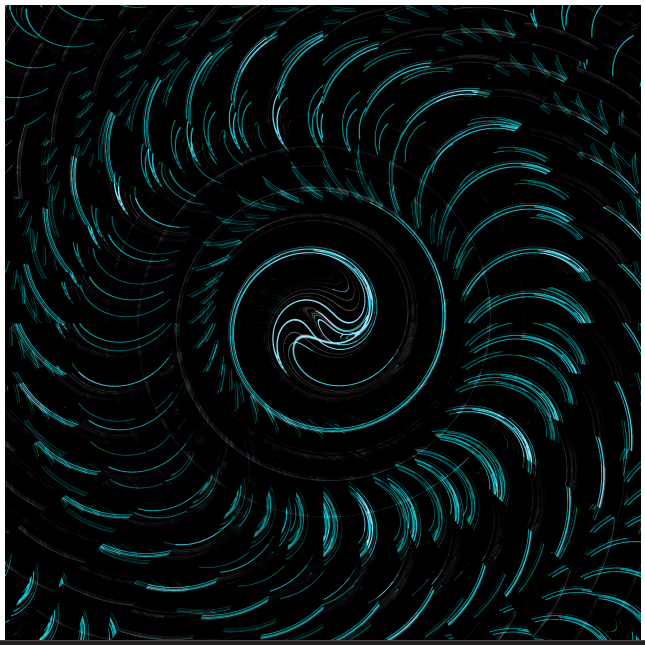
Modernity in Question
Studies in Philosophy and History of Ideas 19

Ryszard Nycz

Culture as Verb

Probes into the New Humanities



PETER LANG

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The book deals with what the author calls the new humanities: a broad and diversified front of orientations, directions, and turns grouped around five major currents: the digital humanities, engaged humanities, cognitive humanities, art-based research, and posthumanities. What links these approaches is their opposition toward the principles of the modern theory of humanistic cognition, which appears to be immaterial, external, impersonal, static, and neutral. Against this model, the new humanities posit a different type of cognition: embodied, penetrating the interior of the studied field, personalized (participatory), active (intervening), and situated (engaged). With this significant change, we proceed from the culture of disinterested observation, founded on the myth of contemplative view of the external world, to the real culture of participatory action, which is reconciled with the perspectivity and partiality of the subject's cognitive actions and which paves the way to reality from within and in its own right.

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ISBN 978-3-631-87455-4

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STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF IDEAS

Edited by Małgorzata Kowalska

VOLUME 19

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Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

The Publication is funded by Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland as a part of the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities (project number NPRH/U21/SP/495982/2021/10). This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Ministry cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Cover illustration: Courtesy of Benjamin Ben Chaim

ISSN 2193-3421
ISBN 978-3-631-87455-4 (Print)
E-ISBN 978-3-631-89917-5 (E-PDF)
E-ISBN 978-3-631-89918-2 (EPUB)
DOI 10.3726/b20700

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Peter Lang – Berlin · Bern · Bruxelles · New York · Oxford · Warszawa · Wien

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This publication has been peer reviewed.

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Author's Note

I wanted to write this book because of two ideas that have been wandering around my head for a long time, asking to be named, defined, and analytically specified. The first one revolves around the appreciation of humanistic writing as a strictly cognitive activity, which is not merely a record or verbalization of some earlier cognitive work, but rather an environment, in which such a cognitive process actually takes place and crystallizes itself – regardless of prior necessary assumptions, plans, or hypotheses. At the beginning the second part of this book, I use Latour's formula of "text as a laboratory" as the main metaphor to characterize different variants of this creative cognitive practice.

Nevertheless, I do not claim this to be a universal model. Certainly, there are humanists-researchers, who, to use their own self-description, just "put down on paper" what they had already thoroughly planned and specified. I believe, however, that it is not the only and not even most important model. Indeed, we should at least confront it with the one in which cognition does not precede action (in this case writing), but in which it is rather action (writing process) that becomes a specific virtual and empirical laboratory where cognition is activated, organized, and directed – and which ultimately generates cognitive results.

The second idea concerns the need for reorientation of our thinking about culture – which, in the twentieth century, has come to be construed mainly in terms of its nominalized and structural-systemic understanding as a normative system of the symbolic control over human activity – towards another conception, which appreciates culture's action-oriented, causative, and creative nature; in short, its active quality discussed in the first part of this book.

Thanks to the support of the National Science Centre, which financed the project "Innovative Polish Studies Humanities: The Text as Laboratory," NCN UMO–2012/07/B/HS2/01451, it became possible to draw conclusions from these loosely coupled ideas and sketch the topography of the confederated – for connected through their opposition toward classic modernity – contemporary research positions which share the basic assumptions of the "action" turn or front.

I am well-aware that this project has not been carried out fully nor extensively enough. However, I hope that it reached the stage in which it provides arguments explaining the undertaken research and, to some extent, sanctions its subject and the outlined problem area. Generally, the book deals with what I call the new humanities, namely a broad and diversified front of orientations, directions,

turns, and simply moments of curiosity, connected through their opposition toward the principles of contemporary theory of humanistic cognition.

This book provides a concise explanation of these new vocabularies and research strategies. This allows readers to evaluate themselves to what extent the proposed typology seems convincing; after all, there is no widely shared agreement concerning the categorization and understanding of these new phenomena. At this point, I shall merely stress that the opposition toward the principles of contemporary theory of humanistic cognition involves five points of contention, the settlement of which incorporates the new-humanistic quest into the wider trend of philosophical-scientific, existential-ideological changes.

For if the modern cognition appears to be immaterial, impersonal, static, external, and neutral (disinterested or unengaged), then the new-humanistic quest relies on quite different assumptions, namely – of the type of cognition, which penetrates the interior of the studied field, as it is embodied, personalized (participatory), active (intervening), and situated (engaged). This is a significant shift not only in established cognitive perspective, employed methods and analytical tools, but also in attempts to provide a different definition of standards of objectivity for cognitive results.

With this change, we proceed from the culture of disinterested observation, founded on the myth of contemplative view of the whole external world, to the real culture of participatory action, which is reconciled with the perspectivity and partiality of the subject's cognitive actions and which paves the way to reality from within and in its own right. Moreover, we proceed from the "knowledge that" (nominalized, propositional, and encyclopedic) to the "knowledge how" (technical, equipping, and competence-oriented), while the focus on subjective results of cognition shifts to the interest in the creative process itself and its "improvisational" nature.

Stanisław Brzozowski once noted that labor is the only human language to which nature responds. To be sure, Brzozowski understood the idea of labor quite broadly, pointing to all manifestations of creative action. That is why we may consider him – along with his contemporaries: Bergson, Whitehead, James, and Dewey – as the forefather of contemporary (new-humanistic) conceptions of the "verbal" nature of the human being, culture, and cognition of reality in the process of its becoming.

I propose the term "probing" to describe the prevalent way of cognitive action in new-humanistic research. In my view, it is a methodological tactic that differs from more typical humanistic methods in several distinctive respects. First, such method consists in examining a given objective environment from within, that is to say, in the field of commonly shared experience. Second, it focuses on

trial, partial penetration of the problem territory, most often by studying specific cases. Third, its most privileged technique is a specific kind of "interrogation" of objects, events, and processes, with the use of questions and experimental interventions that can be carried out by virtue of new conceptual vocabularies – a technique, which, in effect, allows various, earlier unnoticed features of research objects to emerge and become present.

During the work on this book, I realized that I practice probing as an analytical-argumentative technique. One consequence of this tendency is my use of a kind of argumentative loops, in which central issues continue to return to be discussed from yet another angle. These loops, to be sure, are affected by repetitions but my hope is that they make it possible to illuminate the key problematics from a diversity of perspectives. Another consequence of such practice is the gradual emergence of this new-humanistic continent in my discourse, both in the course of argument and constant reciprocal interactions between descriptions and described objects.

I am not really sure whether these are positive and utterly beneficial features of humanistic writing. In this case, however, when the point is to capture the features of the historical present, ongoing changes, or current tendencies which are not fully crystallized nor permanently situated in the order of knowledge – in this case, the outlining of the "feel-structure" of contemporary humanistic practices with the use of the probing method appeared to be the best practical solution.

Certainly, it is one of many possible way of characterizing the constellation of new research initiatives or the new humanities, as I call it here. Furthermore, and even more certainly – it is one of many models of humanistic research which is not only possible but also actually practiced in the contemporary humanities. I do not intend to decide which of these models is better. After all, the confrontation of different ideas in an open discussion has been always the strength of the humanities. Even today, we must defend this right and liberty.

Part One

1. The Humanities of Yesterday and Today: In a Nutshell and Not without Simplifications

1.1. To Begin: On Critics and Defenders

It has been a long time since the humanities enjoyed such popularity and occupied the center of attention for so long as in the last quarter-century. Admittedly, it has been thanks to the stigma of anachronism imposed by the global tendencies in scientific policies translating into local and peripheral reproduction of solutions introduced, sometimes wrongly, many years ago in the so-called global centers of knowledge "production," in the perspective of which further "investing" in the humanities appears as economically inefficient, scientifically worthless, and socially useless.

Naturally, the authors of the first argument are the proponents of the market model of technouniversity, for whom economically understood profitability of educational and research services is a fundamental criterion when assessing the value of academic institutions. The second charge comes from the representatives of mathematical and natural science standard of scientificity, from which – as they argue – the humanities' approach substantially diverges in terms of results, procedures, and criteria. Finally, in the public discourse, the third, often repeated if never empirically confirmed charge became a cliché according to which the humanities are the type of interest that does not stimulate individual careers nor creates new jobs.

Possibly, we may credit some responsibility for this black PR to the well-known fact that the humanities have outran football as the discipline of common interest and competence; not only does everyone feel knowledgeable about this field but also consider themselves its representatives. Anyone who practices the humanities may experience it whenever they meet an entrepreneur, natural scientist, politician, or a journalist, who would start a conversation with a hearty but condescending declaration: "I am a humanist too, but…" after which one may usually expect another attempt to "be put in line" or induce to subordinate to techno-economical, scientific, or political criteria considered as indisputably correct.

To be sure, humanists do not idly watch the progressing marginalization of their position and status. On the contrary, it is indeed fair to say that the wave of discussion, primal studies, and commentaries that was the response to such

criticism became the phenomenon comparably significant to the campaign for the humanities – or "sciences of mind" – in the times of the anti-positivist breakthrough hundred years earlier. To refrain from going back into too-distant times, it is enough to say that in the Anglophone world – in the current phase of the debate – a book by Bill Readings, on the one hand, and by Martha Nussbaum, on the other,[1] played a stimulating role. Similarly, essays by Jacques Derrida and Gadamer or Jaspers were equally important in France and Germany.[2]

In Poland, books by Maria Janion, Tadeusz Sławek, or the collective volume edited by Józef Kozielecki anticipate a similar kind of discussion. Moreover, works by Michał Paweł Markowski, and Piotr Nowak, or the collective volume edited by Piotr Sztompka[3] determine its contemporary nature along other books, symposia, conferences, and the work of the Polish Humanities Crisis Committee or the Citizens of Academia. Even though these texts are worth considering, I will not discuss them here. Instead, I should only mention that, by means of new rhetoric, these authors and institutions in various ways try to defend and force

1 Cf. Bill Readings, The University in Ruins (Cambridge: 1997); Martha Nussbaum, Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education (Cambridge: 1997).

2 Cf. Jacques Derrida, "University without Condition," in: Jacques Derrida and the Humanities (Cambridge University Press: 2002); Hans-Georg Gadamer, Teoria, etyka, edukacja. Eseje wybrane, selected by R. Godoń, ed. by P. Dybel (Wrocław: 2008); Karl Jaspers, The Idea of the University, trans. H. A. T. Reiche, H. F. Vanderschmidt (Boston: 1959).

3 Cf. Maria Janion, Humanistyka: poznanie i terapia (Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy: 1973); Tadeusz Sławek, Antygona w świecie korporacji. Rozważania o uniwersytecie i czasach obecnych (Katowice: 2002); Humanistyka na przełomie wieków, ed. by Józef Kozielecki (Warsaw: 1999); Michał Paweł Markowski, Polityka wrażliwości. Wprowadzenie do humanistyki (Cracow: 2013); Piotr Nowak, Hodowanie troglodytów (Warsaw: 2014); Idea uniwersytetu. Reaktywacja, ed. by Piotr Sztompka and Krzysztof Matuszek (Cracow: 2015). Cf. other studies: Wiedza, ideologia, władza. O społecznej funkcji uniwersytetu w społeczeństwie, ed. by Piotr Żuk (Warsaw: 2012); Fabryki dyplomów czy universitas?, ed. by Maria Czerepaniak-Walczakowa (Cracow: 2013); Krzysztof Musiał, Uniwersytet na miarę swego czasu. Transformacja społeczna w dobie postindustrialnej a zmiany w szkolnictwie wyższym krajów nordyckich (Gdańsk: 2013); Głosy w sprawie interdyscyplinarności. Socjologowie, filozofowie i inni o pojęciach, podejściach i swych doświadczeniach, ed. by Joanna Kurczewska and Magdalena Lejzerowicz, (Warsaw: 2014); Kultura i rozwój. Analizy, rekomendacje, studia przypadków, ed. by Jerzy Hausner, Izabela Jasińska, Mikołaj Lewicki and Igor Stokfiszewski (Warsaw: 2016).

the conviction about the indisputable value of the cultural and symbolic capital, which – also today – includes humanistic education and research in its original, autonomous (in a civilizational and cultural sense) and formative shape (in the existential, community, and civic understanding).

1.2. Disciplines in the Face of New Studies and Directions

Recognizing the significance of these discussions and arguments on the introduced reform programs in the humanities as part of the technouniversity market model, in the following part I wish to draw attention to the gravity of the ongoing changes within the humanities (including their border zones), the consequences of which may be even more momentous than the former. It concerns changes in practicing the humanities and defining their characteristics and functions they serve.

The changes are even better visible in a broader time perspective. Still in the sixties, paradigms – as defined by Kuhn – governed the humanities and other science fields. Admittedly, structuralism was then the dominant model of practicing science, but, on the one hand, it competed with hermeneutics and, on the other, with different types of sociology of art, literature, and culture. In the next two decades, simultaneously with the evolution of structuralism into post-structuralism, hermeneutics into radical hermeneutics, and sociology of art into cultural studies, there were attempts to fit the new tendencies within the new disciplines defined by the criteria of an institutionalized model of practicing science. In such a way, for example, cultural and media studies officially became disciplines of the humanities.

We may consider even more interesting the subsequent changes happening under the trendy slogans of "studies" and "turns" during at least the last quarter-century but introduced already half-century ago, first, through the linguistic turn and later the cultural turn, the role of which seems decisive today. Even though the stigma of "trendy" interests definitely has its negative aspects – associated primarily with imitative copying of methods and solutions, research initiatives gaining global popularity, humanistic theories created in massive "production" centers, and inflationary abundance of proclaimed new orientations – it should not obscure the substantive meaning of the new research interests nor the consequence of the progressing division in the existing model of practicing the humanities and profound changes in the field which occurr under the slogans of new studies and turns.

First, we encounter new orientations arising on the borders of the established disciplines or beyond them. Second, their nature is "inherently"

transdisciplinary: both in terms of their subject matter, which does not fit within any of the existing disciplines, and in terms of their research methods and procedures, which are not the sum of the methods employed by sciences but rather attempts to find a new analytical language and vocabulary suited to the hybrid subject under study. Third, although the crucial concepts of this vocabulary usually are "the travelling concepts" of the humanities,[4] they acquire special status within a given orientation. From descriptive concepts, they turn into analytical and operational ones, which not so much register the "objective" features of an object existing previously and independently from analysis, but profile the way of seeing the subject, its perception, features, functions, and meanings.[5]

Furthermore, a particularly interesting feature of these new studies and turns is that the hitherto existing, neighboring, or problematically related disciplines exhibit great resistance to any attempt to absorb or even affiliate these new orientations, which is especially visible for example in the Polish humanities. For quite a long time, memory studies have tried to earn recognition from professional historians, who only recently have found for them a special place on their disciplines' border. The same applies to visual culture studies, which art historians still consider amateur and unprofessional. To this day, gender studies must fight the allegations of practicing ideology. In turn, performance studies, out of necessity, define their position outside theater studies. Furthermore, some musicologists still perceive sound studies as cognitively unscientific occupation … To a much greater extent, it concerns the posthumanities, especially in their wide range absorbing thing, animal, and environmental studies, or in affective studies, for which finding a native discipline seems painstaking if possible at all.

As a result, possibly for the first time since their beginning, the humanities have become divided into two distinctive areas, for which it is difficult to find one common ground of comparability. On the one hand, there is a "classically modern" part defending professional methodology and divisions. On the other hand, there is a part which I would call the "new humanities" but the name itself has a more specific origin, especially in the American tradition. The latter humanities define their status, set their problematic field, and profile new methods and scientific tasks in a way unfit to the previous disciplinary divisions. It all happens in the direct relationship with other scientific disciplines, namely social,

4 Mieke Bal, Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide (Toronto: 2002), p. 29.

5 Cf. Doris Bachmann-Medick, Cultural turns. New Orientations in The Study of Culture, trans. Adam Blauhut (Berlin: 2016).

exact, natural, and applied sciences, and with art and life (meaning: the everyday experience) treated as means of creative cognitive activity.

Construed in this sense, the new humanities are different from the classically modern humanities in at least two additional crucial aspects. The first of them is the evident tendency (or even determination) to conduct and develop research outside the standard system of term opposition, except dualisms in which modern thought defined its characteristics, control over objects, and the development perspectives. Culture and nature, human and non-human, subject and object, individual and community, the mind and materialism, subjective agency and social structure, cognition and action, aesthetics and politics, meaning and sensuality, intellectual and affective, history and memory, picture and text, and so on. From universal dualistic categories to particular oppositions, all these pairs of terms cease to be treated as contradictions enforcing alternative choices of "either-this-or-that" kind.

Today, it is even more common to refer to such concepts as the aporetic aspects of the human cognition of reality, which are not just necessary but indispensable, and, simultaneously, they are mutually connected and condition each other and they are of "both-this-and-that" kind. Such an approach is supposed to take us beyond the aforementioned modern world's dualisms into its other, more credible operative descriptions. Seemingly, if one were to name the unifying principle or conduct strategy – in the works of philosophers, such as Latour, Rancière, Nancy, and science researchers, such as Mitchell, LaCapra, Rothberg, Reddy, Massumi, Gumbrecht, and many others – then it would be the search for some sort of non-dualistic vocabulary.

Apparently, this strategy – or maybe habitus (in Bourdieu's understanding) of the contemporary humanities – comes from the will to reject the hitherto procedure consisting in imposing (verifying) in advance given theoretical categories on the studied object or process and choosing the attitude of "practicing theory," namely introducing analytical definitions from empirical matter, whose complexity, heterogeneity, and hybridity require more flexible, relational, netted, and operational vocabulary. This tendency is visible in memory studies registering weaves of the objective and the subjective, the neutral and the evaluative, and the individual and the socio-cultural; in visual studies outlining the palimpsest space of the visible, its inclusions and exclusions, hierarchies, and symbolic rivalries; in performance studies constructing the continuum of causative actions, spectacles, and shows; in affective studies identifying the natural-cultural bedding and environment of affects, emotions, feelings, moods, and conditions or processes "leaking" through any conventional barriers of oppositional states or processes. Virtually, this tendency is visible in all other studies and turns.

An attempt to think outside or beyond the categories of oppositions – but not their rejection as after all, it is a foundation of logical reasoning – is also a consequence of shifting the interest from results, objects, and products – which are easier to categorize in oppositional terms – to processes, practices, and actions that we examine because of their inner logic, characteristics of their agency and creativity rather than effects they produce. In this respect, anthropologists refer to the model of cultural improvisation, sociologists and philosophers to practice, ethnologists to "action research," cultural anthropologists to the action-oriented or "verbal" comprehension of culture (in opposition to its nominal, modern understanding as a pre-existing set of rules and normative control).[6]

1.3. Humanistic Innovativeness

The static understanding of culture as, for instance, a symbolic system of normative control over human activity usually goes hand in hand with the dominance of the canonical model of practicing the humanities. Alfred North Whitehead once gave the simplest definition for it by saying that all the philosophy so far is just "a series of footnotes to Plato."[7] By extrapolating this observation, the humanities would be an endless reflection on the foundation of questions and problems unveiled at the dawn of European culture and later accumulated through the work of subsequent generations, and their refinement in exegetic commentaries, denying in critical analysis, and ordering and systemizing them in typologies and syntheses.

One could say that such a model relies on the assumption that the new is just the long-forgotten old, which makes any attempt at the new suspicious, consequently delaying its recognition, that is, until it is verified against the unlimited archives of cultural heritage if the given new idea is similar to something that already exists. Admittedly, it is a fine model for the times of the stable development of science and humanistic knowledge within the dominating paradigm. However, it cannot give an account of the phenomenon of the ongoing radical

6 Cf. among others: Zygmunt Bauman, Culture as Praxis (Thousand Oaks: 1999); T. Ingold, "To Human is a Verb," in: Finite but Unbounded: New Approaches in Philosophical Anthropology, ed. by Thomas Schwarz Wentzer, Martin Gustafsson and Kevin M. Cahill (Berlin: 2017), pp. 9–24; Agata Skórzyńska, "W poszukiwaniu miasta jako praxis" in: Kulturowe studia miejskie, ed. by Ewa Rewers (Warsaw: 2014); Pretextual Ethnographies. Challenging the Phenomenological Level of Anthropological Knowledge-Making, ed. by Tomasz Rakowski and Helena Patzer (London: 2016).

7 A. N. Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: 1978), p. 39.

and revolutionary change, small but significant effects of human creativity, nor the emergence of something new and innovative, which enriches the cultural inventory with new solutions and retroactively restructures and rehierarchizes cultural legacy, elements of which are now treated as for example anticipation, affinity, development phase, or the contradiction of the new.

Bearing in mind the complex etymology of the word "culture," which refers on the one hand to "colony" and, on the other, to "cultivation," one may say that the canonic model of the humanities is at the same time the "colonial" one, because it is subject to the principle of imitation/emulation of the prevailing – or imposed? – pattern. Whereas in the "cultivation" model, which competes with the previous creative and causative model, culture is some sort of nature's supplement as a caring and attentive nurture of the new, which without such help would not realize. On the other hand, the humanities are an endless work of invention (creation or exploration of the order) creativity, and innovation. Therefore, another opposition emerges, whose transgression or "disarmament" is a visible tendency of the contemporary new humanities.

Introducing the category of innovation to define the action-oriented and creative aspect of culture and the agency-driven nature of the humanistic activity may seem an excessive terminological abuse (given the noticeable opposition of humanists who argue to have better definitions), the inflation of the term's meaning in common use and science administrators' jargon (in which everything should be innovative), and the restrictive use of this concept in (applied) sciences, which deny this right to the humanities. Indeed, the humanities do not perform any better in rapidly developing research conducted under the umbrella term of creativity, in which in crucial syntheses, the systematized overview goes from exact sciences through applied to social sciences and art… with a notable absence of the humanities.[8]

I believe that we should not resign – or allow for our exclusion – from participating in this creative and innovative community. Except for the "political" reason, there are two other ones, which are much more significant. First, although today we may associate the innovative humanities mostly with the possibilities of the digital humanities, they still have their own specific features enriching

8 Cf. among others: Richard Florida, The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life (New York: 2002); Robert W. Weisberg, Creativity: Understanding Innovation in Problem Solving, Science, Invention and the Arts (Hoboken: 2006); R. Keith Sawyer, Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation (New York: 2012).

the term's scope and meaning. Second, because of the opportunity to enhance the agency-driven, "applied," and "implementative" results of the humanistic activity, which have been so far marginalized and underestimated and which today may be extractable by the once disrespected menial and "applied" perspective. Thus, such a perspective confirms its significance and raison d'être.

Given the lack of a commonly accepted definition of humanistic innovation, I will use my own working definition. I propose to understand humanistic innovation as: a) an original solution to the existing problem, in equally scientific and socio-cultural dimensions, thanks to b) the development of a repeatable scientific procedure, which is not an application of any existing method, in a way that leads to c) revealing of a new problematic field, d) initiating a new sub-discipline or research orientation, and e) stimulating the process of change in the fields of socio-cultural knowledge, tradition, conduct, mentality, and sensitivity. I propose to treat this definitions' five components as a modules, assuming that, in particular cases, only some of them may appear. However, two modules are inseparable and indispensable: substantive invention combined with socially useful innovation. In short, innovative works are the ones that creatively resolve not only professional/content-oriented issues but also the socio-cultural problems.

Innovativeness in this sense characterizes a separate quality of humanistic activity, one that does not repeat the meanings of the existing related terms (namely originality, invention, creativity) nor the traditional autonomous status, proclaimed at the turn of the nineteenth century by the humanities itself and the founders of its modern status. It is easy to notice that this definition of innovation does not overlap with its meaning in applied and exact sciences, even though it does take up on its own ground the principle of universalizing "implementation" of a solution to a problem. In the most general sense, innovativeness indicates the creative and agency potential of humanistic activity and simultaneously imparts it with social usefulness or, more broadly speaking, servitude. Such innovative humanistic works always played a historically significant role. However, I hope that it will not be inappropriate to observe that especially such innovativeness is a recognizable feature of works situated within the new humanities, particularly those founding or developing new studies and research turns. (Recently, Dariusz Kosiński, among others, has highlighted this tendency.)[9]

Moreover, anyone can inspect whether this was the role and features of Mitchell's books for visual culture studies, Fanon, Said, Spivak, and Bhabha's for post-colonial studies, Butler's for gender studies, Caruth's for trauma studies, Olsen's

9 Cf. Dariusz Kosiński, "Czy będziesz wiedział, co przeżyłeś?," Opcje 4/2014.

for thing studies, Schechner's for performance studies, Nora and Assman's for cultural memory studies, Hirsch's for postmemory studies, Garrard, Coupe, and Bella's for eco-criticism, green studies, or environmental studies… The list of studies and turns is far too long to quote it here in full; they also frequently form weaves of higher complexity and specificity. Moreover, it is not always possible to indicate the undoubted founders of new orientations, which are often a result of interest reconfiguration in numerous research communities.

The striking feature of most of these studies and turns is that they no longer locate their results exclusively in the professional research space, which was and still is – may the supporters of classical criteria, disciplinary "purity," and traditional standards of practicing the humanities excuse me (as by no means is this a criticism of this model but rather a defense and protection of field hybrids and bastards) – the dominant tendency in the classically modern model of the humanities. Besides their innovative, substantive qualities, namely the originality of proposed solutions, the novelty of methodological propositions, the discovery of new problematic fields, and the initiation of new orientations, these studies and turns also perform important social tasks and cultural roles. Indeed, they are decisive and often effective interventions in the field of social consciousness and unconsciousness, and the symbolic universe of culture and practiced attitude, norms, and behaviors.

Sometimes, the studies and turns in question have emancipatory potential – especially for minorities and subordinated groups – which, generally speaking, ultimately constitutes the leaven, breeding or "hatchery" of civil society that every authority must reckon. Occasionally, they interact subversively, favoring the dismantling of the existing social order (treated as unjust or illusory). Sometimes, they reveal and center shamefully concealed events or issues, suppressed and isolated in the collective memory (and non-memory), thus, subsequently forcing the society to work through, "overcome" (in Vattimo's sense[10]), and include them within the identity process. In other cases, they simply stimulate interest and redirect the society's attention toward other issues, phenomena, or processes that are significant – at the time being or in the near future – to individuals and societies in the existential and communal dimensions of human life in trans- or non-human surroundings.

Obviously, the distinction I write about has been settled in the culture itself and humanistic reflection from the very beginning. It usually took the form

10 See G. Vattimo, "'Verwindung": Nihilism and the Postmodern in Philosophy," in: Contemporary Italian Thought (1987), Vol. 16, No. 2, Issue 53, pp. 7–17.

of the two aspects of culture-forming activity (namely, the stabilizing and the modernizing, the reproductive and the creative) leading to the attempts of creating culture typologies according to the dominating pattern, namely the culture aimed at continuity or change, hot or cold, or neutral or committed, and to attempts to define culture in accordance with a given model. However, there is a significant shift of emphasis in the innovative works of the new humanities. What remains not only the effect but also the measure of these works is their "implementation" into socio-cultural practices of some sort of formative innovation and repair program, which activates, in individuals and groups, not only agency but also creative attitudes of responsibly and jointly acting subjects characterized by sharp critical consciousness.

It is worth noting that innovation understood in this sense does not contradict the tradition but becomes its medium; not as a neutral conveyor but an active, constructive carrier, constantly (although retroactively) producing the sense of continuity, order, value, and meaning. One could say that this is the only sense of continuity and persistence that our "risk society" – as defined by Ulrich Beck[11] – is capable of in today's unpredictable world. However, it takes only a moment to conclude that there is nothing entirely new in it. To grasp this unique weave of creating and discovering, transgression and retroactivity of culture development, Pierre Bourdieu repeatedly evokes Nicolai Hartmann's metaphor – which Bourdieu, apparently, considers particularly apt – that makes the key invention of the nineteenth century a universal metaphor of cultural innovation: it is "like a train bringing along its own rails."[12] As Bourdieu seems to reiterate after Hartmann, in such a way, what we create is a foundation on which we lean.

Indeed, it is possible because the previously unpredicted solution investigated retrospectively reveals itself as something waiting for actualization, something already "coded" in what is concealed and potentially present. Discussing the paradoxical phenomenon of efficient creativity, the eighteenth-century inventor of the founding principles of modern literary criticism, Samuel Johnson, states that truly original authors tell us about things of which we have never heard, but once we learn them while reading, we become convinced that we have known them all along; as if innovation was a reminiscence.[13]

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11 Ulrich Beck, Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity, trans. Mark Ritter (Thousand Oaks: 1992).

12 Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: 1977), p. 79.

13 Cf. M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (Oxford: 1971).

Today, the new humanities have become an ever more noticeable counter-proposition of practicing research in the humanities, principally due to the strategy of building bridges of cooperation where the previous approach created barriers of separatist autonomy and of emphasizing creativity rather than the requirement to "renew the meaning" of the cultural canon. Moreover, new humanities emphasize research that legitimizes its innovative value, especially in the particular sense of humanities that connects substantive insightfulness with social usefulness (often meaning the interference in mental superstitions, suppressions, phantasms of cultural memory, traditions, and conduct strategies). One may say that this kind of humanities based on alliances with technology, science, and society, are precisely a school – namely practicing the theory – of cultural innovation.

However, while provided examples accentuated search for a simultaneously individual and universal feature, in the research conducted within the new humanities, its innovative advantage is connected above all with addressing social local issues. It should be satisfying that, recently, the Polish humanities have been thriving with works that undoubtedly influence the social and cultural domains of life. However, due to the dominating style or the disposition system of our culture and social mentality, which consist in the strategy of moving forward with our backs and heading toward the future while looking back at the past with its traumatic and repressed experiences, conflicted memory-policies, new-humanistic research focuses on such issues and ways (formulas, dictionaries) that allow for naming, analyzing, and integrating them into the hitherto identity experience.

1.4. Humanistic Affects and Affections

We have also witnessed a more general change in various contemporary practices – analytical, theoretical (theory-in-action), or more broadly, humanistic – a change which deserves additional attention. Behind this change, there are studies which form the so-called affective turn. Like other orientations, this turn takes its name from the crucial concept serving here also as an operational key, which provides access to this significant dimension of social and cultural life and profiles its properties. It is not hard to see that the affective turn concerns an issue as old as culture and the humanities themselves, but it does it in a way that re-orientates and restructures the research field, generates new sub-disciplines (for instance, research of emotional communities and their role in historical and civilizational processes), reconfigures positions and meaning of other key terms in the humanistic vocabulary (especially of intellect, mind, experience, matter,

sensuality, or corporeality) in a way that makes it possible to pose new questions – also regarding traditional matters and objects – and receive new, different answers.

There are many signs that affective studies, which have been present in the West for decades, and in Poland only for a few years, will not be a temporary trend but will settle in the humanities for longer. These studies may penetrate deeper into the field and methodological traditions of the humanities, transforming our perception of their subject and the principles and procedures of practicing them. As philosophers of culture, sociologists, psychologists, writers, and artists argue, we live in affective societies and create emotional communities whereby social bonds and collective experiences rely on the common affective amalgamate – which is more negative than positive, cf. the contemporary profusion of hate "culture" – rather than reasonable choice and recognition.

Perhaps, this is why jointly manifested and articulated emotions and feelings are shared in both meanings of the term; they unify and differentiate, connect and divide at the same time. They stimulate groundbreaking, unpredictable political actions and retroactively modify the memory of the collective past. Moreover, they force to exchange the sterilized image of the classical subject, who reasonably manages him/herself and his/her relations with others and the world, for the vision of an individual with an embodied mind, which not so much manages but evokes and negotiates his/her needs, aims, and relationships with others, and co-creates their shared community with the non-human world. All this happens in the open horizon of sensual and affective experiences. The complement to such an image of contemporary times –characterized by increased sensitivity to affective relations – is the technology offering us (now or soon) applications for electronic communication devices, which serve to signalize affective attitudes of our interlocutors even before we know what they have to say…

Apparently, our cognition and practice of culture undergo similar changes, in which the emphasis shifts from nominal and adjectival understanding of culture – as, say, a product or feature testifying to being part of the "objectified legacy" of human creation, or a normative system of the symbolic control of human activity – to its verbal aspect, in which culture appears – as has been said some time ago – as *cultivation*, namely a creative activity aimed at, on the one hand, encouraging growth, emancipating hidden possibilities, manifesting respect for the very value of someone's or something's emergence and, on the other hand, planning and controlling the development, caring for and breeding the desired shape of forms in the state of development.

Activating the action-oriented aspect which is crucial in the etymology of the word "culture" – *cultio* and *colere*, namely cultivating, caring, educating,

worshiping – helps us realize that, first, culture is foremost a creative action which stimulates the existence of something that would not emerge without the external intervention and nurturing – somewhat maieutic – and supervisory care. Unfortunately, this process is not unambiguously positive, because it may be of emancipatory or colonizing character. It is no accident that culture, colony, (and thus colonization) share the etymological roots. In the cultivation process, there is a possibility of supporting the realization of one's potential or subordinating to the development according to predetermined – imposed by institutions or authority – patterns and cultural norms.

Second, the activation shows that the affective aspect is an inherent feature of thus understood cultural creativity, namely in the sense of an outward "inclination" toward something or someone aimed not at possessing them but to let them be. As evidenced by *Słownik Warszawski* [Warsaw Dictionary], besides *afekt* [affect], old Polish differentiated *afekcja* [affection] which is an "inclination toward something or someone" – in Arct's dictionary, in this sense, there is also the verb *afekcjonować* which means "to like or favor something" – and *afektacja* [affectation] which is an "exaggeration or fake affect". Therefore, we mean such an inclination toward something or someone – our "fundamental" attitude – which means being interested in what is outside a person and simultaneously being attracted to the other, which as a result facilitates the growth and being of the other. Such inclination allows the other to emerge and exist as the other and makes room for the ethics of "hospitality toward the Other" and responsibility – as Wodziński strongly emphasizes, developing Derrida's thought.[14] Unfortunately, in contemporary Polish, the latter meaning suppressed the first one, which is harmful to the matter itself and the way we speak about it.

Cultural studies on affects deal with both affects and affectations but mainly the first one, namely the ways of articulation and representation of affects, emotions, feelings, and moods (along with evoking, influencing, and organizing them) in art and culture. The typology of affects remains unstable, and the context or individual original definition projects usually specifies them. One may say that not much changed since the already classic attempts in this field – for example, Altiery's book published fourteen years ago[15] or Deleuze's concept of affective intensities.[16] The list of issues started by this new theoretical vocabulary

14 Cf. Cezary Wodziński, Odys. Esej o gościnności (Gdańsk: 2015).

15 Cf. Charles Altieri, The Particulars of Rapture. An Aesthetics of the Affects (Ithaca and London: 2003).

16 Cf. among others: Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, What is Philosophy?, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: 2000); Brian Massumi, Parables for the Virtual. Movement,

is much broader. Omitting detailed deliberations, we may say that there are three questions considered most important: 1) are affects (in their various forms, modality, and connections) represented in texts and other cultural objects or can they be articulated in other, non-representational ways, including via negativa, namely through cracks and disruptions of the discursive or artistic organization; 2) are affective "meanings" (similarly to "meanings" conveyed by images) separate modes of messaging or can they be studied within the enhanced way of understanding the semantic values of cultural texts; 3) can we treat the relationship between intellect and affect as opposition or should we seek its new conceptualization – and if yes, what should it consist in? It is easy to guess that each time, the conducted argumentation is supposed to point to every second proposed view.

Perhaps, it is not that relevant whether such a broad research front opened by affective studies deserves the name of another turn – the meaning of which greatly devaluated – or whether it is just another "vocabulary" in culture studies. However, noteworthy, it still serves the same methodological operation. If, as observed by Bachmann-Medick, we recognize the turns by the fact that conceptual vocabularies serve not only identification and description of the given (new) objects' but also become analytical categories, a methodological operative procedure changing the traditional characteristics of the researched objects and identifying other features, dimensions, and functions of the cognized reality, then affective studies undoubtedly fulfill this criterion. Affective studies serve not only the research on new features (or "intensity") of contemporary culture but also – and perhaps above all – the reinterpretation of the existing image of human beings, society, and culture of the past. Moreover, as it is usually the case in such attempts of revolutionary interpretation, affective studies handle rather unceremoniously the state of the art or nuanced, multi-perspective views of the research territory. At first glance, they often offer only one "affective"

Affect, Sensation (Durham and London: 2002); Brian Massumi, The Politics of Affect (Oxford: 2015); Sara Ahmed, The Cultural Politics of Emotions (New York: 2004); The Affective Turn: Theorising the Social, ed. by Patricia T. Clough and Jean Halley (Durham and London: 2007); Sianne Ngai, Ugly Feelings (Cambridge and London: 2007); Formy aktywności umysłu. Ujęcia kognitywistyczne, ed. by Andrzej Klawiter, Vol. 1: "Emocje, percepcje, świadomość" (Warsaw: 2008); Arlie Hochschild, The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling (Berkeley: 2012); Emocje w kulturze, ed. by Małgorzata Rajtar and Justyna Straczuk (Warsaw: 2012); The Affect Theory Reader, George J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Durham and London: 2012); Teksty Drugie, 6/2013 and 1/2014 [texts about affects].

point of view, which is a quite narrowly profiled project of interpreting a given field, formation, artistic direction, or genre to demonstrate cognitive benefits of such a venture more explicitly (even at the expense of incompleteness or biased image). From such a perspective, affective studies would be research manifestos proclaiming new cognitive stances in the public space of humanistic reflection on culture and new views on it rather than thorough investigations, subtle conjectures, or firm argumentative modifications of its established image.

However, on the other hand, these partial findings, research probes, and analytical insights gradually change the existing cultural landscape, its perception, the nature of the theoretical and analytic practice, and views about its nature. Therefore, they not only suggest the legitimacy of perceiving culture through its affective dimension but also invite the conclusion that we enter the "culture of affect," namely contemporary culture, which to a great extent owes its specific shape to "investments" in affective relations that determine the dominant forms of art and literature, distinctly stigmatizing preferred attitudes, behaviors, and institutional organization and management strategies of the "experience society" (in both meanings of the term) foretold by Gerhard Schulze many years ago.[17]

Furthermore, in a close encounter, the "affect culture" gains meanings, by which it can no longer be inscribed in the framework of the standard dualisms of modern thought. One may say that it is in a peculiar "non-place" of traditional humanistic vocabulary. Indeed, it goes beyond the oppositions of culture and nature, intellect and feeling, the individual and community, the linguistic and the extra-linguistic, semantic concept of representation and sensual experience, seizing rich and diverse spectrum of affective excitements and reactions which have the character of affects, emotions, feelings, and moods activating in various media, kinds, and genres of high ("elite") and popular culture.

Noël Carroll, among others, followed this path when analyzing the role of emotion in popular art in a way which illustrates the profound affiliation between emotions and cognitive processes, and which may lead to conclusions that reinterpret the nature of seemingly intellectual practices, such as the development of theoretical argumentation. Referring to the findings of contemporary cognitive theory of emotions, according to which reason is an inherent part of emotions, Carroll argues that "the emotions provide feedback to our processes

17 Cf. Gerhard Schulze, Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart (Frankfurt/Main and New York: 1993). See also: Schulze, The Experience Society (Thousand Oaks: 2008). Cf.: Scott Lash, Another Modernity. A Different Rationality (Oxford: 1999).

of attention … and hold our attention on the relevant features of the situation;" they "motivate behavior, since the emotions are typically made up of desires, as well as cognitive states. Emotional states cognitively organize our perceptions of situations in light of our desires and values, and thereby prepare the organism to act in its perceived interests."[18]

According to Carroll, the "criterial prefocus" plays a key role in studying the character and function of emotions in popular and artistic culture. One may treat it as a form of the well-known method – or disposition – of "framing." In Carroll's approach,

> Emotions are intimately related to attention. … They direct our attention to certain details, rather than others; they enable us to organize those details into significant wholes or gestalts, so that, for example, our attention selects out or battens on the concatenation of details in the situation … The emotions operate like a searchlight, foregrounding those details in a special phenomenological glow. … The emotions manage our attention when we are in their grip. And that management undergoes changes in the sense that it first alerts our attention to certain gestalts and holds our attention on them, and then encourages further elaboration of our attention, inclining us to search for further elements of the relevant gestalt in the stimulus and leading us to form expectations about the kinds of things we should be on the lookout for as the situation evolves.[19]

Besides, the process of "prefocussing" or "framing" attention is of general character: it consists in directing the attention toward the "stimulating" element – such as a phenomenon, event, or thought – and selectively extracting it from others, intensifying and evaluating it, rehierarchizing its features, and associating it with other elements, with which it forms a sort of constellated whole or figure ("gestalt"). Along the lines of Caroll's argument, the process applies not only to the techniques of organizing the emotional impact of popular or high art but also to the development mode of new cultural texts or even humanistic theoretical discourses in general, especially when it is in the phase of non-final crystallization, searching, or finding systemic regularities in the amalgamate of phenomena encountered in experience, in other words, when the theory is in the stage of "theory practicing" or "theory in action."

Krzysztof Abriszewski extrapolates Carroll's theses exactly in this direction by arguing that

> if my assumption about the connection of theory in the humanities and emotions is valid, then already at first sight it is visible that it encompasses quite a big area: postcolonial

18 Noël Carroll, Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays (Cambridge: 2003), pp. 223–224.
19 N. Carroll, Beyond Aesthetics…, pp. 225–226.

> studies, feminist approaches, any critical theories, queer studies, animal studies, revisionist approaches in history, namely everything that sometimes obtains the name of 'new humanities,' a significant portion of critical tradition, and probably many other currents. The structure of bringing back justice, which is typical for many popular culture pieces, will reiterate there.

Later, Abriszewski generalizes:

> one must attribute connection with emotionality to theories in the humanities – at least to some of them – as their regular constituent and not a pathological addition or unnecessary communication noise that must be quieted. … the way the theoretical argument is conducted attempts to control the viewer's attention. It is precisely prefocusing – namely directing the recipient's attention that is built into the message in advance. … Consciously or not, theoretical works embed a particular structure of emotional reactions into their argument.[20]

I consider Abriszewski's observations as greatly inspiring. In the humanistic scientific discourse, the affect also acts at first as Spinoza's conatus – namely, as attention impulse or attention stimulator, activating, profiling, and organizing cognitive processes in tight connection with the environment. Undoubtedly, especially in subversive and emancipative, engaged, post-humanistic, enactive and cognitive currents, the new-humanistic theoretical practices deliberately use this affective tool in their critical investigations: they stimulate and direct attention, create cognitive and perceptual frames evaluatively structuring the organization of components, activate the respondents by influencing their attitudes, mentality, behavior, and actions. The discourse of the new humanities is affective, both in the above-mentioned sense and because of a more foundational grounds; it is stimulated and energized by the inherent affection, which is an inclination to act for the benefit of the other involving affective impact, cognitive interest, and ethical sensitivity.

1.5. Two Humanities?

The new humanities start and develop their activity on the borderline, no-man's territory, which they organize by rules different than the hitherto ones. They do not care for the exclusivity of own research field. Rather, the new humanities emphasize the horizontal "network" of interconnections and "feedback loop" between different fields. Each field builds its relations with other fields and areas of science from scratch, by no means guarding its autonomy and independence.

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20 Krzysztof Abriszewski, "Co robi teoria w humanistyce?," Filo-Sofija, 29/2015.

They eagerly associate with art and its specific cognitive-critical activity. Finally, the new humanities do not even hesitate to invade the social "body" (its problems, illnesses, needs, and dysfunctions).

In the middle of the twentieth century, C. P. Snow diagnosed the emergence of "two cultures" – the humanistic and natural ones – with gradually deepening differences in perceiving, describing, and researching the world.[21] We cannot exclude the following: if the constellation of the studies and turns, which characterizes the new humanities, only solidifies and deepens its connections and relations with other fields, then we will face the existence of two humanities, which ever more differently define their position, objectives, and status. The debate between them – already treated as probably the most significant since the so-called "antipositivist breakthrough", which, a century ago, sanctioned the existence and raison d'être of both these cultures – may decide not only about the reconfiguration of the field of knowledge and activity of the humanities but also for long determine the position, status, and function of the humanities at the crossroads of scientific fields, technology, social life, nature, and culture.

21 C. P. Snow, Two Cultures (New York: 1959).

2. New Humanities in Poland: A Few Subjective Observations, Conjectures, and Refutations

2.1. Driven into A Depressive Position

Given the fact that the new-humanistic ideas and practices have been more widely at work in the Polish community for only a decade, we may rejoice at the scale and temperature of the discussions they provoke. Indeed, the commitment to these issues only proves that they are pressing and fundamental not only for humanistic researchers and the humanities but also for defining the status of the field itself. In this brief introductory essay, I would like to first focus on the nature – and the confusion – of the most important disputes, concerns, and doubts, outline the main range of the slowly stabilizing field of the new-humanistic research, and conclude with my remarks about the rather narrow current of such research which I also practice myself.

Certainly, the discussions are heated partly because they overlap with the debates on the humanities' crisis, debates which are at least forty years old both in the West and in Poland. It evidences that such matters can no longer be resolved in a narrow group of "isolated" specialists, because the disciplinary borders between the "interior" and the "exterior" deteriorated, became blurred or outdated, and now we must be aware that we are all in the same "interior," and, therefore, we are also exposed to the public view.

As far as the "crisis" is concerned, I want to state the following. First, the crisis has its real foundations in the technological-civilizational, social, cultural, and historical-political transformations of the contemporary world. Humanistic research and education models have always reacted to – and sometimes, stimulated – such changes; therefore, there is no reason for it to be otherwise now. Second, I believe that the crisis stems from the surprisingly efficient rhetoric of politicians and human resources administrators which irresistibly reminds me of the effects – temporary ones, as we know – of persuasive argumentation presented by the main protagonist in the last *LEGO Batman* movie who managed to drive Joker into depression once he convinced Joker he was worthless since Joker had never been and never would someone important, namely Batman's main nemesis.

By the same token, humanists were convinced to perceive themselves as worthless parasites – living off the taxpayers' hard-earned money – and whatever

they do is neither important for science nor useful for society. If we consider the fact that the basic function of the humanities still consists in the constant creation of critical self-knowledge and sensitivity and the creativity of individuals and communities endowed with agency, it seems that driving humanists into depression is politically convenient, because it allows others to instrumentally take over the humanistic tools and fields, while simultaneously charging humanists with the responsibility for mental and social effects of such action. Marcus Miessen, among others, gave an accurate description of these issues in *The Nightmare of Participation*.

2.2. Contradictory Fears, Threats, and Harassment

I am convinced that the humanities – including the Polish humanities – are doing quite well, and the crisis – meaning the critical unrest attributed to the contemporary humanities – is the evidence of rapid changes and development. The criticism aimed at the humanities is antinomic and it currently narrows down to three contentious issues, namely the humanities' social usefulness, innovative status, and disciplinary professionalism.

The first issue: social usefulness. Some say that the humanities should above all undertake and resolve contemporary social and civilizational issues instead of closing themselves in an ivory tower of anachronistic, hermetic problems. Seemingly, that is the point of the British minister's infamous remark about medievalists, who are considered the elite of the humanities: "I don't mind there being some medievalists around for ornamental purposes, but there is no reason for the state to pay for them."[1] On the other hand, there are those who argue that it would be an ideological degeneracy to depart from the humanities' mission of defending their autonomy and conducting professional, neutral, and objective research. The problem is to convince the first group that the seemingly unnecessary research has social, cognitive, and formative consequences and often stimulates new directions of reflection. The problem is also to convince the second group that no autonomous isolation is possible today; not to say that it ever existed.

The second issue: the scholarly position of the national humanities. Some argue that to achieve a legitimate status, we must abandon the scientific inferiority

1 Rebecca Smithers and Will Woodward, "Clarke dismisses medieval historians," The Guardian, 2003 (May 9) https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/may/09/highereducation.politics.

complex coming from the sole fact of learning from wiser foreigners, thus – as it gets interpreted – imitating Western patterns; and the other way around, we should look into ourselves, that is to say, reach for the core national thought and tradition, because only then it would be possible to achieve authentic originality. Others claim that the only broadly recognized measure of worth is the international position of the national humanities, therefore, we enter the path of its internationalization as soon as possible. The first group often invokes Alexander Kiossev's bold concept according to which the self-colonization, namely the acceptance of own inferiority, causes the peripheral position of Middle-Eastern Europe.[2] Regardless of the inspirational value of this thesis allowing one to identify and interestingly interpret syndrome of features and causes of this state of affairs, I see it as – perhaps accidental – surprising resentment echoes of racial theories on Slav's inferiority (here: genetical and etymologically slave-like one), which may lead to the activation of obscurantist xenophobia and the cult of national "originality" in the sense of bizarre self-denotation – namely like when we speak of somebody that they are an "original" person.

Interestingly enough, there is no national Piast poetics, nor Jagiellon cultural studies which we would conceal due to some embarrassment with the Polish culture's juniority. Generally speaking, it is quite undeniable that we – like others – owe what is most original in history more likely to the effects of international exchange and fusion of people and ideas, especially (in the Polish case) to the influence of the nineteenth-century German humanism. However, this does not mean that since ideas do not have any nationality, the historians of these ideas do not have it either. It is the other way round, which is visible in the textbooks or syntheses: Anglophone textbooks of, for example, literature theory, are dominated by the Anglophone traditions, French – by the French, German – by the German, Russian – by the Russian, Czech – by the Czech… There are no reasons to marginalize or ignore Polish achievements in Polish textbooks.

As we know, the second group calls for "internationalization" which amounts to forced publications in English. However, this group ignores the fact that even the most professional measures and resources granted for running English – truly English, not English-like – journals of, say, the Post-humanistic University

2 Alexander Kiossev, "Notes on Self-Colonializng Cultures," in: After the Wall. Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe, ed. by D. Elliott and B. Pejić (Stockholm: 1999). Cf.: Polish commentaries of, among others, J. Sowa Fantomowe ciało króla (Cracow: 2021); E. Klekot "Samofolkloryzacja. Współczesna sztuka ludowa z perspektywy postkolonialnej," Kultura Współczesna, 5/2016.

in Lębork or the publication series of Higher School of Landscape in Ojców, will not lead to improving the *h*–index of their publications worldwide.

We must convince the first group that refusing to confront the world may result in falling into unconscious repeatability or even idiotism in the etymological meaning of this word, namely lacking education, being self-centered, and having no interest in public matters. In terms of the latter group, we should convey to them that entering the elite circle of worldwide visibility, attention, or discussion is a tiresome and gradual process, burdened with uncertainty, risk, and, above all, the necessity to accept the unwritten laws imposed by the knowledge "factories" and acknowledge the theories of huge centers of globalized science. (The theory of center-periphery relationship adapted to the humanities and social sciences says a lot about this).[3]

The third issue, that is, discipline's professionalism is the most troublesome, because it involves true yet unresolved problems. For some, people claiming the novelty of the new humanities are mere usurpers. As Henryk Markiewicz liked to reiterate, the new is just the long-forgotten old; therefore, prior to using this adjective, it is necessary to thoroughly scan the available knowledge deposit to see if someone already said something similar… Usually, the scan result is or may turn out positive; at least because anything may be similar to something else to some extent. For others, programs of the new humanities are a real threat to discipline professionalism, because they deny the stability and definiteness of the research object, the distinctiveness and unity of the method, and the possibility of constructing theories in the modern understanding of the humanities modelled on science, namely as systemic structures of general claims that eventually conclude the process of elaborating the aggregate of detailed statements.

We must inform the first group that, first, there is nothing more historically relative than novelty, hence, any use of this concept is meaningful only in a particular context. Second, a feature – or maybe an indication – of the intellectual-cultural change is also the reconfiguration of humanistic legacy: as Borges noticed, just like a new original writer creates their precursors, so new tendencies in the humanities make it possible to notice ex-post the "protogenic," anticipatory, or precursory features in tendencies deemed historically closed or obsolete, and such a retroactive mechanism of rehierarchization and reinterpretation is a constant attribute of the historical transformations of the humanistic thought.

3 Cf.: Tomasz Zarycki, Peryferie Nowe ujęcia zależności centro-peryferyjnych (Warsaw: 2003).

However, we should admit to the other group that there is still much to be done. Tearing down the walls between the disciplines and between the humanities and their community led to the radical extension of the empirical field and replacement of the finite holistic theory as the product of systemic intellectual activity with some kind of draft program of a recently initiated research process, thus also with its local, particular "practicing" – extracting from practical cases – or with experimental research concepts.[4] Additionally, another result of this action is the constitution of the object within the research process along with the syncretism or hybridism of methods. Needless to say, all this does not guarantee the identity to the (post)discipline or field of the new-humanistic research. However, this does not mean that we should suspend the research waiting for the new, fresh thing (namely theory, object, and method) to cool down.

2.3. New Humanities as a Basin: Five Currents

The scope of the new-humanistic research is not fully specified or accepted, neither worldwide nor in Poland. Content-oriented and well-informed disputes, shifts of methods and central issues, negotiations of inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations are widespread in the field. The strongest (because also the easiest to organize institutionally) current is the digital humanities (due to the powerful new media and tools) with their electronic labs quickly emerging around the world, including Poland. The second current, also strong and early formed, is the engaged humanities – committed to social, political, economic, and cultural matters – with a critical-emancipatory attitude toward contemporary ideas of neutrality and autonomy. The third current seems to combine different humanistic programs assuming collaboration and exchange with natural and exact sciences, at least in terms of using their results and methods. Often, this current takes the name of the cognitive humanities because of the significance of cognitive sciences within humanistic research. To this shortlist of three tendencies, I want to add other two which have been developing steadily. That would be the posthumanities, if we understand it widely as an orientation examining the relations between human beings and the environment – natural and cultural one – which interact with each other. The last leading current would be the art humanities – if I may express myself that clumsily – combining the humanities using artistic tools and practices with art as a cultural practice based on research.

4 Cf. among others: Ryszard Nycz, Poetyka doświadczenia. Teoria – nowoczesność – literatura (Warsaw: 2012), p. 115.

All these currents – and I have listed only the ones I consider predominant – are connected with each other through numerous channels of mutual flows. Therefore, they rather create a basin than the already developed tributaries of the posthumanist river. However, the general tendency is noticeably joint and distinct. Each of these trends builds bridges in the place of walls that previously separated humanistic thought from: (a) the realm of technology and technological toolset; (b) social life, politics, history, economics, cultural practices; (c) exact sciences (the ditch dug during the anti-positivist breakthrough to protect the autonomy of the *Geisteswissenschaften*); d) the natural environment (it is another part of the mentioned ditch that put human above and beyond the nature); e) arts, literature, and other artistic practices priorly understood as objects of humanistic research and not its components. In practice, this means a possibility of broadening research to the whole realm of the humanities – in a broad meaning – and to the new liminal territories without specified criteria distinguishing them from other fields of science. I will return to this key problem in the conclusion. Now, let us discuss some of the dilemmas within the mentioned currents.

The *digital humanities* are the most recognizable and most representative branch of the new humanities. Indeed, the phrase itself is also a slogan of what is probably the biggest revolution in thinking about the tasks of the humanities,[5] with still unanticipated possibilities of development, thus with still growing cognitive hopes. Although the digital humanities certainly aim to supersede the established humanistic research characteristics, but they give the impression that with such tools they are capable of anything. There were many texts about their advantages, which is why I want to linger over their limitations, drawbacks, and dangers. There are, I believe, three kinds of them. First, there is a doubt considering the development of risky competition between qualitative and quantitative methods. In his autobiographic manifesto, Franco Moretti brings this question up when admitting that he became interested in the digital humanities and big data once he realized that after decades of research on European novels, he only managed to analyze several percent of works from the scope and period he was interested in; therefore his – and other literature historians' – generalizations and syntheses were completely unfounded.[6]

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5 Cf.: N. Fogle's review of Digital Humanities, ed. by A Burdick, J. Drucker, P. Lunenfeld, T. Presner and J. Schnapp (Cambridge: 2012) – "Manifesto for the New Humanities," Avant, IV.2/2013.

6 Cf.: Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," New Left Review, 1, Jan-Feb/2000; "More Conjectures," 20, Mar-Apr/2003.

This observation is valuable. It resembles a discovery of a great transgression. However, once we get over the astonishment for Moretti's wit and overcome the moment of embarrassment at our own blindness, we should question whether these are indeed competing research strategies and if we should replace one with the other. After all, the scientific pursuit of complete knowledge and neutral description of it has never been the primary aim of the humanities… I do not intend to elaborate on this matter further; suffice it to say that regardless of any doubts, these are programs that allow us to pose new questions to the corpora and to obtain new ground-breaking answers.

The second doubt concerns promoting the myth of complete, objective, and neutral knowledge obtained through digital – that is to say, quantitative – methods. After all, this myth obscures advanced processes of selection, schematization, and homogenization of the researched "material." Only the digitalized elements are subject to research – what is not in the database, ceases to exist, to be environmentally visible – and then a series of additional criteria serves to select the analyzed material out of the digitalized content. In the end, it is considered in a highly homogenized form that obtains approval disregarding the specificity of individual specimens and the species themselves.

For example, in practice, research on a novel may include its label features (such as the word "novel" in the subtitle) and the repertoire of features of the ideal, although not actual, type. Therefore, such research will not provide information that, for example, a book called *Literature. A Novel* is a fusion of novel, testimony-autobiography, essay, and self-referential-metaliterary conventions but also that the genre itself is a hybrid. As Latour observes, the spirit of scientific modernity concealed in the digital humanities promotes the myth of pure genres. Certainly, digital humanists are well-aware of this, which is why they mostly pose questions concerning things like metrical and stylistic features, diffusive migration of plot schemes, themes, or stories – questions to which the quality humanities did not pose or could not find answers.

The third issue involves the consequences of the revolutionary transformation within the research field and methods. By radically extrapolating practices of the digital humanities, one may say that it leads to the replacement of the literary and cultural text research with big data analysis; the theory with the applications of technological programs; interpretations with visualization, modeling, simulation, thus, with forms of description; the interest in the individual, the original, the worthwhile and the value-forming with the statistical analysis

of macro-tendencies.[7] Even though I highlight the controversial consequences of these transformations, I do not intend to defend the existing modus vivendi between qualitative and quantitative methods. Rather, I believe that we should strive to find solutions that could help the quantitative methods reach valuable qualitative results, and the qualitative methods legitimize their argumentations and conclusions through quantitative analytic possibilities.

Equally early, the *engaged humanities* became known for their massive "intervention" in the social and mental environment, orientation to change the status quo, and general subversive-emancipatory nature.[8] Noteworthy, the initial dominance of the left-oriented worldviews now become balanced by the input of the liberal, conservative, or even theological-religious positions. It is visible, among others, in the fifth issue of the representative coursebook *The New Humanities Reader* from 2015, which is a fine insight into the thematic and methodical topography of the engaged humanities. They do not present themselves as a new area of science, but as a humanistic, "human dimension" of knowledge in general. They do not propose a new systemic analysis of the human world but rather the constellatory variety of case studies that indicate relationships between different ways of thinking, methods, and knowledge fields. The engaged humanities are to teach creative reading which not only involves knowledge but also experience, creativity, and imagination of the reader. They encourage the development of "knowledge how," "technical" and instrumental skills, the methods used to manage risk situations (experimental ones), the criticism toward certainties and dogmas, and the active (agency-driven) participation in cultural, social, and political realities.[9]

Possibly, it is not a new phenomenon but rather the restoration of the nineteenth-century pattern of cultural competence; culture as a formative practice; rather an attribute of the individual (as Stanisław Pietraszko defines it) than a research object. However, it is once again an important and valid issue today. In this sphere, it is evident that the applicability of the new humanities – or the humanities in general – primarily means the ability to "refresh" and "refurbish" the mentality of individuals and community in terms of ideas, attitudes,

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7 Cf.: Urszula Pawlicka, "Humanistyka: pracownia, centrum czy laboratorium," Teksty Drugie, 1/2017.

8 "O nowej humanistyce z Ewą Domańską rozmawia Katarzyna Więckowska," Litteraria Copernicana, 2/2011.

9 Cf.: The New Humanities Reader, ed. by R. E. Miller, K. Spellmeyer (Stanford: 2015), pp. XXII–XXXIV.

behaviors, agency-based actions, and emotional sensitivity. Moreover, undoubtedly, the best books, shows, performances – also by Polish authors – do have such "applicable" influence on the audience.

Although the *cognitive humanities* are very much open to ideas, methods, and research results of natural sciences (especially life and mind studies), they are – if I may presume so – in a relatively least equal position among the sciences. This is because in practical attempts of cooperation, the cognitive humanities clash with a rigid objective and methodological stance of hard sciences despite democratic, conciliatory, and unifying ideology around this cooperation. Arguably, we are still in the stage of monopolistic capitalism; just as with Ford, when the client could choose a car of any color as long as it was black. Similarly, hard sciences' conviction about their monopoly on exact, certain, and complete knowledge determines the relationship between hard and soft sciences. However, the help of ethnologists, sociologists, and philosophers of science – namely Bruno Latour, Karin Knorr Cetina, and others – who indicate subjective, social, mental, cultural, and political conditions of apparently scientifically pure laboratory research, brings hope for a still-distant finish line and meanwhile, it provides inspiration and tools to create bridges for real transfer of points of view or collaboration.

After all, opening the new chapter of a real collaboration seems only possible after developing a common field of research where interests in different problems and points of view – scientific and cognitive – could meet and negotiate their case. Possibly, the category of the "embodied mind" (that is not a novelty in linguistic and anthropological studies) may play such a stimulating role; at least if we consider it in the face of the perhaps groundbreaking *The Cognitive Humanities: Embodied Mind in Literature and Culture*.[10]

Meanwhile, the *posthumanities* provoke today perhaps the greatest ideological, worldview, and philosophical controversies,[11] which seems to indicate the importance of the addressed issues and posthumanities' growing significance for the humanities in general. Studies on things, materiality, natural environment, flora, and fauna developed within the humanities from various angles reach their limitations, examine the fortitude of the anthropological barrier and the possibilities to extend the area of anthropological cognition. Personally, I follow two

10 The Cognitive Humanities: Embodied Mind in Literature and Culture, ed. by P. Garratt (Basingstoke: 2016).

11 Agata Bielik-Robson, "Nowa Humanistyka: w poszukiwaniu granic," Teksty Drugie, 1/2017.

inspirational clues. I owe one of them to Robert Esposito, who noticed that both for Heidegger in his *Letter on Humanism* and Sartre in his *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (both texts from 1946) "none of its basic presuppositions – namely, the refusal of biological concepts of human nature, the absolute opposition between man and other living species, the underestimation of the body as the primary dimension of existence – is actually put up for discussion."[12] Indeed, such a discussion is actually a part of the posthumanistic reflection. The other inspiration are the works by Latour, who notices that:

> we stand in the face of the risk of overlooking everything interesting about the entities which anthropology peculiarly called "cultural" or "social" encounters but, moreover, we risk we will not give justice to the notion even more peculiarly defined as "corporeality" which became "the other side" supposedly explored by the physical anthropology.... Regardless of etymology, there are no reasons for anthropology to stay anthropocentric. It only means that this discipline is particularly interested with common points of these agencies and certain historical figures associated with the notion of "humanity."[13]

Risking a grotesque oversimplification, I would say that the posthumanities study the human being in the "culture-nature" environment (a feedback loop between culture and nature, history and nature, the social and the biological). First of all, in such a context, we perceive the human being as a "hybrid" in the type of "animal-human-spectre" (to use once again Tadeusz Konwicki's phrase) – namely a psycho-corporeal entity possessed by the nightmare of the past, phantasms of the future, and phantasm of desires and affective excitation, rather than the conscious being once described by famous Monsieur Teste – a character created by Paul Valéry – as a pure intellect, master of his own fate, and the ruler of all creation located above and beyond biological, natural, and material environment. Second, both the human being and culture can no longer be situated outside of – and in opposition to – nature. Instead, they need to be perceived as complementary, that is to say, functioning in the environment of mutual participation and influence.

The last current on which I would like to focus is art-based research. It finds its counterpart in the arts' use of humanistic research, as is visible especially in critical art. The function of this awkward notion of the *art humanities* is to indicate

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12 Roberto Esposito, "Politics and Human Nature," in: Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics (New York: 2012), p. 92.

13 Bruno Latour, "Waking Up From 'Conjecture' As Well As From 'Dream:' A Presentation of AIME." TSANTSA – Journal of the Swiss Anthropological Association, May 20/2015, pp. 12–18, https://doi.org/10.36950/tsantsa.2015.20.7428.

the mutual relations between the mentioned fields of cognitive-cultural practice. Research using art has been present in studies for more than twenty-five years, whereas, in Poland, the art humanities have been developing more systematically and consciously for the last few years,[14] and are slowly emancipating from the environment of the engaged humanities. The art humanities combine approaches stemming from the involvement in social issues with the approaches of social sciences, namely aimed at action, and with different art forms (narrative, performative, or visual ones). In such a case, artistic experimentation becomes one way of constructing humanistic cognition, which goes beyond the language and conceptual rationality. In this way, art-based research aims at expanding the borders of cognition and knowledge about human capabilities, functions and forms of comprehension, and the ways of forming identity, attitudes of agency-based action, structures of feeling, or affective foundations of community bonds. Finally, classic, important, and inspiring works by Susanne Langer – which I happily emphasize – have received their due attention, followed by interpretation and recognition, in the so-called art humanities.

2.4. From Cultural Literary Theory to Reading Cultural Texts

In the context of thus outlined – very subjective – topography of the most crucial new-humanistic attitudes, I will briefly discuss the evolution of literary theory, part of which I navigated, namely, the Cultural Literary Theory (CLT),[15] which a few years ago constituted a collective proposal for a "transitory period" between

14 Cf. among others.: Elliott W. Eisner, The Enlightened Eye. Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice (New York: 1998); Gregory L. Ulmer, Heuretics. The Logic of Invention (Baltimore–London: 1994); Susan Finley, "Art-Based Inquiry: Performing Revolutionary Pedagogy" in: Sage Handbook of Qualitative Inquiry, ed. by N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln, Vol. 3, (Thousand Oaks: 2005); M. Kosińska, "Między autonomią a epifanią. Art based research, badania jakościowe i teoria sztuki," Sztuka i Dokumentacja, 14/2016; T. Rakowski, "Sztuka w przestrzeniach wiejskich i eksperymenty etnograficzne. Pożegnanie kultury zawstydzenia: jednoczasowość, zwrot ku sobie, proto-socjologia," Teksty Drugie, 4/2016. Cf.: the classic work, anticipating the affective turn in research on art, by S. K. Langer, Feeling and Form. A Theory of Art (New York: 1953).

15 Kulturowa teoria literatury: główne pojęcia i problemy, ed. by M. P. Markowski, R. Nycz (Cracow: 2006); Kulturowa teoria literatury 2: poetyki, problematyki, interpretacje, ed. by T. Walas, R. Nycz, (Cracow: 2012).

the maturity stage of modern literary theory and its then emerging contemporary mutations, incarnations, and metamorphoses.

The encyclopedic definition created by Janusz Sławiński is the best occasion to ponder on this mature stage of structural thinking about literary theory. According to the definition, it is "a branch of literature studies consisting in inquiries about the structural and evolutionary principles of literature as a separate field of humanistic activity, general characteristics of literary creations and their typological differences, and about the mechanisms of the creative process and reception of literary works to some extent."[16] Although this definition contains Sławinski's favorite "flexible" phrases, (for example "inquiries"), it is a display of methodical and systemic thought; systems (or "systemoids") are works, genres, conventions, literature (as "a system of norms living in history"), literary theory, and (as a paramount whole) literary studies. All normative orders have their designated places in literary studies: from basic "typical linguistic-structural items" to "literary tradition" and research orientations and schools. In that sense, literary theory constitutes a certain "generalization and schematization" of fragmentary research tasks. Furthermore, it creates categories which arrange theses specific research and include them into "coherent complex of literary knowledge." (Let us note the loosening of rhetorical positivist corset of scientific modeling: from *systemic studies* of literature to *complex of literary knowledge*, which is typical for Sławiński.)

Along these lines of thought, literary theory has not lost its value but rather transformed it into that of a historical type. Literary theory still may be – and was – studied; for instance, main theoretical and methodological approaches of cultural studies have drawn plenty of assumptions from this spiritually structuralist research theory. The fundamental issue lies perhaps in the fact that the questions (concerning internal order of literature) the literary theory could have answered ceased to be important or interesting. Let us consider how often do we read today's works on a narrative structure, the relationship between story and plot, narrator and protagonist, time and space, or description and storytelling. Thus, when I myself tried to create an encyclopedic definition of "literary theory" in 2000, I wanted to respect the historical and historic status of this category and the concept of practicing theory in the rational and systemic spirit of modernity by writing in the first sentence of the definition that it is a "branch of

16 Janusz Sławiński, "Teoria literatury," in: Słownik terminów literackich, ed. by J. Sławiński (Wrocław: 1998).

literary knowledge encompassing systematized structure of general statements about the essence, kinds, structural and evolutionary regularities of literature."[17]

Such literary theory could not provide answers to questions about why people create and read literature and what is in it – despite the sterile, general, and schematic nature of its structural categories – that effectively satisfies the existential, ideological, and social objectives and needs. Certainly, it is arguable that these questions were actually familiar but deemed unprofessional and did not fulfill the "scientific" standard of modern literary theory. However, the point is that the views on this matter and, as a result, the formula and nature of cognitive tasks have significantly changed.

The idea of cultural literary theory seemed to be a promising research project on these matters, mainly because it was to cover both cultural – broadly speaking – dimensions of literary texts and cultural – not only normatively literary – ways to read and analyze literature. Although, since the beginning, the idea did not assume – because there was no will and possibility – to retain the "scientific" status of literary theory as the creation of rational, systemic and systematizing thought. In this case, the "theories" were various "studies" and "turns," which are something closer to research concepts (developing from keywords, such as gender, postcolonialism, memory, performance, or affect), theories *in statu nascendi*, theories in process, "theory practicing," which were the projects of initiated research programs rather than finished creations of a systemic approach to a subject area. After all, in the West, it was a fading time for "literary theories," then for "adjective-less" and "epithet-less" theories – as in the famous Jonathan Culler's approach – and later on, for any "cultural-literary studies" in which the "theory" lost its superior operational category due, as I believe, to the shift of scope and function of this research formula.

I think that today, despite its eccentric (or odd) name – combining literary theory, cultural theory, or cultural studies – the cultural literary theory had raison d'être, was necessary, and, besides, it was exactly the equivalent of the literary-cultural studies. They have been institutionalized, for example, in the U.S. by Robert Dale Parker's repeatedly reissued textbooks,[18] and in Europe by Naomi Segal and Daniela Koleva's recently published study *From Literature to*

17 Ryszard Nycz, "Teoria literatury," in: Literatura polska XX wieku. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny (Warsaw: 2000).

18 Cf.: R. D. Parker, How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies, 3rd edition (New York: 2015); R. D. Parker, Critical Theory: A Reader for Literary and Cultural Studies (New York: 2012).

Cultural Literacy.[19] Notably, the last volume seems to be worthy of a short commentary because of the "cultural literacy" category and a program – or rather an expressed will – included in it which consists of the objective and methodological profiling of the contemporarily conducted research. Cultural literacy is becoming a superior umbrella term in the humanities with functions and meanings far from philologically understood literacy – as opposed to "orality" – which was already visible in the American tradition, for instance, in the renowned literature researcher E. D. Hirsh's bestseller *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*.[20] Thus, the issue is about a kind of cultural competence, manner, and sophistication, namely "knowledge how" instead of "knowledge that" according to old Gilbert Ryle's differentiation, which allows to effectively function in society and contemporary culture, including the technological culture.

On the other hand, the second idea seems to undertake of a key task which is to define – or professionalize, specify – the "identity" of the modern humanistic research spanning on an almost unlimited variety of subjects and problems in a seemingly hybridized manner deprived of methodological unity or distinctiveness. Meanwhile, this proposal concerns distinguishing four key categories aimed to direct and, perhaps, model literary-cultural studies, namely textuality, fictionality, rhetoric, and historicalness.

I consider it to be a good direction that is worthy of exploring, specifying, and critically testing for its operational capabilities, even though, we are still at the beginning of the road. I myself attempt to go in a slightly different way. In the last years, I begin every lecture on CLT by explaining that the title acronym retains its validity (as it is the same in Polish for "Reading Cultural Texts"), whereas its scope and theoretical-methodological substance slowly change, that is, from cultural literary theory to reading cultural texts. I will shortly explain the meaning of the last three words.

First, I believe that we have every right to keep on studying texts in a narrow and broad sense, and without limiting ourselves solely to texts denoted as literary. This is because of the tremendous profusion and enduring role of different but also completely new kinds of text production – (oral and literate) – in contemporary cyber-culture, public and everyday life. Other other practices (namely visual, sound, causative, and performative ones) also acquire the status of cultural texts (here, in opposition to natural objects which are the items of the

19 From Literature to Cultural Literacy, ed. by N. Segal and D. Koleva (Basingstoke: 2014).

20 E. D. Hirsch Jr, Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know (New York: 1988).

exact and natural sciences research, because they are meaningful and semiotically organized objects and practices).[21]

Therefore, second, we should comprehend their meaning in a broader context than just as denoting content of linguistic expressions; both in regard to linguistic texts, and cultural ones (extra-linguistic). By referring to remarks made elsewhere,[22] I shall state the following: if we retain the understanding of interpretation as an intellectual procedure of attributing meanings to ambiguous fragments of a text as a result of identifying the context in which these fragments acquire meaning constructing the semantic order of the whole, then there at least two essential areas of meaning left out beyond that interpretation. The first consists of pre-linguistic and pre-conceptual "feelings" about the meaning of emergent, involuntary, self-inducing nature, which result from our own participation in the community of experience which contains these texts, practices, and conducts. The second consists of "post-conceptual" (bodily, affective-sensory) effects of the impact and transmission of these pre-conceptual, extra-conceptual, and conceptual meanings.

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21 In twentieth-century thought, there was a long tradition of this differentiation into physical objects that "only exist" and are analyzed by natural scientists, and cultural objects which "not only exist but also have meaning." On the other occasion, I deduced this differentiation from S. Czarnkowski's ideas, however, Roman Ingarden, among others, was also a spokesman for such a differentiation. While pondering on the difference between the feature and value of the object, Ingarden notices that the first one is omnipresent whereas the second is an addition which "provides the object with a dignitas, a new dimension of its existence, impossible without this addition. It elevates it above worthless objects which only exist but do not mean anything." Roman Ingarden, Przeżycie, dzieło, wartość (Cracow: 1966, p. 100). Cf.: similar note by E. Cassirer on cultural object: "This object, as any other, occupies a place in time and space. It is here and know, emerges and fades. As long as we describe the here and know, the emergence and fading, there is no need to transcend the physical circumstances. However, on the other hand, precisely the physical comes in a new function. It not only 'is' and 'becomes' but also through being and becoming it 'indicates' something else. The indication of a 'sense' unseparated from the physical but which is embodied in it and exists through it is a joint moment for all the content we denote as 'culture.'" E. Cassirer, Logic of the cultural sciences (Yale University Press, 2000).

22 Cf. notes in an outline "Literatura: litery lektura. O tekście, interpretacji, doświadczeniu rozumienia i doświadczeniu czytania. Z dodaniem studium przypadku 'Wagonu' Adama Ważyka" in: Ryszard Nycz, Poetyka doświadczenia. Teoria – nowoczesność – literatura (Warsaw: 2012), p. 301.

Commonly, we call them all meanings; when we talk about something, for example, conduct, attitude, or event, we are aware of it, of its meaning, message, or intention… One may point out that such conceptual meaning is surrounded, penetrated, and stimulated by the extra-conceptual meaning (which it may also stimulate). However, it is even more apt to say that, in fact, we encounter the "embodied meaning,"[23] which is hybrid in its character and extends from the meaning of a body through the notion of a social "body" comprehended from a community-based point of view to the meaning incorporated in the "culture-nature" environment and enticed by "affordances" – a term coined by James Gibson – of the ecosystem; understood here as a kind of meaning "offers," signalized by the environment in a relationship with us.

Hopefully, two simple examples will explain this brief characteristics. First. When Charles Baudelaire starts his famous "Spleen" with the equally famous phrase: "When the low heavy sky weighs like a lid...,"[24] he does at least three things at once. First, he finds a graphic epithet for the mental experience of depression, melancholy, and gloom which up to this point were not expressed with such evocative imaginary formula (this is a new epithet, but it refers to older traditions, such as the Middle-Age imagination of heaven as a roof rather than an open unrestrained vastness in the vein of, for instance, Szymborska's poetry). Second, Baudelaire specifies the meaning of this image; a feeling of the overwhelmed man crushed by the weight of a huge lead lid. Third, the impact of this image taken over by the readers for their own purposes undoubtedly led to the popularization of the whole poem, and it inspired and influenced many other authors at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Poland, this refers especially to the poets creating the decadent "landscapes of soul."

Let us proceed to the second example. When Joanna Rajkowska created the "Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue" project, which consists of a huge plastic palm tree on Charles de Gaulle's roundabout on the Jerusalem Avenue in Warsaw, she also did at least three things. First, she activated the feeling of affinity, a kind of affective-experience bond between societies and nations, namely Poles and Jews, who once were neighbors but are now separated by space, time, the barrier of death, trauma of memory, mental conflicts among others. Rajkowska managed to achieve that with aesthetically gentle – thus in this sense politically neutral – means of artistic gesture through placing the palm tree which causes the artificial

23 Cf. Mark Johnson, The Meaning of the Body. Aesthetics of Human Understanding (Chicago: 2008).

24 Charles Baudelaire, The Flowers of Evil, trans. William Aggeler (Fresno, CA: 1954).

imitation of a natural Israeli landscape element to evoke complex cultural contexts and the historical motivation of the seemingly arbitrary name of the street. (Later, Rafał Betlejewski made a similar gesture by stronger means in a song "Tęsknię za Tobą, Żydzie" [I Miss You, Jew]). Second, on the level of discursive message, the conceptual formula of postcard "greetings" creates a "friendly" type of long-distance communication, and, perhaps, it performatively stabilizes this relationship as a "friendly long-distance one." Third, the impact of this gesture – which, after all, was a quite successful intervention into social mentality and sensitivity – initiated a vivid history of the palm tree's presence in the life of the city and its dwellers throughout which it gained the features of cultural palimpsest and the knot of conflicting memory policies.

I presented these oversimplified characteristics only to highlight the necessity of extending the scope and type of semantic activity of "cultural texts" that must be covered in the process of their reading. I believe that today, the concept of reading may serve as an analytical "meta-category" because of its features otherwise apparent in informal usage: it accentuates the process instead of the result, partiality or aspects instead of finality or wholeness, the subject's activity as a condition to activating the meaning, namely participation instead of reflection or observation, and the interactive nature of meaning instead of meaning as a defined sense hidden somewhere in a text. Furthermore, above all, reading emphasizes that both subject and text are in the same space and that they are both agency-related factors, participating in the same intrinsic cultural reality, meaning they are not located on opposite sides of the cognitive barricade.

Reading as a process of mediatory organization of the relationship between these subject-objects becomes the carrier of meaning and the medium of participatory cultural cognition. Finally, we may (and should) treat reading as an essence or embodiment (tested in the empirical activity) of literature studies competences endowed with tools to solve the most convoluted conundrums of literary texts and "knowledge of how" – how to cope in the world of meanings of "culture-nature" – in which traditions of culture semiotics are certainly still present? Of course, the signalized status of cultural text, nature of embodied meaning, and the idea of reading are only the first indicators defining the starting point of a desired methodological project.

2.5. From Participatory Culture to Contribution Culture

These hastily-outlined five main development variants of the new humanities are just a sample of a draft topography of positions around which numerous studies and turns, expanding prolifically in the last quarter-century, have started

to gradually concentrate. At least that is what the analysis says. Despite all the dissimilarity and different directions of purposes and strategies, they still have striking common features – along with the separately characterized trend of the literary-cultural research or the CLT – which I want to discuss concluding this chapter. Even though there are plenty of them, I will discuss only the most important three.

First and foremost, the world of the new humanities is a world of immanency, a participatory reality, cognition from within, and participatory cognition. It is visible in all the listed variants. The digital humanities operate in the "participatory culture." The engaged humanities are a form of intervention, sometimes to the point of performing an invasive breach of petrified positions, superstitions, or behaviors of a community. The cognitive humanities, in turn, are defined by the subject's position as a "subject in the environment." The posthumanities' are about "culture-nature" ecosystem as a realm of subjective activity. Finally, the art humanities are characterized by the inclusion of art as a tool and medium for creative cognition. Kirsten Hastrup formulates this nature of the new-humanistic cognition in the most radical way by stating that "we cannot reach reality in any way unless we become part of it."[25]

No doubt we can hear in this sentence the echo of the Nietzschean proclamation of performative (as we could say today) cognition: "we do not learn the truth; we are the truth," and his insistence on the replacement of objectivity with perspectivism. Generally speaking, we are dealing with a clear rebellion against the modern, neo-positivist ideal of cognition, which is carried out form a metalinguistic perspective of an external overview of objects perceived in an unbiased, neutral, and objective way (objects hitherto existent and independent from the cognition act). The development of humanistic research conditioned with this ontological-epistemological style is an undoubtedly new and cognitively alluring task.

Nevertheless, the participatory culture, which we have apparently entered, has its consequences. It sensitizes to various participation forms, including involuntary participation, to the ambiguity of witness or passive spectator's position – stimulating, as I presume, among others, a modern reflection of historical examples of the bystander position during the Holocaust – and to the difficulty, if not impossibility, of casting oneself as an uninvolved spectator. Nonetheless, the participatory culture carries some inconveniences or even perils which are

25 Kirsten Hastrup, "Social Anthropology: Towards a Pragmatic Enlightenment?," Social Anthropology 13.2/2005.

the feeling of "imprisonment in immanence" and inaccessibility to the metalinguistic cognitive position, which makes it possible not only to accept the holistic perspective and unbiased distance but also exercise the ability to transcend all situational conditions. This may be the source of appeal for alternative concepts, which refer directly to, for instance, the Kantian tradition.[26]

The second striking feature is the primacy of "knowledge how," tools, and competence-based skills in virtually every current of new-humanistic research. Indeed, this prevalence is most evident in the digital humanities which ostensibly emphasize their "instrumental" nature as a set of new powerful tools potentially capable of everything while seeking worthy challenges at the moment. It is equally visible in studies on cultural literacy which are explicitly defined in terms of competency, a new kind of "civility" that should be an attribute of every civilized individual today. Contemporary supremacy of reading and "theory" as a concept initiating a research process and project is yet another result of departure from the standards of modern theory with its emphasis on finalized and systemized general knowledge concluding particular results, thus, a propositional, conceptual "knowledge that."

In my view, it is not about exchanging one with the other but rather about an attempt to derive goals (including new research objectives) from means – new tools, approaches, and concepts – instead of adjusting or subjugating means and tools to arbitrarily established doctrinal goals. Indeed, it is the experimental theoretical concepts and research hypotheses that create the possibility of achieving truly new subjective knowledge, not the extrapolations of a currently superior theory into new areas. This feature is most strikingly manifested in the engaged, cognitive, art, and posthumanities precisely in such a form.

Finally, the last set of kinships: the interest in processes (rather than their results or essential features of invariable objects) – the creative process, the receptive process, the process of change, practices (rather than old-fashioned theories) – and the action-oriented side of cultural and social reality as necessarily equipotent to the continuity and development of humanity and culture. Hence the focus on diffusion processes and circulation of cultural elements in the laboratories of the digital humanities; and the focus on "intervention" programs

26 Cf.: Nigel Rapport, "Apprehending Anyone: the non-indexical, post-cultural, and cosmopolitan human actor," in: The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 16.1/2010, pp. 84–101; "Nieustająca zdolność do działania. Nigela Rapporta antropologia wolności" in: Kolokwia antropologiczne. Problemy współczesnej antropologii społecznej, ed. by M. Buchowski and A. Bentkowski (Poznań: 2014).

and inquiries into the social activities and changes in the engaged humanities; and the focus on interactions between human beings and nature, including the "culture-nature" environment, in the cognitive humanities and posthumanities; and the focus on using art as a performative cultural practice in the art humanities. It is also the reason behind the "natural" extension of such research into the problematics of creation, creativity, or innovativeness (which ex-post prove the changes caused by these processes in hitherto states of affairs). From such a perspective, even humanity and culture, which used to be perceived as the synonym for unity and identity, manifest their processual, alternating, hybrid, creative, and "verb-like" image.

2.6. Culture as Verb: An Untimely Innovation but a Timely Idea

Let me conclude the chapter with an anecdote from my own field. As I am quite interested in this problem, I prepared a lecture delivered in May 2014 during Copernicus Festival, and I was truly satisfied with the title I came up with, namely *Culture as Verb*. However, the satisfaction did not last long as in 2015 (the repeatedly referred to in this book) *Kolokwia Antropologiczne* was published with the date of 2014 which contained Tim Ingold's lecture "To Human is a Verb" translated into Polish by Ewa Klekot as *Człowieczyć to czasownik* (an abridged translation of this text was published earlier, at the end of 2014, in *Autoportret*, with a title even more similar to mine, namely "Człowiek to czasownik" (Human is a Verb).[27] To be sure, I am not evoking this example to brag about my a pioneering nature of my study – which, by the way, would not exactly be true as Ingold presented his lecture a bit earlier than I did and as Ingold's dedicated reader I know that earlier, he had addressed, among others, the category of "cultural improvisation" which concerned this problem to some extent.

The reason why I address this experience is that it serves as a clear evidence of an ongoing practical and theoretical-methodological change in the humanities of the globalized world. Indeed, it shows a moment when, in both the center and

27 Cf.: Nycz, Kultura jako czasownik, lecture, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpiAuOxWfzg; T. Ingold, " 'Człowieczyć' to czasownik," in: Kolokwia antropologiczne (Poznań: 2014); T. Ingold, "Człowiek to czasownik," Autoportret 4/2014. By the way, Ingold's formula may be intertextually connected with earlier and akin formulas, such as: "God is a Verb" – cf.: D. A. Cooper, God is a verb. Kabbalah and the practice of mystical Judaism (New York: 1998); and "God is not a noun, God is a verb" form Buckminster Fuller's poem No More Secondhand God.

the peripheries, in the minds and practices of both the global humanities' elite and local craftsmen of the humanistic toolset, similar ideas and research projects are developed and there is a similar and unexpected change of places (positions and viewpoints). This is probably the source of subjective and tentatively optimistic nature of this essay about the new-humanistic quest – an essay which is also accompanied by the senile and thus uncanny impression that I am repeating myself after quarter of a century. We do not know whether it will get better if it will get different but apparently it has to be different if it is to be better.

3. Culture as Verb: Probing the Creativity of Cultural Action

3.1. Culture in Action

1.

Today, the concept of "culture in action" has become a common label for various practices, research strategies, and teaching directions within the so-called participatory culture. Among others, these directions consist in encouraging and researching "grass-root culture" in local communities, initiating the re-enactments of significant historical events, arranging the interactive artistic-cultural activities, setting the active-participatory role of the audience in contemporary museum and exhibition practices, probing the job market for humanists, and profiling the academic teaching responsive to the needs of the market. Undoubtedly, it is a substantial artistic-cultural-humanistic movement consciously engaged in the pursuit of the action-oriented model of culture that is supposed to lead to practical consequences and transitions in the realm of worldviews, mentality, sensitivity, identity, and experience of both individuals and communities actively participating in the organized projects.

In my view, these are the building blocks of an empirical proof for the thesis denying unfavorable prognoses, frustration of cultured people, and criticism from other fields of activity: even today, culture is still meaningful, necessary, and provides results. I consider these participatory cultural practices occurring mostly in the popular or universal culture and the public realm in the context of a gateway and proof of growing social importance – or maybe a trend – of such variant and understanding of culture which I denote as "verb-like," and whose intellectual origin and most important traditions I seek to concisely describe.

We all know that the concept of culture is chronically polysemic, complex, multi-faceted, and has generated so many definitions, interpretations, and typologies that it is painstaking to even attempt to create one's (quasi-)own characteristics of it. Although I do not intend to take such risk, I will nonetheless note that a distinction is necessary if we wish to emphasize and describe any aspect of culture. And because, in several passages of this book, I happen to apply to culture the distinction – somewhat amateur (although used by some specialists), but also effective in the sense of having an operational result – based on the parts of speech division, so I would like to do it once again but in a more structured manner.

If we take a look at the semantic scopes of the concept of culture and its historically dominant understandings (in the Western culture), then we may notice that its basic differentiation into adjectival, nominal, and verbal meanings makes it possible not only to identify – in a simplified manner – its main aspects but also to see the historical fluidity of relations between them. Both of these observations concern the domination of different model of understanding culture in space and time.

Having accepted the perspective of cultural parts of speech, one might say that culture as an adjective is a feature attributed mostly to subject (subjects) and derivatively to objects, institutions, and discursive frameworks. Once we accept that "being cultural/cultured" comprises the fulfillment of the teleological ideal of culture, then we assume that culture is, above all, a set of skills, competencies, and ways to "manage," namely the set of inclinations compliant with principles accepted and valued by the community – or according to some: by all humanity – for achieving the status of a cultured individual in a world of values and meanings. Thus understood, culture has a formative nature; it is about shaping a human, targeted development of individuals subjugated to hitherto devised and accepted patterns that need to be assimilated (taught, practiced, trained) until they become "natural" characteristics of the cultured person.

Pierre Bourdieu writes that once individuals reach this state their traits become an unconscious skill and body's memory: "the most serious social injunctions are addressed not to the intellect but to the body, treated as a 'memory pad.'"[1] Assimilated and thereby embodied skills and competencies become a special capital, that is, the cultural capital that may be accumulated and converted into social or economic capital. These skills include the diverse and partially changing spectrum of normative practices inscribed in societal scenarios of conduct (for example, social graces: good manners), in historically changing conventions of customs (for example, to drink coffee from a cup), and standards of common knowledge (for example, to recognize a quote from Shakespeare or explain Einstein's theory (Snow's examples)), up to trans-historical values of individual and societal life (for example, ethical and religious: thou shall not murder).

Without exaggerating, it is fair to say that since the Greek *paideia* and Roman culture, since Cicero (with his parallel of "cultivating" soul and land) and Seneca the Younger (with his self-fashioning as a student under the supportive care of his master in *Letters from a Stoic*), through universal Enlightenment ideas

1 Pierre Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, trans. R. Nice (Stanford: 2000), p. 141.

of Kant's "civilized" mankind and Herder and Humboldt's romanticist ideas of mankind borne out of national culture, to modern Martha Nussbaum's calls to maintain this formative idea and its value for present and future human, it has been precisely the adjectival understanding of culture that has maintained its relevance and durability.

If culture in the adjectival sense is basically what is "ahead of as," because it specifies the direction, purpose, and characteristics gained as a result of the human development, then its nominal concept is always of what is "behind us" as a kind of a being, existing and antecedent reality independent of historical individuals and communities; a reality that individuals and communities inherit, subjugate to, learn, appreciate, and understand. It is appropriate to add that if the adjectival "being cultural/cultured" consists in a specific embodiment, individualization, or unitization of a general pattern, then the nominal culture is a realm of symbolic norms and structures, particular elements of which they are only accidental embodiments or executions.

According to Chris Jenks, nominal understanding of culture was in fact historically primary: "[culture] directs us to a consideration of all that which is symbolic: the learned, ideational aspects of human society. In an early sense, culture was precisely the collective noun used to define that realm of human being which marked its ontology off from the sphere of the merely natural."[2] In his recent book, Wojciech Burszta, a translator of Jenks's book, agrees with such "nominal" account, remarking that "the notion of culture in the broadest sense separates the domain of nature from the realm of deliberate intentionality. As a varnish on the canvas of society understood as an assemble of individuals, culture is a binder which, despite the chaos of interactions, actions, and beliefs, enables us to find firm values and norms which enable us to distinguish categorically different social conventions regardless of their variability."[3]

Culture as an ordered world of values and sense which the individual enters and learns, which defines the boundaries of the possible/appropriate/gratifying and the impossible/inappropriate/tabooed, which spreads out before the individual a range of value-laden behavioral scenarios, a system of prohibitions and orders, a symbolic universe of identity belonging and territories of ubi leones, strangeness or otherness, and so on, and so on… These are the aspects of the nominal understanding of culture, which, in practice, have prevailed throughout the century of development of modern anthropological reflection on culture. It

2 Chris Jenks, Culture (London: 1993), p. 19.

3 Wojciech J. Burszta. Świat jako więzienie kultury. Pomyślenia (Warsaw: 2008), p. 157.

is probably no coincidence that this was also the time when culture became a peculiarly distinct research object; to put it briefly: from the 1870s to the 1970s, to give an example and put names on it: from Taylor to Geertz.

Objective and nominal understanding of culture is clearly visible in well-known characteristics of culture included in Talcott Parson's *The Social System*, which is the key achievement of the American sociological-anthropological theory. Summarizing the then dominating definitions of culture, Parsons notes that they boil down to three fundamental ideas: "first, that culture is *transmitted*, it constitutes a heritage or a social tradition; second, that it is *learned*, it is not a manifestation, in particular content, of man's genetic constitution; and third, that it is *shared*."[4] As one may clearly see, all three processes refer to an object, a kind of symbolic reality that is assumed to exist in all its endowment independently of any contacts with individuals or communities which become its bearers rather than its creators or producers. Individuals' and communities' activity is subjugated to this reality and it is to support, implement, and preserve this reality through participation.

There is no question as to creating a new legacy or transforming the existing one. It is no coincidence because, in this case, culture is a normative system of symbolic control whose function is to provide the community with feeling of safety, static order, and meaning that comes from the choice and assimilation of life roles and strategies offered by the cultural system. According to Wojciech Burszta, this very function of culture is essential and irreplaceable:

> The world is a culture's prison, because people strive for stabilization in the certainty of commonly accepted beliefs; they strive for orientation signs facilitating participation in the world marching forward, in which today's ideals might become the tomorrow's pile of outdated platitudes. However we understand culture, it brings order into the chaos of individual and collective experiences. Culture manages our thinking...[5]

Undoubtedly, such a protective, controlling, conservative, and order-preservative function of culture is essential. However, it should not dominate culture's other functions or aspects; after all, this would lead to disruptions and dysfunctions stemming from the incapacitation of an individual, limitation of his/her freedom, elimination of the effort of transgression, creation of the new, risk of change, and cultural innovation. Peter Sloterdijk explicitly remarks that the consequence of this is a "behavioral training... a good part of what we call

4 Talcott Parsons, The Social System (London: 1991) p. 9. Cf. Chris Jenks's commentary about it with a different approach: Jenks, Culture, p. 81.

5 Burszta. Świat jako więzienie kultury. Pomyślenia p. 16.

'culture' is a nonchemical 'sedative.'"[6] In the last concept, Sloterdijk cleverly combined meditational practices of standstill, philosophical fiction of a gratuitous, neutral, external, and contemplative spectator – "seated outlook of the world" – and the "pacifying" function of culture as a means of soothing human's desires, instincts, passions, longings, and anxieties.

On the other hand, Zygmunt Bauman – who once deemed Parson's concept of culture as a perfect example and proof of instrumental rationality of modern thinking – argues that the consequence of noticing in culture the factor which "nullifies incidence" is that it

> is what makes the departure from an established pattern impossible, or at least highly improbable. Culture is an immobilizing, "stabilizing" factor; indeed, it stabilizes so well that unless culture "malfunctions" all change of pattern is incredible... In the ideal-typical description of culture in terms of the "must's" and "cannot but's," there was no room for the alteration of entrenched patterns. Explaining change was the notorious Achilles' heel of the Parsonian (and the most authoritative) version of the orthodox view of culture...[7]

2.

It is worth making a certain disclaimer, and distinction, when we write about culture as the third part of speech, that is to say, as a verb with its creative, agency-based, and action-oriented function. Indeed, also the adjectival and nominal understandings of culture were developed (or based) on action theories. After all, "being cultural" indicates the process which, in certain dimensions, is subjugated to cultivation (understood as breeding or nourishment) of individuals or communities through superior authorities offering (which sometimes as a proposition that cannot be declined) the development path compliant with the assumed pattern and subject to normative control. In this spirit, we may contend after Jenks that socialization and social institutions ensure the nourishment of a person, education (upbringing) ensure the nourishment of mind and spirit, and finally, colonization – of an indigenous life. Let us note that the last aspect is not accidental and cannot not be omitted and marginalized: it is inherent in culture from the beginning, it is the ever-present possibility (or a dark side) of the acculturation process as not-always-voluntary "attitude training."

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6 P. Sloterdijk, The Philosophy of Art. Wisdom as a Practice, trans. Karen Margolis (Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 53.

7 Zygmunt Bauman, Culture as Praxis (Thousand Oaks, 1999), p. xviii.

Similarly, the role of action is explicitly visible or even highlighted in the key concepts developed by Weber, Parsons, or Lévi-Strauss. However, in each case, it concerns also actions subjected to implicit or overarching patterns, rules, and norms. Here, human action is understood solely as an incidental and contingent manifestation of the general logic of culture – a superior system or deeply implicit, unconscious paramount structural order which no individual initiative is able (nor should be able) to violate or disturb – on the surface of life. Thus, it is an activity that is determined and somewhat governed – managed – by the system and the structure. Bauman summarizes this status of the understandings of culture prevailing in modernity and their primacy over action-oriented positions in the following way: "whether as an object or as an element of the actor's orientation, culture is viewed here as a reality preceding the action, shaped and settled well before the actual action may indeed begin."[8]

In this respect, the "verbal" understanding of culture is different from its "nominal" and "adjectival" counterparts. However, it is different more as a complement than an opposite. In the modern history of such an action-oriented understanding of culture, we should identify George Simmel as its inventor (or at least a precursor). In his essay "On the Essence of Culture", Simmel revives the old notion of "cultivation" as a creative activity which materializes what the nature cannot materialize but what simultaneously – when materialized – activates its hidden potential:

> Cultivation presupposes the prior existence of an entity in an uncultivated, i.e. natural state. It also presupposes that the ensuing change of this entity is somehow latent in its natural structure or energies, even if it cannot be achieved by the entity itself but only through the process of culture. That is to say, cultivation develops its object to that perfection which is predetermined as a potential of its essential underlying tendency. […]
>
> Strictly speaking, this means that only man himself is the real object of culture. For he is the only being known to us with an inherent a priori demand for perfection. […]
>
> […] culture implies also that such human development involves *something external to man*. […]
>
> The specific meaning of culture is this fulfilled only where a person adds something external to that development […] The paradox of culture is that the subjective life, which we feel in its continual flowing and which pushes of its own volition towards its inner perfection, cannot, viewed from the idea of culture, achieve that perfection on its own,

8 Bauman, Culture as Praxis, p. 125

> but only by way of those self-sufficient crystallized structures which have now become quite alien to its form (*formfremd*).[9]

From today's perspective, one may find in Simmel's original reflection various themes anticipating the problematics of later thought on the peculiarities and dilemmas (or paradoxes) of culture in action. This insistence that culture is chiefly a system of action manifests itself, for instance, in Cassirer's works; Clifford Geertz develops the concept of the human as a being requiring to be complemented and thus "deficient," (this concept actually originates in Plato's ancient *Protagoras*), while Jacques Derrida includes it in his theory of the "supplement," and so on. I would like to devote a separate section to three important themes: the social dimension of the "cultivation" process initiation; the paradoxical character of the effective innovation, invention, collective reconstruction of the "new;" and the crucial dilemma or aporia for cultural growth – creation versus stagnation, namely Sloterdijk's *sedative*. It does not seem accidental that all three themes are connected with treating creativity as a universal democratic capability or skill and not as a unique gift of a genius.

3.

The first theme has a special (ontological and epistemological) status of the becoming of the "new," or more generally, of *looking like something is going to happen*, which eventually may not materialize or which – once materialized – will become the "new" or turn out to be a dysfunctional oddity and nonsense. All in all, this is a problem of a cultural change, the nature of a "transition period," or even more broadly speaking: of the potential hidden in the moods and actions of present reality. This problem has a profound importance for understanding the mechanisms of decay of the old and emergence of the new orders and the role of individual initiatives in this culture-forming process, and because of its

9 Georg Simmel. Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings, ed. by D. Frisby, M. Featherstone (London, 2000), pp. 44–55; Cf.: Cassirer's deliberations about Simmel's "tragedy of culture" in his study The Logic of the Cultural Sciences: Five Studies and his remark that: "We do not become aware of this identity [of "infinitely differentiated" forms of culture – R. N.] through watching, weighing, and measuring; nor do we come upon it through psychological inductions. It can manifest itself only through the act. A culture becomes accessible to us only if we actively enter into it; and this entering is not bound to the immediate present." E. Cassirer, The Logic of the Cultural Sciences: Five Studies (New Haven, 2000), p. 76.

fleetingness, contingency, preconscious, and pre-intentional nature it effectively escapes the tools of system-structural analysis.

While probing this dimension of cultural activity, we have to abandon the classically modern – and "scientific" – research procedure based on the assumption of cognitive objectivity from the external perspective and agree on research conducted from within. One could say that we replace scientific *analysis* with *probing* (after all, a probe is a tool used to analyze the chosen area from within). From such a perspective, culture is a network of activities and meanings, in which all of us participate by molding them and undergoing their influence. Raymond Williams was among a few researchers interested in the issue of change, the coming of the new, and the cultural transformation. Fascinated with the "structure of feeling" in the process of cultural development, as he called it, Williams has tried for many years (from *Preface to Film*, 1954, through *Long Revolution*, 1961, to *Marxism and Literature*, 1977) to highlight from different perspectives the nature of cultural dynamics in its historical and social timeliness.

As Williams argues in *Culture and Society*, in the present cultural activity of individuals and communities, not all of them, and even not the ones most essential for culture's development are educated and formed already in language and concepts. Rather, they are still being "sensed" as a kind of unclear, ambiguous stress of the internal dynamic constellation of collective sensory attractions, affective excitements, cognitive interests, and preferred dispositions or skills which only seek their way to emerge and find their way to express. Taking this internal perspective of the individual participating in the culture of a given place and time, Williams notes:

> A culture, while it is being lived, is always in part unknown, in part unrealized. The making of a community is always an exploration, for consciousness cannot precede creation, and there is no formula for unknown experience. A good community, a living culture, will, because of this, not only make room for but actively encourage all and any who can contribute to the advance in consciousness which is the common need. Wherever we have started from, we need to listen to others who started from a different position. We need to consider every attachment, every value, with our whole attention; for we do not know the future, we can never be certain of what may enrich it; we can only, now, listen to and consider whatever may be offered and take up what we can.[10]

"The structure of feeling" is Williams' term for culture at the phase of "a preemergence, active and pressing but not yet fully articulated, rather than the evident emergence which could be more confidently named." Culture in this phase

10 Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780–1950 (New York: 1960), p. 354

is "distinct from both the dominant and the residual;" indeed, "it is never only a matter of immediate practice," because it lacks new or creatively adopted tools and forms. Williams emphasizes that in the standard culture analysis focused on already formed, established, "objectively" existing "institutions, formations, and traditions," "the living presence tends to lose meaning." It happens because of the tragic "separation of the social from the personal" for focusing on the social results in the interest in solely the past – "determined, explained." Therefore, "we have indeed to find other terms for the undeniable experience of the present: not only the temporal present … but the specificity of present being, … all that … is grasped and defined as the personal: this, here, now, alive, active, 'subjective.'"

As we may see, Williams's argumentation is above all a kind of insightful establishment of the new territory of cultural practice and a kind of proclamation of a new research perspective in which categories of experiencing and sensing – which are not contradictory to thinking but something in the middle ground or even disrupting this opposition: "thought as felt and feeling as thought"[11] – become prominent and acquire fully positive meaning. I evoke William's concept as the opening of an essential research program aimed at grasping the development potential of culture, extensions of which are contemporarily visible in numerous conceptual variants and mutations concentrated, among others, around concepts of potentiality, hauntology, cultural participation, or simply, culture in action.

However, already within the program itself, a fusion of three factors appears to be at work, namely the participatory experience of action in the present, the cultural process of change (the emergence of the new), and the research activity amending its tools and procedures to the characteristics of such processual, contextual, relational, and contingent "object." I find this precise fusion of three kinds of factors a common feature of modern theoretical-cultural practices that dominated the humanities after successfully questioning the claims of the great modern Theory; especially its claims in regard to universality, objectivism, and trans-historical (essential or quasi-essential) validity.

4.

The second theme outlined by Simmel is the paradoxical nature of the creative activity, "the emergence of the new;" creation of something that did not earlier exist and what is successful (only?) when it is an actualization of a hidden

11 Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford University Press: 1978), pp. 126–144.

potential or possibility of which one could not be aware before. The essence of creativity is by all means art which impelled anthropologists of culture to "legalize" the popular, institutional division between culture and art (including literature in the latter). According to, among others, James Clifford (who deduced this distinction from the tradition of collecting), culture includes everything collectively shared and traditional, thus, the "nominally" understood legacy given to us by past generations into the deposit, care, and safety. Meanwhile, art is to Clifford the original, unique, individual, and new.[12] In his analysis of this approach, Grzegorz Dziamski writes that "art represents culture's dynamic, changing, and creative aspect. It is fair to say that culture is that which strengthens and confirms existing rules and art is that which contradicts the rules and pursues the transformation of collectively accepted principles."[13] Human creativity is yet another great theme and issue, impossible to exhaust in any, even the longest, single monograph. Therefore, I only recall it to signalize the existence of a particularly creative, yet still mysterious formula of culture – and art – in action.

The issue with the obvious and common-sense division between culture and art is that the closer we look into informal, everyday cultural practices, the more we see in them the same creative mechanism and paradox that we would only attribute to art. From the very artistic perspective, it is well put by famous Franz Schubert's saying: "It is easy to write a good song. You choose a melody that everybody recognizes but that no one has ever heard before."[14] This is because "recognizing a melody that no one has ever head before" means both to create a form that allows to unveil so far unexploited melodic possibilities in sound, and to find rules in this melodic form known from previous, collective experience; thanks to it we do not perceive the melody as noise or an acoustic cacophony.

Michel de Certeau, among others, presents the issue from the perspective of ordinary cultural practices by analyzing, for example, the creativity of consumers' choices and practices, (which are impossible to reduce to the passive reproduction of producer-imposed behavior).[15] Pierre Bourdieu follows a similar path when pondering on the phenomenon of creative invention. He provides

12 Cf. James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art (Harvard University Press: 1988).

13 Grzegorz Dziamski, Kulturoznawstwo, czyli wprowadzenie do kultury ponowoczesnej (Gdańsk: 2016).

14 A quote from: A. Noë, Varieties of Presence (Cambridge – London: 2012), p. 80.

15 Cf. Michel de Certeau, The practice of everyday life, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkerley: 2011); M. de Certeau, L. Giard, P. Mayol, The practice of everyday life, Vol. 2: Living and cooking, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik (Minneapolis: 1998).

spontaneous jokes – the molecules of everyday creative cultural improvisation connecting the new with retrospective necessity – blooming in everyday conversations:

> Each agent, wittingly or unwittingly, willy-nilly, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning. Because his actions and works are the product of a *modus operandi* of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery, they contain an "objective intention," as the Scholastics put it, which always outruns his conscious intentions.... The schemes of thought and expression he has acquired are the basis for the *intentionless invention* of regulated improvisation. Endlessly overtaken by his own words, with which he maintains a relation of "carry and be carried," as Nicolai Hartmann put it, the virtuoso finds in the *opus operatum* new triggers and new supports for the *modus operandi* from which they arise, so that his discourse continuously feeds off itself like a train bringing along its own rails. If witticisms surprise their author no less than their audience, and impress as much by their retrospective necessity as by their novelty, the reason is that the *trouvaille* appears as the simple unearthing, at once accidental and irresistible, of a buried possibility. It is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing that what they do has more meaning than they know The habitus is the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent's practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less "sensible" and "reasonable." That part of practices which remains obscure in the eyes of their own producers is the aspect by which they are objectively adjusted to other practices and to the structures of which the Principle of their production is itself the product.[16]

I decided to include a longer quote, first, because its presents less-remembered Bourdieu's points of interest, and, second, because it includes numerous paradoxical features of the phenomenon of creative activity, namely the fusion of individual and collective "silent," unconscious knowledge, the creative-retroactive mechanism of the effective invention of the new; culture as "habitus" – the human's capability to create basis which becomes the support for further action, "agility" of cultural activity – "what the human does concerns both the action and the agent. In every action, the agent simultaneously changes the world and himself;" this affects the status of objectivity, which is neither a representation of independent being nor a creative subjective construction, but a being activated in action and present in the practices of order or meaning.

Hans Joas applies a similar account to the model of the modern subject's action. Along these lines, the rational subject specifies its purposes independently of the external world; the idea precedes action, plan – its realization, definition

16 Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: 1977) p. 79.

of the purpose – choice of tools. In *The Creativity of Action*, referring to the tradition of pragmatism, Joas argues that contrary to the proponents of the rationalistic model – which Joas calls the teleological interpretation of action's intentionality – cognition cannot be separated from action, the self from the world, and the mind from the body. Therefore, Dewey was probably right, since

> he does not presuppose that the actor generally has a clear goal, and that it only remains to make the appropriate choice of means. On the contrary, the goals of actions are usually relatively undefined, and only become more specific as a consequence of the decision to use particular means. Reciprocity of goals and means therefore signifies the interaction of the choice of means and the definition of goals. The dimension of means in relation to the dimension of goals is in no way neutral. Only when we recognize that certain means are available to us do we discover goals which had not occurred to us before. Thus, means not only specify goals, but they also expand the scope for possible goal-setting. 'Ends-in-view' are not, therefore, vaguely conceived future situations, but concrete plans of action which serve to structure present action.... For Dewey the crucial issue is the difference between goals which are external to the action and prescribed, and goals which emerge in the course of the action itself but which can also be revised or abandoned.... perception and cognition not as preceding action but rather as a phase of action by which action is directed and redirected in its situational contexts. According to this alternative view, goal-setting does not take place by an act of the intellect *prior* to the actual action, but is instead the result of a reflection on aspirations and tendencies that are pre-reflective and have *already always* been operative.[17]

In this perspective, subsequent phases of the problem-solving process are not seen as *quasi*-rational pattern "means – ends" in which ends are "predetermined" objects independent of real circumstances, designated in opposition categories, and means are only the instruments of fulfilling these purposes. Later on, Joas still proves that in the act of reflection, we thematize aspirations which normally function without the active participation of our consciousness; they are pre-reflexive, located in our bodies. In practice, it looks like our experience becomes the constituent of our action and instead of the "means-ends" pattern of action, there is action consistent with the formulas of "subject-in-environment" and "action-in-situation." As a result, we witness a change in the image of how our ends are created and established. It is about the process during which it is only the accessible, experimentally tested means that reveal the attainable goals which are subject to further modifications and changes (realized through further "means" which are at the subject's disposal). Therefore, they are not given

17 H. Joas, The Creativity of Action, trans. J. Gaines & P. Keast (Chicago: 1996), pp. 154–158.

antecedently and arbitrarily established by the intellect. Instead, they appear as a result of final conclusion which in specific situations will satisfy our aspirations and will be compliant with our values.

To illustrate this abstract argumentation on the real phenomenon, Joas quotes a handy example from Hubert Dreyfus's book. Actually, Leszek Koczanowicz used it once, but it is so lovely that I cannot resist quoting it, too:

> When a man falls in love he loves a particular woman, but it is not that particular woman he needed *before* he fell in love. However, after he is in love, that is after he has found that this particular relationship is gratifying, the need becomes specific as the need for that particular woman, and the man has made a creative discovery about himself. He has become the sort of person that needs that specific relationship and must view himself as having lacked and needed this relationship all along. In such *a creative discovery the world reveals a new order of significance that is neither simply discovered nor arbitrarily chosen* [emphasis by R.N.].[18]

With these few examples, I tried to present that, in all its manifestations – from situations being a part of our experiences, through practices of solving everyday problems and spontaneous manifestations of innovation, to the most original artworks – the analyses of the creativity of human action seem to prove that it has nothing to do with the mythical principle *creatio ex nihilo* or divine eruption of genius. It does not resemble the engineer-like and methodically planned actualization of an idea. Rather, it is reminiscent of the practices of an agile and flexible *bricoleur* – as Lévi-Strauss would have it – who manipulates the available material and tools to create a new form in which unpredicted possibilities hidden in the principles of culture may come true and manifest themselves through their novelty – sanctioned by the tradition, rules of language and action, experience – to reconfigure or reinterpret the established state of affairs.

In a sense, both those who say that there is nothing new under the sun and those who say that every repetition is unique and new are to some extent right. The peculiarity of the creation legitimized by culture resides in a creative discovery of complementarity in what seems to be aporetic or contradictory; the transgressive-reactive "emergence of the new," the invention of an accidental event which retrospectively explains its necessity. In this context, Bachmann-Medick invokes a new modern understanding of culture as indeed culture in action. According to it, culture ceased to be comprehended as an "as a unified objectifiable *container* of symbols and meanings. Rather, it is regarded as a

18 H. L. Dreyfus, What Computers Can't Do – The Limits of Artificial Intelligence (New York: 1979), p. 277, a quote from: H. Joas, The Creativity of Action, p. 163.

dynamic *network* of relationships between communication practices and representations.... Cultural objects are not simply 'givens,' but emerge through (symbolic) interaction. [emphasis R. N.]."[19]

5.

The third important theme initiated in Simmel's deliberations is the aporetic structure of the concept of culture as cultivation, which is visible already in its primary etymological connotations that mean both "controlled development" and "spontaneous growth." Simmel notices in this cultivation seeds of this "tragedy" or paradoxical nature (which Cassirer calls the dilemma of culture). Zygmunt Bauman uses this opposition as the core of his argumentation in *Culture as Praxis* and proves that we are dealing with ambivalence, which is generally inherent for culture, especially for modern culture. At the same time, Bauman proposes that the notion of *praxis* should acquire both the function of establishing an order and of creativity, which are the attributes of collective development: "The idea of creativity, of active assimilation of the universe, of imposing on the chaotic world the ordering structure of the human intelligent action – the idea built irremovably into the notion of *praxis* – is indeed comprehensible only if viewed as an attribute of community, capable of transcending the natural or `naturalized' order and creating new and different orders."[20]

In his "Introduction: written twenty years later," Bauman adds that this "ambivalence of 'creativity' and 'normative control'" specifies the internal dynamics of culture. As Bauman conciliatory adds "'Culture' is as much about inventing as it is about preserving; about discontinuity as much as about continuation; about novelty as much as about tradition; about routine as much as about pattern-breaking; about norm-following as much as about the transcendence of norm; about the unique as much as about the regular; about change as much as about monotony of reproduction; about the unexpected as much as about the predictable."[21] In the American anthropology and culture theory, Roy Wagner's *The Invention of Culture* role (first edition in 1975) played a similar as Bauman's work (first edition in 1973). Wagner also makes the action-oriented understanding of culture intrinsic to the "cultivation" etymology his starting point in order to

19 Cf. Doris Bachmann-Medick, Cultural turns. New Orientations in The Study of Culture, trans. Adam Blauhut (Berlin: 2016). p. 122.

20 Z. Bauman, Culture as Praxis, p. 95.

21 Bauman, Culture as Praxis, p. xiv.

grasp the characteristics of culture and its dynamics as continuous interaction of two processes: invention and convention (conventionalization).[22]

Tim Ingold joined this multi-generational dialog in the foreword to another edition of Wagner's book, in which he reinterprets Wagner's use of invention and convention. Ingold writes:

> Invention is going on everywhere, all the time. Human life, before all else, is an inventive process, continually pushing out against the resistance of what has gone before. For example, every time we use a word, or a particular combination of words, perhaps to tell an interlocutor about something that has happened, we choose it because of the meanings it has gathered from previous contexts in which we have heard it used, and because we have reason to believe that these usages and these contexts will also have been familiar to the person with whom we speak. If he is familiar with them, then he will understand, at least in part, what we are saying. If not, we'll have some explaining to do. That familiarity, thanks to which our words make sense to others, is what Wagner calls *convention*; the improvisation by which, in any utterance, we adapt words to novel and unforeseen situations is what he calls *invention*. There can, then, be no invention without convention, else it would be meaningless. And *vice versa*, there can be no convention without invention, for how else could it arise save from past improvisation? In life, conventions are never given but are the hard-won and always provisional outcomes of our incessant and never wholly successful attempts to make ourselves understood. To treat them as given, then, is to mask the creative process of their formation, as though they preexisted the processes that gave rise to them.[23]

Although Ingold's remarks may seem banal and obvious, their consequences are quite the opposite. Ingold universalizes and spreads the understanding of the invention process and reinterprets it according to his concept of cultural improvisation. According to Ingold – and Elisabeth Hallam – the answer to the key question "how is new knowledge and new culture born?" may lead in different directions depending on whether we are interest in the improvisational nature of the problem-solving in the course of action or rather in the innovative effect of creative activity. "The first defines creativity on its course, the second – through its creations. To understand creativity as innovation is to comprehend it *ex-post* in the category of its results, not as future-oriented in the category of actions leading to those results."[24] From such a perspective, improvisatio defines the culture in action which, among others, consist in the fact that improvisational

22 R. Wagner, The Invention of Culture, revised and expanded edition (Chicago: 1981).

23 T. Ingold, "Foreword," in: R. Wagner, The Invention of Culture, 2nd edition, with a new foreword by Tim Ingold, Chicago 2016, p. xl.

24 Creativity and Cultural Improvisation, ed. by T. Ingold, E. Hallam (Berg: 2014).

creation does not contradict convention, as it sometimes happens in the case of innovation. For improvisation can be also carried out in actions which follow patterns, norms, and institutionalized cultural practices.

In Ingold's last texts, we may observe a struggle to go beyond dualisms and thinking through oppositions. In his study, the category of action is a paramount tool for characterizing human existence, and within its scope, the notion of improvisation plays a dominant role; in his essay, "To Human is a Verb," Ingold observes: "And since all human life is happening, so all creation is occasional: a moment-to-moment improvisation."[25] The anthropological concept of humanity outlined in this text is based on the notion of action from which all human features, characteristics, skills, and capabilities are derived. However, Ingold observes that "one could look at this same world in two ways, either from the outside, considering every organism as the living embodiment of an evolved design, or from the inside, by joining with the generative movement of its growth and formation – that is, of its coming into being or ontogenesis."[26] Still, Ingold's argumentation compels the conviction that the first perspective is not really accessible to us or is a cognitive usurpation (seeing "from nowhere" by "nobody"). What is accessible to us is participatory cognition, cognition from the "inside", which needs to find ways to guarantee its objectivism.

3.2. Perception in Action: A Case of Cultural Landscape

1.

I must begin this part of my deliberations with a disclaimer. The following observations are by no means a well-informed presentation of current knowledge and debates on perception and cognition. Today, it is an enormous and dynamically developing field within cognitive psychology, cognitive science, neurophenomenology, and many other specialized disciplines. In this book, they are supposed to serve as an indispensable, preliminary context to characterize the action-oriented dimension of the understanding of culture, a dimension which is directly connected to the cognitive-perceptive activity. I signalize it in a simplified form of keywords or philosophemes drawn from the vocabulary of new knowledge on perception and cognition.

The positions deemed most important from this perspective surfaced around a quarter-century ago (although there were some important, earlier antecedents),

25 Tim Ingold, The Life of Lines (New York: 2015), p. 140.
26 Ingold, The Life of Lines, p.126

when research on embodied cognition,[27] on the one hand, and cognitive enactivism, on the other – here, in Alva Noë's version due to, among others, the role played by art in his deliberations – became the center of attention.[28] Both emphasize the role of experience, sensual feelings, sensorimotor organism reactions, and the meaning of the organism's action and interaction with the environment in the context of identification and molding the perception and cognition.

Perception is action. Ludwik Fleck shared this opinion a long time ago: "To observe, to cognize is always to test and, thus, literally to change the object of investigation."[29] Seventy-five years later, Alva Noë begins his book by declaring that

> the main idea of this book is that perceiving is a way of acting. Perception is not something that happens to us, or in us. It is something we do. Think of a blind person tap-tapping his or her way around a cluttered space, perceiving that space by touch, not all at once, but through time, by skillful probing and movement. This is, or at least ought to be, our paradigm of what perceiving is. The world makes it available to the perceiver through physical movement and interaction.[30]

As we see, both Fleck's and Noë's thesis about perception as action is closely connected with abandoning "sight" as a model of cognition in favor of "touch" (physical contact with what surrounds us).

Oppositions of the mind and the body, and reason and emotions are artificial; they rather obscure and deform than model and describe the actual activity which consists in an inextricable relation. Disembodied feeling and consciousness are fiction eliminating all content of our experience, including the experience of our identity. Emotions are an inherent fundament and constituent of the concept creation process, giving meaning to the experience, and the functioning of the imagination. "*There is no such thing* as how things look independently of this larger context of thought, feeling, and interests. What we know and what we see push and pull against each other, and they move each other and guide each other and tutor each other."[31]

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27 Cf. E. Rosch, E. Thompson, F. J. Varela, The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Humans Experience (Cambridge – London: 1991); Mark Johnson, Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding (University of Chicago Press, 2008)

28 Cf. A. Noë, Strange Tools. Art and Human Nature (New York: 2015).

29 Ludwik Fleck, "On the Crisis of 'Reality'," Cognition and Fact. Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 87, (Dordrecht: 1986).

30 A. Noë, Action in Perception (Cambridge – London: 2004) p. 1.

31 A. Noë, Varieties of Presence (Cambridge – London: 2012), p. 129.

Perceiving is the acquisition of representation, cognition is not a contemplative observation of things captured in the form of representations of the external spectator's mind. "Perceiving is a relation between the perceiver and the world. Perception is nonrepresentational in the sense that perceivings... are not about *the world*, they are episodes of contact with the world."[32] It is a continuous, interactive exploration of environment providing a sensorimotor understanding.

> We ought to reject the idea – widespread in both philosophy and science – that perception is a process in the *brain* whereby the perceptual system constructs *an internal representation* of the world. No doubt perception depends on what takes place in the brain, and very likely there are internal representations in the brain (for example, content-bearing internal states). What perception is, however, is not a process in the brain, but a kind of skillful activity on the part of the animal as a whole.[33]

As we know, the classic cognition model is based on the opposition of subject and object (world) and the static "lethargic" position of the uninvolved observer, who takes – as Sloterdijk has it –

> an exercise in not-taking-up-a-position, an exercise in de-existentialization, an attempt at the art of suspending participation in life in the midst of life. Only through this narrow door could thought enter a sphere of pure observation in which the things of life cease to affect us directly. The observing ego should take the place previously occupied by the position-taking ego.[34]

In the programs of embodied cognition and enactive cognitivism (and in other contemporary philosophical and research orientations), this model gets superseded by (situated) "cognition in situation" based on the interactive relations between organism and surrounding reality. In the participatory model of cognition "from within," the subject is existentially involved in the cognition process; because he is an active, self-interested, affectively moved individual who paves the way through his physical, sensual, and sensorimotor activity to cognitive access to reality and to himself, namely to the "presence" of reality and himself.

By paraphrasing Tim Ingold, who is an ecological anthropologist, we may say that one of the names of the environment in which human life takes place and in which the human being acts and is acted upon is landscape. In its

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32 A. Noë, Varieties of Presence, p. 65

33 A. Noë, Action in Perception, p. 2.

34 P. Sloterdijk, The Art of Philosophy. Wisdom as a Practice, trans. K. Margolis, (New York: 2012), p. 18.

numerous contemporarily recognized dimensions (ontological, epistemological, experience-existential), landscape loses its old status of a concept standing in opposition to nature, in which it played a role of the cultural-symbolic construction of physical reality. Going beyond another opposition of the internal and external world, the cultural landscape becomes a tool for constructing a different anthropology in which the human being finds his/her home outside him/herself, namely in the environment, thanks to identity-forming relations that also bring order and meaning of surrounding reality.

2.

Nowadays, the cultural landscape is one of the most frequently and effectively developed analytical categories. It was conceived at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the community of German geographers to specify the result of human's historical effect on the natural environment throughout centuries, and today it belongs to the key categories of contemporary humanistic geography, anthropogeography, the geography of culture, and landscape architecture. In the last thirty years, the cultural landscape stepped into the field of the humanities and social science becoming more and more popular among researchers and rivaling with category of the aesthetic landscape that has been around for more than two centuries, as well as with kin studies using the category of place, especially the place of memorial, and respectively the landscape of memorial category. The cultural landscape is particularly eagerly applied in transdisciplinary studies initiated in almost any discipline of this field of knowledge, in particular: history, ethnology, cultural studies, literary studies, philosophy of art, aesthetics, psychology, sociology, economics, eco-criticism, and environmental studies. It plays a substantial role in breaching the research limitations resulting from binary thinking: nature and culture, space and time, social and natural, sensory and symbolic, human and extra-human, physical and historical, empirical and rational, body and mind, being and meaning…

The hybrid nature of the "cultural landscape" category and its object seems to fit in the part of contemporary cultural research which aims to redefine its position and status in close connection to intensively transforming the civilizational and natural environment. Although it cannot be ruled out that this situation is due to visible flexibility and fluid range of applying this category, which allows us to approach these matters in a variety of ways: from conventional, traditional, "thematological" studies (about various relations between nature and culture), to original professional proposals of research projects. Therefore, we are perhaps in the phase of dynamic development and concept-theoretical stalemate of research

on the cultural landscape. Precisely this question impels me to shortly consider the possible profiling of this category in cultural studies research. I will attempt to capture this working and necessarily elliptic argumentation in three points.

3.

The first step required by the introduction of the cultural landscape category comes down to transforming the "atomistic" collection of separate elements into a "holistic" set of aligned components. In a classic essay about the constitution of the aesthetic landscape, Georg Simmel emphasizes the change: "when instead of meadow, house, creek, and clouds, we see 'landscape.'" Next, Simmel adds: "once we do not see the sum of the particular natural object but an actual *landscape* we have to do in an art *in statu nascendi*." Landscape acquires this aesthetic status of art representation through the creative, agency-driven engagement of the subject who actualizes and distinguishes "the knot of the given and the created by us" in the picture. This knot unifies all elements by means of mood which is an affective alignment of the unique overview of the entirety: "something general not connected directly to any single element of the landscape but with something common to many landscapes."[35] Those who remember the history and the application of the concept of mood (*Stimmung*), particularly in the German tradition, from Heidegger to Gumbrecht's recent concept may easily[36] deduce the possible benefits of using this category. However, there might be yet something else in the observation of "artistic" *in nuce* activity of the subject perceiving landscape; something which is an imprint of any poietic action in which – contrary to *praxis* – there happens an actualization of something which would not emerge without external stimulation and creative subject's "nurture," for its source – as Aristotle said – rests in the creator, not in the creation.

Another consequence of the holistic approach is the transformation of the elements appearing as external, priorly specified parts of opposition into the elements of the internal diversity of the whole. Time and space, perceiving and acting, the subjective and the objective, culture and nature (thus also the cultural and natural landscape) become – as to forecast future deliberations – components of internal diversity specifying the particular organization of the research object in, among others, memory studies, object studies, urban studies, geo-poetics, or

35 Georg Simmel, "The Philosophy of Landscape." trans. Josef Bleicher. Theory, Culture and Society 24.7–8/2007.

36 Cf. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung. On a Hidden Potential of Literature, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford: 2012).

eco-criticism. Already a long time ago, Arjun Appadurai noticed this relational structure by arguing that the concept of "landscape" and other "-scapes" are not about "objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors."[37]

4.

These last observations lead me to signalize the less obvious second step – in logical, not chronological sense – in the process of constituting the cultural landscape. This step is about transforming the relationship between the subject and the world (its landscape part): from the observational relationship into participatory; from static into dynamic (interactive); generally, from the relationship based on external oppositions of "ready" individuals into internal diversity of the interacting elements of the cultural landscape, which among its components includes the subject endowed with agency. Once we move from thinking in terms of subject-object opposition to analyzing the arrangement of the human(causative subject)-in-environment, we ought to seek support for the analysis and studies in such theories of perceiving and acting which accept this holistic-relational approach. I believe that one of the most influential concepts in contemporary research on this arrangement (human-in-environment) is James Gibson's ecological psychology of perception with his theory of affordance; in terms of the key issue of reciprocal relations between subject and surroundings. Formulated in 1979, and rooted in twentieth-century thought,[38] this concept continues to be popular among ecological psychologists of perception, cognitivists, anthropologists, and researches of the cultural landscape, for example, Chemero, Costall, Jenkins, Ingold, Olsen, Angutek, Frydryczak.[39]

37 A. Appadurai, Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization (Minneapolis: 1996), p. 33.

38 Among others, in Heidegger's reflection on "equipment" (das Zeug), Bakhtin's anthropology of cultural knowledge, and Merlau-Ponty's late phenomenology.

39 Cf.: A. Chemero, "An Outline of a Theory of Affordances," Ecological Psychology, Vol. 15, No. 2/2003, pp. 181–195; A. Costall, "Canonical Affordances in Context," Avant R. III, No. 2/2012, pp. 85-93; H. S. Jenkins, "Gibson's 'Affordances': Evolution of Pivotal Concept," Journal of Scientific Psychology, December, 2008; T. Ingold, "The temporality of the landscape," World Archeology, Vol. 25, No. 2/1993; Bjørnar Olsen, In Defence of Things. Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects (Lanham: 2010); D. Angutek, Kulturowe wymiary krajobrazu. Antropologiczne studium percepcji przyrody na prowincji: od teorii do empirii (Poznań: 2013; B. Frydryczak, Krajobraz. Od estetyki the picturesque do doświadczenia topograficznego (Poznań: 2014).

To put it in simple terms, the affordance theory suggests a new look at the subject-object relationship. Despite the claims of classical philosophy and theory of perception, the cognition process is not about recognizing the physical traits of independent objects. Rather, in the course of (animal or human) subject's active functioning in a particular environment, its specific features become activated and "objectified;" while the environment "offers" and presents itself to the subject in such a shape that might be useful and beneficial to it – chair offering "seatability," tree – "climbability," hole – the danger of falling or a possible shelter, and so on – and conversely, subject's skills (at the possible activity) improve during the process. According to Tim Ingold, who follows Gibson's tradition, we may discuss perceiving the environment which "comes down to seeing it in terms of resources used in action in which we are at the moment involved."[40]

Thus, along the lines of Ingold's tradition,[41] landscape is actually a concept of existential experience of living, taming, and adjusting to the *work-in-progress* surroundings marked with their own temporality, which we change, and which changes us. Classic oppositions grasping the relations between subject and object, culture and nature become internalized and deconstructed here. It is not true that first we perceive and only then we act; on the contrary, it is in action that things become available to our cognition. If we traditionally assume that the human being, not nature, exists in time and history, that natural objects are, whereas cultural objects not only are but also mean, then in Ingold's concept of landscape – which is almost a synonym of the subject-in-environment arrangement, temporality, and changes – palimpsest memory and meaning have become inherent features of the natural-cultural environment.

5.

Probably the most intriguing third step consists in drawing conclusions from perceiving the subject-object relationship as reciprocal and causative; these conclusions originate already in the ambiguities of Gibson's concept, out of which the most significant one concerns the thesis on the direct perception the environment's traits, which undoubtedly brings this concept closer to the realistic position. However, when Gibson characterizes the nature of this directness in more detail, he notes that it is not about identifying the physical features

40 T. Ingold, Culture and the Perception of the Environment (London: 1991).

41 Cf. T. Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," World Archeology, Vol. 25, No. 2/ 1993.

independently of the organism, the natural existing being. After all, these traits, which are the affordance of things, "are one due to the attitude and behavior of the particular animal." As a result

> affordance is neither subjective, nor objective feature, or, if you wish, is both at the same time. Affordance crosses the opposition of subjective-objective, allowing us to understand its unsuitability. It equally concerns the environment as well as behavior. It is as much psychological as it is physical, although it is neither at the same time. Affordance indicates both sides – the environment and the observer.[42]

The problem, which Gibson does not settle unequivocally, is to acknowledge whether what affordance indicates (the environment and the observer considered here as the subject of perceiving not acting which is yet another inconsequence) exists in its whole, and prior to and independently of the relation deemed an affordance or rather the environment and the subject profile and place themselves within the space created through affordance. Following the reflective path of the critical followers of Gibson's thought, namely Chemero, Costall, Olsen, I believe that this concept seeks to move beyond the dichotomy of realistic and constructivist positions and what it leads to is the acknowledgment of the ontological supremacy of such relation as "source" causative mediation, within and because of which the subject and the environment create and "objectify" their dispositions and shapes. Let us note that thus understood mediation is not a tool of the intermediary integration of "ready" phenomena or a kind of bridge between separate, pre-existing individuals. As in Regis Debray's cultural-studies and mediological concept, mediation "produces what it mediates"[43] through modeling and associating the elements with one another in such a way that it forms not only their reciprocal connection but at the same time their separate shape and identity.

In this perspective, without ceasing to be a useful analytical category for different forms of human arranging of the natural environment, the cultural landscape acquires meaning as a model, laboratory formulae of research on universal subject-in-environment setting. By activating some etymological components of this definition (after Ingold and other researchers), one may say that landscape is indeed an image of a country. If it is an image, then it is objectified, aesthetically and semantically burdened, and it consists of isolated and mutually aligned elements. Next, a country (understood not only as a physical or political territory) is

42 J. J. Gibson, The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception (Psychology Press, 1986), pp. 128–129.

43 Regis Debray, Introduction à la médiologie (Paris: 2000).

a subject's home territory with traits of a specific "world" (with space-time, tradition, symbolic imagination) and through the sense of belonging to which we define our identity, which binds us with other "fellow-countrymen" and distinguishes us from "non-fellow-countrymen," that is, the strangers. Therefore, the culture of thus conceived landscape would have tautological features. Indeed, it would have them if it was not for one of its above-mentioned features, namely, the "agency-driven mediation."

6.

As I have tried to show, we usually comprehend culture in a nominal or adjective manner, which consequently results in understanding culture as an entirety of human creation ("a complete legacy"), features, abilities, and competencies, attributed to a "cultured" human; or we deem objects as cultural when they possesses features indicating they were created by a human as opposed to the natural objects that emerged without human contribution; or finally, we first and foremost understand culture as a normative system of human behavior's symbolic control forming a specific way of life. Polish, among other languages, imposes strong regime in this respect as it does allow for using the word *kultura* (culture) in a verbal sense (let us set aside odd-sounding expressions like *ukulturalnić* [to culturalize]). Perhaps, the only exception is the word *kultywować* (to cultivate) and *kultywacja* (cultivation) in slightly obsolete or technical senses: to nurture, maintain, or develop something because of its value; in this case, however, there is still some reminiscence of the action-oriented understanding of culture as agency-driven, mediatory activity, transforming the individual and the environment into the domesticated world of values and meanings.

Meanwhile, the meaning of culture as cultivation, namely ingenious causative activity, is not only the oldest and source meaning but also, as it seems, the most up-to-date in its contemporary manifestations and functions. Once we hear *colere* in culture, meaning cultivating, breeding, and nurturing, it is easier to include the physical and natural environment within the scope of culture. For this environment conditions the subject's activities, including those which (somehow retroactively) incite and shape the activity of the environment. Moreover, it becomes easier to activate those meanings that are no longer considered peripheral or obsolete in modern eco-critical and post-humanistic perspectives and other fields.

One may even contend that, in this notion of the cultural landscape, three eternal and fundamental concepts of the European tradition collaborate with one another. They are: *physis* – nature, that which grows out of itself (because it

has an inherent principle of its own growth, namely the *arche*); *praxis* – human activity in which the will is expressed in action and achieves its purposes within its borders; and *poiesis*, or *techne poietike* – creative activity which conceives and brings to life that which has not existed before. As proved by Agamben,[44] once distinguished by Aristotle, in subsequent eras, those principles have repeatedly got in each other's way (collaborating or rivaling) in order to negotiate new relationships in modern and contemporary times – the discussed shift in the notion of the cultural landscape serves as a good example of this process.

7.

In the category of the cultural landscape, I tried to activate three elements which, I believe, constitute its meaning and characteristics: the holistic organization of elements; interactive structure of the relationship between the subject and surroundings; mediatory-agentive relation which shapes forms of their presence and activity. In standard research of the typical cultural landscapes (be it a "natural" English park, palimpsest urban space, or a memorial), the last element, however primary, remains unseen as if it was absent. This relationship and its constitutive meaning reveal themselves only when the cultural landscape vanishes, transforms itself, falls apart, or is reconstructed from the remnants and traces of the past. Let us quote Alan Costall's slightly eccentric but particularly telling example of such a process:

> A group of archaeology students at Copenhagen University engaged in an excavation of the camp area attached to the annual rock music festival at Roskilde. They found plenty of used condoms and beer cans, a few food wrappers, and a single hash-pipe (needless to say, these items have pretty definite canonical affordances). Although they remained mute on the subject of condoms, the students suggest that future archaeologists excavating the same site in a thousand years time might well conclude that the people they were studying drank much more than they ever ate. They themselves were mainly impressed, however, by what their excavation failed to reveal – the event that was holding these various artifacts together. "We cannot see the music in the festival's soil"[45]

Without rock music performing the role of mediating, agency-driven relation which configures and correlates the constellation of elements, and which moves through the multiplicity of "offers" for their users to choose and present precisely

44 Cf. in particular, the analysis of relationship of poiesis–physis in the essay Privation is Like a Face, and relationship of poiesis–praxis in the essay "Poiesis and Praxis," in: G. Agamben, The Man without Content, trans. G. Albert (Stanford: 1999).

45 A. Costall, "Canonical Affordances in Context," AVANT III.2/2012, p. 91.

these activating possibilities for the subject's action adjusted to the festival's overall organization and its participants' habits or behavioral scripts – without this, the cultural landscapes of the festival breaks down into a collection of unrelated elements and traces of the subject's activity separated from identifiable features of his/her surroundings. Let us notice, however, that similar situations may occur in any other case: the mediating relation which constitutes cultural landscapes as unique arrangements of the human-in-environment organizes and (through selection) leads to the inclusion of some elements and the exclusion of others (cf. commemoration and forgetting,

the past present and removing its traces). As we know, "natural" English parks emerged as a result of a substantial transformation – sometimes to the point of destruction – of the previous natural terrain formation; urban "palimpsests" – as a consequence of the semiotic arrangement of people's historical activity within this space, which tends to be intentionally selective, rarely accidental; places of memory are not only a respectful way of rendering justice to human deeds and sufferings but also a manifestation of symbolic violence and suppression or repression of the memory about the unwanted past.

Once we bear in mind this ambivalence of human activity in the formation of a cultural landscape, it seems even more tempting to activate the old meaning of "verb-based" notion of culture as it contains a kind of ethical message embedded into the notion of "cultivation:" as a respectful and reverent process of inciting, nurturing, and modeling the core development features of the object, which, however, without such "midwife" care, would not come into being; for the objective form of their presence, available to the subject, would never come to light.

3.3. Theory in Action: Three Glosses on Contemporary Theoretical Practices in the Humanities

1.

Traditionally, the issue of change in the history of culture, art, literature, and theory has proved to be one of the most troubling, both in terms of anticipating and explaining it. This has been the case not only in the humanities. Indeed, this is what happens especially when what is at stake are not so much paradigmatic "revolutions" (with their own exemplary if questionable descriptions) as processes of intensifying local innovations, gradually settling in the cultural field and gaining social visibility and attention. The main issue is that we are unable to fill the information gap between "not yet" and "already." That which is coming,

which is looking forward to coming up, which emerges out of embryos of the "new", is always unexpected and unpredictable (impossible to extrapolate, to plan, to anticipate). However, as soon as it surfaces and crystalizes, it immediately activates its (so far concealed) antecedents, unveils its development path, and imposes on us the retroactive necessity of its being.

The same process is at work in the area of changes of theoretical reflection in the humanities of the last quarter-century: what for some (those critical toward novelties) is just a granulation of the universal Theory, for others (those interested in new tools) is an exhilarating profusion of the studies and turns which encourage us not only to read literature outside of its internal literary traits but also to read in this new (at least to some extant) way not only literature; or, in other words, to read literature along with other cultural texts in the same manner (let us note that, in this sense, only-literary theory is no longer possible today). The volcanic energy attributed to the emergence of those new theoretical initiatives is apparently not inexhaustible, especially given the fact that for the last couple of years – which is more or less when cultural affective studies emerged – no new projects matched the significance of the old ones.[46] Perhaps, the time has come for a consolidation of these theoretical activities and the critical reflection which must also include the actors of these changes (for today, there is no object without subject, and vice versa) instead of the sole impersonal game of tendencies, concepts, or principles.

Jan Błoński – who used to say that he loved theory, but it was not a mutual feeling –once told me in a burst of honesty that he had always feared the time in which he would realize that he could not keep up, that the young would prove to him that he was wrong, when he would feel he cannot do any different, any better… However, as Błoński added, it turned out that everything was actually different; on the one hand, he simply did not care about the novelties of the

46 It does not mean, however, that new orientations do not appear. One of the most expansively growing studies are the heritage studies, or heritology, which encompass the problems – or reach the areas – of not only virtually all humanistic disciplines but also many modern new-humanistic studies and turns, for example, cultural memory studies, affective studies, visual culture studies, urban studies, trauma and Holocaust studies, performance studies, and the issues of many other disciplines, for example, sociology, economics, cultural geography, environmental eco-criticism, or tourism. Such a major phenomenon requires, after all, a separate analysis; Cf.: K. Kowalski, O istocie dziedzictwa europejskiego – rozważania (Cracow: 2013); G. Ashworth, Heritage Planning (Geo Pers, 1991); The Nature of Cultural Heritage, and the Culture of Natural Heritage, ed. by D. Lowenthal and K. Olwig, (London: 2015).

young – he deemed them of little worth and time-wasting – and, on the other hand, he was convinced that he had no equal in his area. When he was telling me that, Jan Błoński was younger than I am now, therefore as an individual who went through hardships in the never-ending transition period – which due to its continuity has acquired the features of a normal state of affairs – I can attest that it was an apt observation on subjective fears, premises, and rationalizations of people participating in this kind of changes.

First, we indeed tend to situate ourselves (namely, to perceive our situation as embedded) within the main current of ongoing changes, and to extrapolate the current process into the future, understood in a linear manner, as a progressive increase of accumulated knowledge on the object, which is usually accompanied by a noble concern whether our development will match the development of the universal knowledge and whether someone will not overtake us. Second, we indeed tend to construct an illusory feeling of safety; illusory, because based on choosing the role of the science garden keeper in which we can successfully hide from the winds of history. Third, becoming open to confrontation and dialog, and a will to understand the other, are not a spontaneous disposition but rather a necessity and effort from which we refrain as long as it is possible to treat the other (those other objects of curiosity) as marginal, eccentric, progressive, and, therefore, transient. Recently, I have realized that upon hearing a friendly question which was asked out of confusion: if the new humanities have been "dealt with," could we go back to literary theory?

Of course, we can. Humanistic knowledge is not marked by cumulative progress, and we will never know if what seems hopelessly epigonic to us might turn out to be a pioneering anticipation; therefore, now we might as well be Platonists, neo-Thomists, or structuralists, hoping for such a (better) future. However, lessons learned from the past convince us that any (even successful) attempt of return brings change, and the constellation of possibilities and "embryos" of the new bulging in the present constantly reconfigures the knowledge, including the place and function of old, traditional, and hitherto prevalent pattern. It brings us to another statement, namely that the present (probably any, but ours in particular) is a time in which we are unable to anticipate the future, plan it, or predict the direction of its development. Czesław Miłosz once observed (paraphrasing an old Chinese proverb) that our orientation toward the future resembles the behavior of a blind man who may never find out if what he touches is a snake's tail or elephant's trunk. However, we may never know if our choices, dispositions, and actions will minimally swing the balance to the scale of the future reality "production" (meaning transition from the non-existent and potential to the existent and actual or effective).

Noteworthy, in this regard, there is no real difference between theoretical humanistic practices and scientific ones. As the science historian and philosopher, Hans-Jorg Rheinberger, argues:

> The history of experimenting is, say, a history of "theory in action." It is, besides, about the historical conditions of research *processes* materializing in often unpredictable relation toward socially and politically sanctioned research *programs*. Whole modern culture is based on the process which we may describe as a process of creating events impossible to anticipate. Its "logic" – even if planners reluctantly admit that – has little to do with the pattern of cognitive rationality which is attributed to the Cartesian individual – rightly or not, I will not judge it here. The logic of what is impossible to anticipate, in the modern scientific process, functions in a concentrated form to some extent and can be studied.... After all, such research aims to identify the condition of systems development in which "the new" may happen.[47]

Therefore, both in the humanities and sciences, the theory in action is: first, a theory *in statu nascendi*; second, an intervening theory that actively influences the state of affairs (or, at least, the current knowledge of it); third, a theory identifying itself in action (contrary, for instance, to a theory which is static and transcendent in relation to the subject of contemplative observation or description) in the process of trial research activity, pre-examining the objects; fourth, a theory focused on outlining the conditions and describing the emergence of novel and innovative processes. Besides, in this perspective, the discussed theory in action can be rightly situated in a much broader field of knowledge, mostly defined as action research which comes down to connecting cognitive tasks, the participant's perspective, and action aimed at changing the existing *status quo in a particular area of reality.* This research tradition can be traced back to Kurt Lewin's social studies – sociology, education, pedagogics – developed in the 1930s. Contemporary action research – designated with other terms, such as intervention research, impact research, involved research, participatory research to some extent – permeates into other disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, for example, ethnography, anthropology, cultural studies, feminism and gender studies, visual culture, art based research.[48] Moreover, I wish to

47 Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, On Historicizing Epistemology, trans. David Fernbach (Stanford: 2010).

48 Cf. review of positions included in: Handbook on Qualitative Research, ed. by Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks: 2017); Badania w działaniu. Pedagogika i antropologia zaangażowane, ed. by H. Cervinkova, B. D. Gołębniak (Wrocław: 2010); Badania wizualne w działaniu. Antologia tekstów, ed. by M. Frąckowiak, K. Olechnicki, M. Krajewski (Warsaw: 2011).

add that I consider the concept of action as equivalent to the concept of practice, even though I am aware of their different ideological origins. Indeed, I consider it as a basic concept for it is less burdened with ideological connotations.

2.

I do not intend to go into details, nor come up with another paraphrase of a brief history of theoretical practices' transformation in the broadly understood humanities. I only wish to note that *the concept of action* endows these diverse practices with common traits, and furthermore, it indicates common – "action-like" – characteristics of the subject, purpose, and method. After all, these theoretical practices take reality (or its elements) in becoming, in the process as their subject; their purpose is an effective influence, a transformation of the existing state (contrary to its mere description or interpretation), or image change (approached from the perspective of new categories); its methods and research techniques are action strategies, actively interacting with objects, experimentally interfering them, only searching for theirs principles and standard of the developed theoretical concept in the networks of studied relations.

Obvious examples come to mind instantly. Performance studies should not even be mentioned in this context. In literary research, there prevails understanding work as an event and the process of reading as an experiment performance. In visual studies, the key concept is how images function (their impact force on viewer's sensory-affective reactions); in memory studies – the functioning of memory and forgetting, conflicts and rivalry of memory politics, traumatic events and transfers of them (individual and collective, postmemory); in affective studies – agitations and coagulation of sensory-affective "intensities" and their (linguistic-conceptual, individual, collective, cultural, media) transmission and translations; in feminism and gender studies – subversive-emancipatory work of theory pursuing the change of the existing order; in postcolonial studies – the practice of dominance and subjugation, the process of empowerment of the incapacitated and the process of independence of the colonized, and so on, and so on. Given those diverse meanings of theoretical activities, one may distinguish four complimentary basic variants of understanding theory in action.

Therefore, the theory in action is, first of all, a work in progress. It emphasizes trial, preliminary, reconnaissance aspect of theoretical practice seeking tools, methods, and aims in research "dialogue" with the objects, for example, events and processes. In this sense, theory in action stands in opposition to modern Theory understood as the culmination of systemic research and generalization

of its particular results in a form of a systemically grasped arrangement of general statements having universal scope. It is in this vein that the editors of *Post-theory* (1999) emphasize that post-theory is a theory "yet to come;" the editors of *Theory After "Theory"* (2011) argue that those differently oriented studies (from disability studies through eco-criticism to globalization studies) undertake vivid dialog in the key issues of the political change, life conditions, and institutional practices; and the editors of *Theory Matters* volume from 2016 conclude that such a state of the modern theory in the process of development and change is constant and specific to it: "theory and *doing theory*, as we suggest, must be fully aware of its own contingency. There is no a priori stability of theoretical categories... Theory implies constant revision, change, improvement, specialization, and even more detailed defining."[49]

Recently, Krzysztof Abriszewski has chosen this path in his article "Co robi teoria w humanistyce" (What Does Theory Do in the Humanities?), in which he introduces the concept of theory and science in action understood as a transfer from "completed science" to "science in progress, in which theory mixes with other elements but is not the end of the process, because process still continues;" a transfer, in which "theory equals to some extent to abandoning the static perspective for identifying the processes." Furthermore, Abriszewski suggests to distinguish a few stages of theory in action, or rather in inter-action. First, "seeing something different," namely the result of theoretical action achieved, as presumed, by the new operational vocabulary. Second, "forgetting about work." For the success of theoretical work, as I understand it, is to blend in an anonymous general language and "neutral" perception, as this is when the theoretical results or achievements "obviously" become shared by everyone concerned. Third, "circulation," which is apparently about often and long-lasting presence in the scientific circulation; both these features are most easily achieved either by the position's distinctness, uniqueness, or eccentricity, or thanks to inspirational values of influence (inciting to develop or criticize the idea); after all, in practice, both variants of "circulation" visible in the environment clash with the idea of disappearing in a neutral, anonymous language. Finally, fourth: the "involvement of emotions," which is substantially visible in contemporary theoretical

49 Cf. Post-theory. New Direction in Criticism, ed. by M. McQuillan, G. Macdonald, R. Purves, and S. Thompson (Edinburgh: 1999), p. xv; Theory After "Theory", ed. by J. Elliott, D. Attridge (London: 2011), p. 14; Theory Matters. The Place of Theory in Literary and Cultural Studies Today, ed. by M. Middeke, Ch. Reinfandt (London: 2016), p. 350.

practice which resign from neutral impersonal argumentation of "propositional" nature (statements judging an object or reality) for the sake of using emotions as a perceptive-cognitive framing which orients and concentrates attention, selects the context, valorizes the perceived objects and their characteristics, and, generally speaking, constructs participative space of interactions between the subject and the environment.

Abriszewski draws these characteristics from Noël Carroll's reflection on "prefocussing" developed in his *Philosophy of Mass Art*, but the phenomenon of framing itself – although not always explicitly affective – traces back much farther to works such as Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis*, Culler's *Framing by Sign*, or Judith Butler's *Frames of War*.[50] Noteworthy, the "structure of feeling" plays a similar role in both Williams and his commentators. Namely, one of the variants of approaching this theory is precisely about a specific "framework of feeling" which shapes and directs the understanding process of the acting subject, locates it in the story's sequential order, and makes understanding itself a function of feeling.[51]

Last observations enter the area of theory in action in the second sense of the term. In this sense, theory is a tool of intervention into the subject field, conducted to change the established state of affairs. In theory of science, Ian Hacking develops this idea in his classic work *Representing and Intervening*, arguing that science not only consists in representation (the meaning of which he substantially re-interpreted), but also in intervention covering mainly the experimental ways of gathering knowledge which not only serve to test the theoretical statements or hypotheses but may also reveal new phenomena, generating new theoretical conceptualizations.[52] In the humanities and social sciences, this kind of theory in action dominates primarily in the engaged humanities, in which engagement is perceived as a

> type of research practice and discourse which prioritizes the emancipatory needs of specific people, groups, and individuals, in which researchers, who consider their role as realizing of communicative concern (Habermas), engage themselves in projects aiming at the social change (not only improving the position of the privileged subjects), and the

50 K. Abriszewski, "Co robi teoria w humanistyce?," Filo-Sofija, No. 29/2015; Cf. Noël Carroll, A Philosophy of Mass Art (Oxford: 1998) and his Beyond Aesthetics…

51 Cf., for example: F. Inglis's commentary on Williams's "sensory framework" in: F. Inglis, Culture (New York: 2004).

52 Cf. I. Hacking, Representing and Intervening. Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science, (Cambridge: 1983).

> essence and boundary conditions of this *praxis* is the feeling of subjectivity – concerning both researchers and the participants of the social situations, and the type of the subjective activity rooted in optionality and satisfaction.[53]

It is easy to notice that theory in action, as characterized above, plays a crucial role in, among others, postcolonial studies, feminist criticism, gender studies, and has essential functions in critical theory, cultural studies, new ethnography and archaeology, disability studies, art-based research, animal studies, posthumanities, and other fields. In a broader context – that is, as a tool leading to transformation of the dominant state of being, mentality, attitudes, behavior patterns, ethical sensitivity and responsibility – theory in action is highly valued even in the most narrowly understood humanities, namely philosophy, history, literary studies, linguistics. According to Doris Bachmann-Medick, we may even perceive it as a gradual rise or even domination of

> the cultural studies [that] are increasingly being viewed not only as textual but also as pragmatic action sciences... They are increasingly focusing on cultural practices and forms of perception that include translation, observation, memory, comparison, description, narration, representation and staging. In addition, they are addressing the question of how global conditions are impacting the transformation of these perceptual and expressive forms.[54]

In its third sense, the theory in action is a theoretical practice grasped within the aspect of its own activity idiosyncrasy and actual trajectory of theoretical activity. In many aspects, this trajectory turns out to be contradictory to common opinions on this topic, opinions to which Pierre Bourdieu collectively refers as a scholastic vision of cognition assuming that "every action is preceded by a premeditated and explicit plan;"[55] a vision considering theory a result of purely intellectual, project-planning work indicating a logical, systemic image or a model of the object, then tested only in experiments or case studies.

> No! – says Michel Serres – not the one who researches does not know, walks in the dark, tinkers, hesitates, keeps his objects in the state of limbo. No, he does not invent his calculator thirty years before it came to be because he does not predict how we, who know

53 B. D. Gołębniak, H. Červinkova, "W poszukiwaniu emancypacyjno-transformacyjnego wymiaru badań pedagogicznych i antropologicznych," Badania w działaniu. Pedagogika i antropologia zaangażowane (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe DSW, 2010), pp. xiv–xv.

54 Bachmann-Medick, Cultural turns. New Orientations in The Study of Culture, p. 288.

55 P. Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, p. 138.

> and use it, would seem to perceive it.... By a miracle, he reaches the result which he did not fully predict, but he sought for it, therefore he saw it without seeing it.[56]

In his discussion of the "laboratory life" of scientists, Serres anticipates the works of, among others, Latour, Woolgar, or Knorr-Cettina. Indeed, his account may serve as a valuable hint for similar research on the humanities' "textual laboratories," in which we find a similar evolution of theory approaches – from directive and normative through descriptive to orientational (trial), heuristic, and exploratory.

According to Wolfgang Iser, the epithet "exploratory" (meaning: search, reconnaissance, research, insight) and the process of "mapping" and understanding are precisely the features that best display the distinctiveness of the humanistic research practices (soft theory) from the scientific ones (hard theory), aiming to predict and explain. In the end, predicting ruled by laws heads toward controlling and grasping something (in both its meanings), whereas mapping is based on assumptions which are then modified through observation of subsequent new data that are further gradually included in the research framework, and it leads to exploratory searching and discovering something. Metaphoric "open" ideas, whose special role is to "release" new associations (phenomena, processes, contexts), are for the humanities what laws that must be applied at all times and subjection of research to phenomena are for science.[57] Both these approaches seem to reconcile in Theodor Adorno's notion of a "properly written text"[58] as a process of organizing a constellatory network of relationships in which inventive concepts play a key exploratory role, figuratively drawing together phenomena,

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56 M. Serres, "Préface qui invite le lecteur à ne pas négliger de la lire pour enter dans l'intention des auteurs et comprendre l'agencement de ce livre," in: Eléments d'histoire des sciences, ed. by M. Serres (Paris: 1989), p. 15.

57 Cf. W. Iser, How to Do Theory (Malden – Oxford: 2006), pp. 4–12.

58 T.W. Adorno, "Memento" (51), in his: Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life, trans. E.F.N. Jephott (London: 1999), p. 87. Here is how Adorno elaborates on this notion: "Properly written texts are like spiders' webs: tight, concentric, transparent, well-spun and firm. They draw into themselves all the creatures of the air. Metaphors flitting hastily through them become their nourishing prey. Subject matter comes winging towards them. The soundness of a conception can be judged by whether it causes one quotation to summon another Where thought has opened up one cell of reality, it should, without violence by the subject, penetrate the next. It proves its relation to the object as soon as other objects crystallize around it…"

contexts, and processes that no prior agenda could have anticipated.[59] This distinct, creative component of the way we function seems to transgress both the principles of mechanical reproduction and the emergence processes of unpredictable novelties.

The fourth meaning of theory in action focuses on the characteristic of the result of the exploratory searching process, which usually ends up with creation or an "emergence of the new." At the same time, it has a general and rudimentary dimension. Perhaps, the precursory position in terms of observing and describing the creative aspect of research or exploration processes belongs to Ludwick Fleck, who in his 1929 essay "On the Crisis of 'Reality'" writes:

> exploring is neither a passive contemplation nor acquiring the only possible insight into the ready product. It is an active vivid entering into relation, transforming, in short – creating. Independent reality does not belong neither to 'the subject' nor to 'the object' – any existence is relative and consists of reciprocal influence.[60]

Today, creativity studies comprise lots of volumes, although the problems of the creative humanities, and their idiosyncrasy, are hardly visible.[61]

While I do not strive to fill this gap, I simply want to signalize the presence of this creative aspect of the research activity results on its most obvious level. Indeed, we may only grasp that creative aspect retrospectively and retroactively, that is, once it emerges in the field of knowledge and distinguishes from the

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59 I attempted to describe Adorno's idea in the essay "Lekcja Adorna: tekst jako sposób poznania, albo o kulturze jako palimpseście," in: R. Nycz, Poetyka doświadczenia. Teoria – nowoczesność – literatura (Warsaw: 2012).

60 Ludwik Fleck, "On the Crisis of 'Reality,'" Cognition and Fact. Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 87, (Dordrecht: 1986), p. 57.

61 Cf., among others: R. W. Weisberg, Creativity. Understanding Innovation in Problem Solving, Science, Invention, and the Arts (Hoboken: 2006); R. K. Sawyer, Explaining Creativity. The Science of Human Innovation, 2nd edition (New York: 2012); Creating Consilience. Integrating the Sciences and the Humanities, ed. by E. Slingerland, M. Collard (New York: 2012). Separate group consists of works regarding "the creative class" – cf., for example, R. Florida, The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life (New York: 2019); Od przemysłów kultury do kreatywnej gospodarki, ed. by A. Gwóźdź (Warsaw: 2010); K. Wojnar, Polska klasa kreatywna, (Warsaw: 2016). Another group concerns the works of creativity psychologists, cf., for example, E. Nęcka, Psychologia twórczości (Sopot: 2012); M. Csikszentmihalyi, Creativity. The Psychology of Discovery and Invention (New York: 2013). Yet another group consists of the philosophical-humanistic essays, for example, G. Steiner Grammars of Creation (New Haven: 2002).

"current state of research" and the repertory of circulating positions, and rearranges and rehierarchizes, (to some degree rewrites) the history of research in a given domain due to the approach it constitutes (through activation of, for example, the pioneer and anticipatory tendencies, and marginalization of hitherto dominating positions and currents). Indeed, inventions are part of any time and space, but it was modernity that defined them as a key criterion of its development, and thus, the modern humanities are largely the history of retroactive "revolutionary" reinterpretions of tradition due to the primacy principle of "the new." It is all about revolution in Kuhn's sense, because modernity emphasized mainly the quest for a new pattern of science practice (systemically understood overarching theories).

Meanwhile, today, the innovative nature of studies and turns marking the new humanities manifests itself in finding specific tools – new concepts and analytical techniques – treated precisely as theories in action (of small or medium range). Bahmann-Medick even believes that the creativity expresses itself already in the sole nature of the "turns," namely in the consequence of transforming descriptive concepts s into operative ones as they influence the shape of reality, that is, our knowledge of reality. The same applies to specific conceptual inventions, such as postmemory, multi-directional memory, queer, affectivity, emotional communities, cyborgization, or new research programs, for example, postcolonial, gender research, and so on, and so on. These new vocabularies trigger new research questions which indicate phenomena in contexts which are different compared to the established, prevalent ones, activating their suppressed or concealed aspects. As a result, they change our knowledge about their meaning and our knowledge of what they are.

3.

Furthermore, the contemporary "action" turn in theoretical practice brings more general consequences that are not always positive or optimistic. To practice "theory in action" is to position oneself within the world we aim to understand; to enter personal, physical contact with it; to learn it only through some perspectives and fragmentarily. As I understand, it is not a matter of choice or will but rather of a rational necessity. As Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison argue,[62] the idea of objectivism which became an essential criterion of a real cognition only in the nineteenth century and dominated the modern theory throughout

62 Cf. L. Daston, P. Galison, Objectivity (New York: 2007).

most of the twentieth century, is now considered one of the key modernity myths. Still, this very myth of objectivism combined the illusion of impersonal and non-physical cognition, a utopia of looking from nowhere (namely, from a transcendent or meta-linguistic perspective), and the possibility of taking up the static, contemplative position of an unbiased, uninvolved observer.

A long time ago, when emphasizing the socialized, cultural nature of our cognition, Ludwik Fleck observed that "regardless of where and when we do something, we are always in the center of cognition, never at the beginning."[63] In turn, Donna Haraway, the author of the concept of situated knowledge, argues that:

> we must learn to... equip our internal theoretical and political scanners with objectivism to define where we are and are not in mental and physical space we are barely able to name. Therefore, paradoxically, objectivism is an arbitrary and particular kind of embodiment; it definitely is not a false vision promising to transgress any boundaries and avoid responsibility. The conclusion is simple – only biased perspective gives hope for the objective vision.... rational knowledge does not pretend to lack involvement: to be from everywhere and anywhere at the same time, to be free from interpretation and representation, to be fully independent or fully confirmable. Rational knowledge is a process of critical interpretation among "areas" of the interpreters and the readers of codes.[64]

The crisis of modern objectivism, for which Haraway's concept of situated knowledge is a remedy, is yet another problem that I may only signalize with two more positions. Kirsten Hastrup sees it as a chance to legitimize participatory cognition and indirectly challenges the fictions of classically modern objective and neutral cognition by analyzing the peculiar reflexivity of ethnographic experience (different from the one highlighted by Bourdieu). It is about reflexivity that

> refers to the way in which the accounts and the settings they describe elaborate and modify each other in a back-and-forth process. This implies that accounts that describe a setting are made up of expressions that derive their specific sense from that very setting. It is an essential (rather than instrumental) reflexivity that allows us to take full advantage of the experience of relativism, without destroying our more general aims, namely the search for objective knowledge. Reflexive anthropology places itself between

63 L. Fleck, "On the Crisis of 'Reality,'" p. 56.

64 D. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," in: Feminist Studies, Vol. 14, No. 3/1988, pp. 575–599; Cf. M. P. Markowski's reflections on the argument of critical approach toward this category in the humanities: M.P. Markowski, Polityka wrażliwości. Wprowadzenie do humanistyki, part 4: "Przeciwko obiektywności" (Cracow: 2013).

> the poles of correspondence theory and constitutive theory … If reflexivity is part of ethnography, this means that the anthropologist becomes her own informant. Sharing the social experience of others implies the using of all senses and the suspension of judgement, possibly to a still unprecedented degree, but it does not entail the creation of fiction and thus the undermining of any scientific standard. While we cannot, obviously, experience the world from the perspective of others, we can still share their social experience. In fact, there is no social experience that is not shared. Sharing implies that we are part of the plot, and it is this position that provides us with a unique key to an understanding of worlds, of how they are constituted and transformed, and how positions are assigned to individuals within the plot-space understudy.[65]

Hastrup's perspective valorizes experience as a kind of participatory cognition that provides us with access to the world (as she writes in the same part of her book: "reality does not become less real because we are part of it") and to other people (because of the primary socialization). Consequently, this perspective impels us to search for new tools and methods to legitimize thus acquired knowledge, and mainly, to abandon the idea of modern cognition but also the mythical ideal of (not only European) culture: *bios theoreticos*. Peter Sloterdijk devotes an enthralling essay to the abandonment of the great cultural meta-narrative in which he presents that the most privileged and appreciated form of cognition – from the Platonic contemplation of ideas, through Husserl's *epoche* and ancient Indian metaphysical thought, to modern mysticisms – was that which became the one of a disembodied, isolated, and disinterested observer "without qualities" who watches human life spectacle from the heights of transcendent "nowhere."

Sloterdijk argues that the mythical observer who for thousands of years guaranteed the possibility of truthful and full cognition of reality's essence is (perhaps irrevocably) gone because of acrimonious attacks of modern and contemporary "doubters." Sloterdijk lists ten most important factors leading to the death of the immortal Observer who stays in eternal, and seemingly safe, "lethargy": the anchoring of the theory in practice; rejection of the fiction of cognitive independence; undermining of the fiction of unbiasedness through the assumption of an inherent game of interests and involvements; influence of the Heideggerian "being-thrown-into-the world," and the ontological dimension of his concept of mood, on the crisis of theoretical cognition; wavering of faith in disinterested cognition in natural sciences; subversive influence of existentialism; revealing of the sham of objective theory by sociology of knowledge; feminism's role in

65 K. Hastrup, A Passage to Anthropology: Between Experience and Theory (London: 1995), pp. 50–51.

debunking objectivism's fiction created by "masculine" authority; the role of neuroscience in challenging the purity of cognition, and discovery of connections between logic and affectivity; exposure of the scientist and expert – thanks to Bruno Latour and others – as entangled in interests, emotions, cognitive limitations of the individuals not of the "external ambassador from the world of ideas."[66]

However exhaustive we consider this description to be, Sloterdijk's makes us aware of the global dimension and the historic nature of the forthcoming change, which comes with as many questions and perils as potential cognitive and existential benefits. I refer to Haraway and Hastrup's optimistic concepts of overcoming the aporia between the universal and particular, neutral and involved, the position of observer and participant, impersonal statements of facts and personalized and positioned knowledge, as well as Sloterdijk's apocalyptic vision of the ghostly Observer's departure, in order to confront them with a local, specific, and quite complicated case that unveils yet unsolved issues. For me, an example of that is the idea of "self-colonization" coined by Alexander Kiossev, a Bulgarian art historian. At first glance, his idea, quite popular in Poland, has features of ground-breaking innovation. Kiossev writes:

> The concept of self-colonizing can be used for cultures having succumbed to the cultural power of Europe and the west without having been invaded and turned into colonies in actual fact. Historical circumstances transformed them into an extracolonial "periphery," lateral viewers... It is important to emphasize again that the colonial imagination did not captivate some already existing, stable, eternal or primordial cultures. Self-colonization took place at a point where the small and marginal nations sprang forth; it was entwined with the act of imagining their "imagined community"... The metaphor "self-colonization" has "self" in it—not because some already existing nations colonized them—but because their own "Selves"; namely cultural identities emerged as a spin-off in the process of Euro-colonial hegemony, in an asymmetrical symbolic exchange with the colonial center... In this attempt they took up or created a set of categories, codes, and patterns whereby they could deliberate their own: the "universal" categories as enlightenment, freedom, democracy, state, independence, sovereignty, universality, and even the notions of "specifics," "authenticity," and "our own," in the national meaning of the latter.[67]

66 P. Sloterdijk, The Art of Philosophy. Wisdom as a Practice, pp. 124–131.

67 A. Kiossev, "The Self-Colonizing Metaphor," in: Cultural Aspects of the Modernisation Process (Oslo: 1995) http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/s/self-colonization/the-self-colonizing-metaphor-alexander-kiossev.html.

Indeed, Kiossev's idea is revolutionary in the literal sense of the term. He proposes to reverse and scrutinize the existing notions and models of acculturation, development, and absorption of culture, which, since the dawn of anthropology, starting from evolutionists and diffusionists, were associated with the assimilation and transformation of cultural norms and patterns deemed as a universal legacy, "common good" without any political or ideological charge. However, it is also a fact that the notions of culture and colony, and consequently colonization, have a common etymological origin by no accident. As Terry Eagleton observes, "cultivation is exclusive to the self-improving individuals. People get cultivated by other beings, primarily, by a political state." Hence, "the metaphor of culture as a form of imprisonment. We are prisoners of this image of enslavement."[68] After all, culture is still most commonly understood "nominally," as the existing world of order and meaning, including in particular: the normative symbolic human behavior system, and thus, it indeed implies the development process of enforced cultural norms and patterns. Similarly to the subjectivization process, for example, through interpellation (Althusser), or *assujettissement* (Foucault), culture implies adopting a role and subordinating to the behavioral scenarios imposed by the discourse authority.

However, with his idea, Kiossev is not playing an arbitrary game of concepts but rather takes the assumptions of the postcolonial method of analysis to their extreme consequences. After all, if the purpose is to deconstruct the seemingly neutral concepts and structures and to unveil the power relations, hidden hierarchies, and valuations, imbedded in relationships of dominance and subjugations, own and foreign, privileged and stigmatizing, then this work brought to completion leaves no place for anything that could be deemed as neutral; not charged; universal; or objective. Therefore, cultures do not acquire shape and identity thanks to the use, exchange, or transformation of ideas existing in transcultural circulation but they "self-colonize" in this process and simultaneously doom themselves to unoriginality, a stigma of "inferiority" and dependence, deepened by deprecating images of themselves assimilated with "strange" patterns.

A natural consequence of thus reinterpreted acculturation process is frustration, resentment, xenophobia and they are almost inevitable in Kiossev's essentialist vision of cultures supposedly divided into "perennial" or "primordial" and dependent or derivative; the first group (mainly, the western cultures) is

68 T. Eagleton, The Idea of Culture (Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), pp. 14, 137. This aspect of the notion of culture is addressed also by W. J. Burszta, Świat jako więzienie kultury. Pomyślenia (Warsaw: 2008).

allegedly genetically equipped with identity and growth capabilities, whereas the second (primarily, the cultures of Middle-Eastern Europe) are already source-convicted to emulation and dependence (not incidentally, "slave-like" etymology of the name "Slavs" comes to mind). Interestingly, Kiossev does not refer to anthropological tradition indicating the process of hybridization and translation as basic mechanisms of cultural development, neither does he indicate any alternative for the cultures that develop later, nor does he define his own attitude and point of view; Kiossev makes his ironic argument "from anywhere and nowhere" by enjoying the benefits of the external observer which at the same time he challenges in his own discourse.

I will not continue to elaborate on this line of thought, even though its consequences of are worthy of further analysis.[69] If I invoke this example, it is only because I want to point out a more general problem which theories in action face. By accepting the immanent perspective exclusively and cultivating (even to the point of substantializing) not only differences but also the psychologically and physically personalized situated knowledge and the culture of involuntary and unintentional participation – by doing so, theories in action have finally faced the problem of identifying and naming the unburdened, neutral, common, and general. For example, postcolonialism, which divides everything into the familiar and the foreign, hampers – if not precludes – talking about the common and shared. Indeed, the same applies to gender studies, which by marking everything with gender differences, marginalize what is most common among people. Likewise, it is true of memory studies if we consider, for instance, the symptomatic evolution of the witness status from the uninvolved spectator to bystander (after all, the culture of participation rejects the position of non-involvement and lack of responsibility).

Thus, it looks like the world of immanence generates not only the ecstatic experience of contact with the reality of life but also a sense of deadlock or cognitive imprisonment.[70] It seems essential for theory in action to produce a new formula of objectivism: for instance, by defending and legitimizing the unavoidable bias of "situated objectivism" in action or by exhibiting the advantages of participatory cognition, the "objectivism of participation" (hence the importance of Haraway and Hastrup's manifestos); or by attempting to synthesize the results

69 Joanna Fomina captures interesting ideas in her essay "Integracja europejska jako samokolonizacja? Zawłaszczenie teorii postkolonialnej przez polskich eurosceptyków," in: Czas Kultury, No. 4/2016.

70 Cf., for example, G. Deleuze, Immanence: A Life (Thousand Oaks: 1997).

of critical work by forming a confederated alliance of the Objective Observer's adversaries (Sloterdijk); or even by following earlier developed paths, such as searching for "empirically-based universals" – after all, Anna Wierzbicka's program is an attempt to resolve similar linguistic dilemmas – in other humanistic and social-science fields than linguistics; or by giving, in to Adorno's alluring tropes (and tropisms) of abandoning the authoritative, expropriating, and "imperial" knowledge of the modern subject in favor of the appreciation of the actively passive knowledge, which achieves its truth and "objectivism" – in both senses of the term – at the stage of "felt contact with objects."[71]

We can go on with that list at great length, but what remains most likely is that the new formula of objectivism will emerge in other, unpredictable ways. Historians of knowledge and science know only too well that the research process and theoretical activity never stop, even though their established formulas may find themselves in deadlock. Still, new theoretical practices may already be in an embryonic, pre-conceptual, unattainable state of current structures or frameworks of feeling, or only aspire to the scientific status (including humanistic professionalism). Moreover, as any other work, current theory in action is unpredictable because it is ruled by divergence, not convergence, and it is not possible to predict its shape, nor is it possible to anticipate its results.

71 T.W. Adorno, "Finale" (153), in: his, Minima Moralia…, p. 247.

4. The Other is in Us: Identity in the Times of Mobility (A Few Remarks on the Polish Experience)

4.1. Introductory Remarks

Migration processes have such a profound influence on politico-historical, socioeconomic, and cultural-identity changes in global and local contexts that the twentieth century began to be described as the "century of mobility," and the first fifteen years of the twenty-first century have emphasized these processes even more. By mobility, I understand any coercive or voluntary movements of people, namely, emigration, immigration, deportation, displacement, relocation, or repatriation. Provided we agree that the identity of individuals and communities gains its form in a close connection with the environment in which human life happens, then its change should activate the identity-oriented work, which, at least to a minimal extent, redefines the established identity.

Certainly, this is one of the crucial issues among the concerns of the new humanities'; and the reason for that is its individual and collective importance, and the extent to which it is saturated with emotions, trauma experience, conflicting arguments, competing memory policies, or identity projects. In this context, the Polish experience remains an area of an open conflict, which my following remarks will surely not resolve. In fact, their only purpose is to confront this issue with a handful of commonplace remarks (which, to be sure, may not be that commonplace to everyone).

In the modern period, the identity strategies were situated between two radical positions (both having historically and geographically universal origins). The first one is best explained by the utopia of non-belonging, free mobility of individuals and communities unrestricted by any barriers of private or local "worlds." It is well described by Robert Musil at the beginning of *The Man Without Qualities* in the narrator's ironic remark: "The excessive weight attached to the question where one is goes back to nomadic times, when people had to be observant about feeding-grounds."[1] Today, we find various permutations of it in, say, philosophical-anthropological reflection, such as Rosi Braidotti's concept

1 R. Musil, The Man Without Qualities, trans. E. Wilkins & E. Kaiser (New York: 1965), p. 4.

of "nomadic subjects" or in Nigel Rapport's neo-Kantian book on the concept of man with a telling title: *Anyone: The Cosmopolitan Subject of Anthropology*.[2]

The second extreme is embodied in the myth of familiarity, of one's own irreplaceable spiritual inner self and "own place on Earth" generating phantasms of internal purity, exceptionality, indigenousness, and value along with the originality of what emerged in isolation and independently of any exterior processes or influences. At the dawn of modernism, Wacław Berent gave an apt description of this myth:

> today's familiarity, being dogmatically farfetched to any prominent manifestation of contemporary creativity is ready to soon become an unbearable tyranny for the mind. In time, however, reluctance and prejudice toward awakening, criticism, and "half modernism" come to the aid. – Here opens a wide and comfortable path of virtue for anyone who wishes to become "purely an artist," "purely a visual artist," "purely a spontaneous person," a beautiful violet in a folksy field of cabbage, a primrose on home manure, always "from divine spark," always familiarly naive, always an idiot.[3]

The last insult is not just an expression of Berent's straightforward out-spoken personality but also evidence of his "ear" for etymological overtones: after all, *idiotes* are people uninterested in public matters, who turn their back on the world, focus primarily on themselves, and are satisfied with cultivating their inner self without trying to confront it with the "external world."

The Polish experience is situated beyond these extremities as being a paradigmatic example of a cultural melting pot in which multi-ethnical, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-religious phenomena and processes have clashed and sublimated into original forms. Suffice it to remember – with a bit of shame – the example from school. The oldest known Polish sentences were spoken by foreigners: the first one – by a Ruthenian soldier in the Tartar army (*Biegajcie, biegajcie* – Eng. Run, run); the second by a Pole from the Silesian division of the

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2 Nigel Rapport, Anyone, The Cosmopolitan Subject of Anthropology (Berghahn Books, 2012); Cf.: T. Rakowski, "Nieustająca zdolność do działania. Nigela Rapporta antropologia wolności," in: Kolokwia antropologiczne. Problemy współczesnej antropologii społecznej, ed. by M. Buchowski & A. Bentkowski (Poznań: 2014); Rosi Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory (New York: 2011).

3 Wacław Berent, "Fryderyk Nietzsche. 'Z psychologii sztuki.' Tłumaczenie i dopiski Wacława Berenta," in: Pisma rozproszone. Utwory prozą. Utwory poetyckie. Szkice literackie i publicystyczne. Listy, introduction, edition of text, critical appendix by R. Nycz, fragment concerns chapters "Idei w ruchu rewolucyjnym" and "Onegdaj," and Wacław Bolecki's appendix and commentaries to these outlines (Cracow: 1992), p. 109.

Piast dynasty (*Gorze nam się stało* – Eng. a tragedy is upon us); the third by a Czech, Boguchwał (*Daj, ać ja pobruszę, a ty poczywaj* – Eng. Let me, I shall grind, and you take a rest). The first Polish-German phrase book was published by a Silesian, Hieronim Wietor, in Cracow (ordered by German colonists), whereas the first victim of church censorship was a German Szwajtpolt Fiol who was imprisoned (and subsequently acquitted) for printing Orthodox religious books. Of course, we can go on with that list. Actually, from the early days till the end of the Second World War, we are dealing with the fact that the Polish identity and culture grew in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-lingual environment.

A new situation did not arise until the postwar period when xenophobia-generating ideologies and policies overlapped with geographic-territorial, ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic changes. Once we realize that the actual changes were never deep enough to justify the conviction about Poland's indigenous ethnic-cultural purity, then it is astonishing to realize that in a span of three generations such a far-reaching change of attitudes and mentality could occur without interruptions. Using four space probes, as it were, sent to different parts of the Polish past, I attempt to find the proof which would explain this mental evolution and ways or paths to escape the identity deadlock. The end of the Second World War is my reference and starting point because of the already mentioned reason and because it is still an active threshold for the living memory of contemporary people.

4.2. Polish People's Republic and Today: Divided Memory and Displaced Society

1.

First of all, it is important to note that the past of the Polish People's Republic (PRL) – since the very moment when the PRL itself became the past, which is already a quarter century – has constantly haunted, tormented, and allured us with the images of former failures or successes, imposing itself, like a filter, onto the perception of contemporary times. The communist past quickly became an enduring, crucial fragment of the vivid memory in the present day, which at times helps us understand (past and present) private and public behaviors, choices, and views, while on different occasions making us perplexed about them. However, it continues to frame our thinking about the present and the future, as much as it forms the current shape of our knowledge about the PRL past. Perhaps, one of the reasons behind the situation is that although our library of works and

syntheses about communist Poland is abundant and increasingly expanding, it did not translate at all into a widely accepted collective memory which would be effectively worked through. After all, our (individual, family, environmental) memory –the memory of everyone who remembers the PRL experience – seems to be permanently shared and therefore divided.[4] First, it is because memory distinguishes and isolates what is true of our own experience from that which (seemingly) is collectively shared; and it opposes the latter kind of experience, subversively undermining and decomposing it into a constellation of individual cases or stories. Second, our memory of the PRL is shared with others – in the sense that we share one's fate or opinion; therefore, it takes part in the suprain-dividual realm, perhaps to the point of co-creating it. It seems that everywhere where – as in cultural memory or culture in general – we are unable to separate "bare" facts from their values and meanings (that which we think happened from what actually happened), unable to establish what it really was that was, the connection between the individual and the collective does not constitute a homogenous whole but rather a node or knot in which differences and kinships are a factor of unity and distinction to one another; a factor which antagonistically connects the divided community of our memory.

I think that the task ahead is to carefully and thoroughly describe the particular idiosyncratic threads, which form this collective memory node. It seems to make more sense than exposing and rejecting these threads in search for some true form of collective experience. The Polish literature examined in this aspect provides prolific material that documents memories of past multiculturalism, life in the multicultural environment, and invasive attempts to enforce the image of homogeneous ethnic-cultural purity onto reality. Here, I think about the Polish migrant literature, the mythical literature of the Galician Austria-Hungary, the memory literature of the Eastern Borderlands, and the literature of "small homelands..." One of the last inquiries into the PRL memory is the one that, first, heads toward the so-called literature of the Recovered Territories hidden deeply in the archives and condemned to oblivion (forever, as it seemed), which is a schematic, biased, and often journalistic response to the propagandist claim to present the Piast genealogy of these lands (ethnically and culturally homogenous). Second, it heads toward the testimonial literature written by displaced settlers. Third, it heads toward the contemporary postmemory literature which

4 Cf. the account of shared and divided community proposed by Jean-Luc Nancy, Inoperative Community, trans. P. Connor, L. Garbus, M. Holland, and S. Sawhney (Minneapolis: 1991).

turns this palimpsest memory inscribed in landscapes, human fates, and experience into its own task, an object of literary expression. As it turns out, the repressed comes back in the empathic-critical reading and takes the floor given by the critic; a critic who breaks through a memory narrative; whose proposopoeian figure becomes a novel character or narrator in the postmemory literature.

Although this research current largely draws from new vocabularies and methods of contemporary theory and criticism, their application does not blur historically specific outlines of the problem of a general dimension (migration of peoples and its variants in the modernity and postmodernity). On the contrary, by setting the problem in the comparative context, this current makes it possible to grasp its universal and locally specific aspects. The latter has (or at least: might have) a substantial meaning for the experience of PRL Poland.

2.

Let us note that after the Second World War, two-thirds of Poland's territory was, euphemistically speaking, moved and two-thirds of its inhabitants were relocated. Additionally, there occurred (or there was the risk) of the relocation of the Warmians, Mazurians, Silesians, Ukrainians, Lemkos, Kashubians, and Boykos… Then there were also the new settlers moving into the houses of murdered Jewish residents and owners. Let us add peasant workers relocated to new cities and construction sites. Finally, on top of that, there were new residents of postwar Warsaw. Can anyone doubt that two hundred thousand prewar Varsovians who died in the Warsaw Uprising would not have given a different – mental, cultural, political – face not only to the postwar capital but perhaps also to whole postwar Poland?

To these relocations of people and communities within postwar borders, we should add emigration processes, which to an important extent were enforced or administratively "stimulated" by the authorities. I have in mind two particular emigrations processes: emigration of the Polish Jews in the fifties, sixties, and seventies (around hundred-thousand people), and post-Solidarity emigration in the eighties (around one million people). Although the first emigration may seem less demographically important, it was a crucial experience for the Polish postwar mentality and its resolved memory of the Polish-Jewish relations during the war, Holocaust, and postwar period; furthermore, it was crucial for the conflicting attitudes hindering the chance to create a collective identity. The latter was so far the last mass political emigration with a relatively short institutional span and activity but with long-term mental, existential, social, and economic consequences not only for the emigrants.

To put the main thesis in a brief and more radical way: in the perspective of such convoluted historical necessities, intentional actions of the communist regime, and fate, Polish society is a displaced, de-territorialized, and dislocated society. A society in which (almost) nobody is "at home," in his/her own place, in his/her own environment; in which anyone can be deprived of his/her place and/or owes his/her place to new authorities. Obviously, living outside a friendly safe space weakens individuals and communities' identity, will, and agency-based activity. It leads to a state of suspension but thus also dependence (incapacitation and "external containment"). Moreover, when a human being cannot find support within him/herself (through his/her own legacy, own environment), he/she seeks it in a superior community, namely a religious, national, or even ideological community.

To sum up this too elliptic argument: a society that is not in the right place is a society without its (own) place. Hence, it is a society for which there is no place in a structure governed by authority. Therefore, destruction and exclusion of the society (social bonds, structure, or organization) were significant factors thanks to which the PRL regime triumphed and thrived. In turn, the emergence of society, reconstruction of social organization, and the reactivation of social bonds beyond communist control had ultimately demolished communist institutions and led to the fall of the PRL.

3.

From today's perspective, we should add that the Solidarity resurrection in the late 1980s was based on a short-lived emotional community "confederately" formed against the regime authorities but not settled well enough in democratic institutions of public life and commonly shared convictions in the collective memory and public opinion. With the passage of time, which is clearly visible after a quarter of a century, this community began to disintegrate and divide again, to be subjected to remission of old antagonisms, compulsively recurring affective traumas and superstitions (pre-judices), and eruption of memory policies (partly, but also more and more often stimulated and ideologically instrumentalized by the authorities). Unable to make any sensible diagnosis of this extremely opaque situation, I have chosen Polish literature as my guide to point to just one (albeit significant) driving factor behind the contemporary confusion of the Polish mentality.

I am thinking here of a confrontation – perhaps not yet conducted? – of contemporary Polish migration literature, created by the participants of the last great migration wave (no longer political, but an economic one), which was possible

thanks to Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004 (about two million so far) with the domestic literature of that period. In migration literature, Polish policy and memory play a surprisingly insignificant, functioning mostly as a context or justification for protagonists' economic-social-existential trouble. Whereas in domestic literature, Polish historical memory and policy are very much a driving force and main topic, and the rest is a consequence of decisions made in these fields. In migration literature, local experiences are the results of being placed in the globalized world, while in domestic literature, it is global processes that break down, modify, and profile themselves in the local perspective.

The difference in experience articulated in the two dimensions of contemporary Polish literature seems to be the most significant, because it is the most interesting in the adopted context. To put it in a nutshell: migration literature presents, in general, the experience of the protagonist who finds him/herself in the position of the other, the stranger in a society in which he/she struggles to function and find him/herself. However, domestic literature often (but not only) shows the protagonist who confronts others or strangers or common attitudes toward the otherness or strangeness and when it does so, it describes different but complementary burdens of a position of the other or stranger, someone from beyond the economic or social realm. I would not like to foretell another split in Polish literature into "domestic" and "migrant," nor do I want to hierarchize their literary and aesthetic or artistic values. On the contrary, I would rather call for a complementary confrontation and equal inclusion (in cultural analysis) of the articulated experiences.

4.

However, the alternativeness of "taken" positions signals a substantial difficulty in forming identity strategies. Julia Kristeva, among others, indirectly points to that in her already classic and important book, *Strangers to Ourselves*,[5] in which she argues that we find the "stranger" in the others to try to recognize in them our own denied and repressed traits. However, in this Bakhtinian philosophy of a working man, Kristeva does not take up the most essential (for me) proposal contained in Bakhtin's "exotopic" identity concept (discussed below), which

5 J. Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: 1991); cf. T. Kitliński, Obcy jest w nas. Kochać według Kristevej (Cracow: 2001). Cf. the inspirational book by P. Czapliński Poruszona mapa. Wyobraźnia geograficzno-kulturowa polskiej literatury przełomu XX i XXI wieku (Cracow: 2016), which analyses the issue in other aspects and from other perspectives.

consists in not looking for oneself in the other, but the other way round: first, in oneself, try to find this defiled other and stranger. If one reads these two wings of Polish literature as complementary discourses on Poland and the Pole today, then one must undoubtedly admit to something (and admit that Bakhtin was right).

First of all, as our contemporary literature shows us, I am the other and the stranger, whom I deny, do not want to know, disregard, and am afraid of; second, it is always me who is in some way not at home, alienated, displaced, exposed to the risk of inferiority (this was mentioned above); third, without negotiating (working out, building up, finding) community bonds of acceptable "being with myself", that is with the environment in which I live, no satisfactory, more permanent form of "being myself" can succeed. The "self" has to be understood in the individual as much as in the collective dimension. Thus, perhaps the most puzzling element of mental-affective-memory conundrum is precisely this environmental "ourness" and "home-growness," from which our indigenous community draws its xenophobic energies and affectations, creating phantasms of essential purity. The evidence of the momentous role of this literature (of both wings) is that its probes into collective memory and collective forgetting and the nature and affects of communal (un)consciousness allow us to come closer to solving – or at least understanding – the conundrum.

Of course, this is but a bare (amateur and grotesque) outline of the possible argumentation in which geopolitics allies with poetic and cultural anthropology to seek the fundamental issue (probably one among many) that determines choices, behaviors, and solutions in private, public, existential as much as political, ideological, quotidian, aesthetic, literary, and artistic, or, speaking broadly, cultural realm.

4.3. The Strategy of the Other: Polish Postcolonial and/or Post-dependence Studies

1.

The history of Polish society, literature, and culture may constitute a rich and complex, but also almost paradigmatic case study of postcolonial categories of domination and subordination. Suffice it to say that, at the outset of the early modern period, that is between the sixteenth and eighteenth century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth grew to be an empire in Middle-East Europe, only to fall to political nonexistence for more than a hundred and twenty years after it lost independence in 1795. The Polish lands and their inhabitants were incorporated

into the structures of the three neighboring empires of modern Europe: Austria, Prussia, and Russia, and subjected in each case to slightly different methods of colonization and strategies of center-periphery dependence.

Although the year 1918 brought the rebirth of state independence as the Second Polish Republic, it did not last long. The outbreak of the Second War World in 1939 brought about subsequent obliteration of the Polish statehood and subsequent division of the Polish lands and inhabitants between rivaling empires of the German Third Reich and the Soviet Union. Even though the end of the Second World War in 1945 prompted the restoration of the Polish statehood under the banner of the Polish People's Republic, the country largely lacked sovereignty, as it was a client state of the Soviet Union. It was a state with two-thirds of its borders moved, with radically changed ethnic makeup and similarly reduced territory, as compared to the prewar period.

It was not until the events of 1989 and 1990 that Poland – returning to the name of the Republic of Poland – regained its sovereignty (which occurred also in other states of Middle-Eastern Europe). Furthermore, only then, did old unresolved traumas or, contrary, memories or phantasms of former glory began to surface from under the layers of suppressions, silencings, and deformations of the official history. They became the ingredients of rivaling memory policies and a subject of critical analysis.

2.

I believe that this caricatural summary of the Polish history was indispensable to understand the palimpsest complexity of the issue and the reasons for a certain delay with which postcolonial, post-dependence, and (to some extent) postimperial studies are turning to the topic, be it a narrow Polish or a broader Middle-European context. There is no reason to elaborate on them in greater detail. However, it is worth signalizing their separate genealogies and conceptual networks which cross, overlap, and intertwine with each other with respect to a common problem syndrome – and they do so in a way that does not allow them to be divided between various disciplinary fields.

Although postcolonial studies stem from literary-cultural research, already in the books by founding fathers, namely Edward Said and Frantz Fanon, we can see an effort to transgress these disciplines to the social, historical, and political issues. During the first period, that is two decades, postcolonial studies developed solely around the issues of the Western world which came down to an analysis of complex and changing relations of domination and subjugation between the so-called first and third world (former colonies of the first world). Only at the

end of the nineteen-nineties because of a few articles but mostly because of the foundational monograph study *Imperial Knowledge* by the Polish Russianist and Slavist Ewa Thompson published in 2002 (Polish edition in 2002, Ukrainian in 2006, Belorussian in 2009, Chinese in 2009, Russian in 2007), postcolonial analysis entered the issues of the so-called second world (relations between Russia, later the Soviet Union, with neighboring countries and nations dominated by it) and slowly became a legitimate humanistic discipline. Noteworthy, the works of French historian Daniel Beauvois played a similar "cornerstone" role in Poland for research on Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a colonizing state. These books include *Les confins de l'ancienne Pologne: Ukraine, Lituanie, Biélorussie XVIe–XXe siècles* from 1988 and, above all, *Trójkąt ukraiński: szlachta, carat i lud na Wołyniu, Podolu i Kijowszczyźnie 1793–1914* published in Lublin in 2005.

Although the discussion ongoing over the past several years among Polish researchers did not lead to a full consensus regarding validity of using this definition, it made the issue signaled by it becoming one of the most significant in scientific research and that has brought the first essays on the topic, such as Maria Janion's *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna*, or monographs, namely *Teoria – literatura – dyskurs. Pejzaż postkolonialny* (2013) by Dariusz Skórczewski or *Polska Szeherezada. Swoje i obce z perspektywy postkolonialnej* (2015) by Dorota Wojda. All in all, we may point out that the "institutionalization" process of the postcolonial studies conducted in Middle-Eastern Europe is still ongoing and at different development stages in different countries. It seems like it faces the longest way in Russian studies conducted by Russians as we may gather from negative and very emotional reactions to Ewa Thompson's book.

In general, the second orientation, namely the post-dependence studies have their roots in socio-economic research, to put it more precisely: in the research on the conditions of South American countries, which became the empirical base for the dependency theory. This theory explained the mechanisms behind countries remaining in the state of underdevelopment with external and not internal factors, with the strategy of the imperial centers toward the peripheries. Immanuel Wallerstein developed the best-known version of the theory, advancing it to a global theory of shifts in the economy and social structure. On the one hand, the recent years have brought a critical revaluation of dependency theory's theses, and on the other, its radiation on the sociocultural and historical-political studies. Examples include the books *Inventing Eastern Europe* by Larry Wolff (1994) and *Scenarios of Power* (2006) by Richard Wortman. This current includes also the analyses of the Polish post-dependence discourse understood as a collective term for a set of institutionalized meaningful articulation practices, which organize human experience, identity projects, social, political, and

cultural relationships, axiological and symbolical collective imagination, forms of perceiving reality which were undertaken after the dependence situation had ended but almost always bore its traces. These efforts, which combine postcolonial and post-independence inspirations, resulted in already numerous collective volumes published among others by Post-Dependence Studies Centre, and two authorial books: *Opowieści "skolonizowanego/kolonizatora"* (2010) by Hanna Gosk and *Fantomowe ciało króla* (2012) by Jan Sowa.

Finally, let us turn to the most recent orientation, which remains in an embryonic state in the Polish critical and literary world, that is, the postimperial studies. They stem from the politico-historical analyses of the present, and just like the previous orientations, from the critique of dependency theories. It seems that this is a still prevalent perspective as one may judge by the recent *Post-Imperial Democracies* (2010) by Stephen E. Hanson and *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story* (2011) by Dmitri Trentin. Postimperial studies, however, have their, increasingly strong and interesting, branches in other disciplines, too. Rita Sakr's *Monumental Space in the Post-Imperial Novel* (2012) may serve as a case in point. For Sakr proposes to read the palimpsest monumental spaces filled, on the one hand, with cultural memory, ideological missions, symbolic monuments of domination and violence, and, on the other hand, with the subversive practice of emancipation and democratization exercised through actions undertaken by individuals and communities in the public realm.

To be sure, Rita Sakr does not analyze monumental spaces or Russian novels. However, the chapter "Świątynia i pałac" (Temple and Palace) from Ryszard Kapuścinski's *Imperium* (Empire) proves how cognitively rewarding might be the perspective emerging from a combination of memory research, geopolitics, and postimperial literature. The chapter describes the fluctuating status and functions of the Moscow square where during the imperial times the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was erected only to be then destroyed under Stalin's order to make room for the planned Palace of the Soviets which, eventually, was not constructed. The remaining foundations of the Cathedral were adapted for the swimming pool; however, that was not the end of the story as in recent years – which Kapuściński could no longer see or describe – the cathedral was reconstructed. Apparently, we live in postsecular times. It is highly probable that both this topic and this type of research may become an eagerly undertaken study subject by literary and cultural scholars, including not only those from Russia. Finally, because of its critical reception by Russian readers, it cannot be excluded that Kapuścinski's *Imperium* itself may in the future play a founding role in cultural postimperial studies conducted by Russian researchers, which could be

similar to the mentioned books by "foreign" authors speaking about the topic "reserved" for "native" representatives of a given culture.

3.

The eruption of the traumatic past, intensity, diversity of rivaling memory policies, and the reactivation of religious and parareligious needs and practices in the community's public life as much as in the individual realm create a new problematic field of the contemporary mentality which has recently become a subject for the postcolonial, post-dependence, and postimperial studies. Their effectiveness, however, is heavily dependent on accepting widely shared comparative perspectives, confrontation of memory discourses, dialogical exchange of experiences, and negotiation of meanings in the relations between nations and cultures. These, however, remain at a deadlock.

As it seems, the same applies to individual attempts at working through one's own traumatic experiences. I find a contemporary shift in experiencing human temporality the most intriguing among many essential matters emerging in this area. If modernity left us with the notion of humanity as an "unfinished project" (to paraphrase Jürgen Habermas' concept), focused on the future, outlining its rational plans and visions, striving to manage and colonize it, anticipating it, and subjugating the present and past to it, then right now we are witnessing a colossal transformation of these relations and the modern concept of subjectivity. The future emerges as unimaginable; it puts us at the risk of the unpredictable and disorienting. Like the present deprived of its own name, it allows us to define it only as a post-past – in reference to what it leaves behind, what it is not, and what it follows. In the situation when the future appears to be absent and closed to us, the suppressed triumphantly returns.

A short poem "Pogłos" (Echo) by Ewa Lipska magnificently captures this issue:

Droga Pani Schubert, nie mogę wytłumić
powracającej przeszłości. Hałaśliwych kłótni
języków obcych. Nie mogę wyciszyć głośnej
gorączki naszych rozpalonych głów. Ucieczek
z domu. Przenikliwych zapachów pogrzebów
i mięty. Życia w cudzysłowie. Nie mogę wyizolować
mniejszości z krzyku większej całości. Co mówi na
to lekarz? To tylko nie leczony, chroniczny pogłos.

Dear Mrs. Schubert, I cannot silence
the returning past. Loud quarrels
of foreign languages. I cannot mute the loud
fever of our burning heads. Escapes

from home. Penetrating smell of funerals
and mint. Life in quotation marks. I cannot isolate
the minority out of majority's cry. And what does
the doctor says? It's just an untreated chronic echo.[6]

This is how the long arm of the past reaches us and turns out to be not only active and persistent in the present (as it triggers consequences), determining (and, at times, stigmatizing) our future actions, but also open and somewhat unwillingly prone to changes. If we were to seek the circumstances in which our old traumas, griefs, shames, and addictions surface, come to the forefront, and take into possession, I would see it, most of all, in the present acknowledgment of the past's power which – like echoes of past events and afterimages of landscapes left behind (let me adopt Władysław Strzemiński's notion of art theory into this "theory" of traumatic experience) – disrupts the perception of reality, disorientates, baffles and smothers any rational projects of the future or conceals them with a network of compulsive memories of the past.

"What is done is done," goes the saying which declares the necessity to accept the irrevocable ultimateness of the event that took place. Constant echoes in our heads and annoying mirages of our memories would actually evidence the validity of a different belief, namely of the impossibility of accomplishing, finishing the event, of recognizing it as closed until it has resounded in all its consequences and has been worked through and ceased to be sustained by the unreconciled imagination and unreconciled memory.

4.

It can be said that in the simplest dimension, the value of the postcolonial and post-dependence cognitive perspective lies in stressing the necessity of the perspective of "the other"; that is to say, in the realization, thematization, and critical evaluation of something which the community usually overlooks. After all, such were the beginnings of this orientation and to this day it is a source of its strength. Suffice it to think about the roles of the Palestinian Edward Said and the Algerian Frantz Fanon in the critical reinterpretation of the European image of the Orient. There is also the American scholar Larry Wolf who critically analyzed the historical genealogy of the politico-discursive shape of Middle-Eastern European countries, and there is the French writer Daniel Beauvois who raised awareness of the colonial aspects of the Polish politico-cultural tradition

6 E. Lipska, "Pogłos" in: E. Lipska, Pogłos (Cracow: 2010), p. 43.

or the Polish-American researcher Ewa Thompson who developed the issue of colonizing-imperial aspect of the Russian culture and its representatives.

I treat Lipska's poem as evidence of literature's "xenological" value. Indeed, literature apparently has not only the status of an ordinary discursive medium or the representation of the "complete" content message which emerged somewhere and sometime else but also of an active, rhetorically sophisticated, and imaginatively dynamic bearer, who at the same time embodies and profiles a unique content of the affective-intellectual potential of collective memory and human experience in the intelligible and communicative way. In this way, literature becomes the unique discursive tool in which – as in the other's eyes – we may see our own repressed, overlooked, and denied traits. Thus, it is a form of the other (or the other's discourse) that notices, records, enhances, develops, cleanses, and also hears, sees, and critically internalizes our suppressed and encrypted echoes and mirages that haunt so many (perhaps all) of us.

4.4. The Other Like Me: Three and a Half Comments to the Theoretically and Practically Current Issue

1.

Meeting the other, the relation "one of us vs the other," or "one's own vs the other's," within a divided community, the processes of diffusive intercultural permeation, hybridization, and fusion of what is different (which is conditioned not only by the imitative and dependent, but also the original and specific) – these problematics undoubtedly include some of the most crucial issues for the humanities and culture in the last century. It is not without reason that these issues have already brought to life a huge library of studies, commentaries, and conceptualizations in theoretical philosophy. It has also been obvious for a long time that it is an issue which does not reside solely in the space of academic dispute, but mainly in cultural reality with its growing historical, political, and social problems. Therefore, it could be said that this is one of the few areas where the broadly understood humanities can not only do something cognitively valuable, in terms of knowledge, but also social usefulness; depending on the effects of implemented programs of (socially) corrective, formative-educational, or political and cultural character.

To be sure, the problem is that the two main programs developed in this area remain at a deadlock. The first is the classically modern program of meeting the other in culturally universal categories developed by Euro-American anthropology of the first half of the twentieth century. The indisputable weight of

its achievements cannot obscure the fact that the anthropologist acting here as a participating observer translated particular forms and contents of the local culture into a "universal" vocabulary of description, namely – the vocabulary of the Euro-American anthropology of historical cognition. Over time, this Eurocentric version of universal and objective cognition began to reveal more and more distinctive features of knowledge-power: domination and subordination of the other. Regardless of the argument on the noble art of persuasion for the sake of the enriching value of learning about the other, the understanding "bending" over the singularity of the other also revealed a superior and condescending perspective that internally hierarchizes and takes the floor itself to speak on behalf of the other (but in the language of the one who "bends" over), while stigmatizing and marginalizing the other.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the criticism of the crypto-Eurocentric cognitive universalism stimulated the development of another influential model, namely multiculturalism, which already had its time of glory and success, a time that passed. If the first model preached that "everyone is the same, just not quite" (to paraphrase Homi Bhabba's famous formula), this model proposed a program based on the tolerant-pluralist (and relativist) recognition that – simply put – "people are different," because the cultures in which they participate, personal patterns, and experiences that define their identity are different. Consequently, multiculturalism's agenda assumed supporting all practices that reinforce and develop the identities of individuals and communities (however understood), rather than those which, from some external perspective, we would consider "universally" valuable and worthy of promotion. If in the first model, universalistic claims to know the truth generated cognitive disputes and ideological conflicts, then multiculturalism was to lead to resolving those conflicts by replacing disputes over beliefs with differences in subject positions; differences in opinions with differences in points of view.[7]

2.

Perhaps, I oversimplify these positions too radically and overlook many important consequences only to highlight one topic, namely understanding the other. The universal model leads to deforming the image of the other in the categories

7 I am inspired by W. B. Michaels's, The Shape of the Signifier (Princeton: 2006) (especially ch. "Posthistoricism"), and R. Leys's, From Guilt to Shame, Auschwitz and After (Princeton: 2007) (especially ch. "Shame Now").

of the dominant culture, while the multiculturalist model leads, in practice, to abandoning the attempt to understand the other, because eliminating the ideological discord suppresses the cognitive interest. According to these assumptions, cultures, just like human experiences, are equal as they are incomparable and disproportionate. Moreover, as identities are not convictions and they cannot be changed or challenged, we must learn to tolerate (stand) them. As long as normative (cultural, political, and state) systems of control over human behavior function effectively, there is no need to exceed the requirement of formal integration of ethnic communities in federated enclaves; nor do we need to try to understand their efforts, motivations, and peculiarities. Consequently, the cognitive task is limited to registering personal and cultural differences, while omitting the challenges of both the process of understanding and ethical engagement or responsibility. Interestingly, registering differences need not be solely in the nature of acceptance, as the attitudes of negation, rejection, and refusal to understand "other's" problems seem to have the same roots. Thus, the reversed side of multiculturalism's affirmation of cultural differences would be a refusal to be interested in others since they are others, not our own, not familiar but foreign, exemplified by reactions as: "it is none of my business."

"Somebody else's problem" (SEP) is a category of psychosocial analysis of behavior and attitudes (with abundant literature on the subject), which has been popularized in the Polish humanities mainly thanks to an excellent study *Cudze problemy. O ważności tego, co nieważne. Analiza dyskursu publicznego w Polsce* edited by Marek Czyżewski, Kinga Dunin, and Andrzej Piotrowski.[8] First published over a quarter-century ago, this volume still remains up-to-date as proven by recent numerous Internet articles with headings such as "Migrants are not my problem." Fear, shame, and guilt are the main three affective motives that stimulate the SEP practices which function in everyday life and public discourse, as described and presented by the authors. They may result in xenophobic attitudes contemporarily surfacing in variant forms of mentality and (anti)social behaviors. Only signaling this theme of the contemporary humanities and social sciences, I want to point out that the issue is not alien to modern culture, including the popular culture. Let us quote first two stanzas of the Polish rapper Fisz's song "To nie mój problem" (Not my problem),[9] in which both the high-humanistic

8 Cf. Cudze problemy. O ważności tego, co nieważne. Analiza dyskursu publicznego w Polsce, ed. by M. Czyżewski, K. Dunin, A. Piotrowski (Warsaw: 2010).

9 Fisz, 'To nie mój problem,' in: Zwierzę bez nogi, Emade, DJ Eprom 2011, http://teksty.org/fisz-emade.

models of cognition (quasi-universal and identity) are filtered through imaginations and notions of the popular culture by portraying – quite convincingly – a "habitus" of its typical representative:

Nie ma prawdy, są interpretacje
Mój kosmos ma cztery twarze
Od atomów po molekuły
Ten kosmos ciągle się kurczy
Dwie ćwiartki po lewej stronie
Dwie ćwiartki po prawej stronie
Trzeba się teraz opowiedzieć
Ale to nie jest mój problem
Ale to nie jest mój problem
Każdy aspekt jest skorelowany
Trzeba być czarny lub biały
Trzeba być Batman lub Zorro
Trzeba mieć dumę i honor
Jedynie słuszny trzeba mieć pogląd
Ale to nie jest mój problem
Ale to nie jest mój problem

(There are no truths, only interpretations
My cosmos has four faces
From atoms to molecules
My cosmos constantly shrinks
Two quarters on the left side
Two quarters on the right side
It is time to take sides
But it's not my problem
But it's not my problem
Every aspect is correlated
You have to be either black or white
You have to be Batman or Zorro
You have to be proud and honorable
You have to be of the right opinion
But it's not my problem
But it's not my problem)

Perhaps, it is worth adding that the analysis of the Polish mentality in terms of SEP ought to be continued, because current forms of this mentality extend beyond a safe, isolationist perspective excluding the other from the realm of individual attention and social visibility. They evidence increasingly radical attitudes of aggressive intolerance, symbolic violence, and eruption of affective-discursive "hate." It is an even more dangerous tendency as it leads from the neutral attitude

"Migrants are not my problem" (prevalent in the Internet comments in September of 2016) to active interventions under the slogan "Others/foreigners, go away!"[10] which show their unabashedly violent faces also in everyday human relations and in the real social space.

The second comment indirectly stems from current diagnoses and observations. From postwar times until now (with only a few interruptions), we have been dealing with the policy of xenophobia practiced not as a reaction to the actual changes in the reality, actual traits, and issues of Polish society but primarily as a tool of exercising power by authoritarian regimes and a tool of their particular legitimization by adjustment to mental pre-judices of the communities manifesting their native familiarity (mostly of peasant origins). Herta Müller's remark on this topic is certainly worth consideration and elaboration:

> All Eastern Europe was xenophobic. Today, we are dealing with this past xenophobia. Contempt for others originated in the dictatorship. It was initiated by the regimes and eagerly accepted by the societies. … Little has changed in the Eastern Europe of today. … Communist Eastern Europe "produced" refugees. No one has counted them to this day. And no one remembers them. Not even those shot during escapes, torn apart by dogs on the border, or those who drowned in the Danube. This is a pronounced gap in Eastern European self-awareness. And perhaps the main reason for contempt and cold-heartedness.[11]

The writer's recent observations about the Polish experience of the PRL and recent times[12] generally confirm such diagnosis on the Polish example. Perhaps, xenophobia is a way – for some, an efficient one – to cleanse and free oneself from the past, to chase away the repercussions and afterimage of the past which hamper accepting the present and its problems through blaming the "stranger" as a defined culprit and enemy; surely, however, such an approach does not bring

10 Or, more precisely: "This is Poland and everyone will find their place here as long as they do not sympathize with Muslim savages," "You are nobody, Mamed, because you fear abandoning Islam," "Let the goat eat pork and flawlessly sing the Polish anthem, then he will be forgiven... this is the only way" – commentaries from June 2017 addressed to Mamed Khalidov.

11 H. Müller, "Freiheit ist etwas, wovor manche Angst haben und andere nicht," text of the introduction during conference European Angst organized by Goethe-Institut, December 6–7, 2016 in Brussels, https://www.goethe.de/ins/pl/pl/kul/mag/20907619.html.

12 Cf., namely S. Twardoch, "Polska nie jest cywilizowanym państwem," interview with F. Memches, TVP Info, June 4th, 2017, https://www.tvp.info/32502997/szczepan-twardoch-polska-nie-jest-cywilizowanym-panstwem.

any prospects for the future. Either way, the testimonies of the critical collective self-knowledge are yet another argument for an urgent analysis of the problem and undertaking a "recovery" program, which the humanities and social sciences should precisely undertake.

3.

Perhaps, with their inherent deadlock and negative consequences, the discussed programs – which, let us note, rely on the dualistic idea of the relation between the I and the other as separate, autonomous monads – need alternative inspirations and solutions. Generally speaking, I believe that we should reverse the course of argumentation and thus acknowledge that our image in the eyes of the others and the capability to take up an external perspective and confront it with the internal image of ourselves which we cultivate – these are the essential, inherent parts of our self-knowledge, mature consciousness, and the critical self-cognition of both the community and individual. I am confident that only this movement – which is simple although perhaps not easy to make – may cause the development of inter-cultural relations, encounters, and dialogs to become something indispensable, necessary in everyday life, and of common interest to both individuals and communities.

There is an extremely useful category that may bring us closer to achieving this goal. We owe it to Mikhail Bakhtin, who is unquestionably one of the most original and relevant twentieth-century researchers of literature and culture. We are talking about "externality," one of the key concepts in Bakhtin's vocabulary. In his work about Bakhtin, Tzvetan Todorov proposed "internationalize" this hardly translatable term (by referring to Greek sources) and called it "exotopia," while the Polish translator, Danuta Ulicka, rendered it as "niewspółobecność" (non-copresence). Bakhtin introduced this term to his works (presumably, inspired by Johannes Cohn's "transgredience") already in the twenties and later on used it on frequent occasions, systematically expanding the spectrum of its application. Out of the technical concept describing "inter-literary" relations between an author and a protagonist, it became the universal category of the historical-cultural anthropology. I will skip the analysis of its general meanings, as it occupies a well-deserved distinguished place in contemporary Bakhtinology (and also for example in interpretation theory, postcolonial, or post-dependence studies). Moreover, it lets us treat it outside of its historical and "Bakhtinological" context as a relevant proposition for the transitory period, a bridge over the abysses of today's history, politics, and socio-mental attitudes and behaviors.

To put it in a nutshell, this approach consists in identifying the "shifted" position of the experiencing and cognizing subject always situated outside – in terms of time, space, nation, and culture – of its object (be it another object, subject, community, culture, or itself). However, most significantly, we should not perceive it as a vulnerability or an obstacle to overcome (for instance, through participation or empathy) but rather as an inherent feature of human (self-) knowledge, a condition of authentic understanding, and a trace of invention (creative discovery).

> Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. …
>
> It is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly … We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that it did not raise itself; we seek answers to our own questions in it; and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new[13]

One may say that in this approach, it is an originally elaborated but still a classically modern view on the value of the external perspective and confronting one's own image with the image in the eyes of the other (initiated in the modern European tradition with "strategy of the alien" in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and continued in the postcolonial and post-dependency studies). What is even more striking (and rarely noticed), in Bakhtin's works, there is indeed an innovative complement to this view. It leads the researcher to reject the idea of an individual and the national culture as a kind of closed container (the idea we owe to the Romantics, namely Schelling and Herder's concept of culture as a sphere or an island). As Bakhtin argues, and as we see in the quoted poem by Ewa Lipska, when it comes to the subject "Man has no internal sovereign territory, he is, wholly and always, on the verge; looking inside himself, he looks *into the eyes of the other*, or *through the eyes of the other*."[14] Bakhtin makes a similar argument about culture: "One must not … imagine the realm of culture as some sort

13 M. Bakhtin, Speech Genres and Other Late Essays, ed. by C. Emerson and M. Holquist, trans. V.W. McGee (Austin: 1986), p. 7.

14 Bakhtin, quoted in Philosophical Thought in Russia in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century, ed. by V. Lektorsky, M. Bykova (Bloomsbury: 2019).

of spatial whole , having boundaries but also having internal territory. The realm of culture has no internal territory: it is entirely distributed along the boundaries, boundaries pass everywhere, through its every aspect."[15]

Let us notice that from this perspective borders between the inside and the outside no longer distinguish the autonomous collective or individual identity of the whole but on the contrary, they run within it, or they even converge in (sometimes create) its center. After all, this whole is established on the borders, it has a status of a frontier territory in which the external becomes internalized and the part considered as most personal reveals its external genealogy. Above all, I see the value of Bakhtin's concept of identity – as an exotopia, or self-differentiating ego, or internalized other – in two ways. First, Bakhtin's concept originally anticipates key observations of modern thought, especially of the anthropological-cultural one – to cite Edward Said who says that "all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic."[16] Second, it may constitute the commonly shared assumption of effective intercultural dialogs. After all, it somehow enforces (in the best interest of the understanding and effectively critical self-cognition) approval for co-being and therefore the necessity to define oneself, attention, and respect, also toward the other. The other who is inside and around us.

4.

I am aware that I may be accused of unsophisticated reasoning with a bit of prudence, and perhaps even naivety. But even if it is so, I still believe that once we realize, think (just in case: I write in a nutshell) about the "other" that he is "just like me," then the barrier of the untranslatability of perspectives, views, experiences, and politically or ideologically "deformed" ladder of hierarchy, domination, subordination, and center-periphery dependencies vanquishes or is suspended. In such a way, we may also tackle the syndrome of xenophobia and the feeling of "incompleteness" stemming from the same source, which generate the reactions based on fear of rejection or outright hostility toward otherness, but also shame (because of who I am) and guilt (for what I have done).

15 Quoted in G.S. Morson, C. Emerson, Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics Literature (Stanford: 1990), p. 51.

16 E. Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: 1994), p. XXV. Cf. M. Sahlins, Apologies to Thucydides. Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa (Chicago: 2014).

In this way, after the failures of the paternalistic universalism model "all are equal but not exactly" and the model of multicultural isolationism of "people are different" (because they are and it cannot be changed) which manifested their dysfunctionality (to say the least), perhaps it is worthy to try a new model summarized by the slogan "the other is just like me, because he is in us." The other (is) like me: exotopic identity of Bakhtin's individual and culture shows the way, because our identity, being ourselves consists of being outside oneself. It consists of being outside oneself in the sense of primary socialization, or more broadly, communitization; in the sense of interactive, reflective dependence on others; in the dimension of transcending, ex-centric going beyond "oneself." Certainly, it does not mean that Bakhtin's thought is unique against the backdrop of twentieth-century thought; on the contrary, there are similar observations among many modern thinkers and philosophers.

One of them is, without doubt, Emmanuel Levinas who in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* outlines the direction of his quest in the following way: "To see in subjectivity an exception putting out of order the conjunction of essence, entities and the "difference;" to catch sight, in the substantiality of the subject, in the hard core of the "unique" in me, in my unparallelled identity, of a substitution for the other." Later, Levinas says: "This anarchy in the recurrence to oneself is beyond the normal play of action and passion in which the identity of a being is maintained, in which it is. It is on the hither side of the limits of identity. This passivity undergone in proximity by the force of alterity in me is the passivity of a recurrence to oneself which is not the alienation of an identity betrayed."[17]

Levinas's concept of ethics, named by him "the other within the same," leads to acknowledging that, in general, the ethically understood subjectivity is the experience of existence founded on being moved by the other in a way anteceding any acts of consciousness, thus undermining our own feeling of autonomy along with the ability to act spontaneously. The "anarchic" quality of my relationship with the other consists in the fact that the other's "demand" shakes off my sovereignty, deprives me of it by imposing a burden of responsibility, and thus condemns me to the passivity of affective submission.

Undoubtedly, another great thinker in this area is Jean-Luc Nancy who in *The Inoperative Community* describes the outlines and borders of the individual being as follows:

17 E. Levinas, Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: 2006), pp. XLVII–XLVIII, 114.

> It is a groundless "ground," less in the sense that it opens up the gaping chasm of an abyss than that it is made up only of the network, the interweaving, and the sharing of singularities … There is nothing behind singularity – but there is, outside it and in it, the immaterial and material space that distributes it and shares it out as singularity, distributes and shares the confines of other singularities, or even more exactly distributes and shares the confines of singularity—which is to say of alterity—between it and itself … Community means, consequently, that there is no singular being without another singular being, and that there is, therefore, what might be called, in a rather inappropriate idiom, an original or ontological "sociality."[18]

If the specifics of modern cognition take the form of cognition of the other (the other in which I am; the other that is in me; a co-individual individual; a subjectivity and collectivity emerging in the same moment and process), it is because the real appears before us as the radically different, which after all (as Bakhtin, Levinas, and Nancy would perhaps say) we are. Therefore, when we think that we cognize with the cognized, we actually cognize with our own selves. Literature and art have always been aware of it, hence possibly their effect of the transgressive-reactive nature of the artistic invention, namely going beyond oneself that gives us access to that in what we participated from the start.

4.5. Polish Memory

1.

Around a quarter-century ago, a memory boom has started (in the West a few years earlier, in Poland a few years later) and it is still in full swing today, although we can notice first signs of a certain "tiredness" with the topic. Back then, at the turn of 1980s and 1990s, there were many favorable factors for it: political changes in the world and in Middle-Eastern Europe (namely dissolution of censorship which regulated knowledge about the past); economic crisis (connected with uncertainty prompting to look into the past); socio-civilizational changes (with symptoms such as the rise of "risk society," crisis of utopian thinking and rational anticipation or planning of the future); and finally, consequences of self-critical work in the humanities leading to, among others, refuting the modern faith in objectivity, neutrality, and "finiteness" of the historical knowledge.

However, possibly, this change was fostered by some traits of the postmodern sensitivity or mentality which, according to famous Geoffrey Bennington's diagnosis from the 1970s, consisted of "nostalgia for the future and awaiting the

18 J.-L. Nancy, The Inoperative Community, pp. 27–28.

past." Thus, it consisted of reversing human attitudes and strategies of acting, acknowledging modern future planning based on rational criteria derived from extrapolated traits of past experience as an irretrievably lost object of nostalgic memories of opening to a recurring wave of the past, the suppressed, remission of the repressed collective and individual experiences which were not worked through, and of exploring and re-arranging the past heritage in new patterns.

This is why this triple change or withdrawal was so profound and radical: from the future to the past, from the historical past to the memory past, from conviction about finiteness and irreversibility of "the past in itself" to the feeling of opening the future (its sense, hierarchy of events, and effects) to interpretations, needs, and desires of the present. Today, the still increasing memory wave is fueled by institutional structures and actions (public, museum-commemorating) and social trends (staging and reconstruction, or video games) as much as historical and memory policies affecting the collective emotions (of smaller and bigger groups) and – which is not less important as it influences the previously mentioned areas – subsequent research objective and cognitive challenges (which are more and more numerous) in the area of the widely understood humanities.

In the abundant Polish library of memory studies and research on the Polish cultural memory (or Polish memory cultures), there are but a few works that aim at synthetic diagnosis or attempt to define the characteristics of the Polish cultural memory. Therefore, I have a handful of introductory questions which may stimulate the creation of a holistic diagnosis, synthetic overview or topography of positions, and draft definition of the specificity of the Polish cultural memory.

The questions were the following: Can we talk about a common habitus of the Polish cultural memory or rather about separate, at times rivaling, Polish memory cultures despite the diversity? Can classic anthropologic categories of shame, blame culture (and other similar categories) be useful in the outline of the Polish cultural memory or should we seek different tools to describe it analytically? Is cultural memory a burden of our legacy or a fundament of agency-based action for Poles? Does its crucial place among factors determining individual and collective thinking, feeling, and acting lead to the feeling of expropriation from the present and fear of the future, or is it a mistake to think about it that way? Is it for the contemporary people only an "other country" or an inherent, strongly emotive element of our here and now? Should we consider Polish memory cultures in terms of oppositional traits (namely between acknowledging them as "score of wrongs," traumatic memories or blames and treating them as a balance of past triumphs and value capital), or rather in terms of mainly hybrid wholes? What is the threshold experience (and current point of reference) for contemporary forms of the Polish cultural memory: traditions

of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Partitions, the Second World War and the Holocaust, postwar period, all of them combined, or yet something else?

As is often the case with the process of building a democratic space of open discussion, the questioners ask what they want, and the responders answer as they please. I hope my questions were not too banal nor completely irrelevant. Still, it is certain that they were prematurely posed. The probes sent by writers deeply into the Polish memory[19] – which I consider essential, insightful, and cognitively fascinating – revealed so many new resources of memory problems and potential moot points that it was necessary to postpone their synthesis, let alone the creation, however tempting it might be, of a formula of some absolute memory which, as the case of Borges' Funes shows, may only bring a cognitive and communication disaster.

However, there is already an answer to one (the last) question: for the contemporary people, the threshold of community experiences that form their collective memory consists of events and experiences of the third generation (after the Second World War); probes into the interwar period or the First World War were occasional and required special justifications. The answers to other questions can be found as well but we need to extract them from their authors' individual views. My intention is not so much to summarize these views as to draw attention to certain aspects of this culture – the culture of memory – in which we live and ways to explore it.

2.

"The past is a foreign country" is a metaphor used in the title of David Lowenthal's[20] influential book (by the way, contrary to the author's intention who emphasizes different forms of the past's presence in the present and contemporary ways and "policies" of choice and use of the past for present-day purposes), which, from the contemporary perspective, must seem as an essence of the modern attitude toward the historical past (even more so to the Polish reader who hears in it Norwid's famous "village" left behind "the wheels" of running time). After all, a foreign country is a reality that exists in its full form independently of us, to which we may acquire access by arduous learning its language and laws, or through guidebooks that show a way to a tourist and explain its

19 These probes are works by many authors that contributed to a special monothematic Teksty Drugie No. 6/2016.

20 D. Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country (Cambridge: 1985); Cf. new edition: The Past is a Foreign Country. Revisited (Cambridge: 2015).

peculiarities. In contrast, memory is rather a landscape than an independent territory, an effect of interaction between the subject and the environment in which the subject functions. I follow Sławomir Kapralski's[21] footsteps when I write about the landscape of memory, but I wish to make some things more clear with the help of research on cultural landscapes. The key factor here is abandoning the perspective of an external, neutral observer and adopting (perhaps necessarily and irrevocably) the status of a participant actively influencing and forming the image of the environment – which, to be sure, also acts on the participant (in terms of his/her "identity").

This is the formation process of memory images activated through the participation of experiences (existential, emotional, axiological, political, social) along with the needs, fears, and desires of the individual or community. Thus, it is easy to imagine that the same corpora of historical events itself will form into a different landscape of memory from the perspective of a Polish Jew, a Polish peasant, a Silesian, a Warmian or a Mazurian, a victim of the Operation Vistula (be it Ukrainian, Lemko or Boyko), or even a member of gender minority. These differences do not necessarily have to connect with the "falsity" of someone's memory and "truthfulness" of another's; they are expressions of a subjective point of view merging into the constellation of diverse perspectives to which we may switch (or between which we may choose). After all, we cannot take up an external, superior, "spectator," or "objective" perspective. Whether we like it or not, we are always accompanied by others in us (as Nietzsche would have it); we are part of the arrangement we learn about. This does not make a (remembered) reality less real but only shows that cultural memory requires proper tools to describe it.

3.

We should confront the spacious dimensions of the memory culture with the temporal one, as since (at least) the time of de Quincey, the privileged form of the latter is the metaphor of palimpsest. Clearly, memory resources do not constitute a consistent bedrock for the present; on the contrary, there are constant tectonic ruptures underneath; work of memory and commemoration is at the same time work of forgetting and non-remembering, exclusion and repression, and returns of the repressed, remissions of unwanted past events and experiences. And just

21 Cf. S. Kapralski, "Pamięć, przestrzeń, tożsamość. Próba refleksji teoretycznej," in: Pamięć, przestrzeń, tożsamość, ed. by S. Kapralski (Warsaw: 2010).

as an earlier description begins to surface in the later text, so another perspective – that of the other – comes up from underneath the later "homogenous" side of the story; and it comes to the fore, demanding to be acknowledged and heard.

Consequently, the voice of the Polish Jews, concerning their fate and relationship with the Poles during the Holocaust, has waited to be heard for a very long time (until the nineties, to be fair). It is only recently that the voices of Warmians, Mazurians, Silesians, and Kashubians have begun to be heard in public… We only begin to realize that the fate and perspective of a peasant provide material for a still unwritten epic and altered Polish memory. At this point, we must acknowledge that – even though we tend to belittle, if not marginalize, the influence of the humanities on cultural and social life – books by Jan Tomasz Gross, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, Jan Sowa, Grzegorz Niziołek, Andrzej Leder, to name just a few, all from the field of memory, have deeply changed Poles' mentality, sensitivity, attitudes, or even their cultural habitus, at least to the point of no return to old beliefs, reactions, and behaviors (in both the individual and statistic dimensions).

The metaphor of palimpsest, an old inscription surfacing from underneath the new one, brings up another problem (and a source of deadlock) related to this dimension of memory: not enough space for everyone on the scene of collective memory. As we all know, the Romani have long lamented that the Holocaust of the Jews has removed the Romani's genocide from common social attention. Similarly, former Polish prisoners of concentration camps feel relegated or even absent from Polish memory and consciousness. It is as if collective memory "enforced" a constant hierarchy, selection, and structure (thus, marginalization, exclusion, relegation) of memory narratives which – seemingly – must fit in the unknown, finite memory "slots." Perhaps then, we should seek non-narrative modes of evidence and presentation? After all, if something was not told, it does not mean that it did not exist; not every story is to be told, or possible to tell…

4.

The third meta-problem of the Polish culture of memory is the case of its unity (specificity, uniqueness) or diversity (discrepancies, matters of dispute). There is no denying that reflection on Polish memory too often takes up (without admitting it) the traditions of reflection on the Polish soul, national character, essence, or substance. Certainly, a close relationship between the issue of collective memory and the one of national identity favor this state of affairs, however, this is not enough for a justification and legitimization. Interestingly, the psychoanalytical insights leading to the identification of the trans-historical problem

syndrome come closest to such an approach. Besides that, some perspectives tend to specify various aspects of Polish memory without defining their connections. Furthermore, anyone can notice that Polish memory became a "battleground" – to borrow Enzo Traverso's concept – of competing memory policies (museums, monuments, anti-monuments, stories, shows, or installations).[22]

By extrapolating these remarks, it is easy to become depressed and almost fearful – especially once we realize that a multimillion nation is stubbornly marching backward because it is unable to look away from the past, while simultaneously the nation's members are getting in each other's way and tripping each other up… While it would be enough just to broaden the perspective a little bit to make it more comparative, to see that there is nothing peculiar in this giant maze; nations of Middle-Eastern Europe, and possibly of the world, share similar features, attitudes, and behaviors. As Maciej Janowski has recently pointed out, Polish history never was and therefore should not be told as a history of exclusively Polish people because only then will it be possible to work through the sense of personal grandeur, innocence, and, most of all, exceptionality which some people persistently promote and bring it down to a (verifiable) size in confrontation with reality.[23] I believe that the same applies to Polish memory; for it never belonged exclusively to (ethnic) Poles. In a nutshell, we must search for effective ways to make the other's perspective (on us and in us) a permanent, central part of Polish memory.

Let me begin with a comment referring to Jean-Luc Nancy's[24] inspirational concept of inoperative community: Polish memory – perhaps like any other memory (cultural, collective, or an individual) – is shared, which means that it both participates in and divides what it shares. The specificity of this agonistic (to use Chantal Mouffe's term)[25] relationship, based on a feedback loop generated by disagreement, manifests itself in the third meta-memory metaphor, namely: the nodes of memory.

Recently, editors of the collection titled *Węzły pamięci niepodległej Polski* (Nodes of Memory in Independent Poland) used this metaphor as an equivalent

22 Cf. E. Traverso, L'Histoire comme champ de bataille: Interpréter les violences du XXe siècle (La Découverte, 2011).

23 Cf. M. Janowski, "Polityka historyczna. Między edukacją a propagandą," in: Pamięć i polityka historyczna, ed. by S. M. Nowinowski, J. Pomorski, and R. Stobiecki (Łódź: 2008).

24 Cf. Nancy, The Inoperative Community.

25 Cf. Chantal Mouffe, Agonistics (Verso Books, 2013).

of Pierre Nora's "places of memory" (*lieux de mémoire*).[26] Undoubtedly, it is an interesting and productive metaphor but, nonetheless, it has its distinct dimension, with different connotations and associations. It is easy to notice once you realize three consequences of its use. First, the effect of collective unity is not a harmonious process of reaching agreement on facts and beliefs but it involves an inextricable relationship of contradictory, competing views and attitudes. Second, just like nodes do not have an unchanging inside, so the alleged internal core, unique substance, or essence of Polish memory (national identity) stems from an intertwining of heterogenic threads which, once they are untied and taken in isolation, are no longer special as they become part of a general repertoire of convictions, affects, and dispositions.

Third, if this is the case, then the pursuit to overcome contradictions, reconcile competing attitudes, and resolve disagreements seems to be an unrealistic and therefore counter-effective endeavor. This is also due to the fact that the seemingly unsurmountable barrier is also what unites and gives continuity to our collective being, perhaps also as a factor of its relative uniqueness and exceptionality. Whether we like it or not, there is something essential about these conflicts, which, by the way, are hard to comprehend for others, just like conflicts in the Balkan countries or Far and Middle East may be troubling for our understanding. This fierce antagonism – the struggle between the Kozak and the Tatar, left- and right-wing, Catholics and "freethinkers", proponents of the national cause and advocated of cosmopolitism or universal humanism, majorities and minorities, peasants and nobility, etc., all holding each other in an inextricable grip of competition – creates a space of contradictory reasons which are collective in the sense of being self-evident to us, but which also exist precisely insofar as they remain in those antagonistic relationships and, as a result, provide Polish (shared and divided) memory with relative continuity and unity.

5.

If there is anything accurate in this observation derived from the discussed three metamnemonic metaphors which aim to diagnose the effects of our immersion in the world of collective memory, then the conclusions we may draw are not optimistic. The landscapes of memory opened before us in new, different, and enthralling forms but there is no way out, only doors without handles. Palimpsest

26 Cf. Węzły pamięci niepodległej Polski, ed. by Z. Najder, A. Machcewicz, M. Kopczyński, R. Kuźniar, B. Sienkiewicz, J. Stępień, and W. Włodarczyk (Cracow: 2014).

resources of the past bring to the surface, recall, and force us to account for the forgotten wrongs, but our agora has too little room to let them all be voiced and heard. Thus, memory nodes usually turn out to be knots of conflict, where unreconcilable, and sometimes incommensurable, experiences, rights, values, and emotions are intertwined. Indeed, to untie these knots, resolve the contradictions, would often mean to dissolve the community itself… It seems that there is no good (perhaps any) way out of the world of memory.

However, since I am an optimist convinced that there is always more than one answer to every problem, I suggest taking a look at the whole situation form yet another, different perspective, rather than embracing a depressing constatation that there is no way out. After all, if we cannot part with the world of our memory, perhaps we need to accept it for better or worse? Come to terms with the specters which continue to haunt our memory, recognize them as our cultural capital, and acknowledge as a part of us. Perhaps, in doing so, we can break the shackles which keep us in the past, and, without getting tired and overwhelmed with memory, finally look forward – to see what the future holds.

Part Two

5. Toward the Innovative Polish Humanities: Text as a Laboratory: Traditions, Hypotheses, Proposals

5.1. Preliminary Assumptions

I shall formulate the following remarks out of conviction that it is necessary to develop an action-oriented (operational) theory of humanistic texts grounded in my experience of the Polish studies (that is, research on Polish literature and discourse conducted in the local cultural environment). Such theory should be inspired by world research developments and bear more general consequences regarding the place and role of the text in the humanities and the need for its new theoretical conceptualization. The latter should primarily serve to develop a tool which would make it possible to transfer – with all necessary adjustments – essential tasks and challenges of the humanities to the context of modern science and cyberculture.

Such an approach toward our central problematic may appear as an anachronical attempt to return to the so-called textual turn in the humanities, especially today, when researchers abandon linguistic-autonomist methodological assumptions and search for research tools which would provide them with access to the object dimensions of the humanities: a possibly direct, empirical, cognitive, and practical tool. However, I do not believe that such a goal is achievable without the critical analysis of the established status of the text in the humanities and the reflection on the possibility of working it through and thus modifying it. At the same time, I do not think that it is possible or worthwhile to reject the "text-centered" specificity of literary and linguistic studies or the humanities in general.

After all, today, in both the public and private realms, in the old and especially new media, what we are witnessing is not so much a decrease as proliferation of textual practices, new genres, styles, and textual conventions, followed by the development of methods and techniques employed to analyze them. To be sure, this does not mean that texts are still the central research object; within the contemporary visual culture and cyberculture, they are taken together with different kinds of objects, pictures, photographs, films, animations, and graphics, as elements of hybrid multimedia constructions. In any case, texts remain inherent

components of the contemporary cultural reality, and the method of "reading culture" modeled upon them maintains the status of a cognitively privileged tool of analysis and interpretation.

In my view, the problem is that the text – in its metonymic sense, of a text-oriented research program – is considered precisely as a source of the marginalization of the humanities by the field's critics, whereas, for most defenders of the humanities, it is the bulwark of its lasting value. In both cases, we are talking about a specific, contemporary concept of the text as an autonomous, complete product of meaningful human activity, which is not the only possible concept nor even a sufficiently justified one.

As we know, the contemporary debate on science and science policy conducted from the perspective of the so-called technouniversity, which is the current research and education model,[1] leads to a gradual marginalization of the humanities considered as a type of knowledge that is not very useful (or even not useful at all), because it does not generate any innovation, real impact, or change in the cognitive, social, political, or cultural realm. A frequent justification for such critical assessment is that humanistic research concentrates precisely on the text construed in the traditional sense, namely as an objective and autonomous entity (with respect to social and "practical" reality). We may agree with this formal, although not knowledge-based or evaluative qualification of the specificity of the humanities. Indeed, in the humanities, it is the text – in its broad cultural sense and variety of forms and functions – that remains a shared object, means, and a research result.

As I am convinced that innovativeness – in its humanistic understanding involving other concepts of this sort, such as invention, novelty, originality – and agency-driven impact constitute the fixed if not always prioritized components and criteria for the assessment of humanistic research theory and practice, I must agree that the narrow, traditional, and objective-autonomous concept of the text functioning within this research is not only substantially responsible for such a state of affairs but it also hampers the development of the humanities and their scholarly status. For I think that such an understanding of the text is simply reductive and misleading. Moreover, I believe that the desired reorientation of humanistic research will not occur through bypassing what was their central objects so far. Instead, we need to come up with a research program that

1 Cf. E. Bińczyk, Technonauka w społeczeństwie ryzyka. Filozofia wobec niepożądanych następstw praktycznego sukcesu nauki (Toruń: 2012).

would make it central to activate the repressed empirical, cognitive, and practical/agency-driven dimensions of the humanities.

In short, I propose, first, to recognize the text – textuality, discursiveness – as the shared foundation and object of the humanities. Second, I believe we must modify the very understanding of the humanities. Humanistic texts are not – and should not be – treated merely as standard objects, neutral media of measurable results of cognitive and creative work performed elsewhere and at some other time, or re-presentations of what is prior and independent to them. Texts involve the accumulated process – controlled by various rules of professionalism – of creating, cognizing, and researching, and the disciplinary-workshop and cultural-experiential environment activated in the course of this process, which, according to Latour, is "the functional equivalent of a laboratory. It is a place for trials, experiments, and simulations."[2] As I believe, these three dimensions allow us to realize the nature of our discursive "object" only when considered together.

My introductory essay of the action-oriented theory of the humanistic text is not supposed to lead to entrenching within a more traditional, "autotelic" humanistic research and education model, nor does it lead to succumbing to the criteria of exact sciences (for instance, by demonstrating that I respect their standards). In turn, the following outline is supposed to be a positive answer to the contemporary problem, an attempt to find remedies to identity crisis of the humanities. This attempt should lead to a re-disciplinization of the humanities resulting from a critical confrontation with both the humanistic tradition and criteria, standards, tasks, and goals of modern science. Given this strategic aim, in what follows I deliberately adopt the terms "innovativeness" (a jargon expression from the vocabulary of science administrators) and "Polish humanities" (which is supposed to modify their disciplinary identity) together with the metaphor of "the text as a laboratory," borrowed from Latour.

5.2. Three Models of Academic Research and Education, Their Defenders, and Dysfunctions

Recently vital[3] reflection on the history of the humanities and conceptions humanistic practice within university institutions in the West allows us to

2 B. Latour, Reassembling the Social (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 149.

3 Cf., among others: Humanistyka przełomu wieków, ed. by J. Kozielecki (Warsaw: 1999); T. Sławek, Antygona w świecie korporacji (Katowice: 2002); H.-U. Gumbrecht, The Powers of Philology. Dynamics of Textual Scholarship (Urbana–Chicago: 2003); A.

identify – and present in a necessarily oversimplified manner – three basic models of academic education and research, each having significantly different dominant assumptions, goals, and ways of achieving them.

One may call the first model *formative*. It focuses principally on the *subject* – not only education but also formation of the subject (from Antiquity to the beginning of the twentieth century). Indeed, this was already the aim of the ancient *studia liberalia* and the modern *studia humanitatis*. Moreover, this was also the aim of Kant's "university of reason," which assumes the formation of individuals according to the Enlightenment model of universal humanity. Finally, it was the aim of the Humboldtian "university of culture," which seeks not only to educate citizens but also imbue them with the spirit of national culture. In this case, "personal" culture was the purpose – or "attribute," to use Stanisław Pietraszko's term[4] – of university education and cognition. What mattered was the reproduction of cultural human beings – the nation's elite. This formative model centered on the shaping of the subject began to give way to a different approach around the end of the nineteenth century.

The second model – let us call it the *professional* one – focuses on studying the *object* and developing competences which enable its humanistic cognition. Such a model has been at work from the second half of the nineteenth century to the second half of the twentieth century, but it is still practiced in Poland. According to model, culture with its products, patterns, and processes has become an independent research object that is equally important as other research objects.

Zeidler-Janiszewska, "Visual Culture Studies czy antropologicznie zorientowana Bildwissenschaft? O kierunkach zwrotu ikonicznego w naukach o kulturze," Teksty Drugie, No. 4/2006; M. Nussbaum, Cultivating Humanity (Cambridge: 1998); H.-G. Gadamer, Teoria, etyka, edukacja. Eseje wybrane, selected by R. Godoń, ed. by P. Dybel (Wrocław: 2008); D. LaCapra, "University in ruin?," in: D. LaCapra, History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory (New York: 2004); E. Domańska, "Jakiej metodologii potrzebuje współczesna humanistyka," Teksty Drugie, No. 1–2/2010; A. Bloom, Umysł zamknięty. O tym, jak amerykańskie szkolnictwo zawiodło demokrację i zubożyło dusze dzisiejszych studentów, trans. T. Biedroń (Poznań: 2012); M. P. Markowski, "Humanistyka, literatura, egzystencja," in: Teoria – literatura – życie. Praktykowanie teorii w humanistyce współczesnej, ed. by A. Legeżyńska and R. Nycz (Warsaw: 2012); J. Culler, The Literary in Theory (Stanford: 2006); Fabryki dyplomów czy Universitas? O „nadwiślańskiej" wersji przemian w edukacji akademickiej, ed. by M. Czerepaniak-Walczak (Cracow: 2013); B. Readings, The University in Ruins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); K. Jaspers, The Idea of the University, trans. H. A. T. Reiche, H. F. Vanderschmidt (Boston: 1959).

4 Cf. S. Pietraszko, Kultura. Studia teoretyczne i metodologiczne (Wrocław: 2012).

This process continued simultaneously with the emergence of the so-called sciences of the mind (*Geisteswissenschaften*) or culture during the anti-positivist breakthrough. This has led to the professionalization of humanistic knowledge and division of the humanities into disciplines, which with time split into separate science sectors – a process legitimized by a development of their own autonomous identities founded on what they demonstrate as differences between their objects and research methods. Culture has become one of such objects, followed by the text which turned out to be a material-semiotic device for the deposition, storage, transfer, and transmission of meanings. Simultaneously, expert analytical knowledge became a specialized methodology for identifying, articulating, and explicating the authentic – presumably unalterable – meaning of the message.

I would suggest describing the third model as *innovative*, as it is characterized by its insistence on *technique* – in the original understanding of *techne* as a mode of discovering – and therefore on discoveries (in basic research) and inventions (in applied sciences) – at the expense of the former since the 1960s. It is also known as the "market-model" of the university for it is the market that often dictates research preferences and provides paths of priority funding; or the "university of excellence," because it implements a universal system of evaluation and competition using homogenizing quantitative criteria. Perhaps, the most appropriate term here is "technouniversity," since it rewards technoscience, namely the pursuit of innovation. Overall, the model seeks constant progress in the methods and techniques of processing data and obtaining significant practical, social, and civilizational results.

It is precisely the model in which the humanities found themselves at a deadlock. Because they often seemed to lack a technical and innovative potential, they were marginalized and tolerated with increasing reluctance by science administrators. However, it is worth adding that this deadlock applied to both the traditional and modern humanities, but we cannot say the same about the five new variants of humanistic research which have recently emerged in the field. First and foremost, what I have in mind is the *cognitive humanities* – also called the neurohumanities or new humanities – which search for techniques and methods of accessing the prediscoursive and preconceptual activity of the embodied mind understood as a source of

human creativity and culture.[5] Second, the *digital humanities*, in which digital technology becomes the source of changes with extensive – although more often

5 Cf., among others: J. Gottschall, Literature, Science and a New Humanities (Cognitive

proclaimed than proven – practical, methodological, epistemological, and ontological consequences.[6] Third, the *engaged humanities*, which perform analytic interventions into the social mentality, memory, and cultural identity, often with the aim of formulating or even implementing various corrective, recognition, or emancipation programs.[7] Fourth, the *posthumanities*, which seek to redefine human beings' position in a close relationship with the environment – things, nature, animals – of which we are part.[8] Fifth, the *art humanities* (art-based research), which, on the one hand, see art as a unique cognitive tool and, on the other hand, subsume under their scope artistic practices based on inter- or transdisciplinary research, especially those of critical art.[9]

Although these different dominants of the academic education and research model could constitute complementary dimensions of knowledge acquisition and science practice, their development history shows that we deal with competitive and goal-oriented models, which appear simultaneously irreconcilable. The formation, object cognition, technical proficiency (and agency) of the subject in the realm of broadly understood mediation practices and processes are diverse – yet deeply interrelated – sorts of activity. All of them seem equally crucial, both in the past and present, although these activities were always mutually hierarchized; the evolution of knowledge models gave primacy to their successive variants at different periods of the history of science.

Studies In Literature and Performance) (New York: 2008); Creating Consilience: Integrating the Sciences and the Humanities, ed. by E. Singerland, M. Collard (New York: 2012); E. O. Wilson, Konsiliencja. Jedność wiedzy, trans. J. Mikos (Poznań: 2011).

6 Cf., among others: A. Burdick and others, Digital Humanities (Cambridge: 2012); J. McGann, Radiant Textuality. Literature after the World Wide Web (New York: 2004); J. Schnapp, T. Presner, Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0, http://www.humanitiesblast.com/manifesto/ Manifesto_V2.pdf.

7 Cf., among others: J. Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: 1990); E. Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: 1994); G. Spivak, The Post-Colonial Critic – Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues (New York: 1990); E. Domańska, Historia egzystencjalna (Warsaw: 2012); M. Rothberg, Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization (Berlin: 2009).

8 Cf., among others: D. Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (London: 1991); E. Domańska, "Humanistyka nie-antropocentryczna a studia nad rzeczami," Kultura Współczesna, No. 3/2008; C. Wolfe, What is Post-humanism? (Minnesota: 2010); R. Braidotti, The Post-Human (Boston–New York: 2013).

9 Cf., among others: S. McNiff, Art-Based Research (London: 1998); T. Barone, E. W. Eisner, Art-Based Research (London: 2012); J. Haywood Rolling Jr, Art-Based Research (New York: 2013); K. Wodiczko, A. Ostolski, Socjoestetyka (Warsaw: 2018).

The advocates of the value and social status of the contemporary humanities locate their positions precisely within the individual models of knowledge development indicated above, which is, in fact, quite symptomatic. For some, the humanities are primarily the ultimate and irreplaceable space for shaping individuals – their culture, self-knowledge, and identity – also as conscious, critical, open-minded, creative citizens and members of communities and societies (Jaspers, Gadamer, Nussbaum, Readings). For others, the humanities are primarily a field for a development, implementation, and dissemination of professional knowledge about human sense-making activity and its products. This knowledge is subject to the rules of discipline specializations and strict standards of verification and falsification; knowledge of permanent value, which, once acquired, ensures specialized professional competence of autonomous significance.[10] Finally, a small group – but growing in strength – considers the humanities principally as a room for the return of the repressed. By "repressed" I mean, of course, technology (*techne*): once located in the heart of Plato's myth about the origin of culture, (in *Protagoras*), the divine art stolen by Prometheus, then what was long deemed the opposite of culture today returns as the key ally in the fight for the survival of the humanities which are undergoing constant transformations in the contemporary field of knowledge and media environment.[11]

The advantage of the first model oriented at forming the subject was quite early recognized as a source of weakness. As Jonathan Culler notes, if the purpose of the cultural university was to shape the man of culture, then we can consider the figure of the university professor as its embodiment. This explains the popularity of such anecdotes as that of "a dowager accosting an Oxford don during the first World War: 'Young man, why aren't you in France fighting to defend civilization.' 'Madam,' came the reply, 'I *am* the civilization they are fighting to defend.'"[12] The point is that, in the opinion of an ordinary person, the autotelic education model not only reproduces inequality but principally generates asocial

10 Cf., among others: H.-U. Gumbrecht, The Powers of Philology (Urbana–Chicago: 2003); L. Waters, Enemies of Promise: Publishing, Perishing, and the Eclipse of Scholarship (Cambridge: 2004); S. Fish, Professional Correctness (Cambridge: 1995).

11 Cf., among others: B. Stiegler, Technics and Time, Vol. 1: The Fault of Epimetheus, trans. R. Beardswotrh, G. Collins (Stanford: 1998), Vol. 2: Disorientation, trans. S. Barker (Stanford: 2009); Vol. 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise, trans. S. Barker (Stanford: 2011); Understanding Digital Humanities, ed. by D. M. Berry (New York: 2012); K. Hayles, How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis (Chicago: 2012).

12 J. Culler, The Literary in Theory (Stanford: 2006), p. 249.

individuals with a rentier attitude toward life. Such people are quite literally disinterested because they have no interest in engaging in the needs of the collectivity nor in succumbing to its imperatives.

The values and shortcomings of the second model, in which culture – and thus the text – becomes an object of study are widely discussed today. The same applies to the third model, in which culture and technology shape the media space and manage mediation processes – and the media are not just a medium of communication, because they significantly influence our relationship with the world. At this point, I would like to discuss just one side of this issue, which is the innovativeness of textual research and text-producing research. Moreover, I do not want to address it directly – it is difficult if not impossible – but, as it were, via negative. For it is certainly easier to say what it is not than what it is. Based on my observations and hypotheses, I think that the most popular research practices, which we are willing to consider as legitimate and useful, precious, or even very valuable, but not innovative, include the following five tendencies:

(1) sreproducing or ordering, systematizing or typologizing cognitive results of others instead of conducting independent research;
(2) proclaiming own position without argumentative justification nor confrontation with the current state of knowledge – this type of contribution is defensible in the case of textual manifestos; in other cases, it involves the risk of ignorance, arrogance, or both;
(3) focusing on methodology and workshop improvement without acknowledging the necessity of their verification and usefulness regarding the empirical material, which is a necessary activity in itself and it is sometimes practical but of little significance as autotelic activity;
(4) extensive cultivation of the field of disciplinary knowledge through filling the "gaps" – concerning a so far neglected object or features of a known object – by way of applying a routine research pattern, which conveniently supplements the cognition of some objective area and tests the applicability of its tools by exploiting theories and methods until their operational exhaustion;
(5) concentrating on solving partial or apparent problems while ignoring fundamental issues – detailed secondary research has its indisputable value, which is rather absent in the works relying on negative comparative studies focused on dissimilarities; undertaking such research often seems to stem from avoiding crucial problems, as they pose the risk of failure.

If this list is correct – or at least worth considering – then two conclusions can be drawn from it. First, these non-innovative practices encompass the majority of

research papers in the humanities – including, certainly, the Polish humanities – that can and often do produce cognitively valuable research results. Second, innovative practice (defined operationally as the symmetrical reversal of the mentioned tendencies) would consist in the preference for transdisciplinary research with distinct empirical roots and consequences specific to a given discipline, closely linked to a new and well-established theoretical conceptualization leading to posing (reinterpreting, solving) a problem of fundamental significance not only for a given discipline and thus the entire knowledge field but also for their social surroundings and human mentality, experience, and culture in general.[13] Undoubtedly, caring about standards and conventions is as essential to the sustainability and development of the humanistic culture as innovation-oriented efforts. If I emphasize the latter, it is because of my conviction that, in our (local) humanistic environment, they play a far too little, overly marginal role – which has a negative impact on our socially shared knowledge and contribution to the world humanities, let alone the well-being of researchers.

5.3. The Specificity of the Humanities or About the Three Meanings of One Sentence by Stefan Czarnowski

We can endlessly discuss the nature of the humanities, which is why, this time, I would like to identify three crucial and quite commonly accepted meanings of the term. Stefan Czarnowski, a prominent Polish sociologist, religion scholar, and cultural anthropologist, concluded the introduction to his last book *Kultura* (1938), published posthumously, with a brief, simple sentence: "Bo poznanie kultury jest także kulturą." (For the cognition of culture is also culture). Of course, we can consider Czarnowski's statement in the context of the book's preface, and especially in the context of the preceding sentence, a conventional invocation to readers: "Do czytelników należy osądzić, o ile rezultat naszych wysiłków wzbogaca kulturę." (It is for readers to decide how much does the result of our efforts enrich culture).[14] In this context, the concluding sentence becomes a kind of rhetorical finish complementing the preceding invocation to readers as an additional decorative statement which, without introducing anything new, concludes the utterance with a general reflection. However, as we know from contemporary

13 I attempt to describe these features or criteria of innovativeness more broadly and positively in Chapter 1: "The Humanities. Yesterday and Today" in this book.

14 S. Czarnowski, "Kultura," in: Dzieła, Vol. 1: Studia z historii kultury, ed. by N. Assorodobaj, S. Ossowski (Warsaw: 1956), p. 23.

philosophers and theorists, this logic of supplementarity also obeys its own laws. In this light, what might look like a mere embellishment turns out to profoundly alter the superficial meaning.

First, let us notice that this judgment is manifestly *demarcative*. It becomes apparent when we realize that the cognition of nature (in the standard practices and views of natural scientists) is not part of nature. In contrast, the cognition of culture is part of culture – and this feature fundamentally distinguishes research of culture from the so-called exact sciences; the research in question received the name of sciences of the mind or spirit, sciences of culture, or simply the humanities. Exact sciences deal with things that simply are, whereas the humanities – with things that mean or signify. In terms of our historical position, a closer tradition, which makes it possible to grasp the consequences of this distinction, is the so-called anti-positivist breakthrough, which led to the formation of the humanities. But there is also a more distant tradition, namely the ancient and modern reflection on humanity's "cultivation" of meaning and its effects in the form of cultural products.

If the first context indicated the differential-identity meaning of the predicate, then the next one helps reveal the *internal differentiation* of the discussed field of knowledge. Since "the cognition of culture is also culture," neither cognition is culture (in a narrow sense), nor culture is cognition (in a stricter sense). However, both concepts relate and interact with each other within a broader or more special concept of culture. At this point, we see a division into cultural creation – cultural products – and knowledge or processes of cultural cognition. It is a division that currently takes the form of a dualistic approach to the culture defined, on the one hand, by the phenomenalist approach (culture as a set of products and practices leading to them) and, on the other hand, the idealization approach (culture as a system of meanings, symbols, patterns, and an axiological-categorial network). Culture is evidently both, namely what we see and that through which we see; however, disputes among philosophers and cultural theorists prove it is very challenging to agree on these positions or reconcile them within some overarching category.

From yet another perspective, we can read Czarnowski's sentence as an expression of a stronger position than the descriptive-typologizing one. After all, "the cognition of culture is also culture" means that the knowledge of the object and the way of achieving it become, in this case, part (an aspect, dimension) of the cognized object. In other words, cultural creativity has a cognitive component, and cultural cognition has a creative component, because it "forms" or "enriches" and thus changes – at least to some extent – its object. And the new object calls for another cognitive operation, making the cognition process an

endless endeavor. In general, it is the process in which people's activity in the cultural environment relates both to the object and themselves. In such a feedback loop, the described states of affairs and our self-knowledge modify and deepen themselves. Therefore, one may say that the most specific feature of the *invention-based* humanistic cognition is that it *shapes* or *co-shapes* and thus changes things *to which it refers*. This, by the way, is what links this kind of cultural texts with records of pre-conceptual, primal-level states, having similar properties; with attempts at discursivization of the "source experience" or with "emotives."[15]

I tried to extract three meanings of culture from Czarnowski's seemingly rhetorical and short sentence. The first meaning distinguishes and differentiates knowledge about culture (humanities) from the natural (exact) sciences and gives it a relative identity. The second one indicates the significant internal differentiation of this knowledge field spanning between alternative – often competing – positions, namely understanding culture as a system of patterns and symbols and understanding it as a set of practices and products. The third one suggests there is an interaction between the idealization dimension and the phenomenalist dimension, which relies on the reflexive character of humanistic cognition. Since the fundamental feature of humanistic cognition is that it forms (changes) things to which it refers, it has a truly innovative, creative, or – to use a more appropriate term – inventive character.

However, it is a distinctly different type of innovation. Risking oversimplification, one could say that discoveries in basic sciences change (multiply) our knowledge and not the world. In turn, inventions enrich (change) the "equipment" of the world – and human beings – with technical artifacts and ways of managing the world's resources or properties, and methods of their productive use and processing. At the same time, successful inventions in the humanities penetrate to some extent both these realms: through their creative practices (*techne*, *ars*), they produce artifacts that are the media of cultural meanings which give access to unnoticed features or sides of human experience. In such a way, by creating, they discover.

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15 Cf., among others: W. M. Reddy, "Przeciw konstruktywizmowi. Etnografia historyczna emocji," trans. M. Rajtar, in: Emocje w kulturze, ed. by M. Rajtar, J. Straczuk (Warsaw: 2012); W. M. Reddy, The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions (Cambridge: 2001); C. Petitmengin, "Ku źródłom myśli. Gesty i transmodalność: wymiar przeżywanego doświadczenia," trans. E. Bodal, A. Tuszyński, Avant, Vol. III, No. T/2012, http://avant.edu.pl. I want to thank Ewa Domańska for bringing this interesting journal to my attention.

Relating the mentioned models of knowledge and properties of humanistic cognition to textual research and practices, one may notice that each of them leads to different profiling. In the traditional model of the humanities, focused on the formation or education of the subject, classical texts appeared in decontextualized – and often fragmented – form and were primarily reservoirs of approaches to universal themes, allowing one to explore crucial philosophical, moral, social, or political problems. Commenting on Durkheim's observations on this matter, Pierre Bourdieu notes that, over the nineteenth century, with the merging of universalist humanism and "a reading which is attentive solely to the properties of form," there emerged an autonomous realm of humanistic knowledge in which this model began to give way to the successive one, centered on producing, reading, and studying texts as autotelic objects:

> Pure production produces and presupposes pure reading, and ready-mades are just a sort of limit case of all works produced for commentary and by commentary. To the extent that the field gains in autonomy, writers feel themselves increasingly authorized to write works destined to be *decoded*, hence *subject to a repeated reading necessary to explore, without exhausting it, the intrinsic polysemy* of the work.[16]

David Olson describes the same process from a different perspective. In Olson's view, the paper world from the era of writing, and later printing, has undergone gradual de-empiricization, eliminating all extra-textual factors that determine assigning and interpreting meaning such as the author's intention, situations of utterance, contextual relations, or embeddedness in the experienced reality. This is how an autonomous reality of the text with self-sufficient meaning emerges; the text as a kind of container that stores, transmits, and shares – with all who can read – an intact deposit of sense. Thus, according to Olson, the modern autonomous text provides not only a model for speech but also for the constitution of the modern autonomous subject.[17] Moreover, in the extreme form of this concept of text – as a field or network of signifying elements – we no longer deal with textual writing and printing as technical devices but with what Louis Mumford calls the *machine*: an autonomous order of functions, a device for the annihilation of time and space, and a process detached from objects or substances – although

16 P. Bourdieu, The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field (Stanford: 1996), p. 305.

17 Cf. D. R. Olson, The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing (Cambridge: 1996).

embodied in an artificial device.[18] In the contemporary virtual space of digital technology, this process has certainly intensified and taken on new forms.

Latour's description of "the text as a laboratory" may seem a risky and inadequate metaphor for specific humanistic practices and their conceptualization, which is probably why Łukasz Afeltowicz finds it unsuitable for describing them.[19] However, I think it is the opposite. If we regard Latour's words as a metaphor for the artificially "isolated closed system" – a fundamental methodological operation in natural sciences – which the humanities develop by applying their own measures, then we may conclude that the modern model of the autonomous text meets – or desires to meet – the criteria of modern science. After all, the "arrangement" of the autonomous text: (a) reduces the complexity of the object's qualities by isolating them from the conditions of its creation, the subject's intentions, contextual, historical, or social meanings, and the recipient's extra-textual environment and experience; (b) presupposes a systematic, standardized analytical process, namely the principles of competent, professional interpretation; (c) leads to repeatable and reproducible results ("correct" interpretations) that are (d) agreed upon and legitimized by an "interpretive community," which is a sort of equivalent to the teamwork criterion in the exact sciences, although the practice of teamwork itself becomes a noticeable trend in the humanities.

According to ethnologists of science, the difference between what scientists preach as part of the standard theory and what they actually do in the laboratory characterizes also the relationship between the modern ideology of text and the actual textual practices of humanists. The modern view of the textual laboratory (in the general and more specific sense: libraries, archives, or workshops) – at this point I am signalizing the status of the text within the third, innovative or technical model – by no means relies on the idea of autonomy; nor does it depend on the concept of the text as a container. Instead, there appears a different concept, that of the text as a *node in the network of relations that permeate* the historical, social, and cultural environment, thereby changing it. Here, the intention remains an inherent component of meaning, like the utterance situation that the text creates and represents, and the contextual relations tested in the reading process, which cannot succeed without the essential engagement of the recipient's experience and knowledge. On the other hand, meaning is not a "ready"

18 Cf. L. Mumford, The Myth of the Machine, Vol. 1: "Technics and Human Development" (San Diego: 1967).

19 Cf. Ł. Afeltowicz, Modele, artefakty, kolektywy. Praktyka badawcza w perspektywie współczesnych studiów nad nauką (Toruń: 2012).

piece of data represented by the text but a relational feature that somehow gets registered by the technical (textual) instruments of cognition and communication to shape and share its form through them.

Besides, such a concept of meaning is not unique; it prevails, among others, in cognitive linguistics. For instance, according to Gilles Fauconnier, linguistic expressions do not contain any fixed, ready-made meaning, because they are only a sort of instruction with a potential for meaning, which actualizes itself as the discourse and its understanding develop through attempts – acts – of embedding it within contexts, namely the discursive and extra-discursive environments constituting a network of "mental spaces" in which the meaning of the message is located and developed.[20] On the other hand, according to Dominique Maingueneau's characterization of the literary text (made from the perspective of critical discourse analysis), to treat the the literary text as discourse

> is to reject the phantasm of the work in itself, in its dual sense of a work of autarchy and a work from the depths of creative consciousness; it is to restore works to those spaces that make them possible, in which they are produced, evaluated, and in which they are governed. The conditions of utterance pervade the uttered, and the uttered refers back to its own conditions of utterance (the status of the writer related to the way in which he or she situates himself or herself in the field of literature, the functions assigned to genres, the relations with the addressee constructed by the work, the material media and modes of circulation of expression...). … The context is not located outside the work, like its successive shells, it is the text itself that manages its context. It is true that works speak of the world, but the acts of their utterance participate in the world they are meant to represent. It is not the case that on the one hand we are dealing with a universe of silent things and actions, and on the other with representations separated from it, which would be its image. Literature is also action; it not only makes statements about the world but also organizes its own presence in this world.[21]

5.4. Three Types of Humanistic Textual Practices

To work *on* a text – this key business of literary studies – is also to work *with* the text. I believe that the latter activity is crucial and specific to humanistic activity, because it complements the previous activities, absorbs and transforms them. In the humanists' work, the text is not only an object or partner but also, and above all, a guide: not only as a medium or transmitter but also a mediator,

20 Cf. A. Libura, Amalgamaty kognitywne w sztuce (Cracow: 2007).

21 D. Maingueneau, Le discours littéraire: Paratopie et scène d'énonciation (Armand Colin: 2004), pp. 51, 53.

which, being "in-between" develops what it mediates;[22] then, as the one who walks ahead and shows the direction or paves the way; finally, as a kind of Baedeker guiding us through newly discovered roads and wilderness of experience. The text is a guide that leads us to understand the other if, as Bakhtin suggest, at the same time it allows us to understand ourselves in terms of the other. Certainly, this is not the case in exact and natural sciences in which the text is a sort of a post-factum account of laboratory experiments conducted elsewhere and at other time.

Extrapolating these premises into the field of poetics, we can say – in a necessarily simplified manner – that each of these types of interest in the text leads to different profiling of the tasks of the humanistic (and, derivatively, literary or artistic) text's poetics:

(1) *the model of working with the text* originating in the hauntological-hermeneutic tradition (with its theological branches) in which the text (work of art) acquires the features of a subject; it poses questions or gives answers, looks at us – and, at the same time, according to Benjamin, attracts our attention and forces an auratic distance – it is the agent, exerts influence, and so on. Here, the text is the other we meet, a partner in the conversation in the course of which it makes itself available to our understanding, subjects itself to interpretation, and represents that which, to some extent, is already potentially given on the "other side," developed, and deposited in the work, namely the author's spiritual world and the work's historical meaning.
(2) *the model of working on the text*, which focuses primarily on analyzing the text (work of art) as an artistic object – closed, formally finite, and extracted, namely autonomous – and aims at grasping the rules of its internal organization and the deep order of its meaning; which is a distinctive feature of the entire philological and structural tradition, classical editing, or archival and source studies.
(3) *the model of working using the text*, which activates and prioritizes the part of the poetological heritage in which poetics is primarily a technique – in the variety of its historical meanings intertwined around the central one, namely as a mode of discovering. From *technaksein kai theorein* – "inventive thinking," so that something could be created from things that may be or not, following Aristotle – and the art of inventive search for the "missing word" (Steiner) to the idea of "exotopic" poetics by Bakhtin based on assuming

22 See R. Debray, Introduction ŕ la médiologie (Paris: 2000).

> the necessary temporal, spatial, and cultural non-co-presence of the comprehended and the comprehending and Adorno's concept of the text as an idiosyncratic process of inventing networks of linguistic-conceptual relations, in which things form their shape and making themselves available to human cognition or, at least, loom on the horizon of understanding.

I invoked this fairly common-sense division of textual practices in the contemporary textual laboratory of the humanities also to highlight the differently oriented possibilities of inventive (innovative) action. In the first model, the text is a sort of a partner – helper, tool – in performing tasks or solving issues other than the ones that inspired it; here, features of the text become analytical categories giving access to the cognition of phenomena or problems of extra-textual or other-than-textual character. In the second model, the text is an object of analytical, experimental inquiry in which changes of questions posed to the text, or in its the conceptual network, or in the experiential framework of reading – all these changes provoke different answers, activate earlier unnoticed dimensions of meaning, and reveal suppressed or unconscious layers of an experience record. Finally, in the third model, the text is primarily the inscription of its development process and simultaneous construction of meaning.

In the three remaining chapters (7, 8, and 9), I will try to demonstrate the functioning of these models by outlining short case studies on: (1) Jan Błoński's critical practice as personal hermeneutics; (2) Janusz Sławiński' theoretical practice as structuralism in action; and (3) Bruno Schulz's creative (literary) practice as the art of "cultural extravagance" – involving, among other things, Schulz's own idea of the creative process, closely related to the "processual" rules of organization, the poetics of his prose. These examples are not selected randomly: the first two figures are my mentors; Jan Błoński was my university teacher, and Janusz Sławiński supervised my doctoral dissertation. Bruno Schulz, in turn, attracted my attention long ago with his fascinating note about creative process, which is one of few relevant records of artistic self-knowledge in Polish literature.

I analyzed Schulz's note in the context of an attempt at a holistic interpretation of his works. There is yet another reason why this analysis is included in the book, namely – both for Schulz and for me, art (art in general, and Schulz's art in particular) is a tool of cultural and anthropological cognition and should not remain isolated from other cognitive practices of the humanities. Undoubtedly, each of the mentioned cases deserves a separate, extensive study; I am aware that my proposition is merely a preliminary look on their writing styles and cognitive models, bearing in each case strong authorial signatures. At this point, I can only engage in trial and fragmentary exploration – or probing – of these problematics.

The problematics of knowledge production (in general) and, especially, the traditional question of the creative process (seemingly) condemned to oblivion or disregard (as discussed in a non-scientific manner) should unquestionably take its rightful place in humanistic reflection. Especially since it reclaimed its scientific status in the current of cognitive neurophenomenology. The evidence are works by Claire Petitmengin, who, by analyzing first-person testimonies regarding the creative process of scientists, philosophers, artists, and writers, reconstructs the principal stages of constituting, profiling, negotiating, and defining the meaning in the process of a text's development: from "the source of thoughts," namely a residual, pre-conceptual, and pre-discursive fermentation threshold of the semantic amalgam in the form of poly-sensorial and transmodal "felt meaning" of the lived experience – to a conceptually and discursively formatted meaning, which does not substitute or suppress the residual stage but, on the contrary, can be read properly only in reference to the residual state from which it draws its energy (intensive stimulations) for subsequent transformations.

This invention of meaning, captured in textual "experience reports," makes it possible to maintain

> a dynamic, enactive view according to which cognition, far from being the representation of a pre-given world, is a process of co-construction of the inside and the outside, the knower and the known, the mind and the world. … If our ideas draw their meaning from the preverbal dimension of our experience, then there is no real understanding which does not attain such depth. Understanding an idea means accessing the felt meaning, which is at its source, thanks to specific gestures.[23]

The idea is also about sanctioning the value of more pragmatically and practically oriented research leading to an analytical and theoretical reflection on the techniques – patterns, strategies – of creation/construction of the text in the humanities. A developed inventive text participates in solving the task and becomes the operator of reorganization by fine-tuning all parts of the research process and integrating them into a methodically constructed discourse. The development of an (own) effectively organized analytical text is also the activation of networks of meaningful relations between elements of the studied text and the evolution of orders (regularities) thanks to which the text acquires a place and meaning in culture, while the recipient – a new form of sharing experience, also his or her own.

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23 C. Petitmengin, "Towards the Source of Thoughts. The Gestural and Transmodal Dimension of Lived Experience," Journal of Consciousness Studies, No. 14(3)/2007, pp. 77–79.

In the new, digital humanities, there is an increasing pressure to develop and study techniques of producing texts, processing data, logistics of transmission, and managing reception, which perhaps even determine the core of the humanities' problematics. In their manifesto, Schnapp and Presner describe this evolution in the following way:

> Like all media revolutions, the first wave of the digital revolution looked backward as it moved forward. Just as early codices mirrored oratorical practices, print initially mirrored the practices of high medieval manuscript culture, and film mirrored the techniques of theater, the digital first wave replicated the world of scholarly communications that print gradually codified over the course of five centuries: a world where textuality was primary and visuality and sound were secondary (and subordinated to text), even as it vastly accelerated the search and retrieval of documents, enhanced access, and altered mental habits. Now it must shape a future in which the medium-specific features of digital technologies become its core and in which print is absorbed into new hybrid modes of communication.
>
> The first wave of the digital humanities work was quantitative, mobilizing the search and retrieval powers of the database, automating corpus linguistics, stacking hypercards into critical arrays. The second wave is *qualitative, interpretive, experiential, emotive, generative* in character. It harnesses digital toolkits in the service of the Humanities' core methodological strengths: attention to complexity, medium specificity, historical context, analytical depth, critique and interpretation.[24]

I quote these two examples of "working with the text," showing an interest in knowledge and text production also because they show two crucial liminal areas or, perhaps, post-humanistic wings, between which the contemporary humanistic research finds itself: first, neuroscience – reaching the pre-conceptual and the pre-linguistic level of communication, immersed in the bodily experience, that links human beings with other living creatures, and, second, digital technology, which becomes the sign of the digital turn of "machine" and "postperceptional" (because disembodied) cyberculture. The flexibility and strength of today's humanities will determine whether the two areas are going to absorb them, making them a component of other knowledge fields – maybe even a significant one but with no right to exist independently – or whether the humanities will try to absorb the two areas and use them for their own purposes, redefining their identity and equal right to be among other fields of contemporary science

24 J. Schnapp, T. Presner, Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0, http://www.humanitiesblast.com/manifesto/ Manifesto_V2.pdf., p. 2.

and "technoculture." The third option, a return to the previous status quo, is probably not available (at least not anymore).

5.5. Conclusions

I advocate a departure from the modern ideology of the text as a container and an autonomous, isolated laboratory of standard procedures for representing, securing, transferring, and receiving meaning. Instead, I propose to turn to the contemporary – and Latourian in spirit – view of the textual laboratory as a node in an open network of translational operations between the natural, the social, and the discursive, which mediates and inventively transforms the relations between the mind, body, and environment. This action-oriented (operational) concept of the cultural text strongly combines disciplinary knowledge (knowledge that) with agency-generating knowledge (knowledge how), and it is mediative in nature, because it reconciles opposing knowledge models and types of textual practices; this enables the transition from the modern humanities to the new humanities – posthumanities? neurohumanities? digital humanities? – which today are trying to find their place between the empirical and the virtual. This concept of the text is:

Holistic – in such an approach, cultural texts are all objects and practices characterized by the semiotic organization of meaning, namely written and spoken, visual and musical, performative (theatrical, behavioral), and material texts.

Note: the "reading of cultural texts" is not about returning to "linguistic imperialism" specific to the period of dominance of the textual turn involving the analysis of cultural phenomena and processes in terms of a linguistic system or language-based theories; it is about acknowledging that: (1) whenever we ask about order and meaning, we turn/transform objects into some sort of texts; and (2) the process of understanding, interpreting, reading them is conditioned – enabled and restricted – by the "frames" of reference that profile the sought organization of meaning and limit the object's polysemic or disseminative potential, namely they reduce the complexity of the object's features.[25]

Action-oriented (operational) – in which understanding of the text (considered along the phase of writing/constructing the cultural text) as a discursively

25 Cf., among others: R. Krauss, "Welcome to the Cultural Revolution," October, 77/1996, http://www.jstor.org/; J. Culler, Framing the Sign. Criticism ant Its Institution (Norman: 1988); M. Bal, "Czytanie sztuki?," trans. M. Maryl, Teksty Drugie, No. 1–2/2012.

organized way of cognition does not merely refer to the produced object as a message carrier but involves the process of producing humanistic knowledge – engaging archival, workshop, intermedial, and interpersonal devices and techniques of research – and the methodological practice of discovering regularities and meanings of the cultural world accumulated in the text.[26]

Note: in this approach, the central object of study is the humanistic research text, but for obvious reasons, its characteristics must affect the characteristics of texts literary, artistic, source, historical, or anthropological) which are its objects study.

Effective (practical) – leading to the development of skills for the production, processing, compilation, understanding, and dissemination of various cultural texts; skills that make it possible to critically study the object and "actively understand" it (in the sense of knowing how to do something).[27]

Note: as a consequence of developing the practical-effective approach, it becomes possible to apply such a concept of the text as an educational program, thereby proposing a specifically profiled model of Polish (humanistic) education, which would emphasize the operational use of methods and theories, learning "textual actions", namely the "techniques" of producing, processing, understanding, and disseminating texts and their meanings in the public and private realms, in a close, mutual relation to the environment in which the individual functions, especially in the contemporary area of cyberculture and digital technology.

5.6. Coda

In the locus classicus of the traditional humanistic education, Seneca encourages a young adept of knowledge to abandon uncritical submission to the authority of "great books" and stop investing his education effort solely in erudition:

> "This is what Zeno said." But what have you yourself said? "This is the opinion of Cleanthes." But what is your own opinion? How long shall you march under another man's

26 B. Latour, "Prolog w formie dialogu pomiędzy Studentem i (cokolwiek) sokratycznym Profesorem" (Prologue in the form of a dialogue between a student and his (somewhat) Socratic Professor), trans. K. Abriszewski, Teksty Drugie, No. 1–2/2007; A. Clark, Supersizing the Mind. Embodiment, Action and Cognitive Extension (Oxford: 2008); Ł. Afeltowicz, Modele, artefakty, kolektywy.

27 Cf., among others: P. Stockwell, Texture – A Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading (Edinburgh: 2012); McGann, Radiant Textuality; J. Bartmiński, S. Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, Tekstologia (Warsaw: 2009).

> orders? Take command, and utter some word which posterity will remember. … But it is one thing to remember, another to know. Remembering is merely safeguarding something entrusted to the memory; *knowing, however, means making everything your own* [emphasis R.N.]; it means not depending upon the copy and not all the time glancing back at the master. "Thus said Zeno, thus said Cleanthes, indeed!" Let there be a difference between yourself and your book![28]

Although today we are significantly more skeptical about the neutrality and effectiveness of memorizing techniques – remembering things as they really were – what remains relevant is Seneca's crucial postulate that the test for knowledge is "doing" and that "knowledge how" trumps "knowledge that." Two thousand years later, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela made this slogan – in their formulation: "all doing is knowing, and all knowing is doing" – the guiding call of the new, united, and holistic conception of the mind, matter, and life.[29]

Making humanistic knowledge a tool for agency-driven action, successful change, and effective impact remains the challenge for the humanities, a challenge which, today, is perhaps even more pressing than ever. We may come closer to this goal by recalling the traditions of treating the text as a mode of action, attempting to operationally reformulate its conception, and striving to design a research and educational program adjusted to the environment in which the future humanities will develop; the environment and the humanities among which we are already present, and which, after all, are already present among us.

28 L. Seneca, Epistels, trans. R. M. Gummere (Loeb Classical Library: 1917), p. 239.

29 H. Maturana, F. R. Varela, The Tree of Knowledge. The Biological Roots of Human Education (Boston–London: 1998), p. 26

6. Jan Błoński: Personal Hermeneutics

6.1. Jan Błoński and His Theater of Interpretation

At the outset, I must stipulate that the reckless idea of, first, reading and then summarizing Błoński's whole oeuvre in a short analysis exceeds my capabilities. Moreover, I think that formulating such a concise self-presentation would be challenging even for Błoński himself – the teacher of the arduous art of critical summarizing. Thus, instead of trying to encompass everything, I will attempt to indicate what is peculiar and distinctive in Błoński's work, what makes his discourse recognizable after merely a few sentences, and what ensures the uniqueness of his critical, essayistic, and scientific diction and, as I believe, secures him a separate and permanent place among the prominent scholars studying the art of reading literature. Błoński's invention – and maybe also a symptom of natural inclination – is a characteristic way of professional reading: Jan Błoński's *theater of interpretation*.

Let me start with a banal observation. The fundamental type of Jan Błoński's critical and scholarly activity is reading – of specific books – and not creating a literary synthesis, constructing a program or doctrine, reconstructing cultural awareness, or diagnosing changes in social mentality. In other words, reading is not only an initial form of contact with the literature replaced later in the course of further inquiry with ever more complex or sophisticated forms of the "higher" discourse, but also an irreplaceable form of initiation: the crucial sort of cognition and a central genre of utterance. Probably, this is why, in Błoński's oeuvre, there are no "servile" readings conducted to confirm the validity of some general thesis, theory, or program, no "faked," or illustrative readings… I wanted to write that there are also no "show-off" readings in Błoński's oeuvre, but in fact, there are plenty of them, at least if we understand them as a presentation (of the way to solve the mystery of meaning) and a demonstration (for others). Moreover, it is not only about Błoński's undoubtedly vital requirement of empirical credibility and verifiability of general statements concerning the writer, the work, or literature in general.

As I believe, in this case, reading is an elementary and universal anthropological situation: the encounter between human and work is a sublime form of the archetypical meeting between self and the other (another human, the world). As Błoński writes in *Romans z tekstem* (Romance with the Text), "understanding people and the world is nothing but the ability to look through someone else's

eyes."[1] If this is true, then Błoński's perspective presented in the text opens our eyes to reality and helps us understand it better. However, the condition is that we manage to penetrate the author's positions, namely settle on the spot where the peculiarity of perspective becomes transparent, the existential problem or obsessive topic becomes possible to grasp ("the primary opposition I attempt to capture" or "the chief poetic gesture," as Błoński puts it), and – again in Błoński's words – where the "man of art, that is, the historian of the incomprehensible" is born.[2]

In Błoński's writings, there are only a few ideological declarations, and, if they appear, they usually take the form of casually mentioned remarks made in the margins of his reflections on other issues or on the occasion of characterizing critical attitudes of researchers that are exceptionally close to Błoński. Perhaps, most interesting in this respect is the methodological – which is already significant as it does not happen a lot – introduction to a selection of Georges Poulet's essays. Indeed, for both Błoński and Poulet, "reading is about empathizing with the represented world and reproducing it." And, for both writers, everything "begins with the gesture of intuitive sympathy thanks to which the critic takes upon himself the existence of his neighbor." Moreover, both Błoński and Poulet look for "the initial, most fruitful moment of creativity." However, Błoński's opinion that "participation and identification are keywords of Poulet's critique" does not refer to the Polish author anymore.[3] Of course, Błoński's criticism requires participation – in this case, representation assumes participation – but perhaps not identification: as I suppose, Błoński would consider Poulet's ideal of purely immanent critique, of the "mimetic duplication of the act of thought" unreal and unnecessary. Instead, the critic's task is rather to immerse empathetically in the inner world of the text in a way that does not give up the possibility of maintaining distance and performing controlling functions by the understanding and experiencing reader.

I see the need to solve this difficulty as one of the most important justifications for Błoński's concept of reading, which I call the theater of interpretation. In short, the theater of interpretation involves staging – on the stage of literary discourse – one's reading process; it is a staging that sometimes appears as an ordered cognitive narrative of fiction – as, for example, in *Od Stasia do Witkacego*

1 J. Błoński, Romans z tekstem (Cracow: 1981), p. 77.

2 J. Błoński, Miłosz jak świat (Cracow: 1998), p. 174.

3 J. Błoński, "Przedmowa," in: G. Poulet, Metamorfozy czasu. Szkice krytyczne, ed. by J. Błoński, M. Głowiński, introduction: J. Błoński (Warsaw: 1977), pp. 11–16.

(From Stasio to Witkacy). More often, however, it takes the form of a dramatized interaction between various roles played by the critic. Symptomatically, Błoński speaks on behalf of the protagonist and author, *opinio communis*, more specific positions, and, of course, on his own behalf. However, none of these ventriloquist voices is neutral, autonomic, or objective: each is also internally dialogized in such a way that summarizing someone's position – Błoński's famous, sometimes lethal or revealing or even simple-minded, analytical weapon – implicitly contains ironic, critical assessment, reveals shortcomings and limitations, or, on the contrary, novelty and originality.

Let us quote two examples – necessarily limited to fragments – of the free critical and seemingly indirect speech:

> I have always tried to take specific moral responsibility in my books – Andrzejewski seems to say – Indeed, I probably changed views, styles, masters. … Why did I agree not to leave the public market; why did every event, every historical turn find a watchful witness in me? Because I believed that my vocation was to be a teacher.[4]

> But are there not too many mushrooms in the borscht? Not much at all – a Pole would say – as much as we usually keep in the theater pantry! The multitude of effects, formal insatiability, and a contredanse of tricks and ideas. After all, this is a significant feature of Polish dramas, from Słowacki and Norwid to Wyspiański and Witkacy! A sale of forms! Orgy of ideas! Quotemania and tinkering with symbols![5]

Indeed, there are many more such passages in Błoński's writings.

A hermeneutist would probably say that this is how the critic responds to the calling of the work. Błoński eagerly advocates this humble and responsible motto: "studying literature refers us back to our very first fascinations and leads to capitulation before greatness."[6] However, such an attitude is, in fact, rarely present in Błoński's oeuvre, and it manifests itself only with respect to several masterpieces. What is striking – at least for me – in the interpretative "behaviors" quoted above is the reversal of the hermeneutic scheme between the human being and the work. After all, the active party is the researcher-critic: he poses questions to the text, initiates the dialogue, arranges the situation, and searches for arguments. One must also admit that Błoński hardly ever allows invectives – even the sophisticated ones like: "this shameful nonsense – a bastard of Makuszyński and Disney – would probably never appear in print if it was not for

4 J. Błoński, Odmarsz (Cracow: 1978), p. 255.

5 J. Błoński, Wszystkie sztuki Sławomira Mrożka (Cracow: 1995), p. 267.

6 Błoński, Romans z tekstem, p. 10.

the pretentious 'film script' pemit."[7] Instead, Błoński declares a conciliatory attitude, fondness, and respect for otherness; moreover, he is willing to have good faith in the work's value to draw from the text more intelligent answers than anyone – including me – could attribute to it. Most often, Błoński solely talks and polemizes with himself rather than the textual "interlocutor."

Knowing Błoński a bit, it is hard to resist the impression that he treated texts as people or people as texts. In both cases, the dialogue starts with a friendly yet merciless questioning, a sort of humorous "tickle" which pushes the interlocutor out of a blissful nap of self-reconciliation, namely identification with a role, position, or situation in which they felt safe, and with which they felt naturally associated. Experimental change of situation, exaggeration of premises, bringing consequences to the extreme, testing the strength and authenticity of positions with joke and irony are just some of the measures used by Błoński in everyday life and reading to create the multi-voiced debate, in which, besides the voice of the text – or interlocutor – also the voices of his sometimes shyly hidden antenati and antagonists, voices of common sense and hermeneutic over-sophistication, apologists, and mockers, are heard. As I believe, Błoński did it because of his conviction that the truth about the text – just as the truth about the other, the world, and self – is not so much a matter of an inner conviction, power of intuitive insight, or the compelling force of argumentation logic, but a process of cooperating dialogically and building the space for an open dispute, which is also the space for joint search and agreement.

Thanks to such criticism, both people and works come to life in Błoński's presence. After all, for Błoński, an encounter with the work is first and foremost a meeting of two individualities that are unique and unpredictable to each other. To be sure, this does not mean that Błoński naively believes in the possibility of the human being's innocent contact with the work occurring on some pre-critical, unbiased area of human sensitivity or spirituality. Błoński knows only too well that the book we take into our hands is wrapped in various guises and labels, which initially shape our readings; moreover, he knows that we see in it in advance what we expect to see because of our interests, culture, needs, and limitations. However, the point is that knowledge, routine, superstition, or "tactical" protection cannot – and should not – reduce the risk and chance (and surprising results) of such an encounter.

From this a perspective, it does not matter whether we study a book of a renowned classic, mediocre penman, or a debutant manuscript, which is still

7 Błoński, Odmarsz, p. 30.

waiting to be marked with the stamp of literariness. It is only when our interpretative efforts emerge out of disinterested curiosity that we can receive the light of cognition that multiplies our knowledge, exceeds vain aesthetic satisfaction, or petty contentment resulting from the confirmation of what we already know. Here, I would see the explanation behind the striking, exceptionally sparse feature present in Błoński's readings: the interest in another perspective (devoid of the slightest traces of doctrinarism), the openness to accept that there may also be other positions, even very distant from the one advocated by the critic, as long as they demonstrate a high degree of originality or intellectual elaboration of the problem.

As they say, the way of traveling determines the destination. The same goes for Błoński; I believe that the features and values that distinguish his concept of reading literature are also the ones he appreciated, discovered, and described with such keenness over and over in the books of his favorite authors. Błoński once confessed that "the main authors [he] dealt with, for example, Sęp-Szarzyński, Proust, Witkacy [let us add at least Gombrowicz, Mrożek, and Miłosz] make up a strange constellation,"[8] for which it is hard to find any logical common denominator. But could one not say – perhaps only slightly exaggerating – that in each case Błoński showed the greatest fascination for the inner theater of the artistic and ideological self-knowledge: the drama of the "internally split" subject, the dialogue with the "master who calls himself 'I'," the psychomachia of the contradictory conditions of an artistic personality, the strategies of mastering – or defending against – the force of the interpersonal, and the tactics of careful cultivation of the polyphonic texture of the poetic persona?

It is maybe not entirely absurd to suppose that the concept of reading described here also proves the existence of a single and unchanging method of studying literature – insofar as the hypothesis about the consequences and affinities of Błoński's principal interests is somehow correct. The theater of interpretation has such a flexible and multifunctional design that it enabled Błoński to use it in all principal fields of his professional activity, namely as a critic, literary scholar, and academic teacher. Usually, after some brief exchange of compliments at the proscenium of the literary achievement, Błoński the literary critic quickly rushes behind the scenes of the artistic image, to the level of decision-making processes, the accuracy or unsuitability of the author's artistic, ideological, moral, and existential choices, while at the same time convincing the audience to embrace his reasons, drawing the spectators into his game as an ever-present critical partner

8 Błoński, Romans z tekstem, p. 310.

in the spectacle. As a scholar and researcher, Błoński frequently dramatizes and "personalizes" the impersonal literary process; he animates and personifies old artifacts and modern monuments by staging the dialogue of tradition and novelty or antagonistic ideological attitudes and artistic positions. It is a dialogue that makes contact with literature a fundamental tool of anthropological self-knowledge. Finally, as a teacher, Błoński gives a demonstrative lesson in critical anatomy, which, although non-imitable and non-emulatable to anyone, has perhaps an even more essential task, namely setting the level of this most elementary, most necessary, and at the same time rarest skill, while also defining the manner of its testing.

6.2. Błoński: Our Contemporary

Błoński was a historian of all Polish literature. Today, it is not as rare as before, but back when researchers had their narrow specializations and "stuck" to one author, period, or genre – only prose, poetry, or drama – which they would slowly explore throughout their entire academic careers, someone who wrote books on Sęp-Szarzyński, Wyspiański, Witkacy, Gombrowicz, Miłosz, and Mrożek – not to mention the still uncounted studies, interpretations, and lectures ranging from Kochanowski to the debutants of the 1990s – must have seemed a person from a different world. Even more so since, in the case of Błoński, his Polish-studies and philological competence goes hand in hand with erudition and research passion of a comparatist and historian of mentality, whose look at the examined literary issue makes it reveal its role in the spiritual currents of the epoch and the peculiarities of national psychomachy. These passions resulted in, on the one hand, separate studies on French literature and theater, Proust, Beckett, Bachelard, Poulet, and Barthes, and, on the other hand, works on the identity models and stereotypes of the Pole, the Sarmatian tradition in Polish culture, and the (often dramatic) coexistence of Poles and Jews in history and culture.

It is therefore no surprise that Błoński stirred irritation in some people, or, at least, patronizing attitudes displayed toward this eccentric amateur of literary and intellectual fascinations who tends to arrive at his conclusions following individual paths, which frequently went over the heads of the "researchers of insect legs" bent over a selected piece of the literary corpus. Of course, more often, Błoński aroused fascination, especially among the younger generations. The fascination had many reasons: the originality of his readings of the most complex texts, the boldness of unexpected associations, or the ability to instantly place seemingly literary tricks or formulations in the problematic center of the worldview of a given epoch, cultural tradition, or national mentality. However,

years later, I think that the factor determining Błoński's influence is, above all, the ability and courage to have his own view of literature. Błoński does not hide behind the so-called state of research and standards of periodization; he does not skip them either. Instead, Błoński turns them into a premise or springboard (sometimes evident but more frequently hidden in argumentative allusions) for his own insights that are not only literary but also an ideological, social, and cultural in character.

Thus, one could say that Błoński was just a critic; however, not only in the sense settled in our taxonomy of literary activities, limited to evaluative practice concerning contemporary literature and cultural life. This practice interested Błoński for a long time and brought him many successes, making him the authority in the literary life of the Polish People's Republic. Błoński remained faithful to thus understood criticism for his entire life, devoted to it much time and some excellent books, namely those published and those slowly appearing in printed volumes of scattered writings. To this day, the diagnoses and prognoses included in these works – both accurate and less accurate ones – are a source of inspiration and reference point for the most captivating works written by the outstanding representatives of several generations of literary critics (even though it usually remains a hidden source of inspiration).

Still, Błoński deserves the title of critic also in a more general sense, closer to the one from French or Anglo-Saxon tradition, in which literary criticism is sometimes an overarching term for literary studies. In Błoński's case, it concerns especially such an understanding of criticism that does not acknowledge or see the possibility of separating: (a) values from facts; (b) own experience, beliefs, and knowledge from the neutral description of allegedly independent (and independently existing) meanings; (c) the exclusively autonomous field of literature, separated from the totality of social and political life, history, and culture. Błoński speaks firmly on these issues several times, although he avoids theoretical or methodological proclamations. He usually explains this with his lack of theoretical "talent;" however, a possible reason is his strong reluctance toward quick generalizations, "systemic ambitions," and having unique personalities or peculiarities squeezed into a doctrinal corset.

As to the first issue, Błoński, like a contemporary cultural hermeneutist, maliciously but not unreasonably remarks that theorists, hypocritically declaring objectivity in the sense of freedom from valuation, strikingly often seek to ground their arguments in masterpieces. In such a way, they mask their fear of literature – especially the new one – and safe dependence on their predecessors. As to the second issue, Błoński, like a contemporary neopragmatist, argues that thus understood neutrality is an illusion: one never meets the text directly, "eye to

eye" because our eye – armed with our and our "interpretative community's" tastes and pre-judices[9] – and the text itself reach us already evaluated, pigeonholed, and wrapped in the network of cultural intentions and meanings. As to the third issue, Błoński argues – for example, in his remarkable correspondence with Mrożek – in the spirit of what we may call ethical criticism, claiming that there was never autonomous literature which would be "only itself," and the "liberation" of literature is, in fact, a terminological misunderstanding.

Therefore, can one even talk about Błoński's one specific critical method? Definitely, but not in a normative sense. Błoński uses techniques psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, and structural analysis – at least as means of pastiche, cf. *Miasta* – and philosophical anthropology. Moreover, he draws on the traditions of new criticism (especially the "criticism of consciousness"), the art of interpretation, psychoanalytical criticism, and sociology of culture. From these ingredients, Błoński creates his style of "romance with the text" resulting from his fascination with the "incomprehensibility" – today, one would say "otherness" – of literary expression. The appeal of this "incomprehensibility" draws even the most critical reader into an unpredictable adventure of reading, engages not only the intellect but also emotions, aesthetic sensitivity, and ethical attitude, and, finally, induces the reader to experience, empathize, and understand. However, it happens in such a way that makes it possible to "enact" – sometimes in a truly performative mode – these conflicted meanings in Błoński's critical theater of interpretation, where the most hermetic messages of civilizational transformations or coded messages of intimate dramas find explanation (and justification) as signs of an arranged psycho- and sociogram of national and transnational culture. It is probably in this sense that Błoński defines criticism as "the consciousness of literature."

On the other hand, almost throughout Błoński's entire life, literature – this "disinterested experience of language," as he once remarked in a definition-like manner – is the consciousness of society and the whole culture, because culture is "the very form of society's existence." Therefore, Błoński is probably unwilling to distinguish between the external and internal and restrict the art of interpretation – of which he was a master – to an uncovering of immanent meanings deposited within the text. For Błoński, interpretation is rather a form of the ever more popular case study, in which a peculiar configuration of meanings, the constellation of contextual relations inscribed in the text is subject to

9 In Polish, przed-sądy, which refers to Gadamer's famous concept of the Vor-Urteil [translator's note].

development – during critical reading – into a bundle of references leading to subsequent cases – literary events – which, in turn, lead to subsequent ones, and so on, revealing the network of relations constituting the empirical and, at the same time, somewhat rudimentary level of turning what is literary, cultural, social, and political into institutionalized forms and patterns of culture. Probably the most intriguing of Błoński's arrangements – on the models of the Polish identity and Polish traumas, the stranger (the foreigner), the Jew, "Jewishness," Poles' attitudes toward the Holocaust, strategies of the development of poetry, Polish and émigré literature, politics, and writers – not only anticipate today's thematic fascinations and major intellectual debates but also constitute an alternative mode of description – rather than, say, a sort of preparation – to the traditional model of textbook historical-literary synthesis or theoretical taxonomy. It is a mode that today inspires many researchers to perform similarly oriented attempts at registering the transformations occurring in literary and cultural practice.

In one of his letters to Sławomir Mrożek from 1964, which was a central period of the Polish People's Republic stagnation, Jan Błoński melancholically, quite rhetorically, yet not without pressure, asks his friend: "is it possible to assume such a thing: a European of Polish language? Can it serve as a starting point, or can it only appear at a certain development stage, as a crowning?" Błoński addresses his question to a writer who feels the overpowering violence of Polish culture's symbolics, social mentality, and national identity policy and seeks – successfully, as we know – ways to translate these determinants into transculturally legible and vital patterns and attitudes. However, judging by the particular emphasis with which Błoński expresses it, he also addresses these words to himself and to the task of critics – truly missionary one at that time – to which he devoted himself.

It seems that Błoński's formula of criticism was extraordinarily successful in facing this challenge. Jan Błoński was a European critic of Polish literature. However, it is possible that his untimely modernity – in the sense of spiritual belonging to the modern cultural formation and being up-to-date – of Błoński's attitude and writings, which began with a daring reading of *Ferdydurke* by an eighteen-year-old in the distant year of 1949, can only be truly recognized today.

7. Janusz Sławiński: Structuralism in Action

7.1. Irony and Maieutics

Although versatile and varied, Janusz Sławiński's activity has focused on three fundamental and strategic areas of literary research: first, theoretical and metatheoretical reflection; second, editorial and propaedeutic work; and third, organization of academic life. Sławiński's theoretical writings immediately brought him well-deserved fame. Moreover, among Polish literary researchers, his theoretical concepts became an almost universal standard used to orient other ideas, estimate someone else's competence, and shape university education. At the same time, his approaches to particular problems became even standards in the musical-entertainment sense, namely popular topics of theoretical variations and sampling, objects of numerous adaptations, developments, and transformations in the reflection of Polish studies.

Discussing Sławiński's editorial and propaedeutic work, I mean the journals he edited (*Teksty*, *Almanach Humanistyczny*, and *Kultura Niezależna*), book series ("Z Dziejów Form Artystycznych" (From the History of Artistic Forms), "Vademecum Polonisty" (Polish Studies Vademecum), and his contributions to *Zarys teorii literatury* (An Outline of Literary Theory) and *Słownik terminów literackich* (Dictionary of Literary Terms). Generally, these three branches of Sławiński's activity link his successful efforts to develop, implement, and creatively use an efficient, modern, and, above all, universally accepted *common language* of literary studies. Finally, Sławiński's program and organizational efforts – whose most visible manifestation were academic conferences devoted to literary theory (and others, such as the one on "badly present literature") – brought a specific formula of university life and a sort of its "sociotechnical" framework. It was so successful and attractive that the academic milieu immediately recognized it as a model form for its self-organization.

Without going into historical details of these activities, one must admit that Sławiński's work – considered in a transindividual dimension – provided our milieu with a significant gift, namely a state of *normal* functioning in times which were far from ordinary. It was a sort of ecological niche – as Sławiński liked to call it – a space of free thought and argument protected by constant efforts. Indeed, one needs a moment of critical reflection to notice that this shared, and

thus somewhat "nobody's" good, bears a distinctly strong trances of its inventor's individuality.

Although Sławiński's writings do not lack generically conventional utterances, they are recognizable thanks to Sławiński's distinct preference for a form of which I cannot find a precursor in Poland. It is a form of "essays in (meaning attempts at) literary theory," emerging from a primary decision-making process and systemic invention, in which the relationship between the subject and theory has remained so far intact and the object of cognition is only starting to acquire its objective features in the course of the author's activities, performed on his own responsibility, such as differentiation, classification, and systematization of our confusing research field.

Interestingly enough, similar preferences seem to prevail in other realms of Sławiński's activity. His editorial concept of a literary journal – such as *Teksty* – does not follow the existing models and owes its distinctiveness to the idea of a "workshop journal," a forum for intellectual invention rather than exhaustive – and exhausting – monographs. The formula of academic conferences organized by Sławiński differed considerably from practices accepted elsewhere, especially in the aspect that gave them the character of mental workout or exercise, sometimes a severe test, or sporting trial of strength.

From such a point of view, everything suggests that among the roles offered by the scientific life of a given discipline, in every type of activity, Sławiński "invariably" – which is another of his favorite expressions – played the role of a sender and disposer of the rules of speaking and professional behavior of the Polish studies community. One could say that Sławiński especially likes fulfilling the tasks of the "subject of creative actions" – as he called the speaker in literature – of Polish literary theory, which is to say, precisely this communicative role whose specificity and meaning he himself described best.

Although the name is new, the role itself is rooted in noble traditions. It seems that it can be decomposed into at least two related operations: the *ironic* and the *maieutic* one. The former is preparatory. It thoroughly purifies the field from superstitions and cliches, doctrinaire obstinacy, naivety, and simplifications. The destructive power of its influence manifests itself directly in Sławiński's already legendary polemics and critical speeches. This operation is rarely present in Sławiński's texts, but it involves the ironic use of quotation marks that frequently serve to express one's own and others' views, concepts, or all-encompassing systematizations.

The second operation, in turn, has never led, as one might expect, to the creation of a definitive theory, implementation of one's concept, or meticulous preservation of an old, proven formula. In this case, the role of a caring midwife

of the fetuses of other people's skills is more relevant than that of a carefree, self-absorbed producer. Such a strategy, of which Sławiński's bold actions convinced us at every step, was, above all, to make the cognitive situation clearer, define the ways of legitimate conduct, and reveal the field of research possibilities, providing the *others* with an opportunity for effective and independent activity. Thus, Sławiński's strategy apparently has also led to, first, ethical and pedagogical effects, and then to cognitive ones. Indeed, it is an exceptionally difficult and rarely observed skill.

7.2. Of Janusz Sławiński's (Not) Quoting

From its very beginnings, Janusz Sławiński's theoretical writing has distinctively stood out from other works in the field of literary studies, because it is highly individual, especially once we compare it to the prevailing discourse which usually follows professional standards and rules of the genre. Thanks to, among other things, stylistic features (especially lexical preferences), terminological inventiveness (until recently, its results constituted a significant part of the canonic repertoire of Polish literary theory), characteristic logic of argumentation (typically developing in line with the network of systemic oppositions built a vista), and elegant construction of utterance (which is a model for a good theory narration), Sławiński's essays are recognizable already after a few sentences, even though they do not overly expose the author's presence in the text.

Among these specific properties of Sławiński's discourse, which are relatively easy to identify and, besides, described multiple times, there is also a less obvious one (as it is negative), which, however. seems crucial, that is, the absence of quotes, especially those from the so-called source literature. In other words, Sławiński constantly refrains from putting extraneous thought into his utterance. Of course, I need to make a reservation with respect to this general remark. It does not apply to Sławiński's first book, *Koncepcja języka poetyckiego Awangardy Krakowskiej* (The Concept of the Poetic Language of the Cracow Avant-Garde), which followed the professional standards of literary research discourse. However, admittedly, in this case, Sławiński quotes the source literature rather scarcely, and these are rarely particular formulations. Finally, it is also untrue in the case of Sławiński's works on the authors he held in high regard – although each time for different reasons – namely Thomas Stearns Eliot, Kazimierz Budzyk, and Jan Mukařovský. In such a perspective, we should consider quotations from them expressions of genuine appreciation, if not homage, on the part of Sławiński. However, considering his overall published oeuvre, this intriguing feature – which, on such a scale, probably relates Sławiński's writings only to

those of Roman Ingarden – over time manifestly intensifies, ever more affects his successive works, and stimulates their specific rhetorical organization – in any case, accords with it – perhaps provoking the reader to make comment on, if not try to explain, the mysterious nature of Sławiński's motives.

Let us note what the author loses by renouncing this conventional means of discourse production in the humanities. First, Sławiński rejects invocations of authorities, maybe except for the three indicated cases. Second, he cannot specify the sources or set the text in the context of some corresponding tradition of thinking about literature (in the sense of making a particular reference to given solutions which determine the genealogy or genesis of his own ideas). Third, Sławiński loses the possibility of refutation (a dialogical interpretation and critical assessment of the so-called state of research). Fourth, he refrains from individual attempts at systematization – or ordering – of existing positions into a configuration which may receive the status of his own research achievement. Fifth, he cannot make polemical references to unpopular opinions, which may inspire constructive criticism and a presentation of his own view on a given issue. Sixth, Sławiński loses the chance to demonstrate his own erudite conceptual equipment, which, admittedly, usually does not directly legitimize the persuasive effectiveness of the message but, in any case, indirectly strengthens it.

This short and by no means complete list of the functions of quotations in the humanistic discourse can give us some idea about the significance of Sławiński's refusal to quote. Indeed, the list also tells us something about the consequences of such refusal for his strategy of constructing own discourse. This strategy, to be sure, is not about simply rejecting the external context. We may even contend that Sławiński's texts perform the role of exempla which illustrate specific features of invoked views, discussed theoretical positions, or phenomena of humanistic and cultural life. Indeed, the scale of possibilities which he employs is immense.

The easiest possibility is to present or discuss the essence of someone else's position in one's own words. Noteworthy, it is not usually a completely neutral process, because it involves an element of criticism or exposition of the main idea, meaning the most significant one in argumentation, not necessarily in the original context. Another trick – a bit in the style of Lem's *Perfect Vacuum* – is to use a fictional example (for instance, of a given type of review or argumentation), which regardless of its amusing side entails a weighty – and usually critical – evaluation of the presented form of utterance and the theoretical assumptions that legitimize it. A variant or development of this trick is to summarize the history of a given concept or doctrine with a fictional plot – a "fairy tale" – implying its re-evaluation made by the "fabulator." Yet another operation – a sort of the

equivalent of systematic classification of a given spectrum of attitudes or research positions – is to vividly characterize fictional personas representing bundles of roles and crucial beliefs, significant for the discussed standpoints and their place and status in the taxonomic order. Sławiński's readers will probably agree that it would be difficult to accuse him of showing off his erudition. One could risk the thesis that, instead, Sławiński inserts ironic and common-sense examples of – or references to – phenomena and behaviors taken straight from everyday life.

Apart from their exemplary-argumentative function, the listed operations frequently embellish his argument, changing its tone and stylistic register and thus providing readers with necessary anecdotal material, which helps them grasp the conclusions and often activates additional meanings that are crucial for the overall meaning of the argument. However, characteristically, all of them aim for systematic elimination of the others' speech. A strange thought or utterance unprocessed by Sławiński has almost no right to enter the territory of his discourse. Exaggerating only a little, we can say that Sławiński's texts are reserved only for their author's own speech. Of course, it does not mean that Sławiński renounces the possibility of debate, polemics, or dialogues. Quite the contrary, he is engaged in such activities but in the space of his individual theater of speech, namely under the conditions and in the form modeled by his own discoursive strategy. Indeed, nothing is further from this strategy than to stay cautiously hidden behind someone else's words, developing one's own ideas using paraphrases, commentaries, or variations over some widely accepted thought which enjoys recognition of professional authority. On the other hand, one cannot say that it is about directly proclaiming his own position which would be unbridled by tradition or the current state of research.

The goal of these strategic operations is rather to provide such conditions – or organize such a discursive space with an inherent specific system of oppositions and rules – in which an own view on the given issue would appear to the reader as an inevitable and objective consequence of successively accepted, irrefutable premises. If there is any form of coercion here, it is certainly its noblest variety, one which serves to inspire the readers' vigilance and critical focus, while also activating the foundation of their own positions and making them aware of it. Thanks to this textual practice, it sometimes might be possible to resist the compelling logic of argumentation. Provided, of course, that it happens by virtue of going beyond the argumentation's scope of influence; and at the same time, by thinking at one's own expense and in one's own analytical "language". In other words, when Sławiński's text becomes an inspiration for individual search, poses challenges to its readers, or forces them to think in their own, original way (both in the sense of reaching one's own originary beliefs and in the sense of finding

their potential novelty and, perhaps, seeds of their difference from other existing ideas). As it is often the case in such situations, the strongest influence leaves the faintest traces on the surface.

From such a perspective, Sławiński's indications and entire statements, in which he addresses the issue, gain special significance. For instance, when he writes about infecting the reader-critic with the author's vocabulary, or about the fruitfulness of intertextual theory, or "obsession" on quotes, or the function of quoting in general. The first issue, introduced in the well-known essay "Sprawa Gombrowicza" (The Case of Gombrowicz), can be also read from an autobiographical perspective. After all, it is also a lesson whose effects Sławiński successfully tested and verified in his writing. He avoided publicly discussing intertextual research for a relatively long time. However, his opinion, as evidenced in one of his texts from the series *Bez przydziału (VII)* (Without Assignment (VII), has gained its shape quite early and, as always in his case, was both independent and far-sighted. In the text, Sławiński expresses his awareness of the significant indebtedness of intertextual research to the centuries-old tradition of poetics and sees its core in what already received attention earlier and what e.g. Irzykowski – in fact, the only object of Sławiński's lasting admiration and the specialist in discovering the "transforming" dimension in artworks – calls "resorting to one's reserves," and therefore, one could say, to probing – revealing and analyzing – the unconscious textual, ideological, and cultural background of one's own discourse. In the end, however, Sławiński champions a radically broad understanding of this category, which is Bakhtinian in spirit, recognizing the historical significance of its influence on restoring the role of the utterance-level and the status of the subject in the transformation of our understanding of what the literary work (literature in general and our experience of it) is. In turn, Sławiński's intriguing reflections on his youthful tendency to put almost every term in quotes and his distrust and sense of the incompatibility of his thoughts with the standard meanings of general language seem not only convincing as a record of an individual experience but also accurate as a portrait of young intellectual pains because of the indeterminacy of his views (his subjective endowment) and, perhaps, his participation the still untamed linguistic environment. Moreover, Sławiński's reflections make it possible to recognize at least some premises for building one's own discursive strategy.

Finally, in *Bez przydziału (VIII)*, Sławiński's symptomatic gloss on quoting – or rather, on his reactions to other researchers who quote his views and statements – makes his decisions easier to understand. Sławiński writes there about the impression of severe deformation of his thought, which comes together not only with the awkwardness of being an authoritative object of others' pondering

but also a melancholic conviction about the ineffectiveness of correcting the interpretations that circulate in community discussions or analyses in which Sławiński's own concepts become merely helpless objects. In the essay's conclusion, Sławiński notes that his ideal would be to exert an impersonal and anonymous influence, accomplished when readers or listeners would unwittingly adopt the author's position emerging from his research invention, a position which at the same time would be treated as objective findings of institutionalized knowledge. If we recall Sławiński's self-proclaimed fondness for writing dictionary and encyclopedic entries, we can say that he tried to fulfill this ideal. After all, encyclopedic entries present the results of exploration and synthetic research arrangements of specific scientists in the form of depersonalized and objective knowledge; therefore, they are frequently highly individualized by the author and profiled by specific theoretical and methodological assumptions.

In general, one can say that the second, complementary dimension of Sławiński's (not) quoting, namely the presence of his ideas and their formulations in the statements of other researchers interestingly corresponds to the earlier analyzed dimension. In his introduction to Janusz Sławiński's *Prace wybrane* (Selected Works), Włodzimierz Bolecki notes, quite aptly, that the actual influence of Sławiński's ideas does not correspond to his relatively rare presence in quotations and footnotes that attest to conscious references made by individual researchers. Having said that, one can agree that this remark is appropriate both in its general scope and regarding a particular period, especially the 1980s and early 1990s. Moreover, I am sure that when the program analyzing the "impact factor" is finally created and implemented in the Polish humanities, it would turn out that Janusz Sławiński occupies one of the highest positions – and this applies not only to several decades of his activity but, in fact, to the whole twentieth century.

Thus, Janusz Sławiński's thought is undoubtedly present almost uninterruptedly – both in a thematized and implied manner – when it is quoted and when it is not, that is to say, both when it is visible on the surface and when it is hidden in the corners or unconscious backstage of Polish studies and literary theory. His thought is also present in a way that would have been particularly pleasant to Sławiński, namely, that of an author of universally accepted – and thus treated like an anonymous common good and universally accessible resource of objective knowledge – terms and definitions, distinctions and classifications, and conceptualizations of currents, directions, and periods in literary studies. However, perhaps the evidence of Sławiński's even more impactful presence is the almost invisible "blank" – as Norwid once called it – influence through the acquisition of seemingly neutral but, in fact, strongly idiolectal peculiarities of style which

are characteristic of Sławiński's discourse, and through his eager if sometimes peculiar use of terms such as: "invariably" (*nieodmiennie*) instead of "as a rule" (*z reguły*), "peculiarly" (*osobliwie*) instead of "especially" (*zwłaszcza*), "to put things straight" (*układzić*) instead of "order" (*uporządkować*), or "wording" (*wysłowienie*) instead of "formulation" (*sformułowanie*) or "definition" (*definicja*).

Such testimonies bear even greater importance, because they seem to be – and usually are – indicators of the adoption of not so much particular ideas or terms but a style of thinking, cognitive attitude, or even personal role model. I know what I am talking about because I have more than once caught myself under such influence. In fact, every Polish literary scholar can verify, by looking into his/her works and experiences, whether there are traces of Sławiński's words, thoughts, and attitude; or try to find out whether – and to what extent – they proved themselves immune to this irresistible influence of Sławiński's research personality, exerted beyond the threshold of consciousness and self-control.

8. Bruno Schulz: Art as Cultural Extravagance[1]

8.1. The Problem with Schulz

The enormous – and constantly growing – library exegeses and interpretations of Schulz's works conducted by the most prominent Polish and foreign literary scholars is both tempting and discouraging – or intimidating – for those who wish to record yet another (new?) reading of his works. Such an overwhelming context makes every attempt to add another brick to the Schulzological edifice an ever-riskier task, burdened with the grave threat of unfulfillment, repetition, or production of a marginal supplement to existing readings.

An equally significant reason for my reading-interpretative resistance – proven also by the fact that, so far, I have not written any separate text devoted to this oeuvre – is that I have a problem with Schulz. I have a problem with his bizarre "rhetoric of exaggeration," often tending toward pompous pretentiousness, which even Schulz's most profound irony cannot disarm. I have a problem with decrypting the so-called deeper meaning of the bizarre human menagerie occupying Schulz's world, the nature of its struggles and purpose of its activity. I have a problem with capturing the anthropological raison d'être of this peculiar, deeply idiomatic – although drawing heavily on cultural memory – existential-artistic project, in which the category of "personal mythology" (suggested by Schulz) seems to be rather a guise of the artistic license than an explanation (and therefore deserves at least a re-reading), and in which the aesthetic or ideological declarations present in this project can hardly be taken at their face value, for they are strikingly contradicted by Shulz's literary practice. Finally, I have a – basic and elementary – problem with the strange semantic organization of Schulz's works, which effectively escape hermeneutical operations of convincing exegesis. It is as if they were permanently (structurally?) open, waiting to be completed by meaning which remains an unfulfillable promise.

Certainly, these may be merely my problems which no one has to share. However, this overly lengthy confession of a troubled reader of Schulz's works appears as necessary to determine the starting point for the proposed reading and my

1 I delivered the first version of the text at Bruno Schultz Festival in Drohobych in June 2016. I want to thank all organizers for the invitation, especially Wiera Meniok, the principal organizer and the legendary spiritus movens of the Festival.

perspective, the awareness of somehow entering the role of the Schulzian protagonist as an "ashamed audacious man" encroaching the elite scene of Schulzology or a jittered usurper who claims the right to know the mystery of these works. Hopefully, the fact that I try to explain something to myself here may serve as a partial justification.

As a person passably trained in my profession, I assume that it is no coincidence, that these "peculiarities" and "oddities" are significant, and one should not overlook them attempting what can be called strong interpretation (profiling the reading in a new, insightful, and homogenous perspective). Moreover, I concluded that the key to this mystery is not an encrypted code of hidden meanings but lies in plain sight (like a stolen letter in Edgar Allan Poe's story; by the way, Władysław Parnas already used this comparison in reference to Schulz). It is precisely the ambiguous, multidimensional, and intense peculiarity of Schulz's works, namely the title extravagance. In the following four sections concerning my problems with understanding Schulz's "peculiarity," I shall try to outline its topography, necessarily limited to Schulz's literature (although applicable also to his visual works), and signalize its strategic analytical tropes.

However, before I begin, I need to provide some vocabulary explanations. The word "extravagance" occurs in Schulz only once, in the story *Birds*. In the English translation of his prose, it is rendered as eccentricity: "At that time we did not yet understand the sad origin of these eccentricities, the deplorable complex which had been maturing in him."[2] But its equivalents, appearing in Schulz's contemporary dictionaries, are among the most ubiquitous terms in his prose.[3]

8.2. Rhetoric of Exaggeration

The stylistic and rhetoric extravagances of Schulz's prose attracted the polemical attention even of its first critics, like Wyka or Napieralski. Undoubtedly, they

2 The Complete Fiction of Bruno Schulz, ed. by J. Ficowski, trans. C. Wieniewska (New York: 1989), p. 20. Henceforth quoted as CF with a page number.

3 The Polish Language Dictionary edited by Jan Karłowicz, Adam Kryński, and Władysław Niedźwiedzki: extravagance – oddity, strangeness, absurdity; to extravagate – to say unbelievable things, to tell untruths. The Illustrated Dictionary of Polish Language by Michał Arct: to overreact; weirdness, abuse, excess. The Gutenberg Encyclopedia: exuberant, exaggerated, bizarre. Additionally, there are significant etymological meanings: extra + vagari means to wander beyond, outside; extra vagans means the one going astray, wandering, erring; and extravagans, which is a medieval legal word, means promulgated outside of canon law.

are a recognizable trademark of Schulz's idiom. Here are some examples: "the ever elusive essence of fire" (CF 19), "my mother, worried and unhappy" (CF 20), "lying face downward on the furry lap of darkness, we sailed in its regular breathing into the starless nothing" (CF 26), "the amalgam of dawn withered" (CF 26), "nameless face" (CF 27), "the vastness of the transcendental" (CF 117), "the differential calculus of the night continued" (CF 237). Thus, we see the tendency to pleonastic multiplication of similar terms and maximization of the intensity of features, substantialization and realization of abstracts, specialized technical or scientific terms, and pompous reduplication of definitions of the inexpressible… All this is well visible in his self-ironic self-description: "how could an accumulation of adjectives or a richness of epithets help when one is faced with that splendiferous thing?" (CF 117). Undoubtedly, this rhetoric of exaggeration is challenging for Schulz's readers, including myself.

A long time ago, Henry David Thoreau's writings gave me the first clue for understanding the stylistic extravagance; however, it was not until reading Robert Baker's work that I was able to develop it. In the conclusion of his exalted meditations in *Walden*, Thoreau writes as follows:

> I fear chiefly lest my expression may not be extra-vagant enough, may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced. Extra vagance! it depends on how you are yarded. The migrating buffalo, which seeks new pastures in another latitude, is not extravagant like the cow which kicks over the pail, leaps the cow-yard fence, and runs after her calf, in milking time. I desire to speak somewhere without bounds; like a man in a waking moment, to men in their waking moments; for I am convinced that I cannot exaggerate enough even to lay the foundation of a true expression. Who that has heard a strain of music feared then lest he should speak extravagantly any more forever? In view of the future or possible, we should live quite laxly and undefined in front, our outlines dim and misty on that side; as our shadows reveal an insensible perspiration toward the sun. The volatile truth of our words should continually betray the inadequacy of the residual statement. Their truth is instantly translated; its literal monument alone remains. The words which express our faith and piety are not definite; yet they are significant and fragrant like frankincense to superior natures.[4]

Thus, for Thoreau, like for Schulz, the extravagances of style are a way of not so much overcoming the limitations of standard language communication (which is impossible), but the identification of linguistic barriers blocking free expression of the truth about human experience of reality, which, thanks to this stylistic device (artificiality and unnaturalness) may gain a voice, yet only via

4 H. D. Thoreau, Walden (Princeton-Oxford: 2004), pp. 324–325.

negativa: "betray[ing] the inadequacy of the residual statement." It does not fully comply with Schulz's declarations, but it is only insofar as they are oversimplified. For "the nameless does not exist for us."[5] This famous Schulz's dictum is not about – as one might think and as young Wittgenstein would have it – "the limits of my language meaning the limits of my world." Rather, it comes close to "late" Wittgenstein's views, as a justification of one's search for access to what is ineffable in language; for Schulz, it is primarily the sublime and inexpressible ("I am drawn to increasingly inexpressible themes"). In his extravagant style, Schulz writes: "no word, no allusion can adequately suggest the shiver of fear, the presentiment of a thing without name that exceeds all our capacity for wonder" (CF 117).

Indeed, in my opinion, Schulz's view is the following: we gain access to reality only in the form of the "after-taste of that [thing without name – R. N.] on the tip of our tongue." When we search for a missing, adequate word and we think it is "on the tip of our tongue," then even if we do not find what we are looking for, it remains a real if unexpressed word, as evidenced, for instance, by our rejection of other terms as "inadequate." The same applies to real things and reality: they are accessible to us only "on the tip of our tongue," through endless attempts to express and name them using an "inadequate," artificial language that will never become the "language of things" but which gives us an extra-verbal and extra-conceptual, sensory-affective "taste" of contacting them.

In his book titled *The Extravagant: Crossings of Modern Poetry and Modern Philosophy*, Robert Baker draws inspiration from the above quoted passage from Thoreau's *Walden*, arguing that the concept of "extravagance" may become a more operational analysis category of the transformations of modern poetry – from Romanticism to the present – and of the evolution of philosophical thought (from Hegel to Derrida and Nancy) than the category of the sublime that has been so far widely used for this purpose. In Baker's approach, the philosophically worked-through category of extravagance – activating the meanings which I have listed at the beginning – makes it possible to choose between three essential paths in the artistic-philosophical development of modernity (in the broad sense of the term). First, the experience of the sublime, which manifests its creative agency, especially in the language of innovative works of modernist and avant-garde art. By using the figure of the sublime, they break and transcend the normative frameworks and limitations of the contexts in which they appear. Second,

5 Letters and Drawings of Bruno Schulz, ed. by J. Ficowski, trans. W. Arndt, V. Nelson (New York: 1988), p. 117. Henceforth quoted as LD with a page number.

the Faustian search in which "creative destructions and destructive creations" lead to the transformation and expansion of our experiential boundaries. Third, the experience of the abysmal, unfounded negativity, which conditions, moves, and shatters our schemes of both positive knowledge and clear and distinct representation.[6] It seems indisputable that Bruno Schulz's work not only can be but has been repeatedly analyzed from these three relevant analytical perspectives;[7] therefore, in this text, it is sufficient to merely signalize these possibilities.

In the passage from *Walden* quoted above, Baker also finds another, more general idea, which is also of great significance for Schulz's work. Commenting on Thoreau's "extravagant" desire to travel beyond conventional existential and linguistic limitations, Baker asks whether "the wandering he [Thoreau] evokes is an existential wandering that can only be adequately conveyed through a linguistic wandering, or whether it is in the first place a linguistic wandering that" – as a departure from the norms of simplicity and communicability – "then is able to bring about an existential journey;"[8] or finally, whether it is both, and there is a sort of feedback loop between these forms of wandering that defines ambivalence, so characteristic to this kind of "extravagant" writing. I think that this is also the case with Schulz. On the one hand, Schulz's language and style generate states of affairs, plot adventures, and transformations; they also build the thematic mood and the direction of existential search. On the other hand, Schulz's existential project could find no better articulation than in this exaggerated discourse that transgresses conventional norms. From the third perspective, it is

6 Here, I paraphrase Robert Baker's argument from his The Extravagant: Crossings of Modern Poetry and Modern Philosophy (Notre Dame: 2005), pp. 269–270.

7 For works devoted to interpreting Schulz's prose in these three currents, cf., among other things: A. Bielik-Robson, "Życie na marginesach. Drobny aneks do kwestii 'Bruno Schulz a kabała chasydzka,'" in: Schulz. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej, ed. by J. Majmurek (Warsaw: 2012); W. Bolecki, Poetycki model prozy w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym: Witkacy, Gombrowicz, Schulz i inni: studium z poetyki historycznej (Cracow: 1996); D. Głowacka, "Wzniosła tandeta i 'simulacrum.' Bruno Schulz w postmodernistycznych zaułkach," Teksty Drugie No. 2–3/1996; J. Jarzębski, Prowincja Centrum. Przypisy do Schulza (Cracow: 2005); M. P. Markowski, Powszechna rozwiązłość. Schulz, egzystencja, literatura (Cracow: 2012); W. Panas, Księga blasku. Traktat o kabale w prozie Brunona Schulza (Lublin: 1997); W. Panas, Bruno od Mesjasza. Rzecz o dwóch ekslibrisach oraz jednym obrazie i kilkudziesięciu rysunkach Brunona Schulza (Lublin: 2001); K. Stala, Na marginesach rzeczywistości. O paradoksach przedstawiania w twórczości Brunona Schulza (Warsaw: 1995); Słownik Schulzowski, ed. by W. Bolecki, J. Jarzębski, S. Rosiek (Gdańsk: 2003).

8 R. Baker, The Extravagant…, p. 4.

precisely ambivalence – where these two dimensions mutually preserve and undermine each other – that defines the authenticity and peculiarity of the creative idiom of Schulz's artistic and life project.

8.3. The Poetics of Extravagance

Already at the beginning of his short review of *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, Witold Gombrowicz gives the best solution to the problem of extravagance in both the appearance and behavior of the figures who occupy the represented world of Schulz's prose. Noteworthy, in Gombrowicz's review, the words "*dziwna*," "*dziwak*," and "*dziwaczna*" (weird, weirdo, and bizarre) appear repeatedly. When wondering about the inner logic of the plot in the collection's eponymous story, Gombrowicz admits that if one considers it in terms of probability and common sense, it is a "pile of absurdities:"

> The protagonist visits his father, who leads a "loose" life, following a not quite defined principle of "reversed time" in a sleepy town. After taking a nap with his father, the protagonist wanders around the main square and walks into a store, where he receives a package with a small folding telescope inside. The protagonist unwraps the telescope, which gently turns into a car and carries him to the square. Then, a war and revolution break out in the town. The protagonist returns to the sanatorium, but here, a dog jumps at him. As it turns out, however, it is not a dog but a human being, or, more precisely, a human being *breaking* into a dog and vice versa. The protagonist escapes.[9]

It seems that the most important conclusions in this well-known, deservedly classical interpretation of Schulz's universe are those drawn from the analysis which follows this description. As Gombrowicz writes:

> Schulz chooses arbitrary and random elements to build a distinct world of them, while we may trace in this artificial and fictional world the same powers and laws that prevail in reality. In Schulz's writing, however, they are incomparably more distinct and powerful because the random and fictional qualities of their form (and hence, for instance, of t characters and events in which they appear) are debunked.[10]

According to such a concept – which, by the way, can be regarded as a self-definition of Gombrowicz's writing – it would be wrong to seek a "logical plot thread," "particular psychology of characters," or, in general, let me add, fulfillment of any principles of fictional representation in Schulz's works. One might

9 W. Gombrowicz, "Twórczość Brunona Schulza," in: Proza (fragmenty), reportaże, krytyka 1933–1939 (Cracow: 1995), p. 365.

10 Gombrowicz, "Twórczość Brunona Schulza," p. 367.

rather say that Schulz constructs an artistic laboratory, in which he seemingly combines "arbitrary and random elements" in an "extravagant" way. ("Seemingly," because it is hard to agree with this Gombrowicz's statement; usually, it is about the surprising interpenetration of intentionally selected exposing-realistic and phantasmatic elements). It is thanks to this "extravagant" combination that violated conventions, transgressed norms, or broken rules are thematized, made present, and subjected to subversive critique.

At several points, Gombrowicz notes the essential role of emotions in this process: "the seriousness of feeling each emotion separately;" "it is not about the dog but the very emotion of fear … its 'inner quality' which remains the same under the guise of changed shape."[11] Once arranged into a unified tone, mood, or atmosphere – Schulz himself wrote about "*klimat*" (climate) – these emotions ensure the coherence and affective-semantic dynamics of his stories. And even though these dynamics do not translate into the effect of a conceptual representation of extra-linguistic reality, the operation (and impact) of Schulzian discourse remains highly efficient, agency-driven, and engaging the readers' imagination and experience. According to Gumbrecht, it is so because

> what affects us in the act of reading involves the present of the past in substance—not a sign of the past or its representation. … Reading for Stimmung cannot mean "deciphering" atmospheres and moods, for they have no fixed signification. … it means discovering sources of energy in artifacts and giving oneself over to them affectively and bodily—yielding to them and gesturing toward them.... And as long as atmospheres and moods reach us physically and affectively, it is also superfluous to seek to demonstrate that the words we use can name extra-linguistic realities. The skepticism of "constructivism" and the "linguistic turn" concerns only ontologies of literature based on the paradigm of representation. This does not matter when reading for atmospheres and moods: they belong to the substance and reality of the world.[12]

I believe that Gumbrecht's remarks may equally relate to Schulz's prose, since its characteristic and striking stylistic feature of "experiential," affective-sensual "presence" of objects and events in the environment of "culture-nature"[13]

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11 Gombrowicz, "Twórczość Brunona Schulza," pp. 366–367.

12 H. U. Gumbrecht, "Reading for Stimmung. How to Think About the Reality of Literature Today?," in: Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential in Literature (Stanford: 2012), pp. 14–20.

13 By introducing this category, I would like to suggest Schulz's artistic-anthropological strategy, worthy of a separate analysis, which would rely on the mutual permeation and interpenetration of both categories, and even questioning the opposition – culture vs. nature – between them, which is visible, for example, in the descriptions of

produces the effect of participation in – not representation of – experienced reality.

To give an example of a reading microanalysis of such a technique, I will use a suggestive one-sentence description of a town immersed in "the darkness below, humming like a shell," which returns to me in a nearly compulsive manner: "in a flash of lightning I could see my father, his nightshirt unbuttoned, as, cursing terribly, he emptied with a masterful gesture the contents of the chamberpot into the darkness below, humming like a shell" (CF 16).[14] I think this passage manifests, in a nutshell, the whole tainted beauty of "Schulzism." In the emphatic and over-expressive description, the Father, seen in a flash, performs a gesture with which he frees himself from the impurity of the soul (a terrible curse) and the body (the contents of the chamberpot) by expelling them to the cosmic exteriors of the night, which adjusts to this tense atmosphere through natural expulsion – the lightning – to poetically "hum like a shell" with all these sounds. Moreover, such a grotesque combination of the sublime and the obscene, excitation and repulsion, allows us to draw more "realistic" conclusions – for example, about the sanitary and sewerage conditions of the town, physiological habits of its residents, or their tendencies to emotional and spiritual hyperirritability. It may also inspire the development of phantasmatic imaginations in the readers.

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the city, in which Schulz metaphorizes it in natural categories and descriptions of nature, approaching it in technological and civilizational terms. It is also present in the modeling of human characters' descriptions in animal categories, and, of course, in the metamorphoses of the Father and so on. Extrapolating this observation into the entirety of Schulz's writing project, one could say that the legitimacy of analyzing it from a post-humanistic perspective depends on three fundamental convictions expressed by Schulz. First, one should capture a human being more like an "animal-human-spectre" – to use the term by Tadeusz Konwicki – than an autocratic master of own fate and all creation located outside and above the natural environment. Second, one must not situate human beings – and culture – outside – and in opposition to – nature, but "supplementally," in an environment of interactive, agency-driven participation. Moreover, human sensorimotor activity, as in the case of tropism, is also subject to a "tropistic" symbiotic interaction with the environment. Third, the "culture-nature" is in this prose – among other things – "a certain special kind of substance … One person is a human, another is a cockroach, but shape does not penetrate essence, is only a role adopted for the moment, an outer skin soon to be shed" (LD 113). As Schulz writes in the same spirit elsewhere, "the quality of a dog is an inner quality and can be manifested as well in human as in animal shape" (CF 269).

14 The last comparison "humming like a shell" (szumiąca jak muszla) is not present in the English translation [translator's note].

It is sufficient to see in the Father's gesture an example of similar practices of other fathers to be able to feel and hear how the choral reverberations of their peculiarly lofty, sublime tirades blend with the rhythmic sounds of "terrible curses" and "big flushes" of sewerage pouring down the streets and finally combine into a bouquet of smells, sounds, and liquids, floating over the town with a stream of both attracting and repelling, fascinating and disgusting, and spiritual-physiological impressions. All this creates this unique atmosphere, sensual-affective mood, and also specifies the unnamed ingredients of the "darkness, humming like a shell" in a provincial town.

In my view, this is exactly how affective states become "instilled" in a suggestive image which is both realistic and phantasmatic, sublime and satirical. They then become "spectral" media – in the agency-related sense – and thus active carriers of meanings that the reader of Schulz's stories must appropriate and develop.

8.4. Schulz the "Diffusionist"

I have the impression that the anthropological-cultural context of Schulz's artistic project remains understated, even though it is quite distinct, namely – we can define it as diffusionism. In Schulz's times, this orientation was present mainly in the Austro-German, English, and American schools but today, one can also hear its overtones not only in strictly anthropological research but also in postcolonial studies, the world-systems theory, dependency theory, and studies on world literature and transcultural memory. Noteworthy, in literary studies, an equivalent for diffusionism were the studies on influences and dependencies, later continued within intertextual poetics and today cultivated as part of cultural memory studies.

This anthropological-cultural context is crucial not only because, as we know, in Schulz's prose, "everything diffuses beyond its borders, remains in a given shape only momentarily, leaving this shape behind at the first opportunity" (LD 113), although the fact that the writer uses the term certainly is not accidental. There are more reasons for linking Schulz with diffusionism. Let us consider a few relevant theses of diffusionists and Schulz, which will allow us to observe these affinities.[15] First, culture is not an integrated system nor an autonomous

15 Cf., among others: A. Kuper, Culture. The Anthropologists' Account (Cambridge: 1999); E. Nowicka, "Dyfuzja kulturowa," in: Encyklopedia socjologii, ed. by Z. Bokszański and others, Vol. 1 (Warsaw: 1998); R. Linton, "Dyfuzja," in: Elementy teorii socjologicznych (Warsaw: 1975); A. Waligórski, Antropologiczna koncepcja człowieka (Warsaw: 1973).

structure. It is a collection of elements – Schulz calls it "the inventory" – which, in a given cultural area, form a specific node (sometimes viewed as an identity figure) and then unravel and enter different configurations. Richard Lowie, one of the most prominent representatives of diffusionism, describes culture as a "thing of shreds and patches,"[16] borrowed or taken from different cultural circles.

First, let us recall once again that, according to Schulz, "everything diffuses beyond its borders, remains in a given shape only momentarily, leaving this shape behind at the first opportunity" (LD 113). This is what happens to the Father: "what still remained of him — the small shroud of his body and the handful of nonsensical oddities" (CF 18). Second, the development of culture does not depend on inventions but, above all, borrowing, penetrating, and reproducing cultural patterns and products, and the intensity of intercultural contacts. The Schulzian "migration of forms," which is "the essence of life" (LD 113), corresponds to the diffusionist migration of patterns. Third, according to some diffusionists, it is possible that there was a single source of all variety and unity of cultures – ancient Egypt as the alleged birthplace of culture – from which all cultural invariants spread around the world originated. Such a position comes close to Schulz's speculations about the cultural lair, core, or roots of things. Fourth, both Schulz and diffusionists understand culture as an existing set of norms that control human behavior, a repertoire of behavioral scenarios, which set the usually (practically) insurmountable boundaries of human free activity. From such a perspective, creativity and invention are either manifestations of "transformative production" – as Karol Irzykowski calls it – or exceptions, ultimate means, and inexplicable excesses. It is so because – and this is the fifth point – the human being, according to both Schulz and diffusionists – is an essentially inert being, more inclined toward the routine reproduction of attitudes and roles than their "extravagant" crossing, experiments, and exploration.

I signalize these affinities not because I want to present Schulz as an anthropologist. (Although, in the phantasmatic and often acutely observant descriptions of faces, attitudes, or behaviors, one can feel the ethnological instinct of the "human zoo" researcher, to employ Sloterdijk's expression). My point is to note that it is in this provincial, sleepy, and marasmic town, this lair of own existence

16 R. H. Lowie, Primitive Society (New York: 1947), p. 441. Incidentally, it seems that this term is a paraphrase of another expression previously used by Adolf Bastian – "a beggar's cloak of mottled shreds and patches" – quoted by Lowie in his work The History of Ethnological Theory (New York: 1937), p. 33. Cf. A. Barnard, History and Theory in Anthropology (Cambridge: 2002), p. 50.

and imagination, where Schulz discovers a model, prototypical form of the human world. It is a world, in which human behaviors are subject to two eternal and, at the same time, very modern passive affects: boredom and waiting.[17] It is a world in which novelty – signs or attributions of modernity – is a diffusional borrowing, a reproduction of the life pattern from a cultural center. It is a world in which human creativity – even in everyday activities and especially in art or literature – is a cultural extravagance and extra-vagance: a journey beyond the limits and norms of culturally sanctioned scenarios of human activity and standards of conduct.

8.5. Text in Action: The Method of Creating, Constructing, and Reading

Schulz's creative method and reading strategy correlated with it have not received much attention so far,[18] but they are indisputably worth it. However, Schulz's remarks on the creative process are paradoxical. The paradox is that Schulz solemnly proclaims the validity of essentialist approaches toward phenomena, including the creative process and the text with its meaning. At the same time,

17 Both these issues deserve broader discussion or elaboration. As for the first issue, cf., among other things: J. J. Haladyn, Boredom and Art: Passions of the Will do Boredom (New York: 2015); Essays on Boredom and Modernity, ed. by B. Dalle Pezze, C. Salzani (Amsterdam: 2009); E. Goodstein, Experience Without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity (Stanford: 2005). Concerning the second issue, cf., among other things, remarks on "messianism without the Messiah" later in this work. As a sign of the significance of this issue to Schulz, cf. three "boredom-studies" quotes: "[shop assistants] corroded by boredom, they climbed on tall shelves and drummed with their feet, looking fixedly at the empty expanse of the market square, longing for any kind of diversion" (CF 232); "I have been telling you that everything is held back, tamed, walled in by boredom, unliberated! And now look at that flood, at that flowering, at that bliss…" (CF 133); "we, creating up in Cloud-cuckoo-land and devoted to some chimera under hundreds of atmospheric pressures of boredom, distill our products that are useful to almost no one. Boredom, Witold, blessed boredom!" (LD 124).

18 Nevertheless, cf. two recent works analyzing "Odpowiedź na ankietę Wiadomości Literackich", which is a crucial text of Schulz in this respect: Markowski, Powszechna rozwiązłość… and A. Dauksza "Poetyka afektywna Brunona Schulza. Rekonesans," in: Historie afektywne i polityki pamięci, ed. by E. Wichrowska, A. Szczepan-Wojnarska, R. Sendyka, R. Nycz (Warsaw: 2015). Dauksza's work not only holistically investigates Schulz's poetics in affective categories but also signalizes the validity of considering it in the post-humanist perspective – which I also address (cf. above).

he characterizes them in more detail using metaphors and descriptions which either rely on homonyms of opposing meanings – transcendence as an absolute being and the process of exceeding, substance as a foundation and the "liquid state" – or "dissolve" these essences in the development process, the contingency of the relationship with the environment, and the openness to complementation or change. This is what happens in the case of Schulz's confessions about the genealogy and genesis of his own works.

In a letter to Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, we read about arch-images from childhood times that later become the source and program of Schulz's literary oeuvre. They "establish an iron capital of the spirit" and "the rest of our life is spent interpreting these insights." The work of such artists is "deduction based on ready-made assumptions" and an "unending exegesis, a commentary on that one couplet of poetry assigned to them" (LD 111). Therefore, these arch-images contain a ready-made repository of inexhaustible symbolic meanings. On the other hand, they do not involve anything conceptually or linguistically defined, because they are given "in the form of forebodings and half-conscious experiences" (LD 111), and their mystery remains unresolved. Moreover, "they function like those threads in the solution around which the significance of the world crystallizes for us" (LD 110).

The concept of "crystallization" of meaning is the opposite of the idea of semantic "capital." What in the latter is a linguistic-conceptual account (and explanation), bringing outside (and to the surface) things that were earlier deposited inside, in the former becomes a process of gradual amassing of meaning as a result of the development, multiplication, and tightening of the network of experienced relations. In the light of the latter concept, meaning is given in advance but remains encrypted, whereas, in the light of the latter, meaning constitutes a task to perform (or comes to be regarded, always ex-post, as an anticipation of a subsequent event) and is constructed through superficially established constellations of associated elements. It is not easy to reconcile (or correlate) such positions, and the difference between them is significant and abundant in consequences. Perhaps, to some extent, the homonymous meanings of ambiguity activated here account for this difference: as polysemy (the cumulative profusion of meanings) and dissemination (the diffusive spreading of meanings in contextual networks).

The concept of "crystallization" leans toward dissemination, which prevails in Schulz's last and most important – although also very brief – statement about his creative process the "Odpowiedź na ankietę 'Wiadomości Literackich'" (Reply to the Survey of Wiadomości Literackie) from April 1939. This confession is worthy of careful analysis, for which, however, we have no room here. To demonstrate

the distinctiveness of Schulz's position, it is worth juxtaposing it with another metaphorical model of the creative process favored, for example, by his artistic promoter, Zofia Nałkowska. Nałkowska consistently advocated the preformation – prior determination – of the textual content, of which the text was (only?) a result or expression. Nałkowska's "engineer-like" technique became legendary, although Schulz had its interesting if paradoxical account: to him, it was actually a kind of "engineering of emotional masses",[19] which involved laying out the plot of a novel on a blackboard and then designing and writing individual sentences, which she "pinned" to predetermined points of the text's structure.

Schulz could not be more far from this approach. Let us quote the full text of his response to the survey of *Wiadomości Literackie* (No. 17/1939):

> My next book will be a volume composed of four stories. The subject, as always, is insignificant and difficult to summarize. For my own use I have several names that convey nothing. For example, the theme of one of the stories bears a title borrowed from Jókai's "Marsz za *porte-épée*" – I really don't know how to describe the theme before the contents crystallize.
>
> The real subject matter, the ultimate raw material that I find in myself without any interference of will, is a certain dynamic state, completely "ineffabilis" and totally incommensurate with poetic means. Even so, it has a very definite atmosphere, indicating a specific kind of content that grows out of it and is layered upon it. The more this intangible nucleus is "ineffabilis" the greater its capacity, the sharper its tropism and the stronger the temptation to inject it into matter in which it could be realized. For example, the first seed of my story "Birds" was a certain flickering of the wallpaper, pulsating in a dark field of vision – nothing more. That flickering had however great potential content, enormous possibilities for representation, a quality of ancientness, a demand or claim to express the world itself. The first germ of "Spring" was the image of a stamp album, radiating from the center of vision, winking with unheard-of power of allusion, attacking with a load of content one may conjecture.
>
> This state, however poor in content, gives me the feeling of inevitability, a sanction for imagining, certainty of the legality of the entire process. Without this basis, I would be given over to doubt, I would have the feeling it was all a bluff, that what I create is arbitrary and false.
>
> At the moment I am drawn to increasingly inexpressible themes. Paradox, the tension between their vagueness and their evanescence and their universal claim, their aspiration to represent "everything" is the most powerful creative stimulus.

19 B. Schulz, Proza, ed. by J. Ficowski (Cracow: 1964), p. 495.

> I don't know when these stories will be ready for print. An inability to take advantage of bits and scraps of time forces me to set aside their completion until vacation.[20]

Already the initial sentences of the quoted statement contain a riddle. Schulz writes about the planned – written at the time? – four stories, one of which borrows the title from Jókai's "Marsz za *porte-épée*." There is no such work in Mór Jókai's oeuvre – similarly, we do not know any story by Schulz under this title, but maybe it is a "name for Schulz's own use." However, chapter 28 of Jókai's novel, *The White Woman from Lőcse*, describes a situation related to the compromising of the honor of a male character and the rules allowing/forcing him to challenge his antagonist to a duel: "One must preserve the honor of the *porte-épée*."[21] As we know from a dictionary, *porte-épée* is a term for a sort of strap, buckle attached to the handle of a cold steel (the so-called spade). We may speculate that Schulz used this term in a metaphorical sense to show that the actions of the characters in his story would transgress the standard rules of "honor" and social-customary forms of behavior, and that they "drift," as Schulz's protagonists tend to do, into the territories of overwhelming temptation, desire, and craving, which remain beyond rational control and norms of decency.

At the very beginning, Schulz explains that the theme of his stories is "insignificant and difficult to summarize." In other words, it is unknown and unimportant what they are about (besides, Schulz does not know "how to describe the theme before the contents crystallize"). If, by default, one determines the theme by the object of the utterance – an event, idea, problem, or story – in the case of Schulz's stories, their "formal" themes are pretextual, apparent, or mystifying. On the other hand, the chief theme is an "ultimate raw material," which literary studies usually treat as the opposite of the theme and a means of expressing or articulating the previously developed thematic ideas and messages. I believe that it is not coincidental since Schulzian themes are not earlier conceived ideas for the content, which would be planned in advance, but they are a constellation of feelings, sensations, stimulations, imaginations, and preconceptual and preverbal experiences. Schulz describes them with the oxymoronic term "dynamic state" which, in many respects, resembles the "structure of feeling" as defined by Williams.

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20 Jerzy Ficowski, Regions of the Great Heresy, Bruno Schulz, A Biographical Portrait (New York: 2002), pp. 146–147.

21 I owe this clue to Professor Lajos Pálfalvi, whom I wish to sincerely thank here. Cf. M. Jókai, Biała dama z Liwoczy [sic!]. Romans historyczny, trans. B. Jaroszewska (Warsaw: 1904).

Schulz writes that they are "ineffabilis" – that is to say, inexpressible and incomprehensible (cf. the Christian Ineffabilis Deus and scholastic Individuum est ineffabilis) – and "totally incommensurate with poetic means" (which, at that point in time, meant literary means). Perhaps, it is (also) because they only pave their way to be captured in a concept or word articulation, trying to find shape in a yet non-existent poetic – artistic – form invented in the course of writing. Noteworthy, the fact that Schulz adopts this writing technique as a sort of record of the gradual "crystallization of content" means that the writing process is never final and even the reader's engagement cannot put an end to it.

However, the question of what they are – precisely in this "dynamic state," not an autonomous literary result, in the process of becoming and making present various potentialities abounding in possible actualizations – defines two grand anthropological themes of Schulz's prose. Let us discuss them briefly.

The first theme – obsessively (or compulsively) probed by Schulz in his narrative case studies – is the theme of the subject. It concerns the individual as a psycho-corporeal organism existing in *tropistic* plant-animal symbiotic interactions with the surrounding environment,[22] which is exposed to its call, life-giving motoric stimulations and attractions, and his/her own senso-motoric responses to the stimuli and offers coming from the surroundings – from which the individual unsuccessfully seeks to escape.

The second theme is that of art as a tool of cognition, one which is authentic and irreplaceable (by science or philosophy). The true nature of not only artistic but also generally humanistic cognition is different. For it is *actively passive* cognition "from within," based on the experience of participation in cognized reality, submission to its abysmal attractions, consent to be governed, and subordination to its power – to the point of losing oneself and going through metamorphosis. Slightly exaggerating, we may contend that Schulz's protagonists take the risk – or give in to the temptation – of achieving objective insight into the truth of things by themselves adopting the status objects.

Thus, Schulz's brief and contingently written note quite precisely outlines a model of (literary) creative process, a model which openly, and in many important respects, opposes the assumptions, ideals, and patterns of rationalist modernity. A characteristic feature of this Schulzian approach is, first, that the source

22 I believe that the coincidence – not only in terms of the chronology of this statement by Schulz but also in terms of his entire oeuvre's problematics – with the problematics of the debut prose by N. Sarraute, Tropisms (1939), is not accidental and deserves a separate analysis.

or starting point of literary creation are minor, intense, rationally uncapturable sensory-affective experiences ("a certain dynamic state, completely ineffabilis"). They are the authentic truth of subjective experience, which is a sufficient and true legitimization of the creative act. Second, they are emergent – they occur "without any interference of will," they can never be planned. Third, their specific feature is the mood or aura of tuned-in affections ("a very definite atmosphere") which remains an "intangible nucleus" as long as it is not embodied in the language, figures, concepts, and imaginations of literary discourse.

It is precisely this common atmosphere unifying the variety of actions and forms of human and non-human beings involves the "sharp tropism" because, like external stimulation of plant movements, it tropistically attracts, selects, and frames the actors of the represented scene, protagonists, and events of Schulz's micro-plots ("indicating a specific kind of content that grows out of it and is layered upon it"). This plot-related, representational layer of Schulz's stories is relevant as a form of extravagant – peculiar – embodiment and activation of affective potential tuned to a "certain atmosphere," tone, or mood. It is the latter that really matters; and the more semantically undefined (thematically "faint," "inexpressible" in language and concepts) it is, the more potent it becomes as a stimulus to "represent everything" and inexhaustible source of inspiration for the reader's "production" of meaning.

In my opinion, these are precisely the rules that also shape the networks of Schulz's stories' semantic organization. Therefore, the Schulzian model of the creative process is at the same time a model of text construction. Unlike "human works [which] have the peculiarity that, once completed, … become hermetic, cut off from nature, consolidated on a base of their own," Schulz's texts resemble the work of the Blue-eyed One from *The Republic of Dreams* which "has not cut itself off from the great cosmic contexts; it is immersed in them half-humanized like a centaur, harnessed to the sublime processes of nature, still unfinished and growing" (LD 223). In other words, the text is not a finite autonomous meaning structure that blurs and invalidates the traces of its creation process; rather, it constitutes a narrative articulation and rhetoric coverage of various stages of the creative. Schulz admits it himself by recalling his perception of wallpaper with birds or a stamp album as sources of thematic "dynamic states," which, after all, are scintillae narrationis, narrative sparks of the stories.

Therefore, one could say that Schulz's stories have no meaning, insofar as by "having" we understand a preexisting thought deposed and encrypted in the work, message, or anecdote which are extracted, explained, conceptually clarified, and made more coherent through the interpretative work of exegesis. Nonetheless, instead of exegetical interpretation, which operates vertically

(top-bottom, depth-surface), we are dealing here with "postbiblical," horizontal, figurative reading (before-after, text-context) in which meaning is not a prior data but a potential and relational feature, anticipated and clarified only ex post. For it is only a future event that gives meaning its shape, an event which, however, might never occur.

I would adopt the same perspective to read the messianic themes in Schulz's literature, including his "unknown masterpiece:" *The Messiah*. This is because I believe that – regardless of the possibility of tracing these messianic themes in Schulz's oeuvre, as several researchers recently did with success, and regardless of the fact or hypothesis of a ready, completed work being lost or destroyed – this whole literature is informed with "messianism without the Messiah" or "the messianic without messianism," which Derrida describes as "this desert-like messianism (without content and without identifiable messiah)."[23]

Schulz's prefigurative narratives are – as we might say in an old-fashioned way – structurally open, or, in other words, they open themselves to what is to come but which does not fit into the horizon of expectations or anticipations;[24] they bring accounts of experienced events to a threshold behind which there lurks something which is absolutely different, but which, in Schulz's words, is "too big and too magnificent to be contained in mere facts" (CF 129) and cannot be expressed. This pressure of waiting for the unconditioned, unpredictable, different – for the (ultimate) meaning of what one has read – is imposed on the reader, who tries to fill this gap with his/her own predictions and hypotheses, enclose the structure or context, and "nail" or "discover" the meaning. The history of reading Schulz's works suggests that the affective-semiotic-semantic energy of his literary oeuvre is not yet exhausted but, on the contrary, still fuels its readers' insatiable desire for meaning.

8.6. Recapitulation

In this essay, I have proposed a cursory investigation of Schulz's tropes from the perspective of "extravagance," understood as a rhetorical stylistic feature; a feature of the "atmospheric" alignment of the tuned-in affects of his experiential narrative; a feature of the attitudes, appearances, and behavior of characters in the represented world; a feature of the "diffusionist" context of Schulz's cultural

23 J. Derrida, Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning & the New International (New York–London: 2006), p. 33.

24 J. Derrida, Specters of Marx, p. 211.

anthropology project; a feature of the metaphorical model of the creative process; a feature of the "prefigurative" semantic organization of his stories; and, finally, a feature of the "messianic" challenge which they activate in readers.

Bruno Schulz, the extraordinary vagrant – the *extravagant* – wandering on the margins of modern life and creativity, draws us into extravagant experiments of his art, which seeks to go beyond the petrified, inert form of reality where all actions are governed by routine, the stagnation of fixed forms, and constraints of static concepts and language. The goal, however, is not to give us access to some extra-human reality – which is a mythical possibility and a utopian dream – but rather to capture and convey a trace of existence of something from the other side: that of dynamic, creative changes of the things which are seeming unchangeable.

For me, this is the essence of Schulz's extraordinary oeuvre – which I intended to summarize with the idiomatic formula of art as cultural extravagance – and its truly messianic task: to write in a way that allows us to feel – and to let others feel – "the presentiment of a thing without name."

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