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### Merely a threat? Worldwide transformation as a chance of development – psychological reflection

*The author considers the psychological aspects of globalisation, drawing attention to the possible effects of worldwide transformations. She presents definition problems and characterises the main currents and mechanisms of globalisation at the turn of the 20th and 21st century. Several standpoints of contemporaneity researchers concerning the evaluation of the effects of undergoing transformations have also been recalled. Noticing the diverse effects for development and the functioning of individuals and groups, she concentrates on a selected aspect of the living environment, namely, on diversity. She formulates the thesis that the heterogeneity of the environment, which constitutes a characteristic of globalisation, stimulates development in its various phases and fields, optimising particularly the functioning of reflective persons who enter into dialogue with contemporaneity.*

**Keywords:** *globalisation, effects of worldwide transformations, heterogeneity of the environment, development*

#### Globalisation - a fashionable word

Today, the term globalisation belongs to a group of very popular words, which has been confirmed by the results of conducted surveys. According to the research of the Public Opinion Research Centre (Roguska, 2004), 62% of society has come across the term, but only every third of Poles (32%) claim that they know what it means. The essence of worldwide transformations is also understood by researchers of social phenomena in a variety of ways (Wosińska, 2007). Piotr Sztompka claims that globalisation is the “process of economic, financial, political, military, cultural, ideological relations and dependencies between human societies, becoming more concentrated and intense, which leads to the uniformity of the world in all these scopes and is reflected in the formation of social bonds, solidarity and identity on a supralocal and supranational scale” (2002, p. 2). The complex network of interdependencies resulting in the specific process of the transformation of the world into a complex system of interconnected vessels has also been accentuated by Anthony Giddens (2001). In Polish literature on the subject, this thesis is also sustained by Kazimierz Krzysztofek, among others, for whom globalisation means “an increasing number of conjunctions and ever fewer disjunctions; the synergistic

effect of two driving forces of transformations: the market and technology” (2002, p. 118). Andrzej Siciński thinks likewise, stating that: “globalisation signifies the phenomenon of a rapidly growing codependency between the things that are happening even in the farthest corners of the world. Our globe, the Earth, becomes, in line with this conviction, an increasingly greater totality; becomes a system, and a system of the most diverse points of view: ecological, demographical, economic, social, and cultural” (1999, p. 22).

The key concept for the undertaken discussions appeared in lexicons relatively recently – Webster’s Dictionary refers to it in the 1960s. The PWN (Polish Scientific Publishers) Encyclopaedia has the following explanation: globalisation is “the characteristic and dominant, towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, tendency in world economy, politics, demography, social life and culture” (Krupa, 2007, p. 331). The multitude, complexity and dynamism of the phenomena that the term globalisation designates make it difficult for them to be understood and penetrated, and sometimes is the cause of misunderstandings. In undertaking theoretical analyses and empirical studies, researchers have referred to the descriptions of the phenomena that constitute the signs or effects of worldwide transformations (Krzysztofek, 2002;

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Siwek & Baar, 2006). They have been described as being dynamic in nature, taking place in time and space and the processual nature of globalisation supports the argument reinforcing the thesis that its essence cannot be cognised directly - this can be done only indirectly, for instance, by studying the selected effects thereof (Friedman, 2001; Staniszkis, 2003). Ordering the existing definition proposals is possible and moreover necessary when setting out to analyse the phenomenon.

It seems that the two main groups of definitions are accompanied by two research methodologies. The first solution is multi-stage in nature and the first step comes down to accepting the most general - thereby, the least precise - way of understanding globalisation. The next, consists of creating a list of its numerous manifestations, and the final stage comprises systematic, in-depth studies. This is the approach assumed, among others, by Martin Albrow, who acknowledges that globalisation refers to all the processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, a global society (1993, 1996). Thomas Friedman also perceives the manifestations of globalisation to be found in every aspect of life, understanding it as a "the dominant international system that replaced the Cold War system after the fall of the Berlin Wall" (Friedman, 2001, p. 25). The Authors of these approaches often refer to well-aimed metaphors when they write of transformations taking place on the global scale, namely, in the categories of basins, the shrinkage of the world, or boundaries becoming increasingly vague, etc.

According to the Authors of the second type of definition, the essence of globalisation remains only one, concrete phenomenon that attracts attention and initiates theoretical studies or empirical work. This group of researchers includes supporters of a superior category constituting an exchange that surpasses the physical state borders and mental barriers of the people inhabiting the lands. Its main outcome remains a new way of functioning, namely, strong interdependency (Okon-Horodyńska, 2003). According to Anthony Giddens: "globalisation is, in a certain sense, a process of the development of bonds with a truly worldwide reach like the global state system or the international division of labour" (2006, pp. 30-31). Whereas for Anthony McGrew, globalisation signifies the multiplicity of relations and mutual interactions on the state level and social level, which produces one worldwide system (McGrew, 2007; Held & McGrew, 2007). Among the Polish researchers of global transformations, Ziemowit Jacek Pietraś particularly strongly accentuates the fact that the essence of globalisation remains "the arise of one, global system of relations as a result of which a network of interdependencies arises" (2002, p. 251). Also Marian Golka (1999) propounds evidence for the existence of this network of dependencies stating that even the fate of Amazonian tribes depends on the demand for paper in North

America or Europe (which contributes to deforestation of the jungle).

The Authors of the studies on global transformations particularly highlight economic and military threads, as well as legal and ecological ones, namely, those that can be particularly well distinguished by the average citizen and are noticeable for the ordinary participant of social life. The question arises whether and what it is that connects those that are interested in worldwide transformations. The common conviction seems to be the statement that we are witnesses of dramatic changes in our living environments. The topic requires, however, extensive, interdisciplinary research, well-grounded in theory. The lack of the latter probably makes systematic research more difficult to undertake. Leaving aside the propounded approaches it can be stated that the new times and the global environment exert a mass effect on human beings, influencing them both advantageously as well as disadvantageously depending on the living context and the psychological profile of the given person.

### **Global transformation in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century - its domains a characteristics**

Global transformations encompass all areas of existence and for this reason cannot be cognised at the same time. A legitimate methodological solution remains, therefore, respecting the demands of reductionism, positing the narrowing down of the field of analysis. In the research process, this means identifying the fields of worldwide transformations and studying the phenomena within the so-called streams of globalisation. The most frequently mentioned currents (streams) include the economic, political, ecological, worldwide security, demographic, anthropological, information and cultural paths (Golka, 1999; Pietraś, 2000). It is not necessary to remind the reader of the conventionality of the divisions, the connections and even the overlapping of the phenomena taking place therein. We will now briefly signal the dominant trends.

Globalisation in the economy is manifest by an ever greater interdependency of production and markets in given countries (Golka, 1999). Mutual investment, production, commerce, and cooperational relations are extended and intensified. International entrepreneurship is becoming more intense, thereby enabling the flow of capital, technologies, workers, and fusions of production companies (car, pharmaceutical, clothing, and food) or banks are taking place ever more frequently. Nowadays, the latter largely obtain their income from international activity, which earlier was not so commonplace (Krugman, Obstfeld, 2002). Economic relations are revealed particularly well by the crisis, which is visible in some countries of the European Union; news of the condition of the economy in Greece,

Ireland and Italy has shaken exchange rates. Specialist institutions (credit rating agencies) – deemed sometimes as global superpowers – operate by evaluating the credit rating of entities operating on financial markets (Pięciak, 2011). The nature of human work is also changing and is ever more frequently being performed “at a distance” (telework). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that raising qualifications and willingness to retrain constitute the object of the everyday cares of people employed in various sectors of the economy. As a result of the signalled processes a macro-change is gradually taking place of the economic polarisation of the world: some countries are becoming richer while others are becoming poorer.

Globalisation in politics is the shaping of structures and mechanisms that steer social life on a global, increasingly more interdependent, scale (Pietraś, 2002; Hardt & Negri, 2004). As was noticed by Jadwiga Staniszkis (2003), the real authority today is not held by the nominal centre of management but by so-called global logic. This means that the goal of global management remains the cohesive steering of the international environment with the simultaneous retention of national states. Some researchers stress that this goal is difficult to fulfil seeing that, due to worldwide transformations, the significance of the national state is weakening (Majcherek, 2001).

Ecology, on the other hand – understood in a global perspective – includes problems connected with the protection and preservation of the natural environment. Its increasing destruction – resulting from the industrialised and often exploiting activities of the human being – is cross-border in nature. The scope of the studies undertaken includes not only the designation of places and the scale of destruction but also the activity of institutions and organisations (particularly non-government institutions) that proliferate and embody the principle of sustainable development. Sustainable development (in other words, eco-development) is a doctrine of political economy that accentuates the quality of life on a level on which the current development of civilisation makes possible. It is worth quoting the first sentence from the report prepared by the World Commission on Environment and Development, which defines the basic idea. On the current level of civilisation “sustainable development, which implies meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,” is possible. The Authors of the report write that the present civilisation has reached a level of prosperity that is possible to sustain provided, of course, good management. The model of such an economy requires correct and consciously shaped relations between economic growth, caring for the environment (not only the natural environment but also the artificially created environment) and healthcare.

A psychologist is particularly interested in phenomena that are included in the informational and cultural current of

global transformations. They are connected with the transfer and exchange of information, ideas, knowledge, ways of thinking, convictions, values, namely, goods that are of prime importance for the shaping and development of the personality (Porębska, 1985; Brzezińska, 2000; Miluska, 2001). Globalisation in the area of culture encompasses many phenomena above all including the relations between global and local culture (Krzysztofek, 2002). Borders are disappearing (c.f., among others, the specificity of the travelling habits of EU member state citizens), the phenomenon of the homogenisation of cultures can be observed, and the significance of mass culture is growing (Ritzer, 1999). The voice of national cultures, enabling the identification of local societies, is resounding ever more and standing in opposition to this. Generally speaking, the culture path of globalisation has two faces: the arise of a “global village” and at the same time of “villages around the globe” (Krzysztofek, 2002). The mutual relations between an individual and the dynamically changing environment make the surroundings – from a psychological perspective – an important challenge. It was based on this idea that Jeffrey Arnett announced (2002) that we are witnesses of the birth of a new specialisation, namely, the psychology of globalisation. Its representatives are concentrating their attention on a plethora of problems resulting, in particular, from difficulties in adapting to the changing world (Ledzińska, 2002; Ward et al., 2003; Arnett, 2004; Arnett I Tanner, 2005; Eytan, 2004; Walesa, 2011; Lipińska & Zagórska, 2011).

The term globalisation in the sphere of information gives rise to associations with the whole syndrome of phenomena. It is created by the ease of producing things, storing, processing and transmitting information, as well as the easy access to a great and diverse scope of data. Literature on the subject highlights, above all, the sheer amount of the content referred to sometimes as information flood which cannot be compared to anything similar in the past (Morbiter, 2007). The psychological effects of remaining in an environment which is rich in information has become the subject – lasting many years – of my own research (Ledzińska, 2009).

It is easy to notice that worldwide transformations do not encompass the entire world to an equal extent but are apparent, above all, in places where they are most easily accessible (Dyczewski, 2000). A characteristic of globalisation at the turn of the second and third millennium remains its specific causative mechanism, namely, the development of information technologies (IT), contrary to the “engine” of global transformations in earlier times, i.e. violence, the physical dominance of stronger states over decidedly smaller and weaker states. The word technology comes from the Greek *techne* – art, craft or skill, and the Latin *logos* – science, concept, knowledge, and signifies a field of technical knowledge on issues connected with

the processing of raw materials and production of semi-finished and finished products. A narrow approach to the term technology can also be found in literature, which is applied in relation to a concrete phenomenon (e.g. the technology of collecting information) and a broader understanding, referred to as a scientific discipline. The encyclopaedic definition of technology refers to it as an applied science encompassing the production of products from starting materials which can constitute matter, energy or information. The word signifies a field that integrates the answer to three questions: What? From what? And how? Some researchers suggest treating information technology as a scientific discipline that arose from the combination of information and telecommunication, while others opt for a more precise and less technical definition. In this approach, information technology is an interdisciplinary science combining mainly information technology and telecommunications. It deals with the phenomenon of rationally obtaining, selecting, collecting, processing, removing, distance transmitting and using information that has been derived from different sources. This takes place with the use of computer networks and computers that are equipped in appropriate software or other tools. The processed data is used in various areas of science and in everyday life (Morbiter, 2007).

### Globalisation - an evaluation of its effects

Finding the scientific level of the analysis of the effects of worldwide transformations is not - as has been already pointed out - easy due to the complexity of the problem and the lack of available theoretical grounding. The effects of this deficit are felt not only by psychologists but also by representatives of other humanities disciplines (Sztompka, 2005). Thus, how can analyses be undertaken in the present situation? There remain two paths: reference to general concepts, the Authors of which concentrate on the changes taking place in culture, or reference to a narrower approach propounded, among others, by media theorists. Three dominant standpoints can be identified: criticism of the observed phenomena, their full acceptance, and finally, an ambivalent opinion that takes into account the "profits and losses" seen in the individual and social perspective.

#### Approval of Global Trends

The list of enthusiasts is opened undoubtedly by Francis Fukuyama, a staunch supporter and advocate of global processes (1996), accentuating their unavoidable and irreversible nature. Moreover, the researcher perceives globalisation as one of the most progressive forces and - as he himself stresses - is calm about the future of societies that will exist in a civilisational uniform world. The world is drawing towards the triumph of American

civilisation and culture, and globalisation is the end product of modernisation - the Americanisation of the world (Fukuyama, 2000). To it do we owe economic development and its basic results, namely, the raising of living standards. Attempts to go against the phenomena taking place on the planet are perceived by the scientist as impossible and irrational due technological advance - the very powerhouse behind the transformations that are taking place. Those that oppose globalisation are attempting to prevent something, which will take place anyway (Fukuyama, 2000, 2000a). People will only be happy and free in a global world - the Author of the "The End of History" concludes.

#### A Criticism of the Outcomes of Global Changes

It is worth calling to mind approaches the Authors of which highlight the relations between the dominating technology of the era and the specificity of the cultures co-designated by it, including the perception of man (Bolter, 1990; Postman, 2004; Ritzer, 2008). The thought of Neil Postman (2004), who concentrates on analysing the effects of modern technology that is becoming a part of everyday life, is particularly close to psychologists. Despite him presenting it in the categories of "blessings and burdens", he particularly developed the thread of existing threats and possible dangers. He defined it with the use of neologisms: technopoly and technopolisation of life. Technopoly is - according to the scientist - a third type of culture that arose after the two earlier, namely, the neolithic period and technocratic age. The criterion for identifying the mentioned classification of cultures constitutes the relation between tools and instruments and the system of social convictions. Put directly, this concerns the strength of the influence of the available tools and instruments (i.e. technology) on the world of culture (i.e. values, human relations, and symbols). In the first type of culture, tools were closely related, almost integrated with it. In the age of technocracy, this integration was broken, the old order was destroyed and in its place appeared the cult of technology and invention and a boundless faith placed in reason and the power of science. Technocracy did not, however, destroy tradition and did not negate the need for rules to exist in the contemporary world. Technopoly, also referred to as totalitarian technocracy, also signifies the subordination of all forms of cultural life to the rulership of technology. This is, therefore, a specific type of relationship between the world of culture and technology as well as emerging new technologies. The essence of the dependency remains the supremacy of technology over culture, its dominance is sometimes referred to as tyranny, which is reflected in the sub-heading of the well-known book of the Author: the triumph of technology over culture.

Technopoly can also be interpreted as a characteristic attitude that a person has towards technology. An indicator thereof remains not so much fostering the introduction

of technology but awarding it priority significance. This can be found in the strong statements of Postman that technopoly is a certain state of mind; many almost “deify” technology, claiming that its development constitutes the highest achievement of humanity, whereas the creation and dissemination of information constitutes one of its prime values. In the meantime, in the opinion of the Author, the uncontrolled expansion of technology is destroying the social fabric because it is weakening human relations, changing the functioning of traditional institutions and marginalising reflective action. This syndrome, referred to as the technopolisation of life, signifies a rapid advance of technology bringing with it numerous facilitations and conveniences (like, for instance, in the area of creating information, obtaining access thereto, and storage and transmission thereof). The threats resulting from the improper use of this innovative technology comprise the other, somewhat darker side of the phenomenon. Postman particularly pointed out two such threats: the mediatisation of life and the information flood. The essence of the former remains the frequently applied today transfer of an increasing number of experiences from the real world into the media world. The latter involves the avalanche of data that reaches us, almost without any obstacles whatsoever, through a wide array of channels. Their excess – in relation to the limited cognitive capacity of the human being – makes selection, processing, transformation into knowledge and rational use more difficult (Ledzińska, 2009).

A synthesising approach to the dominant (unfavourable) influence of technology on everyday life also constitutes the work of David Bolter, the Author of the familiar thesis: such is technology as is the culture (1990). The scientist argued that the current technology determines a person’s viewpoint perspective, and many of its users perceive other people as though they were a machine, i.e., from the angle of modern technical equipment, judged, above all, in terms of their productivity. Thus, we are, above all, meant to be effective and efficient like a fast computer equipped in an increasingly stronger processor. The idea of the effectiveness of actions that has a strong economic justification has permeated all areas of life and constitutes one of the most important rules of functioning of contemporary societies (Ritzer, 2008).

Benjamin Barber (2000) can also be included in the group criticising dominant trends; he highlights its dangers and threats. The researcher – concentrating on political and economic issues – divides contemporary civilisation into the symbolic universalism of the west, that is, the McWorld, which abounds in mass culture phenomena, and the particularism of the east, referred to as Jihad. According to the Author, these worlds remain in constant conflict while at the same time needing each other. Approaching global changes in a broad perspective, Barber sees above all divisions and polarisations, which, in his words, constitutes a “world of various speeds and a changing geometry.”

He foresees, however, that it is Jihad, which will give in, giving rise to the process of uniformisation. The current world economy – in relation to the lack of such democracy – can merely harness and accentuate anarchy. The stalling of these processes is impossible and an effective solution to this remains the creation, in the place of the McWorld, of a citizen world - CivWorld (Barber, 2000).

An Ambivalent Evaluation of the Effects of Worldwide Transformations

An extreme evaluation of global changes is alien to one of the most outstanding researchers of contemporaneity, Samuel Huntington. According to the Author, there exists no such thing as a global civilisation but it is rather great villages that exist on the human globe (Huntington, 1997). The global environment is and will remain multipolar, and its order will still be shaped by several superpowers representing the main civilisational circles of the world. Globalisation – contrary to the claims of Fukuyama – leads to differentiation and this differentiation encompasses all areas of life. We are, therefore, witnesses of the renewal of religious, ethnic, cultural, etc., identification. National states are becoming increasingly more modern, but modernisation does not mean westernisation – on the contrary, an ever stronger resistance towards attempts of implanting western models and ideas can be observed. According to the researcher, only external forms of globalisation are readily accepted like fashion and entertainment, for instance. Let us quote the example of the Author, who claims that an Iraqi drinking Coca-Cola does not cease being – in the cultural sense – an Iraqi. The influence of worldwide trends on the lives of contemporary people only possesses a modifying nature and does not lead to profound transformations on the individual or social level. Ambivalence in approaching the outcomes of globalisation is evident also in the manner of perceiving human relations. In the opinion of the Author, we are being provoked (encouraged, and sometimes even forced) to maintain interpersonal relations, including intercultural relations, on a previously unknown level. The intensity of the said relations may lead to a “collision of civilisation” on the level of different cultural circles. The conflict between the civilisations reflects – in the opinion of the researcher – the essence of the world. Finding a harmonious way of cooperation, however, is the key to world order coming about.

The presented standpoint identifies a generality in perceiving the outcomes of the changes taking place on the global scale. It is also characterised by the subjectivity of approaches and almost “visionary” nature. The originality of the theses and the type of argumentation used is worthy of admiration. It is difficult, however, to translate them into the language of psychosocial problems and even more difficult to plan empirical procedures based on them. We have therefore continued to search for possible anchorages and the penetration of literature has given rise to finding

an interesting conceptual proposal authored by a Canadian researcher, media theorist, and co-author of the Toronto school, Herbert M. McLuhan (2004).

Based on an in-depth analysis of the process of mass communication, the researcher formulated several principles that can be applied in the process of explaining the nature of information societies. The first is the existence of a global culture as a prerequisite of worldwide information transfer and exchange. This is probably the source of the optimism of the Author, who developed his ideas in the 1970s. McLuhan concentrated, above all, on the significance of television, thanks to which the world slowly became a “global village.” Another principle is the specific way of perceiving the media, understood as an “extension of the human senses” (McLuhan & Zingrone, 2001; McLuhan, 2004). Electric media were the first to influence more than one modality, thus distorting the sensory balance of man. In one utterance, we can read: “The twenty century relation between man and computer is not, in essence, distinctly different from the relation between prehistoric man and the ship or the wheel - the essential difference consists in the fact that all the earlier technologies or extensions of human organs were partial and fragmentary, whereas electric technology possesses a total and all-encompassing dimension” (McLuhan & Zingrone, 2001, p. 379).

The Author controversially defined the very means of communication, claiming that the medium remains a carrier of information. This means that social changes are caused not so much and not only by content transmitted via given means of communication, but through the very presence and influence of the media on the environment of a person. The form of transmission changes its content – this is what the main thesis of the researcher from Toronto states. This means that the only condition to come to know the content of the transmission is understanding the nature of the very medium. Since the means of communication not only shape the content but also the recipient, understanding of the role of the media may prove to be helpful in explaining cultural transformations. Perhaps the most important generalisation of McLuhan is the thesis, in line with which, the means of communication determine and shape the consciousness, even to the point of changing the human personality. The Author wrote some years ago that the result of the proliferation of electric media is that everything changes: the human being, his family, neighbourhood, education, and relation to others. The media completely transform us and nothing remains unchanged.

McLuhan clearly perceived the complex, both positive and negative consequences of technological development. He frequently stressed that technology not only transforms but also destroys a person’s current environment. This is because invention possesses two natures: it can become a blessing and a curse. This viewpoint is shared by many researchers of contemporary phenomena (*inter alia*

Tadeusiewicz, 2002; Goban-Klas, 2001; Morbitzer, 2007). Definitely a part of this group, we are concentrating in this discussion on the “bright side of globalisation,” that is, on attempting to reveal certain privileges of our times.

### **Heterogeneity of the environment as a stimulator of development**

*Talent develops in quiet places, character in the full current of human life.*

*J. W. Goethe*

Heterogeneity can be found today not only between countries, but also within a given country and even city, Hans Rosling said in one of his interviews. This category seems to be a key word making it easier to understand certain bright sides of globalisation. The diversity of the environment including the influence of the milieu constitutes – in light of psychological knowledge – an unquestionable factor of human development (Trempała, 2011). The positive effects of the diversity have also been noticed by the representatives of other humanist disciplines. Leon Dyczewski (2000) writes about the positive influence of globalisation stimulating the development of all the spheres of psychical functioning. According to these researchers, intensified contacts with representatives of different cultures facilitate cognitive, emotional and social formation. The confrontation with an otherness particularly shapes one of the factors of personality, namely, human personality, inclining to choose between a specific philosophy of life, a way of thinking and experiencing. In this place it is worth quoting a fragment of a more lengthy utterance of Adam Zagajewski, which corresponds with the currently developing thread. “I remember my first, longer trip abroad – this was many years ago in Berlin. I closely safeguarded my own idiom but I had to confront it with the German language – through conversations, and above all through literature. This was an immense challenge. When, by chance, not long after that I found myself in Paris, I encountered the reefs of another language which was equally alien to me. Perhaps once we encounter an alien reality we expose ourselves to danger and open up to the unknown” (2011, p. 2).

It is worth pointing out the similarity of the mentioned convictions with the descriptions of the very participants of worldwide transformations. This thesis is documented below.

From the report of the global information and media company ACNielsen (Global Online Consumer Survey)

The ACNielsen Company – operating in over 100 countries – is the world leader in the scope of delivering marketing information. Branches of AC Nielsen conduct research in the scope of measurement and analysis of the dynamics of development of markets and analysis of consumer attitudes and behaviour.

The Global Online Consumer Survey is a short internet survey lasting only ten minutes. In the summer of 2006, ACNielsen asked 22,781 Internet users from 41 countries and 15 different time zones various questions, including regarding their attitude to globalisation. Selecting a representative sample of adult Internet users in each country, the same demographic criteria were used.

It turned out that half of the respondents coming from the entire world admitted that globalisation is exerting a positive effect on their life. Among the advantages of the main worldwide trends, the respondents mentioned the following:

- ease of access to information and entertainment
- extensive access to the same products and services on a worldwide scale
- overcoming barriers between representatives of different cultures
- greater chances of professional development

The influence of worldwide changes on the functioning of individuals and groups – although extensively researched – does not possess to date full empirical documentation (Stiglitz, 2007, Błachnio, 2009, 2011). There is, however, convincing and interesting psychological evidence in the form of data informing of an increasing quality of intelligence tests performed by subsequent generations. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this improvement amounted to even 120% standard deviation. This phenomenon was called the Flynn effect after the researcher who traced and described it (Flynn, 1987).

This regularity – treated also as a sign of a general trend of acceleration – has been explained in a variety of ways (Nęcka, 2003; Nisbett, 2010). Among the many quoted arguments are: improved nutrition and quality of health care, wide access to education, the popularisation of knowledge particularly in the scope of pedagogy and psychology, the domination of a digital and picture culture, and the forms of parental care have changed into more intellectually stimulating ones, etc. The Authors of the majority of interpretations concentrated, nevertheless, on revealing the significance of cultural factors, obviously without ignoring the biological component. It was also pointed out that the

lower test performance limit has also increased above average, while the upper limit has remained relatively unchanged. This could signify that the intergenerational rise in test scores is the highest among persons with a relatively low intelligence. It cannot be ruled out that this is the result of several different factors acting together on individuals coming from the more disadvantaged levels of society.

The regularity that was found has given rise to large interest and many controversies among psychologists. The data obtained by Flynn are not clear-cut and create many patterns, depending on the type of abilities measured and the country of residence of the respondents. The researcher continued conducting the comparative analyses and reported his measurement results taken in the years 1947-2002 (Flynn, 2007). They above all document an increase in the fluid intelligence measures, with a disproportionately lower increase in the crystallised intelligence ratings. Interpreting the data obtained, the Author highlights the fact that every generation of people from developed countries exists in increasingly more stimulating conditions. This is because everyday life is increasingly more demanding. The nature of the main human activity, namely, the professional work environment, has above all changed. This is more often connected with engaging the mind rather than muscles and is often performed in teams of people coming not only from a diverse range of environments but also different countries (cultures). Technological advance forces a person to acquire the skills necessary to operate electrical equipment and to communicate with them and through them. The outcome of the changes in the living environment remains, therefore, the more intense use of the skills of abstract perception and thinking that are necessary in operating many immaterial objects, relations, signs and information. In this way, the next generations will be found not only to physically mature more quickly but also to accelerate in the intellectual sphere. The stimulating role of a diverse living environment can be approached in a different than so far perspective of analyses, revealing the chance of crossing various boundaries, including geographical and psychical ones.

### **The possibility of crossing boundaries - globalisation and transgression**

Crossing boundaries is usually associated with overcoming cordons with the awareness of how very much – in the age of worldwide transformations – the mobility of people has increased. Many people travel for tourist purposes, which usually involves short trips to places that offer good conditions to rest and relax and facilitate discovering areas of the world which were so far unknown (Dąbrowska, 2011). A separate group of relocating people are those that migrate for economic purposes (Duvell, 2004). Since Poland's accession to the European Union we

are dealing with an increased migration of Poles to western European countries. More intense migration movements in Poland began in the 1990s with the change of the political system and the opening of Polish borders. This was further accelerated when some states opened their labour markets to people from new member states. It should be noted, however, that Poles migrated also in the period before the political turning point. In the 1980s, several hundred thousand people left the country (Iglicka, 2000, 2008). A decade later, the number of migrations dropped but their nature changed. Political migrations were replaced by shorter, seasonal trips to undertake work or, as was signalled earlier, tourist excursions. Poland's accession to the European Union in May 2004 became a real turning point – seeing that the free movement of workers is one of the pillars of the market of the European Community. According to various estimates, after Poland's accession to the EU, a number ranging from 300 thousand to 2 million citizens of the Republic of Poland migrated to Western Europe (Lipiński, 2006). Apart from the changes on the international arena, Poland's domestic situation, particularly the high unemployment rate, has also influenced the rise in the numbers of people migrating.

An increased number of migrations are taking place for educational reasons. It was reported in the 2006 Migration Bulletin that in the 2004/2005 academic year, a total 8,390 Poles migrated within the Erasmus educational exchange programme for higher education students – over ¼ more than the previous year. Furthermore, several dozen thousand people have taken advantage of grant programmes while others have undertaken courses that are self-funded. These migrations have become possible thanks to the strategic plans of the EU propagating international mobility of both scientists and students. In the 2009/2010 academic year, the European Commission reported that approx. 213,000 European students, of which 14,000 were from Poland, took part in the Erasmus programme (7.4 % more than in the previous 2008/2009 academic year). Furthermore, it was noted that this was the record interest to date in the said exchange programme between higher education institutions. Therefore, that was the first time since the programme was established in 1987, that the number surpassed the 200 thousand participant threshold. According to estimates of the European Commission, if the current tendency will continue, the EU will reach the goal set for the 2012/2013 academic year of 3 million scholarship holders from the moment the programme was launched. In relation to the previous year, student exchange saw the greatest increase, with as many as 30 % in Estonia and Cyprus. Also in Germany, the number of students benefiting from the European student exchange programme has increased by almost 3 %. The most popular countries for student exchange are Spain, France and Great Britain.

Returning to the title of the paragraph it is worth noticing that the term used therein suggests the possibility of transgressing something more than geographical state boundaries. It is also worth pointing out that the presence of certain words in spoken and written language constitutes a specific sign of the times; this is because the changes taking place in the world are reflected in the language of the people living in the given era. Language also influences the nature of cognizance and this idea has been most clearly expressed in the famous quote of Ludwig Wittgenstein: “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (1997, p. 64). This idea can be understood in the sense that the limits of my mind are the limits of my world, seeing that the Author identified thinking with language.

The word transgression was introduced into psychological literature and propagated by Józef Koziński (1986, 1987, 1997, 2004) by formulating the thesis of the transgressive model of man. The innovative ideas of the Author assumed the end form of developed statements of psychotransgressionism, constituting a new direction in psychology. Today, the term transgression, transgressional, can also be found in works outside the field of psychology. The definition of transgression is precise; its essence is “action wherein a person – usually intentionally and consciously – transgresses the current material, symbolic and social boundaries” (Koziński, 1999, p. 244).

There exist many different types of transgression. Two basic forms of transgressing boundaries were referred to by the researcher as psychological (P) and historic (H) transgression. The first is termed also as private or ordinary – these are actions of individuals or small groups that do not exert an influence on the course of history but that are significant from the point of view of the individual. They serve satisfying needs and give a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment. They give rise to curiosity and the motivation to undertake further efforts. Moreover, these transgressions enable shaping of the personality and sometimes possess a therapeutic value. Certain actions do, however, go down in history. Such is the case with activity that nobody before has undertaken and boundaries which nobody has yet transgressed. This includes great geographical discoveries, new scientific concepts and exceptional literary works. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has abounded in historical transgressions in the field of science and the arts. The Author of the mentioned concept also distinguished expansive and creative transgressions. There is a desire present in human nature to extend one's territory, increase one's influence and intensify control. This finds its confirmation in historical facts and research on ontogenesis. Expansive transgressions include thinking, decisions and actions that are geared towards this goal. They can be oriented towards the external world or towards the person themselves as in the case of someone who “tries to be the captain of his own ship rather than a passive traveller” (2002, p. 55). Creative transgressions,



however, enable progress in various areas of life. Creative activity often facilitates human expansion. Another division is connected with singling out individual and collective transgression. It is difficult to imagine success to be achieved in science without teams comprising experts that are also gifted with the ability to work in a group. The last differentiation consists of constructive and destructive transgression. Everything that is beneficial is considered constructive, whereas destructive transgressions do not serve the individual or the collective good. Koziński claims that numerous destructive transgressions have taken place in the last century: wars, totalitarianism, the destruction of the environment, etc. Those that were destructive to the extreme were given the name Zet transgressions. These are transgressions that are connected with annihilation – the extinction of an animal species or the extermination of populations.

#### Concretisations

According to Koziński (2001), globalisation constitutes one of the four main trends of the third millennium. The researcher suggests it be termed as external transgression due to the fact that significant modifications have taken place in the human environment. He also claims that global transformations can give rise to transgressions, while transgressional behaviour can facilitate acceptance of worldwide transformations and active participation therein.

The Author's thesis about the circular dependency between globalisation and transgression is upheld and developed herein. Globalisation, understood as a type of external transgression inclines towards internal transgressions, namely, to transformations in the way of thinking and acting to date. It is as though the new world induces the birth of a "new man." These modifications are very difficult because they concern the very core of the psyche, the grounds of human existence (Erikson, 1997; Trempała, 2011). The multitude, diversity and rate of transformations taking place further complicate these internal transgressions. Their strength and dynamics depend on the psychological profile including the characteristics of the mind and the properties of the personality. The issue is highly important, extremely complex and relatively little penetrated. In the further discussion, the possible directions of theoretical analyses and empirical research will be signalled.

Various different analytical perspectives are accepted when describing the changes in the global living environment. Among the many approaches the concept accentuating both new elements of the environment as well as the specific nature of its structure draws our attention. The new links – understood as stimuli mediated in global processes – include, above all, new media, new economy and new

frameworks of social experience. Attention should be paid, as has already been signalled, to the variety of approaches, which also differentiate between the representatives of given disciplines. Political scientists are interested in the important phenomenon of the diminishing (and according to some, disappearing) national states. Whereas sociology and psychology papers stress the open nature of social life (Tobera, 2000; Szacki, 2002). This is tantamount to the already highlighted increase in number of both direct and mediated contacts. We are also witnesses and participants of revolutionary transformations in the methods of human communication (Kaczmarek, Kucharski, Stencel, 2006). This new way of communicating enables not only time and space boundaries to be overcome but also the boundaries of one's own psyche (Castells, 2003).

In the times before global trends appeared, the nature of the living environment was relatively constant; a person was connected with some concrete physical territory and social circle created by members of the family, the neighbourhood, the learning environment and the workplace. The possible and increasingly more often necessary mobility gives rise to the fact that today we are dealing with the phenomenon of an intensification of living contexts with all its consequences, particularly a significant increase in the intensity and diversity of physical and social stimulation (Toffler & Toffler, 1996). Once again, the standpoint of researchers approaching global processes as a source of positive stimuli can be recalled, namely, stimulating individual and social development (Toffler, 1986; Castells, 1998). Intense, diverse stimulation taking into consideration, however, the individual energy resources constitutes, in light of psychological knowledge, a favourable developmental context (Kielar-Turska, 2000; Trempała, 2000). This idea has also been expressed by representatives of other disciplines. Karl Popper, while receiving his honorary doctorate in 1991 that was awarded by one of the German universities uttered these important words: "I live in the happiest of worlds." On the other hand it should be kept in mind that there are also Authors describing global changes in the categories of aversive experiences. This group includes, for instance, Z. Bauman's (2000) idea of a polarised society, or R. Dahrendorf's (1993) concept of a "cold" society.

Despite the global transformations that have encompassed many inhabitants of the earth, it can be assumed that the awareness of the effects of the changes that are taking place is proportional to the intensity in which an individual participates in social life and the ability to undertake personal reflection, giving rise to the ability to evaluate events (Heidegger, 2000; Council of Europe, 2003). In the centre of the latter, an ever important question arises regarding the philosophy of life (Buber, 1993), namely, the concept facilitating adaptation to new conditions that are characterised by a great dynamics of change.

The key task of the contemporary person and the challenge of our times is to build an identity that takes into consideration the specific nature of the living environment as well as the content and the rate of social changes. This constitutes one of the main internal transgressions of our times (Dyczewski, 2000; Godzic, 2001; Majcherek, 2001; Kozielecki, 2001, 2004). This is an important but not an easy task for several reasons. The careful observation and critical evaluation of the transformations that are taking place is usually accompanied by the conclusion that ignoring global processes is connected with exclusion. Avoiding inevitable marginalisation, therefore, requires certain modifications to be effected in current ways of thinking, experiencing and acting; this is because global processes have an impact on the entire person, on all the areas of their existence. Thus, the question arises as to what should be the starting point, what and how should be changed in one's own life as well as whose advice to take heed of (Buber, 1993).

Due to the specific nature of the changes taking place it is impossible to stop at the convictions and discussions conducted in the local environment. The highly useful in many life situations references to the past, particularly to individual experiences, tend to be unreliable due to the changes that are taking place in their content (Krzyżewski, 2003). They are taking place through the action of the new generation media that are capable of creating reality and impacting human behaviour in this way (Szkudlarek, 1999). By combining print with the electronic signal a means of communication was obtained that was detached from the determinants of time and space. News sites made up of both significant information and that of little importance instantly reach the mass, in the case of the representatives of the younger generation, Internet recipients. This is the way through which mediation very often takes place, that is, the borrowing of a distant, different and even alien experience. Gradually included in the sphere of thoughts, feelings and behaviours, they can be separated from personal experiences that are slowly gathered in the natural living environment.

### The status of heterogeneity

This mere sketch of the significance of the multiplicity and diversity of the global environment as specific privileges (but also dangers) of our time inclines reflection to be undertaken on the status of the category of heterogeneity. Is it a value that is desired, sought after, and always positive? This is one of the most significant questions of the time of worldwide changes and many attempts at providing balanced answers can be found. Psychologists will closely identify particularly with the standpoint of Timothy Garton Ash (2011), a historian of postwar Europe, according to whom diversity cannot constitute – as claimed by staunch

supporters of multiculturalism – a value in itself. It also cannot be treated as the most important good on an equal level with, for instance, freedom and justice. When does diversity – an intrinsic element of the globalisation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – have a psychological value that facilitates development and optimises functioning? An attempt to formulate an answer will make it easier to restrict the analyses to the situation of an adult. We would then say that the richness of the living environment possesses a supportive and forming value when a person refers to it with a certain distance, with careful thought and unhurried judgement. The complexity and richness of the world in which it is necessary to make and justify one's own choices can then be more clearly perceived. Therefore, it seems that the specific nature of worldwide transformation constitutes a favourable context for development, particularly for thoughtful persons. This is a general dependency, defined years back by H. Bergson, the Author of the quote: "think like a man of action, act like a man of thought."

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