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NEO/MODERNISM – PHILOSOPHICAL AWARENESS IN ART

Abstract: We are confronting a major problem with naming the artistic and philosophical moment we have found ourselves in. It should be perceived as significant that the numerous names for the artistic and philosophical responses to modernity pose as their goal the end of post-modernism – as if they were to heal modernism of its disease. Therefore, there have appeared numerous names for “the now”: metamodernism, hypermodernism, remodernism, transmodernism or neomodernism – to enumerate just some of the proposed ones. They position themselves in-between challenge and extension, providing a critique – but also constructive scenarios that appropriate certain themes and methods. The interplay of resistance and perpetuation is ambiguous in all these instances. Nevertheless, the general stance is that their emergence is an attempt to transgress modernism and postmodernism. The problem with neomodernism is already based on the problem with modernism and the unanswered, open questions inherited from it. We are probably living in a trap that we invented ourselves – an interpretation *ad infinitum*. We may argue, however, that the most important feature of modernist art is that it is philosophical. It has the all-questioning, anaesthetic character. It could be called self-awareness of art or iconoclasm of art. The gaze (seeing) and thinking become one, thought is in the forms. Neomodernism may be a better name for what is happening than the crisis of art.

Keywords: modernism, postmodernism, neomodernism, art, philosophy.

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.¹

1. Are returns possible?

I was recently reminded that the "owl of Minerva" always arrives at night. Philosophical wisdom is supposed to come late. Philosophers are neither concerned with immediate reporting on events, nor with live transmissions.

But are they not? In the field of art, this no longer seems obvious. What does seem obvious, however, is that we are confronting a major problem with naming the artistic and philosophical moment we have found ourselves in. It should be perceived as significant that the numerous names for artistic and philosophical responses to modernity pose as their goal the end of post-modernism or even post-postmodernism – as if they were to heal modernism of its disease. "Because the very term post-modernism has come to represent controversy and criticism, many post-modernists avoid the label. Some argue that the word *post-modern* promotes a singular view of reality, encourages closure, and denies complexity. So they retreat from it to avoid its pejorative associations as something bizarre and frivolous."²

Therefore, there have appeared numerous names for "the now". Among those "magic spells" that aim to interpret and alter our direction in culture we may find: metamodernism, hypermodernism, remodelnism, transmodernism or neomodernism – to enumerate just several of the proposals. They position themselves in-between challenge and extension, providing a critique – but also constructive scenarios that appropriate certain themes and methods – and at the same time questioning what seems already invalid. The interplay of resistance and perpetuation is ambiguous, delicate, intricate and complex in all these instances. Nevertheless, the general stance is that their emergence is concerned with the transgression of modernism and postmodernism.

The new artistic and intellectual developments could be therefore viewed in terms of the Hegelian dialectics. This is how they are perceived within the orientation that calls itself neomodernism. The authors of the Neomodern

¹ M. Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into the Air*, Verso: New York, 1983, p. x.

² P. M. Rosenau, *Post-modernism and the social sciences. Insights, inroads, and intrusions*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1992, p. 17.

Manifesto, André Durand and Armando Alemdar, state therein: “Neomodernism acknowledges the primacy of the Hegelian Idea, upholds both figuration and abstraction, and resists the traditional distinction between old masters and modernist works of art.”³ The novelty here is therefore the will to reconnect with the so-called tradition of old masters in the way that would not necessarily constitute an ironic pastiche. This seems to be the difference between neo-modernism and postmodernism. The latter did not take tradition to be a unilinear progression that could be continued. The difference between modernism and neo-modernism is that modernism broke free from tradition and rejected the monopoly of the mimetic principle. It seems that in postmodernism the crisis of representation was continued and radicalized:

The crisis of representation crosscuts post-modernism in every field from art to psychology, and in each case ‘The end of the Order of Representation’ is heralded. (...) What is really interesting cannot be represented: ideas, symbols, the universe, the absolute God, the just or whatever. Representation is alien to what postmodernists value: the romantic, emotions, feelings.⁴

Meanwhile, the self-appointed representatives of neomodernism wish to restore representation as something powerful. They suggest a return to the easel, to painting, to the grand topics in the painting tradition. They view contemporary art as led astray. To support this thesis they quote Damien Hirst, who once stated that there has to be something wrong with the art world if one can ‘do’ it at the age of 32.⁵ The abovementioned representatives wish to restore the Christian symbols – such as the lamb, or the grand themes – like the nude. On top of this synthesis of all the past and the future, they believe that they are pointing the way to a new direction in art. Whether the self-imposed new modernists are the true and only new modernists is a question we will try to pose by the end of this article. For now we need to note that their understanding of neomodernism – but also any vision that incorporates synthesis – would have to include a possibility of a progression, of a path towards completion. The past of art should be then perceived by a neomodernist in the following way: the initial thesis lacks empirical validation (modernism). Therefore, the second negative phase is to give the thesis the sense of the concrete to negate it (postmodernism). The tension between the project that dominated modernity (modernism) and its anti-project (postmodernism) leads us to a synthesis (neomodernism?).

³ <http://www.andredurand-gallery2000.com/pages/manifesto>, retrieved 6.09.2016

⁴ P. M. Rosenau, *op.cit.* p. 94.

⁵ <http://www.andredurand-gallery2000.com/pages/manifesto>, retrieved 6.09.2016

Many scholars, however, have abandoned the idea of progress, progression, or any linearity for the narrative of human experience. For them, looking through the lenses of linear development and seeing an unused potential in modernism is sheer naivety. Others may perceive neomodernism and some of the “-isms” cited above as a continuation of post-modernism, rather than unfulfilled modernist potential. Pauline Rosenau, for example, differentiates between affirmative and sceptical post-modernism. To stay consistent with its assumptions, sceptical post-modernism should probably not find its continuation at all, but the affirmative version of postmodernism (that which does not construe any overriding truth or meaning but is also not dogmatic about its inexistence) could be easily developed further, according to Rosenau.

Can we therefore be positive that neomodernism actually exists? Can we assume that it is a current unfolding in art and culture? Perhaps it is an intuition or an interpretation of the *zeitgeist* rather than a current? A wishful prognosis. If there is no certainty that it exists, how can it be discussed by philosophers? First of all, if it is uncertain whether something is or is not, then it is definitely a ground for philosophers. Secondly, maybe the owl turns out to be a falcon and its flying in circles makes it more predictable for those who observe the flight. The new and the old are not as separate as we would like to think. Or, perhaps, the owl is a swallow. The debate about whether it is the philosophers or the artists who intuit the earthquake is reminiscent of the hen and egg dilemma. Birds aside, apart from confronting all the new “-isms” and “types of modernisms”, we should face the fact that there must be an unsolved problem (or problems) with modernism – or at least with modernity – that is coming to surface. Apart from that, there are two more scenarios connected with this folly of names that I suggest confronting. The first is that we should abandon our hopes of finding a single “-ism” to describe our plural reality. And the second is that Minerva in the end is right: we cannot grasp phenomena while they last. We also never know when they actually come to an end.

What could be this problem with modernism and modernity that produces a compulsion to multiply names and scenarios? It was already the “make it new” slogan of modernism that turned out to be a trap in itself. Making things new is about breaking with tradition, but what happens if this tradition is already a tradition of breaking with tradition? How would it be possible to struggle to make modernism forever new? The keeping up of modernist tradition stands in opposition to making it new. It is not, however, impossible – as the representatives of neomodernism seem to demonstrate. But are they truly convincing with their script-based art? The neomodernism that they announce is not an *ensemble* of cultural movements that we recognize as animating art, literature, architecture and music. It is more of an effort to create it in the closed laboratory of their thoughts and works.

All in all, the paradoxical effort to perpetuate the avant-garde and the interruption of tradition – that modernism has indeed itself become – has been fiercely criticized by both the public and the art critics. This time we must really ask ourselves whether reality can be divided into notions, and whether this can be done in a preventive fashion, as a performative speech act, or just as a post-factum description. Some of us may actually think that modernism has never stopped having its impact since the very first tremors of this art-quake. But what would provide sufficient evidence that we have never abandoned modernism and that it is still there? Even if we do not sympathize with analytical solutions, they may at least be considered. Let us think of Occam's razor and envisage the possibility of acting in accordance with its simplicity principle. This heuristic technique teaches us that in choosing a theoretical model one can be guided by a preference for less complexity, since simpler theories are more easily verifiable. This is not an irrefutable principle, it is practical. Why use multiple instruments, if we need just one? Nevertheless, we can also perceive the situation from the opposite side: if four instruments are not enough, we need to add a fifth one. Maybe the argument that the modernist compulsion to make things new is indeed one of its essential features and therefore all other modernisms (postmodernism and neomodernism included) could actually be viewed as its mutations is stronger than Occam's razor.

2. What is modernism?

In the light of the above, it seems that the question of the nature of neomodernism could also be reformulated as the question about modernism. Are we done with modernism? Can we search for a new name that indicates a certain rupture with what it was to respond to reality in the 20th century and before? Do we need the term "neomodernism" to signal a break from postmodernism or from modernism?

Finding a deep break between the past and the present has become both one of the least and the most favourite tasks in the social sciences. Although judging the beginnings and ends of phenomena has been lately perceived as somewhat arbitrary, we do recognize them when they are truly dramatic. We can, for example, observe the rise or the fall of such features as rationalism and instrumentation. We have been able to see how the Bible ceases to be the only point of reference for the deepest human dilemmas. What dramatic change can we pinpoint then between modernism and neomodernism? The dramatic changes that appear between modernism and its continuations seem to be the critique of the Western, Europocentric vision and the critique of universalism and utopia. For any optimistic project, utopia must probably loom in the distance.

But looming in the distance as the horizon of an unreachable ideal is not the same as being seen as an actual possibility.

The problem with neomodernism is already based on the problem with modernism and the unanswered, open questions inherited from it. Nevertheless, we should ask whether the existence of unanswered questions makes modernism a fiasco or rather shows its “never-ending now” as a potential to continue shaping our future through art and philosophy. Or is it perhaps in the nature of modernity that it is an open-ended project – an Open Work, a writerly text that is to be constantly rewritten by the reader? We are probably living in a trap that we have invented ourselves: the trap of an interpretation *ad infinitum*. Nevertheless, what we can consciously choose is an interpretation that suits our best intentions for the future. “In order to consciously take part in the project of modernity, one needs to be able to objectively differentiate oneself from modernization. Having said this, *modernization*, *modernity* and *modernism* are all made from the same clay.”⁶ Differentiating oneself from modernization means that we remain distanced and critical towards the circumstances of our material existence in the world, e.g. the technological possibilities. Modernity is the now, modernization is the vector of the material conception for our living, and the modernisms are responses to it. What Greenhalgh means by “the same clay” is probably the context.

One should not forget that Modernism has its temporal and spatial characteristics as the European style that some trace back to mid-19th century, and others ascribe to the 1920-1960 period in visual arts. Nevertheless, Gallien Déjean highlights the fact that it was the 1950s and 1960s that constituted the moment of outstanding intensity in art. There appeared a lot of new artistic groups like GRAV, MID, NULL, Gorgona, Exat 51, G-58, Fluxux, collective ZERO. Of course there were differences in their programmes, but there were also important common elements. Déjean also sees a major difference between the 1940s, marked by the trauma of the war and concentrated on individual wounds, and the more distanced 1950s.

Modernism is far from being a simple concept and different researchers trace different origins for it. The temporally narrowest view of modernism is that of some researchers of design who see it as a style originating in the Bauhaus in the 1920s and ending in the 1960s. The broadest view, popular among philosophers, traces its roots to the Enlightenment with its combination of humanist and rational influences. There is also a third, “radical” tendency – to see modernism as an approach or attitude that is not fully defined by time.

⁶ P. Greenhalgh, *The Modern Ideal. The Rise and Collapse of Idealism in the Visual Arts. From the enlightenment to postmodernism*, V&A Publications : London 2005, p. 23.

This vision was represented in design by Dan Friedman, who wrote: “I view modernism in design as a broad, potentially open-minded, and inexhaustible way of thinking that began in the mid-nineteenth century and continues today among the majority of us who believe that we should use all existing means to understand, improve, change, and refresh our condition in the world.”⁷ Meanwhile, in his efforts to define modernism, Peter Gay writes jokingly in his book *Modernism. The Lure of Heresy*⁸ that you know modernism when you see it. But this – even if true – cannot be enough for a scholar. What is more, it would make us confused about the question of modernity. “The word ‘modern’ (...) has allowed us, through the last century, to label ‘modern’ every painting, pot, dress, lampshade, sculpture, wardrobe or bungalow that has contained bright colour, flat surfaces or quirky angles, without too much thought.”⁹

To trace and understand modernism we have to know how we recognize it. The reason for sketching the impossible portrait of modernism reflected in today’s tendencies is an underlying belief that “For two and a half centuries, artists have struggled to create an art appropriate to the conditions of the modernized world. The outcome of this struggle has been modern art. Modern art remains a grand problem.”¹⁰ One could ask why it remains a problem and also why it remains. When modernism is concerned there arises a number of questions, such as what is modern and what is contemporary, and how do we draw the line between the two; or what is the relation between modernism and the avant-garde; or what is the relation between modernism and postmodernism. It becomes clear that we are confronted with a constellation of interdependent notions of modernism, postmodernism, avant-garde, modern, contemporary. The centre of this constellation, however, seems to be a kind of prolonged now, rather difficult to delineate. If we accept the definition of modernity suggested by Paul Greenhalgh – “(...) to be concise at least on the definition: modernity is the name we give to our responses to the material modernization of the world”¹¹ – we may see that modernity can never end. Greenhalgh adds yet another notion to the constellation – that of modernization:

We (that is to say, some of us) have changed the physical world irrevocably over the last number of centuries. In doing so, we (all of us) were ourselves changed: modernity is the collectivity of responses to the change

⁷ D. Friedman, *Radical Modernism*, Yale University Press: New Haven, 1994, p. 114.

⁸ P. Gay, *Modernism. The Lure of Heresy. From Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond*. W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 2008, p. 1.

⁹ P. Greenhalgh, op.cit, p. 15.

¹⁰ Ibidem, op.cit, p. 13.

¹¹ Ibidem, op.cit, p. 22.

modernization has wrought in us. Modernity is thus a state of being that exists in a tense, intertwined relationship with modernization. More than this, we (again some of us) *deliberately* modernized the world, but as a species we did not deliberately set out to change ourselves: it was the process of a modernization that changed us, bestowing on us a wholly novel set of experiences, and demanding of us that we respond.¹²

The aspect of a reply to the on-going process of modernization seems essential, as well as the fact of recognizing that the modernization of ourselves is both mental and physical, since technology reaches deep into our bodies. But are these the most important elements of the definition?

3. The atemporality of modernism

It is often repeated that it is the development of modern industrial societies that has shaped the modernist trend. However, the actual consequences of this “shaping” are not determined; the technological and industrial development is still ongoing. Thus, together with its new turns and consequences we can observe new reactions towards it in art. But are these reactions still modernist in their approach? And what would that mean? Continuous enthusiasm, shock, or an assimilation of forms and themes? Technology is still evolving, or rather undergoing revolutionary changes. We are more informed about it and sceptical towards it – but at the same time we are becoming increasingly dependent on it and even constituted by it.

Another important factor forming the identity of modernism is usually traced to the atrocities of World War I and World War II. However, the scholars of modernism adopt different standpoints in this respect. Some seem to ascribe the direct formative impact to the years just after the war. Gallien Déjean¹³ writes that the practices of the 1940s were mainly based on individual traumas and that the artists largely inscribed those private scars into their works. Thus, she is more appreciative of the art of the 1950s, which – according to her – was freed from this individual dimension and concentrated on the development of the work of art as such. According to Déjean, the work of art in the 1950s was struggling towards the new dimensions of transitivity. It entered the domain of what Umberto Eco calls the Open Work. The features of the Open Work – the

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ G. Déjean, *Zéro et Nouvelles Tendances. L'enjeu transrégional* [in:] *Au nom de l'art.. Enquête sur le statut ambigu des appellations artistiques de 1945 à nos jours*. Publication de la Sorbonne: Paris, 2013, p. 157-170.

artist's decision to leave the arrangements of some constituents of a work of art undetermined, open to the readers' or viewers' interpretation or to chance, its multiplicity and plurality – persist until today. If Déjean is right, there is already a shift within the decades. Therefore, without an integral consistent character throughout the trend, how can we compare the *here* and *now* with the *then* and *there*? Shall we not rather seek the characteristics that are less related to temporality? The trauma of the war and the technological trauma (even if the technology had been met with enthusiasm) can never be really healed, but these events do not really shape our identity in the same sense as they did a hundred years ago. Perhaps instead of focusing on particular events, the criterion of modernist thinking should be the more general “responsiveness to a context”. A different way of looking at the importance of the context has been suggested by Jacques Rancière, who – instead of using the problematic notions connected with contemporary art or trying to understand modernity which is the basis for the development in contemporary art – offers the notion of aesthetic regime. Each work of art is constituted by its context, its historical situation, and – according to Rancière – has its political implications. Therefore each conception of art positions itself towards the regime, where the regime means a number of assumptions that influence the meaning of the art works.

The complexity of the “here” and “now” versus “there” and “then” that opens up when we start confronting the notions of modernism and neomodernism if we use Greenlagh's perspective is that “For each artist and movement within the whole modern tradition, the problem has always been both the same and different. It has been the same, because the reason why modern art is made has remained the same; it is different, because the conditions in which it is made have constantly changed, demanding different aesthetic solutions.”¹⁴ It is disputable whether, as Greenlagh suggests, the reason to make modern art is the same. He does not even state this reason as if it were a very obvious one. It is a rare approach to treat anything as obvious in the realm of art and philosophy. To start with, the reasons to make art can be divided into those that concern immediate and material recognition and those that touch upon somewhat transcendent grounds (communicating a certain insight, creating a reality that can have a transforming power or a platform for sublimation of feelings etc.). It seems that each artist can have motivations of his/her own and that a given trend captures art as a slightly different entity. Isn't it true, then, that the reason to make art changes together with the understanding of what it is? However, this plurality of definitions and motivations constitutes one of the reasons why we have found ourselves at a loss to find a common label for contemporary artistic actions.

¹⁴ P. Greenlagh op.cit., p. 13.

Similarly to Greenlagh, Jacques Rancière points to a particular reason to make art. He says that being loyal to the general motive for art – figurative or any other kind – which has imposed itself since the times when it is no longer obligated by the norms of representation, is to make visible what is not seen, what finds itself underneath the visible: the invisible which makes the visible possible.¹⁵

4. Philosophical awareness in art

In the search for an atemporal dimension of modernism we may consult the views of Alain Viguier, who has highlighted the importance of the attack on the separation of the work of art and life in his book on the avant-garde entitled *Logique du cadre. Précédents et conséquences de la néo avant-garde*.¹⁶ In his view, the avant-garde is about attacking the institutions or people trying to draw a borderline between life and art. This attack persists until today. Nevertheless, it also provides us with a problem concerning the criteria of recognizing art objects. If everything and anything could be an art object and if there is no division between art and life, we cannot tell the difference between an art object and a non-art object.

We may argue, however, that the most important feature of modernist art is its philosophicalness. It has an all-questioning, anaesthetic character. It could be called self-awareness of art or iconoclasm of art. The gaze (seeing) and thinking become one; thought is in the forms. What are the particular philosophical features of modernism? To enumerate just three:

- The wish to depart from point zero, to start everything anew without using the assumptions of tradition.¹⁷ We see this method used by Socrates, Descartes, phenomenology.
- The turn away from the focus on perception and reception towards production (the processual context of creation rather than the structure or materiality of the work).
- The questioning of itself, of its goals and aims, methods, frontiers and characteristics.

¹⁵ see : J. Rancière, *Figure de l'Histoire*, Presses Universitaires de France: Paris, 2012.

¹⁶ A. Viguier, *Logique du cadre. Précédents et conséquences de la néo avant-garde*, Hôtel des Bains éditions: Verneuil-sur-Avre, 2005, p. 5.

¹⁷ E. de Chasse, S. Raymond (ed.), *Repartir à zéro, comme si la peinture n'avait jamais existé*, Musée des beaux arts de Lyon, Hazan: Paris 2008.

The first two characteristics should make us think of revolutionary moments in modern philosophy. In the first feature we hear the echo of Socrates, Descartes, Husserl, in the second that of Kant, and the third could actually be seen as characterizing philosophy as such. Although Wolfgang Iser has written his famous essay on “The birth of postmodern philosophy from the spirit of modern art”, we can clearly see – considering the three given characteristics – that the question of what is born from what is again reminiscent of the egg and hen dilemma. The self-questioning tendency of philosophy since ancient times is well-known.

Now it may become more clear that the goal of defining modernism in a definitive way is equally difficult, not to say absurd, as that of trying to define philosophy in one definitive way. This results from their very nature – the impossibility of separating them from life, the closeness which they both demand. We live them and their definition escapes us because it is continually enlarged by what we do. This is also the reason why defining modernism and philosophy always has a prescriptive aspect, as it is an equation of a somewhat tactical or strategic decision where to find its frontiers. Nevertheless, it is an important task that has to be regularly renewed. In this perspective, neo-modernism may be perceived as a new hermeneutical effort to understand modernity.

5. Neomodernism

Can we say, in regard to the relation between modernism and neomodernism, that artistic strategies and aesthetic solutions have been reused, although the conditions have changed? Would Peter Gay’s joke, mentioned in the beginning of this article, be still funny and true: that we know modernism when we see it? What are the ways in which modernism returns? Are they visual or rather intellectual? Perhaps they have to do with the continuation of certain visual philosophy which might have developed itself in the ways that it criticizes and negates. The clear use of the modernist visual conventions would probably be an act of reinventing the wheel. Perhaps we cannot say that we know modernism, or this time rather neomodernism, when we see it because, in order not to lose its meanings, it must adapt to the new context and use a new vocabulary of artistic tools that we are not yet able to visually recognize.

To approach this question much more practically, it seems indispensable to look at a particular example. Let us examine the painting of George Condo, an American artist born in 1957. When we look at most of Condo’s paintings we will see the large spectrum of conventions that he uses. And already here we shall stop and see that the “use” of conventions is not the same as the breaking

of conventions. Condo takes advantage of a vast, existing repertoire that brings us back to surrealist, cubist, abstract and pop-art paintings. Contemporarily, we can call them conventions because they have all by now been well established in art; meanings have been ascribed to them, their importance challenged by time. The allusions to cubism can be seen in the way the figures are posed, the use of colours, the geometrization and fragmentarization of the depicted people and objects. What is then the characteristic of his painting? Is it just a sum of the hybridizations of the earlier conventions? The “seeing” that is engaged here is not of an innocent character; it is experienced and well-informed.

Finally, we should thus ask what is neomodernism? It is interesting to see that one of the most important philosophers thought of as neomodernist does not use the word “neomodern” in her book that could seem crucial to the theory of neomodernism. Agnes Heller in *Can modernity survive?* refers to pre-modernism, modernism and postmodernism, but there is no mention of neomodernism. The same applies to her book *Aesthetics and Modernity*, written with John Rundell. She does, however, use such words as “humanisation” or “universalism” – which take us back to the modernist landscape.

Likewise, the term “neomodernism” is difficult to find in French philosophy; it is much easier to read about the avant-garde and its multiple waves. Peter Burger enumerates the practices employed after World War II – such as monochrome, ready-made, assemblage, collage, constructivist structure – to conclude that they can all be described as neo-avantgarde. In his *Theorie der Avantgarde* (1974), he writes that these are passive repetitions of a heroic period in the beginning of the 20th century. He also believes that the criticism towards traditional institutions has been neutralized. Buchloh and Foster have a different notion of the avant-garde: they do not describe it in terms of pastiche, but rather in terms of a historiographic re-reading of modern artistic tendencies, or in terms of retracing a certain discourse of the avant-garde that was repressed by the formalist discourse. The French theoreticians mention the first wave of neo-avantgarde, thus our contemporary situation could be described as the second wave of the avant-garde. The time period of the first neo-avantgarde may be delineated as 1950-1970.

We should ask ourselves if the differentiation between the terms “modernism”, “postmodernism” and “neomodernism” is needed only to divide the large stretches of time and the changing context. The change of name should follow a rupture, a change in identity, an overcoming of the initial flaws. In the Neomodern Manifesto, we can read that “Durand’s *Away from the Flock/Et In Arcadia Ego* is an emblematic ‘Neomodern’ picture, extending the dialectical movement from so-called high art to Postmodernism and beyond. Neomodernism restores the traditional and eternal values of art while contemplating the essence and potential of the present.”¹⁸ Is it then a consciously constructed trend or is it

rather the sum of all the tendencies that we observe today and that bear some or many resemblances to the modernist trend? Is it a name for the times we are living in? A name that shows a rupture with postmodernist critique and a new effort to construct artistic and philosophical reality? Jacques Rancière reminds us in the chapter entitled “L’excès des mots” that letting ourselves be trapped by words means using the words which are improper, because they are not contemporary to what they name.¹⁹ In fact, he is talking about Cobban and the Revolution – but the task of interpreting his words remains. It is impossible not to notice that the entire discussion about art and its role has become very politicized. Certainly, for Rancière, the dialectic of power and knowledge is a crucial one. Seeing as knowing thus becomes a life and death issue. The crisis of art that was announced a long time ago – over thirty years ago or more – is one of the possible names for what is happening to us now. Nevertheless, as Rancière tells us, the rhetoric of the criticism of this period of art may be more important for those who criticize than the object of the criticism.²⁰ Perhaps this is why “neomodernism” is still a better name for what is currently happening than “crisis”.

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¹⁹ J. Rancière, *Figure de l'Histoire*, Presses Universitaires de France: Paris, 2012, p. 70.

²⁰ J. Rancière, *Chroniques des temps consensuels*, Seuil: Paris, 2005, p. 62.

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NEO/MODERNIZM - FILOZOFICZNA ŚWIADOMOŚĆ W SZTUCE (streszczenie)

Doświadczamy obecnie poważnego problem związanego z nazwaniem artystycznego i filozoficznego momentu, w którym się znaleźliśmy. Znaczący wydaje się fakt, że liczne nazwy artystycznych i filozoficznych odpowiedzi na nowoczesność dają sobie za cel zakończenie postmodernizmu – tak jakby miały wyleczyć modernizm z jego choroby. Nazwy, które pojawiły się, aby opisać nasze “teraz” to: metamodernizm, hypermodernizm, remodernizm, transmodernizm czy neomodernizm. Propozycje te stanowią zarazem krytykę jak i kontynuację dotychczasowych trendów. Każdorazowo dialektyczna gra pomiędzy oporem i kontynuacją jest wieloznaczna i skomplikowana. Jednakże ich pojawienie się w sposób ogólny można wiązać z przekraczaniem modernizmu i postmodernizmu. Problem z neomodernizmem oparty jest na nierozwiązanym problemie z modernizmem; odziedziczone zostają te same pytania. Wygląda na to, że żyjemy w pułapce, którą sami wymyśliliśmy, jest nią interpretacja *ad infinitum*. Można argumentować, że najważniejszą cechą modernistycznej sztuki jest jej filozoficzność, podający wszystko w wątpliwość anestetyczny charakter. Można nazwać ową filozoficzność samoświadomością sztuki lub jej ikonoklastycznością. Wzrok (patrzenie) i myślenie stają się jednym, myśl zawiera się w formach. Być może neomodernizm to lepsza nazwa na to co obecnie się dzieje niż “kryzys”.

Słowa kluczowe: modernizm, postmodernizm, neomodernizm, sztuka, filozofia.