

## POSTMODERNISM AS THE END OF SPIRITUAL CULTURE

Vlasova T.I.  
Doctor of Philosophic Sciences,  
Dnepropetrowsk National University  
of Railway Transport named after  
Academician Lazarjan

The contemporary «postmodern situation» may represent a more revolutionary time than any the Western world has ever known. The definition of postmodernism, the nature of postmodernity itself have been in the focus of scientists' attention for more than 30 years in such fields of knowledge as philosophy, sociology, literary criticism, language studies.

The weird logic of becoming postmodern is signalled by the Latin origin of «modern», («modo»), «just now». Postmodern therefore literally means «after just now». The postmodern has been endlessly described. The most famous definition comes from J. Baudrillard, for whom it is «the characteristic of a universe, where there are no more definitions possible. It is a game of definitions that matters ... . It has all been done. The extreme limit of ... possibilities has been reached. It has destroyed itself. It has deconstructed its entire universe. So all that are left are pieces. All that remains to be done is play with the pieces. Playing with the pieces – that is postmodern» [1].

Some researchers claim that «postmodernity» is the time of the sign in all those fields of knowledge that J. Derrida calls «science about man». A time when media images, modes of information, regimes of signification and the «aestheticization» of everyday life have become the main feature of modern experience. For others, it is the time of consumer cultures, and for others still, it is the time of a new hypertechnology. J.-F. Lyotard has defined the postmodern condition as «skepticism towards all metanarratives» [2, c. 7]. According to Lyotard, «grand narratives» (metanarratives) are the supposedly universal absolute, or ultimate truths that are used to legitimize various projects, scientific or political. The «grand narratives» that are in the focus of Lyotard's criticism are the narrative of the Enlightenment and the narrative of Spirit.

For the Enlightenment the aim of any cognitive attitude of man toward the world means cognition of Truth, means belief that reason and science, not religion, would advance human progress. Postmodern thinkers deny that Truth is objective, universal and does not depend on the cognitive Subject. Critiques of science from several disciplines (sociology, philosophy, anthropology and history) have attacked science for its notion of truth and rationality as well as the alleged objectivity of scientific method. All this criticism means that science is a social process, that scientific method is little short of myth, that scientific method is in fact manufactured. Moreover, as F. Jameson puts it, «in postmodern culture «culture» has become a product in its own right». The latter allows Jameson to conclude: «Postmodernism is the consumption of sheer commodification as a process» [3, c. X].

One of the first «post-artists», post-impressionist P. Sézanne said: «The view contains the Viewer» [4, c. 14]. According to postmodern logic, the production of knowledge is never «an enterprise» without some personal benefit. As J. Frow puts it, production of knowledge is always formed by the «shareholders» of that production [5]. The latter accounts for the question: «Who are the manufactures of knowledge?» What is even more significant is the production of a completely new type of «Knower». The old principle that the acquisition of knowledge is indissociable from the training of minds is becoming obsolete more and more. The relationship of the suppliers and users of knowledge to the knowledge they supply and use is now tending to assume the form already taken by the relationship of the commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce and consume. Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, knowledge ceases to be an end in itself. This change from «knower» to the «consumer» of knowledge is the cornerstone of postmodernity, and this is the real historic change which legitimizes the postmodernism.

Postmodernism which took shape in the 1970s might just have remained a European academic fad, except for the following successive developments in science that gave it real substance:

- the new information technology and its aim – global cyberspace;

- the new cosmology and its aim – The theory of Everything;
- the new progress in genetics and its aim – the Human Genome Project [3, c. 107].

Scientists claim that everything «postmodern» depends on and stems from reproduction. It is about fabricating a sort of knowledge which although it looks to be expanding and becoming accessible to a vast public on the internet, is in fact becoming industrially controlled. So, when Lyotard replaces the traditionally-trained knower with the «knower as consumer», he is not valorizing either the «new» knower or the novelties of knowledge, but he is implicitly acknowledging the omnipotence of the free market economy. The new-born consumer of knowledge is supposed to be a myth of postmodernity. His/ her habitat is Cyberia. It is worth while mentioning that this «new space» does not include the age-old function of art and literature – the pedagogical and the didactic one. The teaching function of literature and art was always stressed in classical times, postmodernism has introduced a more complex conception of the relationship between culture and pedagogy.

Everything discussed above suggests that postmodernism should be inseparable from some fundamental «mutation of the sphere of culture»: the classical sphere of culture has been destroyed, the «affirmative character of culture» (H. Marcuse) has been rejected with the transformations of the real into so many «pseudoevents». And this makes valid the famous statement: «The opposite of knowledge is not ignorance but deceit and fraud».

1. Kellner D. Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond/ Douglas Kellner. – Stanford University Press, 1990. – 246 p.
2. Lyotard J.-F. La condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir/ Jean-Francois Lyotard. – Paris, 1979. – 109 p.
3. Jameson F. Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism// Fredric Jameson. – London, New York: Verso, 2009. – 438 p.
4. Appenanesi R., Garrat C. Post-modernism. A Graphic Guide/ Richard Appenanesi, Chris Garrat. – Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd., 2007. – 189 p.

5. Frow J. Economies of Value/ John Frow// Multicultural States. – London, New York: Routledge, 1998. – P. 56-68.