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## CULTURAL CHANGES IN THE KNOWLEDGE CIVILIZATION

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Evolution of digital technology, computers and mass media, which takes place in the knowledge civilization, has a tremendous impact on culture. Traditional culture and technocracy is replaced by postmodernism with such challenges as consumption culture, instant culture, primacy of changes and fast life, sense of power and freedom reconstruction, disguised culture and culture of the body and sexuality, Americanization, global teen, Generation X, the cult of success. Following can be added as well: a "knife culture", Y culture, JP II Generation. It comes together with the collapse of the ethical attitudes.

*Key words:* knowledge civilization, instant culture, body cult and sexuality culture, americanization, global teenager, success cult, generation, knife culture.

We live in the civilization transformation period where a transformation from an industrial to a knowledge civilization occurs. Following is a development of digital technology, computers, mass media which, in turn, has a huge impact on our culture. As a result of mass media development (ground, satellite and cable TV, video, CD, MD, DVD, HD DVD, Blue – ray, multimedia computers, the Internet), a recession of a word culture domination over a visual culture has been observed [35].

A digitalization of media allows for creating virtual reality in which different real pictures are overlapped by computerized ones. A person receiving these pictures is not able to differentiate between what is real and virtual, and begins a life in an imposturous culture [21]. What is real is not a result of a man's direct contact with reality, but rather what he receives through mass media [16]. At the same time, post-modernism is more and more viable, which negates a possibility or a need to depict the world as a "rational whole", and negates all principles. For post-modernists negation is the only principle – a negation of order, law and authorities [22].

In effect, in the third wave, a global change of technocratic culture to technopol took place. Technopol is a way of philosophical thinking, a state of mind, a culture of being, in which material values dominate over the "to be" values. Those material values promote a development on the basis of information and information cannot be evaluated on moral basis. Information deprivation of the

elective moral sieve creates, in the world and in the Polish society, a series of pathologies and many concerns about the future.

A transfer from the industrial to the information period caused a border syndrome. Here, laws and norms characteristic for one period have stopped functioning and new ones have not yet been established. Accompanying this transfer is the ethical life attitude breakdown [11]. Fukuyama calls this syndrome BIG SHAKE. A “social shift” takes place, traditional social institutions such as family, school and church lose their importance, and mass media, widely understood pop culture and peer groups take precedence [17].

The educational potential of traditional pedagogy appears to be “spent”. Pedagogy for the world is becoming obsolete, whether we accept it or not, and differentiations and binarisms typical for the past are “evaporating” in front of our eyes [24, s. 19–22]. In their place, as points out Z. Melosik, are being created: a consumption culture, an instant culture, a change and fast-paced life domination, a sense of power, and freedom reconstruction, imposturous culture, body and sexuality culture, Americanization, a global teenager, generation X, success cult [24, s. 68–91]. One can also add the “knife culture”, the Y culture and the JP II culture.

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Using very apt observations of Z. Melosik of the phenomena being created and the processes being developed [24, s. 98–91], we will point out right now just a few issues. Undisputable nowadays is D. Tetzlaffen thesis, who claims that the modern culture development logic is determined in the Western countries by an unlimited consumption phenomenon. This consumption has become a progress criterion and the success of an individual and the success of societies [33]. It has taken the role which, in the industrial civilization, was played by production, and is becoming the main perspective of perceiving social phenomena. Where there used to be work ethics, now we have consumption ethics [3]. “A life completely dedicated to consumption evaluates all animated and still world elements according to consumptions criteria” [2]. A perception of each culture product becomes momentary, incoherent, a receiver feels bored very quickly and searches for a change- something new, something “what is next”, and searching for new adventures - will abandon again. The main principle, to which the post – modern consumption is subordinated to is the pleasure principle, which is addictive and justifies the consumption activity [5]. According to Z. Bauman there is a specific release of activeness related to consumerism from a modern understanding of functionality, utilitarianism and necessity.

After the system change in 1989 the phenomenon of consciousness tilling has appeared ( P.Sztompka’s term), which means paying bigger attention to money. During communism we all made little money and many of our activities were made

for the common good, for our satisfaction or fun. Nowadays everyone asks himself "How much will I profit from it?". A strive to reach the level of the western consumerist society standards has appeared.

Z. Bauman proves with determination that "A consumer is a citizen's enemy" [6], observing that "When left to his own strength and to market offers a citizen turns into a consumer. To be a citizen and a consumer inclines to different interests, ways of viewing the world, and behaviour; issues filling human lives are placed differently on the importance hierarchy as well. It can be said that a consumer is a citizen's enemy... . A democratic society citizen should worry about public affairs and carefully guard his right to take part in them. He should assume that what he does or what he restrains himself from doing will make a difference in the world. A consumer, in contrary, should oppose everything that disturbs his concentration of searching for his own prosperity, and refuse wasting his strength and time on issues which he deems indifferent to this prosperity.

A citizen should treat society as grounds of co-responsibility and constructive effort. When a genuine and mature consumer treats the world like a pasture and a playground, and a gathering of potential consumer goods.....A consumer society does not give much chance of collective constitution [6].

More and more of us is becoming addicted to consumerism and shopping. I walk in a store to buy one thing and leave with much more. I pay, say thank you and see respect in the sales person's eyes. "One can get addicted to such feeling instantly" [20]. A consumption act such as this one, Z. Bauman interprets as an action in which a unit constructs its own identity thorough a collection of symbols defining particular examples chosen from many [1]. Somewhere in our sub consciousness we hear: "A book is defined by its cover. You are what you buy"

Due to the fact that the attractiveness of a consumer good turns out to be transient, a unit is "forced" to make a continuous choice of new objects [1]. "I'll just buy this and I'll be happy. An advert says that's how it should be. A bank applauds, I can afford". In such manner we heal our childhood complexes when our parents, despite hard work, could not afford much.

In order for satisfaction to appear, shopping has to be bigger and more frequent. "I can't stop". Until it gets to the border of addiction where the habit starts destroying the relationships with those closest to us. "I must have this and then I'm done with shopping, I lie to myself – a shopaholic". The obsession of compulsive shopping was first mentioned by psychologists in 2001 and classified it as an obsessive- compulsive behaviour. New and even more significant danger of the consumerism life style is shopping on Allegro [19]. We overwork ourselves in order to buy, shopaholism causes workaholism, through shopping we work off stress caused by work and hence the vicious circle.

"**Instant culture**" is a metaphor pertaining to a habit typical for our times which is a habit of a necessity of living in the "right now" [23]. "The symbol of

this culture is a famous trio: fast food, fast sex, fast car. Fast food is a microwave, instant coffee, instant soup, McDonald's and Coca-Cola as an instant form of condensed pleasure. Fast sex is instant sexual pleasure which is exemplified by Viagra, instant sex without commitment and emotional involvement/.../. Fast car is a symbol of time and space shrinking, Concorde, cell phone, fax, email, TV stations such as MTV and CNN/.

Another good example is plastic surgery (as an instant form of getting a perfect body), supermarket and the Internet./.../ Modern youth expects immediacy, it does not and cannot wait- besides the dominant message of consumer ideology is "don't postpone your life" [24]. As K. Ozog observes,....more often we concentrate our attention on what is at the beginning, what is first, what is at the beginning of a programme, film, article./.../ we look over a newspaper, looking only at pictures and reading headlines, we change channels quickly or nervously look at websites. We want to get the meaning of the whole text, programme or media announcement. Even short texts are not read accurately. Students make numerous mistakes e.g. when giving answers on their matura exams they do not read a task to the end. For knowledge, such approach has negative consequences because young people learn chaotically and carelessly.

Following is another modern culture characteristic called "**change and fast-paced life domination**". It is a type of a culture of adjusting to the "future shock", "culture spinning", appearance and rapid disappearance of new conversations, new ideas and ideologies, fashion and cultural gadgets, new media stars, and new identity versions. It is said that people born in the 90's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are born with a computer mouse in their hand and a screen being their window to the world [18], and a call phone with SMS's, the Internet with e-mails are their new way of speaking in the fast period "towards" and "after". They live in an "interactive dimension" and in "the right away". "For the graduates who have finished a consumer training, the world is a huge plane of possibilities and more and more intense experiences [3]. What is important is living "in the present and with the present", and speed not being [2].

Modern cultural models which place fast success as the main axiological category cause in youth a dislike for a longer intellectual effort. What is being developed in youth is a competence for "readiness for an instant interaction", rapid acceleration to make relationships with people, which however, are temporary, without a deeper commitment and consequences according to the rule typical for a fast food restaurant: "I come in and come out, I was never here". Those kind of contacts happen not as much as with a whole person but with a role which this person plays for us and vice versa. In place of hierarchical (vertical) correlations new "occasion" horizontal relationships appear [30]. As Z. Melosik observes further "Modern youth does not feel the need for stability; on the contrary, they view it with scepticism and suspicion. Young people are focused on briefness –

they are not afraid of change and with interest wait for it, and quickly become bored with each new thing". A question "What will happen tomorrow?" is not filled with worry but optimism [24].

It causes fateful consequences pertaining to learning consistency and making the knowledge systematic. "The young are not able to create a small system of absorbing knowledge from a specific field. They learn chaotically and are not able to point to the most important context, they cannot tell from less and more important elements. Making the gained knowledge hierarchical is unknown to them and they are not able to connect facts in few logical operations". They cannot select literature, articles and internet files for a specific task. They cannot prioritize, select and associate information. "The young learn the same way they receive a video clip; quickly, anxiously, emotionally and without a deeper understanding". Based on research a considerable percentage of our society consists of functional illiterate people who can read but cannot understand the main meaning of a text [29].

**The end of ideals – a daily life triumph** as an effect of mass culture popularization. Mass culture which is rolling also across Poland, but developed specifically in the West, causes, on an unprecedented scale, a popularization of many types of cultures: the high culture, the low one and different sub cultures. On the other hand, what has been observed are: a low intellectual, esthetical and moral level of this culture products, applauding bad taste of the viewers, mediocrity, vulgarity, primitivism and even brutishness, over - emotionality, an inclination to acting in effect, and an inclination to entertaining viewers [27].

It has been observed in modern youth the end of ideals and changing big ideals for everyday life matters, moments and activities. For centuries it has been thought that the sense of life is living for big ideals and matters. How often nowadays do we hear that: "Ideals inspire only for some time but usually it turns out that usually they are only socially constructed ideals, that they are imposed on us as our own only for us to think and act in someone else's business (political or economic) [24].

It is interesting to observe that "The pieces of their (the youth born in the 80's and 90's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – AZ) moral and life orientation has been shaped at the time of the most offensive indoctrination of the success ideology and the Western world consumerism/.../. They have high aspirations, complex needs; they want a lot. This is first generation (and other follow –AZ) which, on such scale, feel a moral need for success and a natural competitive situation..." [32]. This generation has a differently shaped outlook on the world than a present generation of late maturity. "Makeshift bonds and a lack of commitment are a golden rule" [2], young people prefer to savour trivial matters, get excited by talking about clichés and "about everything and nothing". A lifestyle based on reflection about life, and discussion about important topics, inquiring the cause and effect, searching for the life meaning is disappearing. "Big ideals has been replaced by

small shopping, searching for fascinating moments and trivialities” [24, s. 74]. Everything is accompanied by a marketing approach. The goal is money, making it and changing it for a short-lived pleasure. The pleasure has become spending money on unimportant things and going to supermarkets [36].

**Feeling of power and freedom reconstruction.** “Despite a catastrophic vision of the future without principles and signposts, perspectives of being lost and powerlessness, paradoxically/.../young people are not afraid to live and they have a feeling of a task they have to accomplish, they have a feeling of power and control over reality. From their childhood they learn how to live in a world without definite truths and answers. Therefore, they take matters in their own hands. They construct various arguments and test which ones work in real life. They believe in a pragmatic truth concept; truth is what works and what allows them to “move forth” [24, s.72] ...”escape, evasion and lack of involvement” – that is their challenge [4].

There is a retreat from an institutionalized participation in social life and a so called privatization takes place. People search on their own for signs, values and identity points [12]. For the young the meaning of territory disappears and “the end of space” is born. Through mass media and fast means of transport people in all corners of the world have broader access to everything and slowly cause social relations to be abolished. As Z. Melosik observes “For the young (and not only for them) freedom does not mean a possibility of choice between political parties anymore, but a freedom of choice of a package of products, cultural gadgets and life styles offered by the market and the media.

**Body cult and sexuality culture.** In the consumerist culture people’s identity are defined not as much by mind and heart qualities or indicators of social status like education and values, but body. The centre of constructing a unit identity shifts from the inside to the outside. “ A unit creates its identity through constructing a self visual image – aesthetic and sexual, and a properly dressed up body [25]. Models promoted by the media cause in young people a feeling of gap between an ideal and own body, and a low self-esteem state. It leads to many disorders e.g. anorexia and bulimia.

The second characteristic quality for the body cult is sexuality. “ Liberal sex, cigarettes, alcohol and drugs” are the slogans of a teenage subculture originated at the turn of the 60’s and 70’s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, within the framework of the sexual revolution in the Western countries. Promoting the ideas of “being sexy” and “having sex” as “recreational sex” in open relationships, has had a big impact on social life [10]. Sex is not only for deepening marital love, emotional bonds or procreation but is treated as a source of entertainment and excitement. Pushy visual art on the border of pornography in all-access media and pornography in a closed circuit brought, in many instances, love and beauty of female – male relations to pure biology where only craziness and “getting off” counts. “Sex is good for everything”. “Reset yourself”. Sexual initiation age among teenagers has

decreased significantly. The effect of which is moral relaxation, teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

For some time a slow but progressive inhibition of this unnatural sexual invasion has been observed. In the 80's and 90's during the conservative movement in the USA, fashion for sexual innocence was born. A movement called *Real Love Can Wait* was the first to appear. This movement was supported by many politicians (Ronald Regan was in its lead) and show business stars. In the state of Louisiana in the USA a government educational program was established which was to support sexual abstinence through realization of suitable preventive classes at schools. This program has been very effective. At the base of its attractiveness, the whole abstinence movement and the education school program, there are classic marketing tools : a basic health and psychology message, celebrity support and tens of typical teenage gadgets (caps, T-shirts, rings, etc.). Thanks to the organization *Real Love Can Wait* a "virgin weirdo" transforms into a "fashionable virgin".

In films and TV programs nudity and sex slowly stop being a magnet for audience. When we compare two TV shows, *Sex and the City* and, a newer one, *Desperate Housewives*, it can be observed that the sex craze is passing. Obviously lust attacks still take place but more often, both men and women are busy making a career, working, taking care of the house or doing creative work. They have partially consciously freed themselves from the need for being sexy.

"Up until now, in the world of sexuality, totalitarianism has ruled (men-AZ), however now, women have introduced democracy. They faked orgasms before but now they demand getting pleasure from men" [14]. Sex is a need for a healthy person but more people, even from the media world, are inclined to say that it has been overrated. "Sex does not play the role of a chocolate bar cheating hunger" [14]. For many young people in the world and in Poland a steady relationship of three – in –one : marriage, love and sex; marriage, responsibility and sex has become an ideal.

For some time, besides the body cult and sexuality, another alarming phenomenon has taken place among young people which is making a career and postponing marriage. There are more and more so called *singles* who chose that life style not under coercion but by choice. Being single does not mean lack of sex.

**Americanization.** The economic globalization taking place causes a process of "global culture" to appear. It is not happening through a mutual idea and cultural model exchange between different nations though, but a one- way flow of cultural values from The United States to the rest of the world [15]. The United States dominate today in "non- material" economy, information processing, computer software, media production, finance and science. Economic and military advantage of the USA has made its culture very attractive. The whole world wants to watch Hollywood super productions, listen to American music, wear jeans, eat

hamburgers, study at American universities or read translations of American books and magazines. “It is not happening because people view that culture as superior to their own, but because it originated in an attractive civilization, among attractive items, beside economic and military power” [31].

Even in the most anti – American countries people build the same houses, highways, cars, make the same advertisements, the same McDonald’s. People wear the same clothes and English, in a simplified American version, has become a multinational language. “ It is not important if it is good or bad, it is enough to observe that it has not happened out of coercion but out of pure will of millions, no, billions of people. The USA does not have to impose much on the world or force to many things. America simply attracts people, money, minds, everything” [31]. The world has become dominated through the American cultural code system.

**Global teenager.** The emergence of a world teenage culture causes the whole world youth to be similar. As Z. Melosik observes the global teenager identity is shaped not so much by national values but by pop culture and consumerist ideology. Pop culture, saturated by American image, “works” past the borders and continents and removes national, international, ethnic, and language differences. It is cosmopolitan. “A global teenager is very pragmatic and communicates easily. He is very tolerant of differences and, at the same time, is characterized by scepticism towards the idea of a deeper engagement and deeper involvement (he does not want to rebel in any way or change the world in the name of any understood alternatives)” [24, s.84–86]. A product most convincingly depicted by media is “*the idea* of a teenage global market” [26]. Aggressive advertising changes a child into a consumer. As Z. Bauman proves “ a consumer is a citizen’s enemy” because a consumer “opposes everything that stands in a way of the concentration of a self – prosperity search...”, and “...wasting energy and time on matters which he deems indifferent to his own prosperity”.

However, “A democratic society citizen ought to worry about public affairs and carefully watch his right to an active participation in it” [6]. Undoubtedly, openness, tolerance, being articulate and pragmatic are desired qualities but “ the emergence of the world teenage culture” results in social ( ethnic, religious, historical, cultural and territorial) and national identity disappearance. One should use those identity traits when describing himself [28].

**Success cult** – for a certain teenage group, a determining phenomenon for their identity is a need for success. Everywhere they hear “go to the limits”, “you can do it”, “you have to be the best”. “ There are two success contexts here. The first is marked by striving for power, position and money, the second- through popular fame (obtained mainly through being in the media)” [24, s.88]. They are willing to sacrifice their personal and family life for success. Large circles of teenagers are unable to adjust to such quick changes, they have no jobs and can not afford to buy many things. When compared to the rich they get stressed, “the



inability and despair syndrome” becomes the cause of pathologies. And if you are not great you can take the shortcut. A part of the youth looks for shelter in small social groups (in the mafia as well, unfortunately) and subcultures [8]. They sell their own identity for success.

**Generation X** consists of a different than above- mentioned generation group. The generation of “...nowadays 20 something, devoid of illusions, indifferent, passive and distrustful, which appeared as a negative reaction to a ruling success ideology/.../” [24, s.87-88]. It consists of people who “do not take responsibility for their actions and /or show a general lack of interest” [34]. They live in the present, by looking for pleasures, are not interested in professional success and high social status. On the contrary, they are interested in the *zero look* – a mediocre state.

**“Knife cult”** is a need to possess brass knuckles, knives, Swiss army knives, rubber clubs and telescopic batons, plumber wrenches, hammers, bicycle pumps, gas containers- anything that can scare. This cult has spread among the youth in industrial countries. The knife culture is a result of an increase of a feeling of danger. And not without a reason – aggression on the streets and at schools is increasing in a threatening way. According to research, the feeling of fear and threat does not leave the majority of the young even for a moment. It is the worst in big cities. K. Krajewski from the Criminology Department at the Jagielonski University, based on research, states that 53 percent of Krakow and Nowa Huta population carries something they can defend themselves with. It is similar in other big Polish cities. Carrying weapons gives the youth an illusion of control over the environment and reduces fear. “However, weapons in their hands can easily change from defence items to deadly tools./.../ when you take a knife on the street, three scenarios are possible: you live, he dies you both die. Either way it is bad [9]. When we look at this phenomenon on the European scale, we can state that Poland does not stay far behind European cities. “Oh, my friend carries a hatchet in case he gets attacked”. This is a problem – observes K. Krajewski- of all industrial countries.

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According to this analysis we can see how complex social processes are which determine modern youth identity and how different today teenagers’ ideals are from the universal ones. Created from the post-industrial civilizations and technopol culture globalization, and postmodernism bore different ideas which released phenomena and social processes difficult to understand for the older generation. After all there are first symptoms of the forth wave of a civilization transformation which, by making a biotechnological civilization, will radically alter people’s lives. It all takes place in a highly accelerated manner.

Can pedagogy meet these new challenges and be able to formulate adequate educational ideals equally fast, will the axiological changes have a social quality?

Based on this study a question arises: How can you reconcile the processes created by the knowledge civilization and globalization with the cultural heritage spirit? How meaningful here is a warning given by a civilization historian F. Koneczny: "One can not be civilized in two ways. One civilization has to be superior otherwise a downfall comes".

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## КУЛЬТУРОЛОГІЧНІ ЗМІНИ В ІНФОРМАЦІЙНІЙ ЦИВІЛІЗАЦІЇ

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Еволюція цифрової технології, комп'ютерів і мас-медіа, що характерні для інформаційної цивілізації, мають значний вплив на культуру. Традиційна культура і технократія замінені постмодернізмом з такими викликами, як культура споживання, культура нехайності ("вже і тепер"), перевага змін і швидкого життя, відчуття влади й моделювання свободи, культура маскуванню, культура тіла й привабливості, американізація, стан глобального підлітка, культ успіху. Їх можна доповнити такими явищами: "культура зброї", покоління Х (без ілюзій, байдуже, пасивне, недовірливе). Усі процеси охоплюють руйнування етичних цінностей.

*Ключові слова:* інформаційна цивілізація, культура нехайності, культ тіла й привабливості, американізація, глобальний підліток, культ успіху, культура зброї.

## КУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В ИНФОРМАЦИОННОЙ ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИИ

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Эволюция цифровой технологии, компьютеров и масс-медиа, которые характерны для информационной цивилизации, оказывают значительное влияние на культуру. Традиционная культура и технократия заменены постмодернизмом с такими вызовами как культура потребления, культура сиюминутности (“уже и теперь”), преимущества изменений и быстроты жизни, ощущение власти и моделирование свободы, культура маскировки, культура тела и привлекательности, американизация, состояние глобального подростка, культ успеха. Их можно дополнить такими явлениями: “культура оружия”, поколение X (без иллюзий, безразличное, пассивное, недоверчивое). Все процессы охватывают разрушение этических ценностей.

*Ключевые слова:* информационная цивилизация, культура сиюминутности, культ тела и привлекательности, американизация, глобальный подросток, культ успеха, культура оружия.

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