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## SAFE TIME AND THE EXPULSION FROM TIME OR A REVIEW OF SELECTED POSTMODERN APPROACHES TO TIME

Postmodernity, liquid modernity, late modernism, and the end of history are concepts that, in various ways, address the issue of time. The focus here is not on the ontological nature of time – whether it is a framework for perceiving phenomena or exists independently – but rather on how individuals experience time, its significance in human existence, and how evolving concepts of time influence the perception and reception of the socio-cultural world.

In the society of liquid modernity, as articulated by Zygmunt Bauman, “the conditions under which actions are performed change before the ways of acting can consolidate into habits and routines” (Bauman, 2007: 5). The scholar describes a reciprocal reinforcement between the fluidity of society and liquid life, which is “full of uncertainty, experienced under conditions of constant anxiety. The most painful and persistent fears associated with such a life are the fear of not being surprised, of failing to keep pace with the rapid course of events, of being left behind, of missing the ‘expiration date,’ of being burdened with the possession of something that no longer arouses the desire to own it, of failing to recognize the moment when a change in tactics is required, or of crossing a point of no return” (Bauman, 2007: 6).

The world of liquid modernity is one in which time is perpetually scarce, primarily because the objectives individuals pursue are in a constant state of flux. What was once a goal swiftly transforms into something entirely different, rendering past aspirations and efforts obsolete. As a result, individuals focus on returning to a moment of decision-making, rather than experiencing a world that renews itself cyclically while they remain in a fixed position.

This article undertakes an analysis of the postmodern concept of time, focusing primarily on the reflections of Zygmunt Bauman and their implications for understanding the dynamics of contemporary reality. The discussion aims to capture the ways in which changing perceptions of time shape both individual and collective social experiences. Furthermore, it seeks to address the question of whether evolving conceptions of time constitute a factor conducive to development, or rather a challenge, a threat, or a potential source of risk for late modern societies. The analysis will be based on

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a comparison of selected postmodern perspectives with historical approaches to time, which will allow for an exploration of the directions and consequences of these transformations.

The research methodology will involve analyzing selected texts on consumer society and juxtaposing them with various historical perceptions of time. The findings will be primarily presented in the form of conclusions that address the implications of these perceptions for contemporary consumers.

Historically, time was often perceived as a constraint, an unceasing force that served as a reminder of the transient nature of childhood and youth – moments that, once passed, could never be reclaimed. What had already occurred was irretrievably lost. Maturity, once attained, precluded the possibility of returning to a state of childhood, symbolized by the inability to don a child's attire and engage in carefree play on a playground.

In *The Dance of Life (Taniec życia)*, Edward T. Hall observes that time functions as “the basic organizer of all activities, as a synthesizer and integrator, a way of handling priorities and categorizing experiences, a feedback mechanism for what and how happens, a yardstick by which competence, effort, and achievement are assessed [...]. Time is the deep system of cultural, social, and personal life. Basically, nothing happens outside some time frame” (Hall, 1999: 9).

However, in a consumer-driven world, development does not necessarily equate to continuous action. Rather than following a cyclical pattern of renewal at regular intervals, it may instead manifest as a persistent immersion in the “here and now.”

According to Fredric Jameson, the postmodern experience of time is characterized by a loss of temporal perspective or an absence of a coherent cause-and-effect trajectory (Jameson, 1998). He compares this phenomenon to schizophrenia, as conceptualized by Jacques Lacan's school of thought – an intensified perception of the present moment devoid of continuity.

While a focus on the present might suggest an engagement with reality, in this context, it lacks temporal coherence. The “here and now” remains isolated, unconnected to any notion of a future, rendering the concept of “tomorrow” irrelevant.

Zygmunt Bauman asserts that “time in the ‘consumer society’ of liquid modernity is neither cyclical nor linear in nature, as it was in other known societies in modern or pre-modern history. It has a pointillist nature, that is, it breaks up into a multitude of separate shreds, so reduced that they almost approach their geometric idealization – timelessness” (Bauman, 2007b: 206).

This represents just one dimension of time perception. The experience of time as timelessness can emerge under specific conditions. For such conditions to arise, individuals must cease to reflect on both the past and the future, and the present must gradually lose its temporal extension. In this state, immediate experience becomes paramount, while notions of causality dissipate.

Thus, one may argue that under certain circumstances, individuals perceive a sense of timelessness and may wish to remain within it. Any departure from this state, however, inevitably reintroduces the notion of permanence, which holds significant psychological importance. The past and the future become sources of unease, as they reinforce the realization that the present moment alone does not determine one's fate.

The temptation to fully immerse oneself in the present is undeniable, yet the inevitability of change ultimately disrupts this illusion.

Thus, change appears to become an increasingly attractive and tangible point of reference. As Bauman observes, a remarkable process of neutralizing the past takes place: “It boils down to a single, though truly miraculous, change in the nature of humanity: it grants the possibility of ‘being born again.’ From now on, not only cats have nine lives. During their extremely short stay on Earth (not long ago, people were troubled by its incredible ephemerality, yet its duration has not been significantly extended since then), individuals – like cats – now have the opportunity to ‘squeeze many lives out of it;’ they are offered an unlimited number of ‘new beginnings.’ Those who are ‘born again’ cancel their previous births and everything that followed them” (Bauman, 2007b: 209–210). The temptation to reinvent oneself by erasing the past is particularly compelling. Individuals may choose to diverge from the social group to which they once belonged, adopt a different religion, or even construct an entirely new identity. By rewriting or selectively omitting aspects of their past, they can, in effect, become someone else.

This conceptualization of time fundamentally alters the perspective on human life. As A. Pawełczyńska posits, “Just as the way of understanding time co-defines every culture, it also co-defines human personality and attitudes towards life. Becoming aware of these matters allows for a better understanding of the dynamics of human personalities, attitudes, and behaviours” (Pawełczyńska, 1986: 8). In this context, the postmodern approach to time influences all aspects of human existence, shaping individual experiences and perceptions of the world.

However, is this truly a “new birth,” or merely another performance in which individuals convince themselves and others that they have been “newly created?” Both the fragmentation of time and the erasure of the past appear to be in conflict with the fundamental sense of reality. Do they not, therefore, constitute a departure from a world in which there is a clear distinction between what is and what is not? The loss of temporal continuity and personal identity seems less like a deliberate choice or temptation and more akin to a psychological disorder or an altered state of consciousness.

Magdalena Metysek, commenting on Bauman, writes: “[...] the role of memory is devalued in consumer culture. In this context, active forgetting becomes a necessary strategy in a culture characterized by speed and constant change. Postmodernity, understood as a series of successive presents, liberates individuals from the past and the need to remember. This, in turn, gives rise to a sense of alienation and an inability to domesticate any experience or episode” (Metysek, 2005: 47).

Everything slips away or seeks to be pushed out. The individual in a consumer society not only desires to alter the past but is also subjected to the pressure of the present. Such a person not only avoids remembering but is even incapable of doing so, as memory interferes with enjoying the present. Memory would suggest that subsequent attractions are illusory, much like those previously experienced. However, the ability to quickly feel something that appears significant in the moment distances us from specifics. Thus, the past and the future are essential for cultivating a sense of belonging, presence, and, ultimately, for facilitating communication with others. As a result, while we may feel alienated, we do not always allow ourselves to lose the awareness that there was a past and that there will be a future.

Self-fulfillment does not entail imposing additional burdens, knowledge, skills, or experiences on oneself. It is not merely about acquiring more skills – whether as a child, a young person, a mature individual, or someone in their later years. Self-fulfillment is also not focused on cosmetic or beautifying procedures. It is not about the fact that grey hair, which might have appeared at the age of eighteen, often does not appear in people even after they reach the age of eighty, nor is it about how plastic surgery can prolong youth or how medical advancements enable even individuals in their seventies to become mothers. Therefore, self-fulfillment is not about increasing possibilities *per se*. Rather, it pertains to a shift in mentality – what was once deemed inappropriate for an adult can, today, be easily undertaken by an older person.

An adult can now wear shorts, a garment once associated with childhood, attend a cinema to watch a cartoon specifically adapted to his tastes, and enjoy himself at an amusement park. This adult can repeatedly start over, changing his image and his societal role by altering the symbols that construct his identity. Furthermore, in the digital realm, this individual can do whatever he wishes with his persona, where no one questions his actions, provided they do not harm others.

Time, in this context, has become an invisible or unnoticed obstacle. People no longer reflect on it. After all, they can either develop or purchase the illusion that time does not pass at all, or at least, that it has not yet passed.

Conversely, everything continues to flow in the same manner as before; nothing has fundamentally changed. A seasoned consumer, who demonstrates mastery of all the rules necessary to embody the persona he desires, must learn to avoid confronting this indisputable reality. However, not everyone will be able to endure such a prolonged and persistent struggle. It is not merely a one-time occurrence but rather an ongoing process of contending with time. As we know, this struggle is ultimately bound to fail.

Since time cannot be ignored, it is increasingly becoming a focal point of interest. This interest is closely tied to a profound desire for more of it. The yearning for time – an attempt to distance oneself from transience while simultaneously maximizing the use of the time available and avoiding its waste on unpleasant tasks – has made time a crucial element within the world of consumption.

The basis for the shift in the perspective on the issue of time lies in the fact that: “the criterion of distinction, which for a long time was ‘idleness’ in the case of the upper classes in previous eras, has now become the ‘consumption’ of useless time” (Baudrillard, 2006: 212). In contemporary society, possessing an excess of time marks both the beginning and the end of consumption. It is time itself that enables consumption, while simultaneously being consumed.

Time is perceived in various ways. Baudrillard also argues that “time is an extremely rare and precious commodity, subject to the laws of exchange value. This is evident in the case of working time, as it is sold and purchased. However, this increasingly applies to free time as well, since in order to be more ‘consumed,’ it must be directly or indirectly purchased” (Baudrillard, 2006: 207). An example of this situation is provided by the sale of products designed to save time, such as pre-prepared goods, which are more expensive. In this case, we pay for time using money earned over a specific period. The less time we have, the more we seek to save it, yet the more we

must work to earn the money that allows us to save time. Thus, **time is brought to an absurd level.**

The absurdity of time perception manifests in many directions. It is not only a matter of earning money over time; it also involves the reduction of the time required to address other issues. Additionally, it entails assigning various simulated values to time units. As Appadurai notes, “Consumption not only creates time through its periodicity, but also the functioning of ersatz nostalgia creates a simulacrum of periods that establish the flow of time understood as lost, absent, or twilight” (Appadurai, 2005: 119). Time can be lost or used, with the distinction between the two being made only in reference to longing. Time used becomes an ersatz of past time – it returns, but not as the real past, rather as a simulacrum.

As Philip Zimbardo and John Boyd note, “Every decision and action in the present quickly becomes part of your past. Thus, control over the present allows you to determine what will constitute your past, thereby minimizing the need for retrospective modifications” (Zimbardo, Boyd, 2009: 25). In postmodern, consumer-driven society, individuals are not meant to be tethered to their past. Instead, they are encouraged to start anew within a different context. The past becomes present through a new choice. Consequently, the continuity of life stages is disrupted. Youth, for example, becomes a choice rather than a state or a past phase of life.

Time that returns is merely a moment – an immeasurable shift in the state of consciousness, elusive and impossible to define. This moment, a substitute, results from a rush in which an individual seeks to find themselves. However, the constant, unfulfilled search compels one to use time more efficiently, fuelling an ongoing chase. As Thomas Hylland Eriksen observes, “The effects of this extreme rush are terrifying; both the past and the future, as intellectual categories, are threatened by the tyranny of the moment. [...] In the world today, even the ‘here and now’ is under threat, because the next moment arrives so quickly that it is difficult to remain in the one that still lasts” (Eriksen, 2003: 11–12). Everything continually slips away, accelerating in speed, and the chase appears as though the pursuer is no longer taking any action.

“There are many indications,” noted Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “that we are constructing a society in which it is impossible to engage with a thought longer than just a few seconds” (Eriksen, 2003: 5). However, can a thought lasting only a few seconds truly be considered a sequence of information? Can it be regarded as significant enough to be remembered, either by society or by one’s consciousness? As the same author observes, “In the information society, the basic art is to protect oneself from 99.99 percent of information that we do not want” (Eriksen, 2003: 31–33). In the flood of information, it is not merely its brevity and small time span that prevent it from being memorable, but also its sheer volume. Consequently, most of the impulses that we encounter must be rejected. Life, then, consists of moments that are discarded and those that cannot be perceived. This is well illustrated by the design of internet portals, which are structured to evoke an immediate emotional response, yet lack any substantive content that warrants thoughtful reflection.

Time is always scarce, almost immeasurable, and longer periods have faded into oblivion. What was once desirable has now become distant. As Zygmunt Bauman writes in *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?* (*Szanse etyki w zglo-*

*balizowanym świecie),* “In the ‘pointillist’ time of the society of liquid modernity, eternity ceases to be a value and an object of desire. Or rather, what constituted its value and made it an object of desire is removed and implanted in a moment. In this connection, the ‘tyranny of the moment’ of late modernity, with its principle of *carpe diem*, has replaced the premodern tyranny of eternity with its motto *memento mori*” (Bauman, 2007b: 211). The tyranny of the moment described here is not so much omnipotent as it lacks any alternative. What could unfold within a broader time perspective disappears from view. Impatience replaces perseverance, and constant change displaces all that is stable.

Felicjan Byłok summarizes this relationship as follows: “The desire to possess new consumer goods is linked to the ‘here and now’ orientation, which means that the consumer should be satisfied at this moment” (Byłok, 2005: 242). There is no satisfaction beyond this immediate moment. Consequently, there is no room for reflection, contemplation, or any deeper experience. The moment must replace everything and provide everything. It seems that any duration is perceived as a threat because it does not produce the changes that bring satisfaction. Satisfaction and safetism (the pursuit of security and the avoidance of threats), as described by the authors of *Coddling of the American Mind* (Lukianoff, Haidt, 2023), become the primary goals of the individual, to which the perception of time is subordinated.

So, what remains? “Change, instability, and the constant race with oneself to meet new standards of perfection imposed by the market and various cultural institutions are considered phenomena characteristic of post-industrial societies” (Jawłowska, 2001: 56). However, this instability often goes unnoticed, much like how one cannot perceive anything dark in the light of a strobe. Only what is visible matters. Duration, in this context, falls out of view, and it is difficult to envision its return to the foreground. Duration is seen as stagnation, a lack of action, or boredom that must be interrupted.

Undoubtedly, products and their consumption exert the greatest influence on shifting perspectives regarding the perception of time. “New goods in Western society influence the differentiation of time units, meaning that goods become a medium for manifesting differences in the material world within the dimension of time. Consumer goods serve researchers in establishing a specific temporal framework within culture. As a result, we can determine how the consumer revolution affects cultural dynamics” (Byłok, 2005: 237).

Felicjan Byłok identifies two fundamental dimensions: first, new goods contribute to the acceleration of time; second, these goods allow us to observe how culture evolves under their influence and how attitudes toward time transform. The new perception of time undeniably reshapes culture as a whole. It is difficult to dispute the claim that the perception of time itself is changing due to the continuous emergence of new goods and the persistent encouragement – particularly through advertising – to purchase them.

The consumer revolution influences not only material consumption but also the consumption of ideas and political products, which become more appealing the more distinct they are. This process can be likened to the contrast between sugar and salt – just as opposing tastes create differentiation, so too do ideological positions, such as right and left. This distinction is further intensified through the amplification and

radicalization of emotions tied to ideological convictions, often fuelled by opposition to differing perspectives (Lukianoff, Haidt, 2023: 189–215).

The transition from time-wasting to boredom represents a space that should be managed appropriately. Time-wasting is an area where the consumer must demonstrate creativity, skills, and perhaps even perseverance. However, time-wasting cannot simply be equated with boredom. Boredom signifies an inability to manage what is arguably the consumer's most valuable resource – time. Beyond possessing financial means for shopping and consumption, individuals must also exhibit the ability to make use of even limited resources effectively.

Just as a consumer cannot appear unable to utilize what belongs to them, their efforts must be reflected in their image. The promised satisfaction of the consumer stems from their ability to “waste” time effectively. This does not necessarily mean passively spending time in front of the media; if it does, it should also demonstrate their ability to navigate other aspects of life. Social media play a crucial role in illustrating how consumers manage their time – not only through reports on leisure activities such as trips or parties but also through everyday moments, including shopping or even taking a selfie in an elevator. The consumer cannot afford to be bored or idle; they must constantly prove their ability to manage their time effectively. Likewise, they must maintain awareness of the surrounding world. However, this knowledge does not need to be scientific – what matters is that it is recognized and validated by the social group with which they identify.

In this context, the ability to “waste” time effectively becomes paramount. Boredom is not merely a state in which a person is truly doing nothing and feeling disengaged. For the consumer, the concept extends further. From one standpoint, boredom is seemingly eliminated when individuals scroll through hundreds of channels, believing that exposure to a vast array of messages equates to engagement. However, in reality, boredom often drives the incessant switching from channel to channel, ultimately leading to nothing of substance. From another standpoint, for a more discerning consumer, even acquiring knowledge or holding an important professional position can be perceived as an inability to use time effectively – engaging in activities deemed dull, unproductive, or even frowned upon by other consumers.

Everything must be interesting or, at the very least, appear to be. The overwhelming influx of messages, particularly those employing sensationalist, clickbait-style headlines, exemplifies this phenomenon. These headlines promise extraordinary revelations yet merely serve as incentives to browse through trivial and uninspiring content, compelling consumers to seek ever more stimulating distractions.

The modern contradiction of time lies in the fact that we never seem to have enough of it, yet we are conditioned, trained, and even encouraged to master the art of skilfully wasting unlimited amounts of it. In one respect, reduced labour demands have created more free time; in another respect, we find ourselves working increasingly longer hours, leaving us with less time than ever before.

Baudrillard explores this concept: “We live in an era in which people never manage to waste enough time to escape their fate, instead condemning themselves to constantly saving and accumulating it. However, time cannot be discarded in the same way one disposes of underwear. It can no longer be simply wasted or lost – like money,

it belongs to the system of exchange value. In the symbolic dimension, both money and gold are akin to excrement. The same applies to objectified time" (Baudrillard, 2006: 210). Time thus becomes a marker of status and a medium of exchange. The act of trading time is not only an exchange for money but also for the luxury associated with one's lifestyle. Where one chooses to spend time, how effectively one utilizes it, and what one can afford to do with it all serve as indicators of ownership over time. In contemporary society, time is something we possess and actively trade.

The author of *The Consumer Society (Społeczeństwo konsumpcyjne)* describes this phenomenon as follows: "In leisure time (vacation, holidays), we find the same moral and idealistic fervour for self-fulfillment as in the sphere of work – the same ETH-ICS OF COMPULSORY EFFICIENCY AND ACHIEVEMENT. Leisure is no more a practice of satisfaction than consumption itself, of which it is an inseparable element" (Baudrillard, 2006: 211). Leisure, then, is truly *our* free time only within the consumerist framework – provided we can afford to consume it at the appropriate level, regardless of whether we personally wish to spend our time in this way. It is not merely about pleasure; it also encompasses activities such as body care and cosmetic surgery, both intended to create the illusion of halting time. In a sense, time itself is experienced much like an addiction. Compulsive behaviours related to alcohol, drugs, gambling, and even social media – particularly the controversies surrounding surrogate political issues – all share a common pattern: each intense stimulus demands repetition. The addicted individual becomes detached from linear time, instead entering a cycle of successive moments of gratification.

The contemporary view of time differs significantly in its purpose and use. As Baudrillard asserts: "To this day, what the average individual desires through vacations, holidays, and free time is by no means the 'freedom of self-fulfillment' (What hidden essence would reveal itself here?), but above all, the demonstration of the uselessness of one's own time, the surplus of time possessed as luxurious, extravagant capital, as wealth" (Baudrillard, 2006: 214). Today, the aim is no longer simply self-fulfillment or enjoyment; rather, time has become an integral part of broader consumer behaviours. **Time, viewed as capital, must serve a specific goal** – a goal that is capital-driven and must yield another form of value. As a result, individuals are left without any true sense of personal time. Self-fulfillment has been replaced by the commodification of self-fulfillment across all dimensions, including access to the content of "almost winning," i.e., compulsive satisfaction. This creates a situation where the promise of satisfaction is illusory, as individuals obtain nothing, even though they briefly believed they had received what was promised.

A person either wastes time to exchange it for money, or they demonstrate that they have the financial means necessary to waste time, which then becomes their free time.

As Fromm observed: "With the help of a machine, time rules us. Only in free time do we seem to have a little free choice. Usually, however, we organize our rest in the same way we organize our work time. Sometimes we rebel against the tyranny of time, falling into absolute laziness. Doing nothing but evading the demands of time, we sink into the illusion of freedom, when in fact we are only on leave from the prison of time" (Fromm, 2022: 201). In this passage, the most important aspect for our interpretation is not that machines are the guarantors of time's dominance over us. Today, we could

assert that market mechanisms have replaced machines in this role. **A machine, in the contemporary sense, could be an immaterial mechanism** (with the focus being on operational efficiency, not form). What is particularly noteworthy is the escape from the tyranny of time and, simultaneously, the realization that it is difficult – if not impossible – to fully escape it.

Constantly seeking escape while concurrently recognizing that such escape is impossible – this is one of the inherent contradictions of time. A person who desires free time must be able to demonstrate that they possess it. However, showcasing one's free time requires careful consideration of how the message will be perceived. In this way, free time becomes a period in which minutes pass more quickly, filled with activities that do not fulfill any purpose other than to satisfy the expectations of those observing the consumer. As such, free time can transform into a form of enslavement, a surrender to the pressure of others. This results in constant, urgent work that must be completed “now” or “yesterday,” for the more educated the consumer is, the more they recognize that trends are constantly shifting.

The minimum effort to combat the pressures of time involves purchasing the right number of TV channels and streaming platforms, even though navigating them can be challenging. On the opposite end of this spectrum lies the maximum – constant rushing, relentless work, and an ongoing effort to learn how to keep up with the “correct” ways of spending time.

A specialized consumer is thus caught between boredom and workaholism, engaging in a form of compulsive behaviour. Free time, in this context, becomes a time to be used productively. Wasting time is not simply about taking ordinary rest; it is a skill, a form of knowledge, and an ongoing search that constantly reaffirms its value. Ultimately, a consumer is as valuable as their understanding of how to spend time, as it serves as one of the most significant indicators of their development – much like the label of fine alcohol, which exists primarily to induce a state of intoxication.

The past is the first essential element in creating this temporal triad. A positive sense of the past provides an individual with roots, a foundation for identity, support, and ensures a sense of continuity in life (Zimbardo, Boyd, 2009: 248). The present serves as the place of residence, where the future, as a goal, determines the directions for realizing meaning in the present.

The consumer in postmodern society disconnects from the past and gives little thought to the future. The consumer must function like a high-performing individual addicted to positive or almost positive impulses. In the consumer society of liquid modernity, a person lives in the “here and now,” and one might assume that this is the only valid approach to life. Many addiction therapies, for example, are based on focusing on the present moment. However, the sense of the present and the point in time is not clearly linked to the flow of events. Everything becomes detached from itself, and instead of reconciling with the past or building towards the future, time loses its perspective. Addiction therapies aim to reconnect the past and future goals with the “here and now,” whereas in consumer society, individuals gradually detach from any sense of perspective.

Zygmunt Bauman, in reference to the issue at hand, states: “Consuming is the path to salvation: consume and be satisfied” (Bauman, 2000: 98). He highlights two impor-

tant points: firstly, in this context, consumption becomes a kind of metanarrative leading to “salvation;” secondly, the satisfaction discussed by the author of *Globalization* (*Globalizacja*) is not directly related to possession itself.

Bauman continues: “Consumers are primarily collectors of impressions; they collect things only secondarily, as derivatives of experiences” (Bauman, 2000: 99). The immateriality of consumption may suggest a revaluation of the world as perceived by the modern consumer. Furthermore, the entire metanarrative is undergoing a shift. The material world, which until recently was considered the only reality – the space in which the subject existed – is being displaced by experiences and virtual spaces, where nothing is more real. Experiences and hyperreality (Bauman, 2000: 99), the spread of which is facilitated by, among other things, neo-television (see Umberto Eco, *Czytelnik*, Warsaw 1999: 174–199), are converging into a new world. Intangibility is becoming omnipresent and indisputable, yet elusive, despite the fact that everything is at our fingertips, thanks to mass media, the speed of travel, and the ability to shop online. The consumer is everywhere and can be anywhere they choose, provided they are willing to move.

In summary, individuals in a consumer society focus on the present, with stimuli designed to fuel the need to consume distracting them from the continuity of time. As a result, an increasing number of people do not consider the future. Awareness of the continuity of time enables preparation for upcoming events and the prevention of potential threats. In contrast, perceiving time in a fragmented, point-based manner does not encourage personal development or the pursuit of long-term goals. It also hinders preparation for challenges related to ecology, war, or disease.

Even a shift away from the cyclical understanding of time, aligned with the seasons, leads to an increasing detachment from reality. This separation from history and any sense of continuity – both cultural and interpersonal – also severs lasting bonds, such as friendships or family relationships. In this context, only the immediate quality of relationships matters, rather than their long-term duration, even in the face of difficulties. Consequently, genetic or national continuity loses its significance, while the time spent with those who best satisfy current needs for closeness becomes more important.

This approach becomes particularly dangerous when a consumer society interacts with a society that has a strong sense of continuity and a will to survive – a society deeply embedded in time, which believes that despite the passage of time and transience, there are values more important than individual satisfaction. A society that rejects the concept of time and focuses on the individual seems defenceless against a society for which the overriding value is an idea, implemented through consistent actions in the present and the future.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to analyze the postmodern concept of time in Zygmunt Bauman's approach and to assess whether its evolution constitutes a challenge, a threat, or a potential source of risk for contemporary societies.

The research method involves an analysis of selected texts on consumer society, comparing them with different historical perceptions of time. The findings will be presented in the form of conclusions related to the message directed at consumers.

The primary conclusion of the article is as follows: In the consumer society, individuals focus on the present, with consumption-driven stimuli diverting their attention from the continuity of time. As a result, an increasing number of people fail to consider the future. The absence of a long-term perspective limits the ability to prepare for it, hindering efforts to prevent emerging threats. Viewing time as fragmented, rather than continuous, is not conducive to self-improvement, achieving long-term goals, or addressing challenges such as climate change, wars, or diseases.

**Keywords:** time, consumer society, security, historical continuity

## **CZAS BEZPIECZNY I WYGNANIE Z CZASU, CZYLI PRZEGŁĄD WYBRANYCH POSTMODERNISTYCZNYCH UJĘĆ CZASU**

### **STRESZCZENIE**

Artykuł podejmuje analizę postmodernistycznej koncepcji czasu, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem ujęcia Zygmunta Baumana, oraz rozważa, czy jej ewolucja stanowi wyzwanie, zagrożenie czy też potencjalne źródło ryzyka dla współczesnych społeczeństw.

Metoda badawcza obejmuje analizę wybranych tekstów dotyczących społeczeństwa konsumpcyjnego, zestawioną z różnymi historycznymi ujęciami czasu. Wyniki zostaną przedstawione w formie wniosków odnoszących się do przekazu kierowanego do konsumentów.

Główna konkluzja artykułu jest następująca: w społeczeństwie konsumpcyjnym jednostki koncentrują się na teraźniejszości, a bodźce związane z konsumpcją odciągają ich uwagę od ciągłości czasu. W rezultacie coraz więcej osób nie bierze pod uwagę przyszłości. Brak długoterminowej perspektywy ogranicza zdolność do przygotowania się na nią, utrudniając działania prewencyjne wobec pojawiających się zagrożeń. Postrzeganie czasu jako fragmentarnego, a nie ciągłego, nie sprzyja samodoskonaleniu, osiąganiu długofalowych celów ani mierzeniu się z wyzwaniami takimi jak zmiany klimatyczne, wojny czy choroby.

**Slowa kluczowe:** czas, społeczeństwo konsumpcyjne, bezpieczeństwo, ciąłość historyczna