

The Digital Pandemic: Continuous Mass Fear

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ABSTRACT: A civilization has its lessons in the past, efforts in the present, and hope for the future. Throughout history, humans gathered in different types of social constructs and managed to overcome obstacles, prevailing in difficult situations which seemed impossible at that given time. As several examples, we can take into consideration events such as the Ice Age, wars, natural disasters, and so on. By their nature, *homo sapiens* desire to reach a state of comfort where the basic needs are satisfied, and superior desires can be pursued. Conquering an objective, depending on its complexity, may require more than a lifetime of work. In this manner, the new generations play a key role in our common development as a society, thus they must have a proper education ensured, for the light of hope not to be extinguished. However, in the last decades, a new phenomenon can be seen entering our social domain. To be more precise we will refer to it as “Continuous Mass Fear.” The current paperwork will try to explain the origin of this new enemy, the main features surrounding it alongside the consequences on the new generation. Based on the data provided, we will determine how the state can mitigate the effects of this threat and why it is necessary for democratic institutions to implement a plan.

KEYWORDS: Continuous Mass Fear, generations, social development, civilization, future

The concept of Continuous Mass Fear (CMF)

Continuous Mass Fear can be defined as that type of social phenomenon by which more than a group of individuals are affected on a psychological level, for a period, producing a state of panic and can occur from various causes derived from the elements of the modern era. From a simple perspective, we can classify fears into two categories, the first one being normal fears acting as ordinary alarm systems and the second one building up into pathological fears with issues regarding the moment they activate alongside with their intensity (Christophe 2021, 8-11).

Our subject of analysis can be placed in the second category with the mention that it has a couple of new traits: Firstly, CMF uses the attributes of pathological fears and applies them to a larger group with members being aware of each other or not. Secondly, the timeframe for this new enemy varies between a couple of hours and up to a lifetime, depending on the level of connection one has with his emotions. An individual’s mind represents the settlement of the rational brain and the subconscious.

The Neocortex helps us with performing logical operations and with the understanding of our surroundings, meanwhile the Limbic Brain is the center of all the reflexes, conditional reflexes and emotions gathered during our existence (Zlate 1996, 223-238). In other words, Continuous Mass Fear attacks a person’s emotions creating imbalances both in the mind and in the body.

The cause resides in our progress

At a certain point in our evolution, the world became more connected than ever, people being able to communicate from one side of the planet to the other, as a result of two main factors: computers and the internet. With the help of the technology created by World War II and the Arms Race, computers were created, and in the 1970’s it was said that they would help transform our society, initially serving as learning tools for students (Toffler 254-261, 1973).

The internet assisted in connecting all the PC’s, thus creating a worldwide network. In other words, we progressed from traditional postal services, television and radio to a method

that can spread and receive data in a matter of moments. Even if this new instrument helped us by improving our life and knowledge, it played an important role in creating the CMF.

Nowadays, a person will take most of her information from the internet when it comes to news or simple life hacks, access to it being facilitated by the fact that we have added to the computer more portable devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones. This constant intake of information can make some individuals very vulnerable to misleading data, especially the introverted types. Based on the above ideas, we can state that the key component in dealing with CMF is to understand that information plays a crucial role, depending on how it is delivered.

Information - the supplier of fear

On a general level, information is the base on which all the processes take place. Without information, we would not be able to learn, understand or create. Also, because of the speed of sharing, our civilization is advancing quickly. Despite all of this, information can create Continuous Mass Fear, depending on how it is written on what format or the way it is audio transmitted.

A proven fact is that all the information placed on the internet has generated confusion. In this way, it is very difficult, if not impossible, at one point to distinguish the truth from the lies. We must also take into consideration the subject of an online topic, this being relevant in finding out what impact it could have towards a reader/listener on an emotional scale. Therefore, the main root to our problem is represented by a compound of rapid shared data, of an incalculable quantity, that generates confusion and emotional imbalances.

Society has a possibility to deal with this phenomenon on a first stance, this chance is composed by the experts in various domains, people who have the authority, based on years of study and practice, to say what should be considered as proven or not. In an ideal scenario, they would provide guidelines for the normal citizen in order to avoid any misleading information. Unfortunately, having access to such a huge amount of documentation online, many of it being fake, as per the Sturgeon Law, has led individuals to overestimate their intellectual capacity many of them considering that they are experts. Important scientific figures have been discredited starting from the second half of the last century up until today. They are seen as an elitist group (Nichols 2019, 124-130).

Given the above facts, the world is essentially facing a digital induced pandemic that takes place on a subconscious level while also having effects on the physical realm.

Consequences of Continuous Mass Fear (CMF)

Knowing that the body and the mind are connected, it only makes sense to reinforce the fact that what affects the body also affects the mind and vice versa. In the area of psychology, experts state that a pathological fear is represented by severe anxiety, this is explained as a sense of fear towards an imminent but unclear danger. An example of a such a case can be seen in the continuous state of insecurity caused by the Cold War during the last century, creating a mass neurosis in those days. In short, a sense of threat, repeated continuously can cause anxiety which can affect the intellectual capacity, learning and understanding becoming significant difficult operations (Cosminovici 2005, 205-206)

CMF is much more different than the tension created by The Cold War, because the era in which we subsided adds to it the speed of the internet with its freedom and relatively safety of one's identity. In the past, news on the television and radio ran on at certain hours, today this is non-stop. Therefore, these two traits help us in distinguishing this new phenomenon that has severe effects on an individual and general level.

First, if a subject tends to be more emotional, the encounter with the CMF can start a state of fear, creating anxiety with its own traits as explained above. On a second approach, panic

attacks can also occur if a person can't maintain a stable attitude when assaulted by the informational wave. In this manner, it is important to underline that panic attacks can endanger the victim's life, for example if they occur when someone is driving at highspeed. Finally, when confronted with fear, our bodies try to maintain a permanent state of vigilance and alert, this means that all the biological functions related to this requirement work faster. In the long term, this could cause exhaustion, heart problems and other organ dysfunctions. On a social plan, Continuous Mass Fear can lead to wrong opinions, toxic behaviors or beliefs and non-productive public manifestations.

The state's intervention

A state is a community created in order to achieve a greater common good, thus every citizen works towards what he believes to be good (Baumgarten 11, 2015). In other words, all subjects of the law must, by the nature of their actions, pursue a positive objective. It is also true that a state, with the help from the democratic institutions, must ensure the protection of its people both mentally and physically.

The CMF must be handled by the instruments of a democratic society due to the obligations derived from the fundamental law. We shall take into consideration the prime law of Romania, which has in her composition the right to physical and psychological integrity together with the right for health protection (Romanian Constitution, Art. 22 and 34). As per the doctrine, the right to mental and physical integrity are connected to the right to live, any harm brought to them resulting in an attack on the wellbeing of the victim (Deaconu 2011, 234 – 235). These three are also guaranteed by the right to health protection (Idem, 258-266). We can observe that the fundamental rights provided by the Constitution are interconnected.

Actions against the threat

Since the premises of why the state should deal with CMF have been pointed out, it is necessary to suggest measures which could be implemented. On this note, raising awareness represents a good starting point. The responsible entities could create campaigns which should inform the public about the danger and advising what actions should be taken in order to prevent any dangerous outcome.

Teams of social sciences experts can be brought in order to help the citizens already affected by this digital pandemic. Also, self-helping materials, validated by specialists, should be put at the disposal of the victims. Probably the most efficient action which can be taken is prevention, this can only be done by knowing this attacker on a deeper level. Departments of institutes should use the tools at their disposal to perform well-coordinated research and determine the best mechanism to counter the CMF.

Protecting the order of the law

Another way of dealing with the analyzed subject is by applying the criminal law dispositions or by creating up to date ones. The criminal law consists of the assembly of legal norms that protect the order of the law and the fundamental social values, deals with criminal conduct by enforcing legal sanctions and plays a crucial role in preventing such behavior. (Mitrache C., Mitrache Cr. 2019, 22). By its dispositions, the criminal law could hold accountable the persons transmitting the negative information, after they are tracked down by a specialized team.

In the code we can observe recognized illegal conducts related to the CMF. For example, the act of inciting, by any means, towards hatred and discrimination against certain groups is sanctioned with prison from 6 months up to 3 years or with a fine (Romanian Criminal Code, Art. 369). Since the internet can be considered a public space, we could bring

into attention Article 371 from the same code which says that the disturbance of public order and peace can get the author behind bars for up to 3 years. However, this disposition is created only for the physical world, thus the necessity for new and improved laws that also cover the digital environment. In the end, the state has a series of possibilities to defend the population from the Continuous Mass Fear, by implementing social programs, appealing to the criminal norms, etc.

Final words

Our race, with the passing of time, desires to be more interconnected, since we are social creatures by nature, and we can only evolve by interacting with each other. Using our given talents, we managed to create devices and networks which brought us closer, being able to share experiences and emotions with literally the entire planet. We live in an unprecedented era where society advances rapidly, and we can observe all the wonders technology can bring. As it is the case with many inventions, it can be used to either help us or destroy us, thus the internet develops into a double-edged sword.

Continuous Mass Fear is a byproduct of technology and the desire to influence others towards a certain end. Persuasion and convincing techniques have been studied seriously in the past, from simple body language to how one can sell a product. Today, the persuasion takes place digitally, all depending on how it is presented, the format as well as the subject covered. Most of us spend time on the internet when we are alone, thus the desire for isolation may occur also raising the chances that CMF can reach its goal.

The opinions of experts require to be taken into consideration more and not be discredited based on mistakes which took place in isolated and unique cases, they are the filter for our society and the ones who can bring positive progress. The states and international organisms must understand the danger of this phenomenon and work together towards diminishing it, because it can never be eliminated completely as long as the internet exists. Legal norms must be upgraded to the reality of today, meaning that the digital world needs to be taken into consideration by the legislators when creating dispositions related to public order or individual safety. Social sciences are a key component in this century mainly because all this technology can make us less human in the coming decades.

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