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Postmodernist project in the ukrainian philosophical reflection

Annotation: The article analyzes the peculiarities of appropriation of an interdisciplinary postmodernist project in the Ukrainian philosophy and the humanities since the early nineties of the 20th c. The understanding of the reasons why this phenomenon has been treated in two ways in Eastern Europe in general, and Ukraine in particular, was deepened herein: that is both as an opportunity to accelerate the modernization process after the totalitarian past, and as a threat to civic solidarity and national revival processes that have finally escaped censorship and taboo. The three most important aspects related to the reception of postmodernism in Ukraine are highlighted and explained: the problem of terminology, the problem of civilizational conformity and the problem of ethical consciousness of a culture. The main theses and arguments of both opponents and enthusiasts of postmodern reflection are compared. It is emphasized that the bearer of each of the positions has the opportunity to professionally implement in the Ukrainian educational, research and public sectors certain methodological preferences. It is argued that the project of postmodernism in the interpretation of the Ukrainian philosophers of the older and younger generations is perceived rather in a neutral way, is not very popular and is interpreted primarily in epistemological, historiosophical and ethical dimensions.

Keywords: modernity, emancipation, symptomatological thinking, civilizational (in) conformity, ethical consciousness of a culture

Projekt postmodernizmu w ukraińskiej refleksji filozoficznej

Streszczenie: W niniejszym artykule została przeanalizowana specyfika przyswojenia interdyscyplinarnego projektu postmodernistycznego w ukraińskiej filozofii oraz sferze humanitarnej od początku lat 90. Pogłębiono rozumienie powodów, dla których w obszarze Europy Wschodniej, a zwłaszcza w Ukrainie, odebrano to zjawisko w podwójnej interpretacji: zarówno jako możliwość szybciej się modernizować po totalitarnej przeszłości, jak i zagrożenie dla solidarności obywatelskiej oraz procesów odrodzenia narodowego, które wreszcie uzyskały wolność od cenzury i tabu. Zostały wyróżnione i wyjaśnione trzy najważniejsze aspekty związane z odbiorem postmodernizmu w Ukrainie: problem związany

z terminologią, problem odpowiedniości cywilizacyjnej oraz problem świadomości etycznej kultury. Zostały porównane ze sobą główne tezy i argumenty zarówno przeciwników, jak i zwolenników refleksji postmodernistycznej. Podkreślono, że nosiciel każdej z pozycji ma możliwość profesjonalnej realizacji w ukraińskim sektorze edukacyjnym, badawczym oraz publicznym określonych preferencji metodologicznych. Zaznacza się, że projekt postmodernizmu w interpretacji ukraińskich filozofów starszego i młodszego pokolenia postrzegany jest raczej neutralnie, nie cieszy się zbyt dużą popularnością i jest interpretowany przede wszystkim w wymiarze epistemologicznym, historiozoficznym oraz etycznym.

Słowa kluczowe: modernizm, emancypacja, myślenie symptomatologiczne, (nie) odpowiedniość cywilizacyjna, świadomość etyczna kultury

Introduction

Since the early nineties of the 20th c. Ukrainian national humanitaristics has gained incomparably greater opportunities to contribute to the development of the world's intellectual and cultural space. In this case openness also meant that the local scientific and cultural environments faced a significant number of methodological and procedural problems that had been concealed or banned in the previous totalitarian decades. The ideas of postmodernism, the interdisciplinary in spirit and transnational in its origin movement were at the forefront among the latest challenges over a period of time.

The idea at the core of the postmodern plane was an open inquiry as to the limits and possibilities of freedom, and within its boundaries – the interpretation of classical foundations of the Western worldview and its historically established institutional and values' embodiment. Despite its semantic and conceptual contradictions, this relatively recently so provocative line of thought and imagination sparked the interest of academic and artistic communities, entered the medial-communicative use in many societies, influenced the public opinion and the sphere of privacy, etc. In this way it contributed to the cultural, social, political, ethical, civic and artistic emancipations of the present, in particular – although with a certain delay – in Eastern Europe.

Theoretical understanding of postmodernism in the Ukrainian academic and cultural circles was accompanied by a series of larger- and smaller-group discussions and publications. Their main concern was the consideration of civilizational viability, scientific justification and value-ethical specificity of instilling the «fashionable» concepts in the context of national understanding of the world, mentality and historical experiences.

Recently, the sharpness of spontaneous fascination or unconscious denial in the perception and, moreover, analysis of the «word that claims an idea» (Richard Rorty) has decreased. Nevertheless, the reflections on the views of supporters and opponents of the newest conceptual trend remain relevant, as far as they concern dilemmas of interrelation between freedom and responsibility, tradition and innovation, rooting and cosmopolitanism in the spheres of thought and imagination that will never be completely resolved¹. Thus, even from a formal point of view, it is appropriate to review and summarize how this global project was implemented on a local intellectual and philosophical ground.

¹ Losyk O., *Fenomen svobody i frantsuz'kij postmodernizm* [The Phenomenon of freedom and french postmodernism], Lviv 2016, pp. 75–129.

1. Civilizational (in)conformity of postmodernism

By default, the reflections on postmodernism involve an interdisciplinary approach. One can find the representatives of almost all the humanitarian disciplines among its supporters or opponents and, as expected, there are none among the representatives of the exact and natural sciences. Many seminars on postmodernist interpretations have taken place and are taking place mainly in the circles of culturologists, literary scholars, musicologists, art theorists. To a much lesser extent they are organized among historians, political scientists, religious scholars, sociologists. In this environment one can often hear the arguments of a philosophical nature and the valuable publications appear herein, thus it is possible to include them in the general philosophical reflection on the «post-» as well.

According to our observations, at least three truly seminal discussions have been held on the present issue in Ukraine over the last thirty years. They mostly date from the middle of the nineties of the 20th c. to the beginning of the 21st c., and only one of them was initiated by professional philosophers.

The first of these took place at the conference «National discourses: post-modern or post-mortem?» (Lviv, January 4–5, 1999), organized by the Center for the Humanities of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv in conjunction with the Institute for Historical Research. Unfortunately, the discussion was probably not recorded, just as the post-conference collection of papers was not published.

The second discussion, initiated by Prof. Oleksandr Mamalui, lasted intermittently for several years (1993–2010). It united the philosophical community of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, and the results of the debate are published in a two-volume edition².

The third panel discussion entitled «The situation of postmodernism in Ukraine» took place in the form of a round table meeting on September 11, 2001 (moderated by the culturologist Larysa Briukhovetska)³.

It should also be mentioned that between 2000 and 2002 the independent cultural magazine «І» (editor-in-chief – Taras Vozniak) convened several public seminars in Lviv. Among the main speakers was, in particular, the then director of the Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Prof. Myroslav Popovych.

In general, the herein mentioned before discussions did not have a significant impact on the course and analysis of the postmodern project outside the chosen professional disciplines, given at least the lack or scant circulation of printed publications, which would expand the positions of participants in these debates. However, certain ideas that were expressed by their participants are still relevant.

The ostentatious number of problematic questions concerned not so much the origin and essence of postmodernism and related phenomena as the probability of assigning this phenomenon to the national cultural consciousness, the specificity of the introduced features of novelty, the extent and limits of their impact on the

² *Kakoj modern? Filosofskie refleksii nad situaciej post/nedo/after-post/post-post... modernizma: V 2 t.* [What kind of Modern? Philosophical reflections on the situation of post / under / after-post / post-post ... of modernism: In 2 vol.], ed. L. V. Starodubtseva, vol. 1, Khar'kov 2010; vol. 2, Khar'kov 2012.

³ *Sytuatsiia postmodernizmu v Ukraini (Kruhlyj stil)* [The situation of postmodernism in Ukraine (Round table discussion)], «Kino-Teatr», 2001, nr 6, pp. 2–12.

public worldview. After all, on the one hand, the significance of the phenomenon of postmodernism for modernization processes is beyond doubt and can no longer be denied or ignored. However, on the other hand, postmodernism does not decisively form the paradigm of contemporaneity; it is only one of the fashionable images on its changing surface, that is «outside the context of its origin and existence [...] it largely loses both its strength and sense»⁴. Through this prism there exists a discrepancy between the natural inclusion of the Ukrainian culture in the European fold and the expediency of too enthusiastic, and at the same time belated absorption of all available postmodernist slogans and tendencies.

Following the ideas of Oksana Pakhlovska (the main speaker of the third discussion), we outline three most important aspects related to the reception of the postmodern project. This includes:

- the problem of terminology;
- the problem of civilizational conformity;
- the problem of «ethical consciousness of a culture»⁵.

The first problem has a general scope. As it has already been mentioned, the terminological differences are inevitable even in the environments that are friendly to this «virus» (Wolfgang Iser). Almost every Ukrainian researcher interested in the national manifestations of the phenomenon of postmodernism notes the unconditional acceptance of the conceptual framework of the Western criticism⁶. Postmodern «rhetoric» on the Slavic soil is eradicated from the longevity of socio-historical post-industrial development of Western European countries, therefore «it is no coincidence that it is interpreted here as a purely stylistic practice, as *ars narrendi* and *ars poelandi*»⁷. This factor belongs to a number of other objective factors that form an innovative methodological research base. Their apologists consider the necessity for active borrowing' and use of postmodern lexis and stylistics not just desirable, but self-evident, because without them «we will not improve, but impoverish our cognitive abilities»⁸. A great number of local postmodernists have managed to use postmodernist games with the language or historical heritage «as an effective way of creatively here and now get rid of narrative erotic extremes or senselessly expressive aggression of the so-called obscene lexis»⁹. Nevertheless, the stylistic brutalism does not indicate compliance with the postmodern linguistics and gaming nature yet, and the method and frequency of its use without a doubt leaves much to be desired¹⁰.

⁴ Il'nyts'kyj O., *Transplantatsiia postmodernizmu: sumnivyv odnogo chytacha* [Transplantation of postmodernism: doubts of one reader], «Suchasnist'», 1995, nr 10, p. 112.

⁵ This aspect will be analyzed in more detail in paragraph III.

⁶ Fizer L., *Pro povnu chy nepovnu strukturu ukrains'koi natsional'noi kul'tury* [On the complete or incomplete structure of the Ukrainian national culture], «Suchasnist'», 1989, nr 2, pp. 97-99.

⁷ *Sytuatsiia postmodernizmu...*, p. 5.

⁸ Pavlyshyn M., *Ukrains'ka kul'tura z pohliadu postmodernizmu* [Ukrainian culture from the view point of postmodernism], «Suchasnist'», 1992, nr 5, pp. 118.

⁹ Pakhl'ovs'ka O., *Ukrains'ka kul'tura u vymiri «post»: postkomunizm, postmodernizm, postvandalizm* [Ukrainian culture in the «post» dimension: post-communism, postmodernism, postvandalism], «Suchasnist'», 2003, nr 10, pp. 70-85.

¹⁰ It should be added that in the scientific, including philosophical, field the predominance of «out-of-source knowledge», the practice of «writing in Aesopian language», «tolerance for kitsch» become the cornerstones of negative permissiveness, devalue objective evidentiality and knowledge as such.

However, terminological confusion are only a side effect and a derivative consequence of a much more serious intention, which accounts for the renewal of traditions, replacement of the paradigms of cultural (self)consciousness, viability of the authentic in difficult conditions of the multidimensional globalization of knowledge, values, choices. It underlies the second problem singled out by O. Pakhlovska.

As far back as the first half of the nineties of the 20th c., a thesis on the inappropriateness of accepting the project of postmodernism in the Ukrainian reality was formulated. One of the ways which helps to give reasons for it emphasizes Ukraine's civilizational tardiness: «In fact, Ukraine has existed and still exists outside the technological, intellectual, and cultural phenomena that contributed to the emergence of postmodernism. Thus, how is it possible for the Ukrainian culture to become a postmodern one?»¹¹. It is clear that this formulation is based on the interpretation of the famous statement of the founder of philosophical postmodernism Jean-François Lyotard about the interdependence of the emergence of postmodernism, primarily in the most developed Western countries. The Ukrainian 'picture of the world' in this perspective is perceived as a verdict, and consideration of the national history of ideas in the common direction of European tendencies is considered unjustified, because allegedly there exists a growing danger of further obscuration of the authentic development and in general – a manifestation of inferiority complex as to the dominant intellectual and cultural centers.

These arguments unfairly alienate the modern national cultural consciousness from this contemporary civilizational phenomenon only in view of the frequent historical interruption of local progressive development. It should also be mentioned that the imitation repetitions are widely used «in a truly postmodern environment, which has already foreseen and experienced everything»¹². Therefore, the thesis on the secondary nature of the national form of postmodernism on a global scale is rather an echo of the hierarchical approach of Modern. Moreover, even from a postmodernist point of view, the ability to be satisfied not so much with the discoveries as with the trophies, that is with the repetition and transfusion of already expressed forms in conditions of multiple simulacra of cosmopolitan rhizome, testifies to truly postmodern – peaceful equal and optional – discursiveness.

Some Ukrainian intellectuals, on the contrary, view postmodernism as «a huge chance of self-awareness of ourselves in our contemporaneity»¹³. Thus, Tamara Hundorova does not deny the danger of the «borderline» of postmodern thinking, as well as its illusory nature. However, «in a situation of loss of faith in the inevitable «betterness» she considers such a worldview the most appropriate alternative to the «word-weapon» (Lesya Ukrainka), so that «it neither judges, nor kills, and even saves from what has already happened»¹⁴.

Therefore, there is a reason to state that the passion for game reconstructions in the field of intellectual reflection «reflects the state of minds of the lost and the intimidated», who warm up with freedom and responsibility of thought [Dashkevych Ya., *Postmodernizm ta ukrains'ka istorychna nauka* [Postmodernism and Ukrainian historical studies], [In:] «...Uchy nelozhnymy ustamy skazaty pravdu»: *istorychna eseistyka* [Learn to tell the truth with honest lips': historical essays], ed. P. Sokhan, Lviv 2011, pp. 329–346].

¹¹ Il'nyts'kyj O., *Transplantatsiia postmodernizmu...*, p. 113.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.114.

¹³ *Sytuatsiia postmodernizmu...*, p. 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10–11.

Postmodernism in the interpretation of T. Hundorova is intended for 'non-aggressive solution of this or that dualism, opposition' and other vestiges of the past¹⁵. They have passed into the crisis-ridden contemporaneity as an unnecessary legacy of the patriarchal tradition and other narratives that keep the postcolonial syndrome in the Ukrainian reality. This is a world of ironic denial of sameness, in which «even hope itself becomes irrelevant». Infinity of the interpretation process replaces the humanistic vulnerability and the need to be guided by the usual ethical and aesthetic evaluations, which are the indicators of civilizational maturity at the personal and collective levels. The repetition and imaginativeness of all «the senses and needs of the «Ego» leads, of course, to the paradox. For T. Hundorova, this is a desirable cathartic state, which «serves to help each of us realize in the post-socialist and postcolonial times our own fictitiousness, to understand ourselves as a «question mark», a gap that exists between what we are for others, and those who we are in ourselves». She is sure: «Yes, when reading ourselves, our history, our statehood, we will see that postmodernism is ourselves...»¹⁶.

In the light of these perspectives, the desire to «inscribe» one's own national tradition in postmodernism 'contributes to the destruction of the canon – albeit «under a simplified procedure» (Yaroslav Polishchuk) according to which the previous legacy is equaled to that of a low-value with regard to the modern tastes. The Ukrainian postmodernist asserted their «contemporaneity» through «dictatorial regulations» regarding duties, obligations, and requirements to be non-traditional. Whatever differed from them or belonged to the classics was presumably interpreted as unnecessary and uninteresting.

In fact this reflects the hidden imperativeness of supposedly playful and semi-serious postmodernism. The duality of this project led to the struggle to expand the boundaries of freedom to uncontrolled relativism, and at the same time it was «dogmatic, orthodox, imperative and completely intolerant of all other versions of the worldview»¹⁷. This deep trauma of the perception and understanding of today's reality in general that is caused by the totalitarian experiences, equates the beliefs and the so-called realists, and those who unconditionally admire the new criteria of freedom and consider them better only because they are different from the previous ones. In our opinion, such an approach testifies first and foremost about the postcolonial self- (and, perhaps, sub-) conscious of its representatives and bearers. Thus by criticizing the processes of national revival and calling for arbitrary ersatz experiments on the past, they testify to the almost unreachable possibility of ever overcoming the worldview and mental position of a victim doomed by their own untreatable disability to permanent backwardness, that is, permanent non-contemporaneity.

Finally, on the basis of the evaluation of the above mentioned points of view, we tend to believe that the project of postmodernism, taking into account all the controversies, is civilizationally appropriate to the national context. However, its assignment is more reminiscent of the simple aping and nurtures a high identification

¹⁵ Hundorova T., *Postmodernists'ka fiktsiia Andrukhovycha z postkolonial'nym znakom pyttannia* [Postmodernist fiction of Andrukhovych with a postcolonial question mark], «Suchasnist'», 1993, nr 9, p. 80.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁷ *Sytuatsiia postmodernizmu...*, p. 12.

secondariness and inferiority. Therefore, postmodernist reflection and practice remain suitable «with great correlations» (Vitalij Ponomarov).

2. Inspirations of postmodernism: the historiosophical dimension

The reflections of the philosophical community of Ukraine on the project of postmodernism to a greater or lesser extent present the mentioned above problems of terminological, as well as conceptual and worldview nature. The epistemological¹⁸, historiosophical, socio-philosophical¹⁹, semiotic²⁰ and ethical-axiological dimensions of one of the newest and most radical manifestations of the Western emancipation of thought and imagination are being comprehended and discussed herein.

To our point of view, the thematic bibliography predominantly includes the general overview of the characteristic components of postmodernism (as a field of science, culture and sociality) and postmodernity (as a civilizational and paradigmatic «state» of the last century and a half), acquaintance with and commenting on the concepts expressed by the leading representatives of the postmodern theory and practice²¹.

When choosing among the various ideas known to us, we propose to pay particular attention to two views presented by the Ukrainian scholars, namely Oleh Khoma and Viktor Malakhov. From the very beginning postmodernism was not (and has not become) a priority area of research for them, but at a certain stage it was chosen as a subject for deeper analysis as a factor indirectly related to the sphere of their fundamental research interests (for the first author it is history of philosophy, while for the second one – history of ideas and ethics).

In the monograph *Truth and evidence: symptomatological thinking in modern philosophy* (1998) Khoma set himself the task of interpreting and interconnecting the semantic experiences of those «contemporaneities» that have shaped the Western philosophical tradition in recent centuries. He placed special emphasis on the Modern. In its multifaceted – externally unique and internally diverse – heritage, the researcher noticed a number of non-standard philosophical interpretations, which later became indirect sources of inspiration for the concepts of already Postmodern (which, as we know, is often contrasted with the previous one).

Obviously, such approaches and perspectives are not unique in the European scientific and philosophical thought²². Nevertheless, Khoma is probably one of the first

¹⁸ *Filosofs'ki dyskursy ratsional'nosti* [*Philosophical discourses of rationality*], ed. Liakh V. V., Kyiv 2010.

¹⁹ *Postmodern: pereotsinka tsinnostej: Zbirnyk naukovykh prats'* [*Postmodern: reevaluation of values: A collection of scientific papers*], Vinnytsia 2001; *Sotsiokul'turni ta teoretychni zasady filosofii postmodernu* [*Sociocultural and theoretical foundations of postmodern philosophy*], ed. Liakh V. V., Kyiv 2017.

²⁰ Josypenko O. M., *Vid movy filosofii do filosofii movy: problema movy u frantsuz'kij filosofii druhoi polovyny XX – pochatku XX stolit'* [*From the language of philosophy to the philosophy of language: the problem of language in the French philosophy of the second half of the 20th – early 21st centuries*], Kyiv 2012.

²¹ Kutsepal S. V., *Frantsuz'ka filosofii druhoi polovyny XX stolittia: dyskurs iz prefiksom «post-»* [*French philosophy of the second half of the 20th century: a discourse with the prefix «post-»*], Kyiv 2004; Luk'ianets' V. S., Sobol' O. M. *Filosofs'kij postmodern: Navchal'nyj posibnyk dlia vykladachiv, aspirantiv, studentiv vuziv, iaki spetsializuiut'sia v haluzi humanitarnykh dystsyplin* [*Philosophical postmodern: A textbook for teachers, postgraduate students, university students specializing in the humanities*], Kyiv 1998; Yaroshovets' V. I. *Istoriia filosofii: vid strukturalizmu do postmodernizmu* [*History of philosophy: from structuralism to postmodernism*], Kyiv 2004.

²² For instance, as based on our observations, O. Khoma expresses the ideas that are close to the views presented by Wolfgang Iser, although, judging from the extensive bibliography provided, at

Ukrainian professional philosophers to formulate and set himself a research challenge in an interdisciplinary perspective «to recreate the «scene» in which the process of modern philosophizing is being unfolded, its limits and characteristic features», as the author himself writes in the preface²³. We consider it to be particularly valuable that these arguments were expressed not by an enthusiastic supporter or belated defender of postmodernism in Ukraine, but by the scholar who relied primarily on (re)reading of historical philosophical sources and the thesis that «thinking of any culture can be described as fundamentally unresolved conflict of evidence»²⁴.

This famous contemporary connoisseur and translator of French classics of the 16th – 17th centuries seeks to understand the shaping of a «model of modern thinking» inseparably from the cultural and historical background. Khoma reveals the polyphony of philosophical texts of the beginnings of Modern (primarily the work of B. Pascal) in terms of their rootedness in the culture of the time. In its meta-narrative depths, pluralistic aspects of postmodern philosophizing and the postmodernist «situation» in general were born, moreover «not covertly, but overtly».

In order to grasp and understand the «spirit» of modernization of Western thinking, particularly in the light of philosophical reflections, it is important to avoid both the stabilization and destruction of its structures during all the periods. According to the researcher, the way out of the trite schematic trap of the Modern/Postmodern opposition is to «logically recognize» the key significance of the «set of conditions» that all worldview paradigms have created within their borders.

Khoma proves the uninsulated complementarity of each «local practice» that formed the worldview of Modern in the New Age. For him, this means the beginning of a new type of philosophizing, which he calls «symptomatological». It is largely deprived of the «universalism of its claims», undermines the metaphysical postulates of the «correct» description of objective reality and focuses «not on the direct result of the cognitive process», but primarily on the description, reconstruction, arrangement of «hidden springs» of thought and practical possibilities which made it possible to «obtain certain types of knowledge»²⁵.

The philosopher introduces another term – «thinking strategies», that he uses to name three complementary and simultaneous tendencies: skeptical, dogmatic and symptomatological. They can be applied when characterizing the progress of Western thinking from the 17th to 20th centuries. They exist on an equal footing as a set of responses («probable perspectives») to the overdue demands of this or that era, and are limited exclusively to the «field of problems» outlined by the current paradigm. Thinking strategies appear as well-known classical theories, as well as their individual components or even alternatives. Khoma emphasizes that it is only due to their heterogeneous set that the «thinking of the epoch» is being formed.

The elements of thinking strategies do not stand still, waiting to spread or fading after the triumph of recognition. They creatively dialogue with each other, taking the «external

the time when he was writing the book he was familiar with only one short article by the famous German colleague on the contradictions of the word «postmodernism».

²³ Khoma O. *Istina i ochevidnost': simptomatologicheskoe myshlenie v filosofii moderna* [Truth and obviousness: symptomatological thinking in modern philosophy], Vinnytsia 1998, p. 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 186–188.

form of the conflict of not reduced to each other evidence»²⁶. That is, philosophizing of Modern or Postmodern can be considered «modern» only if it is filled with internal discussions, numerous manifestations of competing thinking strategies. The «simple linear hierarchy» of doctrines in the history of ideas simplifies the understanding of their origins and introduces an unfair assessment of the role of each of them. Indeed, if, for example, the philosophy of Modern was the «carrier» of both high-profile enlightenment meta-narratives and oppositional positions on them, then why «should it be defined only in relation to the former? Wouldn't it be an unjustified restriction of its essence?»²⁷.

The attempts to 'reconstruct' the thinking strategies of the 17th – 20th centuries, and with their help the sources of the postmodern understanding of freedom, will be useful only as researches «from the standpoint of the philosophy of culture» if «to consider the affiliation of philosophical ideas [...] in its conditionality by a certain architectonics of culture», rather than its selected components²⁸. The symptomatological thinking that is based on pluralism combines the Western experience of freedom into the tradition with rich internal diversity dependent «not so much on direct ideological heritage [...] as on the common cultural and ontological characteristics of the thinking field» of the European culture and its main tendencies: from the New Age to the present, from modernity to postmodernity²⁹. From this point of view, the ideas of Descartes and Pascal appear as expressions of separate thinking strategies (respectively, dogmatic and symptomatological), which dispute with the third one, common to Modernity – the skeptical strategy³⁰. The comparative analysis of the guidelines of radical pluralism in the works of Nietzsche and the postmodernists Deleuze and Guattari³¹ becomes meaningful. Non «modern» in its essence (as such that deny pluralism) schools of modern thought – Marxism or Freudianism – become a sample of dogmatic symptomatology already in the 20th century.

3. Ethical controversies of being postmodern-like

Viktor Malakhov, the next Ukrainian philosopher whom we mention herein, reflects on postmodernism in terms of ethics. He wrote an essay-remark entitled *Why*

²⁶ Ibid., p. 153.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 153.

³⁰ Of course, Pascal can be classified as the so-called postmodernists *avant la lettre* (Wolfgang Iser) with certain reservations. Neither Lyotard, nor other creators of postmodern tendencies refer to his views as such that inspired them for their own concepts. At the same time, this thinker gave «very specific [...] answers to all the main questions» of his epoch, but was formed precisely in the atmosphere where dogmatics and skepticism were intertwined with benefit [Ibid., p. 139]. Pascal's «unresolved» interpretation asserted the antinomy of human nature and denied the existence of an absolute position that would objectively express the «infinite» truth, regulated social and cultural contradictions, or established the criteria of reasonableness, justice, etc. It is teleologically oriented towards and at the same time reflects the pluralistic and not reduced to theological searches of a thinking and religious person, who interprets while exploring. Therefore, Pascal's reflection was characterized by interdisciplinary thinking and vulnerability to differences. These features became the basis for the emergence of interesting researches on the indirect succession of his views in the activities of such outstanding creators of modern «contemporaneity» as de Sade, Nietzsche, Foucault and the poststructuralist movements in general [Ibid., p. 16].

³¹ Ibid., p. 162–167.

am I not a postmodernist? (1997). The author himself notes that he reacts critically not to the postmodern worldview as a whole, but to the postmodernist project itself.

As such, the postmodern reflection, according to Malakhov, carries the synergetic potential of the «creative forces of the European humanity» from its conceptual origins. It is imbued with «spiritual jollity» and «seductive vivacity» to modernize reality, although it is still difficult to find a useful, constructive embodiment for them. Instead, the outwardly attractive «-ism» simultaneously contains destructive – both in the nearest future and in the long term – consequences for the human existence. Its semantic component focuses on the «hedonistic reductionism» of all meanings of life and the «ironically playful distancing from the immediate meanings of culture»³². What does Malakhov mean?

The post-project is viewed negatively in the ethical respect as in the result of its practice a number of ideas that are destructive to the authentic existence are introduced and justified. For the Ukrainian ethicist, human destiny is inextricably linked with the difficulty of being, in which suffering prevents the trivialization of existence. By «suffering» Malakhov understands the living, direct reality of the experiences of each individual in the dilemmas of his/her formation as a person, as well as the spiritual and moral participation in the experience of the formation of the existence of other people around. Such processes cannot do without tragic, unpleasant and terrible accompaniments, because only by accepting and retaining their existence can we be convinced of the integrity of our «I» and the solidary «We». Postmodernism seeks to deprive a person of all this, promising them not an ethical, but rather an aesthetic existence, filled with ease, arbitrariness, diversity and variability of choice.

Malakhov introduces the formulation of «aestheticized kind of humility» of a modern person, who in order to avoid any value challenges in his/her existence, emasculates its meaningfulness from rootedness, problematic character, is ready to endlessly «discuss texts, «writing» and not the existence behind them»³³. Human existence appears alienated from the need to constantly actualize the question about its fundamental foundations and is, therefore, doomed to the spiritual loneliness of its representative.

The postmodern project proposes to live in a world of gaps and emptiness, without traditions and values, roots and commitments, which in turn weakens the significance of the efforts by which a person constitutes his/her agency and subjectivity. The relativization of oneself and the environment fills the existence with so many spontaneous simulacra and simulations in which the danger of new disguised authoritarianisms lurks. What is more, uncritical and conciliatory in advance (often identical to indifferent) attitude to all self-expressions revives «that anti-human, disgust for which actually caused postmodernism to life»³⁴, that is enables and authorizes post-modern forms of totalitarianism, bigotry, inhumanity, dictatorship.

Malakhov's ideas find their supporters. Thus, Oksana Pakhlovska, analyzing the phenomenon of postmodernism, separately outlines its influence on the «ethical

³² Malakhov V., *Chomu ia ne postmodernist?* [*Why am I not a postmodernist?*], «Dukh i Litera», 1997, nr 1-2, pp. 378-379.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

consciousness of a culture». In the reflections on the local appropriations of a really multifaceted project, this perspective – in comparison with the problems of terminology and civilizational (in)conformity considered in the second paragraph – appears to be the most important one.

The excess of ill-conceived adaptations of postmodernism in the Ukrainian science and the reality has largely «disoriented, if not distorted» its vision. «The climate in which the uncontrolled verbal elements prevail, self-confident neo-rhetoric and the subconscious cult of feeble imitation» multiplies the uncritical perception of this component of the non-classical worldview and carries the danger of its next kneading («non-meeting») of Ukraine with the European ethos of free choice and equality»³⁵.

Destructiveness lies in the irresponsible, according to Pakhlovska, destruction of the sprouts of common values of the still shaky civic identity of the young state. Postmodernist methodology imposes a collage of interpretations on a scientific basis distorted by ideological sterilization. Dissent and paralogy should be the main background of the story «unwritten, unfinished, or falsified, not objectified in external perception, not integrated into the appropriate context»³⁶. «Cloning without rules» is accompanied by the use of postmodern components for the supposed liberation and overcoming of a number of inherited and acquired stereotypes, traumas and all possible limitations on the way to such a desirable and necessary self-realization. However, how can one rewrite or reconstruct what has only recently, after centuries of totalitarian oppression and purges, begun to unite in the need for solidary self-conscious freedom?

The scholar is convinced that surrogates of postmodernist concepts in Ukraine (and Eastern Europe in general) carry the risk of imposing new cults and alienations, the painful consequences of which are increasingly felt by the secularized Western reality. The democratic countries of the European West have already acknowledged the «individualistic fragmentation of civil society» caused by the postmodern practices. The European East faces equally negative «individualistic fragmentation of post-totalitarian society» under the influence of the same tendencies³⁷. In the first case we are talking about the consequences of emancipation in its current non-classical forms. Intellectual, creative and social experiments towards the liberation of «freedom from ethics» are undoubtedly crisis-based, however they are rooted in a strong historical foundation of European principles of freedom. In the second case, we are dealing with the «import» of already discernibly outdated postmodern «illusions» on ideologically depleted native soil, which still needs to appropriate the Western «experience of constant construction and constant protection of the ethics of this freedom»³⁸.

In the Slavic context, this manifestation of Western emancipation, thanks to local volunteers, simulates itself, «dooming Ukraine to an anachronistic and anachronizing

³⁵ Pakhl'ovs'ka O., *Ukrains'ka kul'tura u vymiri «post»...*, p. 77. Indeed, there are many intellectual sybarites among the defenders of postmodernism, 'people who hone certain authorial strategies' by imposing them on unusual contexts (Oleksandr Ivashyna). Seeking a 'comfortable life', they use the 'situation' itself as a means, a 'comfortable toy' (Vadym Skurativskyj) to increase the chaos and indifference in the ideological and living space of the civilization, which owes its two-thousand-year existence to the continuous desire for freedom.

³⁶ *Sytuatsiia postmodernizmu...*, p. 6.

³⁷ Pakhl'ovs'ka O., *Ukrains'ka kul'tura u vymiri «post»...*, p. 82.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

stay in the «post» dimension»³⁹. The spirit of postmodern freedom in the conditions of post-totalitarian cultural prostration alienates those who seek to embody it from the realities of the present and authentic future. The only thing it achieves is the eradication from the national full-fledged self-awareness. Therefore, the postmodern «situation» in Ukraine for O. Pakhlovska is an example of colonial behavior, which instead of the dreamed freedom of self-expression accelerates the «vandalism of post-totalitarian society»⁴⁰.

Conclusion

The controversy and speculation caused by postmodernism are typical of the intellectual circles of many countries. With all its internal and external contradictions, this *enfant terrible* was, in general, appropriated by the Western science and culture and within their boundaries – by the Ukrainian as well.

In the Eastern European area, for a long time by the force of geopolitics and ideological blockades separated from the synchronous processes of Western emancipation, the postmodernist approach is accompanied by the danger of excessive depletion of the national-civic ethos. Every national science, culture and worldview is looking for an adequate formula for how to revive, reconstruct and preserve the heritage of the past and at the same time meet the modernization demands of the present. Accordingly, the postmodernist theses on fragmentation, bricolage, rhizomatism, game, and relativity are often perceived as untimely or even unnecessary in establishing a common space of freedom and national revival, particularly in philosophical and ethical coordinates.

This situation is typical for the Ukrainian context as well. Three decades of the presence of postmodernism in the Ukrainian reality leave the problem of its functional and applied effectiveness open, namely: to become a means of «destroying those totalitarian forms of thinking that give us hope that the totalitarian practice caused by these forms will never happen again»⁴¹.

The experience of postmodernist philosophical ideas expressed by the Ukrainian authors fits perfectly into the experiences of other national intellectual traditions. It is likely that in this context few of the national centers in Europe, except for the French inspirers of «post-/-ism», were characterized by some specific originality. Topical discussions about postmodernism are club in their nature and have a rather limited scope. In the theoretical and methodological aspect, the analysis of postmodernist concepts by the Ukrainian philosophers of the older and younger generations, in general, corresponds to similar arguments that exist in the intellectual environments of the Western world, but with a clear advantage rather than a neutral interpretation. Obviously, a new philosophical discussion between his supporters and opponents in the light of the latest challenges of modern times would be appropriate. Nevertheless, the lack of demand can also be viewed as evidence of the importance of the post- project, at least in the academic community.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 76.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 84.

⁴¹ *Sytuatsiia postmodernizmu...*, p. 9.

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