

ER(R)GO

summaries in english<sup>1</sup>



Agata Bielik-Robson

Homo Anxius. Modernity, or the Exodus from Fear

Taking the anthropological conviction that fear constitutes the ultimate human quality as its point of departure, the article offers a critical analysis of the notion in question and suggests philosophical ways of overcoming its paralyzing potential. Drawing from such thinkers as Herder, Marx, Freud, Benjamin and Deleuze, the paper first introduces a semi-historical account of fear only to notice that at the dawn of Modernity it becomes significantly redefined: no longer seen in terms of divine warning, the fear, now – following Freud – referred to as *Angst*, evolves into an existential condition, the taming of which is only possible by locating the subject in the network of cultural institutions. This relocation, however, is further complicated by a new dichotomy of philosophical perspectives: just as for the conservative tradition *angst* is understood in terms of hermeneutic lack of meaning and place in the chain of existence, from the Marxist-Freudian standpoint it is considered as an energetic surplus and excess of life transcending all systematic closures.

Tomasz Kalaga

Terror and Dread: The Significance of “The Unfamiliar”  
in the Ontology of Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time*

The article is dedicated to the concept of fear (*Furcht*) as mode-of-attunement in Martin Heidegger’s ontological analysis as presented in *Being and Time*. Unlike the much discussed anxiety (*Angst*), fear for most of the time remains a marginal concept in Heideggerian studies. The article focuses specifically on fear and the three graded forms that it may assume (alarm, dread, terror) which are dependent upon the actual cause for fear. The discussion turns to the possible causes, distinguishing a fundamental polar division into the recognizable and the unfamiliar. The unfamiliar is then brought into proximity with a related concept, that of the uncanny, and both are analyzed in terms of the existential fore-structure of understanding with the intention of demonstrating the possible consequences of the unfamiliar upon *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world.

Sławomir Masłoń

Thy Neighbour as Thy Double: Fear as Social Link

By showing that both contemporary models of the pursuit of authenticity (“be yourself” or “create yourself”) have to produce the evil object evoking anxiety the way Romanticism conceived it in the figure of the double, the paper attempts to trace in “floating” fear the origin of the contemporary social link and show that both the dread of the other and the respect for the other are two sides of the same narcissistic coin, that is, two ways of accommodating the anxiety resulting from the contemporary superego injunction to enjoyment. It proposes that the only way to overcome this impasse would be to recognize that both the fearful (terrorist) and the pitiful (victim) images are in fact images of ourselves and therefore to assume them as our own.

**Maciej Nowak**

Führer and his Island of Fears.

Utopia as a Deadly Danger “which never comes”

The essay looks at what it calls an utopian imagination, as a universal, psychological as well as political, fantasy, which has always helped man and mankind to keep their mind away from fear and anxiety. The author assumes that anxiety, and the fear of Others “we know not of” (to play upon a Shakespearean note) are inherent to human nature, if only for reasons known to all readers of Freud. One of the ways in which “civilisation” helps individual subjects to deal with fear is that it keeps on updating utopian schemes “on offer,” which usually comes as a visionary text authored by a charismatic dreamer, a prominent writer of his age, or a *Führer* (a term read Freud-wise) of a group, a collective body, a whole nation. There are fairly “safe” utopian, or near-utopian narratives, whose character is clearly fictitious; for example the classic utopias (of Plato, Thomas More, Francis Bacon, Shakespeare.) But there are truly perilous visions of “no-places” which in their time made a tremendous impact on minds of multitudes, and seem to have very seriously messed with “real” history. Among the notorious utopias we find Adolf Hitler’s vision of (post-Nazi) Germany of course, but also ones proper to the, quite authorless, ideological appeals of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Alina Mitek-Dziemba**

The Decline of Experience? Pastoral Fears of (Neo)Pragmatism

The article aims at describing and analyzing some of the contemporary dilemmas of American neopragmatist philosophy. It would appear that Richard Rorty’s conclusions concerning the conceptual framework of world-description as rooted solely in the multiplicity of contingent paradigms of vocabularies forces into the background an important aspect of the preceding pragmatist tradition: the sensory experience. Using the example of two prominent landscape artists, Nancy Holt and Ana Mendieta, as the point of departure, the article illustrates the attempts of the neopragmatist thought to revive those elements of John Dewey’s aesthetic philosophy that bear direct relevance to contemporary ecocriticism. In this context, John Shusterman’s writings may parallel the pastoral element of eco-philosophy, providing a refreshing perspective on concepts of the environment and the non-human.

**Wit Pietrzak**

The Ironist’s Fear.

The Human Self in Richard Rorty’s Literary Culture.

Build on the anti-essentialist foundations that were raised by Nietzsche and Derrida, Richard Rorty’s post-metaphysical vision of literary culture entails two crucial concepts: irony and solidarity. The present article intends to highlight the presence of a third, less perceptible key idea: fear. The ironist’s description(s) of the world, involve(s) ever-changing vocabularies, adaptable according to the demands of new situations and emerging different forms of otherness, vocabularies which are shaped and reshaped by encounters with the ever-

extending line of literary works, with the awareness of the inability to find or settle for the “final vocabulary.” It is precisely this awareness, which may, under certain circumstances, be seen as evoking a possibility of fear that concerns not only the stability of one’s identity, but also the inability of a complete and satisfactory expression. This fear, however, does not necessarily have to have a stunting effect – it may be responsible for the stimulation of one of man’s most powerful qualities: creativity.

Michał Różycki

Conspiracy of Science.

Technophobia in Contemporary American Conspiracy Theories

The goal of the paper is to outline the notion of the fear of technology and mistrust of the scientific establishment present in 21<sup>st</sup> century American conspiracy theories. It argues that such negative connotations are invariably tied to the so-called New World Order (NWO) conspiracy theory. The text opens with a brief outline of the origins of the belief in the NWO, starting with the late 18<sup>th</sup> century theories about the Bavarian Illuminati, and culminating with the influence of the Cold War mentality. What the fear of technology stands for in conspiracy theory narratives, the text argues, is the fear of the loss of personal agency. This loss is caused by overreliance on technology which is controlled by a nefarious conspiracy. The text relies on primary sources in the form of works of an American conspiracy theorist, radio host and political activist, Alex Jones.

Mikołaj Marcela

Death Becomes Them:

Living Dead at the End of the 20th Century

It seems that the return of the living dead in Robert Zemeckis’s *Death Becomes Her* (1992) is not the return of repressed death, like in George A. Romero’s films, but rather the return of the repressed of our modern fears: fear of being ugly and fat, and fear of being old. Today, when we are surrounded by beautiful celebrities from television and newspapers, we cannot afford to let our body get out of shape. It appears that to remain human we have to retain our beauty and shape. But even more horrifying seems the threat of growing old. Michel Vovelle points out that the process of growing old appears as one of the most horrible threats for Western civilization. Hidden and repressed it returns in the figure of zombie in Romero’s classic movie series. The “living dead” truly returns to the cinema in 1968 (*Night of the Living Dead*)—the year in which Jean Améry issues his essay *On Growing Old*. From its perspective it becomes obvious that slow and unproductive zombies, “the living dead” which crave only for consumption, represent the senior citizens society that endangers contemporary culture of youth, beauty and health. Simon Clark regards the blood-stained mouth of a zombie as a variation of *vagina dentata* while Maria Bonaparte perceives it as a symbol of castration and impotence.

