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REFLECTIVE (IN)ADEQUACY

INTRODUCTION

Fear, by its very nature, is of interest in psychology and psychiatry. It is there that the main theories regarding emotions, including of course fear and anxiety, one of the basic emotions, have been created. These branches focus on its nature, conditionality, effects and functions. However, fear is also a point of interest in other social sciences and the humanities, not only philosophy and theology, which look for its causes and meaning, but also social psychology and pedagogy principally focusing on social anxiety. Increased consideration of this emotion can also be observed in sociology and it is connected with the inherent characteristics of modernity: globalization, individualization and loss of community and tradition[1]. Iain Wilkinson writes that if we follow such authors as Erich Fromm and Karen Horney „(…) the experience of fear should be recognized not only as caused by the culture of our times but also as a problem of culture itself"[2].

PROBLEMS WITH DEFINING

There is no common theory nor definition of anxiety. Different psychological schools of theory define it in different ways. Some approaches treat the individual and his/her emotional reactions in a purely organic manner (the James-Lange theory) but there are also those in which the individual is a conscious subject and its reaction come from its assessments (cognitive theories). It is usually differentiated from fear which is often understood as a response to the objective appearance of a determined danger factor

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[1] I. Wilkinson, *W stronę socjologicznej konceptualizacji problemu lęku*, [in:] P. Sztompka, M.Bogunia-Borowska (Ed.), Socjologia codzienności, Kraków 2008, pp. 856–883.

[2] Ibidem, p. 858.

and then anxiety is the increasing sense of undefined risk. Some believe that fear is characteristic for all mammals and anxiety is only felt by man because it is linked to ethical problems and conflicts[3]. In addition anxiety is also divided into adequate and inadequate (so called normal and neurotic). In the first the reaction is proportional to the risk and in the second it is not. In reality it is often hard to distinguish fear from anxiety and adequate anxiety from inadequate anxiety. Due to these problems some researchers do not make this dichotomous differentiation, believing fear and anxiety to be varieties of primal emotional intensity, the so-called aversion-fear[4].

According to the behavioural theory of learning "fear is understood as a response to a determined situation and is a result of learning"[5]. According to this understanding the association of any objects or situations with unpleasant experiences (originally it was pain) can lead to the development of the so-called secondary drive (conditional), that is fear, and may motivate it. This association can be adequate and inadequate to the risk. In the latter case it may lead to irrational behaviour and even phobias.

In Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis anxiety is one of the key players. Freud differentiates anxiety from fear claiming anxiety is a "state without an object", a "subjective threat", and "fear appears in situations of real, determined danger or risk", "an objective threat"[6]. The presence of anxiety points to a dysfunction of the human psyche, to a suppression of unsolved internal conflicts and frustrations. In addition, Freud makes a distinction between: normal (realistic) anxiety, neurotic anxiety and moral anxiety. Normal anxiety is closest to the feeling of fear. Its intensity is proportional to real danger, although the person does not know what he/she is afraid of (for example: surgeon anxious before surgery). Neurotic anxiety is inadequate to the risk and the lack of a rational basis for its presence may aggravate the psychological discomfort. This kind of anxiety often takes the form of an expectation of misfortune. Moral anxiety manifests itself as a sense of guilt. The danger here lies in the breaking of social norms. Freud's important contribution is pointing out that anxiety is a disintegrat-

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[3] M. Czarkowska, *Lęki społeczne a tendencje do zachowań afiliacyjnych w sytuacji wyboru zawodu,* Zielona Góra 1986, p. 34.

[4] J. H. Turner, J. E. Stets, *Socjologia emocji,* Warszawa 2009, p. 30.

[5] J. Makselon, *Lęk wobec śmierci,* Kraków 1988, p. 12.

[6] B. Aouil, *W świetle psychologii lęku,* Czytelnia Psychologiczna OnLine at: http://www.zdrowemiasto.pl/psyche/online/

ing element for the human psyche and that is why defence mechanisms have emerged which "working outside of consciousness distorts the reality which is threatening to the psyche. These are so well known: repression, rationalization, projection, compensation and regression"[7].

Karen Horney also distinguishes between fear and anxiety in her neo-psychoanalysis. Both states are a reaction to a threat but when it comes to fear it is visible and objective, while for anxiety it is hidden and subjective[8]. This means that its intensity is "proportional to the importance of the situation to an individual but the cause of this anxiety is not conscious"[9]. In addition, anxiety leads to distortions of the personality core, the image of "I". It triggers a feeling of helplessness, lack of control and may lead to a drop in self-confidence. Horney differentiates between basic fear, which is a psychopathological reaction, an answer to potential danger, and overt anxiety which is close to Freud's realistic anxiety and fear, as the danger is apparent. A disturbance of the sense of security linked to childhood is the source of the basic fear[10].

The cognitive theory of emotions, represented by Richard Lazarus, purports that cognitive processes are a liaison between the situation and emotions. Neither the situation nor the organism alone are sufficient to entice emotions – a relationship between them is needed. Emotions are needed for the individual to adapt as the individual starts with assessing the signals coming from the environment from the point of view of their own interests and if they are related, an emotional reaction appears. If events or situations are dangerous for the interest of the individual, negative emotions appear, including anxiety. After this the individual checks the ability to deal with this situation, for example by seeking or avoiding it. According to this approach, the same situation may create positive emotions in one person and negative in another, including fear, as is is dependent on the interpretation of the event as beneficial or detrimental. From this point of view all emotions, also the negative ones, are informative and are necessary in life. Emotions are interpreted in the same way by Nico H. Frijda. Here

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[7] M. Wójtowicz, *Doświadczenie lęku egzystencjalnego jako sytuacja wyboru,* Katowice 2005, pp. 18–25.

[8] Ibidem, pp. 25–26.

[9] K. Horney, *Neurotyczna osobowość naszych czasów,* Poznań 1999, p. 42.

[10] M. Wójtowicz, op. cit., p. 26.

anxiety is a negative emotion and it informs the individual that something must be changed[11].

Anxiety plays a very important role in existential psychology theories which are partly based on existential philosophy. Fear is one of the inherent aspects of existence – it is inseparably associated with it. Anxiety appears when an individual does not live fully authentically, which means "it is not able to exercise in full the obligation to realize all of their abilities" and this leads to existential guilt and later anxiety[12]. It is known that the world limits the abilities of an individual but at the same time this does not exempt one from the responsibility for their fate, as humans are free. It is important to know that existential psychologists do not aim to eliminate the anxiety but want to understand the anxiety and the existence of human beings and this should lead to authentic choices.

In the 1970s sociologists started to systematically tackle the issue of emotions as they have noticed (a bit late as it seems) that "emotions permeate almost every aspect of the human experience and all social relations"[13]. That is why sociologists most of all want to know the importance of emotions for the main preoccupations of sociology: the self, interactions, social structures and culture as well as how culture and social structures influence our emotions. These emotions can also be negative and encompass anxiety.

Drama and culture theories focus particularly on the fact that emotions, especially during a "performance" should be experienced and shown in culturally determined manner. No only the means of emotional expression are determined, but also the time when these emotions can be shown[14]. Otherwise the carefully crafted self-imaged is in danger. According to this understanding there can be situations and places in which one can feel both fear and anxiety. If the individual shows it in an inappropriate place, time and in an inappropriate manner, one can be marked as abnormal and one's condition considered to be sick.

Symbolic interactionism theories focus on the self, the self concept of the individual. It is confirmed by symbolic interactions and it the individual manages to to this, positive emotions appear. And if the individual is not

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[11] B. Aouil, op. cit.

[12] C. S. Hall, G. Lindzey, *Teorie osobowości,* Warszawa 2001.

[13] J. H. Turner, J. E. Stets, op. cit., p. 15.

[14] Ibidem, p. 38.

able to emphasise its self in a given interaction, it is misinterpreted according to it or breaks set norms, it feels negative emotions, including anxiety. Similarly to the drama theory – here emotions are socially construed and culturally regulated. The individual feeling the negative emotion, for example anxiety, will aim either to avoid social situations which create this emotion or to take up corrective behaviour which would re-establish the correct image of that person[15]. Sociological emotional theories also differentiate symbolic interactionism with elements of psychoanalysis. This shows clearly what an individual can do when he/she feel anxious during an interaction. He/she can use the defence mechanisms that have appeared because of psychoanalysis. They will, however, distort the experience of the individual but will enable it to escape the pain caused by negative emotions, especially those arising from a failure in self-confirmation[16].

In exchange theories emotions are perceived in two ways. Firstly, they show that the success of an exchange or lack of thereof causes, respectively, positive or negative emotions. Secondly – they themselves can be exchanged. Individuals are perceived as striving for benefits. Therefore, if an interaction does not provide the expected prize or brings unexpected losses, the individual will feel negative emotions, including anxiety. A correct exchange is the condition needed to continue relationships and social order, an incorrect one will lead to its disruption as individuals will leave such relationships. But at the same time may penalize individuals not taking part in the exchange and thus uphold the order[17].

Structural theories put particular emphasis on the concepts of power and status. An individual with a given position in the social structure will have sufficient prestige and authority related to it. If other individuals do not confirm that position in interaction with it, for example do not recognize its authority, negative emotions will appear, including anxiety. At the same time the individual who interacts with a person with a given position may expect certain behaviour from that person which would be in accordance with his/her status. If these expectations are not met, negative emotions may again appear. In these theories the concepts of emotions are the least developed but, as Turner notes, they are last and they are the "glue" that

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[15] Ibidem, pp. 39, 124–127.
[16] Ibidem, p. 39.
[17] Ibidem.

holds people together and creates dedication to great social and cultural structures"[18].

WHY A CONTEMPLATIVE (IN)ADEQUACY?

Why today would anxiety be a more inherent feature of the times than in the past? After all, pre-industrial dangers are external to humans and society and a person has no influence on their existence (natural disasters, epidemics)[19], so one could feel constant fear of them happening.

However, as Urlich Beck claims[20]: we have no cure for the great risks of modernity. Although to a large extent we are able to defuse or protect ourselves from pre-industrial and industrial risks, we have created global and universal risks. And this is related not only to ecological, IT and terrorist risks as well as those connected to financial markets, which are characterised by delocalisation, incalculability, permanence and incompensatability. It is the process of individualization and the erosion of communities and tradition that puts us in a really uncomfortable spot, when it comes to feeling safe.

Today we lack certainties for an individual to rely on and that is why the individual must be creative – currently this is a cultural must. Today nothing limits the individual when it comes to choosing a walk of life – not the community (national, class nor family), not race and not gender. On the one side this means great freedom, but on the other it also removes the protective bubble provided by communities and strict cultural values. And they minimized the risk and uncertainties, although taking away part of the freedom. The individualisation of the responsibility for one's fate "puts great uncertainty and risk on the shoulders of an individual. Picking a school, university, getting a job, choosing a partner – all of this is put on the shoulders of the individual". In his considerations on the sociological conceptualization of anxiety Iain Wilkinson writes:

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[18] Ibidem, pp. 15, 39, 253–255.

[19] P. Stankiewicz, *W świecie ryzyka. Niekończąca się opowieść Ulricha Becka*, „Studia Socjologiczne" 2008, 3 (190), p. 120.

[20] U. Beck, *Społeczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze do innej nowoczesności*, Warszawa 2002; U. Beck, *Społeczeństwo światowego ryzyka. W poszukiwaniu utraconego bezpieczeństwa*, Warszawa 2012.

"Thereby I claim that the experience of anxiety should be recognized not only as being caused by the culture of our times but also as a problem of culture itself (...) I see the problem of anxiety as being strongly linked with degree to which the culture of contemporary societies can sometimes enhance in us a strong feeling of uncertainty both when it comes to our identity but also our life goals in a world which appears to be devoid of a proper sense and values. The category of anxiety is a form of symbolic representation such a mind and emotional state in which we are sure that we are in a situation of an unidentified danger (...) the thing which makes us think and feel that way takes place in connection to the degree to which we long for or have been deprived of the cultural resources which allow us to find a mean of getting out of this fateful trap"[21].

What is more, anxiety is of interpersonal nature. Harry Stack Sullivan shows fear as being intrinsically connected to the "urge to present oneself and be perceived as an adequate/responsible human being"[22]. Taking into account the "liquidity"[23] of reality in which everything changes and cultural norms permeate and change each other very quickly[24] anxiety also becomes liquid[25].

"Anxiety is the name we give to our uncertainty: our ignorance of the threat and what needs to be done [...] in order to take control of it or repel it, if taking control is beyond us."

Z. Bauman[26].

How should one function in such a reality? Anthony Giddens says that reflexively.

Because of the reflectively mobilized (although contradictory) dynamic, the modern means of action have a fundamentally counterfactual nature. In a posttraditional social world individuals and communities have access to an infinite number of potential ways of conduct (with the accompanying risk). Choosing from such a number of possibilities

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[21] I. Wilkinson, op.cit., p. 858.

[22] Ibidem, p. 863.

[23] Term borrowed from Zygmunt Bauman.

[24] Z. Bauman, *44 listy ze świata płynnej nowoczesności*, Kraków 2011; Z. Bauman, *Życie na przemiał*, Kraków 2004, p. 170.

[25] Z. Bauman, *Płynny lęk*, Kraków 2008.

[26] Ibidem, p. 6.

always boils down to the „what if" question, it is the issue of choosing one of the "possible realities"[27].

So, on the one hand we must act reflexively among the innumerable possible choices when choosing one of the ways – which will become adequate for us – expressing us, our identity to the extent which was impossible in the past. On the other hand, the liquidity-variability of reality makes us vulnerable to anxiety linked to our self-image yourself in the eyes of others quickly becoming obsolete or not accepted (inadequate).

CLOSING REMARKS

Social studies are also involved in research on the general public sentiment. Such research is performed both by sociologists as well as social psychologists (so called "macropsychologists"). For the latter ones the changes which happened during the last 20 years in Poland are like a natural experiment. With this background they could examine the overall level of satisfaction-dissatisfaction but also the so called "nonclinical mental health indicators"[28]. The number of problems with the public sphere (economy, institutions of public trust and politics) which increased in recent years are seen as dangers by individuals. They disturb the feeling of safety and cause anxiety as well as long-lasting stress. Institutions which should serve us, are seen as inefficient and sometimes even repressive. The lack of a sense of security is caused by democracy and the market as they force us to compete which is linked to the implementation of the so called vertical social model characterized by a race for power, money and prestige[29]. They multiply the possibilities forcing the individual to make constant new choices to which he/she is unprepared for. They may also be on clear social rules concerning these choices which would lower the level of anxiety. A lack of clear rules in politics, many scandals in the government undermine the trust in the country. Growing social inequalities, the instability of the economic system

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[27] A. Giddens, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość*, Warszawa 2001, p. 42.

[28] J. Czapiński, *Makropsychologia, czyli psychologia zmiany społecznej: szkic osobisty. Jednostka i społeczeństwo,* edited by M.Lewicka, Gdańsk 2002, p. 26.

[29] A. Ostrowska, *Społeczeństwo ryzyka? Zagrożenia dla zdrowia psychicznego,* [in:] H. Domański, A. Ostrowska, A. Rychard (ed.), Niepokoje polskie, Warszawa 2004, pp. 122.

(unemployment, among others) cause disappointments and often threaten the self assessment of individuals, increasing the anxiety levels. Also, other systems cause increase of stress when they do not properly realize their functions (educational system, healthcare, police, courts of law). To this one can add concerns about personal safety which can be influenced by: rising crime rates and social pathologies[30]. People in Poland also constantly worry about the financial situation of their family. If these stressors last long enough, such prolonged anxiety may even cause death (for example by suicide). There are several things that may happen before that: withdrawal or aggression, psychological deficiencies and somatic diseases. The psychological well-being of Poles is systematically researched by CBOS and the Polski Generalny Sondaż Jakości Życia (Polish General Quality of Life Survey)[31] under the direction of Janusz Czapiński.

Frustration and anxiety cause an aversion to the pubic sphere as well a feeling of helplessness and passivity. This does not help market activity and engaging in democratic life. It rather stimulates concentration on the daily and the immediate surroundings. This will result in the devaluation of social capital of Poles.

Anxiety accompanies man through the whole life. They may be situational anxieties or a permanent tendency to react with anxiety, but they influence our lives, our understanding of the world and the decisions we make. Nowadays it is said that anxiety is an inherent feature of our reality as we live in a society of risk. Although in the past man did not live free of risks but it seems that today there are less "palpable" than in the past. This situation causes the research of anxiety and anxiety-inducing factors to become more complicated.

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[30] Ibidem, pp. 122–125.
[31] J. Czapiński, op. cit., p. 26.

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