

## CULTURAL STUDIES AND PHILOLOGICAL TRADITION

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**Abstract:** The main proposal of the article is to bring into focus humanism as a project which was always present in the Renaissance philology and is still into the main areas of reflection of the Enlightenment and Modernity. The large part of the article consists of a review of the philological tradition since the Renaissance, and it tries to describe an interdisciplinary nature of cultural studies, which always referred to politics and political science, and comparative multilingual approaches, which made them strictly international. Recent development in the area of digital humanities makes cultural studies similar to media studies. Humanism is the only component of the studies which is indispensable because it is not to be replaced by artificial intelligence.

**Keywords:** cultural studies, individualism, humanism, philology, digital humanities

### HUMANISM, INDIVIDUALISM, PHILOLOGY AND POLYGLOTISM

Renaissance humanism is a kind of prehistory of the humanities. In this context, we have to confront Renaissance humanism and the birth of modern thought during the Reformation. To answer the question of whether Luther was a philosopher from a modern point of view or not, we must not only remember the philological and philosophical tradition of Nietzsche and American pragmatism, the criticism of Foucault and Habermas, or the existential writers like Orwell and Sartre. My reconstruction of what the humanities are today is impossible without realising the rich history of the concept (see Law). Humanities today are, above all, the humanities, while the field of humanities consists of many particular disciplines: archaeology, bibliology and informatics, ethnology, philosophy, history, art history, linguistics, cultural studies, literary studies, art sciences, management studies, religious studies and

the field of theological reflection. According to the classification of OECD: The Humanities are groups such as history and archaeology, linguistics and literary studies, philosophy, ethics and religion and other humanities. The humanities originated in Renaissance humanism, which is also very differently understood, has various faces: in the Renaissance, the famous saying of Terence might be well understood in this context: “homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto”. Humanism is sometimes an educational movement, sometimes a philosophical concept, and sometimes an existential attitude towards life. It is worth noting that at the end of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, an antihumanist reaction already was existing in structuralism, postmodernism or post-colonialism. Currently, we very often talk about posthumanism. The central thesis of my article is that the humanities can not forget about humanism, that humanism, being close to people and their values must all the time be in the mission of broadly understood humanities.

In the broadest sense, humanism is a system of thinking in which human values, interests and dignity people perceive as particularly important. Today, however, humanism in the United Kingdom, for example, means a very particular worldview that is not necessarily related to historically understood humanism. The symbol of the first Renaissance humanism is the so-called Vitruvian man Leonardo da Vinci “Le proporzioni del corpo umano secondo Vitruvio” (1490 Gallerie dell’Accademia, Venice). The symbol of the British movement is the symbol of a happy man adopted by British and international humanistic (atheistic) societies. Dogmas of contemporary humanism are: the cult of science and reason. According to this concept, everything should be subjected to a rational examination. Humanists in the British Isles today are either atheists or at least agnostics, sceptical about everything that concerns God or the gods, believe in one life, emphasise the individual moral autonomy of man, they are usually secularists. The humanist does not have to be: a utopian, an advocate of equality of animals, a utilitarian, extreme naturalist, but there is a strong tendency to equate it. This is too simplistic. I know at least a few humanists from the UK who are not subject to this scheme.

At the roots of the words humanism and contemporary humanities lies the German word “Humanismus” that comes from a reformed educational system inspired by the romantic Hellenism of Winckelmann and Goethe. In turn, the German word Humanismus comes from the fifteenth-century Florentine form of “umanisti”. Still, in the Samuel Johnson dictionary, the humanist is a grammarian and philologist. Thus, the humanist is a fan of the Word. The German reformers of the education system proposed at the beginning of the 19th

century to base the system of education on the classics: Latin, Greek, literature and culture - the ideals of “Bildung”. The Renaissance from the mid-nineteenth century can be seen as the epoch of the development of individualism. One of the most important works of the nineteenth century was the work of Burkhardt called *Renaissance*. As I have pointed out, this is where the Renaissance has been defined as the epoch of individuality and individualism. In this light of individualism, one must also see Luther’s speech about an experience which makes a human the theologian.

A particular case of the humanist and anti-humanist is Friedrich Nietzsche. Raised on classics, he has been sometimes characterised as a critical philologist who gave the exegesis of several Greek words (Michel Foucault). Nietzsche initiated a linguistic turn because he believed that there is no truth and that truth is only an army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms – we think them, and truths are illusions about which we have forgotten that they are illusions, are used metaphors that no longer have the strength to influence us. Later this thought was continued by the philosophers like Ludwig Wittgenstein and Jacques Derrida.

### **CULTURAL STUDIES AND POLITICAL SCIENCE, AND POLITICS**

At first glance, it may come as no surprise that the concept of culture was often subject to political interpretations and was associated with political life, while cultural studies from the very beginning of the day were saturated with the content of political science. If we remember that etymologically understood culture is above all a notion connected with farming and agriculture, effort and diligence, and specific relations of caring and ownership, then we will stop being surprised (conf. the definition of culture defined in “Cultural Theory” by Peter Brooker, p.50).

To take care of something, and care can be taken when we care about being very much. This being careful requires protection and cultivation not only here and now, but also in the dimension of time. Cultivation can serve to be, that is, evident of courage. Culture is also a garden in the etymological meaning of fencing, separating from foes. Hence, culture is a political concept, because activity resulting from care is an activity stretched in time and includes the concept of ownership.

Moreover, where strictly political problems arise out of necessity and work. Besides, culture has always been associated purely economically with areas such as literature, music, painting, sculpture, theatre and film, which are

products of culture and they were perceived as valuable, hence also associated with a higher value. Though that is why today one can criticise cultural life as steeped in consumption of cultural industry products.

That is why the slogan of the political opposition in the communist era in Poland: “everything is politics” strikes with its reason, because in the context of the etymological understanding of culture, ownership relations stand out as the most important, while the Marxist concept of alienation from property and alienation from culture can actually be one of the key concepts.

Therefore, the politicisation of culture is not a choice, and the relationship of cultural studies called in English “cultural studies” with political sciences and with Marxism is understandable by itself. Cultural Studies, one of the most important paradigms for cultural studies as a scientific discipline and as the name for the field of study, was founded in Birmingham on the initiative of Richard Hoggart in 1964, when the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was established, this is the most essential expression of the relationship between discipline and field of study cultural studies with politics. The topics are taken up by this research and educational centre. Educational institutions were not limited to the issues of ownership, with time another issues related to gender were also identified that were irresistibly associated with the ownership issues in Western culture, but opened up wider perspectives. The subject of ownership and gender, as well as the notion of various imagined communities (introduced by Benedict Anderson in 1983), are variously associated with various directions in the humanistic research, such as Marxism, feminism or critical philosophy. This topic is, by necessity, associated with the continuation of a modern way of thinking about subjectivity and identity, and is part of the history of the emancipation of multiple groups and collectives. If the project of modernity originates in enlightenment, it is in the Enlightenment that for the first time the postulate of the liberation of the individual and his aspiration for self-development was formulated in such an expressive way. This formulation, in turn, originated in the discoveries of the Lutheran Reformation. It might be argued not only by the history of modern subjectivity outlined by Tylor, but also by the entire reflection on the Enlightenment project, which not only sought to the hegemony of instrumental reason (according to Habermas) but also launched a dynamic development of communicative reason. This communicative reason could develop only in the conditions of extended freedom and the evolution of the concept of human rights (including women). This project covered even more full circles. Culture has been involved in this process, for instance through the development of new forms of fiction, but also through the themes related to literary and artistic artefacts in general: women’s issues have become more and more popular, and children and the poor have been introduced more and more

often. Emancipation included even the Frankenstein monster on the pages of the novel, in Mary Shelley's writing.

To sum up: wanting to explain the relationship of cultural studies as a discipline and as a field of education with political sciences and politics, we must pay attention above all to the ideological relationship of culture with the issues of ownership and emancipation of the individual. They are the best to bring together various specific problems, such as race and ethnicity, diaspora and hybrid identity, slavery and colonialism, sex and issues related to sex, cultural power and materialism, and the concept of control.

### **CULTURAL STUDIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY**

Political science is one of the many academic disciplines associated today with cultural studies, although it is not identical to it. It is safe to say that the beginnings of cultural reflection should be seen not only in the Enlightenment's critical reflection, which supreme literary expression was "Frankenstein" by Mary Shelley but also in comparative literary reflection. This comparative element allows us to conclude that multilingualism and internationalisation are also a key element in cultural studies. Therefore, in the thematic circle of cultural studies, there is not only critical thinking but also intercultural dialogue. The discipline of cultural studies and the field of education has been often associated with cultural anthropology and ethnographic research. An important feature of cultural anthropology and ethnographic research is focusing on communities, hence placing these disciplines in the area of social sciences. Cultural studies in this context would have a distinctive and dominant component of the humanities with a large share of elements of social sciences. However, it is not easy to establish unambiguous assignments: on the one hand, one should remember the Polish studies dimension of the Warsaw cultural studies (under the title of the anthropology of the word), and on the other, the philosophical-semiotic inclination of Poznań's cultural studies, dominated by Jerzy Kmita, who originally developed philosophical semiotics. Let us add to the cultural studies in the Jagiellonian University in Kraków related to social sciences through the management sciences and cultural, literary studies at the same Jagiellonian University, called cultural poetics or literary anthropology. Besides, at many universities, we also have political science faculties, including a robust cultural studies component in the aspect of the theory and practice of intercultural dialogue. The Łódź experience, in turn, is a strong relationship with literature, theatre and film. However, there are more and more elements of digital culture, sometimes called new media or electronic media.

At the same time, it is worth noting that when it comes to the anthropological dimension of the cultural studies since the nineteenth century they were associated with natural sciences, so-called directly sciences. Interest in the specificity of breeds was crucial for cultural reflection, for example, in Hippolyte Taine. In him, the comparative component and internationalisation are best seen on the one hand, and at the same time, they have many connections with the natural sciences and concentration on the body as well. This relationship will be loosened by the anti-positivist breakthrough of Wilhelm Dilthey, who defined European cultural studies through hermeneutics inspired by classical studies, as well as through the concept of “sciences of spirit” (or “sciences of the mind”) (German ‘Geisteswissenschaft’). In the twentieth century, however, in structural anthropology, which was more than a mere scientific discipline, we observe a turn towards the body, interest in gender relations (incest) or culinary. The return to the body is also associated with the concentration on property issues (e.g. the concept of gift or inter-tribal exchange). These were also the interests of structuralist semiotics. Nowadays, the concept of embodiment derived from cognitive science, both philosophical and linguistic, also deserves attention. This phrase means a strong connection with natural sciences such as neuroscience and neurophysiology, and if it persists, it can unequivocally emphasise the break with the hermeneutic traditions and emphasise the interdisciplinary nature of cultural studies.

This interdisciplinarity makes us think about comprehensive changes in the university world. It is known that the world of universities largely consolidates the ossified structure of the division of knowledge through its organisational structure. This organisational structure and a high formalisation of legal regulations in Poland are related to the conditions for the acquisition by different faculties of the rights to confer scientific degrees and titles, as well as the right to accredit individual fields of study. On the other hand, there are more and more interdisciplinary research centres that can acquire grants, in the world these centres are today the basis for the development of science, not traditional faculties. One can assume that legal changes in Polish higher education will be able to loosen this rigid institutional-formal corset. However, it is difficult to predict the final shape of these changes in Poland. If we continue to be strongly connected with the area of European research, such a direction of loosening the structures seems only possible.

On the other hand, much is being written and talking about the need to make university education more accessible to humanities as well. In this context, one should consider the practical usefulness of cultural studies for candidates for humanities studies. That is why the practical inclination of areas such as intercultural dialogue, translation or intercultural communication studies leads

us to think about the future of cultural studies as more focused on issues closer to, for example, journalism. However, this is the issue of education design, which will also translate into the interdisciplinary nature of research and its thematic areas and methodologies. A large share of social sciences in journalism and social communication would bring cultural studies closer to media studies, which is already a component of reflection on the social history of the media, including both papyrus and print as well as electronic media. The next problem is associated with the latter one: the penetration of contemporary culture by the digital world.

### **CULTURAL STUDIES AND DIGITISATION**

Among the most critical challenges facing the university world is the universal digitisation of both individual and social life. Digitisation in the form of the universal Internet is associated with globalisation, also economic and internationalisation, primarily cultural. Moreover, the dominance of English as the primary means of international communication. However, digitalisation understood in this way means the end of monolingual cultures and adopting more and more popular models of multicultural communities, as well as models of hybrid identity. Already today, for example, the concept of the reading canon is almost impossible to define even within one so-called national culture. If we consider the concept of cultural canon, the definition will be even more difficult, if at all possible. As part of the social, cultural reflection, there are more and more attempts to define the cultures of particular generations by the dominant media (there are, e.g. generations of television and, for example, smartphones). This definition causes that individual canons, which should form the basis of effective interpersonal communication by providing topics, i.e. places of collective memory, which are the basis for shortcuts and secondary codes, are increasingly becoming tribal canons, digitally defined tribes. In connection with the media convergence, it is primarily written about the consumer tribes, but the matter can be even more complicated.

Internationalisation is primarily multilingualism and emerging identity problems. Because multilingualism is the acceptance of the multiplicity of worlds, it is the dominance of the value of tolerance and consent to co-existence. Linguistically this problem appears in the concept of political correctness and research on hate speech. However, this also entails the phenomena of subject hybridisation. Each participant of culture is a unique hybrid on a global scale. There are less and less universal types, more and more units initially composed of many cultural components challenging to predictions. Already in the middle

of the twentieth century, there was a reflection accepting the state of the Tower of Babel as a symbolic definition of the impossibility of full communication understood as communion. Such problems can also be found in the final literature of the 20th century.

However, the whole area of new cultural phenomena, new artefacts of culture, for example, the blogosphere, emerges. New generations in the 21st century are brought up more by bloggers, vloggers and YouTube stars than by the school and its artificially constructed canons. Knowledge is everywhere today, but there are no methods to verify it. This type of activity is subordinated on the one hand to the vast chaos of memes, and on the other hand to the business interests of increasingly international companies. Such a situation in the area in question makes us remember globalisation as well as capital globalisation.

However, one cannot forget about the phenomenon of democratization of creativity: at the beginning of the modernity, the creativity was the privilege of few, property privileged or born, nowadays this financial threshold has declined, more and more people have access not only to sources of knowledge and culture (e.g. to enormous cultural heritage resources in the Gutenberg Project), but more and more people are active in the sphere of digital culture. More and more people have the courage of creation, the courage of poetics. The dominance of mobile platforms and gadgets means that the massive library in your pocket becomes more and more popular, but also the creativity lab in your pocket. Those pockets are conducive to increasing privatisation, but also to increasing dependence on technology and gadgets. The culture of ownership is generally replaced with leases of archival space (the so-called clouds) and a subscription to various digital services. Even literary works purchased in electronic form do not fully become the property of the buyer.

However, the consequences for cultural studies are also enormous, because not only are students becoming more and more digital tribes, but their greater technical awareness increases the popularity of digital forms of knowledge present not only in traditional e-learning but also in Massive Open Online Courses. Knowledge, however, is also connected with the media and their dominance in the lives of young people causes more and more interest in digital media and digital culture. Therefore, it is possible to anticipate not only a digital phrase at universities but also to digitise and mediatization of almost every humanistic discipline. If the digital humanities 1.0 in the 1950s were identical to the use of computers for classical biblical research (creation of indexes), then digital humanities 3.0 use the so-called Big Data to characterise culture. It is common to use computer data visualisation tools, ready means of communication enforce a change in the approach to quantitative research in the humanities. Easier visualisation thanks to computer tools will also force

changes in the way science is practised, although it is mainly a communication phenomenon and related to the popularisation of knowledge.

### THE HUMANITIES AND THE HUMANISM

It is worth noting that when considering cultural studies, we often unknowingly place them either in social sciences or the humanities. If we reflect on the history of science, then the prehistory of the humanities was Renaissance humanism. Reconstruction of what is the humanities and cultural studies today is impossible without realising the rich history of the concept.

The history of Nietzsche's thoughts in the twentieth century allows one to realise the path of not only philology and humanism but also individualism closely related to the Renaissance and classical culture. The end of this culture and the end of humanism is also the end of individualism. Against this background, the question remains open to the extent to which the old notion associated with humanities, such as empathy, can still be a current call as a methodological postulate. Indeed, it can become a concept focusing on the content of education on cultural studies. However, can it, especially in the era of very intensive research on the empathy of natural sciences such as neuroscience, the new-old research paradigm, remain an open question.

Moreover, it seems that the issue of the unfinished Enlightenment project and the issue of cultural changes in the world, hybridisation of social life, globalisation and media convergence all make empathy a methodological postulate and fascinating research and educational topic. As far as it is necessary to understand it together with the old humanistic paradigm, it remains indisputable: there is no necessity. The individual will never be what it seemed to be in the 19th century. However, such concepts as dignity or the concept of ownership seem to be still valid. That is why the value of humanistic reflection will be still high. Without it, the dystopic visions of Orwell and Huxley can come true quickly.

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