

DEFINING THE POST-MODERN

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Today the word "postmodernism" has become so fashionable and widespread that it is applied to almost each area of human life. And at the same time, we are faced with a paradoxical situation where the clear definition of this term is more or less absent.

Indeed, the multifaceted nature of postmodernism has gone from trying to go beyond modernity, criticizing its foundations to the proclamation of a new historical state and its awareness. A huge number of interpretations of the essence, meaning, and also definitions of post-modernism have been caused by its nature.

Obviously, on the one hand, postmodernism is a multifaceted intellectual movement expressing a special view of the world, a special mentality reflecting the profound changes that have occurred in cultural and social life in the second half of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries. On the other hand, postmodernism does not represent a single theory or a single concept but rather a variety of different approaches and visions related to different theoretical directions, as well as the new methods of studying the reality.

Now, it is more interesting and relevant to reflect back to the last century's comprehension concepts of their time that it has ever been before. A number of these concepts described culture as "post-modern", and the society as "post-industrial".

At the end of the last century, Dick Hebdige wrote that "the success of the term postmodernism ... has generated its own problems. It becomes more and more difficult as the 1980s wear on to specify exactly what it is that "postmodernism" is supposed to refer to as the term gets stretched in all directions across different debates, different disciplinary and discursive boundaries, as different factions seek to make it their own, using it to designate a plethora of incommensurable objects, tendencies, emergencies» [1, p.28].

Postmodernism arose as an intellectual movement. It was not called in order to comprehend only economic but also political and cultural problems. Although, the elements of a new ideology have been developed in various areas of European culture since the beginning of the 20th century, postmodernism emerged as a notable social phenomenon, when the sphere of culture claimed to be not only a special but also a dominant position among other social spheres.

The main distinguishing feature of postmodernism is the initial orientation, where any general theories that claim to be the only true knowledge of reality cannot describe the world as a whole. Postmodernism is not a separate movement in literature, architecture, visual arts, theater, philosophy, science, sociology, etc. It is a general expression of the spirit of the times, the intellectual pulse of an era that is called postmodern. Usually researchers tend to distinguish between the two concepts. "Postmodern" refers to the period of time that comes after modern. The historical framework of this period is determined by different thinkers either from the 20s or from the 60s of the last century. Sometimes it goes into the second half of the 19th century. "Postmodernism" means self-awareness of culture at a historical stage.

It is common to find another widely used term "postmodernity", which means a certain period in social evolution or a doctrine aimed to study social differences. This is the difference between "postmodernity" and "postmodernism". The last term focuses on cultural issues while the former one focuses on social contradictions and changes. However, in the early nineties of the last century, these concepts began to be used interchangeably. Although some theorists of postmodernism believe that the concept of "postmodernity" contains a reaction to the era of modernity and modernization. Under the last term, they increasingly began to denote a complex process that leads to the development of a new social structure and its complication. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "modernization" as the economic and technological development of an industrial, capitalist society. Whereby "modernization" is considered as the main characteristic of modernity [2].

As Margaret A. Rose notes in her book "The Post-Modern and the Post-Industrial" [3] (Cambridge University Press, 1996), the term post-modern is a word which has so far been used by a variety of thinkers on the basis of several different understandings of both the concept of the modern and the meaning of the prefix. The prefix "post" shows a connection with the content of the preceding concept. Though, some

understand this connection either as a kind of denial, overcoming or disconnecting with the previous state. While others interpret the prefix as a continuation of development, transition to a new qualitative level.

Difficulties in determining the meaning of postmodernism are also caused by many interpretations of modernism and modernity. Many researchers however agree with the definition of "Modern" from the Oxford English Dictionary: "The end of the Fifteenth century was universally recognized as the starting point ... of Modern, a period which essential characteristics are different from the Middle Ages. Modern means the present, the present time [4]. Under the term "modernism" some understand the ideology of modernity or the so-called project of modern, which was expressed in the philosophy of Rationalism and reached its peak in the Enlightening ideals of freedom, equality and faith in the progress of a rational society. Others out a different meaning in this concept For example, it is functionalism in architecture, abstractionism in art or literary and artistic movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Dictionary gives the following definition: "Post-modern, also post-Modern. Next to or later than "modern" in particular in art and especially in architecture. It applies to the movement against what is denoted by the word "modern". (Oxford English Dictionary, 2d edn, 1989) The Dictionary also notes various problems associated with a large number of definitions of postmodernism. First of all, it is emphasized that the word "post-modern" does not always have to be interpreted as something that follows modern. Since it can be before of contemporary to modern. In case of architecture, referencing postmodern theoretician Charles Jenks, it is unacceptable to consider postmodernism only as a simple reaction against modernity.

To confirm this idea, the Dictionary refers to Joseph Hudnut, who used the term "post-Modern" in 1945 as applied to architecture. He believed that the postmodern architecture is nothing more than mass-produced, fabricated buildings. In his article "The Post-Modern House" [5]. Hudnut described new buildings embodying the miracle of technology, science and the collective-industrial scheme of life, devoid of any sentimentality, fantasy or whim. He believed that the nature of the era, when the world became socialized, mechanized and standardized should inevitably be reflected in the homes of people living in this era. Hudnut gives a description of modern architecture, while not using the term "post-modern" as a better alternative to modern. Today many theorists of postmodern architecture consider his concept to be ultra-modernist rather than post-modernist.

Another understanding of postmodernism is given by Arnold Toynbee in his "Study of History" [6]. Particularly in post-war publications, where he gives an analysis of the urban working class emergence. The term "Modern" is used by him to describe the middle classes of Western society. Toynbee believed that the new page of Western history of the late 15th - early 16th centuries was opened by the middle class (those whom we call today the bourgeoisie), which was competent and numerous enough to become a dominant element in the life of the society, which from that moment began to be called modernist for the next four centuries. By the end of the 19th - beginning of the 20th centuries, the middle class has become the most prominent and advanced part of the whole Western world. Western culture of Modern is a phase of the Western cultural development in general. It is distinguished by the domination of the middle class, covering the period before the arrival of the working urban class. During the Modern era in the Western history, the ability to become Western was directly proportional to the ability to adapt to the style of the Western middle class.

Later Toynbee noted that the post-Modern era is not only distinguished by the emergence of a new working class in the West, but also by the rise and determination of other nations, the emergence of their proletariat and the simultaneous emergence of "post-Christian" religious cults and science. Using the idea of Oswald Spengler about the inevitable decline of the West, Toynbee speaks of the end of Western domination, Christian culture and individualism. Although, he rather shares an optimistic view of the future unlike Spengler's pessimistic one.

Toynbee examines two existing points of view on the essence of post-Modern. The first view holds that post-Modern goes after Modern and brings with it both new tragedies and new achievements. Another one is a pessimistic view of the Western history, which is coming to its inevitable end. Toynbee evaluates both points of view as subjective and egocentric. Since the first and the second believe that further improvement in history is impossible. Moreover, history just does not need them. They either say that this period was as good as it could had been or argue that everything was so bad that nothing new might had been arisen. Toynbee describes them as "rationalizing feelings that are actually irrationally subjective". According to Toynbee, these views and theories, resonating in the society testify that humanity has lost control of its destinies. They signify a social disease that is a consequence of moral degradation.

Another example of the term "postmodernism" usage is Wright Mills's work "The Sociological Imagination" [7]. Mills uses it to describe a new so-called "fourth era", which is following the modern era. He characterizes the "fourth era" as the era of socialism and liberalism generated by the Enlightenment. Moreover, both socialism and liberalism were practically untenable as attempts to adequately explain the

world. The ideas of freedom and reason have become controversial, as increasing rationality does not imply the rise of the mind.

For a more complete understanding of the term "postmodernism", there are references in relation to the new style in literature, called the postmodern style. For example, Michael Koehler in his article "Postmodernism" [8] provides a historical overview of the use of the term "post-modern". In his research, he considers Federico de Onis (1934), Dudley Fitts (1942), Charles Olson (1960), Leslie Fiedler (1965), John Perreault (1968), and Ihab Hassan (1971).

Koehler writes that de Onis dates modernism from 1896 to 1905 followed by two phases: "postmodernism" from 1905 to 1914 and "ultramodernism" from 1914 to 1932. The first phase is defined by him as a reaction to the "excesses" of modernism, and the second as an attempt to expand the search for modernism of poetic innovation and freedom. De Onis uses the term "postmodernism" to describe the works of Spanish and Latin American poets, performed in a new style.

D. Fitts in his work "The Anthology of Modern Latin American poetry" [9] also uses the word "post-modernism", analyzing the works of Enrique Gonzalez Martinez. From his point of view, the Mexican poet differs from the others, by force, clarity, accuracy and intellectualism. Fitts called his work the Manifesto of postmodernism.

Koehler notes in his review that there is still so-called agreement what to call "post-modern". Among the main reasons, he calls the double meaning of the concept of modernity. He considers that the word "modern" can be used as "die Neuzeit" which means "new age" or "new era". Although it is usually translated as "modern time" or "New time". It can imply a period of history starting from the European Renaissance or the comparatively modern period from 1900, when the Cultural Studies concepts of modernism began to emerge. Likewise, this concept can be divided into several different periods and movements. For example, it can start with symbolism and finish with surrealism.

Koehler argues that Toynbee and Olson created confusion by applying the word "Post-Modern" to the period, when modernism was already born and developed. For example, he criticizes Toynbee's position regarding his understanding of post-Modern as the time of a new urban working class emergence.

Koehler also analyzes theories that identify modernity with modernism. He provides an example of Irving Howe and Harry Levin, who believe that the end of the modern period is associated with the completion of the Second World War. Koehler argues that the 50s were marked by a reaction to the extremes of modernist formalism and a return to realism. It was not so obvious in the more avant-garde 60s, which, in turn, can more likely be called "ultra-modern". Whereby he describes the 50s as post-modern.

Koehler considers another point of view that belongs to Leslie Fiedler and Ihab Hassan. On the contrary, they affirm "postmodern sensuality". According to their view, the 50s are only an early phase of postmodernity. For Koehler, this approach appears to be a rebellion against the canonization of classical modernism, which distinguishes the "aesthetic background" of alternative modern traditions such as Dada and surrealism. However, as Koehler notes, if "post" and "postmodern" not only hint at a temporary relationship but also indicate a break with the previous style, then this approach leads to an internal contradiction. He writes: "Postmodernism breaks only with the conventions of the so-called classical modernism but not with its alternative traditions" [10, p.56].

Although the point of view that the term "postmodern" does not imply complete break with modernity or "postmodernism" with "modernism" is controversial. Koehler concludes that the former should be considered as late modernism, and not as postmodern. Clearly, the disputes arise again regarding what to call the "late" or "post" modern. According to Koehler, postmodernism begins only after 70s, while the period from 1945 to 1970 should be called "late modern".

Despite the fact that Koehler often does not share such concepts like "postmodernism", "postmodernity" and "postmodernism", his work is recognized by many authors as one of the first systematic attempts to describe the history of the emergence and use of the term postmodernism.

One of the main differences between modern theories of postmodernism and its earliest predecessors is the first appeal to the concept of post-industrial society, which was formed in the last three decades of the twentieth century. This concept describes certain changes that have occurred in the field of technology, scientific knowledge and the nature of labor. In other words, the concept of a post-industrial society is a concept of a modern society, that is, a computerized and informational, so-called "knowledge society". It should be noted that the history of this theory also includes a lot of debate about what is information or knowledge, what is the nature of the relationship of post-industrial to industrial society, etc.

So, a historical review of the concept of postmodernism shows its vastness, versatility and eclecticism, which creates certain difficulties in its interpretation. It is clear that postmodernism is not a separate movement in philosophy, literature, architecture, economic or political theory. It means a general expression of the worldview of a certain era.

The terms “postmodern” and “postmodernism” did not immediately acquire their current semantic meaning. Until the eighties of the last century, they designated individual cultural phenomena and events but not the worldview of the era as a whole. For the first time, the status of the philosophical concept of “postmodernism” was obtained on the basis of generalizations of French poststructuralism and American deconstructivism, which some researchers call the real ideology of postmodernism. Philosophical postmodernism immediately began to claim both the role of the general theory of modern art as a whole and the most adequate concept of special postmodern sensitivity as a specific postmodern mentality. As a result postmodernism began to be conceptualized as an expression of the spirit of the times in all spheres of human activity: art, sociology, science, economics, politics, etc.

Postmodernism was born at first as a phenomenon of art. Firstly, it was comprehended as a literary movement. Later, it was identified with one of forms of the stylistic directions of architecture of the second half of the century. And at the verge of the 70s-80s, it began to be perceived as the most appropriate expression of the intellectual and emotional perceptions of the epoch. Arising as a reflection on new phenomena in the field of art, postmodernism gradually turned into a specific philosophy of the cultural consciousness of modernity. And in search of a theoretical basis, it turned to the concepts of poststructuralism.

Apparently, there is reason to argue that there is a single set of ideas, including poststructuralism, postmodernism and deconstructivism. This complex is an influential interdisciplinary trend in modern cultural Western life, manifested in various fields of humanitarian knowledge and connected by a certain unity of philosophical and general theoretical assumptions and analysis methodology. Theoretical basis of this complex are the concepts developed within the framework of French post-structuralism by such representatives as J.Lacan. M-F.Lyotard, M. Foucault, J.Derrida and others. The involvement of poststructuralists in demonstration of their positions and postulates of primarily literature material led to the considerable popularity of their ideas among literary scholars and gave rise to the phenomenon of deconstructivism. In the narrow sense of the word, deconstructivism is a theory of literature and specific practice of analysis of art works, based on general theoretical concepts of poststructuralism.

At the verge of the 70-80s, worldview and methodological parallels between poststructuralism and postmodernism emerged. Initially, postmodernism was developed as a theory of art and literature trying to master the experience of various neo-avant-garde movements and reduce them to a common ideological and aesthetic denominator. From the second half of the 80s, postmodernism began to be conceptualized as a phenomenon identical to poststructuralism. In some studies these terms are characterized as synonymous.

Many theories that use the term “postmodern” developed in different time and cultural periods and therefore were based on a different understanding of the terms “modern”, “modernism”, “modernization”, “modernity” as well as the prefix “post” itself. Hence, the various meanings embedded in the word “postmodernism” and in the various areas of its application. One fact remains undoubted. Theoretical and ideological foundations of both modernism and postmodernism were formulated and justified by philosophy that not only met the needs of its time or “expressed the spirit of the epoch” but also radically changed it. Richard Rorty in the book “Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature” [11] writes to the chapter “Philosophy in Conversation with Humanity” that he is attempting to make some allusions to replace the vision of philosophy only as a “matrix” of reality that does not affect people's simple everyday lives. A modern conversation needs to be built otherwise.

Today around the world a large number of researchers continue to address to the topic of modernism and postmodernism, which shows the continuing interest in the problems posed, their criticism and possible solutions in the future to which they are oriented.

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