety decreases, while at the same time it may be replaced by fear” (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2005, p. 307).

The demarcation of fear and anxiety from the perspective of behaviorists can be summarized thus: “Anxiety ... is a future-oriented emotion characterized by negative affect and apprehensive anticipation of potential threats, and results in hyper-vigilance and somatic tension (e.g. muscle tension). Fear mobilizes the organism to take action (fight/flight response), whereas anxiety leads to increased environmental and somatic scanning that facilitates sensory receptivity” (Rhudy & Meagher, 2000, p. 65).

SOURCES OF FEAR

Our report below focuses on the new sources of fear, which we view as the specific socio-cultural stimuli of fear. In a given context, it is necessary to specify that we primarily concern ourselves with the first and also partially with the second of the three different ways suggested by Gray for the study of fear: “First, there is the question of which stimuli can innately arouse fear. Secondly, there is the question of what forms of behaviour innately occur in states of fear. Thirdly, there is the question of extent to which an individual’s particular degree of susceptibility to fear is determined by heredity or environment” (Gray, 1987, p. 6). Nonetheless, we believe that it is precisely the third way that offers an interesting potential for further empirical research.

Of the oldest sources, it is certainly worthwhile to remind ourselves of a not-so-well-known typology of fear: “(1) fears in which instinct plays the chief role; (2) fears which are caused by some painful sensation; (3) fears due to some painful or disagreeable idea or belief” (Morse, 1907, p. 51). The concrete fears, which the author concerns himself with are described by him thus: fear of high places and falling; of losing orientation; of closeness, celestial objects; of darkness; of solitude; of water; of wind, fire, thunder and lightning; of animals; of eyes; of teeth; of fur; of feathers; of diseases; of death; of the end of the world, ghosts; of poverty.

He also lists miscellaneous fears, to which, for example, he adds fears of accidents (drowning, burning, that the cars would run off the track, being killed by runaway horses, hurricanes, earthquakes), fears of financial losses, of disesteem, of standing examinations and even moral and religious fears (Morse, 1907).

Eighty years later, Gray (1987, p. 25) recommends that we “*classify the stimuli for fear into those which are distal and intense; novel; characteristics of special evolutionary dangers; arising during social interaction with non-specifics; or conditioned by fear*”.

COPING WITH FEAR: AN INTRODUCTION

The efforts of Man to manage his fears are as old as mankind itself. However, ridding oneself of fear entirely has been proven to be both impossible and decidedly unnatural. The active search for security as a kind of antithesis to fear is a basic component of human history as well as the history of the individual human. Riemann (2010) introduces these strengths, which act against fear and help to regulate them: courage, trust, resolution, strength, hope, humility, faith and love. The supernatural, religion and science also help, he suggests, manage and cope with fear.

In a universal sense, it is possible to state that coping strategies primarily relate to anxiety and not fear. “If I don’t know what I am afraid of, I am experiencing anxiety, not fear. But this does not permit to fix a clear boundary between fear and anxiety, because whereas fear necessarily concerns definite dangers, we do not assume that anxiety should always concern indefinite dangers. It may be experienced even with definite dangers, that is, dangers which I know what they are, provided that they imply some uncertainty. Anxiety is in fact a response to uncertainty as regards either the outcome of events, or the action to be taken, or one’s power to foresee or to act upon reality, or one’s ability to bear injury” (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2005, p. 295). If we are to dissect the individual causes of fear in the sense that we have discussed, to rid one’s own self of fear also means to rid oneself of its causes. Thus, to rid oneself of the fear of an enemy means either to rid oneself of that enemy or to stop perceiving that person or as an enemy; to remove the fear of the unknown means to change that state into something more familiar etc. It is entirely natural to express fear over a flood, car accident or an exam, so long as those events have a direct potential impact on the person who fears them. Suppression and avoidance of threatening information tends to be expressed as a strategy for coping with fear. In order for a person to overcome their fears, he or she should be able to differentiate which fears represent a genuine threat and which ones do not. At the same time, various natural factors and socio-cultural contexts, where a given individual lives, are also a key factor.

In relation to the subject of coping with fear, it is of interest to note Gray's (1987) observation that alcohol consumption has a particular effect on this emotion (and on frustration as well): *"The finding that alcohol is capable of reducing the avoidance component of an approach-avoidance conflict is able to account for the effect of this drug on social behavior in human beings. ... If we suppose that the type of behavior which is displayed after drinking alcohol was previously restrained by fear (which is in many cases obvious enough), all these effects can be attributed to a single mechanism of action – that of reducing fear. The strong motivation which many human beings build up for alcohol (even before there is any physiological addiction to the drug) can be explained in a similar fashion"* (Gray, 1987, p. 191). However, the question remains whether we can classify the aforementioned impact of alcohol as anything other than as the numbing of the natural proclivities of humans to sense fear. We can add to this argument by pointing to a recent article, whose title also contains the main result of the experiment: "Alcohol Selectively Reduces Anxiety but Not Fear" (Moberg & Curtin, 2009).

Another interesting fact lies in the categorization of fear among the unpleasant emotions: *"People may not always prefer to feel pleasant emotions and avoid unpleasant ones. Instead, they may be motivated to experience even unpleasant emotions when they might be useful for goal attainment. ... People may sometimes prefer to feel bad if doing so can lead to instrumental benefits"* (Tamir & Ford, 2009, p. 488). The common assumption during the study of the regulation of emotions – that people actually do their best to avoid unpleasant emotions – is not universally valid, as demonstrated by the aforementioned instrumental approach to emotion regulation. The motivation to sense pleasant emotions can give way to the need to feel useful emotions: fear, similarly to anger, can help people in their everyday lives to more effectively achieve particular goals. *"According to the instrumental approach to emotion regulation, therefore, individuals should be motivated to increase their level of fear, despite the aversive nature of this experience, when they anticipate the need to avoid threats ... When a particular emotion is unpleasant to experience in the short term but potentially useful in the long term, people may be willing to experience it despite the short-term cost"* (Tamir & Ford, 2009, p. 488). In numerous activities (e. g. computer gaming or those targeted towards the seeking out dangerous real-life thrills), sometimes, feeling fear can be a goal in itself (and can actually be highly enjoyable).

The results of the first study of group interaction, in which participants awaited a fearful situation (Morris *et al.*, 1976) can provide another example of the positive role of fear. It is now known that the expression of fear in a group increases the cohesiveness of that group. *"Fear leads to a desire for emotional comparison on the part of individual members promoting group interaction of a coping nature which, finally, results in heightened intragroup attraction"* (Morris *et al.*, 1976, p. 679).

While studying how people cope with fear, a particularly strong situational context expresses itself: “*Situational contexts may have different potentials to activate either repressive or defensive coping. For example, main effects of defensiveness may be expected especially in situations in which the motive to avoid social disapproval is more strongly activated than the motive to avoid negative affect*” (Pauls & Stemmler 2003, p. 286). The individual can make use of a varied, often mutually competing, arsenal of coping strategies, which are used differently in an intrapersonal (private) and interpersonal (public) context: “*Repressors in the public condition thought and worried about the partner’s (bad) impression of them, whereas the nonrepressors were unaffected by the favorability of the evaluation or of the public nature of the situation. ... Repressors prefer an avoidant self-deceiving strategy when they receive negative feedback privately, but when self-image-threatening information is public knowledge, they pay close attention to it, think about possible refutations, and ruminate particularly about how other people perceive them. ... Repressive–defensive copers compared with other personality groups showed high-behavioral and low self-reported negative affect*” (Pauls & Stemmler, 2003, p. 298).

An inspiring study of the effectiveness of fear appeals directed towards the prevention of various kinds of risky behavior (e. g. drinking and driving) demonstrates, unlike predominant thought, the differences between the effectiveness of prevention campaigns based on high-efficacy fear appeals: “*It was the low-efficacy condition that proved most beneficial in diverting attention away from alcohol-related advertising. In fact, the high-efficacy fear appeal proved counter-productive to prevention-based efforts in that it caused processing resources to be drawn toward alcohol-related advertising*” (Nielsen & Shapiro, 2009, p. 268).

THE ORIGINS OF CONTEMPORARY FEAR

The following text presents fear primarily from a sociological perspective and focuses on the mapping of the socio-cultural causes of fear, specifically the naming of relevant fear stimuli as risks and reveals their origins in the contemporary Western society. Giddens (2000) notes that for a majority of the populace, life in medieval Europe was dangerous, cruel and short (similar to conditions in many of the poor countries in today’s world). Nonetheless, what is notable is that in the Middle Ages, the concept of risk factors (similarly to many traditional cultures) was absent. During the 16th and 17th centuries risk was associated with unmapped territory during exploratory expeditions that sailed around the globe. Later, a connection began being made with time, just as it is used in banking and investment, where the calculation of potential outcomes of investment decisions is a key factor in the subsequent actions. As Giddens (2000) points out, in the ensuing years, this

began to be used for evaluations of a wide sphere of other uncertain situations. The notion of risk is inseparable from the concepts of probability and uncertainty. Risk assumes a society, which actively seeks to break away from its past – and in reality, this is a fundamental characteristic of modern industrial civilization. *“The key point is that the industrial system is rendered capable of dealing with its own unforeseeable future through risk assessments. The revolutionary novelty lay in anticipating a state of the world that does not yet exist and in making this calculable. The completely normal marvel makes it possible to calculate the incalculable – with the aid of accident statistics, by generalizing settlement formulae, and through the generalized exchange principle disadvantages for all are compensated with money. In this way, a system of social rules of accountability, compensation and precaution, whose details are highly controversial, created present security in the face of an open and uncertain future. The counter-principle of modernity, which imports uncertainty into every niche of life, is a ‘social contract’ against industrially produced insecurities and damages, stitched together out of public and private insurance contracts, which prompts and renews trust in corporations and governments”* (Beck, 2009, pp. 26-27).

Thus, the origin of risks falls into the modern age and is connected with a gradual establishing of an economic paradigm, which is becoming the fundamental intellectual construct of the majority of the contemporary world. Each particular risk contains a concrete identifiable danger capable of arousing fear. Lipovetsky (2007) notes that the scientific rationalization and de-sacredization of the modern world gave rise to Man’s faith in managing nature and the entirety of natural laws, while he has ceased to fear unforeseeable and mysterious powers. Thus, what came about was the demise of sorcery and witchcraft. However, in this context, Giddens (1998) warns that we cannot view the fear of God as a fear of something supernatural. During the Middle Ages, the perception of hell and damnation were viewed as an entirely ‘believable’ fate that befell unbelievers in the afterlife. Today, our relationship to the most catastrophic dangers that can await us is somewhat different. Frequently, fear is measured not in terms of the likelihood of its occurrence, but in the severity of the wider potential threat to human life. Giddens (1998) characterizes in detail specific risks which we face in modern society, noticing, for example, the globalization of risk able to threaten the existence of mankind (the possibility of nuclear war, ecological catastrophe, uncontrolled population explosion), the development of institutionalized risk environments (investment markets a possible collapse of global economic trade) and a well-distributed awareness of risk. The public has an acute knowledge of these risks, which create an unsettling layer of danger that affects all of us.

How as mankind do we react to similar risks? Giddens (1998) describes four adaptive reactions to the risks of modernity: the first is a pragmatic acceptance

– we focus on the everyday and its problems; on surviving, which creates a desensitizing that reflects often deeply concealed anxieties, which repeatedly come to the conscious surface in some individuals. A pragmatic acceptance is paired either with concealed pessimism, or with using hope as a fountain of survival and both conditions can coexist in an ambivalent state. The author describes the second adaptive reaction as sustained optimism, underscored by faith and rationalism and in the finding of social and technological solutions to global problems, while science is viewed as a source of long-term security. The third, entirely the opposite of optimism, is a cynical pessimism, but is not categorized as indifference. As Giddens (1998) points out, cynicism is a form of easing the emotional impact of various concerns, either with the help of humor, or with a reaction and answer replete with distaste at the world. In several of its forms, cynicism is separable from pessimism and can instead coexist with a certain frustrated sense of hope. Pessimism is not a guide as to how to react and in an extreme form can only lead to a paralyzing depression. In connection with cynicism, however, pessimism enables a position that has practical effects. Cynicism blunts pessimism, because it neutralizes the emotions and is source of humor. A radical engagement is the fourth adaptive reaction, which presents the realization of a practical battle against great and oppressive problems and an effort to overcome them (Giddens, 1998). Pragmatic acceptance, sustained optimism, cynical pessimism and radical engagement described as adaptive reactions to the risks of modernity, also serve to express concrete strategies that a person uses to face a flood of threatening information (about both real and unreal dangers). The aforementioned strategies also encompass methods of coping with fear.

Giddens (2000) differentiates between external risk, presented by tradition or nature (a poor harvest, floods, epidemics, famine etc.), and manufactured risks, which are dominant in contemporary society. It is crucial to understand that the level of human engagement with nature is so extensive that many external risk factors are in actuality a likely result of human activities, meaning that we could also – at least in certain cases – place them in the category of manufactured risks. Politicians, scientists and other experts have encountered a new moral dilemma between creating mass hysteria on the one hand and concealing the true extent of a given problem on the other. What is problematic is the certainty – or perhaps lack of certainty – that relates to the true state of affairs, whilst at the same time, it is true that we cannot and will not be entirely certain until it is too late, argues Giddens (2000). It is crucial to add that during efforts to achieve certainty, from an empirical standpoint, we prefer the most complete description of a given phenomena, while at the same time resigning to intuition and common sense enabling us to understand various causes. As the complexity of a given problem increases, so do the difficulties in creating a complete empirical description. This means that a given phenomena is wrenched from the

paradigms of specialists and its solving by experts is postponed, while often only component symptoms are dealt with. Global climate change or the implementation of measures toward achieving a long-term sustainable solution of the current economic crisis represent two concrete examples of such phenomena.

WORLD RISK SOCIETY AND CULTURE OF FEAR

In 1986, an influential book by the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft*, was released in which the now widely used concept of a risk society was established. Contemporary society is one of risk, and a risk society is becoming a reflexive society because it identifies itself as the main problem, noted Beck a quarter of a century ago. The causes of movement in the class-based society can potentially be expressed with the exclamation 'I am hungry'. The arrival of a risk society can be expressed with the exclamation 'I am afraid'. "*A society of poverty is being replaced with a society of fear. The phenomenon of a risk society is characterized by a societal epoch, in which, according to Beck, solidarity has emerged on the basis of fear and becomes a political strength... In a certain sense, a risk society is actually a critical, perhaps excessively critical, society. It is a society with a bad conscience*" (Mucha, 2007, pp. 279-280).

In a book of the same name, the British sociologist Frank Furedi systematically examines Western society as a culture of fear. He characterizes the turn of the millennium: "*The past decade has seen a veritable explosion of new dangers. Life is portrayed as increasingly violent. Children are depicted as more and more out of control. Crime is on increase. The food we eat, the water we drink, and the materials we use for everything from buildings to cellular phones, have come under scrutiny. ... During the past decade, supposed threats to human survival have been declared so frequently that the expectation of an apocalypse has become rather banal. Our imagination works towards the worst possible interpretation of events. Expectations of some far-reaching catastrophe are regularly rehearsed in relation to a variety of risks*" (Furedi, 2006, pp. 28-29). On the one hand, a person must face the ever stronger tides of media-accentuated sources of fear, while on the other hand, the individual continues to actively search for, demand and purchase threatening information (news, movies, literature). The consumption of these symbolic contents belongs to commonplace spare-time activities, generates subjects for verbal social interaction and has the potential to fascinate, astonish, and temporarily assuage a craving for sensationalism. It is also crucial to note that on the individual level, notable differences exist, with the situational and socio-cultural context also playing a notable role.

The notion of risk is closely related to that of hazard and concerns entirely routine aspects of our day-to-day lives. *“The term risk refers to the probability of damage, injury, illness, death or other misfortune associated with hazard. Hazards are generally defined to mean a threat to people and what they value. Hazards are not merely such obvious threats as poisons, bacteria, toxic waste or hurricanes. At various times peanuts, tampons, automobiles and contraceptive pills – to name a few – have been represented as hazards. ... All risk concepts are based on the distinction between reality and possibility”* (Füredi, 2006, p. 25).

Beck (2007) crystallizes global risk strategies as the global economy with numerous incalculable risks for the entire world, a global threat to the environment and a global development of technology. He cites an example of the latter in the deciphering of the human genome and the dangers involved in selective genetic manipulation as well as the threats stemming from breaching the global ban on surgical manipulation of the human embryo. Beck (2009) specifies the piling up of risks and threats as a form of organized irresponsibility. Among the phenomena, which mankind is currently exploring, the author notes gene technology, with a specific emphasis on human genetics, an information overload, which is difficult to cope with; terrorism as an individualized and personalized form of war; global environmental destruction; and the most dangerous of all, according to Beck, is the collapse of the economic system. *“Since all of the subsystems of modern society rely on the other subsystem, a failure of the financial system would be catastrophic. No other functional system plays such a prominent role in the modern world as the economy. Thus, the world economy is without doubt a central source of risk in the world risk society”* (Beck, 2009, p. 203). *“Danger is not merely the outcome of any individual act but is something that exists autonomously, quite separate from the actor. ... Once risk is seen to exist in its own right and is therefore only minimally subject to human intervention, the most sensible course of action is to avoid it altogether”* (Füredi, 2006, p. 27). This quote arguably omits a significant factor, that the great majority of risks are man-made.

WE WILL TELL YOU WHAT TO FEAR! JUST WATCH TV AND READ NEWSPAPERS

The Czech sociologist Keller, reacting to the contemporary technological and ecological risks asserted in Beck’s notion of the risk society, notes: *“These risks are invisible, which means that a citizen, during their detection and also while coping with them is fully dependent on the guidance of the relevant experts...modern politics, in the environment of a risk society, is becoming perfectly archaic, as it repeatedly processes questions related to the distribution of sought-out good*

in an era in which in the forms of risk produce more and more unwanted evil” (Keller, 2009, p. 72). The growth of the endangering of the modern person is viewed as unavoidable, even natural.

So, who then decides what is a risk and what is not? “*There are ‘owners of the means of definition’ - namely, scientists and judges – and citizens ‘bereft of the means of definition’, who have the dependent status of ‘laypersons’ and are subjected to the power of definition and decision of experts and judges who decide on behalf of all which conflicting ‘definitions of risk’, and which liability and compensation claims derived from them, are recognized and which are not. Underlying this is a clear hierarchy of knowledge. It lays down the superiority of the expert vis-à-vis the layperson. This presupposes that knowledge and not-knowing can be distinguished, so that in cases of doubt the monopoly over what constitutes knowledge resides with the experts. The complexes of issues outlined above – given the mixture of knowledge and non-knowing, who decides what counts as ‘proof’ and what not? – are ordered according to this hierarchical schema*” (Beck, 2009, p. 33).

The sub-title of another book *Culture of Fear* (Glassner, 1999) is: “Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things: Crime, Drugs, Minorities, Teen Moms, Killer Kids, Mutant Microbes, Plane Crashes, Road Rage, & so much more”. Glassner notices an interesting development, when in the nineties, the US saw a sizeable reduction in crime rates, drug use etc. – but the fear of average Americans continued to grow. The stimuli for our fears are not primarily presented by experts alone, but by the media. “*We have so many fears, many of them off-base, the argument goes, because the media bombard us with sensationalistic stories designed to increase ratings*” (Glassner, 1999, p. xx). Thus, it is unsurprising that the media tend to devote its attention to the less likely causes of death, rather than the major factors such as heart disease. A dangerous virus such as Ebola has its own media paradigm, in which news reports have no hesitation in mixing news with clips from catastrophic films.

Fear is a highly effective sales tool. “*The use of fear has become a widely accepted device for the promotion of a variety of goods. The promotion of fear and the propagandist manipulation of information is often justified on the grounds that it is a small price to pay to get a good message across to the public*” (Füredi, 2006, p. 33). This method of propagation is problematic, particularly in the field of health-care, so long as factual information is not being disseminated from a qualified source.

COPING WITH FEAR AS THE PURCHASING OF INSURANCE, SECURITY SERVICES AND EXPERT COUNSELING

The fact that risks are produced by society as a whole is more than evident. The individual tends not to have many opportunities to face and eliminate new and urgent sources of fear. Thus, a vicious circle emerges: contemporary society produces risks, these are in a large part identifiable by experts who offer ever newer methods of the negation of component risks through forms of private insurance, expert advice, security and legal services, for which the individual either possesses or does not possess the available financial resources. Expert opinions are also often presented in the media and usually have the potential to foment certain desired consumer or voter behavior. *“The past two decades have seen the consolidation of a distinct contemporary form of expertise. It is an expertise that is characteristic of a society that lack confidence about its future direction. ... The new expertise preaches the message that no one should be expected to cope with uncertainties of life and that everyone is entitled to benefit from the skills of professional advisers”* (Füredi, 2006, p. 139).

It is not always easy to accept individual scientific findings, because scientists often disagree with one another. Approaches to studying the pollution of the ecosystem differ in particular countries, despite the fact that the problem is a global one. Some risks can be faced by holding to the principles of caution. Nonetheless, the evaluation of the benefits and risks of scientific technologies is also difficult for another reason: the creation of economic benefits, meaning a pragmatically motivated realization of concrete decisions. *“Cynicism towards expertise, particularly that of science, is often presented as one of the most important contributing factors to the development of risk consciousness. ... One of the ironies of our times is that while society is more dependent on science and technology than ever before, it is also more suspicious of their consequences”* (Füredi, 2006, p. 137).

Füredi (2006, p. 1) notes that: *“Classically, societies associate fear with a clearly formulated threat – the fear of death or the fear of hunger. In such formulations, the threat is defined as the object of such fears. The problem was death, illness or hunger. Today we frequently represent the act of fearing as a threat itself. A striking illustration of this development is the fear of crime as a problem in its own right”*. The second half of the quote is arguably impossible to agree with: the fear of crime is a concrete fear of designated causes (crimes). The reason why we fear crime is often, apart from media sensationalism, targeted political marketing of this fear with a resultant offering of solutions, rather than a statistically based genuine threat of becoming a victim of crime.

Füredi (2006) compiled a list of 36 areas in which counseling is well established. In nearly every counseling location, it was possible to name the sources of

fears (specific fear stimuli) which prompted the need to counsel a given region. Füredi claims that counseling supplants relationships. We can add that it also replaces friendship in many spheres of life. While a useful repertoire of advice and counsel of the older, more experienced generation was traditionally offered to the young (typically from grandparents, parents, teachers and priests), in a precipitously evolving modern society, practical experiences can literally become “old hat” overnight. *“This new expertise works at all levels of society. The world of business and industry has seen the phenomenal growth of the field of consultancy”* (Füredi, 2006, p. 140). Let us add that Reich (2002) notes that the field of security is the fastest growing profession in the US.

CONCLUSIONS

So long as we differentiate between fear and anxiety and define fear on the basis of concrete fear stimuli, it is possible to state that we live in an era of manufactured fears, which stem from post-enlightenment modern Western society, primarily represented by scientific and technological advances and by a preference for rational-positivist thinking.

The risks that we face represent concrete fear stimuli, which are the causes of our fears. A threefold paradox emerges: 1. The risks that we face are predominantly manufactured risks produced by contemporary Western society. While individuals in pre-modern society primarily faced external risks, today, they are their co-authors; 2. As a rule, contemporary manufactured risks are indistinguishable for the average person who must refer to the ability of experts to identify component risks. Such expert opinions are often in disagreement and entirely erroneous; 3. Societies’ greatest fears, as a rule, reflect the media’s articulation of concrete fear stimuli, despite mostly dealing with statistically unlikely dangers.

Usually, it is on the basis of expert analyses that society makes economic and security-related decisions, undertaken with the goal of eliminating the impact of experienced fears. The variegated palette of contemporary fears cannot be denied in the potential of generating notable economic gain. Even information alone pointing to potential dangers is a very attractive media commodity. Coping with expertly identified new fears has become a profitable business for insurers, health care providers, security services, advocacy groups and expert consultants.

The elimination of risks and the ensuring of safety represent new fundamental values in contemporary Western society. It is important to add that this means the elimination of risks and dangers, which are expertly selected and/or articulated by the media. A wide palette of truly notable risks and dangers that endanger the life of the present-day individual are not viewed with genuine alarm for a number

of reasons: 1. experts are not familiar with particular risks, meaning that they remain unidentified, while intuition, unlike the long-term experience of humanity, is not regarded as a relevant means of identifying risks and dangers; 2. they are universally known, but do not represent an attractive subject for the media, for example cancer; 3. they go beyond a national framework of science and politics, for example, the conditions of global poverty; 4. it is not in the interests of influential economic actors for their activities or products to be viewed as dangerous, for example, the long-term battle over tobacco labeling, while the effect of fear appeals is debatable; 5. they present risks only from a long-term perspective that exceeds the term of a particular government, or even the interval of generational change, for example, the true repairing of the financing of the pension system - and that is why addressing such issues is perpetually postponed in a manner not dissimilar to fear avoidance behavior.

References

- Beck, U. (1986). *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.
- Beck, U. (2007). *Moc a protiváha moci v globálním věku: Nová ekonomie světové politiky*. Praha: SLON.
- Beck, U. (2009). *World at risk*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Füredi, F. (2006). *Culture of fear revisited: Risk-taking and the morality of low expectation*. London: Continuum.
- Giddens, A. (1998). *Důsledky modernity*. Praha: SLON.
- Giddens, A. (2000). *Unikající svět: Jak globalizace mění náš život*. Praha: SLON.
- Glassner, B. (1999). *The culture of fear: Why Americans fear the wrong things*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gray, J. (1987). *The psychology of fear and stress*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Keller, J. (2009). *Soumrak sociálního státu*. Praha: SLON.
- Lipovetsky, G. (2007). *Paradoxní štěstí: Esej o hyperkonzumní společnosti*. Praha: Prostor.
- Matthen, M. (1998). Biological universals and the nature of fear. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 3, 105-132.
- Miceli, M., & Castelfranchi, C. (2005). Anxiety as an "epistemic" emotion: An uncertainty theory of anxiety. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping*, 18, 291-319.
- Moberg, C., & Curtin, J. (2009). Alcohol selectively reduces anxiety but not fear: Startle response during unpredictable versus predictable threat. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 2, 335-347.
- Morse, J. (1907). *The psychology and neurology of fear*. Worcester, Mass.: Clark University Press.
- Morris, W. et al. (1976). Collective coping with stress: Group reactions to fear, anxiety, and ambiguity. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 6, 674-679.
- Mucha, I. (2007). *Sociologie: Základní texty*. Jesenice u Prahy: Tiskárna a vydavatelství 999.
- Nielsen, J., & Shapiro, S. (2009). Coping with fear through suppression and avoidance of threatening information. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 3, 258-274.

- Öhman, A. (2000). Fear and anxiety: Evolutionary, cognitive, and clinical perspectives. In M. Lewis, & J. Haviland-Jones, *Handbook of Emotions* (pp. 573-593). New York: Guilford Press.
- Pauls, C., & Stemmler, G. (2003). Repressive and defensive coping during fear and anger. *Emotion, 3*, 284-302.
- Reich, R. (2002). *Dílo národů: Příprava na kapitalismus 21. století*. Praha: Prostor.
- Riemann, F. (2010). *Základní formy strachu*. Praha: Prostor.
- Rhudy, J. L., & Meagher, M. W. (2000). Fear and anxiety: divergent effects on human pain thresholds. *Pain, 84*, 65-75.
- Tamir, M., & Ford, B. (2009). Choosing to be afraid: Preferences for fear as a function of goal pursuit. *Emotion, 4*, 488-497.
- Vymětal, J. (2004). *Úzkost a strach u dětí: Jak jim předcházet a jak je překonávat*. Praha: Portál.

