



The Postmodern Terms – Postmodernity and Postmodernism

Krzysztof Kielkiewicz

Dublin City University (All Hallows College), Ireland

Abstract: The vocabulary of the current epoch includes the term *postmodern*. However, *postmodern* embraces two related, but distinguished terms – *Postmodernity* and *Postmodernism*. Although both of them refer to the same era, they cannot be used interchangeably. The postmodern condition appears as very colourful and liberal among most areas of social life. This paper addresses linguistic postmodern demarcation and explains the postmodern terms with reference to the context of its functioning, along with its time frames, philosophy and its most meaningful representatives. It identifies Postmodernism with its influence on the spheres of culture, science and religion. It presents how spirituality finds its place in the new context of separation from the religious domain.

Key words: postmodern; postmodernity; postmodernism; spirituality; culture

Introduction

Postmodernity is a spectacular epoch due to the variety of its philosophical trends, played out in many social arenas. The acts of the culture are played out in everyday life, in halls of universities, in the chapels or, metaphorically speaking, on the way out of it. It embraces many theoretical frames which contrast and often contradict each other. Perhaps, for the first time in history, the epoch presents such a variety of drifts, influences and worldviews that the main feature of the epoch could be a variety in itself. Postmodernity is a period which has its roots in the 15th/16th century cultural changes. It proposes new references of understanding reality. Challenge, novelty, liberty, new perspective – these phrases saturate postmodern mottos. Philosophy, religion, the socio-political situation and other existential circumstances create the environment where the postmodern phenomenon embraces the mentality and flavours social life.

Could Postmodernity, or maybe Postmodernism, perhaps be interchangeable? Terms imprecisely understood? The drive of a historical era is its dream, social and individual goals which appear in mentality, manifest in philosophy and operate in culture. The drive is usually powered by reflection on the past and draws the resources from the imperfections of previous generations. Prophetic individuals bring it to reality in the form of a challenge to the past. The same applies to the current context. Postmodern experience exists as a material epoch and functions through intellectual means. This experience is relatively new,

existing as it does for only a couple of decades and therefore is still clarifying its operational terms.

Postmodern Terminology

Naming the current era is a theme of discussion among contemporary scholars and philosophers. The problem is not purely an issue of the naming, but regards the broader field of historical classification. Some schools call it Modernity (Smart 1997 p. 17, 489-499; Gallagher 1998 p. 91; Sheldrake 2005 p. 444) classifying the present time as a continuation of the epoch that began in 15th century. However, for the majority, it is differentiated from it and categorised as a new, the postmodern epoch. The prefix *post* emphasises the relation to the previous period and the opposition to it at the same time. According to Adams (1997/1998), the term *postmodern* was used for the first time in the 1950s and 60s to describe a new architectural trend, which was in complete contrast to the previous modern style and a number of authors share this view (Habermas & Ben-Habib 1981; Lakeland 1997 p. 2). Some authors place the etymological roots and cultural appearance slightly earlier. Smart (1997 p. 18) suggests that the term appeared in 1930s in literature as the depiction of a new era, which is perceived as "exhausted Modernism". Nevertheless in the 1970s, the word had been applied broadly to spheres other than architecture and literature. It began to function within the field of art and science, along with its understanding as a critique of the modern tendency in the culture (Huysen 1984 p. 12; Smart 1997). A conclusion to the debate of the timeframes is meaningful; nevertheless, it does not seem to be crucial to find a detailed description outlining when the era began. The roots of the postmodern thought could be traced back to the 15th century, with its climax in 1517 when the secularisation commenced with the explosion of the Reformation (Gorski 2000 p. 139-140). More meaningful however, is the fact that postmodern philosophy is rooted in western culture and Postmodernity is an outcome of cultural changes initiated in the West.

The postmodern vocabulary contains a subtle demarcation in the naming of the epoch. There are two terms in use, *Postmodernity* and *Postmodernism*. The terminology is applied to the same epoch; however it connotes different aspects of it. The term *Postmodernity* regards the functioning of the epoch within historical frames of time. It relates to dates, facts, geography, politics and other quantitative data. The term *Postmodernism* is not interchangeable with *Postmodernity* and it reflects a character of the culture. Postmodernism reflects philosophy, the quality and values, which differentiate it from previous periods (Adams 1997/1998; Hassan 2003; Marmion 2005 p. 146; Gallagher 1998 p. 87). It colloquially can be said that we live in Postmodernity but we do not necessarily have to identify with Postmodernism.

Postmodernism is the theoretical and philosophical framework which largely fulfils Postmodernity, however, not exclusively. A total functioning of the theoretical framework may exist beyond the historical boundaries in situations when the philosophy appears before, or functions longer than, the contractual historical frames. This perhaps enigmatic word game is pretty clear after when one realises that current philosophy does not unequivocally agree with date frames of the era and distinguishes the history of the epoch from the philosophy of the epoch. From the theoretical point of view, Postmodernism does not have to be an exclusive philosophical framework of Postmodernity and other trends may appear, or perhaps those already implicitly existing will be conceptualised.

Referring to the timeframe of the postmodern era, there is observable disagreement, or at least ambiguous opinions. Some theorists claim the Holocaust as a breakthrough between Modernity and Postmodernity, seeing Auschwitz as a place and the moment in history, when the modern world died and the new postmodern world was born (Sheldrake 2005 p. 499). The Holocaust is regarded as the watershed between Modernity and Postmodernity, where the hope was born that the building of new values would prevent the horrible experiences of the World Wars from recurring. A French philosopher, Lyotard, settles the beginning of Postmodernity in the early 1950s and associates it with the transition from the mechanical epoch, which characterised the Industrial Revolution to the electronic era. Computerised civilization, which introduced intelligent machines using a cyber-language, capable of electronic data storage, moved culture onto a different level (1986 p. 3-6).

Bottum (2010 p. 44) does not settle a specific timeframe, but describes the character of Postmodernism in its contextual environment in a laconic and well-fitting way: *It is premodern to seek beyond rational knowledge for God; it is modern to desire to hold knowledge in the structures of human rationality (with or without God); it is postmodern to see the impossibility of such knowledge.* This expression portrays the mentality which characterise the aforementioned periods and the sceptical intellectual character of Postmodernism. Lakeland bases the postmodern reflection on a critique of the Enlightenment, *about the character of rationality, the nature of subjectivity, issues of rights and responsibility and the constitution of the political community* (1997 p. 12).

Postmodernism tends to review the entire aspect of reality, which was proposed by modern thought and seeks to establish a new quality. Smart (1997 p. 12, 39, 116, 150) characterises Postmodernism by large intellectual capacity and openness for a spectrum of influences, more than the previous periods. A frequent use of the prefix *post* with names of philosophical trends emphasises the character of the epoch, as growing out of from Modernity. For instance, postmodernism, poststructuralism, postindustrialism, postfeminism, postmarxism (Smart 1997 p. 22), all reveal linkage of continuation, however in a new, often opposite quality. Smart (1997 p. 108) compares the character of Postmodernism to the medieval epoch calling it neomedieval.

The character of postmodern philosophy embodies a variety of features, the nature of which can be captured in such terms as scepticism, deconstruction, subjectivism, relativism, individualism or globalisation and is observed in many fields such as sociology, religion, science, architecture, anthropology and music. None of these characteristics seems to be unquestionable but one – the breakdown of the metanarrative (Rorty 1983; Lyotard 1993; Holtzhausen 2000). Postmodernism does not accept monopoly which is expressed in mistrust of metanarrative and what Lyotard conceptualised in 1979 (Lyotard 1979, p. 7; Thompson 1993).

Adams (1997/1998), reviewing the postmodern context, portrays the character of Postmodernism in a condensed way. He enumerates four major qualities: the decline of the West; the legitimation crisis; intellectual marketplace; and deconstruction. The decline of the West appears as devaluing processes among philosophical, scientific, political and religious fields. As Adams believes, these areas are burnt out, faded to black, or are on the way to it. The postmodern philosophy appears empty; the science seems to have no more capacity of development. Political democracy is being challenged by Islam and Neo-

Confucianism and religion is weakened by spreading secularism and individual piety. As Adams suggests, current civilisation has no potential to achieve anything new, at least anything meaningful.

The legitimisation crisis is a term that was introduced into postmodern vocabulary by the German philosopher Jurgen Habermass in 1973 (Habermass 1997). The legitimisation crisis can be described as a dialogue within current culture, which undermines values and rules previously taken for granted and social attitudes that were perceived as 'normal'. A concrete example of it could be, for instance, the model of marriage and family. The traditional form of marriage and family is being replaced or challenged by different patterns of parenthood and family, or even rather by a lack of any pattern. The traditional model of marriage and family tends to appear as one of many options nowadays. Married couples, chastity before marriage, heterosexual partnership do not represent an exclusive social norm anymore. Previous legitimations are challenged by new and the *new* never appeared before on such a large scale as now. Re-evaluations of certain authorities such as the role of the father in the family and changes towards equalising of duties and rights in partnerships instead of the patriarchal model of family are commonly observed. The values which seemed to be the bedrock of social functioning disappear or change.

A third feature of the postmodern world is the intellectual marketplace as an expansion of various intellectual goods (Adams 1997/1998). Rapid globalisation makes the world a relatively small place to live in and a place where various intellectual goods such as technology, science, philosophy, religion and worldviews are much more accessible. This situation makes current culture an arena of competition for these intellectual values. For example, religiosity is challenged by secularisation, parenting by television and social media, social relations within the age group or neighbourhoods by home videos, computer games and social connections online. This whole reality creates a certain intellectual and spiritual free market, where people are customers choosing which intellectual product to buy.

The fourth feature is deconstruction. The term *deconstruction* was introduced by Jacques Derrida (1997) who used it in the context of language; nevertheless, it quickly spread to other fields. Deconstruction is an ideological and philosophical trend, which functions as an intellectual decomposition. This tendency manifests its presence within many fields such as science, religion and culture. It challenges value systems and common knowledge, and is based on the dismissal of credibility. Adams (in Gellner 1993) speaks about the theological context of deconstruction, where *objective truth is to [be] replaced by hermeneutic truth*, although, the account given by the author can be given a wider prospect. In deconstructed reality, a world is perceived by a perspective of its components and assumptions. Consequently, these components are understood to the extent that their pieces and mechanisms are comprehended. Deconstruction can be compared to an onion, where knowledge of the surface is determined by an awareness of what is under the next layer. The postmodern manner does not accept any order and if it wants to challenge any order, it refers to reality behind the order and undermines its components.

The postmodern character is also very often associated with such words as globalisation, pluralism, fragmentation, liberalism, relativism and individualism. These features are very closely related and mutually permeating. It seems like the entire Postmodernism deals with a certain structure of reality, which deals with a

legacy of the past on the one hand and puts into question this legacy on the other. Therefore, the postmodern reality is called into question and permanently confronted with questions such as Why? How? Is it so? What does it mean? Jameson (1986 in Lyotard 1986) points to the use of such terms as *crisis*, which was characteristic of Habermass (1997) and *post*, typical for Lyotard (1986) that have an undermining relation to legitimate values appearing as clear qualities of the current epoch.

Every new cultural period, at the first stages of its development, needs to deal with a legacy of the previous philosophy before it constructs its own values. The terminology which is in use indicates that Postmodernism is now at the stage of its development, where it still challenges the past. The great philosopher of Postmodernism, Jean-Francois Lyotard defines postmodern as *incredulity toward metanarratives* (Lyotard 1986 p. XXIV). His classification is in agreement with characteristics given by many other representatives of the postmodern philosophy. Lyotard perceives Postmodernity as a new story, which is built on disbelief and scepticism and which in turn aims at building a new order.

Culture

The phenomenon of postmodern culture has a variety of components and there is a very broad assortment which would have to be taken into consideration in forming a complete view of the culture. It is problematic to separate certain domains and discuss culture without linking it to other areas such as religion, for instance. Lakeland (1997 p. 36) makes an observation that culture is difficult to explain in philosophical terms, but (or because) philosophy explains what happens in the culture. This creates a predicament while portraying Postmodernity through a cultural lens. Religion, for instance, is less concerned about explaining what happens in the culture, but it has a much higher tendency to unite with culture and to become a part of it to co-create the reality of culture. Gallagher, paraphrasing words of John Paul II, says that if faith has no influence on the culture, it is a sign of the weakness of the faith (Marmion 2005 p. 156). Nowadays, a big increase of interest in spiritual matters among western cultures and simultaneously a rapid decrease of traditional religion can be observed. This is a situation that looks paradoxical; it is however the most genuine fact and is clearly observable.

The 2002 Irish census report, published by the Central Statistic Office, presents results which conclude that there is a decrease in religious observance and an increase in secularisation (CSO 2002). This report presents an absence of a "non-religious" population until 1946; however, after World War II, people classifying themselves as "non-religious" quickly increased. The population of "non-religious" doubled every decade, reaching 140,000 in 2002, in a total population of less than 4 million. This means that more than 3.5% of the Irish population claimed to have nothing in common with religion, whereas in 1961 it was only 0.04% of total population.

The report also classifies people according to age groups. People in the age-group of over seventy, describing themselves as non-religious were within the range between 0.5% and 1% of the total population, while people in the age-group 20-34 oscillated around 6% (CSO 2002). Obviously, that report suggests that there will be an increase of the index, because of disappearance of the older generation in forthcoming years.

So the case can be made that the secularisation process has a tendency to grow. This was confirmed by a survey conducted in 2006 where the index of non-

religious people among age of 20-34 ranged between 6.5% and 8% (CSO 2006). If the increase keeps the tempo and the growth of the index continues to double in every decade, it can be expected that in 2040 the percentage of non-religious people in Ireland will exceed half of the whole population. Obviously, the credibility of such prognosis can be easily questioned, because it is a very far-reaching anticipation and there are many factors, which are unexpected, and which may have an impact or significant influence on the direction of the index. The above prediction-analysis is only to show the tempo of the development of the secular tendency. It portrays that the increase is fast and it suggests that transformation of the society is equally fast. Nevertheless, these premises portray that the picture of half of the population declaring non-religious association in 2040 as highly probable.

Smart (1997, p. 116) belongs to the group of authors who observe secularisation as a process that continuously undervalues the significance of the Church, religious practices and the importance of religious institutions. He also explains that this process is very much caused by a postmodern condition which is *unable to deal with "archaic" cultural forms* proposed by the Church (Smart 1997 p. 116-117). The current institution of the Church is in possession of a body of doctrine which was appreciated by many ages of Christian tradition and shaped the post-pagan modern world. However, the form of communication of it today is largely outdated and not effective for contemporary people. Lakeland (1997) believes that the Church and religious institutions have to face big challenges, because *Postmodernity challenges almost every element (...) of the faith community* (p. 58). The postmodern context creates a paradox, where *contingency replaces foundations* (p. 14). In this context it is difficult to predict the development of spirituality being a cultural component and avoid a risk of socio-spiritual superficiality. Finding a solid frame of spiritual reference, which was held by the Church for the majority of the Western population so far, appears as problematic.

Gallagher (in Marmion 2005 p. 150) observes the postmodern condition from the philological perspective. The author notes that current language often comes out as a list of complaints, presenting the postmodern reality in dark colours. He describes this attitude as a succumbing to the temptation of lament, to *a litany of "-isms": relativism; narcissism; hedonism; materialism; nihilism*. These negative qualities belong to the condition of present culture. These terms and values cover very transparent characteristics of societies of the West, namely, their consumer-oriented lifestyle. Taste, pleasure, satisfaction, self-realisation are very high on the list of people's needs. A decrease of the influence of communities of faith and the invasion of secularism dislodging people's religious values (Marmion 2005 p. 157) does not obliterate spirituality, but creates a context where spirituality changes its manifestation. Along with the decline of interest in traditional forms of religion, there is a noticed increase of interest in spiritual themes among communities of the West. According to the account given by Schneiders (2003), books treating spirituality and related matters are among the most popular in America. Retreat centres are very busy and spiritual concerns among society shows an increase of interest rather than decrease.

Conway's (2006 p. 111) argument explains this perhaps confusing status quo. The author states that people *have by nature a spiritual orientation*, a desire for God which, if unfulfilled, leads to spiritual frustration. The author argues also that the spiritual dimension in humanity is an existential order. As a consequence, a certain decline in traditional religion does not accept a vacuum and it simply has

to be refilled. This empty space is completed by an increase of interest in spirituality. The author calls the above condition a process of *detraditionalisation* that touches postmodern societies not only regarding religious matter, but also in reference to a wider cultural spectrum (Conway 2006 p. 119).

This religious-spiritual condition carries very positive and constructive potential in terms of ecumenism. The postmodern spirituality opens up an ability to cross the boundaries between religions, nations, cultures and races (Sheldrake 2005 p. 498-500). The postmodern spiritual thought finds common elements among different cultures, even if it does not necessarily seek them. There is now the potential to cross boundaries and establish relations based on commonly-held values. Because of its tolerance, acceptance of individuality and respect for human rights, Postmodernism carries values which were always close to humanity. The ecumenism and dialogue between religions of the World may meet up on the plane of spirituality and in the spirit of the postmodern interreligious discussion.

Science

Michael Foucault allows for the supposition that an issue of *Subjectivity and Truth* is the indispensable object of knowledge (Foucault 1997 p. 87). This problem refers in equal measure to science and religion. However, because the author speaks about it more in the scientific context, his account is discussed in the science section. Personal experience with subjective thought, whether truth or objective perception are dilemmas competing with each other and at the same time complementing each other in the field of scientific knowledge. The clashes of these two – individual experience and unbiased knowledge – also meet in the human mind, which is the central scene of this drama. Objectivity and subjectivity – Bernard Lonergan grasps both of these implications in one view of reality. He conceives that when subjective conviction and objective appearance agree with one another, in other words overlap, then the genuine perception of reality appears (Lonergan 2007 p. 259). Nonetheless, the fashion of postmodern science gives an advantage to the subjective implication over respect for the ultimate truth. There is a number of fashions which tilt the scales towards respect for individual conviction, self-knowledge and subjective interpretation rather than otherwise.

Jürgen Habermas, the German philosopher, introduced the term "*legitimation crisis*" as a trait of current culture (Habermas 1997). The distinguished philosopher, Jean-Francois Lyotard, one of the individuals deeply discerning into the character of Postmodernism, speaks about a legitimation crisis within the sphere of science. This crisis changes the very foundations of scientific research, calling into question the methodological rules, previously taken for granted. At the same time, Lyotard expands the term "*legitimation crisis*" from the sphere of culture onto the field of science in his challenge of metanarrative. The legitimation crisis in the scientific field is a trend of disregard for authority, deciding what science is and is not, and what is scientific and what is not scientific. Consequently, if the foundations of verification are contested, any scientific results of the study can be potentially questioned regarding its validity (Lyotard 1986). This circumstance is caused and determined by the linguistic terms and they can be understood differently, depending on the linguistic code which is used to communicate. Lyotard states that *each of the various categories of utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put – in exactly the same way as the game of chess is defined by a set of rules determining the properties of each of the pieces, in other words, the proper way to*

move them (1986 p. 10). The concept of legitimation crisis is very closely related and dependent on the Derridean concept of deconstruction (Derrida 1997), which originally applies to language, but also found its reference in many other spheres including science. The task of deconstruction is to recognise all the components of an expression or statement and then to analyse the manifestations of the components in order to construct new concepts or redefine stereotypes. The first representative of a philosophical approach to language in the way of deconstruction was Jacques Lacan, who represents the psychoanalytical tradition. It is worth mentioning that the process of development of postmodern philosophy was stimulated by a number of impulses, where the psychoanalytical tradition plays an important role. The importance of psychoanalytical tradition has its advocacy in the current development of psycho-derivative academic disciplines such as psychoanalysis, psychology or psychotherapy and counselling.

Another meaningful trend which influenced the field of postmodern science supports an antiauthoritarian approach to knowledge and causes relativism in philosophical perception. This trend is called post-structuralism with its great representatives Nietzsche and Heidegger and their continuators Levinas, Derrida and Kristeva.

“God” in Nietzsche’s assertion is used metonymically. That is, it is name which substitutes for and sums up a way of doing philosophy in which a highest principle is sought that grounds the possibility of all things. As “the White House” is a name substituting for and summing up the American government under its presidential head of state, so “God” is metonymy for “absolute Truth”, “absolute Goodness”, “absolute reality”, “absolute reason”, the origin and measure of all things (Being in modernity’s understanding of metaphysics) (Ward 1997 p. XXVIII). With the death of God Nietzsche announces the overcoming of metaphysics, for he announces that there is no foundation, no ground, no origin that ultimately is governed by a perspective, i.e., we, as human beings, desire and require it. We cannot think or have knowledge at all without radically selecting from multiplicity of sense data what we are to think and know. In an act of Titanic iconoclasm he announces a nihilism in which there is no truth, goodness, reality, reason, origin which is not contingent, ephemeral, and the effect of the human will (Ward 1997 p. XXIX).

This is a reason why, for instance, the discipline of spirituality, which is a descendant of religion, theology and religious disciplines, is so abandoned by Christianity and so orphaned methodologically. Current spirituality broke away from structural frames of religion and became a separate and individual discipline. The post-structural scientific fashion stimulates the breaking of boundaries, of statements always taken for granted and opens ways for different views, and this is a positive aspect of this trend. However, the same fashion causes extirpation from tradition and original sources, which in turn is disadvantageous and may even be dangerous.

Heidegger, another main representative of post-structuralism, partially shared Nietzsche’s view, however he believed that knowledge without any assumption, simply cannot exist. He believed that *presumably because of this god-less God nothing can be said – not within philosophical discourse and method anyway* (Ward 1997 p. XXXIII). Therefore, Heidegger assumed the existence of a philosophical God, which cannot be strictly qualified as religious. Nevertheless, for the purposes of scientific foundations, he took God’s existence as necessity.

Bringing the theme of postmodern science back from deeply philosophical discussion to more common-sense terms, the present condition of science clearly relates to the socio-cultural environment. Seemingly, commerce relates to spheres of life other than science, but practically this relation is very close and meaningful.

It is rather clear that many spheres of life today are commercialised or can be, and everything is buyable or can be. According to Lyotard, knowledge belongs to commercialised spheres as well. Because knowledge runs the industrial development, the products of the knowledge on the free market are simply goods for sale (Lyotard 1986 p. 3-6). Everything now is worth a certain amount of money: items, ideas, land, we even say "time is money". We are so used to it that we are unable to see the artificiality of this maxim - its abnormality and often its pretentiousness. Many decisions and situations not directly related materially are frequently worth money. The sphere of industry can dictate which studies are to be undertaken and which abandoned; it can influence direction of research. In this way, science stimulates development of commercial goods and the financial sphere supports scientific development, closing the circle.

Religion

Perhaps one of the most admirable attributes of religion, at least from a theoretical point of view, is its relation to truth and its serving as a tool of personal transformation. Postmodernism is very disrespectful regarding truth in metaphysical terms; therefore, religion in a postmodern world faces a big challenge. As was mentioned above, the deconstructive processes and the crisis of legitimation keep stripping religion of its mystery. Relativism and subjectivism deny respect to what was always respected. Philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas argue the irrationality of religion from the philosophical point of view. *Nothing is less opposed to ontology than opinion and faith*, he asserts. (Levinas 1987).

Truth in premodernity was measurable by various instruments, which were tools of verification (Gallagher 1997 p. 93). These tools were non- experimental; today's tools of verification support relativism and the consequences of it are visible in the maze on the ground of values. *...moral responsibility is viewed as an illusion inherited from a different era. In its extreme form, life is valueless, moral absolutes are illusory, and freedom is only a game. No stable points of reference remain* (Gallagher 1997 p. 89). Relativism causes a situation where *foundations have been eroded, orthodoxies overturned, certainties undermined, and truths relativised* (Smart 1997 p. 114). The position of Christianity or religion in general, in the postmodern context, is commonly observed as difficult and one of the most transparent dilemmas is the approach to the ultimate truth. *Religion has always been thought to be about "eternal" truth, and there is something destabilizing for religion in postmodernity's preference for ways of seeing over truth* (Lakeland 1997 p. 45). Lakeland's perception is shared by a number of authors from Christian circles, considering truth as a key question about the condition of religion in the current culture.

Such great representatives of postmodern thought as Lacan, very clearly advocate a mentality which has difficulty in finding common language with religion.

We analysts, who claim to go beyond certain conceptions of prepsychology relative to the phenomena of our own field or who approach human realities without prejudice, do not have to believe in these religious truths in any way, given that such belief may extend as far as what is called faith, in order to be interested in what is articulated in its own terms in religious experience - in the terms of the conflict between freedom and grace, for example (Lacan in Ward 1998 p. 36).

Lacan, as a representative of psychoanalytical tradition, is very influenced by the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, and very enthusiastically quotes him; *Freud himself took an unequivocal position on the subject of religious experience. He said that everything of that kind that implied a sentimental approach meant nothing to him; it was literally a dead letter for him* (Lacan in Ward 1998 p. 37). The postmodern philosophy appears in many forms and challenges the current order in many ways. The aspect of religion is also confronted in many different ways.

Levinas in a specific way approached the problem of transcendence, which is a crucial aspect in religion. He simplifies transcendence to the level where transcendence is the sum of immanent experiences. In this way he reduced religion and religious experience to the existential one, and secularised religion. Interestingly, religiosity which stays in contradiction to secularisation, now by Levinas is equalised with all secular experiences.

At the outset, Levinas presents philosophy as a mode of reflection that reduces everything to immanence. (...) For anything to be it must become present to a consciousness. Consciousness is an act that synthesizes the field of experience, representing it for the "I" that now holds the field and its contents. Levinas focuses on the act of transcendental apperception, the way that a consciousness itself sets the stage onto which all experience must come. For Levinas, this act forces all that transcends me to become immanent for me (Gibbs in Ward 1998 p. 47).

Perhaps one of the representatives of current reflection, who fitted the postmodern denomination almost perfectly, was Michael Foucault. He was a philosopher and psychologist, a great thinker, educated by Jesuits, who died of AIDS in 1984. It could be said that he represented a lot from postmodernism in his persona. He was difficult to be categorised within a specific discipline, he even refused to be called a humanist. He blurred boundaries between disciplines and popularised an interdisciplinary approach to humanities. He was especially concerned with the theme of sexuality and its relation to religion. Another postmodern thinker, Michel de Certeau, also regards postmodern standards. He was a Jesuit and his worldview was grounded in Christian tradition; however, he challenged religious perception of mysticism bringing it down to the secular domain. He did not equalise secularisation with Godlessness, but just emphasised the secular character of reality rather than mystical. He believed that holiness does not happen exclusively in the chapel (De Certeau 1988). It is however an interesting compilation, which portrays a capacity of postmodern philosophy and its diversity. The postmodern philosophy is not only anti-Christian, relative and secular; it has also the capacity of practising it in different ways, perhaps to some extent in old-fashioned ways. De Certeau did not go substantially into pure philosophy to practise theoretical and intellectual reflections, but rather he concentrated on a *practice of everyday life*, which in fact is a title of his book (De Certeau 1988). This is maybe what establishes him as a postmodern philosopher who has respect for the Christian tradition. De Certeau believed that Christianity is more a matter of practice than of talk, even if on a highly philosophical level. In his book he presents practical implications of psychological resistance in people's everyday life.

The road of religion in Postmodernity seems to be a path through hardship; however, it would be dishonest to leave the vision of it, without the voices of other and different views. There are a number of great thinkers, who hold and develop metaphysical and epistemological approaches to philosophy, theology and religion. Among them are Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI, born 1927), Hans Urs von

Balthasar (1905-1988), Yves Congar (1904-1995) and Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984) with his methodology of science, based on four stages towards authentic knowledge. Experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding assume a feasibility of learning a truth in an on-going process (Lonergan 2007). They convince that very different approaches to postmodern thought still function. Theologian Karl Rahner (1904-1984) is perceived as a great contributor to the field of interreligious dialogue. In an amazing way he spoke about every human's ineffable, inexhaustible and incomprehensible experience of God beyond religious boundaries. His insightful *The Anonymous Christian* was very controversial for many and at the same time helped to solve many dilemmas regarding the understanding of salvation in Christian tradition (Lane in Marmion 2005 p. 91-96). The Second Vatican Council, even if very few of its promulgations are put into practice so far, is still a very prophetic voice and a challenging call to postmodern people.

Discussion

Antiquity drew an intellectual energy from the wisdom of philosophy. Christian culture extracted spiritual strength from the faith operating within the frames of the Church. Postmodernity appears as the epoch which develops liberalism and tolerance and introduces a lay element even into religion and spirituality. Postmodernism also introduces interdisciplinarity into the fields of science and religion. On the field of religion, postmodernism introduces divergence, variance and a clash of different influences, which meet on the platform of culture and then develop further as a potential for dialogue and ecumenism. Religions do not have a sufficiently broad theoretical capacity to embody assumptions of different religions into their own. However, spirituality as a discipline of religious clashes comes with interreligious dialogue under the strong influence of a third tendency, that of secularisation which challenges traditional religion. In addition, existing liberalism stimulates a crisis of values and thus a withdrawal of a large proportion of the religious population from the practice of religion (at least in a traditional way), which drains the churches. A positive aspect of this vacating is a refinement of the religious population. People who are motivated to practise religion because of purely cultural and habitual reasons disappear and those who are deeply motivated just stay. Those who will forsake the practice of spirituality in the chapel cannot desert their spiritual condition which will call for its manifestation.

The current experience of Postmodernity may seem to be hard and gloomy. However, in the face of growing globalisation, favouring of liberalism and tolerance, the postmodern condition could produce something which previous epochs never achieved – dialogue and agreement not only on the local, but on the global level. Agreement is needed in many spheres – the political one would be of primary importance, but religious and cultural seem to be appealing as well. Experience currently challenged and a dismantling of reality could be a necessary stage before more a constructive period. Every epoch needs to face the legacy of the past to make a room for introduction of new values. Postmodernity which is colourful, but vague at the same time needs to reach the stage when the intellectual effort comes to its peak and produces a bloom of the era. Evaluating the evidence from the fields of current science, culture and philosophy as well as listening to great postmodern representatives, it can be assumed that the postmodern bloom is not present yet.

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