

Late Modern Projectivity and Existentialism¹

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Abstract: The article addresses the issue of the relationship between existentialism and late modern projectivity interpreted in terms of project work and of biographical projectivity. It does so from the perspective of transformations of subjectivity in modernity and late modernity, and, therefore, from the perspective of the process of individualization. The objective is to answer the question of the belonging of existentialism to one of these sociocultural formations. For these purposes, some major categories of existentialism such as project, anxiety, and temporality are analyzed. Their analysis leads to the conclusion that there is a close, structural correlation between existentialism and sociocultural structures of modernity as well as that existentialism, in contrast to late modern projectivity, has some emancipatory potential related to its alienating status in modernity. The article refers to the methodology of qualitative sociology.

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Introduction

Projectivity is undoubtedly an important factor that sheds light on the transformation of individuality in late modernity (or postmodernity)². Projectivity should be understood not only as a new, crucial form of work, key to the ongoing changes in professional activity/project work, but also – and above all – as a fundamental form of individualized biographical experience, pertaining to an individual's identity. Understood this way, projectivity is an expression of the process of postmodern individualization, and in the historical perspective it is the culmination of modern individualization processes. In terms of project work related to a “system of pluralized, flexible decentralized underemployment” (Beck, 1992: 149), projectivity is a manifestation of what Baethge calls “the increasing normative empowerment of direct labor processes” (Baethge, 1991: 6). On their bases, individuals make claims not only to align them with their own perceptions, preferences, etc., but also to shape them (Baethge, 1991: 7–10) in accordance with the shaping of their personalities, and thus with self-realization. In this perspective, work would be not only goods, but an expression of personality, a way of being, an individualized form of life, and, thus, an element of biographical projectivity. The latter means the totality of individual strategies and life orientations creating individuals' identities, understood after Giddens as the reflexive project of the “self”: “the self becomes a reflexive project” (Giddens, 1991: 32). Thus, projectivity is part of the late modern process of individualization meaning “the transforming of human ‘identity’ from ‘given’ into a ‘task’ and charging the actors with responsibility for performing this task and for the consequences (also side-effects) of their performance” (Bauman, 2000: 31–32). In late modernity, individualization becomes a compulsion and “fate, not a choice. In a land of the individual freedom of choice, the option to escape individualization and to refuse participation in the individualizing game is empathically not on the agenda” (Bauman, 2000: 34, cf. 30–35). Beck recognizes that “this isolation, this ‘solitary confinement of the ego’ is a mass sentence” (as cited in Bauman, 2001: 50)³.

The essence of projectivity in its professional and biographical sense is the project. This category is the basis for understanding postmodern subjectivity (which finds philosophical expression in postmodernism), but at the same time it refers to existentialism which, for the first time in the philosophical and technical sense, uses the category of the project to present its original understanding of subjectivity. In both cases, the reference to the category of the project makes it reasonable to compare postmodern subjectivity, such that emerges from sociological analyses, with the existential concept of

2 I treat these terms interchangeably, having in mind, above all, Beck's understanding of late modernity as reflexive modernity (as opposed to classical or industrial modernity), on the basis of which “the modernization process detraditionalizes its foundations in industrial society” (Beck, 1992: 153, cf. 9–15, 153–154). In the text, therefore, I refer primarily to Beck, Giddens, and Bauman as those theoreticians of late modernity who saw it as a reflexive transformation of modernity. I refer to the opposition between modernity (classical) and late (reflexive) modernity for reasons of the transparency of analyses, being aware of the presence of elements of modernity in late modernity.

3 “[...] ‘individualization’ means the disintegration of the certainties of industrial society as well as the internal compulsion to find and invent new axioms for oneself and others who do not have them [...]: individualization does not result from the free decisions of individuals. To quote Sartre, people are doomed to individualization. It is an internal compulsion to construct, design and stage not only one's own biography, but also the networks inherent in its involvement, understood as preferences and changes in subsequent phases of life” (Beck, 2009: 29, see 28–31).

subjectivity. The more so that the sociologists themselves (Beck, Giddens, later Bauman) describing the transformations of late modernity in the final two decades of the last century referred in their analyses to Sartre's thought (including the concept of the project), who is the most famous representative of existentialism in the general cultural circulation. These references, however, were incidental, selective, and contextual, and were not part of a systematic comparative analysis. Interestingly, in their partiality, they related Sartre's thought either to modernity (Bauman⁴) or to reflexive, late modernity (Beck⁵).

At first glance, it can be assumed that there is a correspondence between projective subjectivity in late modernity and existentialism. Both understandings of subjectivity are linked by anti-essentialism, which is a radical expression of individualization processes: in the first case – social anti-essentialism (the individual does not have a social identity), while in the second one – philosophical anti-essentialism (the individual does not have an ontological and anthropological identity). In existentialism, the existence of an individual does not have its justification in a pre-existing (metaphysical, anthropological, or historical-social) order of things, which defines its essence. An individual itself establishes this essence with its constitutive project, which is the result of an ever-repeated effort to shape itself ("existence precedes essence"). On the other hand, in late modernity and flexible capitalism, projectivity frees an individual from its social "essence". The latter survived – after the collapse of the estate structures of traditional society – in classical modernity in the form of large, stable social structures and institutions, symbolized by Weber's "iron cage", with their routines (see Sennett, 2006: 36–54). These structures defined the social framework of individual biographies and defined the professional and private identities of individuals, reducing them to permanent professional, social, and family roles. Nevertheless, in modernity, identities determined by social position are no longer given or innate; they are acquired in the sense that they become the subject of repetition and confirmation or rejection in favor of others, but they are also relatively stable, related to and thus embedded in a different social system⁶.

On the other hand, on the basis of late modern professional and biographical projectivity, an individual is uprooted and "liberated from the social forms of industrial society – class, stratum, family, gender-dependent position", and is deprived of outside support and condemned to themselves (Beck, 2002: 111–112). Thus, projectivity reflexively defines the framework of its identity from the very beginning. It is forced to constantly construct its ever-temporary and labile – "fluid" – identity within the "reflexive identity project" (Giddens) or a "self-reflexive" biography (Beck). In both cases, therefore, we are dealing with a life transformed into a project.

4 See footnote 6.

5 See footnote 3.

6 In this context, Bauman recalls Sartre: "as this happens, human beings are no more their 'born into'" their identities. "As Jean-Paul Sartre famously put it, it is not enough to be born a bourgeois, one must live one's life as a bourgeois" (Bauman, 2000: 32). In other words, one must actively take up one's own identity, live as if one had freely chosen it. Similarly, in another position: "at the sundown of the classical era of modernity Jean-Paul Sartre summed up the time-honored experience in his concept of the 'life project' which not so much expresses as creates the 'essence' of the human individual" (Bauman, 2001: 231).

The aim of the article is to verify the above initial conviction about the correspondence between the projective understanding of subjectivity in late modernity and the existential concept of subjectivity, and, as a result, to answer the question – does this concept refer to sociological descriptions of subjectivity in modernity or in late modernity? This article defends the thesis about the close correspondence between existentialism and modernity. This thesis will be substantiated by analyzing the categories of contingency and fear, the project, temporality, and project normativity, key categories for understanding the existentialist vision of the world, and the social position of a human being in late modernity.

The analyses presented in the text are of a philosophical and sociological nature, and start with the assumption adopted in the grant that human subjectivity can be fully understood only in the context of the lives and biographies of individuals, and that their lives and biographies can be understood if they are presented in the perspective of subjectivity. Therefore, for these analyses, the existential concept of subjectivity is an important analytical tool and it can be treated as a heuristic-analytical model that allows the conceptualizing, in terms of subjectivity, of the projective-biographical experiences of individuals in the world of late modernity. This procedure allows the highlighting and sharpening of some of the features of modern projective subjectivity and the demonstration of its specificity. Thus, it makes it possible to capture the difference more clearly in the understanding of subjectivity in the world of classical modernity and late modernity whilst, on the other hand, shedding light on the sociocultural context of the emergence of existentialism and, at the same time, postmodernism, which is not analyzed in this text.

In turn, the analysis of the above-mentioned projective-biographical experiences of individuals is carried out in the perspective of qualitative research. Their empirical basis is the material collected during research conducted using qualitative methods – these are narrative interviews conducted under the grant, based on the technique of (auto)biographical narrative interview (in F. Schütze's version), as well as an interview about the present (present life) developed in project and inspired by phenomenology and Gestalt psychotherapy (see Biały, Piasek, 2024). The analysis of the collected qualitative data will be used to compare the image of postmodern projective subjectivity emerging from them with its existential understanding, as well as with the findings contained in the sociological literature.

On a final note concerning the legitimacy of comparing the professional-biographical projective experience in late modernity with existentialism, the latter shows the ontological, unchanging, and timeless structure of human existence, thus situated outside history and society, and proclaims the ontological incompatibility of external world existence and human subjectivity given to itself in a pre-reflexive experience, which cannot be captured in objective categories appropriate for the description of empirical reality, including social reality. Of course, for existentialists, adopting the category of intentionality from phenomenology – directed against the cogitation tradition – a component of subjective self-knowledge is an objective reference to the world. For this reason, human existence is always “being-in-the-world” (the need to prove the world was considered scandalous by Heidegger); it is doomed to a world in which (thus also in society) it must manifest and objectify itself, but in

which, due to the ontological strangeness of the world and transcending the existing world by its own power, it cannot be fulfilled. Does it make sense, then, to carry out the above parallel? Leaving aside the founding assumption of the existentialist ontology about the fundamental strangeness of the world, I shall focus on its other structural similarities with projectivity. Nevertheless, the issue of the strangeness of the world can be shifted toward the question of the forms of the social alienation of the individual and situate the concept of modernity and its basic vocabulary within the perspective of alienation. Adopting this social perspective will also make it possible to answer the question about the possibility of relating it to late modern projectivity.

The analysis of the above-mentioned categories, essential to the understanding of subjectivity in existentialism and in late modernity, will begin with the concept of fear as an affective modality of the individual's understanding of his/her situation in the world, related precisely to the strangeness and contingency of his/her existence in the world.

Anxiety/anguish (fear)

The issue of alienation, the strangeness of a human being in the world, refers in existentialism to his/her general situation in the world and to his/her affective reaction to this strangeness. The former is defined by the contingency of the existence of the individual, by throwing it into a pure, non-intelligible factuality as "a radical contingency" (Sartre, 1956: 545) given in the sense of the absurdity of existence – so dramatized in the works of Sartre and especially Camus – i.e., the futility and senselessness of all efforts to make sense of it (Sartre, 1956: 615) defines human existence as *passion inutile*: "Man is useless passion"). An individual reacts to the state of ontological homelessness and loneliness with chronic anxiety and uncertainty. Anxiety/anguish in existentialism is twofold: ontological, generalized, indefinite, and objectless, as its elusive subject is the very existence of the individual in objective experience in his/her abandonment and, at the same time, in his/her inalienable freedom. Anxiety, however, is specified when it accompanies the individual's responsibility for specific acts of his/her unconditional choices by which he/she determines the shape of his/her existence. In both cases, anxiety is an expression of the individual's responsibility for their existence, it is constitutive of the human experience of the world. Anxiety reveals human freedom, opens up to the possibilities of the existence that arouse anxiety, "because it depends on me alone to sustain them in their existence":

Anguish in fact is recognition of a possibility as my possibility; that is, it is constituted when consciousness sees itself cut from its essence by nothingness or separated from the future by its very freedom (Sartre, 1956: 35).

Anxiety, therefore, is anxiety before one's own possible, authentic existence, anguish before one's own being: "freedom, which manifests itself through anguish, is characterized by constantly renewed obligation to remake the *Self* which designates the free being" (Sartre, 1956: 34–35, also 29–45)⁷.

On the basis of modernity with its progressive ethos, faith in progress and its great ideological narratives expressing the desire for law and order, the experience of the strangeness of the world is treated as an expression of the alienation of the individual in capitalist modernity, as a reaction to the negative phenomena of the processes of modernization and disenchantment of the world – the erosion of personal bonds, loneliness, and the atrophy of the sense of existence. Therefore, the fear associated with them does not express, as in existentialism, the individual's authentic experience of his/her fundamental, ontological situation in the world, but has an empirical, psycho-social character, expressing the social deprivation of the individual related to the malfunctioning of socioeconomic structures and institutions. Therefore, it is a negative condition that can and should be removed by reforming and improving them for the sake of the collision-free existence of the individual and society. In its negativity, it thus expresses social alienation. Modernity excludes fear from its progressive self-awareness. In existentialism, on the other hand, fear in its positivity – as fear for authentic existence – also shows alienation understood as an inauthentic modality of existence; however, this alienation consists of an individual's escape from his/her dramatic condition in the world, from his/her freedom and responsibility for shaping his/her existence. Due to alienation, the individual then understands themselves only in empirical and objective categories, and draws the reasons for their existence from the external order – from social existence, from history, etc. In other words, he/she makes the social essentialization of his/her existence, preferring security over freedom, getting rid of responsibility for themselves, the repressed awareness of which is given only in "bad faith" (see Sartre, 1956: 47–70). In this mutual relationship, existentialism as an expression of cultural modernism and the alienating experience of capitalist modernity reverse the signs of authenticity and inauthenticity.

However, if, in the spirit of critical theory, fear is regarded as an expression of the alienating tendencies of modernity, as a reaction to the alienating "iron cage" of capitalist rationality, it also reveals the truth about modernity. However, the truth is ambiguous. On the one hand mystified, distorted by giving anxiety a universal meaning in existentialism – by contrasting the individual and society – and on the other emancipatory in the sense that in this distortion it shows the deficit of sense in modernity and at the same time refers to the normative core defining the process of individualization – the desire for authentic self-realization and autonomy. In this negative sense, in this distorting and ambiguous inversion of signs of authenticity and inauthenticity, fear would reveal, albeit in a wrong way, the possibility of authentic existence that would indicate both the need for and the direction of change. In the above critical and social perspective, existentialism and modernity confirm their mutual affiliation.

⁷ "What *Angst* is anxious for is being-in-the-world itself. [...] *Angst* reveals in *Dasein* its *being toward* its ownmost potentiality of being, that is *being free for* the freedom of choosing and grasping itself" (Heidegger, 1996: 175–176).

However, due to the positive experience of contingency, existential anxiety corresponds with late modern fear. In well-known descriptions of late modernity (Beck, Bauman), fear becomes a constitutive, affective mode of experiencing late modernity in a society of risk. The risk permeates all aspects of an individual's life. It refers to the contingency of existence determining its functioning in a postmodern society as a result of the disintegration of permanent structures, institutions, and social ties (classes, nuclear family) that are characteristic of "heavy modernity" and that have been replaced with the "light and mobile" structures characteristic of "light modernity" (Bauman, 2000: 53–59, 113–118), with all their fragile ties and identities, established by individuals with decisions devoid of a binding social context. The risk is associated with globalization, with the experience of disorientation and uncertainty in an increasingly fluid, opaque, unpredictable world where everything changes, "everything can happen and everything can be done, but nothing can be done once and for all" (Bauman, 2001: 87). In late modernity, it is true that "the social space in which identity can be constructed is expanding", but this extension by no means goes hand in hand with "expanding the capacity of individuals to inhabit these larger spaces" (Wagner, 1995: 245). Fear in late modernity, as in existentialism, expresses the radicalized experience of the contingency of existence.

This experience has its source in the aporetic nature of the late modern process of individualization, related to the "force of self-determination" (Bauman) of the individuals in the conditions of late modernity⁸, owing to which – and on the basis of the reflexive project of the self – they shape themselves with their choices determining their life strategies and identity. However, these choices are uncertain, marked by risk, and they arouse fear. On the one hand, resulting from the disintegration of permanent social structures and the increasing "privatization of the of identity-formation processes" (Bauman, 2001: 127), individuals no longer find support for these choices in strong – now dispersed – authorities and role models. On the other hand, in the globalized, non-transparent world of liquid modernity and flexible capitalism, they are unable to predict and control their consequences. At the same time, however, they are held responsible for the consequences as if they were entirely their own fault (see Bauman, 2000: 31)⁹. More generally, they must be responsible for the contradictions and threats inherent in society, with which they must deal "as a *personal problem* [...], as our personal fault or ailment" (Bauman, 2001: 69) – according to the already canonical Beck's thesis that living in a risk society means "the biographical solution of system contradictions", that "social crises appear as individual crises" (Beck, 1992: 137, 100).

However, anxiety/anguish in existentialism and fear in late modernity differ from each other, having different structures and different functions due to a different understanding of the indefiniteness of the threat which the individual is afraid of. In existentialism, anxiety for its own possible authentic existence – hence its elusiveness and indefiniteness – is anxiety toward a tangible threat that, in a sense, an individual can remedy with his/her existential effort of self-determination; in this meaning,

8 It is also a compulsion to take on challenges and risks as a "test of character" on the basis of flexible capitalism: "what counts is that you try, make an effort, even if you know that you are doomed to fail" (Sennett, 2006: 120).

9 An aspect of this fundamental contradiction is the disproportion between the excess of needs and the ability to satisfy them, characteristic of the late modern consumer society (Bauman, 2001: 58, 68).

it is a kind of concentrated, condensed fear. This threat is a massive world under the sign of “the They” (*das Man*) understood as “predominant mode of being”, as “subject” of everydayness” and averageness of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1996: 107, see 162–185) – the impersonal, submissive, normalizing routines of everyday life that abolish individuality and the uniqueness of the self, giving it an external identity, reducing anxiety in favor of a sense of security, and so on, thereby keeping it from self-determination. Indicating a threat to the individual and at the same time opening them to the possibility of being themselves, the emotion of anxiety has a positive, constructive character in existentialism, performing a cognitive and existential function – it orients the individual in the world, because, by opening the horizon of authentic existence, it opens to the future showing the direction of action, mobilizing and stimulating self-determination. It integrates existence by becoming a component of the individual’s pre-reflexive self-knowledge.

Not so in the case of late modern fear and biographical projectivity. Let us begin with the statement of one of the respondents:

I am afraid, of course I am afraid for the children. But, man, it’s such a heavy burden, having children. This is, of course, a great privilege and great love [...], but at the same time thinking, looking at these children, you want to provide them with the best possible future. [...] And what else am I afraid of? I guess that’s what I’m afraid of [...] losing independence. Both externally and internally. It means, for example, lack of funds, that, I don’t know, I will stop being able to work so much and pay off loans and live the way I like. But I’m also physically afraid of such degeneration that I don’t know if something will happen, and I’ll lie down, or I won’t [know about it] see. [...] when I think about old age, looking also at my husband’s old parents who are helpless, I would like to avoid it. [...] And of course, now, like everyone else, I am afraid of the war [...], I am afraid of what would happen if we, the children’s guardians, or the children got sick. But nothing really bad has happened. So, I guess you must be lucky.

At first glance, it seems that we are not dealing with fear, but with fear having its own specific causes. However, the multiplicity of the causes that result in generalized anxiety pointing to its other, deeper source is puzzling. This fear can be related to the respondent’s ACoA syndrome. It seems, however, that the severity of this generalized anxiety indicates its systemic nature and refers to the respondent’s entire social situation defined by the risk, randomness, and unpredictability of events over which the respondent has no control. This particular respondent overshadows this situation with the contingency of life in general:

Some kind of accident or bad situation. Well, these are things we can’t control. [...] It is also difficult to prepare for something that fate will bring, it seems to me that it is very often a coincidence that decides where we are [...].

The respondent works in an educational institution in a full-time job, under which she simultaneously carries out many tasks and projects; she claims that this work is self-fulfilling. This scattered activity, regardless of family factors, results in fatigue and burnout. It breeds uncertainty and general fear.

Due to the structural uncertainty associated with the reflexive project of the self and the insoluble contradictions of the late modern world, which the individual, burdened with the compulsive requirement of self-determination imposed by the processes of individualization, has to resolve in the biographical plan of their existence, fear in late modernity is not a fear of a specific, identifiable threat. It is a “diffused and ambient” fear, for which there is no specific cure (Bauman, 2001: 67, 227), hence it is not fully conscious, but “it haunts, says Bourdieu, consciousness and the subconscious” (as cited in Bauman, 2001: 52). In the face of the impossibility of identifying the threat, the indefiniteness of fear is somehow impersonal, systemic; it expresses the impotence of the individual and their powerlessness in the face of their unsuccessfully internalized fate. If the subject of fear is the existence of the individual, it is a diffuse existence. Fear in late modernity disintegrates the individual, making them incapable of self-determination. This is the case of several female respondents who clearly feel general anxiety. One of them says:

[...] I wanted to free myself, all the time [...], I think to myself, from something that was imposed on me. Some kind of fear, no? Yes, it seems to me that I felt a great fear that was instilled in me by my parents.

This respondent believes that the source of her fear is directly the trauma caused by her father’s violence. It certainly is. However, she does not notice that this fear is also related to her multiple and dispersed activity (artistic and earning), which determines her biographical project and which is reactive and escapist (as a reaction to the family situation). The respondent suffers from the inability to define herself, to integrate her design and give it a deeper meaning. She has this feeling that she lives in a shaky, unstable world. The world of late modernity, with its possibilities and its unpredictability, creates conditions for her escape activity and intensifies her initial fear. This situation concerns many respondents with a decidedly projecting biography that is diffuse and reactive. They strive for self-fulfillment by freeing themselves from their traumas and gaining psycho-existential independence and self-reliance.

And just now I’m just starting to build myself, no [...] I must be independent; I want to be independent and that’s it.

However, this is difficult, if not impossible, because the activity of these respondents is of a reactive nature, a manifestation of an escape into projective hyperactivity, possible under the conditions of late modernity. Although their fear is anxiety because of authentic existence and self-realization, it does not lead to self-realization, but, rather, to the maintenance of this reactive hyperactivity. Under the conditions of late modernity, it becomes generalized and elusive.

If the tangible afflictions of individuals are substituted with the deepest, undefined, external sources of fear which have become personal matters of the individual, and are privatized¹⁰, they cannot be its object, because fear is not the fear of one's own identity or of one's own existence and its deficits. The process of therapy does not remove the cultural and systemic sources of fear, but often camouflages them; rather, it concerns symptoms, biographically-localized problems, and not their deepest, systemic sources, biographically-irremovable, escaping the reflexive control of individuals. Its goal is not so much to transform the individual as to restore their balance, reconcile them with the world, and adapt to reality¹¹. Trauma is not an existential borderline situation in which an individual realizes the possibility of being themselves, but, rather, it is stress, tension, something that gives rise to a sense of meaninglessness, something whose sources must be removed. Thus, ultimately, fear is not the fear of possible authentic existence, but *because of* the existing existence. This situation is confirmed by the conservative desires and visions of life of the respondents. Even if they declare their striving for self-realization assuming a time horizon and effort in order to give their dispersed, multi-tasking activity a higher, moral and social significance, the horizon of their dreams is defined by peace and security, including material security. Some respondents even reject dreams, as, e.g., one of the respondents working as a project in a cultural institution and talking about self-realization and fulfillment of her own ambitions:

I prefer to grab what is pleasant in my here and now than to feed on dreams, as if somewhere else might be fine. Because I have no dreams. I may have some desires like I don't know, going on vacation, but it's not a dream¹².

The fear of these respondents is conservative, giving their biographical projectivity a pragmatic, adaptive, and conformist character. Therefore, this fear does not raise existential questions, and this fact can be explained by their exclusion from the sphere of pure relations – “the sequestration of experience” (Giddens, 1991: 155–169, 183–188). This phenomenon was noticed by one of the respondents, a middle-aged woman who, despite her projective biography and project work, represents a traditional moral mentality and a traditional work ethic:

Well, I know the young people I know. Well, as if these are people who really have such a consumerist approach to life and generally [have] such a level of some kind of sensitivity [...], they push away some difficult topics, various diseases. Because, I just don't know, they don't come into contact with it or don't want to, or maybe they just don't have anyone like that in their family. But maybe I'm wrong, maybe it's different.

10 “[...] social problems are increasingly perceived in terms of psychological dispositions: as personal inadequacies, guilt feelings, anxieties, conflicts and neuroses” (Beck, 1992: 101, also 153).

11 A more optimistic view can be found in Giddens, who, seeing therapy as an “adjustment device”, associates adaptation with the individual's harmonization of their “present concerns and future projects with a psychological inheritance from the past” (Giddens, 1991: 246). Giddens refers to the link between fear and freedom, and thus to the existentially-productive meaning of fear (Giddens, 1991: 47–49, see 47–55).

12 It is similar in the case of a young, active respondent: “and I have no dreams. I don't have. Because everything I want, I do”.

In turn, an example of “the sequestration of experience: is demonstrated by another respondent, who represents the youngest generation of the respondents; she is a student involved in various activities. Through them, she reproduces the family pattern of career and success, and at the same time escapes from excessive, authoritarian stimulation on the part of her parents, consistent with this pattern. When asked about spirituality, she replies:

I don't really need that. Perhaps it's just that I haven't had any such experiences in my life, for example I have never been to a funeral, I have never lost anyone close to me, for example, to devote any greater reflexion to what happens to a person after death, or I've never felt such need, just that I don't know, I need some higher power to whom I can turn for help.

Therefore, late modern fear is conservative; it tells the individual “I feel bad”, but it does not say why it is so or how to deal with the evil affecting them. Being an accomplice of the opaque world, it is a blind, repressed, and blocked emotion, because its source is completely dispersed and, therefore, irremovable. The more so that late modernity, in which it is impossible to draw the line between the authentic and the inauthentic, is, on the one hand, in its libertarian self-affirmation, appearing to be without alternatives, and, on the other hand, imposes an obligation on the individual to deal with their own, privatized problems. For these reasons, Bauman may conclude that if modernity is characterized by “compulsive critique of reality”, then late modernity – by “compulsive *self-critique*” (Bauman, 2001: 106). This can explain the disappearance of mechanisms of direct, institutional control in late modern society. The other side of the tightening of the compulsion of self-definition and the requirement of self-responsibility in late modernity is the loss of a sense of security, and it applies to both project work and biographical projectivity – generalized fear along with the common sense of uncertainty is precisely its expression.

In summary, fear in existentialism and modernity has a constructive character; it points to a possible authentic existence defined by self-determination understood as the autonomy of the individual. Fear in existentialism does this in a direct, positive way, whilst fear in modernity does this in an indirect, negative way. On the other hand, fear in late modernity is conservative; it expresses the individual's inability to self-realize understood as the ability to creatively express themselves.

The project

The response to the contingency of existence and the fear that accompanies it is the sense-creating effort of the individual expressed in a life project, by means of which they make sense and make the world understandable to themselves. Project is a central category to the existential, anti-essentialist ontology (Heidegger's fundamental – *Entwurf*¹³, Sartre's phenomenological – *projet*¹⁴), as well as for

13 “As projecting, understanding is a mode of being of Da-sein in which it is its possibilities as possibilities [...]. Project always concern the complete disclosedness of being-in-the-world” (Heidegger, 1996: 136–137).

14 “Evry project is comprehensible as a project of itself toward a possible” (Sartre, 1956: 460).

defining the projective modality of work and biography in late modernity¹⁵. In existentialism, the project expresses human existence in its open, dynamic, and temporal structure; it is the concretization of the choices made, transcending what is current, projecting oneself on one's own possibilities. Through their realization, the individual understands themselves in the entirety of their existence, opening to the world, establishing the horizon of meaning in which they understand themselves and the world – their being-in-the-world. Existence is defined by the temporalizing and present-situation-creating interplay of “thrown/throwness” and “project” (Heidegger)¹⁶, “factuality” and “transcendence” (Sartre)¹⁷, through which it takes up the past in light of a future-directed, project-organizing goal (human existence is a “thrown projection”).

There is certainly a structural and formal analogy between the existential project and late modern projectivity in its narrower and broader sense. Project work is understood here as a standard form of work organization proper to late modernity; its new institutional pattern is characterized by definability, finiteness, and temporality, i.e., on the one hand, the performance of specific tasks that run at a specific time and, on the other, their one-off nature and often uniqueness (performing it for the first time) as well as complexity that require innovation, redefining the rules of work (see Birken, 2012: 2–4). Biographical projectivity is inscribed in the whole of fluid, individualized postmodern relations, linked with the process of continuous construction by individuals of their identities, free from stable structures and social references typical of classical modernity. It is, therefore, associated with the “privatization of the identity-formation process, the disperse of authorities” and patterns (Bauman, 2001: 127). Its component is often project work.

However, the fundamental difference between the existential project and projectivity is clearly visible; it concerns primarily the time horizon – the length of their duration. For existentialists, the project is long-term, often extending over a lifetime, although of course it can be replaced by another, in the longer term. Sartre distinguishes between, “original choice”, fundamental choice, let us call it biographical or strategic, with which an individual establishes a comprehensive, long-term life project¹⁸ and secondary choice, made in the space designated by the former, that is undertaken in specific life situations. The fundamental choice gives a biographical and narrative orientation to an individual's life, sets a horizon of meaning and a relatively coherent system of values, the implementation of which requires consistency, long-term commitment, an effort to overcome resistance and obstacles, if not often sacrifice. In short, work on yourself aimed at implementing and maintaining an existential project. This attitude, together with the accompanying sense of contingency, the absurdity of existence, and the ultimate futility of efforts, is described as heroic, also due to the need to break with the previous

15 Regarding the career of the term “project” in the socioeconomic sphere (see Bröckling, 2005).

16 “Project is the existential constitution of the being in the realm of factual potentiality of being. And, as thrown, Dasein is thrown into the mode of being of projecting” (Heidegger, 1996: 136).

17 “Now the meaning of the past is strictly dependent on my present project” (Sartre, 1956: 498).

18 “The free project is fundamental, for it is my being. [...] the fundamental project which I am is a project concerning not my relations with this or that particular object in the world, but my total being-in-the-world; [...] this project posits for its end a certain type of relation to being which the for-itself wills to adopt. This project is not instantaneous, for it can not be “in time” (Sartre, 1956: 489, also 564, 599, see 557–575).

project, which fails in “They”. One can also talk about relative, non-teleological improvement, the measure of which is not, however, objectively or intersubjectively (socially) important norms, patterns, and criteria¹⁹, but, rather, internal norms determined by the hierarchy of values defining the project. The long duration of the project and the effort to implement it, as well as axiological subjectivism, are all the determinants of the understanding of existential projectivity as autonomy.

Due to autonomy being understood in this way, there is a close correspondence between individuals’ existential and biographical projects carried out under the conditions of “hard modernity” with its stable institutions, permanent roles (professional: a full-time job with a long career path and professional development; social and family: a nuclear family) as well as strong social ties and obligations. They constituted a stable framework for the biographies of individuals – they guaranteed their long-term nature, their continuity and cohesion in the conditions of progressing individualization²⁰. They enabled autonomy to constitute a model of subjectivity in modernity, also created a space for the idea of self-improvement or self-improvement rejected by late modernity. Thus, Bauman could legitimately attribute Sartre’s existential project to “heavy modernity”, referring it to its constitutive concept of order symbolized by the Ford factory – this “undoubtedly the highest achievement of order-oriented social engineering”; at the individual level, it found expression in “Sartrean “life project”, serving as a guiding design for the self’s life-long effort of identity building” (and at the global and social level – in Parsonian social system) (Bauman, 2000: 57).

What is the status of the project in late modernity? Well, its basic determinant is that it is short-lived. On the basis of flexible capitalism, project work has a strictly defined time perspective, and biographical projectivity is determined by individual decisions and short-term life plans and strategies related to the disappearance of permanent structures and social bonds. Most importantly, their temporary nature is established in these decisions themselves.

The analyzed interviews confirm this image of projectivity in late modernity, but also complicate it; its complexity depends on the respondents belonging to different generations. In terms of project work, the respondents are characterized by high flexibility and the readiness to take on new projects and challenges and treat work as temporary. This approach is visible especially among respondents from Generations Z and Y, but also X. The aforementioned respondent from the latter generation, who has conservative views and represents a traditional work ethic (loyalty, reliability, commitment), declares her readiness to change her job (after all, she had worked in other institutions before, also in terms of projects). However, she does not undertake other activities in line with her interests, for economic reasons, for fear of worsening her material status. This feature is important to the respondents from the Y and X generations, who are looking for stability and security. An analogous picture can be found in the area of biographical projectivity, an important element of which is project work. The activity

19 In his later works, inspired by the thought of Simone de Beauvoir, Sartre emphasizes the intersubjective dimension of choices.

20 “The ‘classic’ identities of modern society were, in effect, long-term projects, developing like a *Bildungsroman*” (Rosa, 2012: 103).

of the Generation Z is more dispersed, fragmented, and networked. This generation is more open to new relationships, but not necessarily deeper ones:

I don't feel the need to establish closer bonds [...], I don't have the head for a family [...] I'm weak at maintaining relationships that limit [me], unless I fall in love, [but] it's not a priority, I don't feel [that] I need it, I don't need it.

On the other hand, in the case of Generations X and Y, the need for lasting ties and stable relationships is visible, although the aforementioned respondent with conservative views, also referring to the issue of relationships, treats her partnership quite instrumentally.

The late modern project is, therefore, not subject to the logic of the existential project in that it does not have long-term plans and strategies or far-reaching goals, and does not require self-commitment or long-term effort, overcoming resistance and major obstacles. There is no room for perfection, let alone heroism.

The short duration of the project is associated in late modernity with a different model of subjectivity, with self-realization as the ability to express oneself in network relationships. It is true that in late modern project work one deals with self-realization, but it becomes institutionalized and functionalized, and thus subordinated to the logic of achievement and profit. This is the case of one of the respondents working in a cultural institution. As part of her full-time job, she carries out many tasks and projects. She declares that she self-fulfills in these activities, but she feels tired and burnt-out, and complains about the impossibility of pursuing her other interests. She belongs to the group of the respondents from the X and Y generations, whose project of self-realization is functionalized, or who undertake project activity for financial reasons, without having time to pursue their interests and passions. In all these cases, symptoms of burnout can be observed. The second group consists of respondents from Generation Y, whose design activity (usually artistic) mostly takes place outside public institutions (foundations or their own practices). This activity defines their biography and shapes their identity. Nevertheless, due to the multiplicity of activities and their dispersed nature, they are unable to define themselves by integrating these activities and giving them a deeper moral and social meaning, which they strive for. They understand self-realization as the ability to express themselves and their personality. However, they want independence, but as a condition of network self-realization. Therefore, they do not understand this independence in terms of existential autonomy, but, rather, as psychological independence from traumatized relationships with parents (toxic early family experiences) and also as moral independence (they want to give self-realization a higher social significance). Another, third group consists of the respondents from Generation X, who entered adult life either before the so-called transformation in Poland or alongside it. They self-fulfill within institutions or outside them (the case of a pensioner who consistently subordinates his life to artistic self-fulfillment, which was previously his secondary activity). It is interesting to note that this self-realization is not essentially network-based; it is closer to the modern model of autonomy as independence and striving to realize one's long-term project.

Particularly with regard to the respondents from the second group, a general thesis can be formulated concerning the status of late modern projective subjectivity. The network dispersion of their many activities as well as their inability to integrate these activities and to self-define is an expression of their identity crisis and points to the reactive, escapist nature of their project activity. It is associated with family disorders, the source of which are: the ACoA syndrome, parental violence, and family models with authoritarian features. These phenomena are often accompanied by excessive expectations and ambitions of parents imposing their vision of development. In short, in late modernity, projective subjectivity with its dispersion and network location is in many cases reactive and grows out of the authoritarian forms of the traditional family and its crisis in the environment of late modernity.

A different understanding of the time horizon of the existential project, correlated with biographies and modern identities as well as of late modern projectivity, also entails a different understanding of their temporal dynamics.

Temporality

In existential thought, time is the primordial, ontological structure of existence; it is subjectively-experienced temporality, the dynamics of which gives extatic unity to the structural moments of existence and binds the future, the present, and the past called extasies – it temporalizes human existence: “Temporality is evidently an organized structure. The three so-called ‘elements’ of time, past, present, future, should not be considered as a collection of ‘given’ for us to sum up – for example, as an infinite series of ‘nows’ in which some are not yet and others are no longer – but rather as the structural moments of an original synthesis” (Sartre, 1956: 107, see 107–170, 496–504)²¹. The project constitutes its essential moment, because it is constituted due to the future that energizes time and gives it unity, in light of which, and within the limits determined by the factual existence of possibilities, existence takes up and organizes its past, submits it to the purpose defined by the project, and gives it a new meaning, thus becoming a coherent, uniform whole integrating all the episodes and events of life²². In this case, it is easy to find a correspondence between the temporality of the existential project and the temporal, biographically-structured dynamics of the life of individuals which is typical of classical modernity. “The temporalization of life” (Kohli as cited in Rosa, 2012) of an individual enables his/her biographical and narrative continuity, “according to a three-layer temporal pattern (the biography of the modern era, which consisted of the period of education, professional life and retirement, or childhood, adulthood and old age), defining an institutional, steady structure around which one could plan one’s life” (Rosa, 2012: 103).

21 “Temporality ‘is’ not a *being* at all. It is not, but rather *temporalizes* itself. [...] Temporality temporalizes, and it temporalizes possible ways of itself” (Heidegger, 1996: 302, see 297–306).

22 “Primordial and authentic temporality temporalizes itself out of the authentic future [...]. The primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future” (Heidegger, 1996: 302–303).

In the meantime, late modern professional-biographical projectivity is referred to in well-known descriptions of the transformation of the experience of time in late modernity, and projectivity is their embodiment: late modernity is “episodicity and fragmentation of social and individual time” (Bauman, 2001: 132). Due to the “deinstitutionalization of biographies and life trajectories”, it is characterized by the “detemporalization of life” (Rosa, 2012: 103), the disintegration of its temporal organization. Time loses its temporalizing and integrating function of human existence; it does not provide it with biographical and narrative coherence and continuity. It breaks down into a series of unrelated episodes which, once experienced, lose any meaning for our lives and our identity, and which, therefore, “we are unable to make [...] a part of our own experience” (Rosa, 2020: 140) or merge into a meaningful, biographical-narrative whole: “But if we can’t genuinely adapt all of this, then none of the possible narratives will be binding and credible (which is also consistent with the fact that we are no longer willing to share our life stories” (Rosa, 2020: 144, see 138–144)²³. In this time perspective, which detemporalizes biographies and human identities, the existential function of the past and the future changes – the past ceases to influence the present experience, and the future does not direct existence, does not bind it with life plans and strategies, but opens to what is accidental and unforeseen, so the detemporalization and fragmentation of time makes family planning and professional life impossible, does not allow the capturing of the “sequence and duration of activities or commitments” in coherent life projects “according to a straight line extending from the past to the future”; these plans and activities are “left to their own course”, which is determined by unrelated contexts and situations. “As Richard Sennett argues in his well-known essay on the ‘corrosion’ of character, maintaining a stable character and adhering to a time-proof life plan are incompatible with the demands of the late modern world” (Rosa, 2012: 103)²⁴.

23 Rosa links the detemporalization of time and the progressive fragmentation of human life within the framework of his theory of late modern acceleration with the acceleration of time. An important argument for this thesis is found in the contradiction of the late modern experience of the so-called subjective time paradox. This paradox is based on the disproportionate relationship between time lived and time recalled: if individual moments, experienced intensely as positive (pleasant, stimulating) pass quickly and if time passes quickly, then “they extend [one] in memories – they become long and vice versa, if time is prolonged (e.g. in the experience of monotony, boredom) and flows slowly, the memories associated with it are shorter and less memorable. So we are dealing with the relationship, ‘short/long’, ‘long/short’”. Meanwhile, the late-modern form of experiencing time is expressed by the formula: ‘shortly/shortly’; there is a proportional relation between the time lived and the time remembered. Due to the multiplicity of decontextualized, isolated episodes with a quickly worn-out stimulus nature, “lived time passes [...] very quickly and remains in memory as well” (Rosa, 2020: 139).

24 It is worth adding that the late modern experience of time was anticipated in the critique of inauthentic existence by the precursors of existentialism – Kierkegaard and also Nietzsche – who were important inspirations for existentialism. Interestingly, they only related this experience to developing modernity, noting some of its tendencies which, along with the proper acceleration of late modernity, became its essence. In this critical perspective, they pointed to the change in the existential meaning of time, the disappearance of the integrating function of the life experience of an individual, and, consequently, its disintegration into isolated moments, fragmentation which breaks the continuity of experience. The above criticism remains in the background of the well-known Benjaminian distinction between the (episodic) experience proper to modernity and the (continuous identity) experience: we become richer and richer in isolated experiences that we are unable to integrate into a coherent personality. This criticism refers *avant la lettre* to late modernity and is an argument for the belief that changes within cultural modernism preceded the social processes of late modernity: “[...] we know today how the late nineteenth century vision of a Nietzsche [...] [and] literary modernism actually take place every day in our kitchens and bedrooms on the threshold of the twenty-first century. [...] we are the heirs of cultural criticism that has become rigid [...]” (Beck, 2002: 19).

In the conducted interviews, the respondents did not take up and problematize their experience of time. However, this experience is not shaped by the dynamics of temporality, which allows one to re-evaluate and transform their life in the perspective of the future, and also by giving the past a new meaning. The respondents from the younger generation do not have clearly-defined goals and life plans; the future for them is a sphere of quite abstract possibilities, from which they will, depending on the circumstances, choose the most appropriate opportunities for them at the moment. They focus on the present, on short-term activity. In this horizon, they want to live without problems, hardships, commitments; they want to pursue their interests: “I live like this from day to day”, says one of these respondents. The situation is similar in the case of the respondents from Generations X and Y. One of the previously-mentioned respondents says: “I prefer to grab what is pleasant in my here and now than to feed on dreams”. These respondents lock themselves in their present, in the horizon of everyday worries and crises that determine the conservative, reactive nature of their relationship to the future: they want peace, security, and a life in line with the world. The reference to the future is the strongest among the respondents from Generations X and Y with a high degree of biographical projectivity, who are plagued by identity crises. They strive for self-definition and identity self-realization through the integration of their dispersed activities. In this perspective, they want to work through their traumas, overcome their crises, and give a new meaning to their past.

The possibilities of emancipation and normativity

What are the emancipatory possibilities of the existential/modern project and projectivity in late modernity? Let us begin with the emancipatory implications of the experience of time. In the case of existentialism, change and rebellion (freeing oneself from the impersonal everyday reality of “They”) are inscribed in the very dynamics of human temporality as the basis for the future-oriented movement of transcendence of the existent reality. It is analogous in modernity, in which the dynamics of existence is determined in the individual plan by improvement and linear development, while in the social plan – progress and the pursuit of social change for the sake of the future goal, i.e., a better or ideal society. Due to the breaking of the biographical and narrative continuity of the human experience of the world as a result of the detemporalization of time in late modernity, Rosa talks about its “alienation” from human life essentially related, let us add, to the separation of abstract, expert systems (Giddens) and globalization processes. In this context, the question of the possible emancipatory potential of the existential/modern project and late modern projectivity can be raised. Well, in the case of the latter, bringing time to a shrinking and self-limited present – devoid of ties to the past and future – means that it loses its project-creating power. It cannot become the basis for hope for the future; it prevents its active shaping and thus the rebellion “against even the least tolerable present” (Bourdieu as cited in Bauman, 2001: 52, also 149)²⁵. Taken out of the dynamics of life, it performs a conservative function in relation to the existing *status quo*. The more so that it is defined

25 In the context of conflicts between employees and employers, Sennett, following Hirschman, writes about replacing “criticism” with “parting” (Sennett, 2010: 78–79).

by pleasure, which is characteristic of both late modern consumerism and the sphere of pure relations subject to its logic, where immediate satisfaction or gratification corresponds to it. Pleasure, by its nature, is passive, conservative, and apologetic toward the factuality of existence. Therefore, despite its dynamism, projectivity is a component of the late modern order devoid of emancipatory force; the change inscribed in it does not transform it, but actualizes its successive, desynchronized possibilities.

We have already talked about the lack of a constructive, normative reference to the future in the case of the majority of the respondents with a projective biography, such that allows one to transcend the current existence and give a new meaning to the past. These respondents basically affirm the existing world, perceive it as without alternatives, and only want to find a place for themselves in it, like one of the young respondents: "I create the reality around myself"; at the same time, however, he states the lack of influence on the world, recalling globalizing neoliberal capitalism:

[...] because the truth is that most of us in such a close environment simply have no influence on what will happen. It's as if there are great organizations behind it, there are simply people who are rich, who want to be even richer, and unfortunately this is how the world works [...].

They rather want to overcome their crisis and adapt to the existing social reality, which they do not want to change in its general dimension. Although many of them, especially from the upper register of Generations X and Y, want a better world in their declarations, these declarations are quite abstract, and these respondents engage in broader actions consistent with them. The non-committal nature of the respondents' declarations reveals their dreams of peace, security, and stability. These dreams are reactive and conservative. They often also perform a compensatory function to the extent that they allow one to endure reality. This mechanism can be clearly related to one of the respondents, an innovative IT specialist who works for a corporation. He wants to set up his own business, which would provide him with an income that would allow him to stop paid work and lead a comfortable life; however, he constantly postpones making these dreams come true. On the other hand, the emancipatory potential in the individual dimension is visible in the respondents striving for authentic self-fulfillment, although it is often blocked by the escapist nature of their activity.

Correlative to the change in the function of time in late modernity, transformations also take place in the sphere of normative foundations of late modern projectivity; they are undoubtedly related to "radical doubt" arising from "the extreme reflexivity of late modernity" (Giddens, 1991: 20–21, 29). In existentialism, the values constituting the subject of choice and guiding the project are experienced at the moment of choice as unconditional (of course not as universal, but as subjectively given), i.e., such that they flow from internal necessity and are without alternatives, which means that the individual commits themselves to them as if, once and for all, constructing on their basis the individual's stable identity inscribed in the permanent project of their life. These values bind the personality of the individual, responsible for their stable character and identity, for their full commitment to future goals and the durability of their commitments, and precisely for the long-term nature of their projects and life strategies. In short, reference to these values enables a strong, forward-looking, project-creating orientation. It is true that

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche contrasted this feature with modernity, pointing to the relativistic tendencies pervading it, which emerged as a result of the decay of the old, universal religious and metaphysical ideals, and which undermined strong identities. Nevertheless, also in this case, cultural modernism was ahead of the civilizational and social transformations of classical modernity. Therefore, the choices of the individuals in modernity can be attributed to unconditional character to the extent that they were based, on the one hand, on stable social and institutional structures, strong social ties, and permanent patterns of family and professional roles, and, on the other hand, in the corresponding relatively-coherent value systems. They guaranteed the durability of projects and life strategies.

This is not the case in late modernity with its short-lived designs and fluid identities. On the basis of its “acceleration”, also axiological, i.e., the exacerbation of cultural skepticism, the reflexive choices of individuals are not grounded either in permanent social and institutional systems or in strong values and their stable hierarchies determining the durability of identity, commitments, and ties. These choices have no “normative weight” in a world where everything can happen and everything is ephemeral. They are marked by contingency, they are made with the awareness of their temporary and alternative nature, i.e., with the awareness that they refer to possibility as a possibility – to one of many counterfactual possibilities, hence one that can be resigned from at the very moment of choice to be replaced by another. This means that the choice of a given identity does not close the door to other identities but, rather, harmonizes with as many possible currently available options as “sensible reasons of today may prove costly mistakes tomorrow” (Bauman, 2001: 88, also 147–148). Short-term choices made in this way lose their importance²⁶. Therefore, in the sphere of pure relationships, the bonds and relationships defined by these choices are focused on quick, short-term, and immediate gratification – they last “as long as the ephemeral satisfaction of each partner”, the clause “until further notice” is “built-in, as is the right of resignation «at one’s own request»” (Bauman, 2001, 86). By analogy with the liquid, shrinking present, the “weak” axiology of late modernity undermines the ability of long-term commitment, weakens the responsibility and obligations of the individual, and, by cutting them off from the future, deprives them of project-creating power and does not direct them to change. Thus, it weakens its involvement in the privatized and individualized public sphere, in whose autonomy it could find a solution to the problems assigned to it and privatized, in which it now finds only an apparent and substitute solution. The flip side of radical, late modern individualization and “corrosion of character” (Sennett) is “corrosion and slow disintegration of citizenship” (Bauman, 2001: 49, see 47–50).

Concluding remarks

To sum up, the analysis of such factors of human existence as contingency, anxiety or fear, the project and its temporality, values and the ability to change reality – enables one to indicate the strict assignment of the existential project and the modern project in its social dimension, in which the

26 “[...] freedom comes when it no longer matters” (Bauman, 2001: 47–48). In this criticism, Bauman refers to Strauss, although it can already be found in Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

former finds its matrix. Thus, it indicates the fundamental incommensurability of the existential and modern project with late modern projectivity. Fear in postmodernity loses its positive, constructive character. It does not open to other, authentic possibilities of existence; it is conservative and adaptive; it is fear due to the existing existence. The project in late modernity replaces modern autonomy with projectivity understood as networked self-realization which, as the interviews show, is often either suppressed by work demands, pragmatically functionalized, or dispersed; in the latter case, self-realization is deprived of a deeper meaning due to the impossibility of integrating the dispersed activities that make it up. Temporality breaks down in late modernity into a series of dispersed moments of the present, and is conservative. It loses its function of biographical and narrative integration of an individual's life. Thus, it is deprived of the emancipatory potential associated with the ability to go beyond the existing reality. Undoubtedly, late modern projectivity constitutes a radicalization of existential and modern project, but one that goes beyond it and abolishes it, i.e., it changes its nature and its emancipatory function. If the existential project includes the possibility of rebellion, and in this it reflects the possibility of changing reality – characteristic of modernity and the transformation of the social identity of the individual and their social position – then late modern projectivity loses these functions; in the professional dimension, it becomes a component of flexible capitalism, and in the biographical dimension – a late modern component eroding the community-public sphere and detraditionalized and individualized social relations. In this way, it intensifies the drama of the ambivalence of modern processes of individualization “as the most advanced form of socialization”. One can agree with Bauman's belief that this ambivalence, which consists of “the yawning gap” between *de jure* and *de facto* autonomy, “between the right to self-assertion and the capacity to control the social settings which render such self-assertion feasible or unrealistic”, in late modernity prevents “what the new individualism hails in theory and promises, but fails, to deliver: the genuine and radical freedom of self-constitution and self-assertion” (Bauman, 2001: 50, 96)²⁷. Nevertheless, late modernity is not so much about autonomy in its classical sense as, rather, about project self-realization as the ability to express oneself in network relationships. The analysis of the interviews makes it possible to conclude that the threats to self-realization are not only its institutionalization and functionalization, but also identity crises related to traumas originating from disorders of the traditional family. These traumas are responsible for the reactive nature of the self-realization of many respondents and for the dispersion of self-realization, which does not make it possible to give a deeper meaning. If in the modern world dispersed activities were subordinated by means of discipline and authority to a uniform model of identity, then late modernity with its lack of permanent social structures, ties, and patterns creates natural conditions for their dispersion and the impossibility of their integration for self-realization. However, if modernity with its ideal of autonomy provided the possibility of an emancipatory alternative to its shortcomings, in the individual plan this alternative was existentialism, then late modernity no longer indicates these possibilities. The comparison of the sociological image of subjectivity and the image of projective subjectivity in modernity and late modernity, respectively, with the existentialist concept of subjectivity was to indicate the usefulness of the latter as a specific

27 Considering the totality of threats in a society of risk, Beck may conclude that “the extreme individualism of modernity is transforming into its complete opposite” (Beck, 2002: 12).

heuristic and analytical model that allowed for a better study of the transformation of subjectivity in late modernity. The model above requires development with other moments and categories, such as being-in-the-world, corporeality, intersubjectivity, death. This article is a contribution to further research, requiring the support of more extensive empirical material.

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Projektowość późnonowoczesna a egzystencjalizm

Abstrakt: Artykuł podejmuje kwestię związków między egzystencjalizmem a późnonowoczesną projektowością, rozumianą w kategoriach pracy projektowej i projektowości biograficznej. Czyni to w perspektywie przemian podmiotowości w nowoczesności i późnej nowoczesności, a więc w perspektywie procesów indywidualizacji, by odpowiedzieć na pytanie o przynależność egzystencjalizmu do którejś z tych formacji społeczno-kulturowych. W tym celu poddano analizie kilka centralnych kategorii egzystencjalizmu, jak projekt, lęk/trwoga i czasowość. Analiza ta prowadzi do wniosku, że istnieje ścisła współprzynależność strukturalna między egzystencjalizmem a społeczno-kulturowymi strukturami nowoczesności, jak również, że egzystencjalizm zawiera, w przeciwieństwie do późnonowoczesnej projektowości, pewien potencjał emancypacyjny związany z jego alienacyjnym statusem w nowoczesności.

Słowa kluczowe: nowoczesność, późna nowoczesność, projekt, egzystencjalizm, lęk, czasowość