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POSTMODERNISM AND POSTMODERNITY (IN THE LIGHT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND THE PROCESSES OF INDIVIDUALIZATION)[1]

The links between postmodernism and postmodernity are obvious, regardless of postmodernism's autonomy, developmental logic

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or self-awareness. As a cultural and philosophical formation, it was constituted in the 1970s and 1980s, i.e. at the very moment of transition from modernity to postmodernity, or to late modernity (Giddens) and reflexive modernity (Beck) as opposed to classical modernity. The Postmodernists: Lyotard, Vattimo and Welsch, problematized these relationships, whereas Rorty somewhat negated these issues and was more interested in the political and cultural dimensions (Szahaj, 2002). They related the changes taking place in philosophy and art to the changes taking place in the sphere of science and technology at the time of the transition to late capitalism. To a lesser extent, however, they related them to the transformations of social structures and to the individualization processes determining them, which are decisive for postmodernity and postmodernism. The aim of the article is therefore to confront the postmodern approaches to the above changes taking place within postmodern capitalism with their descriptions presented by the sociology of postmodernity, especially from the period of its birth (Beck 2002). This comparison will allow us to show significant similarities between the philosophical and sociological perspectives of understanding postmodernity in terms of change and reflexivity (I) and to then show and assess, to what extent the key values of postmodernism — freedom, authenticity, self-realisation, tolerance, diversity and multiplicity of all forms of life, social justice and equality — were squandered due to the above changes. I will make this critical assessment from the perspective of the impact of digital technologies on the transformation of capitalism (II), especially in the sphere of consumption and its socio-cultural consequences (III) and then from the perspective of the process of individualisation (IV). When considering the relationship between postmodern thought and postmodernity, we ignore

the difficulties connected to the former, unless they are reflected in the phenomena of postmodernity.

I.

Let us start with a general definition of the relationship between modernity and postmodernity. Modernity is determined by the logic of change manifested in the destruction of the state structures of traditional society, as a result of rapid socio-economic modernization associated with industrial capitalism, the commodity-monetary economy, urbanisation, class society and the progressive rationalisation of and disenchantment with the world. To this unstoppable modernising change, modernity attributed a normative orientation, a "project that is directed towards a goal" (Lyotard, 1998, p. 70) associating change with progress. Modernity was to realize the universal ideals of the Enlightenment and lead to the emancipation of the individual and society. Modernity was shaped by order-creating tendencies, recognized by Bauman (2006, 2008) as by its essence to control the spontaneous development of history and society by including it in the framework of emancipatory socio-political projects that were legitimised by "grand narratives".

Postmodernity, on the other hand, is constituted by freeing modernising change from emancipatory goals (progress, final orderliness, wholeness) and its acceleration. This process had two sources. The first was the experience of totalitarian regimes, revealing the dark side of modernity and exploiting its civilizational potential (bureaucracy and technology) for purposes that were alien to it; decolonization processes were also important here. Lyotard (1997, p. 87) talks about "the whole history of cultural imperialism since the dawn of the West." The second source was the transformation of modern

capitalism related to the transition from the industrial economy to the service economy, as well as from the welfare state to the deregulated free market economy and consumer capitalism, globalisation, the progressive individualization of the social structure and, finally, the rapid development of digital and computer technologies. These phenomena marked the radicalization of modernization to the extent that the impulse of modernising change, released by modernity, became free from its goals and turned against what in modernity was a remnant of the pre-modern era. This is what blocked the dynamics of change, and thus, turned against both its historical finalism, which legitimised emancipatory aspirations, as well as the social structure of modernity. This radicalization resulted in a transition from "simple modernization" to "reflexive modernization", from classical modernity to reflexive modernity, no longer constituted by "its opposition" to "the world of handed down traditions and nature", but which "stood against itself", referring to and questioning one's own "assumptions'' (Beck, 2002, p. 17) and thus making a reflexive relativization of the historical significance of classical modernity. In the social dimension, this questioning means that modern society "detraditionalizes its foundations" defined by "the binding social power of class cultures and traditions" and families.[2] Under the pressure of a deregulated market, "forms of developed industrial society are being abolished: social classes and strata, the nuclear family and its associations, the "normal biographies" of men and

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[2] "An industrial society is not and never has been possible as a purely industrial society, it has always been a half-industrial, half-state society. Its classes were never a relic of tradition, but a product and foundation of industrial society" (Beck, 2002, p. 114, cf. 129-130, 166-168). Similarly, Jameson (2011, p. 35, also 320): in its "purer form, capitalism eliminates those enclaves of pre-capitalist organisation that it tolerated or exploited in previous phases".

women, the regulation of professional work, etc.", "marriage, parenthood, sexuality and love" (Beck, 2002, p. 236, 20, 21).

Reflexivity also means transforming postmodern society into a "risk society". Firstly, there is the risk of both realising the unforeseen consequences of modernization processes, scientific development, technology and industry (e.g. nuclear energy or environmental pollution), all leading to the "socialisation of nature's destruction" as a result of the blurring of "the boundaries between nature and society" (Beck, 2002, p. 14). Attempts to remove these consequences result not only in undesirable side effects but also, in view of the socialisation of the crisis of nature (Beck, 2002, p. 236), in structural risks. On the other hand, there are risks inherent in postmodernity itself, related to globalisation, a highly competitive market, dispersed medialization and the individualization of social bonds based, to an increasing extent, on the decisions of individuals freely constructing their personal and social identities. In postmodernity, the proper control of modernity is replaced by chaos and the risks associated with it. Their other side is contingency that is, let us add, the essence of the postmodern vision of man as a being devoid of essence, creating his fragile and transitory identity and ephemeral order of meanings in a network of contingent relations with the world. Postmodernity with its chaos, risk and contingency has become an element of the constitution of postmodernism, only that it wants to free a becoming subject from the dimension of risk, to leave contingency without uncertainty and fear because, as Welsch puts it (1998, p. 111, note 49), "Postmodernism is not associated with melancholy, but with a euphoric view of finality and finitude."

What is the relationship between philosophical postmodernism and the reflexive (postmodern) modality of modern change? Well, this

modality found its expression in the founding disputes for the self-awareness of postmodernism regarding its relation to cultural modernity (modernism). As we know, if the first approach, isolated and primarily represented by early Bauman (see Morawski, 1994) and pointing to a radical break between postmodernity and modernity, could not take this change into account, it was articulated by the second, dominant approach, represented by Lyotard, Welsch and Vattimo. Emphasising the continuity between modernism and postmodernism, they see in postmodernism the critical continuation of modernity, its "development", "strengthening and radicalization" (Welsch 1998, p. 256, 265). This radicalization consists in freeing from the power of modern "grand narratives" (that is, from the power of first principles, wholeness and history) such modern phenomena as pluralism, scepticism, difference, fragmentation and diversity and the contingency of existence, which modernity has supressed and marginalised with its universalistic tendencies and which have become the essence of postmodernity.

By analogy with the sociologically described reflexiveness of (post)modernity, one can talk about the reflexive nature of (post)modernism which would involve modernism questioning its universalist foundations. This self-questioning, expressed in the language of "anamnesis", "rewriting", "reworking", "overcompensation", would be expressed in the "reflexive development and implementation of the hard and radical modernity of our century" (Welsch, 1998, 116). In these categories Welsch describes the essence of the avant-garde which he wants to extend to the entirety of culture, especially to science (Kowalska, 1997, p. 6), as "long, persistent, highly responsible work aimed at exploring the hidden premises of modernity" (Lyotard 1998, p. 107). Critically referring to its heritage, the avant-garde questions its foundations to the extent that it frees experimentation from guiding

emancipatory ideals and makes it the goal of itself, that is the creation the rules of which are laid down in its course (Lyotard, 1998, cf. 24-28). In this way, modernism turns reflexively to its foundations and by questioning them, opens up to pure, reflexive change which, in its postmodern mutation, translates into the language of events, unrestrained creation and construction.

This means there is a homology between postmodernism as a reflexive cultural mutation and reflexive modernity as defined by Beck and Giddens; postmodernism would correspond to "a crack *within* modernity that breaks free from the framework of classical industrial society" by detraditionalizing its social structures (Beck, 2002, p. 16).[3] The logic of liberated, reflexive modernization would therefore operate both in the social and cultural sphere.

The carriers of reflexive, post-modern change have undoubtedly become science, digital and information technologies, as well as the processes of individualization. To what extent do they relate to the change unleashed in late capitalism and to what extent do they embody postmodern ideals?

II.

Let'a start with the importance of science and technology, the development of which is associated with the emergence of postmodernity (Szahaj, 2021, p. 40), and in which the postmodernists pinned hope for the transformation of culture and society in accordance with their project. The first was Lyotard who, in *The Postmodern*

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[3] "Postmodernization of the entire culture would consist in the increasingly common reflexive attitude of subjects to the growing range of beliefs that make up culture", in their "denaturalization and idiosyncrasy at the same time" (Szahaj 2002, p. 206, also 208-209). "We have entered the phase of self-reflexive, self-correcting modernism" (Morawski, 1994, p. 176).

Condition which brought philosophical postmodernism to life, articulated this desire in his diagnosis of (early) postmodernity, developing a model approach to science and new technologies for postmodernism; their meaning is ambiguous. In postmodernity, science frees itself from the "grand narratives" ("libertarian" and "speculative") that legitimised it. It does this (by analogy with Beck's findings) by taking over the critical impulse previously aimed at traditional stories by these narratives and setting it against these narratives themselves (Kowalska, 1997, pp. 14-15). Giving up the claim to the truth and the search for certainty, science reveals its para-logical, differentiating structure, becoming an "open system". It legitimises itself through a game which, as in the case of the avant-garde described by Lyotard, consists of creating new, competing concepts; its only value would be that it "'creates ideas', that is, other statements and other rules of the game" to which one will go to convince its other participants, thus legitimising the paralogy (Lyotard, 1997, pp. 171-172).

Lyotard perceives the situation of science in postmodern capitalism in two ways, pointing to two tendencies. The first, in the conditions of "development of techniques and technologies since the Second World War" and the growth of instrumental reason and the "renewal of liberal, developed capitalism" (Lyotard, 1997, p. 111), leads to the technical functionalization of science and subordinating it to the requirements of the market and technical efficiency.[4] Knowledge is thus subordinated to "the hegemony of capital", it becomes a commodity, a "productive force, that is, a moment in the circulation of capital" (Lyotard, 1997, p. 128), subject to the "principle of equivalence" which

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[4] "The merit of the French philosopher is certainly that he was one of the first to notice the birth and development of a new type of capitalism (information capitalism) and its expansion (...)" (Szahaj, 2021, p. 180, footnote 243).

encompasses everything "it involves them in the exchange (...) and neutralises their power of being an event" (Lyotard, 1998, p. 82). Capitalism is totalitarian in the sense that it seeks to subjugate "all aspects of life, including feelings and pleasures" (Lyotard, 1998, pp. 140-141). It tolerates the political sphere and "national traditions" "only to the extent that the social bond is not (yet) fully bound to one economic sentence" (Lyotard, 2010, p. 207, 210). Until then, it needs "civil society", "representative" democracy, "the doctrine of parliamentary liberalism" (Lyotard, 1998, p. 82, 126, 43).

However, and this is the other tendency, Lyotard hopes for science and new technologies to develop their paralogical potential. This is based on several premises. The first is the belief that a system based on the mere requirement of effectiveness is counter-effective because bureaucratic control suffocates the subsystems of science and technology, limits their effectiveness. Due to their optimization, it must leave space for the creative development of science (Lyotard, 1997, pp. 152-153). The second, ontological premise is based on the conviction of the autonomous nature of the historical development of science.[5] It is not genetically related to technology, which did not evolve out of the "need to know" but the "need to get rich" and profit. It means that the transition to postmodern science was not "the accidental growth of science as part of technical progress and the expansion of capitalism" but "the internal erosion of the legitimacy of science" (Lyotard, 1997, p. 114). The third

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[5] The thesis about the autonomy of science makes it difficult to understand the appropriation of science by technology. It seems that this difficulty is the premise for Stiegler's understanding (with reference to Derrida) of the relationship between science and technology in terms of the pharmakon. In this way, Stiegler can justify Lyotard's idea of the democratisation of digital technologies and the ambiguity of postmodernity itself, while rejecting the idea of resistance. Regarding the criticism of Lyotard and another possibility of reading of Lyotard, see (Stiegler, 2007, especially pp. 221-265).

premise is anthropological in nature, based on the conviction that the "development of technological science" "does not meet the expectations resulting from human needs", both individual and collective and is a threat "to literature, to love, to uniqueness" (Lyotard, 1998, p. 105, 126 also 111).

What's at stake when it comes to the confrontation with capitalism is therefore the emancipation of science from the rule of the imperative of technical efficiency by releasing its paralogical, critical and culture-creating potential. In science understood in this way, free on the one hand from meta-requirements (truth, goodness, beauty), and on the other free from "positivist pragmatism" and focused on creating, Lyotard sees a model of culture and of the functioning of society. This model assumes the revival of social language games, an agonistic game of discourses that eliminates the existence of social meta-prescriptions, regulated by justice giving each of them the right to vote, beyond any lasting consensus (except local and transitory). The road to the realisation of this vision is associated with democratising computerization, subject to "control and regulation of the market system" and power, through the dissemination of access to "memory and data banks" (Lyotard, 1997, p. 172, 177).

The texts written after *The Condition* indicate Lyotard's undoubtedly greater pessimism and, in a way, the minimalism of solutions consisting in the weakening of the "development of technological science" and the increasingly autonomizing the technocratic tendency of capitalism, which he considers a "necessity" or "destiny". Lyotard framed this strategy in terms of resistance. This resistance "works through various 'micrologies'", primarily by reclaiming the avant-gardes, which are "no less significant than the

importance of technological science" because they have "the ability to arouse "reflection" and "sensitivity" (Lyotard, 1998, p. 89, 113, also 128).

The belief in the ambiguous nature of technological capitalism is basically maintained by Welsch and Vattimo. However, Welsch no longer believes in the critical, socio-cultural potential of information technology. To him it postulates opposition, in the name of multiplicity, to "technological totalitarianism", i.e. the expansion of technology to other areas of socio-cultural life, in which "all perception, thinking and action are subjected to technological structuring" (Welsch, 1998, p. 308, see 296-309). Technology should be inscribed into the "pluralistic orientation of postmodernism." On the other hand, Vattimo, with his program of "getting over" (Verwindung) Heidegger's *Gestell*, seems closer to Lyotard, although at the same time more optimistic. He postulates the liberation of science from technical specialisation and its development according to the aesthetic model. Opposing the "myth of dehumanising technology", he inscribes medialization into the movement of weak nihilism which, through "dissemination of exchange value", serves to "render the world unreal", "a fairy-tale experience of reality, which is also our only chance for freedom", and leads to the freeing of man from his "subjectivity" (see Vattimo, 2006, pp. 22-25, 27-42). In short, science together with "planetary technology" is an opportunity for "a world of complete mediatization of experience, in which we are already to a large extent" and in which "the distinction between truth and fiction, information and images is blurred" (Vattimo, 2006, p. 169).

Let us now refer to Beck's analyses (2002, see pp. 238-344), which allow us to examine the diagnostic and prognostic values of postmodernist analyses. Significant similarities can be found. As far as

science is concerned, according to Beck, it goes, in analogy to the development of modernity, from "simple science" or "half-way" to "reflexive science". The transition takes place as a result of its internal development, as well as "risks related to scientific and technological development". This development is not only a "source of solutions to problems", but also a "source of the causes of problems" through which "society is confronted with itself" (Beck, 2002, p. 278, 239). The origin of threat is no longer external nature, but "perfectly mastered" socialised nature. Confronted with its own consequences, science questions its own assumptions and "extends its methodical scepticism also to its own foundations and practical consequences" (Beck, 2002, p. 240), thus undermining its claims to truth and knowledge. This reflexivity leads to differentiation and to the pluralization of methodological and theoretical positions, and consequently to the creation of hypotheses and assumptions resulting in the "data that is produced" disappearing from reality (Beck, 2002, p. 253) and being interpreted differently. According to Beck, the "self-relative pluralism of interpretation" (Beck, 2002, p. 256) and the expansion of risk areas of public concern lead to the social empowerment of science. Formerly "objects" of science, individuals must relate to the many different concepts necessary for action, select one, and thus actively influence the socially expanding processes of "production and application of scientific research" (Beck, 2002, p. 240). Paradoxically, the disintegration of "hard" science leads to an increasingly scientific society. Later, Giddens will talk about expert systems permeating everyday life, which are constantly subject to revision and which, due to their inconsistency and multitude, become the subject of choice for individuals who increase their scientific and practical competences (Giddens, 1991, pp. 137-143).

Like Lyotard, Beck points to two trends in the development of science, emerging in the face of risks and threats related to the scientific and technological development and the growing pressure to counteract them. The first is related to the subordination of science to "economic and political interests", which at the same time intensifies non-scientific irrationality. In reaction to its pluralization, science escapes into dogmatization, i.e. into hermetic specialisation and professionalisation. Science then removes the symptoms instead of the causes, only intensifying the spiral of successive threats and, in view of the impossibility of removing these causes, considers them to be a product of "the pressure of objective necessities", "systemic pressures" and the "fatalism of consequences" (Beck, 2002, p. 274). The second tendency gives hope for "the emancipation of social practice from science and through science" (Beck, 2002, p. 240). This would be related to undertaking the unfinished, Enlightenment project of modernity and with the emergence of scientific rationality using historical experience, learning from mistakes and searching for "connections" (undoubtedly corresponding to Welsch's later idea of "transversal reason"). It would then indicate comprehensive ways of acting aimed at removing the very causes of the threats of modernization and therefore require new, pluralist forms of politics which, due to the inadequacy of both traditional democratic-parliamentary politics and bureaucratic centralization in the face of progressing social differentiation, would make it possible to oppose the self-empowering economic and technical development. These forms would mean the "democratisation of technical and economic development" (coordination of parliamentary control over the development of technology and "parliaments" of experts, inclusion of groups of citizens in decision-making processes, as well as the "institutionalisation of self-criticism" at all levels of the institutional

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functioning of society). With some optimism, Beck concludes: "the potential for danger (...) could challenge the creative imagination and human creative potentials" (Beck, 2002, p. 333). Beck's findings are directly upheld by Welsch (1998, p. 306, footnote 306).

Cautious optimism based on the belief in the creative-pluralistic potential of science and technology and their positive social consequences is therefore shared by Beck (as well as the even more optimistic Giddens) and postmodernists, especially Welsch and Vattimo[6], who see it strongly confirmed in the transformations of postmodernity.

However, the last four decades have confirmed Lyotard's worst fears about the direction of capitalism, especially his later writings (although there is also a certain amount of stubborn optimism to be found there). Indeed, everything indicates that modern capitalism has buried hope for the emancipatory potential of science and rapidly developing technologies. In its highly competitive, neoliberal form, it took over and subordinated them to the logic of profit and the increasingly globalised and politically uncontrollable capital, from production processes to the globalised universe of the Internet and the social media that functions as part of it. Modern capitalism has become service capitalism and cognitive capitalism (see Szahaj, 2014). This tendency, noticed by Beck and Lyotard, which was an important subject of contemporary sociological discussions (Etzioni, Bell, see Welsch, 1998, pp. 39-46), comes to the fore in the conviction that technological development is irreversible as the main determinant of social dynamics; this belief serves the naturalisation of scientific and technological development, which is expressed in "technodeterminism" and the

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[6] For Welsch "postmodernism (...) no longer needs to be advertised, because it is realised" (Welsch, 1998, p. 53, also 269; see Vattimo, 2006, p. 15, also 11, 169).

accompanying "technocratic-libertarian utopia" (Szahaj, 2021, 53). Postmodern, unstoppable change took the form of technological development free from social goals.

Today, apart from the undoubtedly positive aspects of digital technologies, more and more of their negative side is being noticed. In their progressive colonisation of subsequent areas of social life and culture, the huge deficits in postmodernity are revealed as if under a lens.

III.

Let's begin with looking at consumerism which, having become the goal of production in postmodern capitalism, needs a consumer ideology that makes consumption the vocation of the individual (Bauman, 2006a, pp. 173-174). As such, the Internet and digital media with their global reach have become a key medium of the consumer market, having been marketized, so that "the content of the media itself has become a commodity" (Jameson, 2011, p. 282). They are a carrier of consumption, but also an area of its creation, because the Internet and media corporations transfer the data they develop (thanks to algorithms that profile the personality of their users) to the advertising industry, which affects consumption and, in turn, production by commercialising existing lifestyles while simultaneously promoting new ones. Thus, using techniques of persuasion, it shapes consumer preferences and tastes, creates new needs and decides on what is to be deemed a successful life. In this way, with the help of advertising and persuasive techniques, the digital network exerts an overwhelming influence on the behaviour of individuals, their desires, emotions and choices (using the aforementioned algorithms, which allow for defining the often unconscious needs and desires of individuals). In doing this, it serves the surveillance, supervision and the subliminal control of individuals,

becoming a kind of "soft totalitarianism" referring to the hedonistic-consumer ideology (Szahaj, 2021, pp. 108-110). By shaping cultural consumption patterns and influencing the behaviour of individuals, it does not serve the autonomy of individuals or the possibility of the independent shaping of their lives: "contrary to their own belief that they fully realise their freedom in consumption, they actually submit to culturally defined patterns of consumption strictly combined with dominant beliefs about the good life, wealth and prestige" (Szahaj, 2021, p. 89). Let us add that it is precisely consumerist, technologically mediated capitalism, along with the "transformation of reality into images", the loss of depth and the breakdown of time into a "series of eternal "nows"" (rapidly changing needs requiring immediate satisfaction), which trigger euphoric, hallucinatory intensities, along with "eternal change"; a schizophrenic, dissociated subject becomes, according to Jameson's (1988, 1997) powerful thesis, genetically and functionally decisive for the emergence of postmodernism, defining the logic of late capitalism.[7] In this post-Marxist version, postmodern culture as a "cultural dominant" removes the critical, subversive distance towards reality characteristic of modernist culture. It is not the ideology of capitalism, ambiguous in its cultural features, but its functional component which "not only replicates the logic of late capitalism, but also strengthens and intensifies it" (Jameson, 1988, p. 88, also 415).

Digital technologies are also becoming the main medium of visual culture with all the consequences for the way of perceiving reality and thinking, meaning "the dominance of the image over the written message, discontinuity over continuity, distraction over attention and concentration, fragmentation over the whole, conciseness over broad

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[7] "Postmodernism is a function of pure commodification as a process" (Jameson, 2011, p. X).

description, superficiality over depth, impressions over analysis, emotions over intellect, engagement over distance" (Szahaj, 2021, pp. 116-117); also, let us add, the present moment over temporality. Privileging, just like consumption, the present, the transmission of digital media in its entirety, inherently fragmented, dispersed and additive, destroys the possibility of a reflexive narration, conditioning the autonomy of the individual, because it does not allow it to organise its biographical experience in its temporal continuity and in its entire socio-cultural context.

In this environment of pictorial-visual culture, digital media has become an important channel for the development of commercialised mass culture. It combines and mixes the higher culture with the dominant lower culture, playful and entertaining, often trivial and common, with a low level of the artistic and intellectual. Deprived, like all information flows, of "qualitative filters", it undermines the pattern-forming hierarchies of cultural values and through this "axiological flattening" (Szahaj, 2021, pp. 96-97) leads to relativism, the anaesthetic effects of which are neutralised by the constant changeability and diversity of its content. Although important artistic ideas and technical-artistic innovations arise in this culture, they are immediately captured by mass culture.

Modern technologies (the Internet and social media) significantly contribute to the weakening of social ties and the affective-personal relationships necessary for socialisation towards loneliness, whilst intensifying the negative effects of the culture of narcissism and exhibitionism onto individuals, correspondent to the exhibitionism and voyeurism characteristic of post-modern, democratic management and control (Bröckling, 2016, p. 161). Exhibitionism is commercialised

through the use of the compulsion to compare and succeed, competition extracting the most superficial features from individuals (celebrities, influencers) (Szahaj, 2021, pp. 90-94). These phenomena, mediated technologically, give rise to alienation and depression, expanding the circle of therapeutic culture.

It is impossible to say that technologies have come out against Lyotard's cautious hope that they would support avant-garde artistic explorations related to the generation of "events" and the "aesthetics of the sublime", or that they would break the dominance of popular culture's eclecticism on the "level zero of contemporary universal culture", multiplying the effects of the power of capital. The "realism of what is first is best", defining this culture and promoting kitsch and "disorder ... in the sphere of taste", is the "realism of money" and benefits (Lyotard, 1996, p. 35). Technologies will therefore complete the work of making reality unreal, which is also rooted in the very economy of capitalism - in the idea of a contract, whereby "there is only that reality which is agreed between the partners in the form of a consensus on knowledge and commitments"; "to think otherwise", Lyotard adds, "would be to have an overly humanistic notion of the Mephistophelean functionalism of science and technology" (Lyotard, 1996, p. 37, 36). Today it can be said that if technologies contribute to the unreality of reality, it is only by reinforcing the simulacrum consumption of commercialised signs and information, thus confirming its "Mephistophelean functionalism" and neutralising any countercultural rebellion by subjecting this rebellion to the normalising logic of commercialised popular culture. Vattimo and Welsch, on the other hand, rejecting the avant-garde requirements of novelty and innovation that were adopted by Lyotard with some reservations, see in the media (producing images free of truth) a carrier of the aestheticization of

everyday life that binds the high and the low. This "means the spread of the rule of mass-media" (Vattimo, 2006, 48) and, thanks to it, "the achievements of aesthetic modernism increasingly pass into ways of life and penetrate everyday life" (Welsch, 1998, p. 284). Vattimo and Welsch, following in Lyotard's footsteps, also attribute an important communicative function to the media: in the "society of advanced pluralization" it provides "patterns of orientation and behaviour" (Welsch, 1998, p. 284), "aesthetic models of behaviour (...) and the organisation of social consensus (because the power of mass-media is primarily aesthetic and rhetorical)" (Vattimo, 2006, p. 89, also 13, 47). Today, however, the media does this primarily in the commercial and consumer dimension, as well as in politics, especially the populist kind, which uses persuasive emotional influence, threatening democratic pluralism through the phenomena of post-truth and fake news.

Digital technologies have not therefore turned out to be a factor of social change that would allow the realisation of the values of freedom, equality and fraternity that are important for the postmodern "project". These technologies are not a medium (apart from some exceptions) of democratic political debate or a free game of social and cultural discourse that are supposed to put these values into practice. On the contrary, functionalized by the market, they not only reproduce market-conditioned inequalities and social injustices, but also deepen them. These structural social issues are not addressed by the media, they do not mediate in their negotiation, in accordance with Beck's belief (2002, p. 149, 202) that "social crises" and "systemic contradictions" are not "accepted in a social nature and if they happen to be, then very indirectly" but must be "resolved biographically". Moreover, they were not raised as essential by the postmodernists themselves, who generally accepted the capitalist system (Lyotard to the least extent), which increasingly

appeared to leave no alternative, and in which they found premises for the implementation of the aforementioned values (including technologies). Postmodernists were more interested in conflicts of the moral, ethnic and religious nature, which were increasingly occupying the field of emancipation and struggle, also diagnosed by Beck and characteristic of a pluralist society, i.e. those relating to minorities, to ""assigned" features (...), race, skin colour, gender, ethnicity (Gastarbeiter – foreign workers), age or disability" (Beck, 2002, p. 150); Eagleton, 1998, pp. 37-40, 89, 122-123) ascribes to their dominance a surrogate character in relation to socio-political issues. In these conflicts, presented in terms of language games, postmodernists saw a struggle for authentic pluralism and a manifestation of the non-consensual "practice of justice" (Lyotard, 1997, p. 176). These new issues attract the media to a greater extent, again in accordance with Beck's (2002, p. 148) thesis about "*promoting fashion by the mass media on certain topics and conflicts*", both because of their otherwise important as well as socially and culturally relevant timeliness and, because of their systemic function, in which the media expresses "mainly claims against the ideologies of sexism and racism, which have always been incompatible and regressive to the egalitarian logic of legal entities in the market" (Bernstein, 2019, p. 59).

IV.

What remains is the question of postmodern individualization; the above discussion of the importance of digital technologies shows that they were not a favourable medium for this process.

Postmodern individualization was the second key factor of the change which determined the transition from modernity to postmodernity. The "new individualism" emerging from it had several sources. One of them was the social transformation taking place in the

1960s and 1970s, conducive to the free shaping of identity performed by individuals, i.e. the possibility of choosing an individual way of life and individual development. These transformations were associated with an increase in income and free time limiting the formative influence of social classes; with the rapid development of the service sector came acceleration of vertical social mobility; with greater access to education came increasing possibilities to choose a profession. These factors enabled participation in different social environments and exposure to different lifestyles (Honneth, pp. 2004, 468-470). Another source of the "new individualism" was the dynamically developing consumerism following the Second World War, that had its cultural roots in Protestant and then in Romantic sentimentalism (Campbell); it favoured the consumption of goods by intensifying the sense of life and pleasure. The specific meaning given to consumption initially concerned the elite (luxury goods), which was followed by mass consumerism (Honneth, 2004, pp. 464-470, see also Marody, 2014, pp. 94-95). Finally, the third source was the "sexual revolution", which made sexuality the privileged sphere of "testing one's individuality"; this had its cultural roots in modernism (literature, rock music) promoting romantic ideals of authenticity, self-discovery, self-expression and experimenting with one's own identity (Honneth, 2004, pp. 470).

It was this "new individualism" that led to the individualization of social structures as described by Beck: the weakening of the "nuclear family", the development of "pure relations" based on the reflexive project of the self, i.e. on the decisions, emotions and inclinations of the individuals themselves (Giddens, 2001, pp. 88-98), the methods of spending the increase in free time which, apart from rest from everyday work, began to more and more serve the expression of one's separate individuality and finally, the importance of consumption as an area of

expression of individual lifestyles (Honneth, 2004, p. 471) in the context of the expanding aestheticization of everyday life (see Featherstone, 1996).

According to Bell's well-known thesis (1994), consumerist individualism entered into what seemed to be a structural conflict with the requirements of economic efficiency and the puritan work ethic that legitimised them, undermined by the heritage of the modernist avant-gardes and by its inherent values of artistic creativity and sensual drive, which were gradually extended to hedonistic and consumerist attitudes. Capitalism has abolished this contradiction by making hedonistic consumption the basis of production and by functionalizing individualism economically, that is, by making it the basis of a highly competitive free market economy. These revaluations were accelerated by the counter-cultural revolution of 1968 aimed at capitalism, the critical impulse of which was intercepted and institutionalised (Boltanski/Ciapello), deciding about the transition to postmodernity, to a neoliberal society, and about the "society of achievement" replacing the "society of discipline" (Han, 2022, p. 28). Individualization became the principle of social reproduction.

The result of these processes is a postmodern subject defined by the compulsion to create their own identity as a result of the disintegration of proper modernity, class-conditioned structures and social bonds which, through permanent careers, professional ethos and ways of life and family, stabilised the identities of individuals and gave them biographical unity. If in modernity the subject could change and redefine its identity by breaking the class determinants of their social position, then in liquid postmodernity the subject is forced to constantly, reflexively define itself in changing contexts and socio-cultural situations.

The consequences of this disintegration problematized the postmodern conceptions of the subject. It loses its unity and stability otherwise guaranteed by the emancipatory reference to the metaphysical or historical whole captured by the "grand narratives", and becomes a changeable subject constructing its contingent identity in multiple, fluid networks of references, relations and language games. Despite the above-mentioned re-evaluation of the subject's nature, they are guided by the values of freedom, creation, authenticity, solidarity and compassion, which connect them with modernist axiology, but lack its foundations.

It seems that postmodern individualization was a hidden assumption of a certain optimism held by postmodernists regarding the possibility of implementing these values in postmodernity, and more precisely in the area of digital technologies. In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard recognizes the functionalization of individualism by capitalism when he writes about "the revival of liberal, developed capitalism after the retreat of Keynesian protectionism in the 1930s-1960s, which ... gave special value to the individual use of goods and services" (Lyotard 1997, p. 112). He refers to the economic use of the contract by neoliberal capitalism, assuming individualization and constituting the principle of "evolution of social interactions in which a temporary contract actually replaces permanent institutions in professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, familial and international matters", "a temporary contract is preferred by the system because of its flexibility, lower costs and accompanying passionate motivation, which contributes to improved efficiency" (Lyotard, 1997, p. 176).

Nevertheless, in the contract, Lyotard finds a premise that allows him to discount it in favour of postmodern individualization. By its very nature, this opens up to a multitude of games and "finite meta-

arguments", although Lyotard immediately adds: "strictly speaking, it is not the goal of the system, but the system tolerates it, and within it [the tendency] points to another goal, which is knowledge of language games (...)" (Lyotard, 1997, p. 176). It is a crack in which Lyotard's resistance is supposed to operate in order to create space for these games.

However, the further development of the capitalist "system" and the "universality of the market" (Beck) showed its low tolerance for the libertarian-discursive potential of the "time contract" and the individualism behind it. Born partly under the pressure of social individualization, mass consumption and digital technologies, the "new spirit of capitalism" required individualised forms of economic activity corresponding to the requirements of a highly competitive market.[8] Consequently, this new spirit of capitalism neutralised the criticism of modern capitalism, both social and artistic (defending the authenticity and autonomy of the individual against standardisation, mechanisation and massification) (see Boltański, Chiapello, 2022, pp. 258-297), assimilating libertarian tendencies, including the individualistic ethos of the counterculture associated with the ideal of self-realisation and the correlated anti-capitalist, anarchic-communal social experiments becoming a laboratory of entrepreneurship (Bröckling, 2016, pp. 175, 28). Thus, the "new spirit of capitalism" subordinated the "new individualism" to the imperatives of a highly competitive market, efficiency and effectiveness, transformed individuals into entrepreneurs themselves, and changed self-fulfilment (which became a socio-cultural coercion) into individualised economic practices replacing the Taylor

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[8] In the part of the text discussing the functionalization of individualism, I refer to my text *Postmodern individualization in the light of critical theory (Frankfurt School),* which was accepted for publication in "Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej" .

model with the "increasing normative empowerment of direct labour processes" (Baethge, 1991, p. 6, see 7-10). According to these practices, to work is to meet the requirements of individual development and self-realisation. The employee becomes a creative entrepreneur who is meant to show initiative, commitment, creativity and flexibility which, in the conditions of a highly competitive market, allow them to take up new challenges and acquire completely new skills. The individualization of work corresponds to changes within the structure and forms of management in the "system of pluralistic, variable, decentralised employment" (Beck, 2002, p. 220). In this way, meeting the desire for self-fulfilment, autonomy and non-alienated work, the requirement of self-entrepreneurship serves to maximise production (Bröckling, 2016, p. 201, 28). The new individualism not only ideologically legitimises the capitalist economy, but above all has become its "productive force" (Honneth, 2004, p. 467, 473, 474).

The institutional model of economically functionalized self-realisation has become project-oriented work, which is part of biographical projectivity. It is characterised by a clearly defined goal, a specific implementation time and strictly defined, planned tasks performed and evaluated within specified time sequences. They are one-time and often unique, their implementation requires invention and often flexibility due to the need to redefine the rules of work, modify goals and means in order to find creative solutions (see Birken, 2012, p. 2-4). A project combines the autonomy of the "project team" with the autonomy of the performers (with their complementary competences and tasks), self-organisation and self-control with individual motivation and enthusiasm, initiative, personal development, as well as creative cooperation with others. It becomes a "school for the development of entrepreneurial thinking" (Bröckling, 2016, p. 185, 135, 139).

This means that economic self-realisation consists of two essential features. The first concerns the organisation of management. Its vertical-hierarchical structure, characteristic of disciplinary modernity, is replaced in post-disciplinary postmodernity with its individualised, non-hierarchical and democratic forms, associated with rational self-organisation and self-monitoring. Self-control and self-evaluation constitute a "democratic panopticon", "a non-hierarchical structure of reciprocal visibility", on the basis of which "everyone observes everyone and is observed by everyone" (Bröckling, 2016, p. 159, 160). The second aspect concerns the change of the model of motivation, which has already been noted by Lyotard. If in modernity motivation was negative in its nature, i.e. it was based on external authority, pressure and coercion or commands and prohibitions, then in postmodernity this nature is positive: next to earnings or promotion, motivation is determined by the expectation of personal development and the satisfaction derived from it. Referring to motivation serves to (self)mobilise individuals and (self)optimise their effort, to stimulate their productivity, initiative and creativity for the sake of their own and the company's competitiveness: "To be able to further increase efficiency, the paradigm of discipline must give way to the paradigm of achievement, i.e. the positive schema possibility because, from a certain level of efficiency, the negativity of the prohibition acts as a blocker and prevents further growth. The positivity of potentiality is much more efficient than the negativity of obligations'' (Han, 2022, p. 29). The constant stimulation of motivation, enthusiasm and commitment is systemic and institutional in nature (guides, scientific discourses, workshops, etc.). Its premise is the self-realising belief "in the unlimited capacity of the individual to shape his life" and to develop his creative potential. It strengthens the sense of agency, the effort of self-improvement and enables constructive self-criticism in order to achieve

more. It serves mobility, flexibility and readiness to take any risk as a chance for success and meet market competitiveness. In this way, it transforms self-actualization into a compulsive requirement for continuous growth and self-optimization (Bröckling, 2016, p. 33, 153) and into a hidden, internalised compulsion to endlessly "accumulate successive achievements. For this reason, gratification will never happen" (Han, 2022, p. 64). This compulsion leads to self-exploitation (Bröckling, 2016, p. 163) obscured by a sense of self-realisation and freedom. This feeling serves only to adjust the motivation of employees to the external requirements of work, which appear to them as "flowing from their own choice" (Honneth, 2004, p. 473). The freedom of self-realisation turns out to be an "apparent freedom" hiding "the exploitation of oneself (...) much more effective than the exploitation of someone else, because it goes hand in hand with the feeling of freedom. This makes exploitation possible without power" (Han, 2022, p. 161, 160).

The illusory nature of freedom reveals the paradox of institutionalised individualization: calling for and forcing freedom, self-realisation and creativity means calling for and forcing spontaneity that cannot be ordered (Bröckling 2016, 114). This ambiguity or tension makes it impossible to "distinguish between outer appearance and inner being, objective commandment and subjective desire", duty and desire (Bröckling, 2016, p. 35, see 34, 58, 117). There is tension between the requirements of authenticity and the requirements of adaptability and mobility (see Boltanski, Chiapello 2022, p. 589-600) and, therefore, between enthusiasm and discipline, intrinsic motivation and a hetero-autonomous system of (self)control through which claims to self-actualization alienate themselves, revealing in their compulsiveness, "as though they were demands issuing from without" (Honneth, 2004, p. 472, 468). This ambiguity and fear of not meeting the norm of continuous

growth replacing a certain level of achievement and constant (self-)pressure are a source of chronic mental discomfort. In the face of the impossibility to resist, "because it is impossible to resist oneself" (Han, 2022, p. 161), they lead to mental overload, exhaustion and professional burnout manifested in the experience of emptiness and depression — as "social suffering (...) in a certain way without precedent in the history of capitalist societies" (Honneth, 2004, p. 475). As Han (2022, 84) bluntly puts it, "we optimise ourselves to death in order to function better".

The economic institutionalisation of individualization is the basis of the late-capitalist, post-disciplinary subjectivization regime based on social technologies and techniques with a "common aim is to organise life around an entrepreneurial model of behaviour" (Bröckling, 2016, p. 21), and further to shape individuals to govern themselves. Capitalism perversely implements the power of governance, which, according to Foucault (1998, 186-188), means "the exercise of power over people aimed at increasing their ability to exercise power themselves and over themselves, i.e. self-govern" (Bröckling, 2016, 122). In Foucault's mind, (self)governance was to be a way of escaping from the system of power, to serve the aestheticization of existence and creativity, influencing others through persuasion and rhetoric, which, according to Lyotard, was meant to define relations based on contractual "language games". In both cases, it was about primal creative-agonistic relationships, independent of power and economics.

The model of self-entrepreneurship using the ethos of self-realisation, along with its dual structure (enthusiasm and rational discipline), faith in infinite growth as well as the logic of gratification and achievement has spread to all areas of life in the postmodern society,

institutionally mediating the relationship of the individual to himself and to others. At the same time it abolishes the separation of "individualized privacy and seemingly institutionally separated realms" (Beck, 2002, p. 200). It starts with hedonistic consumption, in which individuals not only express their individuality through their choices and decisions that are focused on maximum hedonistic gratification, usually made under the unconscious pressure of the advertising and marketing industry, but also follow long-term strategies that postpone this gratification; Jacyno talks about "calculated consumption", similarly in the case of "new hedonism" (Jacyno, 2007, p. 209-210, 244). It seems that Giddens' "pure relations" determined, to a lesser and lesser extent, by the social context and by the free decisions of individuals, based on their emotions, preferences, etc., are exempt from this model. However, apart from the affective-expressive aspect, they contain the aspect of rational self-discipline to achieve the greatest possible and irrefutable gratification. The self-governance based on it holds the nature of hetero-autonomy mediated by advisory and expert systems, which subordinate the individual desire for authenticity to commonly shared, compulsively implemented patterns and through this "standardise the rupture with standard solutions, making a norm of divergence from the norm" (Bröckling, 2016, 115). The moment of discipline and compulsive self-control can be clearly seen in the ways of spending free time and in the fetishized care for health, subordinated to the principle of fitness and maximising achievements.

The ambiguous, institutional logic of postmodern individualization is well summed up in Beck's thesis that "individualization condemns people to external steering and external standardisation, unknown in the niches of state and family subcultures" (Beck, 2002, p. 198), and that "the very media that cause individualization, also lead to standardisation. This applies to the market,

money, law, mobility, education, etc., each time in a different way. The resulting individual positions are completely dependent on the (labour) market. They constitute, so to speak, a perfected system of dependence on the market..." (Beck, 2002, p. 196). It can be said that in both aspects of institutionalised self-actualization, combining individual motivation with hetero-self-control, we see a convergence of two currents of modern individualism distinguished by Simmel (see Simmel, 1980; Honneth, 2004, pp. 464-467), i.e. expressive individualism and autonomous individualism with the reflexive relationship of the individual towards oneself expressed in self-discipline and self-mastery, control and self-improvement. It is the latter that mediates the institutionalisation of individualization and self-realisation. Jacyno, in turn, writes about the utilitarian rationalisation of expressive self-realisation, which has its roots in the "puritan ethos" adapted by modernity (disciplining the resources of the inner life is no longer used to suppress it in favour of salvation, but to liberate and use it) (Jacyno, 2007, pp. 8-11, 52-56, also 110-111). This means that we would be dealing with a tension between "expressive individualism and utilitarian individualism" (Jacyno, 2007, p. 174). Undoubtedly, utilitarian individualism functionalized autonomy. Postmodernism itself, with its program of releasing the creative potential of individuals, is indubitably a postmodern development of expressive and self-fulfilling individualism, however assuming a decentralised subject, and in this form it became entangled in the dialectics of postmodern individualization. If in modernity this dialectic simulated individualization by referring to autonomy which, apart from expressive individualism, is also the basis of the idea of emancipation, in postmodernity it works through a regime of subjectification that uses expressive and self-realising individualism for institutionalised autonomy.

It seems that apart from the idea of self-realisation and creativity in postmodernism there are other elements conducive to its adaptive appropriation by postmodern capitalism. Let's trade two or three. Firstly, let's look at particularity which is related to the fact of existence. It is present in Lyotard's philosophy of difference with its irreducible difference and, in view of the impossibility of a universal meta-language, the untranslatability of individual language. Lyotard does not explain the rationale and possibilities of communication, even if it is persuasive, he should leave the individual in silence (see Kowalska, 2000, p. 138, 304), and such as he is in his particularity with his actual interpretations of reality. Secondly, this accusation also refers to the relativism often directed at postmodernism, associated with the legitimacy of each voice or language and through this, with arbitrariness that weakens, as in the first case, the validity of the basis for action. And finally, there's the question of the temporal structure corresponding to particularity and relativism. Postmodernism privileges the present (Welsch, 1998, p. 283), the absolutization of which weakens the relationship with the past and the future and destroys the biographical and narrative continuity of existence related to the broad socio-cultural context, as well as the ability to reflect and the possibility of acting and creating. "Now" is pure positivity that expresses the reality of existence and eliminates the negativity conditioning creative action. All three closely related moments can be found, to varying degrees, in institutionalised self-actualization practices. This is most visible in the primacy of "now" in consumption and in the operation of capital with its "will to gain time" (Lyotard, 2010, p. 211), which is one of the sources of the structural acceleration of postmodern change that locks it more and more into the circle of the present. With regard to creativity, which requires free time, this means that under the pressure of productivity and quick results, "the

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commandment of unfettered creativity undermines its own effectiveness. The greater the pressure for innovation, the shorter the life of novelty and the faster the potential for creativity is used up" (Bröckling, 2016, p. 117).

In general, it can be said that the postmodern, accelerating change does not alter anything in the structural sense but, free from emancipatory goals, remains in the circle of the same: "Growth and acceleration no longer serve to improve, but to maintain the status quo (...)" (Rosa, 2011, p. 1058). Next to self-exploitation, the inability to meet the requirements of self-fulfilment, "self-fatigue" (Ehrenberg) and the fragility of relationships and identity, arid change without purpose, and time brought back to the present are another source of suffering expressed through depression and burnout. Consequently, they lead to: 1) the inability to cope with the pressure of time, the pace of life and the related uncertainty; 2) the disappearance of a purpose that temporalises human existence and gives it unity; 3) a sense of worthlessness, lack of importance, undermining the value of commitment and the ability to act (Rosa, 2011, pp. 1054-1159). Therapy itself becomes part of the change. If, according to Beck's thesis, as a result of individualization an individual must biographically solve social and systemic problems and crises, then these problems become internalised, "privatised and psychologicalized" (Han, 2002, p. 193), that is, "they turn into psychological dispositions: into a sense of personal failure, guilt, fears, conflicts and neuroses" (Beck, 2002, p. 149, cf. 183). As a consequence, the aim of therapy is not, as in the traditional psychoanalytical model, an emancipatory and reflexive resolution of crises and conflicts, but something that obscures a critical view of social relations and alleviates symptoms that require continuous mental maintenance through pharmacological treatment instead of time and effort and thus introduces adaptation through maintaining the

ability for continuous mobilisation and self-optimization (Bröckling, 2016, p. 201). This means that postmodern therapy serves the survival and adaptation of an individual to a neoliberal society (Jacyno, 2007, pp. 254-257, also Han, 2002, p. 202-214).

Staying within the circle of the same social reality, postmodern change drew postmodernism in, taking over its ideals. These ideals do not belong to postmodernity, they are the emancipatory heritage of modernity and modernism; what ultimately made it possible to capture them, aside from the moments parallel to postmodernity and postmodernism already mentioned, is the impossibility of their "hard", rational justification, that is postmodern constructivism, which became an expression of modernity's questioning of its own foundations, and an important factor for its unleashed change. It seems that the lack of this justification, along with the equation of unity/wholeness and consensus with terror and totalitarianism, prevented postmodernists from noticing the deep socio-economic inequalities or existing emancipatory aspirations (cultural minorities) and from developing a theory corresponding to these phenomena.[9]

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[9] For the allegations against Lyotard, see (Szahaj, 2021, pp. 178-182, footnotes 243, 245, 247).

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POSTMODERNISM AND POSTMODERNITY (IN THE LIGHT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND PROCESSES OF INDIVIDUALIZATION)

Abstract

The aim of the article is to confront postmodernism understood as a philosophical doctrine, or, more broadly, a certain type of cultural awareness with postmodernity as an epoch expressing the changes of late capitalism. The relationships between postmodernism and postmodernity are analysed from a philosophical and sociological perspective by comparing the diagnoses of postmodern changes presented by sociologists and the diagnoses presented by representatives of postmodernism. In the first part, I discuss the importance of digital technologies, in which postmodernists hoped to unleash the potential of human creativity, and in the second, the postmodern processes of individualization related to the idea of self-realisation. Finally, I reach the conclusion that postmodernity has betrayed the ideas of freedom, creativity, self-realisation and solidarity proclaimed by postmodernists which, according to their hopes, postmodernity was supposed to realise.

Keywords: postmodernity, postmodernism, capitalism, digital technologies, individualisation, self-realisation.

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest skonfrontowanie postmodernizmu rozumianego jako doktryna filozoficzna, czy, szerzej, pewien typ świadomości kulturowej z ponowoczesnością jako epoką stanowiącą wyraz przemian późnego kapitalizmu. Związki między postmodernizmem i ponowoczesnością analizowane są w perspektywie filozoficzno-

socjologicznej poprzez porównanie diagnoz ponowoczesnych przemian przedstawionych przez przedstawicieli postmodernizmu i diagnoz przedstawionych przez socjologów ponowoczesności. W pierwszej części omawiam znaczenie technologii cyfrowych, w których postmoderniści pokładali nadzieję na wyzwolenie potencjału ludzkiej kreatywności, w drugim ponowoczesne procesy indywidualizacji związane z ideą samorealizacji. W konkluzji dochodzę do przekonania, że ponowoczesność sprzeniewierzyła się głoszonym przez postmodernizm ideom wolności, kreatywności, samorealizacji, solidarności.

W konkluzji wyrażam przekonanie, że ponowoczesność sprzeniewierzyła się ideom wolności, kreatywności, samorealizacji, solidarności głoszonym przez postmodernistów, które zgodnie z ich nadzieją miała ona urzeczywistnić.

Słowa kluczowe: ponowoczesność, postmodernizm, kapitalizm, technologie cyfrowe, indywidualizacja, samorealizacja.