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Transformations of Culture in Multicultural Discourses of Postmodernity

The scientific debates focused on culture are connected with the current crisis of identity and nation. The decentering of culture, which is going on now, is a political act that contributes significantly to the decentering of power and wealth. In the mid – 1860s M. Arnold and J.S. Mill responded to the political crisis in Britain turning the discussion into the sphere of cultural representation. For Arnold, the «men of culture» were true «apostles of equality». In the XXth century J. Ortega y Gasset claimed that the mission of the university was of paramount significance mainly due to culture and education: the purpose of the university is to educate ordinary students to be cultured citizens. Concerning multiculturalism which emerged as a discourse during the 1970s, it was often opposed on the grounds of its «culturalism». At present liberal multiculturalism is a label given to the diversity model of cultural differences known in the EU as «harmonization». Nowadays ideas, symbols and images as well as their meanings, are, as a rule, personalised and can be accessible for the scientific analysis only in the process of the dialogue of cultures.

Keywords: culture, representation, identity, nation, university, multiculturalism, differences, dialogue.

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Трансформації культури у мультикультурних дискурсах постмодерну

Наукові дебати, які сфокусовані на проблемах культури, значною мірою пов'язані зі сучасною кризою ідентичності та нації. Децентралізація культури, що відбувається зараз, є політичним актом, який робить значний внесок в децентралізацію влади і матеріальних цінностей. У середині XIX ст. М. Арнольд і Дж.С. Милль відповіли на політичну кризу у Британії зверненням до сфери культурних репрезентацій; для Арнольда «люди культури» були «справжніми апостолами» рівності. У XX ст. Х. Ортега-і-Гассет проголосив громадську значущість місії університету, пов'язану в першу чергу з культурою і освітою: університет дає освіту звичайним студентам для того, щоб вони стали представниками культури. Оскільки мультикультуралізм виник як дискурс у 70-х роках минулого століття, його опозиції з багатьох причин була сфокусована на запереченні «культуралізму». Нині ліберальний мультикультуралізм – це ярлик моделі культурних відмінностей, відомої в ЄС як «гармонізація». Ідеї, символи і образи мультикультуралізму, як правило, персоніфіковані і можуть бути доступними для наукового аналізу тільки в процесі діалогу культур.

Ключові слова: культура, репрезентація, ідентичність, нація, університет, мультикультуралізм, відмінності, діалог.

Татьяна Власова

Трансформации культуры в мультикультурных дискурсах постмодерна

Научные дебаты, которые сфокусированы на проблемах культуры, в значительной степени связаны с современным кризисом идентичности и нации. Децентрализация культуры, что происходит сейчас, является политическим актом, который вносит значительный вклад в децентрализацию власти и материальных ценностей. В середине XIX в. М. Арнольд и Дж. С. Милль ответили на политический кризис в Британии обращением к сфере культурных репрезентаций; для Арнольда «люди культуры» были

«настоящими апостолами» равенства. В XX в. Х. Ортега-и-Гассет провозгласил общественную значимость миссии университета, связанную в первую очередь с культурой и образованием: университет дает образование обычным студентам для того, чтобы они стали представителями культуры. Поскольку мультикультурализм возник как дискурс в 70-х годах прошлого века, его оппозиция по многим причинам была сфокусирована на отрицании «культурализма». Сейчас либеральный мультикультурализм - это ярлык модели культурных различий, известной в ЕС как «гармонизация». Идеи, символы и образы мультикультурализма, как правило, персонифицированные и могут быть доступны для научного анализа только в процессе диалога культур.

Ключевые слова: культура, репрезентация, идентичность, нация, университет, мультикультурализм, различия, диалог.

All attempts of analyzing both the conceptual notion and social phenomenon of multiculturalism turn out to be complicated and give contradictory results due to various reasons among which the main ones can be put under the titles of postmodernism and globalization, as postmodernism is considered not being merely a new intellectual perspective but rather a response to the dramatic changes in the character of social life and human experience in the end of the 20th century. At present radical changes are assumed to signal a more revolutionary time than any the Western world has ever known. We must admit that of great significance are the changes in behaviour and their meanings, first of all, altered and altering dimensions of subjectivity. In the postmodern situation individuals have to adapt to prevailing social conditions. In this very sense most difficult aspects of discussions are connected with social conditions and qualities of subjective experience that are essential to understanding of postmodernity and postmodernism. Among them the main one is claimed to be a pluralism of meanings: «... a pluralism of meaning derived from pluralism of voices, perspectives, and of greatest importance – a pluralization and heightened individuation of human experience» [7, p.4]. Opponents of multiculturalism claim that the issues of the nature of human identity, of the possibility of the separate (private and public) spheres of human life, of the respect of the cultural differences, etc., have taken the place of the traditional issues of power, democracy, freedom, and justice. We may agree or disagree but the fact is that the very nature of power has changed in postmodernity, that is why the philosophic problems mentioned above are still topical though they are indeed changing and being transformed: new social economic and political messages attach new sounding to the questions, which now may seem outdated and not always politically correct.

It is important to underline: those political debates and scientific discussions which take place now and concern the notions of culture and cultural differences are connected with the crisis of identity – both cultural and ethnic identity of postmodern people. «Extended» notion of culture assumes – explicitly and implicitly, – that the culture is not an equivalent of the acquired «high cultural standards» of classical literature and philosophic canons. «Culture is us», writes B. Agger [2, p.6]. Decentralizing and decanonizing of the dominant culture provides a place for «low culture» in its different «pop-versions». The defence of popular culture is mounted mainly by «people» of Madison Avenue who use the media to sell products [1, p.25]. The opponents of pop-culture are supposed to include senior members of professional groups who believe that culture is a vehicle for rehabilitating «the taste of the masses» by imparting moral lessons. Proponents of culture in its classical meaning keep on insisting that a «locality» of culture production have been a university for centuries and they still remain as they have been before. The proponents of «Culture» view universities mainly as academic contributions within an expanded repertoire of literary-critical scholarly activities. On the other hand, theoreticians claim that where cultural studies take account of non-traditional modes of cultural expressions from film, TV to fiction, it implicitly stresses the importance of their expressions denying the claims

of traditional culture on moral legitimacy [8]. The decentering of culture is a political act that contributes significantly to the decentering of power and wealth. It is a fundamental challenge to the dominant order, – writes B. Agger [1, p.11]. Here we can't but mention the reproaches concerning the fact that culture «aestetisizes» politics which is supposed to be an erroneous estimate of the role of culture in the production of the «politically representable citizens». This kind of crisis of cultural and political representation is not new. When in the second half of the 19th century the crisis of representation produced by proletariat's demand shook British political and cultural institutions, J.S. Mill wrote «Considerations on Representative Government» and M. Arnold, responding to the Hyde Park riots of 1866, wrote «Culture and Anarchy». Though both theoreticians led the discussion into the sphere of cultural representation, it was M. Arnold for whom the men of culture, pursuing «sweetness and light», unlike the representatives of classes (the Hyde Park riots) are the «true apostles» of equality. Men of culture scape away economic and class identity and leave behind only «the best knowledge and thought of the time» and, as a result, they leave behind only the disinterested and thus «best selves» [4, p.69]. On this premise Arnold argues that the state should represent the «best» of its citizens, and since the «men of culture» are the representatives of this self the state should represent culture. M. Arnold's programme was so influential that the Newbold Report (1921), the first of a series of government reports on the teaching of English in Britain, included into a list of its recommendations an idea that the English literature should be predominant over every motto which is written in English in Peking's underground: «Patriotism, inclusiveness, virtue». From the point of view of translation, it is worth while paying attention to the word «inclusiveness» – not «inclusion». Some kind of ambivalence of the concept of «inclusiveness» seems to be explainable. In this context we should recollect those criteria of a good government which J. Mill put in his work «Considerations on Representative Government». They include, primarily, virtue and good education of citizens; more precisely, the ability of the political institutions to form virtue through education. The choice of the word «virtue» seems to be conceptual too. It reminds of the «Vertù» and the «Humanitas» formed in the Italian Renaissance and their main «good features»: sense, courage, moderation, justice. If we return to the Chinese government's motto of the last decade, which was meant to appeal to the nation for obtaining higher education, we are sure to see, as an example of this vast country with its indisputable patriotism, that education and political representation are closely connected. According to Mill, the educated «elite» of the country are its best representatives because of their intelligence which gives them a possibility to be above class separation; they are those people who can be relied upon in forming institutions which in its turn can form a state. The other form of knowledge for English children. The report appointed the teacher of English as the mediator between the state and its citizens, claiming that his/her role was to teach students through self-example to do the right things, to be his or her «best self» and, as such, the «best citizen» [4, p.69-70].

Evidently, these problems are at the basis of the motto which is written in English in Peking's underground: «Patriotism, inclusiveness, virtue». From the point of view of translation, it is worth while paying attention to the word «inclusiveness» – not «inclusion». Some kind of ambivalence of the concept of «inclusiveness» seems to be explainable. In this context we should recollect those criteria of a good government which J. Mill put in his work «Considerations on Representative Government». They include, primarily, virtue and good education of citizens; more precisely, the ability of the political institutions to form virtue through education. The choice of the word «virtue» seems to be conceptual too. It reminds of the «Vertù» and the «Humanitas» formed in the Italian Renaissance and their main «good features»: sense, courage, moderation, justice. If we return to the Chinese government's motto of the last decade, which was meant to appeal to the nation for obtaining higher education, we are sure to see, as an example of this vast country with its indisputable patriotism, that education and political representation are closely connected. According to Mill, the educated «elite» of the country are its best representatives because of their intelligence which gives them a possibility to be above class separation; they are those people who can be relied upon in forming institutions which in

its turn can form a state. The last will shape institutions which will define values. Thus, it is culture itself that defines nation. It is worth while recollecting that J. Ortega y Gasset considers characteristics of aristocracy as aristocratism of the spirit whatever a social class or a group. In 1930 J. Ortega y Gasset set forth a programme for reforming the modern Spanish university. Aware that the missions of the university are many and often competing, – moreover, «the mission» is more confused and complicated today than it was when Ortega wrote it, –we would like to stress that Ortega argues that the primary purpose of the university is to educate ordinary students to be cultured people and to prepare them for the real world of professional life. Culture, according to Ortega, consists of those vital elements that make up life: the practice of medicine, law, business, government, art. Science, on the other hand, consists of non-vital elements of life: discovering truths about medicine, law, etc. What Ortega claimed in 1930 is that the university tries to produce scientists, however life is not made up of science, but of those who practice the «arts of culture» [1].

As scientists maintain in the 1970s, multiculturalism in its various forms signalled a crisis in the definition of «nation». Since that time the approaches to multiculturalism have changed reflecting many differences of position apart from those of national peculiarities but the ambivalence expressed in many scientific essays toward any usage of «multiculturalism» is still important depending on whether it means that the term is regarded as alien or integrated to discourses of national identity, or whether it is interpreted as naming minorities, oppositional strategies for reinventing the nation [2, c.3-4]. Presumably, the dominant «radical reader» in the Anglo-American world reactively homogenizes the Third World and sees it only in the context of nationalism and ethnicity. When it comes to the Third World perception, the historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and, of course, politicians cannot admit that their «natural» can be constructed as well, that in their case subject position can also be assigned.

Ortega y Gasset expressed a contradictory character of his time's situation, which is quite topical at present, in the image of the «revolt of masses», masses which intrude in everything, everywhere and their intrusion takes place always by means of violence [6]. The concentrated meaning of the changes involved appears evident in the crisis of the moral principles, first of all, in the universal «golden rule» of the Christianity, which nowadays, in fact, is not an imperative but a «good wish» («However you want people to treat you, so treat them»).

The famous postmodern theoretician Ihab Hassan mentions the fact that after World War II nationalism began to wane in industrial societies, except in defeated countries like Germany and in some «catching up» states like Russia and Japan. Nationalism of a particularly fiery temper, however, began to appear everywhere, – wrote Hassan, – in developing countries, in former colonies, in suppressed ethnic or religious communities of various sorts. The reasons are serious and real; they include persistent deprivation, social injustice, the syndrome of the victim, shifting values, desperate human migrations. The scientist asks significant questions: «Is nationalism always rightist or can it also be leftist, centrist, or, indeed, apolitical?», «What are its gradations, internal conflicts, hidden tergiversation?», «What obligations does a Harvardeducated Iranian woman, wearing the chador, feel foremost: toward her occidental ideals, her family, her gender, her religion, or her country?» [3, p. 284-285].

It would not be out of place to touch upon the semantic peculiarities of the English word «nationalism», because the concept of this word differs from the concept of the Russian word «национализм». In Oxford Advanced Learner's Encyclopedic Dictionary «nationalism» is defined as devotion to one's own nation, patriotic feelings, principles or efforts; movement favouring political independence in a country that is controlled by another or is a part of another. «The Modern Philosophic Dictionary», edited by V. Kerimov, gives the following definition of nationalism: «The hypertrophic form of ethnocentrism; psychology, ideology, politics and social practices of exclusiveness of one's own, ethnic community and state, hostile feelings towards

other nations and states». As it seems, the differences in the concepts are important and should be taken into consideration.

Apparently, translation plays a dominant role in a lot of philosophic and, in general, humanitarian essays: there are many intricate connotations that terms like «identity politics» and «multiculturalism» carry in essays written in English for a Ukrainian reader to understand texts properly.

Since multiculturalism emerged as a discourse of government in the countries of British Commonwealth during the 1970s, opposition to it has often been expressed as a rejection of its «culturalism» and a commitment to more fundamental categories of social analysis – class, race, gender. «Culturalism», however, has not been without its progressive moments. As D. Bennett puts it, the interpretation of racial differences as «cultural», for example, was one of the strategies by which nineteenth-century humanist scientists attempted to combat «racial science». By pluralising the concept of culture humanist anthropologists sought to resist imperialist world-view and colonial practices, viewing culture as relatively autonomous and incomparable. One of the legacies of this kind of culturalism is what scientists call «neo-racism», or «racism without races» [2, p.6]. On the other hand, anti-racism with its stigma of being «abstract» for its failure to be realistic about universal human weaknesses and needs, is accused of testing tolerance thresholds to the limit, denying «natural» expression of pride in culture differences. At present, liberal multiculturalism is the label commonly given to the diversity-management model of cultural differences known in the EU as «harmonization».

We understand that the «politically important common» is a unified complex of ideas, symbols and images, and we are able to turn our apparently conflict interests into a certain single whole only in case if we are patriots in the primary meaning of this word. Meanings are personalised and can be accessible only in the process of dialogue of cultures. Failure to be heard is a tragedy of the peoples in different epochs, as M. Bahtin said; and nowadays this tragedy is often performed on the political stage against the background of culture. The story of «Man of culture» and «Culture» seems to be a kind of Utopian narrative marked by a number of failures, but using U. Eco's words, nobody has said that the narrative of failures is a failure. Even if it is a narrative of the inflexible will in pursuing vain dreams it is worth while investigating this dream and the reasons sustaining its existence during thousands of years.

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