

Summary

There is an alternative approach to postmodernism to that of the Lyotardian concept (postmodernism as the end of grand narratives) as developed by Fredric Jameson. It aims to address a phenomenon associated with the emergence of postmodernism: a change of form and content of life that occurred with the advent of flexible capitalism, in which economic production blended with the aesthetic. This interpretation of postmodernism has more dimensions than the Lyotardian concept as it deals with postmodernism in all its most characteristic manifestations (culture, ideology, visual arts, architecture, literature, space-time perception, theory, economics, and film) and strives for an entire perspective in which postmodernism acts as a cultural-historical epoch featuring the rejection of the very notion of an epoch. It is for this reason we rely on Jameson's concept of postmodernism.

In this book, we have attempted something like Lyotard had in the seventies, but we have adopted a method derived from Fredric Jameson: to record the ongoing transformation of the patterns of thought, enunciation, and sensitivity. Unlike Lyotard, we do not discuss postmodernism's loss of credibility because we are well aware that the loss of credibility is part of postmodernism itself. At first, we have tried to shed light on the gradual corrosion of those institutions that make up the political and social conditions of postmodernism, such as liberal democracy ensuring postmodern pluralism. The postmodern condition was the result of a specific historical constellation (linking political, social, economic and experiential elements) which is nevertheless being transformed, and the relationship of the ideas, which had been considered obsolete as subject or truth, is shifting.

Is our condition still postmodern? We live in a period showing signs of an historical intermezzo in which the established patterns of thought, enunciation, and sensitivity is falling apart while new patterns have not yet crystallized. Our situation is one of transition.

The book begins with a section devoted to some elements of the situation of transition and ends with a section called „Breaking through“. The first part is about the fact that we are no longer in a postmodern condition, but in one of transition, whereas the last part searches for various ways to break free of postmodernism as a dominant form of thought and sensitivity. In our concept, it is necessary to distinguish the postmodern condition from postmodernism itself. We suppose that the situation, particularly that of transition, and the dominant patterns of thought and sensitivity would not necessarily correspond. If the condition is changing and the old and the new are interwoven, the cultural form that originated in the condition continues to embed itself. So we have a special characteristic of our time: the condition is not postmodern, but postmodernism appears as something natural that cannot be connected to an alternative.

The book consists of four parts. The first section, entitled “Situation of transition”, is firstly dedicated to the periodization of postmodernism and its ties to neoliberalism. After the disintegration of universality, the key measure becomes the market. The next chapter deals with the postmodern transformation of instrumental reason in which instrumentality acquired an over-instrumental dimension that manifests itself in the production of commodities with aesthetic, environmental or socially critical meanings. The third chapter treats the decay of the universally valid ideal of education in that, rather than pursuing greater freedom for the universities, leads to their increasing reliance on political and economic power. The fourth chapter concerns the crisis of liberal democracy associated with the process of depoliticization of power and with denaturalization of universal rights and freedoms.

The second part deals with shortcomings of post-Marxist philosophy, especially that of Slavoj Žižek. This topic is important because post-Marxist philosophy offers an alternative to the given situation. The decisive shortcoming appears to be in underestimating the physical aspects of the human being. We attempt to rehabilitate Feuerbach’s materialism as a basis for overcoming this shortcoming.

In the third section, we are interested in Czech critical thinkers, such as Karel Kosík and Milan Machovec, who focus on the crisis phenomena in modern and postmodern times. How can they help us

to illuminate the condition of transition and show the paths out of postmodernism? However, we can also ask which of their concepts have some potential to enrich post-Marxism? Generally speaking: what is the specific contribution of Czech critical philosophy?

In the final part, we try to show some paths that we believe lead beyond postmodernism. In the first chapter, we question how it is possible to identify with something general after the postmodern critique of universality. In our view, it is first necessary to focus on the condition of the identification which is the existence of a lacking, as is mentioned by Plato in the myth of Eros and Lacan, and by Žižek in connection with the inherent split of subject.

In the following two chapters we arrive at the theories of subject which project from a postmodern horizon. In a chapter entitled „In the Suicidal Space of Subject“, we strive to reconstruct the hidden suicidal dimension of the modern subject, as expressed by Walter Benjamin. We then show that the foundation of the new subject, which exceeds the limits of postmodernism, should be this dimension rather than Žižek's „night of the world“.

In the following chapter we focus on two versions of the post-Marxist theory of subject as created by Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek. These theories treat subject so as to involve an element detached from the given situation, having the potential to change this condition. They are two decisive breakthroughs of postmodernism in contemporary philosophy. However, we try to identify their problematic features and outline a new theory of subject, which would be characterized by the ability to read symptoms of change in the entire condition. We called it subject of knowledge.

The last chapter deals with art, specifically poetry. We present Czech poet K. H. Mácha who, in our view, anticipated postmodernism by dissolving all order and law in society, history and art. This, however, resulted in the movement of radicalization in Mácha's poetry, which consists in the total acceptance of all consequences. This radicalization of postmodernism *avant la lettre* by Mácha led to a new type of subject that serves as the answer to this dissolution: It's active subject perceiving supreme art as liberation.