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## TRANSFIGURATION OF MORAL VALUES FOUNDATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

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The article deals with changing processes in moral values foundations and trends in contemporary societies, focusing on their current state and specific features often referred to as postmodern. These processes include such phenomenon as divergence between morality and ethics, where the latter comes into conflict with traditional moral standards in professional communities. New behavioural patterns and goals overpass the boundaries of the earlier established norms and customs. Normative morality is replaced by ethos of certain communities, “tribes” and gender groups. Prominent proponents of the postmodern sociological theory (J. Baudrillard, Z. Bauman, S. Lash, M. Maffesoli) emphasize on the factor of relativity in ideological orientations, which can lead to “values chaos”, where rationalization of social relations, sociality, and progress are substituted by sensual irrationality, individualization, ingress, etc. New research is required to define new human values hierarchy (or transfiguration) of contemporary societies. These tendencies are relevant to present-day Ukrainian society in terms of its processes and specific features such as “hybrid” morality, migration, domestic culture, and youth subcultures, etc.

**Key words:** transfiguration; values orientation; moral foundation; etos; neotribolizm; ingress; sensual irrationality; hybrid morality; postmodernism; multicultural societies.

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### **Трансфігурація морально-ціннісних засад сучасних суспільств**

У статті розглядаються зміни у ціннісних орієнтаціях і моральних засадах сучасних соціумів, що характеризують їх стан і особливості нашого часу. Такі процеси в суспільствознавчій аналітиці найчастіше позначають як постмодерні. До них належить такий феномен як розходження моралі й етики, де остання, функціонуючи в професійних і верстових спільнотах, вступає в певну суперечність із традиційними моральними стандартами. Нові моделі поведінки, спрямування і цілі виходять за межі раніш встановлених норм і звичаїв. Загальнолюдська моральність поступається етосам окремих спільнот, «нових племен», гендерних груп. Прибічники постмодерністської соціології (М. Маффесолі, З. Бауман, С. Леш, Ж. Бодрійяр...) відзначають, що має місце релятивізація світоглядних орієнтирів, що може призвести до «ціннісного хаосу», соціальність руйнується індивідуалізацією суспільного життя, засаднича раціоналізація соціальних зв'язків – почуттєвою ірраціональністю, прогрес – інгресом тощо. Нова ієрархія (трансфігурація) ціннісного світу людності нинішніх соціумів потребує нового дослідження й пояснення. Усе це має відношення до процесів і рис сучасного українського суспільства («гібридної» моралі, міграції, побутової культури, молодіжних субкультур тощо).

**Ключові слова:** трансфігурація; ціннісні орієнтації; моральні засади; етос; неотрайболізм; інгрес; індивідуалізація; почуттєва ірраціональність; гібридна мораль; постмодернізм; полікультурні суспільства.

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### **Трансфігурація морально-ціннісних основ сучасних суспільств**

В статье рассматриваются изменения в ценностных ориентациях и моральных основах современных социумов, которые характеризуют их состояние и особенности нашего времени. Такие процессы в аналитике обществознания обозначают чаще всего как постмодернистские. К ним относится такой феномен как расхождение морали и этики, где последняя, функционируя в профессиональных и кастовых обществах, вступает в некие противоречия с общепринятыми моральными стандартами. Новые модели

поведения, настроения и цели выходят за рамки ранее сложившихся норм и обычаев. Общечеловеческая моральность уступает место этосам отдельных профессиональных сообществ, «новых племен», гендерных групп. Сторонники постмодернистской социологии (М. Маффесоли, З. Бауман, Ж. Бодрийяр, С. Леш...) определяют, что имеет место релятивизация мировоззренческих ориентиров, что может привести к «ценностному хаосу», социальность разрушается индивидуализацией общественной жизни, основополагающая рационализация социальных связей – чувственной иррациональностью, прогресс – ингрессом и т.п. Новая иерархия ценностей (трансфигурация) человеческого мира нынешних социумов требует новых исследований и объяснений. Все это имеет непосредственные отношения к процессам и чертам современного украинского общества («гибридной морали», миграции, бытовой культуры, молодежным субкультурам и т.д.).

**Ключевые слова:** трансфигурация; ценностные ориентации; моральные основы; этос; неотрайболизм; ингресс; индивидуализация; чувственная иррациональность; постмодернизм; поликультурные общества.

### **Introduction**

Analysis regarding current situation of contemporary societies must begin with conditions and factors determining their foundations. Foremost it concerns values tendencies dominating in social sphere. First, sociologists pay attention to the social transformations that define its current situation and state. Some researchers come to conclusion regarding “values chaos” and erosion of moral foundations taking place in a nowadays social life. Others point out towards significant transformations of moral values foundations (especially related to the “Western world”), which is not uncommon for human history. In this light, the paper presents thought-provoking analysis and standpoints of postmodern sociologists regarding contemporary social phenomena.

### **Specifying the purpose of research**

Most prominent proponents of postmodern sociology argue that present-day epoch is characterized by profound transformations in all spheres of human life. That is why it is called postmodern epoch due to its distinctive differences from the epoch of modernity. Therefore, appropriate verification of nowadays basic moral values tendencies, social ideal models, conceptualization of new relations between person and society need to be introduced. Postmodern world carries out new answers to Kant’s questions: What is a world of humans? Who is a human in this world? Nowadays understanding of human nature and meaning of its existence are fundamentally changed by the humanities. Proponents of postmodern sociology develop their concepts regarding global problems, which are also relevant for better understanding of social processes taking place in today's Ukrainian society.

### **Presenting the research material**

Leading researchers of postmodern situation (J. Baudrillard, J.-F. Lyotard, Z. Bauman, M. Maffesoli, etc.) focus most of their attention on importance of irrational, symbolic and imaginary (virtual, simulative) in contemporary society. Extreme transfigurations in today's mentality indicate new social realities, combined with destruction of old traditional foundations in social consciousness. First and foremost, such traits as polytheism of values, hedonism, vitalism and irrationalism start to play one of the most important roles nowadays, which is succinctly summarized by the following quotation of M. Maffesoli: "We are living in interesting times when multilateral knowledge is generated by splash of emotions. In this situation, conceptual apriorism and old research methods, dividing the whole into pieces yield significantly to phenomenological methods, capable to integrate companionship, life stories, and diverse representation of collective imaginary ideas" (Maffesoli, 2017).

Concurrently, it is significant to explain why the term "transfiguration" is used instead of "transformation". According to postmodern thinkers, we are living in times when society is not transformed completely as a whole entity to the very roots, but it rather turns into its derivative formation, familiar to us to certain extent, albeit adjusted to nowadays context. Putting it in other way, the hierarchy of values are ever-changing, but not totally modified. The hypothesis regarding society's evolution direction is widely discussed today. It is suggested that society develops not in a linear nor cyclic but in a spiral way, reverting to certain social phenomena seemed to be completely vanished in history, nevertheless returned today partially transformed and fragmented. As a result, old scientific research methods regarding numerous polemic social issues should be also modified accordingly. Especially it concerns moral and ethics problems, as well as correlation between politics and morality in today's social life.

New trends and new viewpoints concerning moral values transfiguration stream for most inhabitants of postmodern space are accentuated by postmodern theorists.

Our customs and habits on a daily life basis happened to be changed to some extent due to social transfiguration. The core of society transfiguration involves a process of profound transition from moral to ethics. M. Maffesoli notes that quite often "moral" and "ethics" are used as synonyms, but these two notions differ from each other. Morality is a general concept, established and developed since the beginning of the XVIII century in philosophical discourse of Enlightenment. It can be used everywhere anytime on account of its universal humanistic nature. Etymology of "ethos" comes from Greek language and refers to "values uniting the members of a certain group" (Maffesoli, 2017). Thus, the term "ethics" defines a system of values and norms of certain professional communities, namely, "medical ethics", "officer's

honour”, as well as informal sociologists’ rules and principles called “sociological ethos”.

To illustrate this distinction, criterion of success in politics is estimated in its results, not the ways of achieving them (within the legitimate frame, of course). In business, for instance, tax evasion, “sharing” budget funds, “kickbacks” or “promoting” corruption are rarely criticized, often playing an inevitable part of business activities. Therefore, corporate ethics in form of practices, habits and traditions contradict commonly acknowledged human morality. Alternatively, “hybrid morality” is noticed: self-defined “socially important” programs are merged within corruption, political manipulations, social inequality, etc.

Contradiction between ethics and morality became a sign of our times. Hybrid moral values models are reproduced on a daily basis: one thing is self-declared, yet the other one contradicting it, cannot not raise any objections to prevent its implementation. Ukrainian society can provide many examples of collision of economic efficiency and social justice, democracy and inequality, productivity and honesty. Hence, it is essential to look at this phenomenon by means of today’s postmodern analytics.

New values and trends rejecting old theories and terminology need to be accepted in postmodern society. M. Maffesoli notes that there is a difference in understanding and interpreting moral values by political elites and official state with its government institutions on the one hand, and ordinary people within the actual state on the other hand. According to the scientist, elites’ the most common values come from modernism and remain the same now. The social world is interpreted by elites through the principles of progress, individualism, rationalism and utilitarianism, so that they do not realize the existence of other principles, such as tribalism, presentism, emotionalism, aestheticization of everyday life, etc. The latter seeks to transform a daily routine into a state of art, choosing quality over quantity, which then brings about sociological consequences in postmodern society. Hence, M. Maffesoli suggests that three-quarters of sociological studies have no scientific significance today because of devaluating research studies, semantically detached from today’s reality, not mentioning using terminology of the XVIII–XIX centuries (Maffesoli, 2017). Current society lives in a social world characterized by ethical immorality of certain social groups, replacing traditional morality of modern epoch. According to common morality standards, for instance, today’s youth values are immoral (like “marriage” for vacation time), but within postmodern “fast-moving reality” such values are ethical for certain communities. Ethical immorality is manifested in young people’s behaviour, which is ethical in their own groups, but immoral in terms of common traditions.

Postmodernists believe that society of the XXI century experiences “paradigm shift” in epistemological context, when global social processes are merged into

various forms of local existence, which does not contribute towards uniting society in one entity, but rather defending certain communities' interests. Specific term of "glocalization" is used to define this phenomenon of combination between global and local (Robertson, Buhari-Gulmez, 2016, p. 81).

In contemporary society, according to M. Maffesoli, processes of "overloading moralism" have been going on for a long time. He defines "moralism" as the phenomenon of expectation of what the world "should be" opposed to what it really is. Thus, the world is supposed to be moral, but there is a shift from moral criticism to ethical relativism. Today, scientists believe that the global trend of transition from homo-economicus to homo-eroticus noticed with its new order of emotions, feelings and passions. Mostly we observe the exchange of emotional states between the members of communities and their desire to match with the prototype of an "eternal child", teenagers' culture model focused on body and emotional affectivity. In this light, collective hysteria takes place over the rational purpose and materialistic exchange (Maffesoli, 2017).

In addition to the "eternal child" prototype, other distinctive phenomena of the present-day epoch such as new nomadic lifestyle (nomadism) and tribal lifestyle (tribalism) are manifested in migration flows, as well as peculiar forms of transnational communities with the specific set of values and behaviour demonstrating social segregation of certain groups. Generally, postmodernists suggest transfiguration in the traditional forms of family, education, school, government. Nomadic lifestyle is widely represented not only in social mobility, but also in such spheres like ideology, power and profession. It is noted that "the framework of nomadic lifestyle itself can become widespread, then it would be quite natural to change several families, professions, lifestyles during a lifetime" and even to experiment with gender identity (Pliushch, Tancher, 2018).

It is noted that the important process in postmodern culture is not the progress, nor the regress, but the ingress – the concept that is based only on the experience of present, living in a given moment, not expecting for future, but adapting to today's realities. Ingress makes the essence of transfiguration from morality into ethics. M. Maffesoli defines "presentheism" as the notion opposed to futurism, when human being of the XXI century does not confront with the history that cannot be mastered, but with an individual present destiny to which one can only adapt (Maffesoli, 2017).

Thus, social utilitarianism is replaced by the aestheticization of a daily life, while universal morality is replaced by the "tribal" ethics (as it is illustrated in Ukrainian movie "The Tribe" regarding shocking life of deaf young generation). Postmodern ethics is remarkable since it does not deny, but rethink traditional ethical categories, such as responsibility, freedom and moral choice in the context

of perspectives, presented by contemporary socio-cultural circumstances with regard to morality and ethics.

M. Maffesoli compares the types of a modern and postmodern societies, where modern society implements the values of Enlightenment, while postmodern society implements ethical values of certain social groups. The author seeks to disclose differences between these two cultural types of society in terms of ethical antipodes. Thus, universal category of moral “common ethics” is opposed to immorality of ethics in present-day culture. The latter admits the values of pluralism and mosaic form of today's society. The ideal pattern of moral society shifts toward new ideal pattern of ethical communities. Such viewpoint introduces different perspective at socio-cultural processes in the present-day world and stimulates their profound understanding (Maffesoli, 2017).

Process of modernization separated individual person from community and its social unity. The idea of a free and self-determined human personality won over opposed impersonal collective values of traditional society. Fast development of the industrial production and market, state bureaucracy and urbanization of social life became the main reasons for individualism as a cultural value to be recognized and admitted. The “atomization” of individuals is caused by transfiguration in nature of social relations. Hence, “short” social ties dominate over “long” ones; the role of symbolism in social interrelations has increased due to the abstract mediators, such as money, law, political ideologies and expertise (Jameson, 1991, p. 377).

These processes played a crucial role in constructing the system of imaginary ideas of present-day culture, its prototypes, symbols and concepts, determined the historical forms of a nowadays social experience. Within imaginary system framework, the “discovery of childhood” is carried out as a special period of human life, due to which individual patterns of socialization are established, as well as the natural rights of every person for life, property and freedom are proclaimed.

In general, the following features of modernism can be mentioned as the main ones:

- intention to innovate (with ever-changing novelty criteria);
- emphasizing on anti-traditionalism;
- denying classical concept of “natural harmony of existence” based on human being mental abilities ambitions of Modern era;
- braking human as a God's “model”;
- rejecting monism that gave rise to social constructivism and diverse pluralistic strategies to create “new human being”;
- emphasizing anti-normativism based on ideas of self-created social norms, resulting into rejection of traditional ideal models;
- constructiveness of Mind leading to cultural transfiguration programs (Therborn, 1995, pp. 133–145).

Such sociologists as E. Giddens and Z. Bauman point out that the present-day postmodern society is characterized not by substituting one type of rational traditions to others, but its compiled plurality of traditions, habits and knowledge, leading to doubts regarding unique righteousness of any of them, and forming constantly changing and reflective identity. Variability and plasticity of identity become natural and logical in such a fluid society. Accordingly, a new “short-term” mentality is typical for today's consciousness (Bauman, 1996, p. 31).

J. Habermas defines the milestones of social development through current and future individual cultural changes in social communities (ethnicities, families, and groups), where “social” is not based on rational principles of power, progress or productivity, but on irrationality, freedom, and creativity (Habermas, 2006, p. 101).

According to G. Ritzer, postmodern conceptual approach concerns such phenomena as equality of different viewpoints, pluralism of aesthetic standards, protest against dividing cultures into “high” and “low” level, extreme denial of cultural traditions of modern stage of Enlightenment. Feasibility of creating a unified social science theory is questioned, but at the same time, there is a high awareness of need to use entire theoretical heritage to create new synthesis (Ritzer, Stepnisky, 2018, pp. 319–321).

S. Lash claims, that such phenomena as indifference, ironic inactivity towards anything, absence of energetic centralization nor axial project, and even “civilization fatigue” come out to be the main features of postmodernism (Lash, 2003, p. 48). Postmodernists argue regarding “the end of progress”, “the cease of events”, and even the “end of history”. The history does not come to its end because of violence, events, or absence of actors, but it does come to its end as a result of mankind's indifference, numbness and slowdown processes. However, according to postmodern advocates, we are not done yet with history, since the end is just the beginning of something new. Democracy, religion, conflicts, ideology, ethnic groups and other residuals of history may become a subject to re-usage, whereas their archaic forms are preserved (Maffesoli, 2017).

The person of postmodern epoch easily uses totally incompatible worldviews, discourses, segments of languages. However, in the social postmodern dimension not only the limitations do not exist, but guidelines are absent either. Everybody is free to believe in anything, to declare anything, as well as to consider themselves and others whomever they want.

Individualism reaches its logical limits in postmodern era. Human being gets full autonomy, being totally released from society, and from various forms of collective identity, spending more time in virtual world. Work and leisure are gradually moved to virtual space too, postmodern people get used to their game identity, choosing masks, nicknames, roles and strategies (Kenneth, Turner, 2008, pp. 364–365).



According to sociological concepts, postmodernism is based, above all, on the background of disappointment in every ideology, none of which led humanity to ideal state proclaimed before. Postmodern perception of the world rejects theories as such, including social theory (Best, Kellner, 1991, pp. 222–223).

Hence, postmodernism appears to be methodological alternative to modernism and an independent ideological position at the same time. Besides being opposed to modernism, postmodernism continues modern era in all its “manifestations”, bringing a sort of independence to theoretical and ideological formations. It has a significant impact on current sociological theories and emergence of new ones.

According to proponents of postmodernism, a new world community and a new type of consciousness is currently being established. The social core of this community is based on market, economic relations, liberal democratic institutions and commercialized culture to some extent. New international institutions are formed on account of unifying globalization trends. They are characterized by relatively high level of stability with rather strict requirements for countries willing to join them. “New consciousness” is the first requirement since the old categories do not function in a new global system – postmodern society (Robertson, Buhari-Gulmez, 2016, pp. 19–28). At the same time, the return to local identity and defending local communities’ rights within the “global village” manifest the moral value hybridity of contemporary societies in this general tendency.

### **Conclusions**

At the beginning of the XXI century, the Western European scientific community focused its attention on new polymorphic social transfigurations, eventually defined as “postmodern” phenomena. In general, postmodern sociology denotes a set of theories and concepts designated to explore, describe and interpret processes of transformation from modern epoch to postmodern one, analyzing transfigurations of traditional and modern moral values foundations into current ones, identifying the most typical features and aspects of postmodern societies, and determining the circumstances of transition from modern to postmodern epoch. Even though only some of them are noted in this paper, they indicate the direction of major trends in spiritual realm of present-day developed societies.

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