

**CULTURAL STUDIES:
MOHYLIANSKA SCHOOL
(Collective monograph)**

Cultural studies, at least institutionally, exist in Ukraine as long as the very independent Ukrainian state. National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy was the first to make this relatively new discipline a part of academic curricula by founding in 1992 Culture Studies department. It is symptomatic that the first collective work of the department was a textbook which survived two editions (2003, 2005), only now to be followed by the present collective monograph.

According to Latin maxim *docendo discimus* one understands better the complex scientific problem after explaining it to others. Academic discipline has reverse character which makes it challenging to distinguish what comes first – research or teaching. Those educational difficulties, the resistance points of the auditorium, encountered by everyone who entered it, could be seen not only as manifestations of receptive inertia but as the indicators of anomalies in the structure of theory or at least the contradictions in its terminology. Thus a great part of efforts of the authors of the present collective monograph are dedicated to overcoming such obstacles. Both individual entries of the monograph and its general structure reflect this reciprocal movement from theory to auditorium, from research to teaching and back.

Ruslana Demchuk applies constructivist approach to the interpretation of cultural studies as a complex discipline in humanities and outlines its basic definitions such as its object, subject, methods and tasks in the chapter “Identificational concepts of cultural studies.” The key identificational concepts that determine the field of cultural studies, “mentality” and “identity,” are analyzed and conceptual distinction between mentality as a national worldview and mentality as a national character is substantiated in the context of specifics of Ukrainian mode of national identity.

The chapter “Cultures and civilizations from the perspective of mentality” by Denys Korol’ negotiates coordination between the concepts of “culture,” “civilization,” and “mentality” basing its methodology in cultural anthropology and particularly historical cultural studies. From the mid-19th to early 21st century humanities have been developing under the influence of three paradigms of knowledge (classical, non-classical and post-non-classical) that coexist until now and complicate the task of coordinating the concepts of “culture,” “civilization,” and “mentality.” On the more concrete level this task is approached with the help of comparative historical thanatology, which reveals cultural differences in the relation to death, dying and post-mortem destiny as an “indicator of the type of culture and civilization”.

Oksana Bondarets’ examines contemporary state and development of Ukrainian archeology basing it on the periodization by W. F. Genning and provides analysis of scientific research in archeology, particularly the sociocultural reconstructions and their levels of generalizations in her chapter “Cultural studies in archeological experience (methodological aspects of research of archeological monuments in the context of cultural studies).” The chapter argues for the relevance of cultural studies approach, methodology and modes of research (such as the phases of cultural studies analysis, the levels of determination of objects of research and generalizations of the results) for the interpretation of archeological material as well as for the consideration of theoretical and methodological problems of archeology.

The chapter “Visual turn in culture and cultural studies” by Olha Briukhovetska provides an overview of a new field of study which appeared in the last decade of 20th century as an endeavor in comprehending an increasing intensification of production and circulation of mediated images. It reveals an inherent ambivalence in relation toward images at the heart of the study of visual culture. On the one hand, emerging field of study encountered not totally ungrounded accusations in furnishing the purposes of global capital, which is “*accumulated* to the point that it becomes an image.” On the other hand, visual cultural studies furthered agenda of the critical theory by extending it to what Nicholas Mirzoeff referred to as “critical seeing,” which interrogates power relations in the field of visible as well as specific powers of an

image itself. Reevaluating the limits of linguistic-textual approach to visual objects the new research filed emphasizes the importance of taking in account not only what an image means, but also what it does.

The entry “Conceptual and methodological dimensions of L.A. White’s culturological initiatives” by Yuri Dzhulay examines new sources from L.A. White’s legacy that reveal deeper connection of his culturological initiative with the concept of classification of sciences by Wilhelm Oswald. Both Oswald and White featured culturology as a distinctive discipline thus exceeding Auguste Comte’s ideology of the classification of sciences, which is mistakenly imputed to White. “Contextual” model of the representation of the specificity of culturology employed by White forms the basis of his “performative-polemic” argumentation to substantiate it as essentially new science which studies culture. The inclusion in 1972 of White’s article “Culturology” in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* is considered to be the most important result of his culturological initiative. The reasons for the incorporation of White’s version of culturology into anthropology rather than cultural studies are examined.

The chapter “Ethnology and cultural studies: common problematic fields of culture-centered world” by Yulia Nikishenko uses analysis of the major approaches to defining the key concepts of ethnicity theory as to scrutinize current possibilities of the interdisciplinary interaction between ethnology and cultural studies. It examines the concepts of “ethnicity,” “ethnic background,” and “ethnic culture” that constitute important elements of contemporary humanities and form the basis of research interests of ethno-cultural studies as a trend of thought developed at the intersection of ethnology and cultural studies.

A contribution by Oleksandr Ivashyna, “Style as a basis of training in cultural studies,” appeals to *style* as a sort of the last resort in teaching the liberal arts today. Style is inherent to a lecturer and constitutes an idiosyncratic form of knowledge that is not reducible to a philosophy, but rather adds something *else* to it. Nor does style, dealing with representations of reality, represents reality. Despite imaginary freedom in the discipline, teaching style is a kind of surplus that, being quite strict and

measured, knows to stick to “nothing in excess.” It re-actualizes even the dead knowledge, transforms it into a gay science and passes the moments of intensity on what would resonate with the audience to cultivate in it a lifelong taste for thought and reflection.

Mykhailo Sobutskyi devotes concluding section of the book to the problems of interpreting signs in culture. Without limiting the scope of signifying practice to verbal signs in cultural communication he examines signs of any kind in any culture. Signs constitute the very substance of cultural phenomena but, nevertheless, they are sometimes not easily distinguished from the reality itself, especially as it is represented through the visual media. The nature of visual signs differs from that of the verbal, so that one may encounter difficulty in recognizing a hero of a fantasy serial or an architectural construction as a product of signifying practice. The chapter traces complications in the process of teaching semiotics to students due to their tendency to ignore the difference between signifiers and signified as well as signs and symbols to the deficiency of terminology of European tradition.