

Tadeusz PALECZNY

Jagiellonian University in Kraków

e-mail: tadeusz.palczny@uj.edu.pl

TRANSGRESSION AS A RESULT OF CULTURAL CONTACT

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the processes of transferring the cultural elements between different racial, ethnic and religious groups. The transmission of various cultural products containing symbols, norms and values is the result of cross-cultural contact and multicultural relations. Transgression is a kind of exchange and transcultural diffusion between two or more different cultural groups. The processes of common cross-cultural, two-directional influences lead to the creation of new types of universalized identity and create the transcultural forms of social as well as political organization.

Keywords: transgression, cultural contact

Transgression, a term transferred from the area of psychology to the fields of anthropology and cultural studies, is increasingly used in cultural sciences. Its original meaning, which was determined by psychologists, denotes the human need, inclination, eagerness to take on challenges, overcome barriers and cross borders. Transgressive activity is therefore a natural, inborn human need in an intellectual, axio-normative and behavioural sense.

In the intellectual sense, transgression results in the search for unknown phenomena, their discovery and study, the creation of new theories, descriptive models and attempts to explain reality. It may be said that any cognitive activity, especially that of a scientific character, requires one to go beyond the boundaries of knowledge and is therefore transgressive in nature. Any new idea which refutes the existing body of knowledge is essentially transgressive. The heliocentric theory in the field of astronomy, which led to the changes in the prevailing system of values and norms, serves as a good example. As in the case of all transgressive activity, it was met with considerable and consistent resistance on behalf of political and religious institutions upholding the existing axio-normative order. In an intellectual, cognitive sense, especially in the fields of science and art, transgression may be considered heuristic, creative, sometimes revealing, exploratory, progressive, radical. Transgression which takes place in the realm of thought, in the field of symbols and ideas, is a creative activity. However, not all acts of creative will result in clear, positive cultural consequences, as in the case of the fission of the atom and the resulting invention of a powerful weapon. Additionally, many ideas are never brought to fruition, never realised in social practice. Many creative acts of a transgressive nature remain in the sphere of ideas, taking on the form of utopian visions, artistic and scientific works, philosophical treatises, concepts or theories. On the other hand transgression broadens the borders of culture and enriches it by introducing new elements, not only practical inventions, but also creations of a symbolic nature. Many of these cultural consequences of intellectual transgressions remain in the minds or – metaphorically speaking – the “drawers” of their creators, others spread rapidly and enter the sphere of popular culture. Even in its avant-garde form, which is rejected during the social system’s first negative reaction towards it, intellectual, creative transgression is the engine of progress and cultural development. The social sciences attempt to determine the connections and cause-and-effect relationships between the intellectual output of man and the changes taking place in culture. In other words, anthropology and cultural studies, fields concerned with the cultural creations of man, raise the question of the scope of the individual’s impact on culture. Insofar as the opposite relation, the impact of culture on the individual, is clear, the influence of the mechanisms of cultural change which are triggered by outstanding creative personalities is unclear and virtually unexplored.

Transgression also infringes on the existing system of values and norms, sometimes questioning and contesting one of its elements. It may also take on the form of outright rebellion against all of the accepted and axio-normatively established rules of the socio-cultural order. Phenomena categorised as transgressive are also described as trans-

boundary, nonconformist, contesting, transcultural, intercultural, and are associated with the terms: eccentric, radical, total, extreme. This aspect of transgression, transgression as an activity that infringes on the fundamental rules, values and norms of societies shaped and structured in an organised manner (including in a political and religious manner), is most often discussed in the field of social sciences and the humanities. The transgressive activity of individuals or even entire collectivities, such as artistic groups, secret societies, subcultures, religious, ethnic or sexual minorities, terrorist or anarchist groups, members of new social movements, most often leads to their exclusion, marginalisation or even repression. The questioning and contesting of basic social values and norms is in principle an attack on the culture of a particular group which disturbs the cohesive structure of that group and threatens to destabilize it. The majority's natural response to transgression is resistance. Transgression is often antisocial, antireligious, antinational or antichurch. The names of many legally or customarily acceptable transgressive activities include terms such as: anti-art, anti-culture, counterculture, subculture. Transgression is therefore frequently innovative not only in the realm of ideas but also because of its tendency to interpret values and norms in a manner which differs from that which is established. It also results in the acceptance and promulgation of an alternative axio-normative system which goes against the existing order, guarded by a network of organisations and institutions, including state authorities and churches.

In the behavioural sense, transgression is an action integrated into creative activities which may take on a constructive or destructive character. Without delving into the nature of the transgressive "hubric metaneed" (KOZIELECKI 2002), a psychologically defined phenomenon determined by both nature and culture, its social and collective consequences, rather than the description and characterisation of its individual manifestations, constitute an interesting object of study for researchers in the fields of sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. Within the term cultural transgression, in the simple merging of two words, lies a relationship fundamental for ontological and epistemological analysis – the relationship between that which pertains to the realm of the psyche, which is a product of human nature and the personality of the individual, and that which is collective and socio-cultural. In other words, transgression, conditioned by both psychological and socio-cultural factors, leads to changes in the position and status of the psychological subject, but also to a cultural reaction. Transgression ought to be defined in a psycho-cultural manner with reference to the analytical category of cultural identity. Transgression leads to changes in the cultural identity of individuals, determined by the set of values and standards considered necessary in the social group. Therefore, transgression should not be categorized as a typical individual act of non-conformity, disobedience, contestation, rebellion or maladjustment, but rather as a particular individual's reaction to the restrictions and limitations imposed by the system of social norms.

The usefulness of the term is a separate issue. As in the case of transculturation and transnationality, the term transgression has become a permanent element of cultural studies. It stems from the universalising needs of scientific language, the transferral of the English term *trans*, common to many languages from the area of *lingua latina*, de-

noting “something in-between,” “on the border,” into a common area. There are numerous equivalents to the term *transkulturowy* (transcultural) in the Polish language, such as *międzykulturowy* (intercultural), *wielokulturowy* (multicultural), *zewnętrzny* (external) or *graniczny* (bordering). For scholars in the fields of anthropology and cultural studies it would be easier and more precise to use the terms *przenikanie kulturowe* (cultural permeation) or *zderzenie kulturowe* (cultural clash), which are phenomena that occur as a result of every type of inter-group meeting and contact, regardless of whether they result in conflict and antagonism or integration and assimilation. Cultural transgression as a transcultural social phenomenon on the border of cultures can be found in the domination-subordination model but also at the point of contact of a number of different communities within multicultural, pluralistic societies. Thus the transfer of this analytical category from the sphere of psychology, art, creative output, from the area of attitude and identity theories, to anthropology and cultural studies is only a step away. Therefore, it would seem that the adoption of the terms “cultural transgression” and “transculturality,” bearing in mind the differences in meaning, is justified not only by the necessity of unifying intercultural communication codes, but by the need to combine, with the end goal of synthesis, the scientific output of researchers from different cultures representing various scientific fields.

Transgression challenges nature and subsequently moves to the sphere of culture, as a phenomenon manifested through nonconformity, a broad spectrum of ideas, attitudes, contesting and rebellious activities, resulting in attempts to oppose the dominant and generally accepted systems of cultural values and norms. At present cultural transgression rarely goes against nature or corporal limitations, it is more frequently associated with contestation and rebellion.

Cultural transgression, considered by the author of the present work to be a complex set of processes and phenomena located on the borders of culture and civilisation, is characterised by pairs of analytical extremes: psychology-society, individual-group, identity-culture. However, transgressive phenomena cannot be understood through psychological or sociological reduction. Transgression, as the effect of not only certain states of consciousness, views and ideas, but most of all behaviours and actions, has psychological as well as social and cultural implications. When conducting an analysis of needs and motives, it is impossible to separate the acting individual from the context and cultural background, the values and norms of a particular cultural group. The situation is further complicated by the fact that transgression no longer refers to the unified, monocentric, homogenous culture of one specific group, but is located at the point where two or, realistically speaking, many cultures come into contact. If one assumes the universal psychological nature of all human action, this also leads to the cultural relativisation of its social and collective consequences. The dominant state in contemporary cultural studies is ambiguity, a result of the multicontextuality and relativism of concepts and their meanings.

Transgression not only strives “towards something,” it is also a centrifugal movement away “from something.” The blurry border between “here” and “there” is also the space between “today” and “tomorrow,” “us” and “them,” “old” and “new.” Crossing

the border which leads away “from something” does not mean reaching another border which leads “towards something.” Transgression transfers individuals from one culture to another, from a traditional, homogenous, “rigid” space to a postmodern, multicultural, pluralist area of civilisation which is open to diversity. However, it is usually the case that upon abandoning their native culture and crossing normative and axiological borders, individuals and the groups created by them do not reach a new order, do not cross the borders in the designated direction, but instead remain “in-between” two systems of values, like a castaway at sea who cannot reach either of the islands in his vicinity, floating in the vast ocean of uncertainty and indeterminacy. Therefore, in many cases transgression is a trap which results in estrangement, alienation, exclusion in a socio-cultural sense. Transgressive individuals and the groups created by them are located at the cultural borderlands between two or more axio-normative systems, contesting and encroaching on their borders and values. As a result of crossing the established borders, to whatever extent and on whatever terms, transgressive individuals and groups no longer belong to any culture, they go beyond the established system, willingly but sometimes also accidentally and unconsciously – they “check out” from the existing order and, in terms of the sphere of values, often find themselves “in the middle of nowhere.” However, in this intercultural area located on the transgressive borderline, in this “in-between” space, there are landmarks which stem from beyond the border. Not only that border which is agreed on, mental, symbolic and cultural, but also that which is real, spatial, linguistic, organizational and common. Transgressive means external, “foreign,” “from beyond the border.” It is also associated with the minority, considered marginal and unfamiliar. It is therefore no surprise that many of the elements of transgression theory were established in the area of research and studies on migration and spatial transfers, especially their cultural and social consequences.

1. TRANSGRESSION AS A FACTOR OF CHANGE

All attitudes, actions and acts of a transgressive nature refer to the existing, dominant culture. More often than not they constitute a challenge for the prevailing values and norms and undoubtedly disrupt the existing status quo. Although not always an intentional activity directed towards change, transgression often leads to alterations in the existing state of affairs or at the least stresses the need to reflect on the range of restrictions, barriers and borders which influence the functioning and development of culture. The transgressive activity of individuals and groups clearly signals the need for change, it is the result of restrictions which are imposed by culture and considered detrimental. As any challenge directed towards society and culture, transgression also has an expressive, autotelic dimension, it serves no other purpose than to demonstrate its disagreement with the status quo. In most cases, even when it is destructive, it has the tendency to change the existing state of affairs. In relation to culture, from which it stems, every act of transgression, by going beyond the limits of acceptability, forces the system to react. In this sense transgressive activity may be considered innovative,

despite pertaining to age-old values, norms and phenomena, such as religion, carnality, abortion and sexual behaviour. The borders of culture, designated by moral or legal standards, are constantly questioned through the act of transgression by both individuals and social groups.

Every civil society maintains its continuity and stability thanks to culture. Culture itself is a correlate of the organizational system and social structure. What is more, it aims to protect them. Law, morality, religion, science, state and economy, understood as elements of the socio-cultural system, are based on fixed sets of fundamental values. Individual elements of culture are complementary and supplement one another. Since they ensure cohesion within the group, the values encoded in them are protected and passed down from one generation to the next. According to Florian Znaniecki (ZNANIECKI 1992: 277):

This belief in the fundamental immutability of the ideological system of people who believe that it is based on some absolute principles, combined with the popular practice of equating behavioural models with models of activity, was the source of the old and abiding antithesis – cultural order – cultural change, an antithesis that can be found in many religious, political and sociological theories, in cultural theories in general but also in studies devoted to particular cultures.

Attitudes, behaviours and transgressive activities are rarely directed against values considered timeless and unchanging. Moreover, transgression is not directed “against” culture, its aim is rather to go beyond the established cultural boundaries. Individuals and groups who conduct transgressive activities, including new social movements, usually do not negate the meaning of ideals such as freedom, equality or brotherhood, they do not go against God or religion, they do not question the principles of the state and the system of social organization; instead, their aim is to overcome what they perceive as limitations and barriers established by the existing social order.

To reiterate, transgression does not aim to bring about social change. Nevertheless, it does signal such a possibility or need on part of the people who, by conducting transgressive activities, point to the limitations which are a result of the “rigidity” of the axio-normative system. It is not the reaction of the socio-cultural system to transgression, but rather the disruption of its functionality and consistency that leads to change, especially when transgressive behaviour becomes widespread and can no longer be considered an attribute and indicator of the dissatisfaction of minorities, subcultures or social movements. Transgression as a means of collective contestation assumes the form of a subculture or social movement. Transgression as a factor of cultural change initiated by subcultures or social movements refers to the following aspects of the functioning of the social system and the restrictions which it imposes:

1. Repressiveness of cultural norms. Transgression goes against the excessive repressiveness of religious, legal, ethical and moral norms. The level of unification, institutionalisation and obligation expressed in prohibitions and negative sanctions, which are applied if one deviates from the norm, has a decisive influence on the degree of

radicalisation and the intensity of transgressive behaviour and activities. Cultural transgression is an act of creative freedom, especially in the area of artistic, scientific and intellectual creation, expressed in ways which are innovative and shock public opinion. In extreme cases, those who engage in transgressive behaviour and activities may be subject to condemnation, exclusion, discrimination and even loss of freedom or life. Contemporary cultural transgression takes place in developed, liberal, democratic societies within Western civilisation. Consequently, deviation from the norm is far more acceptable than in other types of societies, especially when it comes to symbolic culture, literature, art, music or film.

2. Artificiality and dysfunctionality of norms. Contestation on the part of subcultures and new social movements is one of the manifestations of transgression. Transgressive subcultures are to a large extent the product of cultural norms that are not natural or not fully authentic. The term natural here refers to the compatibility of the biological and social needs of the members of these groups with the commonly accepted cultural dos and don'ts. This aspect can be described through the dichotomy of experienced values and recognized values. Not all values considered socially important are experienced in a personal and fully internalized manner. Early 21st-century subcultures, insofar as they can be described using these categories, are the product of multicultural, pluralistic society. Originality, distinctiveness and extravagance are considered normal and almost universally accepted. Transgression as a form of contestation is usually not directed "against something" but rather "towards something." In groups such as those created by sexual minorities, the art community, new religious movements and the emo, rave and goth subcultures, the point is no longer to rebel but rather to emphasise authenticity and individuality in expressing one's own needs. Members of these groups direct their transgressive contestation not so much against the rules established by the system, but against the hypocrisy, inflexibility and excessive formalism that are characteristic of the norms of the dominant culture.

3. Codification of norms. In this case transgressive behaviour is usually adopted in order to reduce the excessive rigour of cultural codes and norms (including customary and legal codes and norms), in order to empower the individual in his or her actions. Transgression is the reaction of some members of civil society and participants of culture to the monocentric, hegemonic, homogenous nature of the dominant system of values and norms. To put it another way, people demand the implementation of the multicultural model through their transgressive behaviour, driven by articulated or non-articulated cultural relativism. This relativism is associated with aversion towards uniformity, unification, standardisation and homogenisation. It is also the result of a lack of formalisation and institutionalisation, especially in respect to creative groups, subcultures and among members of new social movements, who base their distinctiveness on a common identity which greatly differs from the monocentric identity. Although there are some exceptions, more often than not transgressive subcultures inevitably "clash" with the dominant organisational model in the nation-state. Hence the aversion of the cultural majority in regard to the "misfits" who question religious and national values through their transgressive behaviour towards the dominant cultural order.

4. Standardisation of communication. One of the key characteristics of contemporary transgressive tendencies is the pursuit of diversity of expression and the need to break out from the norm imposed by tradition. In order to break up the monopoly in communication and to increase the diversity of its forms, transgressive groups go beyond the verbal carriers of meaning and content imposed by cultural organisations, including institutions of mass communication. According to transgressive individuals, the press, radio, television, even literature and esteemed art, are burdened with the “sin” of unification and restrictiveness. Dance, music, happenings, or any form of expression that makes little of the established aesthetic, or even ethical canons, is particularly important to transgressive activity. The internet, a multimedia space, a network of electronic communication, allowing for almost limitless – even in legal terms – communication beyond the control of social institutions, emerges as an area of cultural freedom, of unfettered expression. The existence of transgressive groups in general and especially subcultures is based on a network of direct communication – a network which is increasingly transferred to the worldwide web. Transgressive behaviour and activities can no longer be studied without the use of new internet-based methodology.

5. Instrumentalism of values. Transgression in culture aims to give values as a large degree of autotelism as possible. Transgression is the realisation of a tendency whose goal is to limit commercialisation, bureaucracy and formalism. Transgression rejects and does not accept rationalism and pragmatism. Autotelism serves as a type of alternative to the dominant culture. It often leads to irrationalism and mysticism, especially in the case of subcultures classified as New Age. The most recent wave of subcultures, classified by the author of this work as post-subcultures, in essence strive only to underline their own autotelic nature as a differentiating element in a multicultural society. Their originality and distinctiveness is transferred into the sphere of symbols, communication codes, rather than into the area of contesting activity. Currently, in a time when globalisation engenders syncretisation and hybridisation, also when it comes to subcultures, the most important purpose of subcultural transgression is to preserve the border of one's own distinct identity.

6. Exclusive cultures. Some communities and social environments are more prone to transgressive behaviour than others. Every subculture is a transgressive environment that brings together and groups “escapees” who managed to break out from the “golden” cage of culture. The majority of subcultures, apart from those which are established as a result of social marginalisation, the social exclusion of their members, are created by well-fed, wealthy, developed and democratic Western societies. Other forms of social contestation, brought about as a result of poverty, social impairment, humiliation, generally engender the development of social movements of a political nature, although they do also give rise to criminal youth subcultures, such as street gangs or hooligan groups. Transgression is an element of cultural difference, but it does not always lead to a creative alternative. In many cases it can result in social exclusion and cultural marginalisation.

7. Formalisation of behaviour. The aim of transgressive groups, and especially subcultures, is freedom from rigid patterns of conduct and formal regulations that dictate

behaviour. The dominant lifestyle in transgressive subcultures is easy-going and care-free, characterised by the avoidance of commitment, a fascination with details and the tendency to live in the moment, seize the day. Feelings and emotions are far more important than material losses or gains. Spontaneity, next to authenticity, is one of the key factors that characterise subcultures, at least until the point of their ritualisation. Spontaneous access to the subculture, its voluntary and non-restrictive nature, is the source of the transgressive behaviours of its members. However, although access is voluntary, it can become an obligation; this is due to the nature of leadership and intra-group ties rather than the nature of the subculture itself. Since it is a means of breaching formal, statutory and legal obligations and restrictions, transgression is rarely tolerated and accepted by the organizational system and social institutions, especially those which pertain to education.

8. Autocracy. One version of this aspect of transgression contrasts unity with diversity and monism with pluralism. Cultural transgression of a collective nature is a product of democratic societies, but it is also a condition of their existence. Transgressive activities usually take place in societies which generally – though not in all cases – have a tolerant and accepting approach towards difference and focus on the protection of minority rights. They are specific to multicultural civil societies and are an attribute of the deliberative democracy model. Despite their protest-oriented origin, transgressive groups usually do not attempt to confront the system. It is the reaction of the system that usually leads to confrontation and often the escalation and popularisation of particular subcultures, as in the case of student protests, the period of civil unrest in France during May 1968, or the autumn of the “outraged” of 2011.

9. Monocentrism. Transgressive subcultures strengthen the identities of individuals and groups which are part of the social system. Membership in a subculture is usually at odds with the principle of centralism and top-down control over culture. It is therefore automatically against any ideology of a totalitarian nature. All subcultures strive towards social de-monopolisation and attempt to overcome cultural hegemony. Domination is characterised by a monocentric approach, ethnophobia, nationalism, racism and religious fundamentalism. Subcultures affirm the polycentric order; they expand the range of cultural pluralism and new types of multicultural identity. Subcultural transgression inherently goes against the cultural hegemony model and increases the range of diversity in civil society.

10. Unification. Cultural transgression is the expression and the result of dissimilarity and subculturality. That which is extraordinary, non-recurring, exceptional, rather than homogenous and common, is particularly appealing to members of subcultures. Subcultures create mechanisms which stimulate the creativity of their members. They encourage the search for new patterns of conduct and forms of expression. This explains the popularity of audiovisual, multimedia means of communication, which allow for bold, unorthodox experimentation, especially in terms of artistic, ludic, music-related fields. Subcultures oppose mass/popular culture but they are also a product of that very culture. The need to stand out from the crowd, highlight the difference, dissimilarity and originality of one's looks, behaviour and attitude, becomes an ideologi-

cal obsession, a type of subjective schizophrenia. Subcultures, and especially youth subcultures, are usually based on rebellion against the unification of norms and behaviour.

11. Standardisation. Transgressive groups affirm the right of every individual to freely express their personality without being limited by cultural restrictions. In particular, they object to the manipulation of society based on ready-made, standardised forms of influence, such as televised news, commercials and stereotypes. In transgressive groups, individualisation of behaviours and actions often, though not always, becomes a principal value, leading to the creation of new ideological identities. Nevertheless, subcultures oppose the standardisation and uniformity of cultural values, usually preferring unconventional, unique forms of music, lifestyle and creative activity.

Uniformity. Transgressive groups place particular importance on the right of every individual and group to freedom in terms of shaping their own cultural preferences according to their own needs and taste. These preferences are connected with environmental factors which are the result of inhabiting the same ecosphere as other members of a particular housing estate, neighbourhood, racial or ethnic ghetto – as in the case of rappers, *blokersi* [representatives of a Polish youth subculture associated with hip-hop, disillusioned young people living in blocks of flats in large urban settlements] or the Rasta subculture, a division of values due to being situated in the same social category – as in the case of *dresiarze* [representatives of a Polish youth subculture, young people wearing tracksuits as everyday clothing, characterised by offensive, aggressive behaviour and criminal activity], hip-hoppers or *kibole* [Polish football hooligans], or the articulation of the same needs and goals – as is the case in hippy, student, alterglobalist, feminist, ecological, religious or music-related (such as emo or rave) subcultures. Musicians, artists, rebellious priests, thinkers who go against the “current” of major ideological movements, philosophers, scholars, exceptional people, “superhumans,” who express the needs and aspirations of their imitators, fans and admirers, become the leaders, idols and symbols of transgressive subcultures.

Recent theories of reconstruction and modernisation, especially in post-structural concepts in anthropology, are leaning towards the acceptance of transgression as one of the positive aspects of social change. Nevertheless, due to its rebellious and defiant nature and its disregard for or outright rejection of the rules of the system, transgressive behaviour has generally been regarded as a negative, destructive aspect of change that disrupts the functioning of the system. Terms such as destructive, destabilising, disorganising, anarchist, pathological, discordant, disturbing, and many others which carry a similar meaning, are still frequently used when referring to transgression.

According to Florian Znaniecki, change is a gradual, constant, often unnoticeable process. It is a permanent process of reorganisation, through which the cultural system, and especially its representatives, assess specific types of positions and social roles from the point of view of their functionality and usefulness. Among such creative, innovative, “supranormal” units are members of subcultures who undertake transgressive action, contesters, rebels, remarkable people, at once exceptional, controversial and creative. According to Florian Znaniecki, the reorganisation and disorganisation of culture primarily takes place in conditions which threaten the stability and integrity of the

system. Therefore, it may be regarded as a mechanism which is “inscribed” into the internal logic of the system and the rules that govern it. Systemic approaches refer to the nature of transgression as necessary, regular, routine, rather than accidental.

Change may also be accidental or intentional. The latter type of change is particularly important in the context of the evolution and transformation of the socio-cultural system. It constitutes the basis for the reinterpretation of individual and group needs and the ways in which they are met by particular social circles. An important characteristic of this concept is that a special category of “abnormal” and atypical people, described as “supranormal deviants” by Florian Znaniecki (ZNANIECKI 2001: 282-294), is of the utmost importance to the process of change. Additionally,

the personality of the supranormal deviant is therefore focused within his objective tasks, not those which are externally imposed, but those which he undertakes of his own choice. These tasks may belong to many fields of cultural life; usually, however, his interests lie in one particular field [...]. His personality does not boil down to a particular set of established roles. In pursuit of his aims he destroys the established framework of role models and disrupts social circles (ZNANIECKI 2001: 289).

Creative innovation is the primary mechanism of cultural change. According to Florian Znaniecki “It is clear that innumerable cultural crises are the result of innovation, they emerge as a result of introducing new elements into the system, elements which the community or individual borrow from others or produce on their own” (ZNANIECKI 2001: 61). Innovators, transgressive contesters, are usually people who are particularly suited, both socially and personality-wise, for this type of occupation. They occupy a select, though not always privileged, place in every social circle. In the words of Florian Znaniecki (ZNANIECKI 2001: 276)

All deviants, both supranormal and subnormal, rebel against the norms which regulate their social roles, especially against social functions imposed by the normal environment. Their defiance may concern factual tasks or the rules that govern moral, individual or collective activity.

Arnold Joseph Toynbee had a similar view of the origin of change and the way in which it unfolds – he believed that the process of change is connected with the increasing complexity of the system and is always the product of a creative, alienated minority. This special category of people has the exclusive ability to resolve the growing tension and conflict in every culture. Change can only be caused by the elite, as long as it is motivated and prepared accordingly. One of the stages of change, according to Arnold Toynbee, is alienation, defiance on part of the members of the elite, withdrawal from active participation in socio-political life in order to establish a non-evaluative set of conditions for change. The contesters are members of a select transgressive category which unites exceptional individuals who are aware of their role and goals. This type of elite usually takes the form of the seemingly unnecessary social category of “marginal

people.” Their role is usually defined by the occurrence of change. If they are unsuccessful in its effective implementation they become outcasts, exiles and anarchists (TOYNBEE 1947). Some avant-garde, transgressive and creative subcultures, such as diggers, beatniks, hipsters, alterglobalists, anarchists, ecologists, new religious movements, artistic groups, are examples of this socio-cultural category.

According to Arnold Toynbee, the road to change leads through protest, resistance, rebellion against the status quo. Consequently, the system will remain stable and cannot develop until the appearance of a category of contesters, rebels, nonconformists (TOYNBEE 1947: 217-240). This approach was particularly popular in the works of sociologists writing about and attempting to explain the mass youth protests in the 1960s. The number of protesting individuals and groups and the scope of their activities prompted some researchers to accept the thesis that change may be both a consequence and a cause of transgressive contestation.

The most fertile and most reasonable theory appears to be the theory that interprets transgression and contesting subcultures both as a cause and a result of change. Transgression, as a form of subcultural contestation, becomes a mechanism of change, a reaction to flaws in particular elements of the system but also a cause for their appearance. Change and transgression become aspects of the same process of re-adapting elements of culture to new requirements and challenges imposed on the system by members of subcultures. In this case transgression cannot be equated with revolution or evolution. It is a separate mechanism of change, one that is always singular, unconventional, unique, colourful, controversial and never emotionally indifferent.

Cultural transgression is inherently of a subcultural, contesting, minority, relativist, multicultural nature. It is also connected with progress, development, social change and culture. It accompanies crises, disturbances of the social and cultural order, it intensifies during periods of instability in the social structure, it functions as an indicator of fluidity and unrest, it is associated with challenges and fears. It breaks stereotypes, questions established norms, it ignores and endures prejudice, it does not respect the borders marked out by nationalisms, ethnocentrism, monoreligious and monocentric systems of values and norms. In a certain sense, it is a measure of contemporaneity, the current state of affairs. Using a comparison, one could say that every act of transgression is a reflection of the culture in which it takes place. The nature of the act, whether it is creative, an instrument of progress and change, or destructive, anti-cultural, depends on the nature of the social system in which it occurs. Transgression is a response to the conditions determined by the socio-cultural system. In the present times of globalisation, cultural universalisation, rapid technological development, innovative tendencies, “cultural shock” (TOFFLER 1985), fluid and dynamic social life (BAUMAN 1996), transgression has become an acceptable phenomenon and factor of cultural change. However, it is still considered a nonconformist, minority, avant-garde phenomenon which is relative to the requirements of social stability. Transgression is defined and evaluated differently by the organizational system and social institutions, including those of a religious and political nature, and differently from the perspective of the cultural infrastructure, mass media, internet, television, music industry, galleries, museums and

the art market. Technological change is characterised by a greater scope of creative freedom, but also by the requirement of being innovative, original, exceptional, different, “visible” in the multimedia. In other words, transgressive behaviour and actions must catch the viewer’s attention, arouse interest in the observer, cause some form of public reaction. Transgression is gradually becoming a market product, a cultural commodity “for sale.” It is therefore no wonder that, despite its innovative, nonconformist nature, it may take extreme and radical symbolic forms which are presented and realised in a scandalous and controversial manner. Some consider transgression a positive cultural phenomenon, others believe such antisocial behaviour and actions ought to be forbidden, illegal. Depending on the socio-political contest, structure of the system, organization of the normative-legal system, the position and role of religious institutions, transgression may be evaluated in very different, contrasting ways. Transgressive behaviour is subject to widely differing opinions. It is considered innovative by some and revolutionary and destructive by others. Demands for the freedom of the individual and independence of the cultural group are considered anti-system, anti-state and a punishable offence, but may also be viewed as positive action on part of the citizen. From the perspective of institutions whose purpose is to protect the established socio-political order, transgressive contesters, leaders of new social and religious movements, leaders of libertarian groups, anarchists, homosexuals, those who fight for gender, racial or ethnic equality, members of subcultures, are seen as instigators and often considered criminals. In many cases radical activists from transgressive minority groups, subcultures or social movements are considered terrorists, bandits, heretics, dissenters and traitors by some and heroes, martyrs and innovators by others.

Transgression is accompanied by scandal, notoriety, controversy. As in the case of all other actions and activities that result in the crossing of cultural borders, transgression becomes part of a spectacle – a spectacle which takes place on a local and global scale, on a public and private level, in the spheres of religion, ethics, aesthetics and politics. Currently transgression may be considered not only the expression of individual aspirations and needs, but a necessary element of media culture. Creators of culture, artists, actors, directors, musicians, attempt to outdo each other in their ability to surprise and shock their audience. Transgression increasingly takes the world of mass media into consideration and attempts to target its recipient, mainly the masses. Many instances of transgressive behaviour are provoked by the mass media, television channels or web portals. The press, especially in the case of tabloids, excels in searching for, hunting down and disclosing any phenomena that differ from the norm. Privacy and intimacy are increasingly made public. On the one hand social networking sites such as Facebook provide instant messaging services and allow for the exchange of information, on the other they are used for the purpose of cultural exhibitionism. Transgressive cultural phenomena are no longer marginal; they are gradually shifting from the periphery to the centre of popular culture. Contemporary cultural dynamics are characterised by moral relativism, which accompanies transgression, and the alteration of the boundaries that dictate which creative acts, actions and behaviours are considered adequate, tolerable and customarily acceptable. On the other hand there is an upsurge

in the degree of variety of alternatives and the number of patterns of transgressive behaviour which go beyond the sphere of privacy and which are spread through online communication. Different forms of transgression, those which stem from the fringes of society and from the creative elite, are accompanied by changes in the identity of those who participate in the mass-cultural spectacle. In addition to symbolic culture: theatre, cinema, literature, art, transgression may now also take place in fields such as technology, economics and politics. Concert halls, museums, and galleries are abandoned in favour of streets, stadiums, homes and public places.

2. TRANSGRESSION AND THE IDENTITY OF CULTURAL TRANSFER

Culture has transformed into a spectacle with a network structure which currently prioritises categories such as: the mass public as audience, number of viewers, availability, attractiveness and popularity of content. The space which is “taken over” and dominated by mass media undergoes universalisation. It is an intercultural and multicultural space, composed of the elements of the here and now, transgressive, trans-border, inhabited by active creators and passive viewers of the spectacle, show, transmission. New cultural patterns, fashions, trends and other values, norms and needs, which are elements and components of new types of identities of the participants, creators, recipients, are emerging at a growing rate. It is an interactive space, an area of cultural transfer, complex, transitional, “transformational,” “fluid” types of participant identities. The multicultural, self-universalising, globalised world of popular culture intrinsically creates a new type of identity which can be described as “transitional,” “midway,” “in-between,” located between two or more reference groups. This type of identity is common to travellers, migrants, tourists, but also to the recipients of television, internet and multimedia coverage. The identity of cultural transfer is an answer to the requirements set out by postmodern culture. It imposes new forms of participation, but enables and facilitates intercultural communication and contributes to new forms of pluralism.

The identity of cultural transfer is typical of individuals who have not yet reached their destination, who are “on the way,” which often leads “to nowhere.” It comes with the awareness of participating in transformative processes, an identity which is “in motion,” located in the transitional area between the individual’s native culture, their cultural “starting point,” and the “target” culture, which is in the process of being designed and developed. If one poses the question of whether a Goral (Polish: *Góral*, literally “highlander”) from the Podhale region in southern Poland can become an American, or if a Silesian can become a European of German national identity, the scope of the analysis of identity transfer is determined in the same way as when one attempts to establish why the Romani people do not undergo Polonisation or Germanisation despite participating in different cultural areas, including those which are European, Western and global. The identity of cultural transfer is not only common to people who live “on the cultural borderlands,” members of cultural minorities, autochthons, residents of cultural reserves, ethnic districts, multinational academic or tourist enclaves (MAC-

CANNELL 2002), but also active users of the Internet, who are also located “on the borderlands” of different cultures.

The identity of cultural transfer is characterised by phenomena such as transgression, subjectification and individualisation of participants’ identities, universalisation, democratisation and mediatisation. It is an inseparable element and product of globalisation, especially when it comes to technological development in the sphere of interpersonal intercultural communication. The identity of cultural transfer is an answer to the changing requirements of postmodern culture, a tactic which allows one to function in a social environment which is constantly in motion, full of alternatives and choices. Just as reality itself it is fluid, dynamic, unstable, sensitive to change and open to the diversity and multiplicity of cultures. It is the identity of people who are in motion living in a world which is in motion. This type of identity is amorphous, multifaceted, complex, encompassing numerous synthetic, syncretic and hybrid forms; the destination of its “carrier,” who follows the path of multiculturalism, is unknown.

Identity is not something which is given, it is a creative process through which a particular image of the outside world is constructed in the mind of the individual, it is a way of adapting to reality through constant creation. According to anthropologists,

Identity is currently becoming an arduous challenge, a lifelong task for people-in-motion living in a world-in-motion. Although the world appears to be more unified, the comfortable feeling of detachment, of drifting on the open sea where the distance from the seabed, one’s roots, is equal to distance from the shore, one’s new possibilities, is rarely experienced by its inhabitants (BORSZTA/KULIGOWSKI 2005: 15).

The identity of cultural transfer is neither superficial nor deep. It allows its “carrier” to explore the phenomena on the surface and in the depths of the substance in which it is submerged. It is a global, infinite space of popular, mass, universalised culture, available in any place and at any time to anyone who has access to the worldwide web or is a user of the channels of mass communication and exchange.

The identity of cultural transfer is “itinerant,” typical of men “of the road,” travellers, pilgrims, migrants, tourists, nomads who move from airport to airport, hackers and creators, intellectuals and visiting professors, students participating in international or intercollegiate exchange programmes or secondary school students learning foreign languages. The identity of cultural transfer is the identity of those who participate in intercultural exchanges. It is an attribute of those who move in a semantic rather than spatial sense, who travel in a world of meanings, symbols, values and their carriers. As stated by the cited anthropologists,

It is clear that we live in the times of the great migration of objects, they are sold and bought, thrown away by some and collected by others, exchanged and stolen, abandoned and found. The internet, the greatest exchange market in history, has joined the extensive network of bazaars, marketplaces, fairs, flomarkets and stock markets [...]. Objects now lead a nomadic life of their own, seldom retaining permanent cultural roots or a particular identity. Our eve-

ryday “accessories” do not need to tell any simple story, they cross borders but are no longer marked with specific seals (BORSZTA/KULIGOWSKI 2005: 14).

The identity of cultural transfer allows one to go beyond the borders of one's own affiliation, to open up to different cultures and their “carriers.” However, this approach frequently leads “to nowhere,” imprisoning its “carrier” in a semantic trap, in a cultural reserve, in a space which does not belong to any community or group. Occasionally, if the existing social and cultural order is disrupted or “deconstructed” as a result of globalising changes, people torn away from tradition, a familiar cultural space, embark on a “journey” in search of a new identity, follow the path which leads to a new “project.” To some extent this journey is pointless, it leads “to nowhere” (ZUBRZYCKI 1989: 8). People disinherited from their culture, who no longer identify with a homeland that has ceased to exist, accept old hierarchies of values as dominant or become “neophytes” of the new order. In extreme cases this ends in a constant state of remaining “in exile,” the lack of a crystallised identity with one's new ideological homeland, a state of awareness typical of culturally disinherited and cosmopolitan people. In these cases spatial transfer, migration, journeying across the “wilderness” of contemporary culture, becomes a means of achieving freedom from the ideological, moral and customary requirements of a particular ethnic-national or citizen community. As a result, one's identity can be freed from the narrow, regional/local borders of ideologies such as nationalism, socialism or patriotism, allowing individuals who are aware of their contestation to permanently abandon their position in the social system and move from place to place.

In such cases many kinds of identities emerge which are transitory, temporary, random, “for show.” On the one hand the pressure of the social system, the structural requirements of being an actor, artist, politician, intellectual, reporter, journalist, lawyer, doctor, but also a financial immigrant, alterglobalist, union activist or student, result in the imposition of various “masks” onto one's indigenous identity. On the other hand there is the need to protect the original, authentic sphere of one's personality, which is characteristic of contemporary culture. Identity is the key to the conflicting requirements of “postmodern contemporaneity.”

Identity is gradually becoming a type of “programming” or “software” that characterises individuals who participate in the processes of globalisation and are subject to the influence of cultural universalisation. Being part of the universal web of meanings, symbols and values involves the constant “reinstalling” and updating of one's “cultural software,” which allows for communication with other web users. Thanks to the system which allows for the exchange of information, meaning, context and sense, we become “compatible” with other participants of mass, intercultural, universalised culture. Identity is based on the constant updating of information and adding of new mechanisms of adjustment to the changing requirements of social life. Man is like a computer hard disk drive with only the original, basic version of an operating system installed – the cultural identity of one's native, usually homogenous, monocentric cultural group. Cultural and social environments are gradually becoming more heterogeneous, they are composed of a multitude of different elements in which – in accordance with the concept of the

“cultural supermarket” – the values, symbols and creations of many different groups are mixed together.

The identity of cultural transfer inevitably accompanies all those who go beyond the borders of their own culture, their own community, not only in a spatial but also in a symbolic sense. The identity of cultural transfer is a process of updating, sometimes reinstalling, one's cultural software. This kind of identity is accompanied by numerous phenomena and processes such as multiculturalism and pluralism, transgression and transculturality, hybridism and syncretism, assimilation, acculturation and cultural universalisation. It is the Castellsian category of “project identity,” the identity of becoming and exchanging, shaped in the process of globalisation through the constant collision of different axio-normative systems, both in the private and public spheres, in direct human contact and in the worldwide web, multimedia, indirect communication and transfer. The identity of cultural transfer is a “project identity,” created, recreated, updated, allowing individuals and groups plucked from their previous social and cultural position and placed in a new globalised, mixed, pluralised, “mashed up” space to adapt.

The third type of identity, “project identity,” emerges when social actors create a new identity, on the basis of available cultural materials, which redefines their position in society, and in doing so aims to transform the entire social structure (CASTELLS 2009: 23-24).

The phenomena and categories of “cultural identity,” “cultural difference,” heterogeneity, multiculturalism, dissimilarity and autotelism are key to modern studies on and conceptualizations of culture. On the other hand the aim of contemporary scholars of anthropology and cultural studies is the critical reinterpretation of not so much the ontological status of culture but the possibility of subjecting it to systematic studies based on existing methodology. The entirety of contemporary theoretical thought in the area of culture studies is made up of antinomies and oppositions, disputes on the importance of what is common and similar or what is singular and different, what is objective and what is subjective, local or global, homogenous or heterogeneous. Although it does not systematise or explain phenomena, the multicultural perspective is at the forefront of contemporary research. Instead, it compounds the problem of existing controversy concerning alternative ways of practising culture studies, signalling their impotence rather than the possibility of the emergence of a new, holistic paradigm. Subjectivity, individuality, fragmentation, fluidity, instability, temporality, dynamism, the changing nature of identity, minority issues, localism against the unification and standardisation of current global tendencies, these are the most important topics and motifs of contemporary cultural theory. Postmodern discourse on the subject of culture and society is shifting towards extreme, liberal assumptions, in which, according to Andrzej Szahaj (SZAHAJ 2010, 149)

Dissimilarity and difference are celebrated, actively sought out, intensified and multiplied. Any form of unity is seen as essentially oppressive and any form of multiplicity as liberating. No standards of superiority or inferiority are recognized, all evaluations which attempt to

create a hierarchy of worldviews, cultures or value systems are rejected. Only difference, otherness and plurality are considered to be of value.

Thus culture and its conceptualisations cease to be an ideological weapon of expansion for dominant groups, they do not differentiate between people on the basis of their nationality, race, religion, sex or for any other reason. Contemporary notions of culture are a kind of expiation in relation to the theory justifying the “superiority” of Western national cultures in recent centuries. Postmodernism, pressured by the representatives of previously dominated and conquered cultures, would like to erase the “stain” of imperialism, colonialism, cultural domination from the theoretical tradition of Western universities (see: SAID 1991; APPADURAI 2000). The multicultural, alter-globalist, critical, liberal tendency towards the institution of the nation state is exemplified by the postmodern standpoint on post-structural, transgressive and gender issues. In the words of Andrzej Szahaj (SZAHAJ 2010rok: 151), this viewpoint

suffers from numerous problems, of which it is worth mentioning those of a theoretical and political nature. The first kind, difficult to justify in light of available data, presupposes the existence of a state of independence from any initial judgments concerning one's own viewpoint, the possibility of freeing oneself from all contexts, whether they be of a cultural or axiological nature, and peacefully drifting, floating above all earthly affairs and from this height contemplating all the differences in the world. Or, in a different, equally unreliable version, attachment to one's own viewpoint and the simultaneous aim of intensifying the world's differences, the multiplication of difference for the sake of difference. This version is not credible because it assumes that it is possible to simultaneously want something that is in line with one's own viewpoint and something that is totally against it.

In other words, postmodern discourse, attitudes, narratives are full of contradictions, alternative suggestions, antinomies and inconsistencies. They reflect the nature of reality through their individualist, subjective, relativist, ambiguous character. Amidst all the theoretical confusion, a common definition of reality which would reduce it to a construct of thought, a human creation which would conform to the needs of its creators, has not yet been devised. From this perspective culture becomes fiction on the one hand and primary reality on the other. However, a sceptical and pessimistic conclusion can be drawn from these contradictions: the golden age of cultural studies has ended, and a new stage of contemplating the nature and structure of scientific thought itself has begun. We are dealing with “thought on the subject of” thought on culture. There are as many perspectives on the subject as there are discourse participants.

The need for the constant comparing of one's own culture with other cultures has, through the prism of his cultural behaviour, become the source of the canons of human thought. Hence there is still much debate on issues [...] on cultural relativism, the rationality of societies, language disparity, the role of the symbol in culture, myth, religion, ritual, family and so on. It would appear that none of these problems have been fully resolved, that research on

this subject is successively revised, which becomes the basis of anthropology being the art of doubting, the glorification of the social diversity of the world of values combined with the act of distancing oneself from oneself and one's own culture (BURSZA 1998: 179).

Contemporary cultural sciences, including anthropology and cultural studies, attempt to find a solution to the theoretical and methodological dispute, perhaps even conflict, in which the modernist theories of nation-state and postmodern discourse on the subject of civil societies have found themselves. These disputes are not mere academic squabbles. They originate from the academic evaluation of the current political, social or cultural reality which is – like the structure of theory itself – ambiguous, multicontextual, fluid, changing, uncertain and unstable. What is more, reality itself – like our reflection on reality – is in a state of permanent crisis. The crisis of values, economic and political disasters, is accompanied by the feeling of social uncertainty. Postmodern thought attempts to free science and society from political involvement and fear while simultaneously intensifying that fear and strengthening the feeling of uncertainty. However, from critical, multicontextual and multifaceted postmodern thought stems the commonly articulated need for its organisation and newfound conceptualisation in the form of a new paradigm which would incorporate the achievements of modernist theory and post-structural discourse. However, it would seem that this task is as yet impossible. Difference rather than similarity is the basis of all contemporary discourse. Consequently, anthropological thought on the subject of transgression also becomes transgressive, going beyond existing theoretical and conceptual barriers and conventions, introducing new, controversial paradigms.

Translated by Zuzanna Ślawik

REFERENCES

- APPADURAI, Arjun 2000: *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. (Public Worlds. 1.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- BAUMAN, Zygmunt 1996: *Etyka ponowoczesna*. Transl. by Janina Bauman, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- BURSZA, Wojciech J. 1998: *Antropologia kultury. Tematy, teorie, interpretacje*. Poznań: Zysk i S-ka.
- BURSZA, Wojciech J.; KULIGOWSKI, Waldemar 2005: *Sequel. Dalsze przygody kultury w globalnym świecie*. (Spectrum.) Warszawa: Muza.
- CASTELLS, Manuel 2009: *Siła tożsamości*. (Wiek Informacji. 2.) Transl. by Sebastian Szymański. Ed. Mirosława Marody. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- KOZIELECKI, Józef 2002: *Transgresja i kultura*. Warszawa: "Żak."
- MACCANNELL, Dean 2002: *Turysta. Nowa teoria klasy prężniaczej*. (Spectrum.) Transl. by Ewa Klekot, Anna Wiczorkiewicz. Warszawa: Muza.
- SAID, Edward W. 1991: *Orientalizm*. (Biblioteka Myśli Współczesnej.) Transl. by Witold Kalinowski. Warszawa: PIW.

- SZAHAJ, Andrzej 2010: *E pluribus unum? Dylematy wielokulturowości i politycznej poprawności*, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków
- TOFFLER, Alvin 1986 *Trzecia fala*. (Biblioteka Myśli Współczesnej.) Transl. by Ewa Woydyłło-Osiatyńska, . Warszawa: PIW.
- TOYNBEE, Arnold J. 1947: *A Study of History. Vol. 1*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- ZNANIECKI, Florian 1992: *Nauki o kulturze. Narodziny i rozwój*. (Biblioteka Socjologiczna.) Transl. by Jerzy Szacki. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- ZNANIECKI, Florian 2001: *Ludzie terażniejsi a cywilizacja przyszłości*. (Biblioteka Socjologiczna) Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- ZUBRZYCKI, Jerzy 1989: "Żołnierze i chłopci. Socjologia emigracji polskiej," *Przegląd Polonijny* 4.