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The Xenogamous Nature of Cultural Studies

Summary. The aim of the study is to evaluate the xenogamous nature of cultural studies. The author is of the opinion that the word xenogamy that belongs to the biological sciences is worth applying in the form of another metaphor, one relating to the concept of culture as such, culture as an abstract category. The history of this word's usage, and the resultant connotations and denotations of the concept of culture, show that its meaning is not only constantly evolving, expanding or narrowing, but is in addition constantly being 'pollinated' by various areas of social practice. Proving the proposed thesis the author presents the selected works on the concept of culture.

Keywords: cultural studies, theory of culture, social-regulative concept of culture, xenogamy

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In the important book *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams expressed the opinion – one repeatedly cited since then – that the word culture is among the most complicated expressions in the English language, and its meaning is continuously expanding, changing and undergoing dilution¹. Less officially, during a certain radio programme, he added that because of the inescapable ambiguity of the term culture, he would prefer to have never heard this cursed

¹ R. Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society*, Glasgow 1976.

word. That was in the nineteen seventies. It would be interesting to see what Williams would say about today's times, when the proliferation of senses related to this 'cursed word' has proceeded so far that humanist researchers sometimes seem helpless, altogether refraining from attempts at giving some order to the chaos and arbitrariness in referring to the concept of culture. We might then read the reoccurring claim that "culture is everywhere," that "it can be everything or nothing," that "today everybody is interested in culture," and so on and so on in this spirit. One could quite easily write a full volume on nothing but the topic, especially as the pullulation of meanings of the concept of culture is a phenomenon that has already acquired its own name.

The fact that culture is placed in the spotlight in any debate on social topics is supposedly due to it being granted special status and rank within the so-called 'cultural turn' in the humanities and the social sciences. The main cause of this is post-modernist thought as broadly understood, with its obsessive (for some interpreters) search for difference, for otherness, and its questioning of the objectivistic understanding of culture as the binding matrix modelling human behaviour (as a certain anthropologist used to say: "after all, it isn't culture that paints its fingernails"). It is also the tradition of British cultural studies, which adopted the anthropological understanding of culture in a rather particular way, carrying out its 'dismantling' from the point of view of class-related, racial and sub-cultural differences, as well as in regard to cultural gender, sexual orientation, and any distinctness from the dominant culture.

However, we can ask: was this turn the cause or the effect of some earlier events that brought about today's state of – as already said – the inescapable ambiguity of the understanding of culture?

It was by no accident that the surname Williams appeared in the context of what I would like to write about from here on, as among those representing cultural studies he – like no other – is considered responsible for culture today being the centre of attention both in the world of science and in the common human consciousness. Let us recall only that the author of – nomen omen – the important work *Culture* suggested that culture be treated not as a monolith, but be split into four semantic areas, thereby granting culture the character of a xenogamous concept, in other words the kind that can be applied in various areas of research. The first of them is the territory of 'high culture,' frequently identified with the kindred terms of art and civilisation. The second area relates to the Kantian ideal of culture as sophistication, refinement and the general norms demarcating the status of a civilised person, one cultivated in *savoir vivre* and capable of expressing themselves in keeping with the rules of literary language. As for the third area, it only has room for intentional products of culture, such as books, films, television programmes, computer games

and comics, etc., although in the interpretation of cultural studies they seem to lead a life independent of users as separate types of text. And finally there is the fourth territory, embracing culture as the all-encompassing way of life of a given group of people, the collective patterns of thinking, of understanding the world, of feeling, of belief and of action that characterise only this group, differentiating it from others. This of course is the area that for many decades has remained within the field of interest of the anthropology of culture, until recently jealously guarded by the latter as a separate field of research. Researchers of cultural otherness thus understood led to consolidation of the picture of a world comprising autonomous systems of cultures anchored in different geographic niches, within which special 'patterns of culture' could be achieved. As Ulf Hannerz phrased it, multiculturalism constructed anthropologically was nicely wrapped.

Williams' proposals fell on the fertile ground of British cultural studies, then taking on an institutional existence, which showed an interest in all four semantic scopes of culture that he had indicated. Anthropology's monopoly in regard to proclaiming how one culture should be understood had been seriously impaired, if not to say fundamentally discredited. And so it has remained to this day. Thus in *Introducing Cultural Studies*, freshly translated into Polish, we read that culture may embrace "Shakespeare or Superman comics, opera or football, who does the washing-up at home, or how the office of the President of the United States of America is organised. Culture is found in your local street, in your own city and country, as well as on the other side of the world. Small children, teenagers, adults and older people all have their own cultures; but they may also share a wider culture with others"². A term which up until the 50s of the 20th century had almost been the exclusive property of an elite of researchers, mainly anthropologists and conservative cultural critique, became – thanks to Williams and the cultural studies of Thompson, Hoggart and Hall – a flagship research slogan embracing exceptional diversity. They were followed almost immediately by representatives of postmodernist thinking, who were gallantly seconded by practitioners and theoreticians of the avant-garde in art. Culture had well and truly, and probably for ever, become a xenogamous concept. Yet the history of the variable trajectories in the comprehension of this term by no means ends with the avant-garde and postmodernism; moreover, the dispersal of meanings of culture has recently accelerated, and is happening in areas in which we would never have suspected. How did it happen, that an elite, monogamously understood analytical concept became a xenogamous category, one easily cross-

² E. Baldwin, B. Longhurst, S. McCracken, M. Ogborn, G. Smith, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, New York 2008, p. 24.

ing various traditions, senses and non-senses? Why is culture seducing successive throngs of subscribers to the view that nothing significant about the world, man or collective life can be said without it? Where lies the secret of the exceptionally explosive qualities of the concept of culture?

When a compendium was published in the nineteen-fifties of the definitions of culture accumulated by Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952), its authors believed that the concept would become as important for the social sciences as the concept of gravity in physics, illness in medicine, or evolution in biology. And in essence that is what has happened, though in a manner far-removed from what they had anticipated. At more or less the same time, and certainly in the same spirit despite the views usually being treated as opposing each other, Thomas S. Eliot published his book *Notes Towards The Definition of Culture* (1949), in which the great poet and American thinker (as well as a declared British subject) continued Matthew Arnold's tradition, identifying culture above all with a 'repository' of social ideals, with poetry and education. Culture is spiritual reality that should be related to the realm of ideals in beauty, truth and good. Only and exclusively. Culture is a matter of taste and self-awareness, and the latter is something that only some people have, although culture – as Kant would have it – is the ultimate destiny of nature.

In academic depictions these two traditions of understanding culture came to be treated – as I suggested a moment ago – as fundamentally different; the first supposedly related to Edward B. Tylor's descriptive definition of culture from 1871, and the latter, to Arnold's understanding of culture laid out in his passionate work *Culture and Anarchy* of 1869. However, one may view it from a different angle, as both traditions are an expression of the modernistic concept of culture in – respectively – the literary and humanistic versions. In the first, culture is the ideal of art and writing, the studying of perfection, Arnold's 'sweetness and light' combined with 'fire and might'. In the second, realised to its fullest by anthropology, culture is an all-encompassing way of life, a complex entirety, a set of practices of thought and action that mark all different sorts of human groups scattered around the Earth. Both concepts are deeply rooted in Victorian England, and from this they spring, but they gain in significance during the fundamental civilisational changes taking place in Europe, changes that essentially ploughed through the hitherto picture of 19th-century society. The concept of culture made it possible to distance oneself in a rather particular way from these changes, in the sense that it suggested that 'culture is elsewhere'. In other regions of the spirit, or in other space, which was also another time. So let us take a somewhat closer look at this.

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Reading carefully once again the works of Arnold and Eliot, as well as Tylor, and the compendium of 164 definitions of culture by Kroeber and Kluckhohn, lead ones to suspect whether perhaps the modernistic notion of culture, in both of its variants, is not the result of a crisis in religious thought, or putting the matter more broadly – a result of the collapse of the Victorian social order. Or wording it yet differently, and taking into account what we call Continental Europe, the end of the class society? Arnold and Eliot were religious thinkers in that both dreamed of such a form of culture that would be capable of embracing a non-doctrinal faith as space where values could be born, could grow and blossom. Eliot even wrote that culture is the incarnation of religion in a situation when the latter loses its privileged position, supplanted by democracy. Culture is rooted in religion, even should the latter have the form of an inferior or materialistic faith, as seems to be preferred by the poet's kin, fascinated by democracy and the capitalist economy. This has nothing in common with particular beliefs being true or false, but only goes to prove that "any religion, while it lasts, and on its own level, gives an apparent meaning to life, provides the frame-work for a culture, and protects the mass of humanity from boredom and despair."³ Because democracy is boring and has a destructive impact not only on the masses but also on the cultural elites (who are also the elites of power) succumbing to the collective suggestions of equality. Let us return to the lost world, since perhaps it has not vanished for good, especially when we look to see how important is culture, constituting the best example of how people, though born equal, differ in regard to the use they make of the potential opportunities. And this use differs. Beyond the great wall of the culture of the elites stretches – it has been written – the kingdom of folk culture, constituting a separate lifestyle and a different reality. This is a wall that should not be torn down, because the consequence would be a degradation of high culture and the disintegration of plebeian traditions.

The anthropological learning on culture has appeared in a similar manner in the West's confrontation with 'savage' religion, with various varieties of paganism discovered within the construct that the concept of 'primitive culture' constituted. Let us ignore those typically professional debates, those within the academic world, admittedly telling us much about the need for understanding how 'things were in history,' but less important just now. Of greater importance is something else: for anthropologists, specific varieties of faith and forms of religious cult are the means for building the spiritual reality in a form that has fallen into oblivion in Europe. The

³ T.S. Eliot, *Notes towards the definition of culture*, New York 1949, p. 32.

world of the savages was the antithesis of the modern society, whose attributes were above all government, territorial statehood, monogamous family and private property. Since the concept of primitive society functioned on antithetic principles then it must have not only lacked the attributes listed above, but also replaced them with their exact opposite: nomadic life, order based on blood relations, sexual promiscuity and primeval communism.⁴ As Fred Inglis writes with some degree of irony: "Culture is therefore a pre-modern and carefree lifestyle of a simple people happily devoid of shame, in a secret garden, a people we may observe over the shoulder of an anthropologist, but which we cannot join."⁵ In his fascinating book *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*, Michael Denning even poses the thesis that the concept of culture springs from the spirit of capitalism, emerging above all in Europe.⁶ The problem is that culture is sought in pre-capitalist realities: the proponents of both Tylor and Arnold indicate those places in society and the world not governed by the economy of goods (primitive cultures), or where there is a blossoming of the visual arts and literature, which privileged supporters and creators of high culture busy themselves with in their free time, in isolation from the everyday practices of capitalism (an example here being idealised England, with its clear class division with which all were supposedly satisfied) taking place on the other side of the window. This is really two areas of the manifestation of culture. A world dominated by capital, and in its wake by such areas of everyday life as the working day, the production process, the office and factory, machinery and technology, and also learning itself, situated beyond culture. One would search in vain here for anything exotic, let alone sweetness or light... Culture is a sacred reality. Tired and drab labourers heading for yet another shift in the mines have nothing in common with it, and neither do their supervisors. Unless, having first of all discarded the every-day reality of the 'machine,' they are invited into society to contemplate culture in its real – and only – realisations.

These two concepts of culture, admittedly different at first glance, yet altogether complementary, were very successful in Europe and the United States, dominating scientific and artistic reflection up until the nineteen-fifties. From the perspective of culture theories built on the principles of the concepts mentioned above, it was as something basically suspicious that so-called mass culture emerged, and was subjected to merciless criticism essentially as an example of anti-culture. And it was at this moment that Raymond Williams entered the academic area with his own concept of culture as a totally different type of abstraction. He takes into account the dramatic changes brought about by mass culture, a phenomenon just as

⁴ A. Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society. Transformations of an Illusion*, London 1988.

⁵ F. Inglis, *Culture*, Cambridge 2004, p. 80.

⁶ M. Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*, London 2004, pp. 78-82.

far-removed from the customs and religions of far-flung peoples and lands as from the perfection, sweetness and beauty of high culture, [a phenomenon] incongruent to either folk culture or elite culture. It is a culture of merchandise and consumption entering a kingdom hitherto reserved for artists, critics and anthropologists. What had been the culture of the elite became – as Pierre Bourdieu writes – simply a set of cultural commodities serving distinction, and what anthropologists had considered separate, pre-modern ways of living in the world became separate lifestyles, ways of acquiring, using and discarding objects. Culture is entering into and embracing practices of everyday life, is becoming the domain of the profane, is tied to ordinary human bustle in a world full of contradictions, injustices and competing values.

It was in this inevitable way that culture also became a branch of economics, covering media and advertising, as well as the production and distribution of knowledge. Moreover, it has begun to signify not only the culture industry and cultured state apparatus (as Adorno and Horkheimer wanted), but also the forms of existence and consumption of the working class, ways of spending free time, and youth sub-cultures, etc. According to Michael Denning, since the middle of the twentieth century we have been dealing with a dominance of social-analytical theories of culture that demarcate a new horizon for research into contemporary society. A common denominator for British cultural studies, post-structuralism, German critical theory, semiology and New Historicism, and thus those directions creating the spectrum of the social-analytical approach to culture, was the problem of communication as the forms and codes of symbolic action. On the one hand this embraced the actual media, and on the other – issues of rhetoric, hermeneutics, the clues and allegories of social discourse, the issues of persuasion and the perception of content, and the mechanisms of imposing ideologies and everyday life 'with the media.' This was not understanding culture as close to the body, since the participants of social practices were situated barely on the intersection of the axis of code and its interpretations.

The fascination with means of communication that dominated the 60s later gives way to the concept of culture as a community, to questions about how nations, races, ethnic groups and minorities arise, what happens in diasporas, and how hybrid forms of culture are created, etc. This peculiar successive turn, this time called a 'national turn,' constitutes a resurrection of the pluralistic anthropological concept of culture as a way of living for specific communities that can be categorically singled out. The most complete form of a similar reference to the classic conceptualisation of culture, already abandoned in this period by anthropologists, is something we will find in the phenomenon of multiculturalism and its accompanying parallel ideology of multiculturalism. Supporters and defenders, as well as vowed critics of multiculturalism, perceive this turn towards identity-based theories of culture as yet

another expansion of the notion itself of culture, which has “increased its volume to absorb identity and to devote itself to politics.”⁷ The word ‘multiculturality’ remains on everybody’s lips to this day, although here as well we are dealing with new developments that were hard to anticipate during the period of the greatest heyday of identity-related thought and ‘the politics of difference.’

The expansion of multiculturalism and heated debates around this doctrine as the emanation of reified anthropological understanding of culture did not take into account the significant aspect of today’s culture that the might of the pop-culture of simultaneity constitutes within the global culture industry, the current form of which is analysed penetratingly by Scott Lash and Celia Lury.⁸ Multiculturality has been largely absorbed by the metaculture of novelty, above all in the form of commodifying the cultural difference. But that is a separate topic that I only signalise at this point.

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The notion of xenogamy that I have already mentioned a few times belongs to the biological sciences, and means the cross-pollination of plants through the mediation of insects, birds and other animals, as well as wind and water. Pollination is when the pollen reaching a plant’s pistil comes from the stamens of a flower of another of the same species of plant. In her debut novel *White Teeth*, Zadie Smith related metaphorically to xenogamy, suggesting that the continuous crossing of a species is favourable not only for the cultivation of plants, but also for society – that there should be a crossing and mixing of cultural traditions, which in the process of mutual familiarisation cease to be closed off to one another, filled with fear and superstition regarding whatever displays traits of otherness. Putting it briefly, xenogamy is a medicine for social xenophobia.

I feel that the word xenogamy is worth applying also in the form of another metaphor, one relating to the concept of culture as such, culture as an abstract category. The history of this word’s usage, and the resultant connotations and denotations of the concept of culture, show that its meaning is not only constantly evolving, expanding or narrowing, but is in addition constantly being ‘pollinated’ by various areas of social practice. First of all, there are different scientific traditions, modelling culture to their own needs and as such lending it meaning that enables the concept of culture to be exploited in an analytical manner, and not only in the character of an heuristic ornament. But culture today is pollinated mainly by differing ideologies

⁷ F. Inglis, *Culture*, p. 176.

⁸ S. Lash, C. Lury, *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things*, Cambridge 2007.

and visions of politics, for which culture is above all a weapon and an argument in a battle for defined values. This is a confrontation between axiologies that cannot be reconciled. Multiculturalism, nationalism, and conservative and liberal thought have significantly remodelled the scientifically theoretical sense of culture in order to use it for achieving practical emancipatory and patriotic goals, or for supporting competing ideologies of the social and political order. Putting it briefly, the concept of culture has once and for all broken free of the leash of science, and it is worth taking a careful look at where it has wandered and what use is being made of it.

By referring quite knowingly to the figure of concepts journeying in time and space, we could say that by taking culture as an example one can see what the 'travelling concepts' in the humanities, investigated by Mieke Bal, involves.⁹ This Dutch researcher does not actually chart how culture travelled in history – from the word to the concept, between science and social *praxis*, between the sciences, and between the concept and its subjective reference – but this is only due to the assumptions she adopted. According to Bal, concepts belong to culture but do not constitute it. If, however, one considers that the concept of culture has been ascribed such a high status that it has been compared to gravity in physics, then it is also worth taking a look at the journey taken by this abstract term, which, in wandering between rival theories, between historical periods, while also shifting in space, has as a result undergone dramatic transformation. One could then reverse the principle in Bal's reasoning and assume that the manner of understanding culture as an abstract matrix giving order to the scope of collective experiences makes a fundamental contribution to how we understand other concepts and what kind of status we grant them. Culture pollinates and normalises the relations between concepts that determine the symbolic universe of human activities. This universe comes across to us differently in the metaculture of simultaneity as I want to call today's pop-culture, differently in practices of implementing multiculturalism, and finally differently within the confines of contemporary forms of nationalism, neo-nationalism and pop-nationalism. In addition the way it is consumed – as an ideal of multiculturalism, within the worldwide system of the tourist industry that may already be worth calling the 'culture of tourism' – is different. What is more, in order to understand why the idea of a 'war of cultures' continues to be so appealing that its fires are breaking out every now and then in various parts of the world (and Polish society is not free of them), then one should also begin from a thorough vivisection of the place and time that the concept of culture has travelled to.

⁹ M. Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities. A Rough Guide*, Toronto 2002.

The world is culture's prison, because people have a desire to feel rooted in the certainty of collectively subscribed views, they desire signs pointing the way, facilitating their participation in a world hurtling forwards, a world where today's ideals prove tomorrow to be but a stack of played-out phrases. Culture, no matter how it is understood, brings order to the chaos of individual and collective experiences. Culture manages our thinking, though currently not necessarily in the manner against which Adorno warned, i.e. through restricting the freedom of those whom it manages¹⁰. And even if it does, this is done in a much more subtle and hugely diverse manner, while those concerned joyfully follow the guides who organise the world's cultural map for them, believing while doing so that they themselves decide what it is they wish to experience.

The incredible career that cultural studies are enjoying in the world today not so much surprises as gives a headache to representatives of the humanities who believe that cultural studies constitute a discipline of knowledge of such undefined and thereby hybrid a nature that one does not exactly know what it actually wants to investigate. This comment refers to the entire range of institutions mushrooming one after another in Poland, dropping their previous names and eagerly labelling themselves with an expressive institutional description, the core of which is the prefix 'culture.'¹¹ Who today would not like to be a professional 'expert on culture,' after all it always raises one's standing, particularly when one hears from all directions the opinion – reiterated like a mantra – that 'culture is everywhere,' that culture is important, that the 21st century will be 'the age of culture' (Antonio Negri), etc. A glance at the recently published Polish translation of the otherwise serious British textbook, *cultural studies*, easily reveals confirmation of the concerns regarding the incredible expansionism and insouciance in the approach to research presented by proponents of the cultural turn in the humanities. Let us cite a telling fragment, in which the authors inform that the semantic scopes of the notion of culture differ so widely that it could embrace "Shakespeare or Superman comics, opera or football, who does the washing-up at home, or how the office of the President of the United States of America is organised." Moreover, there "culture is found in your local street, in your own city and country, as well as on the other side of the world. Small children, teenagers, adults and older people all have their own cultures; but they may also

¹⁰ T.W. Adorno, *Culture and Administration*, in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* by Theodore W. Adorno, ed. J.M. Bernstein, London 1991.

¹¹ At the University of Warsaw alone there are over a dozen courses in cultural studies, frequently established via a simple transformation of one of the hitherto philologies. Today's most loyal adepts and 'experts on culture' surely derive from just such academic circles.

share a wider culture with others.”¹² With such enormous proliferation of the meanings of the concept of culture is it worth using this term at all? Is there any kind of common denominator, a plane on which experts on culture – using in any way they wish a notion so xenogamous that it gives an impression of having totally shed its analytical qualities – could recognise one another and reach an agreement?

Jerzy Kmita, in his latest book, returns consistently to his idea of forming serious cultural studies as a core discipline of integrated humanities. He is thus proposing something standing in opposition to the prevailing trends in today’s cultural studies, encouraging a search for this common plane and not the creation of further divisions based on the premise that culture, above all, creates ‘differences,’ that only they really count. For the author of the essay *Kultura*, contained in *Konieczne serio ironisty*, there are two considerations that determine why the appropriate characterisation of the concept of culture is so important that one should not unquestioningly accept and apply such understandings of this concept, frequently intuitive and colloquial, that we have been dealing with widely in the hybrid cultural studies research of recent years. He writes thus: “Firstly, giving a fair amount of time to deliberations over the arguments elaborated in the academic humanities, I became convinced that they all apply to phenomena contained within appropriately dismembered culture as defined by Goodenough. In order to practice the humanities with sense one would then have to use the concept of culture clarified in this spirit. Secondly, realising that Goodenough’s concept of culture may, in its details, be interpreted without end, I deemed that one should prefer such an interpretation that seems to best herald inspiration of a more exalted nature for the humanist and of greatest use for humanistic research practice, practice that provides information about us, about the people living today, while at the same time thinking about people already living in this culture, and even our earliest ancestors” (pp. 48-49).

In this brief commentary I wish to refer mainly to these ‘two considerations’ Kmita had, responsible for the fact that culture should be taken seriously as a *vorhanden* reality, to refer to Heidegger’s tradition recently recalled by Baumann and present in the social-regulative concept of culture proposed by Kmita, a cultural expert from Poznań.¹³ Kmita makes no secret of the debt he owes to social-cultural anthropologists, not only Ward Goodenough, but – more broadly – the conceptualisation of the world of human intentionality inspired by the ideas of German sciences regarding

¹² E. Baldwin, B. Longhurst, S. McCracken, M. Ogborn, G. Smith, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, p. 24.

¹³ The first draft of the book *Konieczne serio ironisty* ends with the author’s declaration regarding what his next book will tackle: “Namely, I intend to present an area that, in his time, man broke into and as a result began to *construct* the world and himself. This area I call *culture*” (p. 36). Does this not reflect the transition from the realness of *zuhanden* to the toil of *vorhanden*?

culture. His idea of culture is anthropological through and through, and that in the classic sense. Contrary to what we may read in the writings of some of today's connoisseurs of differentiation, as anthropologists are supposed to be, Kmita does not consider culture a suspect concept of little use. He is a supporter and defender of such comprehension of culture that places it within the sphere of knowledge, convictions and cognitive codes that may in particular adopt the form of normative and directival judgments. As used to be said in Poznań's cultural studies circles, culture is a mental reality that characterises communities distinct in terms of category. From an analytical point of view, its entirety comprises sets of technical-practical areas (the instrumental realm of culture) and symbolic culture, which Kmita now prefers to call the 'culture of using symbols.' The culture of the communities concerned (cultural communities) is identified and interpreted from the point of view of the values and directives respected/accepted in a given community. Culture is a *vorhanden* reality, and thus a sphere within which a particular value is homogeneously maximised in a standardised manner.

Room thereby opens up for giving greater precision – as mentioned by Kmita – to the general grasp of culture as knowledge as most generally understood. Likewise, I also see no reason why we should have to abandon both a framework characterisation of culture and its detailed interpretation. This is determined by the already-mentioned 'two considerations' referred to by the author, although it would also be worth adding another argument in favour of such a way of thinking.

Let us return for a moment to the quote from the said cultural studies textbook, in which it is said that practically everybody, individually and collectively, has some kind of culture. Going by the social-regulative concept of culture, you could say that this is the case, *as long as* you manage to demonstrate that on every occasion we are dealing with a certain set of established judgments shared within the community for which sufficient reason for its singling out could be the very fact that the respecting/accepting of these judgments is tied to the defining of collective identity. This is because it would seem that the type of culture that Jerzy Kmita has been writing about for years is nothing other than the so-called identity cultures – of high profile today (and from a historical and genetic point of view understandable) – currently formed with the full awareness that possessing a culture (and thereby a group one belongs to) is equally as important as having an address. For this reason one cannot treat the idea that there can be a 'culture of your street' as a preposterous opinion, but *as long as* the culture of symbol usage within it is simultaneously standardised and of a community character. I am convinced that we would find such community-identity culture in certain streets of Warsaw's Praga district, while attempting to diagnose it in the heart of Manhattan, and especially outside of office hours, would be in vain.

Cultures as sets of normative and directival judgments may be recognised typologically, which conforms to the well-established tradition of singling out gatherer-hunter and agrarian (traditional) and modern (industrial) communities, also deriving from anthropology, but within each of these typologies there is room for further detailed interpretations. I imagine that today's cultural studies, if not to be restricted to the fireworks of 'differentiation' and to become a serious and esteemed discipline in the humanities, should carefully consider the status of its key notion of culture in the manner proposed by Jerzy Kmita. His concept has significant analytical and order-giving qualities that make it worth taking another careful look at. After all, the paradox is that in its latest versions cultural studies opts for a post-anthropological understanding of 'culture,' while it has never thoroughly worked over once and for all the issue of what the phenomenon of culture involves as *vorhanden*. This applies in whole to the Anglo-Saxon traditions of *cultural studies* and the Polish versions of 'incidental cultural studies.'

And one final remark. As is well-known, the component parts of knowledge on culture embraced by the term cultural studies are very different areas of interpretation-oriented activity – identity cultures, the visual arts, literature, film, television, the electronic media, architecture, the 'convergence culture,' and so on, and so on. The tendency towards the shredding and specialisation of knowledge, only routinely classified as cultural studies, is deepening. Cultural studies today gives an impression of a discipline of knowledge whose overriding ambition is to 'adhere' to reality dismembered in this way. It is very easy to interpret a new movie on this principle, but very difficult to explain why people have come to do certain things in a particular manner, or to carry out particular assessments but not others, despite purportedly now only forming 'cloakroom communities.' Thinking about culture in the way of understanding proposed by Jerzy Kmita also constitutes a starting point essential for reflection over the phenomenon of meta-cultures usually formed in a manner most definitely anthropological, and therefore also in line with the proposals of both Goodenough and Kmita. The fact that we are dealing with a xenogamy of cultures does not mean at all that it is no longer right to be monogamous...

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