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FEARS IN THE LIGHT OF ZYGMUNT BAUMAN'S LIQUID POST-MODERNITY

Abstract. Main task of the paper is to recall sociologist and philosopher – Zygmunt Bauman's observations and concepts on the fears, anxieties, and uncertainties that appear in the modern world. Main focus was directed to Europe as Bauman was particularly concerned about its future and its role in the global society. The paper is illustrated using current examples from political, social, and economic life to confirm and/or negate Bauman's concepts. We ask: are fears stable or changeable? Are they stronger or weaker? Are they constant, coming to an end, or are they replaced by new ones? Additionally, we confront Bauman's concepts with the ideas of other sociologists who applied the interpretative perspective.

We define fear following Bauman's various proposals, and we distinguish many kinds of fears, giving examples from Western societies and socio-economic realities during the time of globalization. We refer to a few relevant sociological concepts to understand Bauman's view better, e.g. the strategy of detour or the term of generalized other. In conclusions, we state that most fears remain the same (especially ontological ones). However, in the 21st century, we can observe the emergence of new ones (also artificial ones).

Keywords: Zygmunt Bauman, liquid modernity, sociology of fear, ontological insecurity, economic fears, political anxieties.

1. Introduction. Objectives. Inspirations

The scientific world has a problem with Zygmunt Bauman's works, with members of the sociological community having a problem interpreting his thought and concepts. This stems from the fact that Bauman's late works were syntheses and mega-syntheses with catchy narratives. He did not conduct detailed research, especially in the last two decades of his academic

work. And even if some academicians agreed with his intuitions and observations, they just as often questioned them for a lack of hard empirical analysis. It is fair to agree that Bauman was more likely to speak as an intellectualist rather than adhere to a rigid methodological framework. He did not need traditional empirics. Instead, he presented concepts and explained ideas based on observation, comparisons, and readings, not only of a scientific nature. Bauman's reception was hampered by thinking in metaphors. His 'message' was problem-oriented rather than systematic (Jacobsen and Poder, 2016). He intuitively trusted philosophers, writers, and even directors. He was convinced that literature, and more broadly culture, can also explain social phenomena, although it lacks a scientific, sociological basis. However, without hesitation, Bauman was an eminent sociologist, so in writing his books, he also drew on his scientific experience. Some authors claim that Bauman is the most important modern sociologist and outstanding theorist (Beilharz, 2000; Tester, 2004). It is confirmed by the authors of the newest monographs covering a critical analysis of his enormous legacy (Brzeziński, 2015; Rattansi, 2017; Palmer et al., 2020).

Also, the popularity of Bauman's liquid life has not waned. Between 2019 and 2021, three in-depth biographies of him were published by Polish authors alone (Rosiak, 2019; Wagner, 2020; Domosławski, 2021), while tens of thousands of citations also demonstrate that his concepts live on in scholarly circulation. They are revised and reinterpreted. Sociologists may criticize Bauman's ideas in many ways, but they cannot ignore him. According to Polish philosopher Adam Chmielewski, "The secret of Bauman's immeasurable popularity was his social hunger for wisdom" (Domosławski, 2021, p. 759). This is probably why his books are read not only by scholars but also by the wider public. Many of them were reprinted (*Sketches in the Theory of Culture* is one of the latest good example (Beilharz, 2020)) and many of them became bestsellers.

In this article, we recall Zygmunt Bauman's observations and concepts on the fears, anxieties, and uncertainties that appear in the modern world, especially in Europe (sometimes wider, in Western civilization) and among modern societies. The reader of Bauman should be aware of the Eurocentric heritage of his thought. "He represented more of a Global North instead of Global South" approach (Rattansi, 2017). The outstanding sociologist identified these concepts mostly in his seminal works *Liquid Modernity*; *Liquid Life*; *Liquid Fear*; *Liquid Times*; *City of Fears, City of Hopes*; *Retrotopia*; *Strangers at Our Door*; *Wasted Lives* and, considering European aspects above all, *Europe. An Unfinished Adventure*. The above works provide the basis for critical exegesis. This paper is illustrated using current examples

from political, social, and economic life to confirm and/or negate Bauman's concepts. We verify the status of the indicated fears at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, asking: Are these fears stable or changeable? Are they stronger or weaker? Are they constant, coming to an end, or have they been replaced by new ones? One of the objectives of the paper is to answer these questions.

Another goal is to compare Bauman's references to sociological concepts from the perspective of the interpretative paradigm. From Bauman's works, we trace the thread of his analysis and meta-analysis of discourses about Europe, contemporary lifestyle, technological and safety traps, and finally, ways of achieving happiness. Bauman did not do this in a systematic or methodologically conscious manner as well; however, one can find extremely valuable hints, which may also be valuable to scientists. Additionally, Bauman's concepts are studied and compared with those of Schutz (1962), Mead (1972), Giddens (1996), and Nowotny (2016), The practical component aims to confront these views with current data and indicators that concern safety and socio-economic and less frequently discussed political issues.

According to Krzysztof Konecki, "Sociology always [revolves] around the concept of suffering" (Konecki, 2018b, p. 67). People strive to achieve ontological security, which is, according to Anthony Giddens, "the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action" (Giddens, 1996, p. 92). Many sociological works that cover the problem of insecurity, poverty, inequality, social loss, chaotic changes, or distrust among institutions refer indirectly to suffering. All these phenomena cause fear, and fear leads to suffering. Bauman tried to identify, explain, and find solutions to break this vicious circle. His concepts are worth studying because he is (despite sharp criticism) an authority not only for sociologists and philosophers but also for some heterodox economists and political scientists, especially those interested in the process of globalization from the perspective of the European individual. His transdisciplinary legacy is still being analyzed (Pollock & Davis, 2020). And his thought is still influential, especially among anti- and alter-globalist movements, including the Old Continent (especially France, Italy, and Spain) and Latin America (Tabet, 2017; Campbell et al., 2018).

From Bauman's works, we identify direct, 'tough' fears connected with the European political situation, both internal and external, and fears which are the result of the European condition, often equated to the human condition. Although we are focusing on more visible/measurable fears, it

does not mean that Bauman was not interested in ontological insecurity. The sociologist from the University of Leeds even stated that death is the archetype of all fears. It is "(...) one 'natural resource' that can boast infinite supplies and complete renewability" (Bauman, 2006, p. 23). Additionally, death has unique features: it does not have a past or a future. However, "[the] fight against death starts from birth and fills the whole of life" (Bauman, 2006, p. 29). However, the dread of death does not have to paralyze the will to live. To conclude, according to Bauman, "Each death is a loss of a world – a loss forever, an irreversible and irreparable loss" (Bauman, 2006, p. 41). Underlining Bauman's interests in ontological fears, we did not decide to develop these aspects of his thought. Instead of looking for fears in areas of death, we look for them in areas of life: political, economic, social, technological, and moral.

2. Sociological research on fear – a concise overview

Sociologists have a considerable problem with the definition of fear. There is also an ongoing dispute about its sources and how its nature changes in different social environments. Sociological research focuses on socio-cultural factors that construct emotions, although scholars recognize that physical and psychological factors are also important sources of fear (Simpson, 1996).

According to Jack Barbalet, "the object of fear is not adequately conceptualized as a threatening agent who or which should be avoided. Rather the object of fear is an expectation of negative outcome" (Barbalet, 2001, p. 155). On this basis, a distinction can be made between fear, which is a long-lasting feeling, and terror, which is a reaction to a sudden threat. Fear is associated with the anticipation of future events; it is constructed by the social and cultural context. When fear is long-lasting and common, processes of reinforcement and ritualization occur in a given society, and it becomes 'social fear' (Tudor, 2003). Many researchers note that in different cultures, distinctive factors trigger fear, and people react to them differently. They operate in a variety of 'emotional climates' (De Rivera, 1992). So, the sociology of fear cannot deal with individual fears; it observes "the cultural matrix within which fear is realized and attend to the patterns of social activity routinely associated with it" (Tudor, 2003, p. 244).

In examining the mechanisms for the formation of a 'culture of fear', Barry Glassner points to the role of the media, noting that they transmit

a large amount of information that arouses fear. It is very often a projection of the negative consequences of various phenomena, arousing anxiety, but also a sense of guilt that we do not act decisively enough to prevent them (Glassner, 1999). Frank Furedi confirms that "the only thing we have to fear is the 'culture of fear' itself" (Furedi, 2007), noting that modern societies highly value security and that people plan their actions taking this factor into account. Perceiving the world as a place full of dangers, a lack of trust in political authorities and other people creates a 'culture of fear'. In such circumstances, people are more eager to accept restrictions (sometimes imposed by politicians), and their readiness to take risks decreases (Furedi, 1997, p. 17–19).

Andrew Tudor proposed six categories of factors that build a 'culture of fear'. These include environments (e.g., city streets), cultures (indicating which behaviors or phenomena are dangerous), social structures (repeated patterns of social activity and interpersonal contacts), bodies (physical strength/weakness, ethnicity different from the majority), personalities, and social subjects (social position) (Tudor, 2003, p. 247). According to David Garland, "our fears and resentments, but also our common sense narratives and understandings, become settled cultural facts that are sustained and reproduced by cultural scripts" (Garland, 2000). It follows that fear depends not only on a specific threat, but it is also the result of social construction (interaction with others) and cultural script. Thus, when examining the sources of fear, one must take into account this context.

Finally, Joanna Bourke notes that in modern Western societies, fear is 'free-floating'. It is constant that when one threat passes, another threat appears. Therefore, the sense of fear is somewhat autonomous, often even disconnected from a specific threat. It stems from the conviction (fueled by the media) that there are many dangers lurking in modern man, from terrorist attacks and environmental pollution to diseases and unhealthy food (Bourke, 2005). According to François Ewald, the breeding ground for a culture of fear is the 'crisis of causality' or the uncertainty of whether our specific actions could prevent the occurrence of negative outcomes. Ewald confirms that we are confronted by two infinities of risk – "the infinitely small-scale (biological, natural, or food-related risk), and toward the infinitely large-scale (major technological risks)" (Ewald, 1993). Sociologists are even able to identify the 'rules' of the politics of everyday fear (Massumi, 1993). From this concise review, we should initially underline that Bauman's concepts and observations are not totally unique and innovative; rather, they develop his predecessors' ideas and theories.

3. Bauman's concept of fear in the European context

First, we must precisely define fear following Bauman's various proposals. Among the many interpretations, the most convincing is that fear is the uncertainty that results from ignorance about danger and a lack of knowledge about what to do with this threat (Bauman 2006). The most disastrous for modern man are fear of the future and "fear caused by the anticipation of freedom" (Bauman, 2017, p. 115). Bauman stressed that in the post-modern world, fears have become somewhat privatized, with each individual experiencing them in their own way: "With fears privatized the temptation to run for cover remains as potent as ever. But there is no hope left that human reason, and its earthly agents, will make the race a guided tour, certain to end up in a secure and agreeable shelter" (Bauman, 1992a, p. XVIII).

Fear is our vulnerability. It has accompanied us since the beginning of civilization, but currently, it is probably exposed more than ever before. We learn in detail about the fears of the post-modern world and how they differ from those of previous times. Bauman makes us aware that each epoch has its own anxieties, but contemporarily they attack us every day, and any escape from them is doomed to fail. "We live today under condition of permanent revolution. Revolution is the way society nowadays lives. Revolution has become the human society's normal state" (Bauman, 2003, p. 2).

Such an approach was questioned by Helga Nowotny, who promoted a proactive attitude toward uncertainty, which is immanent to human life. She claimed that science can predict and fight some threats. What is more, as science has access to increasing amounts of data, it has the potential to develop this ability. So, uncertainty has two faces. On the one hand, it causes fear; but on the other hand, it fuels the development of human creativity (Nowotny, 2016). However, as ontological security "is an emotional, rather than a cognitive, phenomenon" (Giddens, 1996, p. 92), people still are anxious. They feel that few things in life are certain.

We can distinguish three kinds of fears: those that pose a threat to our bodies and wealth, those that endanger the social order, and those that can undermine our position in society and the hierarchy (Bauman, 2006, p. 2). They can have various dimensions: financial (e.g., difficulties repaying a loan, credit card theft, the collapse of the banks), technological (e.g., *the millennium bug*, computer viruses, data capture), ecological (e.g., threats connected with climate change, natural disasters), medical (e.g., pandemics, the fear of incurable diseases), terrorist (which increases because of media coverage, frequent controls, e.g., at the airport), or social (e.g., the anxieties connected with the stability of the political, social, and legal systems).

The perception of fears differs depending on the particular country. In Great Britain, the largest group of respondents (77%) who were polled indicated terrorism as their greatest fear, 60% – military conflicts, over 50% – pandemics, nearly 40% – climate change, and over 30% – the proliferation of weapon of mass destruction (Unisys, 2020).

When the questions referred to the individuals' perspective, the greatest anxieties were connected with knife crime, online fraud, and burglary (Stevens & Vaughan-Williams, 2016). According to research published by global IT firm Unisys in their Security Index, among the 13 surveyed nations, the British were less anxious than the Germans or the French, but more than the Dutch (Unisys, 2020).

It is worth stating that this research was conducted and released before the COVID-19 outbreak. From publications on the society of the European Union, we can cite as an example the results of EU opinion polls in the first wave of the pandemic conducted by Małgorzata Gruchoła and Małgorzata Sławek-Czochra. They show that the fear of a pandemic was a bigger problem than the pandemic itself. There were not so many infections and deaths to have such an effect. What worked in this case was the 'culture of fear', based on cultural scripts according to which people react to threats (Gruchoła & Sławek-Czochra, 2021).

However, Bauman does not forget about the positive dimension of fear. It can protect us from destruction, and thanks to fear, we are guided by common sense in an unreasonable world. The meaning of life would disappear with the disappearance of fear. Achieving security would be the end of a meaningful life, and it would show its absurdity (Bauman, 2004a). Elsewhere, Bauman adds that although anxiety disrupts our lives, they have been gradually changing on a continuum of anxieties anyway (Bauman, 2004a). This idea may refer to the concept of 'fundamental' anxiety proposed by Alfred Schutz (Schutz, 1962). He claimed that the 'fear of dying' is crucial to understanding the behavior of people in society. It fuels all their activities and motivates them to undertake new challenges and cope with the difficulties (Benţa, 2014, p. 68).

Bauman's intellectual peregrinations on the issue of fear range from universal insights into fear as an inherent companion of human life to the issue of generating a particular kind of fear in particular historical-social formations. While the former may regard fear as a generator of human ingenuity, concrete fear at a particular point in time should be attempted to be understood through the aforementioned discourses of impending dangers and statistical data to estimate the difference between discursive and indiscriminate elements of reality. We can see Bauman as

a harbinger of the diminishing space of freedom, including the space necessary to shape the reality around us in the sense of an interpretative paradigm. If most public discourse is absorbed by discussions about ubiquitous dangers, there is less space to create the unreactive meaning of human activity.

4. The technology trap and safety paradoxes

Bauman's fears refer to the quasi progressive achievements of technology. He presented Jean-Pierre Dupuy's 'strategy of detours' in which he argues that our achievements in the fields of transport or medicine are only ostensible (Bauman, 2006, p. 10). He wonders whether the invention of the car does indeed save our time. He quotes data on the number of hours spent in the car, the time sacrificed to maintaining it, and the time needed to earn enough to afford a new vehicle. We should also realize that the car allows us to move around cities at, on average, only four miles an hour (which is almost walking pace). However, modern cars are our oasis of peace. The car is one of the best places to escape from fear (Lutz, 2015, p. 593). However, we should add that if we were to analyze the data on car accidents, it is an illusory escape because our fears should sharply increase. In 2018, more than 1.25 million people across the world died in road accidents, and between 20 and 50 million people were injured or disabled (OECD, 2020). In Europe, the most stressed citizens can be found in Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Greece, where the biggest number of people (per million population) died between 2018–2019. There should be less fear in Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Ireland (Statista, 2020).

One example of the 'strategy of detours' is also our introduction into the pharmaceutical-medical chain. Instead of leading a healthy lifestyle, we spend a great deal of time in doctors' surgeries, queuing to meet specialists, and taking many medications, which are often exorbitant. Another example would be the increasing number of new computer programs we have to learn, instead of just mastering the old ones. Once we have got to grips with them, we then waste time learning how to use updated versions. We may call it the 'detour route', which is understood as the need to acquire technical progress (Bauman, 2006). It brings new fears about not being able to keep pace with new technologies. Ten years after Bauman's cautions, the situation has not changed significantly. Probably, we are only more conscious of the fears and other 'detour routes'.

Bauman concludes that technology at least keeps developing, unlike morality, which is in a delayed state. Maybe we are afraid because our morality is weak. The sociologist introduces us to the phenomenon of the technology trap. With an array of technological toys at hand (mobile phones, programs for communication, laptops, notebooks, smartphones, tablets), we are exposed to constant monitoring – we are available, visible, and recognizable, always and everywhere. Each of us has to be available for our employers, our family, net operators, or salespeople. This kind of communication has become an internal need and, at the same time, a duty. "The doors of our houses became draughty; they stopped isolating the hustle and bustle of the outside world, and they cannot stop the outflow of information, nor our emotions and feelings" (Dzionek-Kozłowska & Matera 2015, p. 102–103).

According to Bauman, the assurance of safety can be understood both in global and local contexts. In the first case, it is reflected in the 'war on terror', precisely with terrorist organizations and the individuals – the terrorists. It is hard to say where they are. We know that some of them may live in the mountains in Afghanistan or the territories of fragile states, out of reach of the authorities. However, they also pass us on the street, sit beside us on the plane, or stand next to us on the metro. The attacks in New York and Washington 2001), Madrid (2004), London (2005), Paris (2015), Berlin, Munich, and Brussels (2016) embed these fears. The thesis of the autonomy of fear fueled by the media is well noted in Western societies. Many publications appeared on the subject of fear after the terrorist attacks on the US on September 11, 2001 (Altheide, 2003; Stearns, 2007). Analyzing Europol's data from recent years, we cannot say for sure whether the terrorist threat has increased or decreased. In 2014, there were two terrorist attacks in Europe, in 2015 – 17, in 2016 – 13, in 2017 – 33, and in 2018 – 7. The *greatest number of causalities* was noted in 2016 – 150 people, and in 2017 – 135 people. In 2018, this number dropped to 13. More and more terrorist plots are being thwarted. Thus, terrorist activities are still high, but the effectiveness of counterterrorism activities is also growing (Europol, 2019).

The obsession with security can also be traced at the local level. The guarantee of security is supposed to be found in cities within cities: settlements of smart homes, with the latest technical equipment, isolated from the rest of the world with high walls or guarded by the security companies. To maintain safety, it is necessary to get rid of everyone we consider to be an intruder, suspicious, an outsider, unemployed, or Other. 'Dispensable' people are removed to the peripheries. At the other extreme, intrusive inspectors seem to be everywhere: at the immigration office, to stop refugees, or in banks, to stop loans and block accounts.

Bauman wonders why job loss, in particular, has become our greatest fear. He claims it is not because we are worried about the lack of activity, but that we feel redundant, rejected, out of the hermetic group of the chosen ones who are able to enjoy the 'glamour of modernity'. Bauman is convinced that the majority of people need stability, not constant change. However, it is hard to accept this view without proof. Many people search for stability, connecting it with security and belonging, but some people seek change, and they cannot stop moving from one place to another, from one job to another. Many people fear change, but some may fear stability. It is quite an old problem that has been picked up on by scientists (Serpe, 1987, p. 44).

Bauman gives thought to an astonishing phenomenon: how is it possible that people who are living in probably the safest period in Europe's history function in permanent fear? He is right to state this. Studying the data on world problems (Our World in Data, 2020) or reading the book *Clear and Present Safety* (Zenco & Cohen, 2019), it can be ascertained that life today is safer than ever before.

In Bauman's opinion, anxieties appeared as a result of strong individualization and our awareness of the fragility of human life. Even if we accept the focus on security, we have to realize that fear has also become the "perpetuum mobile of the consumer market" (Bauman, 2004a, p. 142). Contemporary marketing uses our fears to a great extent – we should be afraid of dirt and dust; we should protect ourselves by installing video cameras. Indeed, the commercialization of fear and its adjustment to the modern market means that it comes back all the time, in different forms. That is why it is so hard to eradicate.

In Bauman's sociology, we can find clues that allow us to understand the described paradoxes. His explanation of modernity is based on the search for a central mechanism responsible for social reproduction on an individual, social and systemic level. In modern capitalism, work is responsible for organizing 'what is essential', ordering the sense of human activity.

In today's society, the center of systemic management, as well as the cognitive and moral axis of life, has become the freedom of the consumer, incorporated into the consumer market. Consumer freedom, as Bauman emphasizes, plays a decisive role as the link between the world lived by individuals and the teleological rationality of the system. His explanation of modernity is based on the search for a central mechanism responsible for social reproduction on an individual, social, and systemic level. In modern capitalism, work is responsible for organizing 'what is essential', ordering the sense of human activity.

Moreover, it must be understood that replacing work with consumer freedom leads to the abolition of the antagonistic relationship between the principle of reality and pleasure, making the latter the main mechanism of self-reproduction. Thus, the fear that accompanies us has to do with symbolic rivalry, the search for social approval, dignity and distinction, and self-realization through participation patterns that respond to systemic definitions of decent living (Bauman, 1992b).

5. What is wrong with Europe?

Bauman, quoting distinguished sociologists, philosophers, historians, politicians, and novelists (e.g., Max Weber, Umberto Eco, and Benjamin Barber), claims, "For many centuries, Europe was a keen exporter of its own surplus of history, inciting/forcing the rest of the planet to partake in its consumption" (Bauman, 2004a, p. 24). Is Europe today able to inspire the rest of the world, or will strong competition push it into isolationism and autarchy? There is no simple answer to this question. On the one hand, Europe is increasingly closed, with greater protection of its borders. On the other hand, it has tried to be faithful to its values, being more sensitive than, e.g., the United States during the presidency of Donald Trump, to human (refugees') rights or more responsible globally in terms of the protection of the environment. Europe still wants to spread the seeds of global history. It is what the European adventure is about: to export its own, genuine ideas, profitable for all humankind. However, it is very hard to agree with Bauman that for the last five centuries, Europe has been exporting its values. We should not underestimate the importing of values from other cultures – their inflow is also significant nowadays. Globalization has fostered the development of interests in different cultures. For example, many Europeans are fascinated with Buddhism, and they have even transformed it into academic research (Konecki, 2018a, p. 221), the practice of yoga, collecting African art, the study of Mandarin, or enjoying non-European cuisines.

It is still possible that Europe may become 'the translator of the world'. European societies have learned from each other for centuries without losing their particular identities. In the context of the conflicted world, Europe seems to be a laboratory in which the appropriate tools for Kant's 'Perpetual Peace' are created (Bauman 2004a, p. 69). What are the features that predestined it to be the ideological guide of the world? Bauman, quoting Tzvetan Todorov, enumerates rationality (although its actions were

irrational in the past), justice, democracy, and freedom. Rationality is understood as the ability to have a constructive argument instead of coming to blows. Justice is the most social among the values. At its core is remorse – in Europe, there are many reasons to feel this. We only need to think about the consequences of European colonialism for foreign nations (Lindqvist, 1996).

George Herbert Mead introduced the term the 'generalized other'. It is "the organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self" (Mead, 1972, p. 134). According to Mead, the inability or even the refusal to see the 'generalized other' on the global scale is dangerous for the proper functioning of society. Each individual should broaden his/her horizons to find the proper place in the social structure and see himself/herself in reference to the 'generalized other'. He warns that when one group feels superior to another, it is a fast track to conflict. If people think they are profoundly different, they cannot identify with the Other. Society is divided by hostility and contempt (Mead, 1972).

Democracy is inherent in freedom. Mead claims that it has potential when everyone could benefit from their own rights and recognize the rights of other groups. Being attached to these features means that citizens are open to new challenges, and thanks to that, but not without difficulty, autonomous societies are born.

Nowadays, Europe, most notably the EU, faces significant problems which could undermine Bauman's vision and Mead's proposal. For example, it must deal with a migration crisis. In the second decade of the 21st century, many refugees wanted to escape deadly conflicts, and more people were determined to find chances for a better life in Europe. This wave of newcomers caused anxiety in European societies and shook the solidarity among EU members to a considerable extent. Some countries refused to accept the immigrants and refugees, despite the EU's common policy. Another worrying phenomenon, which is also connected with the previous problem, is the rise of populist parties. In some countries, they have taken power. Their rhetoric is often nationalistic, and they do not embrace the openness to – using Ryszard Kapuściński's meaning – The Other (Kapuściński, 2006). Sometimes they question the values brought by European integration. Their programs reflect the views of a significant part of European societies. A visible example of this is the decision of British citizens to leave the EU. Nevertheless, most current governments declare an attachment to shared values, so we can hope that rationality, which Bauman claimed is the dominant feature of Europeans, will be the winner.

In *Strangers at Our Door*, Bauman presents the moral panic that is connected with migration crises. He discovers what happens in the background of a migration crisis and how a picture of the whole phenomenon is created. He shows what affects media coverage of the subject and what creates an opinion about the migration of a whole society, which is characterized mainly by mistrust and the fear of people arriving in the country, inaccessible to Others. "Strangers tend to cause anxiety precisely because of 'being' strange – and so, fearsomely unpredictable, unlike the people with whom we interact daily and from whom we believe we know what to expect; for all we know, the massive influx of strangers might have destroyed the things we cherished – and intend to maim or wipe out our consolingly familiar way of life" (Bauman, 2016, p. 8).

Thanks to Bauman, however, we are not without replies to the above comments. His metadiscursive analyses make it possible to combine the phenomena and processes described in this article. He described the processes of self-reproducing a system in which freedom and rationality are primarily about the pursuit of pleasure. At the same time, he explained why such a state condemns us to a moral flaw. The presence of the Other in the modern world threatens the possibility of realizing this pursuit of pleasure. The Other is doomed to be cast as a competitor to the division of the pleasure cake. As Kapuściński wrote, we cannot forbid Others to dream of a better life, but we have trouble recognizing their justification. The language of symbols that dominates our reality generates a rationality of seeking the greatest possible satisfaction. Thus, it becomes a function of the political language of national, racial, and other exclusiveness.

6. The transatlantic crisis and American hegemony

Bauman also speaks up in the hot debate on transatlantic relations, which suffered a severe crisis in 2003 when the United States planned to invade Iraq. He referred to the famous manifesto of the German and French philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, who claimed that the gap between the US and Europe was gradually widening. They concentrated on the differences between the two partners, underlining the secularization of European societies, the attachment to the welfare state, the skeptical attitude to the unlimited free market, and also the abolition of the death penalty in European law. All these elements are quite odd to the majority of Americans. Bauman agrees with this point of view, and he also reminds us

of the massive demonstrations against the policy of George W. Bush which took place in major cities all over Europe. He asserted it was a manifestation of "(...) their shared historical memory of past sufferings and a shared revulsion towards violence and atrocities committed in the name of national rivalries" (Bauman, 2004a, p. 141). Bauman perceives the role of Europe as the advocate of soft power in international relations which is ready to oppose the American hegemony.

Barack Obama's terms of office saw a decrease in American engagement in Europe. However, the relations could still be labeled 'appropriate'. The situation changed dramatically during the presidency of Donald Trump. It was mainly the effect of the US's unpredictable foreign policy, but also the internal problems of the EU. European policy has become more and more independent from the American one, mainly in terms of free trade (Trump is very doubtful about it) or the policy in the Broader Middle East. However, it has to be underlined that despite questioning the relevance of the NATO alliance, Trump has decided to keep the defense cooperation at a high level (Riddervold & Newsome, 2018, p. 152). After reading Bauman's *Strangers at Our Door*, we may add that Trump is also a good (or rather bad) example of a politician who perfectly used people's fear.

Bauman looks closely into the condition of the US's power and wonders whether the American hegemony is truly intact. Somewhat ironically, he quotes Zbigniew Brzeziński, Henry Kissinger, and Robert Kagan, who underlined the US's domination in military, economic, technological, and cultural fields. Bauman claims that the American supremacy was visible mainly in military power. In other fields, it has to share its dominance with China and other emerging markets, as well as Japan and the EU (Bauman, 2004a, p. 52).

7. Global governance and wasted humans

The last part of Bauman's book *Europe. An Unfinished Adventure* is titled "Towards a World Hospitable to Europe". He presents the vision of a transnational system with no nation-states. Before this goal can be achieved, however, a confrontation between two conflicting ways of thinking must occur.

If the nationalistic, parochial, besieged fortress syndrome wins, this project is bound to collapse. However, there is a chance for success if global responsibility and the aspiration to make the world a better place are victorious. According to Bauman, it is the logic which Europe should follow.

It should not be afraid of risk. It cannot be, as Jacques Delors once said, an "unidentified political object" (Speech by Jacques Delors, 1985).

Bauman notices and characterizes the negative shades of globalization. A few times, he goes too far, writing that bad globalization comes from the United States, the International Monetary Fund, or the World Trade Organization. Criticizing institutions and centers of power is easy, but noticing or appreciating the help given in times of disasters is more difficult (e.g., airlifts from the US to Haiti after an earthquake in 2010, or the activities of the IMF in times of financial crisis, including direct aid for Iceland, Ukraine, and Hungary). The author also aroused strong controversies when he strongly underlined the negative consequences of globalization, such as arms smuggling, crime, terrorism, and omnipresent control. He also noticed the harmful effects that globalization has on trade, business, capital, and information. In his eyes, it is only a parasitic and predatory process (Bauman, 2006). After insulting the unbearable world, Bauman reminds himself, however, that the societies of developed countries are living in very safe times, so the uncertainty, panic, and fear that people are feeling are, in fact, a paradox. Thus, the scientist warns us against the conviction about the need to fight and generate artificial threats.

In the final chapter of *Liquid Fear*, entitled "Thought against Fear (or, an inconclusive conclusion for those who may ask what might be done)", Bauman reveals his economic views. He is against the spread of neoliberalism, which favors the strong and the rich and excludes the weak and the poor. Nor does he not support the state as a provider of personal safety, which took the place of the ailing social state. However, the former turns out to be less welcoming as regards democracy. Moreover, it generates fears – and they are fears on which totalitarian countries are based. Bauman puts forward the thesis that the state of personal safety shifts real economic fears (such as inflation or unemployment) to other types of fears (e.g., terrorism).

Bauman warns that our planet is filled to capacity, and further economic progress, mass production, and permanent modernization will lead to an inundation of 'wasted humans'. An extremely controversial thesis of Bauman is that it is economic progress and globalization that generate the production of a greater and greater number of 'wasted humans' (Bauman, 2004b, p. 4). When it comes to absolute numbers, it is undoubtedly an important remark; however, if we consider the percentage of people in the modern world that are useless and compare that to the 19th and 20th centuries, it is impossible to measure. Even if we demonstrate that the level of unemployment was lower in previous times (and by no means was that a rule), we would then have to compare the working conditions of workers and managers. Is the

stress that accompanies us at present, and that results from the fear of losing a job, higher than a century ago? It can by no means be proven, even if we were to use the expertise of a psychologist. The primary barrier to defending this thesis is the lack of proper statistical and comparative data in the analyses (Dzionek-Kozłowska & Matera 2015, p. 96–97).

Bauman's analyses make us aware of the need to reconstruct *defining relations*, even though the author does not reach directly for this research idiom, i.e. "(...) a legal, epistemological and cultural matrix of power within which a policy towards risk is organized" (Beck, 1992, p. 149). Defining relations as power relations means that specific social actors in particular social contexts gain an advantage when problematizing and defining what is socially important, thus becoming 'owners of defining means'. Public disputes concerning social order, labor, or entrepreneurship result in the most important elements of permanent socialization defining social relations in a specific way, with the associated risks of unemployment and social exclusion, among others.

8. Achieving happiness

Bauman continually asks questions about practicing the art of living in the contemporary world. He believes that this forces us to change and redefine our identity endlessly. We cannot copy others – such tactics do not work – even if we choose the lives of outstanding individuals as an example. We must create our own path and clarify the fundamental purposes in life so that in the pursuit of freedom and security, they do not exclude each other. Searching for one's own path can mean achieving happiness when we focus on caring for our good and the good of others when we can transform our solitarity into solidarity. It is in line with Mead's claim that individuals (especially leaders) create society. People can adapt to the environment, but they are also able to modify it, themselves, and society. Those changes may be slow, and they may be positive or negative, but they are inevitable (Mead, 1972, p. 215).

Bauman shows how difficult the path to happiness is, presenting examples from a European art film. Summarizing Krzysztof Kieślowski's *Blind Chance*, he wonders to what extent our lives are ruled by coincidence. The sociologist admits that the artists of life have to choose, but their character determines this choice. Analyzing the choices of the characters in Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's film, *The Lives of Others*, Bauman compares their actions to those of Big Brother – someone who never falls

asleep and who reaches everywhere (Bauman, 2008). Bauman had already written extensively on this subject in his book *Wasted Lives. Modernity and its Outcast*. However, once again, he warns us against the influence of the Big Brothers of today. Yes, the Big Brothers – there is not just one. The first one, from George Orwell's *1984*, who put people in hierarchical classes and kept them under permanent control, did not go away at all. Instead, he was given a new ally. This new Big Brother tracks and removes outsiders who can threaten, in any way, even theoretically, the well-fed part of European society. The common feature of the two Big Brothers is control, and societies themselves help them in their work when consumer unions replace lasting human relationships. This is perfectly manifested, for example, in advertisements that praise objects and not ideas – and so cars are associated with real passion, mobile phones with infatuation, while beer is a vital component of our lives.

Bauman openly defines happiness in his interview with Danish sociologist Michael Hviid Jacobsen. "Happiness is blatantly unlike social inequality, roles, class, and the rest of the traditional topics of sociological books". He filled this with two clear statements about happiness, that it is "an ephemeral state, a momentary condition, explosive, elusive, fleeting, eminently unstable" and it is "the driving force of life pursuits, but like the rest of guiding, lodestar-type utopias, its 'materiality', indeed its human/social significance, is entirely entailed in stimulating its searching and the durable – though all too often serendipitous (unanticipated, unintended and unplanned) effects of that search" (Sociology and happiness, 2014, p. 87–88).

Bauman recommends that we consider our life strategies. The strategy of the metaphorical 'hunter' is the most popular in *Liquid Modernity* (Bauman, 2000). The 'hunter' spends little time cleaning his house but constantly strives to go outside. He wants to be a permanent explorer, and during his adventures, he wants to find happiness, pushing out the metaphor of the 'gardener' (who reflects once prevailing socialization trends and the recommended lifestyle of the phase of modernity) and the 'forester' (the man of the pre-modern era). In the following section of the reasoning, Bauman describes the space in which the choice of a strategy for searching for happiness is made. He appointed two extremely different intellectuals as spokesmen for these choices, Friedrich Nietsche and Emmanuel Lévinas. The former acts as an immoralist and destroyer, convincing us that happiness is the exclusive privilege of a small elite (Matera and Matera, 2011, p. 59).

According to the message of the hero of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, true happiness lies in the egoism of the mighty and the strong, so the only happiness for the rest is to accept this bitter truth and get rid of illusions. So the

efforts of plebeians in striving for happiness are vain. Nietsche also introduced the category of the Übermensch (Overman) who, at the moment of God's death, cannot show weaknesses. He must continuously overcome new difficulties, use his imaginary power, and oppose the crowds of little ones. Fortunately, we also have an alternative in the intellectual offer of Lévinas, who, instead of the Übermensch, offers a category that we all know well – responsibility. It is meant to open us up to others. We can be ready for this opening when we meet and acknowledge our ethical responsibility. In defending ourselves against evil, we must, therefore, strive to "take responsibility for our own responsibility" (Bauman, 2008). We face such choices almost every day. We cannot escape from ontological insecurity.

The authors of *Happiness and Economics* (Frey & Stutzer, 2002, p. 79) pointed to the relationship between happiness and socio-economic factors such as age, health, marital relationships, education, and even sex, and nationality. As regards Bauman, he considers the following factors to be the most 'creative' as regards happiness: work (without hard work, life does not gain value), but also vaguely measurable phenomena such as friendship (a kind of an escort on the journey through liquid modernity), responsibility (proof that Bauman walks hand in hand with Emmanuel Lévinas), and love. The latter does not guarantee a reasonable life if it is modeled on our consumption behaviors. Love will not build itself, and it will not last; it has to be created and recreated every day: "love is something that has to be continually revived and confirmed, enveloped with unremitting/unfailing care and attention" (Bauman, 2008, p. 231).

9. Concise conclusions

A decade after Bauman's warnings, most fears remain the same. The fears are as old as mankind, and they pertain to all areas of human activity. Even though they have already been identified, analyzed, and classified by several influential sociologists (including representatives of interpretative paradigm, Mead, Giddens, or Schutz), they return in the analysis of a new generation of scientists. The theories on fears return because socio-economic reality has been changing.

Ontological insecurities and fundamental anxieties are approached similarly in the interpretative analysis. Bauman's thought is not insightful in this area. However, when we look into the theories in times of globalization, we notice that Bauman's latest *oeuvre* is worth studying. Bauman's concepts perfectly fit 21st-century reality because, nowadays, we can observe

the emergence of new fears. They may change at any moment, however, as a result of the situation in the world. For example, during the crises in US-Iranian relations, there was a notable increase in fears linked to armed conflict and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. It also varies geographically. The level of fear in regions that are affected by a particular problem is higher than in other parts of the world. For example, during heavy rain, drought, or heat, anxieties connected with climate change increase dramatically. During financial crises, economic and technological fears appear more often, while during pandemics, there is panic connected with our health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was completely impossible to separate real threats from artificial ones, and in the case of unexpected events, theories ran amok.

Fears never come to an end. They are like cancer or the heads of the mythical Hydra. They are replaced by new ones, or they move to a different place. However, Bauman encourages us to turn to science and literature. We should be permanently ready to check and verify the sources of fears and distinguish real problems from artificially created ones. And the only activity through which we can escape from fear and achieve immortality is writing. Scientists and writers can transform their texts from something fleeting into something durable (Bauman, 1998).

Bauman took risks in his scientific work. His answer to the accusation of theoretical shortcuts and empirical deficiencies was his creative-book power and the ethos as intellectual. Both defended him from greater criticism from the scientific community. In the case of the Polish sociological community, he also had to permanently defend himself from political attacks. After a careful study of the critics of Bauman's sociology, comparing his observations and anticipations with the real world, and after reading his biographies, it seems that he emerged victorious from both oppressions.

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