

UDC 130.2:159.922:171.1

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30970/PPS.2022.40.8>

## **LIBIDINAL BACKGROUND OF THE CURRENT SOCIAL CRISIS, OR SOME WORD ABOUT POSTMODERN ANTHROPOLOGY**

**Inna Sajtarly**

*Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University,  
Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy of the Humanities  
Volodymyrska str., 60, 01033, Kyiv, Ukraine*

**Olena Ishchenko**

*Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University,  
Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy of the Humanities  
Volodymyrska str., 60, 01033, Kyiv, Ukraine*

This article begins by giving due attention to the development of postmodern philosophical anthropology under the direct influence of psychoanalytical approach. We have in mind, primarily, psychoanalytic “doctrine” of *libido* and the so-called affective values, which, according to a founder of psychoanalytic theory, are determined by a relative sociocultural tradition (“code”). It is this determinacy that has found its additional substantiation within framework of the lead “metaphysical” treatises of 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, the concept of “schizoanalysis” in terms of original fusion between economic determinism and “orthodox” psychoanalysis was proposed.

Both psychoanalysis and representatives of postmodern philosophy have clearly pointed out the libidinal basis of the human psyche in terms of there is always a danger of passion’s power over reason, up to the possibility of losing this reason, that led to a significant transformation of the subject matter of philosophical anthropology.

That is why, the main concern of this article is related to the most complex issue, which is relevant to both the above trends in contemporary anthropology. We are referring to the problem of “superfluous violence”, which according to many thinkers, is evoked by libidinal impulses, and also, by obvious weakness of the postindustrial social system, which produces even “desires”, for example, desire for gratification in its various forms, that which does not contribute in any way to the formation of a “disciplined Subjects”.

The weakness of the “disciplining force”, primarily, at the level of sociality, in the full absence of other “tools” to restrain and control destructive impulses is a significant danger in the sense of reproduction of human social existence.

In addition, the so-called “superfluous violence” psychoanalysts and also some postmodernists elucidate in terms of human tendency to “extract” the pleasure from the suffering, that causes the next, no less complex issue of mechanisms to “design” these “lovers of bloody spectacles”, as one of the celebrated representatives of critical discourse, namely Michel Foucault, wrote.

*Key words:* theory of sociogenesis, destructive libido, forced labor, sublimation, emotional make-up, sociality, schizoid subject.

**Introduction.** In the early of 20<sup>th</sup> century, philosophical anthropology underwent the essential transformations, caused by significant events within humanities related primarily to the development of psychoanalytic doctrine, as well as the *theory of personality sociogenesis*. As turned out later, both of these events were closely linked. The thing is that representatives of the so-called psychoanalytic paradigm, as well as many other significant thinkers of 20<sup>th</sup> century

up to now follow the *idea of sociogenesis of individual mental structure* in terms of determining influence of institutional (social) culture on “shaping” of subjectivities.

It is this idea that was laid the basis of many socio-philosophical studies, starting with Nietzsche’s “On the Genealogy of morality” and ending with postmodern theory of “genealogy of the Subject”. Furthermore, the discovery of *libido* (*libidinal drives*) as a human desire for pleasure and its influence on “shaping an individual ethos” changed both the entire philosophical anthropology of the 20th century and socio-philosophical theory, which became more critical than ever. Since this *libido* is directly related to the emotional field, it is affective values that became the main subject of many philosophical studies, which have focused mainly on the problem of human passions genesis.

**The objective of this article** is to consider the dependence of subject matter of postmodern anthropology, its changes from both the domination of psychoanalytical theory and obvious social transformations, caused by essential transformation in postindustrial strategy of production. **Methodology** of this examining, mainly, refers to critical approaches, which were elaborated by representatives of psychoanalysis and poststructuralism and also some contemporary thinkers as such *Herbert Marcuse, Wilhelm Reich, Norbert Elias, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari*, etc. The **novelty** is to consider postmodern anthropology in terms of a generalized analysis of the issue of “superfluous violence” in the context of psychoanalytic paradigm logic.

**The exposition of main ideas.** Almost the entire philosophical tradition of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (especially, its main trends) testifies that the problem of “superfluous violence” or “the desire for violence” in its various forms turned into the central problem of the most significant studies in contemporary philosophy, including postmodern theory. That is why, the fundamental notion of many philosophical explorations within framework of anthropology is related to a notion of *destructive libido*, rather than just *libido* as such. A number of postmodern authors focus on the dominance of the *destructive libido* in the structure of mental enjoyment, theory of which is limited by the issue of clarifying its origins, that directly is related to the issue of human “nature” and its dependence on sociocultural impacts.

It is worthy emphasizing that the above issue, that is, the constant presence in any *socius* of some excess of violence, especially in interpersonal relationships, both have been posed and developed by representatives of poststructuralism. In addition, many of them turned out to be very skeptical about the idea of *libidinal labor*, which, as well-known, is closely related with Freud hypothesis of *sublimation*. But if we compare Freud’s grasping of sublimation, for example, with the conception of Herbert Marcuse, we may find it to be rather contemplative.

Marcuse is known to have believed that human need for destructiveness (*Thanatos*) is the constant feature of human being, which undergoes essential transformations by virtue of the technogenic essence of very civilization, with its permanent strive for industrial progress and comfort. In its turn, the civilization, which from very beginning is based on repression and coercion, in particular, on *forced labor*, fulfills the constructive function in terms of creating the immanent mechanism of *sublimation*, especially sublimation of human aggressiveness, therefore, the need for violence in its various forms.

Marcuse argued that the established system of industrial capitalism allows humanity to sublimate a huge amount of destructive libidinal energy with labor or the virtue of labor. In contrast to Freud, Marcuse distinguished between “repressive” and “non-repressive” sublimation, where the latter, according to him, is an effect of the “developed industrial society” and is based on libidinal labor as an opportunity to enjoy work.

As a result of sublimation by labor, “the biological drive becomes a cultural drive... There is sublimation, and, consequently, culture; but this sublimation proceeds in a system of expanding

and enduring libidinal relation, which are in themselves in work relations”, thus “*libidinal component impulse*” may enter in work” [6, p. 212–217].

Meanwhile, Freud, for example, didn’t trust humanity and insisted that “every civilization must be built up on *coercion* and “renunciation of instinct”. One has, I think, to reckon with the fact that there is a present in all men destructive, and therefore anti-social and anti-cultural trends... there are two widespread human characteristics, which are responsible for the fact that *the relation of civilization can only be maintained by a certain degree of coercion – namely, that men are not spontaneously fond of work and that arguments are of no avail against their passions*” [3, p. 24].

Along with that, a number of postmodern authors exhibit a rather more critical attitude to the idea of sublimation. According to many of them, the very concept of sublimation is absolutely unfounded, or limited to a small number of examples. Suffice it to recall the notorious treatise that was written by representatives of postmodern philosophy, namely “Anti-Oedipus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia”. It was in this treatise that an attempt was exercised to rationale for the doubtfulness of any *sublimation* at the current stage of capitalism, named as “postindustrial”.

Furthermore, referring to the above studies, especially, the postmodern descriptions of postindustrial phase of capitalism, we can presume that contemporary “anthropological type” is mainly dealing with the enjoyment of “flows and power”, rather than with the enjoyment of esthetics or labor. What does sublimation have to do with enjoyment of flows and power?

It is still possible to assume the existence of the so-called *repressive sublimation* (Marcuse) in the conditions of advanced economies, whereas *non-repressive sublimation*, which supposedly allows humans to be more creative, gentle, noble, etc., apparently, works more at the level of philosophical assumption, than it is does exist.

The same is relevant to no less prominent developer of psychoanalytic theory, namely Wilhelm Reich, who, *vice versa*, did not believe in sublimation, and considered that a special tendency of humans to *superfluous violence* in the sense of violence, which intensifies, becoming more and more destructive and atrocious, is the effect of suppressive sexual *libido*, as he wrote, “unhappiness in love life”.

Reich did not want to accept the old philosophical truth, which had been pronounced by Aristotle: “*man is by nature a political animal*” in terms of that humanity is the “result” of permanent historical sociocultural process, that is, the complex fusion of biological and social, where the main reason of life enjoyment, mostly, is to with satisfying so-called social instincts: human need for superiority or recognition and, domination.

That is why, we believe that it was Erich Fromm who turned out to be closer to the truth, when he tried to rationale for *significance the desire for power in spreading destructive trends, especially, in conditions of total indifference on the part of the social majority*.

Indeed, there is a certain dependence of the above theories on the common “spirit” of the time, related to them. Furthermore, referring to a logic of developing some ideas within the framework of brilliant philosophical trends of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the thesis on the existence of some correlation between the dominant system of social relations and relevant social subject, for instance, between certain system of production and certain mentality or “ethos”, seems to be quite founded.

In the light of the above, we would like to mention about the concept of “*distinctive emotional make-up*”, that was offered by no less prominent developer of methodologies in humanities, namely, Norbert Elias. This concept directly designates that human psyche functions “are directed to the network of social relationships to which the person belongs, perhaps taking the form of aggression or sexual desire. Or they may be directed to the natural world, for example

in the hunt for food or the pursuit of leisure. *The instincts and controls are functions which act within relationships. The psyche is the structure formed by these relation-functions.* The individual person is the structure, formed through the social relationships to which he or she belongs by virtue of the functions he or she carries out within the group” [9, p. 42]. Furthermore, “Norbert Elias’s theory of the “civilizing process”, which has become influential in the historiography of violence” [10, p. 200] as we believe, has been maintaining this influence up to date, especially in contemporary theory of sociocultural process.

In addition, similar to philosophers above, Elias also recognizes the key impact of development of monetary economy on both the social structure of the “Western world” and the transformation of the libidinal basis of personality.

So-called “Western world” differs from other civilizations, primarily, by its “schizoid’s obsessions with the economy”, as Deleuze quite rightly stated, that could not but affect the human psyche in terms of some “softening” of human mores (customs), when the desire for violence is substituted with the desire for accumulation. It is only necessary “to ensure that the Desire of the most disadvantaged creature will invest with all its strength, irrespective of any economic understanding or lack of it, the capitalist social field as a whole. Flows, who doesn’t desire flows, and relationships between flows, and breaks in flows? – all of which capitalism was able to mobilize and break under these hitherto unknown conditions of money. While it is true that capitalism is industrial in its essence or mode of production, it functions only as merchant capitalism. While it is true that it is a filiative industrial capital in its essence, it functions only through its alliance with commercial and financial capital” [1, p. 229].

It is noteworthy, in contrast to Elias’s view, in postmodern works there is mainly referred to a more differentiated structure of economy than just a more differentiated “communal life”, especially in terms of developing the capitalism, mediated by increasing the production and consumption.

That is why, a number of contemporary thinkers claim that it is industrial capitalism that has laid the basis for *humanizing* the entire modern society, including the co-called penitential system. Thus, all of the mentioned authors are combined by the idea of significance of economic changes in shaping both the cultural field (*ethos*) and “anthropological type” in terms of softening or, *vice versa*, hardening of human relation, in particular, human mores.

In the context of the above, Michel Foucault, for example, once remarked that “the accumulation of men and accumulation of capital – cannot be separated, it would not have been possible to solve the problem of accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both subjecting them and using them” [4, p. 221].

But, when considering the history of State development, Foucault was not inclined to absolutizing the human strive for violence, as Guattari and Deleuze insisted. Put it another way, according to Foucault, it is hardly the State system of punishment implies the libidinal component, even then, when we are referring to its past. In his view, even the old systems of “bloody punishment” were based on “*purely calculated violence*”, “*differentiated production of pain*”, rather than on “the eye of the gods who enjoy cruel spectacles” [4, p. 131]. Therefore, in the case of Foucault, we have a purely economic substantiation.

Meanwhile, this is a very debatable issue. The above Elias, for example, fully agrees with Deleuze, that is, with Nietzschean vision, which, as well-known, was based on an exceptional emphasis on the “original savagery of feelings” and “joy in destruction” of previous peoples, including their ruling class (estate).

In addition, some author of a later period, with regret to remark that despite increasing self-control in most of current societies, cruelty and “enjoy in the destruction” and “torment of other”,

which in Elias's words, for instance, are "exceptional phenomena of pathological degeneration" [2, p. 35] continue, that is, we still meet all this in later phases of social development. That is why it is grasping the "prime causes" of destructive impulses that is the most fundamental issue for many explores. The above phenomenon, that is, the need for destructive hatred and enjoyment of violence, which sometimes come into contact with "death instinct", became a special subject matter of examination for almost the entire contemporary social philosophy. From a postmodern, poststructuralist point of view, for example, current humanity is moving toward self-destruction. In regard to libidinal urges, they hardly have some humanistic component. In any case, if it still exists, it manifests itself very weakly and inexpressive: "desire knows only gift and theft" (Deleuze & Guattari), and also there is always some concern with death and "bloody festival of punishment".

In fact, when humans behave destructively, they not only become like animals (animals do not know about prohibition). As Fromm rightly argued, such humans become even worse than animals, since they know about prohibition, but they ignore it for the sake of passionate desire, even when this desire destroys and annihilates them. The passions turn into the main source of life enjoyment and sense of existence. Thus, the discussion about why reason and rationality do not always dominate over unreason and irrationality is absolutely unnecessary. It is obvious, but both are equally inherent only to human being.

Along with the phenomenon of *superfluous violence* that presumably has a libidinal basis, there is another obvious reason for intensifying the destructive trends, especially, in social terms. We have in mind a particular attachment from the part of supporters of Western tradition, for example, to the discourse of individual experiences and passions. One can say even about the whole cult of passions and feelings, which in the conditions of postmodern hedonism have completely replaced any ethical arguments. Put it another way, we can observe that the self-control is decreasing, loosening codes and increasing emotional alternatives.

Meanwhile, some postmodern authors are convinced that in the conditions of postindustrial economy all human passions are, mostly, leveled with the striving for profit and comfortable life, put it another way, it is *material emotions* (Deleuze & Guattari) that are dominant nowadays. In the circumstances of "advanced societies" with their no less developed system of production and consumption, including their virtual forms, we have mostly "pampered" humans with a previously unthinkable comfortable lifestyle. But as evidenced by everyday life experience, the enjoyment of "items" and "services" do not exclude the enjoyment of old human passions, rather *vice versa*, they peacefully coexist.

Particular concern with personal feelings and passions, or constant obsession with them, is often accompanied by inability to self-restraint in terms of restricting one's own affective urges or desires. Can this lead to a mental disorder? Presumably, it is no coincidence that Baudrillard, for example, when describing the postmodern "community" uses the term "therapeutic society", having in mind, obviously, the psychiatric clinic that dominates there.

Indeed, nowadays the system of social relations is being totally swallowed up by market relations. As Marxists rightly states, capitalist production is the production of certain types of sociality, including a certain type of humans. For the postmodern anthropological type, brought up on the liberal ideology of equal rights and opportunities, and, therefore, who does not recognize any social "pecking order", there is only one thing that has an absolute value – it is Himself, perhaps even his intimate circle. And that is all!

In such a system of value coordinates, such phenomena as a group solidarity, especially class consciousness, is more a myth than a reality, which has found its most vivid conceptual reflection in modern philosophy, in particular, in the existential phenomenology of Jean Paul Sartre.



According to Sartre *the Other* always represents a potential danger, but not in the sense that he confesses a different faith, morality, or ideas about the world (as the guardians of the civilizational approach try to assure us), but precisely because he is *not-Me*. Furthermore, there is no certainty that this *Other* treats me as a partner or as a friend, and that he is attached to me, etc.

Presumably, he enters with me into a relationship or communication due only to enslave me, to absorb my freedom, to destroy me as a person, thus Sartre, in fact, reproduced the Freud's viewpoint, once expressed by him in his well-known "Civilization and its discontents": "men are not gentle, friendly creatures, wishing for love, who simply defend themselves if they are attacked, but that a powerful measure of desire for aggression... *homo homini lupus*. Who has the courage to dispute it in the face of all the evidence in his own life and in history?" [3, p. 24].

Nevertheless, as for "sociality" in the sense of *people's need for community*, the final sentence was passed not even by existentialism, but by representatives of postmodern philosophy, which with inherent in them "genital thinking" attacked psychoanalysis due to completely unfounded psychoanalytic "belief" in attachment (affection), that there is attachment between a man and a woman, and *vice versa*, between a woman and a man, between children and their parents, etc.

For Schizoid or in Schizoid's view, all these are myths, which were created by human civilization, more precisely, by capitalism for the sole purpose of "enslaving" humans, motivating them to work on the State and the entire system of public relations, which are grounded on the urge for "surplus value". It is as if a person who is not burdened with a family, is not a "slave" of capitalism, and this capitalist machine provides him with the benefits of life just like that, free of charge and gratuitously.

Meanwhile, it is hardly the above scepticism is unfounded. Peoples who, currently, live in conditions of material and informational excess and high-developed technology, actually, is swallowed up by various "things", which, in contrast to philosophers, are not considered by them as "terror". That is why, the statement of Deleuze with regard to complete dominance of desire for flows, rather than persons, which are totally independent of the "Oedipal dirt" (as he calls the family affection), is quite relevant.

The postmodern "Schizoid" is no longer a moral Subject, nor a "family madman" in terms of his absolute indifference to "fatherhood", "obligation", "maternal love", "social environment", therefore the psychoanalytic story about "Oedipus" is of no interest, or it is easily refuted. Schizoid libidinal flows, are primarily directed toward "*body without organs*", mainly, in the form of capital, and that is why postmodernists classify the Schizoid Subject as a "celibate machine". What "Oedipus" can we talk about?

Furthermore, contemporary information technologies have fantastic possibilities with regard to replacing or simulating real relationships by virtual signs (symbols) of relationships, including feelings and emotions. We have an interesting phenomenon – a virtual simulation of feelings, which is still being broadcast, despite the fact that gender as such no longer matters.

However, women are already so free that they cease to be interesting to men even as an object of libidinal interest, and not only in the sense of oppression or enslavement of their freedom (Sartre), since men's libidinal interest in women apparently ends where women's freedom begins in terms of equality, and God forbid – superiority, which the most convinced feminists dream of.

In relation to the above, it is completely no coincidence, postmodernists focus on both the naturalness of homosexuality and its primary and secondary forms. Presumably, such a vision is the conceptual expression of a very deep phase of gender crisis or alienation between men and women in the so-called highly developed societies, as evidenced by no less serious struggle, competition, up to mutual hatred in everyday life.

Thus, the libidinal background of postmodern anthropology is directly connected with two extremely complex issues, namely, with the issue of superfluous violence and the problem of “designing of Schizoid Subject” in purely philosophical sense. Put it another way, there is mainly referred to such individuals, who are the “humans of desire”. But if the *phantasm*, according to most authors, is a widespread symptom of contemporary human being, then the *simulacrum* is a widespread phenomenon of contemporary reality that is directly correlated to this *phantasm*: “The modernity is defined by power of the simulacrum” (Deleuze).

### References

1. Deleuze G. and Guattari F. (2009) *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. / Translated by R. Hurley. Penguin Putnam Inc, New York, USA, 432 p.
2. Elias N. (2008) On change of aggressiveness / in *Emotions. A Social Science Reader*, M. Greco, P. Stenner (eds), Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York. P. 34–45. URL=<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315881393/>
3. Freud Z. (2005) Civilization and its discontents – The electronic version is copyright. Chrysoma Associated Limited. Publications Division. Electronic Books Library. 40 p.
4. Foucault M. (1977) Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. / Translated from the French by Alan Sheridan. New York : Vintage Books. 333 p.
5. Gaines Elisabeth R. (1995) “POSTMODERNISM AND ANTHROPOLOGY”. *Nebraska Anthropologist*. 85 p. URL: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebanthro/85>.
6. Marcuse Herbert (1975) *Eros and Civilization: A philosophical enquiry into Freud*. Beacon Press books are published under the auspices of the Unitarian Universalist Association. 275 p.
7. Nietzsche Friedrich (2010) On the genealogy of Morality / in *Ethics: The Essential Writings* (ed.), Gordon Marino, The Random House Publishing. P. 274–292.
8. Sartre Jean-Paul (2003) *Being and Nothingness* / Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. Routledge. 688 p.
9. Smith D. (2001) Norbert Elias and modern social theory. SAGE Publications. London Thousand Oaks New Delhi, published in association with Theory, Culture & Society, Nottingham Trent University. 198 p.
10. Wood J.C. (2011) Going mad is their only way of staying sane: Norbert Elias and the Civilized violence of J.G. Ballard/ in J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions. Editors: Jeannette Baxter and Rowland Wymer. Publisher: London : Palgrave, forthcoming. P. 198–214.

### ЛІБІДИНАЛЬНЕ ПІДҐРУНТЯ ПРИЙДЕШНЬОЇ СОЦІАЛЬНОЇ КРИЗИ, АБО КІЛЬКА СЛІВ ПРО ПОСТМОДЕРНІСТСЬКУ АНТРОПОЛОГІЮ

**Інна Сайтарли**

*Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка,  
філософський факультет, кафедра філософії гуманітарних наук  
вул. Володимирська, 60, 01033, м. Київ, Україна*

**Олена Іщенко**

*Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка,  
філософський факультет, кафедра філософії гуманітарних наук  
вул. Володимирська, 60, 01033, м. Київ, Україна*

Запропонована стаття розпочинається з приділення належної уваги розвитку філософської антропології постмодерну під безпосереднім впливом психоаналітичного підходу. Ми маємо на увазі насамперед психоаналітичну «доктрину» лібідо та так звані афективні цінності, які, згідно

із засновником психоаналітичної теорії, визначаються відносною соціокультурною традицією («кодом»). Саме ця визначеність знайшла своє додаткове обґрунтування в рамках провідних «метафізичних» трактатів XX століття. Як наслідок, була запропонована концепція «шизоаналізу» у сенсі оригінального злиття економічного детермінізму та «ортодоксального» психоаналізу.

І психоаналіз, і представники постмодерної філософії чітко вказали на лібідинальну основу людської психіки, відтак на небезпеку домінування у її структурі пристрастей над розумом аж впритул до можливості його втрати, чим здійснили суттєву трансформацію предметного поля філософської антропології.

Тому головна проблема цієї статті пов'язана з найбільш складним питанням, яке має відношення до обох вищевказаних тенденцій у сучасній антропології. Йдеться про проблему «надміру насилля», викликаного, на думку багатьох мислителів, лібідинальними імпульсами, а також очевидною слабкістю постіндустріальної соціальної системи, яка продукує «бажання», наприклад, бажання задоволення в його різних формах, що жодним чином не сприяє формуванню «дисциплінованих суб'єктів».

Слабкість «дисциплінуючої влади» насамперед на рівні соціальності за умови відсутності інших механізмів стримування та контролю над руйнівними пристрастями становить суттєву небезпеку для відтворення людської соціальності і є причиною нинішньої соціальної кризи.

Разом із тим так названий «надмір у насиллі» психоаналітики та декотрі постмодерністи пояснюють властивою людству схильністю отримувати задоволення від страждання, що спричиняє наступне не менш складне філософське питання, яке донині є відкритим – питання про механізми моделювання цих «любителів кривавих спектаклів», як висловлювався один із яскравих представників критичного дискурсу Мішель Фуко.

*Ключові слова:* теорія соціогенезу, деструктивне лібідо, примусова праця, сублимація, емоційний склад, соціальність, шизоїдний суб'єкт.