



Study material (including test)

Course Title: Man in Postmodern Society

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Student Requirements: essay: 1320–1760 words.

Course completion: exam – test and individual student work:

The exam takes place in the form of a written test and paper of 5-6 pages, in which the student demonstrates the ability of self-reflection on postmodern thinking with a particular focus on the characteristics of the concept of man (anthropology), the meaning of life, what it is considered to be. The authors of the 20th or 21st centuries are to be chosen by the students and, based on the literature of the chosen author that students had studied, prepare written work, in which they will focus on the characteristics of the concept of man, the meaning of life and the way of their quest. Written work will be edited according to the methodology for writing final papers (see Faculty web). All work for the exam must be submitted to the teacher via e-mail (svobodz@tf.jcu.cz) no later than 15 working days before the end of the examination period.

Notes for Erasmus students:

It must be sent on teacher's email (svobodz@tf.jcu.cz) minimum 15 working days before you want to leave the Czech Republic.

In your critique try to answer the following questions:

- What is „postmodernity“?
- How can find a man the meaning of life today?
- How changed the man in 20th century?

Course content:

1. Introduction to the postmodern era
2. Characteristics of postmodern times
3. Elements of postmodern thinking
4. Inspiration of the 20th-century philosophy





Postmodern

reaction on the modernity

a combination of different styles (architecture, painting ...)

pluralism (of forms, opinions in one work)

distrust in big story / strong ideas → necessity of weak ideas

Crisis of big ideas / impossibility of uniform interpretation of the world / world view

There is no ultimate foundation / essence / foundation of reality and cognition

not the reason, but reasonableness

Characteristics of Postmodernism

end of grand narratives, heroes, goals

meta-narratives lost their persuasiveness

end of universal validity of one system

criticism of "the final project"

plurality

anything goes

Culture character?

direction?

meaning?

Map – thoughts, language, symbols

journey without a goal – return – remembrance

traps of the postmodernity: arbitrariness, indifference, incredulity, irresponsibility

Criticism of the flat rationalism

Cultural pluralism – disrespect to the past traditions

nausea, fatigue, resignation

distrust in history (no sense for continuity)

rootlessness, a life without memory, without a future

return before history: dinoparks

Justice as a value – equity as equality – equalization values (desire for absolute justice – utopia)

the world as a game they we invent

end of all schemes

start of surprise, a special (non normality)





Paradigm

Greek PARADEIGMA, Latin *paradigma* – demonstrated a pattern, example, formula, schedule, chart

grammar: pattern, rule

Plato: the realm of ideas – the initial model of the world

formula of culture, model / character of cognition

the central notion of contemporary pluralistic epistemology, focused on randomness (contingency) development and suddenness of changes in scientific knowledge: knowledge of the subject is determined paradigm and not vice versa

assumption (presumption, prerequisite, premise, presupposition)

obviously basis which determines the norm

Bacon (1561-1626): Idols (caves, tribe, marketplace, theatre)

Ptolemy, Newton, Darwin, Einstein

style, internal unity

crisis: anomalies above average, fall of normality

Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* – Paradigm's own verification tool

Karl Popper (1902-1994) – falsification (Needless to insist on what the theory is confirmed; rather watch what they could disprove it.)

hermeneutic philosophy paradigm

Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm

non-classical paradigm of science (multialternative, pluralistic science): Never can collect all the data, criticism of induction

the world is chaos and order at the same time, point of instability, the effect of the butterfly wings

Uncertainty Principle – unrecorded information may cause a large change the position of the observer – the role of effects induced by observation

incompleteness, disputableness of science (target: formal consistency)

Constituent Movements of Postmodernism

1) Release of systemic social ties

2) Breaking horizons of modern reason

States will resemble machines, people change in statistical files of voters, producers, consumers, patients, tourists and soldiers. (Vaclav Havel)

Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities. Hones our sense of





differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. (Jean F. Lyotard)

Unhistoricity of Postmodernism (Ahistorical Postmodernity)

pluralism as a principle

resignation to the question of only one interpretation, only one meaning

experience – experience of the world rather than a rational critical analysis efforts after the discovery of nature, understanding the concept (concept)

Postmodernism is ahistorical: not interested in historical contexts, not a big story

perhaps a reaction to historicism, which in Europe nurtured nationalism, confessional and ideological conflicts

unhistoricity/ahistoricism as a "new freedom"?

Martin Heidegger

"The point is not to gain some knowledge about philosophy but to be able to philosophise. ... Philosophy is wisdom of the world and of life, or, to use an expression current nowadays, philosophy is supposed to provide a *Weltanschauung*, a world-view." (*The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 1927)

Phenomenology

"Hitherto, phenomenology has been understood, even within that discipline itself, as a science propaedeutic to philosophy, preparing the ground for the proper philosophical disciplines of logic, ethics, aesthetics, and philosophy of religion. But ... We shall maintain that phenomenology is not just one philosophical science among others, nor is it the science preparatory to the rest of them; rather, *the expression "phenomenology"* is the name for the *method of scientific philosophy in general*" (Martin Heidegger, 1927: *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*)

Existentialism

Jean-Paul Sartre: "... existentialism, in our sense of the word, is a doctrine that does render human life possible; a doctrine, also, which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity. ... it confronts man with a possibility of choice. ... The question is only complicated because there are two kinds of existentialists. There are, on the one hand, the Christians, amongst whom I shall name Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both professed Catholics; and on the other the existential atheists, amongst whom we must place Heidegger as well as the French existentialists and myself. What they have in common is simply the fact that they believe that existence comes before essence – or, if you will, that we must begin from the subjective." (*Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 1946)





Subjectivism

Jean-Paul Sartre: "The word "subjectivism" is to be understood in two senses, and our adversaries play upon only one of them. Subjectivism means, on the one hand, the freedom of the individual subject and, on the other, that man cannot pass beyond human subjectivity. It is the latter which is the deeper meaning of existentialism. ... If I regard a certain course of action as good, it is only I who choose to say that it is good and not bad. ... we are now upon the plane where there are only men. Dostoevsky once wrote: "If God did not exist, everything would be permitted"; and that, for existentialism, is the starting point. ... there is no determinism – man is free, man is freedom. ... We are left alone, without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does. The existentialist does not believe in the power of passion. ... man is responsible for his passion." (*Existentialism Is a Humanism*, 1946)

Read the following texts:

Martin Heidegger, 1927: *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1942: *The Structure of Behaviour*

Jean-Paul Sartre, 1946: *Existentialism Is a Humanism*

Martin Heidegger, 1949: *Existence and Being*

Emmanuel Lévinas¹

begins in an ontic elucidation of what it means to be an existent
a new analysis of the intentional or transcending movement in our existence
a region "otherwise than being" (*De l'évasion*, 1935-36)
ex-istence: intentional or ecstatic movement

Existential philosophy proposes that ex-istence is man's essence.

Man's existence is teleologically oriented toward presence (Husserl), or is a concern for the world (Heidegger).

Being is not a supposit or a substance; this verb designates an event.

Heidegger went back over the metaphysical thought which distinguished becoming appearance, thought, and the ought in the Physis and contrasted them with being.

¹ Cf. Lingis, Alphonso in Lévinas, Emmanuel. *Collected Philosophical Papers*. 4th printing, April 2013, pp. VII-

also

at:

http://www.monoskop.org/images/o/o8/Levinas_Emanuel_Collected_Philosophical_Papers_1987.pdf [29-9-15]





Lévinas argued for a certain priority of existents – a priority for intelligibility, for existents which begin in the midst of immemorial existence, which form beginnings, initiate intelligibility.

Time, or temporality, is the internal structure of an existent; it articulates the relationship an existent has with its existence.

Ecstatic ex-isting, the common structure of man's thoughts, sentiments and moves, is not disintegration but power, mastery, freedom. Heidegger had seen this power to consist in determining, terminating; Lévinas sees it essentially in initiating, commencing.

What is the meaning of existing?

For Heidegger it is toward nothingness, its own nothingness, that an existent projects itself. Nothingness is in the clearing of the world; the thrust into the world is death bound.

For Lévinas this escape from oneself is a flight from being possessed by oneself.

For Heidegger the ecstatic movement of existing has the affective and practical overtones of a care (care for being, care for oneself).

For Lévinas there are two movements, (1) the movement of separation or insistence constitutive of an existent, effected in enjoyment, and (2) the movement of ecstatic existence, experience or transcendence, by which it opens to exteriority – (1) the movements of position, stance, recollection, inhabitation, possession, and labour by which an existent possesses itself as an identity, and (2) those of discourse, desire, and voluptuousness, by which it transcends that identity and itself. The flight of oneself, the movement to exteriority is to be provoked from the outside in our being contented with the content it is unto itself.

This exteriority, this alterity, is not the world. If the world belongs to subjectivity, subjectivity does not belong to the world; being-in-the-world does not define its essence. Subjectivity takes form, identifying itself, by a retreat from the world – it is inwardness, recollection, a *quant-à-soi* and by an escrescence out of the world, in the excess of its feeling vibrant upon itself, an exhilaration in a mundane effect exceeding what was in its causes.

In the transcendence of such subjectivity there is a movement toward an alterity beyond the externality of the things of the world. In this alterity the other is faced, that is, not recognized. To face another is to answer to him. This alterity appeals to me, it contests me. The other faces me in the poverty and nakedness, and the majesty, of his face. To recognize the alterity of the other is not to grasp, to conceive it, but to answer to his solicitation and to answer for my being; it is to give, a giving of what is meaningful for him.

Instead of "tolerance" **Derrida** suggests "hospitality":

"Pure and unconditional hospitality, hospitality itself, opens, or is in advance open to someone who is neither expected nor invited, to whoever arrives as an absolute foreign visitor, as a new arrival, non-identifiable and unforeseeable, in short wholly other."





Notion: Before completing the following test, I recommend you go through all the study material and then answer the following questions:

Explain the term “paradigm”.

What happens during a paradigm shift?

Name the typical elements of postmodern times.

Who are the existentialists?

Name a few representatives of Dialogical Philosophy of Personalism in the 20th century and characterize the essential features of their thinking.

After studying all materials attached, please, fill your answers in the following test.





Test

Postmodern is:

- 1) Everything that happened in the 20th and 21st centuries
- 2) Reaction to modernity
- 3) Rejecting tradition

The characteristics of postmodernism include the following convictions:

- 1) Nothing goes
- 2) Nothing goes, more or less
- 3) Almost everything goes
- 4) Anything goes

“The realm of ideas” was a paradigm of:

- 1) Ptolemy
- 2) Descartes (Cartesius)
- 3) Plato
- 4) Aristotle
- 5) Bacon

The key role of falsification was emphasized by:

- 1) Darwin
- 2) Kuhn
- 3) Bacon
- 4) Popper

The “uncertainty principle” refers to:

- 1) The role of effects induced by observation
- 2) Bacon’s idols of tribe
- 3) Formal consistency of science
- 4) Unrecorded information which may cause a large change

The author of the statement: “Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself” is:

- 1) Kant





2) Descartes

3) Sartre

4) Marcel

Try to explain Heidegger's notion of "being is earlier than beings".

Try to explain Sartre's sentence: *The ego cannot reach other men through the cogito.*

Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote: "...our knowledge depends upon what we are; moral theory begins with a psychological and sociological critique of oneself; man is not assured ahead of time of possessing a source of morality; consciousness of self is not given in man by right; it is acquired only by the elucidation of his concrete being and is verified only by the active integration of isolated dialectics-body and soul-between which it is initially broken up".

On the basis of this text:

- a) The integration of body and soul is naturally given by development
- b) The integration of body and soul is a consequence of the moral theory
- c) The integration of body and soul demands activity of man





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