CULTUROLOGY AS THE SYSTEM OF SYNERGETIC APPROACHES

Tetiana I. Andrushchenko, Tetiana V. Andrushchenko

“Traveler, there are no roads, but you need to go further.”
The inscription on the wall of the monastery in Toledo

Abstract. We discuss about the culturology as the system of synergetic approaches, as a science about culture and the importance of developing various forms of human communication, the culture of interpersonal communication at the level of individuals, social groups, elites, and finally, countries that are able to “break down barriers between countries”, to create an open space for exchanging cultural values, teach to share, show ethical responsibility and generosity.

Keywords: culturology; interdisciplinary approach; systems of culturology; system of synergetic approaches

The culturology is generally accepted as a science about culture. It studies the specifics of material and spiritual culture, their birth and historical progress, the current situation and different nations’ achievements, prospects for development at the local society level the same as in the civilizational dimension.

The culturology appeared as a response to the requirement for an integrated, systematic view of “culture”—a phenomenon that is studied by various sciences, and therefore has several hundred definitions. Since the original ideas about culture were formed from the time of Confucius and ancient philosophy, culturology can be considered an ancient, historical science. However as a subject of more or less basic research, a special subdivision of the humanitarian knowledge, it was singled out in the period of New Age.

The beginning of culturology starts from the philosophical investigations of Giambattista Vico, Johann-Gottfried Herder, and Friedrich Hegel. The term “culturology” was first proposed by the German philosopher and physicist W. Oswald (1909). A bit later it was studied deeply by the American anthropologist, ethnologist and culturologist L. White (1939). Systematic and objective certainty of culturology was provided by such researchers as M. Weber, W. Windelband, E. Husserl, G. Simmel, E. Cassirer, G. Rickert, P. Sorokin.

1 National Music Academy of Ukraine named after P.I. Tchaikovsky, Kyiv, Ukraine. gerasenko.tanya22@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0381-171X
2 National Pedagogical Drahomanov University, Kyiv, Ukraine. t.v.andrushchenko@npu.edu.ua, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6701-8035
A. Toynbee, O. Spengler, K. Jaspers. That is why culturology is considered as a young science and it is still establishing its positions.

R. Aron, M. Bakhtin, J. Geising, L. Gumilev, T. Eliot, K. Levi-Strauss, H. Ortega-y-Gasset, K. Popper, W. Rostow made a significant contribution to cultural studies. Ukrainian humanitarian researchers in cultural studies are also known, in particular, they are: V. Andrushchenko, E. Golovakha, V. Kremenya, L. Levcnik, M. Mykhalchenko, M. Popovych, M. Tarasenko, N. Khamitov, V. Shinkaruk, and a number of other researchers. In the actual scientific conceptions, the specificity of culturology is in its integrative vision of “culture” as an original dimension of the existence and activity of human and society as common phenomena.

The culturology is an integrative science. It connects theoretical and practical ideas about the world of culture, which covers all areas of human life. Based on philosophy as its own worldview and methodological basis, culturology provides a comprehensive study of culture as a holistic phenomenon in the unity of cultural heritage of the peoples of the world, approves systematic approaches to analyzing the culture of public policy, management, organization of public and private life, forms axiological attitudes to ensure a comfortable human existence in the modernized technological world.

There are two main points of view on the place of culturology in the system of scientific knowledge: the isolationist one, which sees culture as a separate science with its own special approach, and often replaces culturology with other sciences — philosophy of culture, art history, sociology of culture, etc.; and the integrative one, which considers culture in the synthesis of social and humanitarian knowledge, expands the field of culture as a branch of knowledge that emerged at the butt of philosophy of culture, cultural anthropology, sociology of culture, cultural theology, cultural psychology, ethnology, history. In this sense, culturology does not study separate cultural systems, but the universal properties inherent in all cultures, formulates general trends and patterns. It studies culture as a holistic systemic phenomenon, sums up the knowledge of other cultural sciences.

We share and follow the integrative approach, implemented primarily in the studies of such well-known scientists and researchers on this issue as G. Arendt, R. Williams, P. Virilio, J. Deleuze, J. Derrida, M. Espana, M. Kagan, A. Mattelar, P. Moulinier, C. Polanyi, M. de Certo, L. Flory, M. Foucault. In the research of these authors it is claimed the necessity to consider the paradigm of culture in the context of studying its diversity, integrity, ability to influence all aspects of social life. This view seems to us the most heuristic, constructive and promising one.

Today this approach is successfully implemented by representatives of The Club of Rome — a non-governmental international organization that brings together scientists, public persons, opinion leaders and business people from more than 30 countries. Almost two centuries after Nietzsche, The Club of Rome scientists again proclaimed the need to reassess the values, proposing to reconsider the place and role of a human in the world, the interaction of cultures not as a clash, according to S. Huntington, but as a cooperation and mutual development which is able to renew a human according to the sociocultural dynamics of our time, ensures overcoming the spiritual abyss of the
fall of human values and their return to the formation of a civilization of the peace culture without suffering, violence and war.

The authors try to understand and interpret the beginnings and pathologies of the modern worldview, and describe the alternative philosophy of the “new Enlightenment”, recognizing that the worldview is responsible for the current crisis situations. According to the publications of the members of The Club of Rome in recent years, the pathological features of the modern worldview are associated with the dominance of reductionist thinking and fragmentation of knowledge. The authors point out the perniciousness of the transition “from the consideration of reality as a whole to the division into a large number of small fragments” and emphasize that “the interaction of the researcher with his object is a basic component of the act of cognition”. The Club of Rome sees the task of culture, science and education in the formation of an integrative worldview in young people, the outlines of “literacy of the future”. From their point of view the main idea of the “new Enlightenment” should be the transformation of thinking and the formation of a holistic worldview, humanistic, open to development, appreciation of stability and concern for the future. The basic points of the “new Enlightenment” according to The Club of Rome scientists are the synergy—the search for wisdom, through the reconciliation of opposites, tolerance and a new balance of opportunities [1].

The current culturological researches are based on the interdisciplinary integration of various knowledge about culture—history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, actually, all branches of humanities. They are marked by a synergetic, voluminous approach to the analysis of the researched problems using a wide range of modern scientific methods.

The synergetic nature of culturological researches allows us to talk about the development of a new terminology and conceptual base: synergetic of regional identities, cross-cultural dialogue, national cultural space (in particular, Ukraine), the phenomenon of hospitality in socio-cultural space, linguo-cultural concepts, communicative etiquette, continuum, etc. At the same time, the well-known and well-established terminological tools in the culturology play with new, sometimes unexpected, facets, open another depth and give impetus to further research in related sciences. The synergetics of culture allows to generalize traditional approaches in understanding “culture”, to reveal the main, essential, natural and at the same time to reveal new faces, functional features, touch to a reality.

It’s common knowledge, the notion of culture has several hundred definitions. For example, A.Kreber and K.Klakhon in their work “Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions” (1952) give 180 definitions of the term “culture”; French culturologist A. Mole—250; American researcher R. Robin—more than 800. Most Western culturologists see it as the primacy of the spiritual over the material. They understand culture as a complex of spiritual symbols (Weber), a form of mental activity (Cassirer), a system of signs, communication (Levi-Strauss), the intellectual aspect of the artificial environment (Lun), and so on. Quite common are the definitions of culture as all that is the result of human activity, is a measure of human humanity, as all that man has created his own mind, and not received from nature, as material and spiritual progress of both individuals and various socio-national communities.
Current cultural studies in Ukraine are devoted to the fundamental problems of culture in its life manifestations, including the study of synergies of regional identities in the cultural continuum of Ukraine, humanitarian communication systems as factors of European integration, cross-cultural dialogue between Ukraine and European countries, genesis and formation of lingo-culturology in the context of anthropocentric paradigm.

Interesting culturological models of Ukrainian researchers appeared after the declaration of independence. Becoming free from the ideological pressure inherent in the scientific space of the former USSR, Ukrainian scholars proposed a series of systematic studies of culturological profile, which enriched the general subject field of culturology, approved a new systemic vision of culture, its functional positioning and purpose. Systematically and universally (philosophical and cultural) view of culture is represented, in particular, by the works of professors V. Andrushchenko, Y. Bogutsky, L. Gubersky, M. Mykhalchenko, L. Novokhatko, a number of other researchers [2].

Emphasizing the heuristic system-integrative view of culture, V. Andrushchenko, in particular, notes that this view allows us to understand the phenomenon of culture as a universal phenomenon, as an object, phenomenon, process (spiritual or material) created (realized) by man as a result of its multifaceted activities as a product of human life. It is no coincidence that the concept of “culture” has long been interpreted as the result of the transformation of nature, in particular, as “land cultivation”. At the heart of culture is work, more broadly — social production, through which material and spiritual objects are created that ensure human life. “Culture” is the “heritage of mankind” created by man (for man) by transforming nature to meet the numerical needs of its existence. However, the author draws attention to the fact that not all products of human activity can be called “culture”. Man-made products in their essence and direction can be different, those that contribute to human development, support its vital functions and those that destroy it. Human creations become a “culture” only when they are an integral part of the life process, ensure its existence and development. Thus, culture is a kind of part of the socio-historical process of its human content, an area where objective laws, without losing objectivity, are subject to human goals to meet human needs [3].

In V. Andrushchenko’s interpretation, this section is characterized by at least three conditions, outside of which it is impossible to speak about culture in the philosophical sense of the word. The first of them concerns the “participation of the subject” (things, ideas or attitudes) in the development of essential forces and human abilities. In this sense, culture is only that which promotes the establishment of man as a man, develops his essential strengths and abilities, glorifies the individual. The second condition concerns the depth of human development of the general cultural content of the subject. An incomprehensible, unexplored thing (idea, process, relation), a kind of “thing in itself”, is not a subject of culture, cannot be used adequately to its cultural purpose. The third condition is related to the inclusion of the subject in the context of universal practice. Those or other subjects that, due to a unique coincidence, found themselves outside the practice, lose (often forever) the general cultural meaning. The normal functioning of culture, the author notes, requires
direct life realization, sensual openness of values for the subject. Culture appears as an objectified essence of man. The degree of development of culture is determined by the degree of human development. This understanding of culture makes it possible to differentiate between historical types of society, to determine their place and role in human history [4].

Further development of culturology and art history is dedicated to the system-synergetic research of Yakovlev O.V. “Synergetics of regional identities in the cultural continuum of Ukraine of the end of the XX— the beginning of the XXI century”. This research is a successful attempt to create a holistic picture of the national culture of Ukraine, its history and contradictory present. The author proposes the concept of a synergetic paradigm of building the cultural continuum of Ukraine, reveals the specifics of the history and ethnography of the main cultural regions of Ukraine, while emphasizing the presence of a common cultural basis. He studies the methodological principles of research from the point of philosophy, aesthetics, culturology, ethno-culturology and regionalism, which provided opportunities to identify universal scientific knowledge through transcultural dialogue of local cultural and artistic phenomena at the levels of specific-unique, cultural-historical and geocultural “chronotops”.

The author’s orientation to the regional direction and complex-system approach in the study of transregional processes of cultural development of Ukraine in the late XX — early XXI century contributes to the formation of scientific understanding of the cultural continuum of Ukraine as a kind of system of specific concepts, categories and concepts of “spiritual metaphysics” ethnomental characteristics, geocultural and regional chronotopes. The author’s indisputable reward is the attempt to apply the theory of synergetics to comprehend cross-regional development, transformation and integration of regional identities into a holistic cultural continuum of Ukraine in the projection from special (regional) to universal (world) levels in order to consolidate modern polyethnic society by transcultural project [5].

The project of synergy of culture reflects the formation of a new philosophical and cultural paradigm of self-consciousness, in which culture stands out and is justified as the basis for the integration of mankind while preserving the identity of ethnic groups and nations. Thus, at the current development of culturology, a synergetic approach in the study of cultural space is the “key” to a multifaceted understanding of the existence of the nation, covering all material and spiritual achievements, the cultural continuum as a whole. Defining a new methodological basis and developing an appropriate categorical-conceptual apparatus in the stream of systematic research opens new opportunities for learning the laws of self-development and self-organization of ethno-national cultural identity in the context of globalization.

The researches of culture in the synergetic aspect open the possibility of reproducing a holistic picture of the national culture of modern Ukraine, developing the concept of building the cultural continuum of Ukraine and implementing the conceptual synthesis of culturological research in the verification of scientific hypotheses in international institutions of Ukraine and abroad. The synergetic approach provides a deeper understanding of the strategy of transnational development of cultural identities of Ukraine based on the generalization of the experience of socio-cultural design in European countries. It also allows
to formulate the basic principles and trends of modern ethnocultures, united by historical-genetic and typological links in the space of their macro-ethnic groups, to comprehend the idea of universalism as a worldview-methodological correlation of universal, ethno-national and regional in cultural meanings and forms.

M. Zakharevych’s culturological researches are interesting and worthy of attention. The author uses the concept of socio-cultural system associated with ideas about the role and consequences of its dynamic transformations, formulated in his time by Pitirim Sorokin. Disorder, unpredictability are features of a living historical process, which indicate the nonlinearity of the theatrical system. The researcher, accordingly, considers the concept of sociocultural system and dynamics of culture in the works of such leading world and Ukrainian philosophers, sociologists, culturologists as P. Sorokin, M. Shapoval, M. Germann, O. Gvozdev, P. Ruin.

Focusing on the analysis of theatrical art, M.V. Zakharevich concludes that theatrical art, in particular, is passed from hand to hand, from generation to generation. Considering the eighty-year history of the famous theatrical family of Frankivsk city, the author uses a wide source base of previously hidden facts, documents, methodologically based on the latest historical and cultural concept of V. Skuratovsky (“Ukrainian culture of modern times: evolution and spasm. Previous notes”, 2007) and outlining the drama of the fate of people from Frankivsk in the “spasm” of their activities under the rule of totalitarianism, the author reveals trends that have long remained outside the cultural search [6].

Cultural studies conducted by domestic scholars in the last decade reveal and understand the roots (origins, causes) of both the fundamental (historically determined) greatness of Ukrainian culture and the deep spiritual crisis that gripped society at the beginning of the second millennium. According to scientists, a spiritual crisis is a disorder (disharmony) of the inner world of the individual (due to temporary loss of spiritual balance) in the direction of either restoring the interrupted spiritual state, or activation of a meaningful new spiritual state that will determine further personal development. Spiritual crisis (as a crisis of culture) is characterized by the loss of historical memory; deformation of morality and aesthetic values; distrust of people (authorities, parents, teachers and friends); loss of confidence in eternal universal values; loss of faith in the sacred — faith in God; despair in science and in human experience. Being in spiritual crisis, a person loses the ability to enjoy art, does not feel beautiful; loses hope for the future (“hope dies last”), considers himself no other than a loser who can do nothing, is not capable of anything. Spiritual crisis man has no authority, does not respect heroes, does not worship symbols. Such a person is on the edge of life and death, he can commit suicide; this person is depressed; it loses the meaning of life, and with it its own dignity. After all, a spiritual crisis is a loss of self-identity, despair of one’s own capabilities and abilities, loss of humanity, confusion in the face of circumstances, loss of spiritual landmarks, a kind of support on which a person stands in living space and time.

Today, according to Umberto Eco, man loses the ability to perceive the achievements of human culture through the prism of the “tree of life” — one of
the most important symbols of the human race: “Finally, the king of all lists, the Internet, a labyrinth, not a neat tree, the Internet, captivating in an indescribably mystical, absolutely virtual tranquility. The Internet, which provides us with a catalog of information that makes us feel rich and omnipotent, but instead we lose sight of what is real-world and what is not, and we lose the ability to distinguish truth from trifle”. [7].

Understanding this situation and introducing the concept of simulacra, Jean Baudrillard convincingly proves that the world has entered an era of total simulation of everything and everywhere. Authorities, social institutions, political parties, cultural institutions in the field of art, do not deal with real problems, but conduct a simulation game on a global scale. The result of such a game is hyperreality, which today is more real than reality itself, because a person has to live and act only in it. Naturally, modern art occupies a special place in the production of simulacra. Baudrillard traces how historically the artistic image turned into a simulacrum, gradually moving away from the reflection of reality, deforming it, and then masking its absence, to completely deny belonging to anything but himself. This “pure simulacrum” has no prototype and simulates artistic activity to create aesthetic values of pseudo-art on non-binding simulacra, pseudo-things, parody-ironic ridicule of modernity and the whole culture. J. Baudrillard calls virtuality a hyper-reality, which he sees as a socio-cultural space of modernity, where traditional values are lost: “Nowadays, the virtual decisively prevails over the actual... — realistic logic of intimidation by the very possibility of the real” [8, p. 33].

If we consider history as a progress of human freedom, then hyper-reality looks like a transformation of the usual way of life on the basis of an exaggerated idea of freedom: — from the beginning of symbolic human activity, to create a system of simulacra, which only conditionally and conventionally denote objects and events — words, pictures, stucco and carved images [8, p. 23].

A powerful system-forming link in culture today is the virtual world, which dangerously erases the boundaries of reality, destroying the usual human coordinate system: “I had a dream that night that I was a butterfly, and now I don’t know if I’m the person I dreamed of being a butterfly or the butterfly who dreams now that he’s human” [9].

Information technology is able to consolidate the monumental large-scale layers of culture, producing virtual reality, which often takes precedence over living reality, and forms a painful human dependence on it. Virtual reality is the nonlinearity of time, the continuity of the present, and therefore does not require memory and tradition, does not require culture to transmit experience and communication between generations, destroys its important protective function. Culture, created by man according to his own architectural project, needs protection from itself, needs equal realization of all its essential forces.

Since the early 2000s, humanity has entered the era of digital culture. This concept is synonymous with the post-industrial and information society, although the digital way of presenting information has led to serious cultural changes already within the information society. This is not only the emergence of new cultural forms, norms, but also — new types of fragmentation of time and space, presented in software, online media, computer games, virtual reality in general. The main difference between digital technologies is the convergence
and inclusion in the global information space, which is provided by the universal language of communication of technical devices connected in an efficient network. Digital media is not characterized by the ability to expose or store information, but by the way and to what extent they exceed the computing power of the human brain. Such a radical acceleration not only leveled the geographical space, which was already achieved by analog electronic media in the twentieth century, but also led to an unprecedented implosion (compression) of time beyond any possible physical physics. New concepts have emerged: digital culture, digital music, painting, clip consciousness, digital and analog sound landscape.

Digital media are based on two fundamental principles: the construction of information in the form of binary code (numerical representation) and their calculation using a computer (computation). The synthesis of the theories of M. McLuhan and J. Gibson emphasizes that very important is not only the way information is presented on the medium, but also what can be done with this information in addition to direct perception. Digital information allows computational operations with many features: data compression, processing and transformation, nonlinear editing, high-speed search and cataloging, archiving, instant transmission, high reliability and security. The speed of calculations and information transmission depends on technical capacity, and all processes do not take place in real time, commensurate with human capabilities, blurring the boundaries of the real and virtual world, where traditional human values are taken beyond it.

Modern powerful technical resource of reproduction of works of art, the opportunity to travel in the virtual space of museum halls and world architectural monuments opens a wide space for personal acquaintance with them and your own aesthetic experience. But at the same time it imperceptibly blurs the line between the uniqueness of the real and the stamp and cloning of the virtual, technical world, turning a centuries-old sensual culture into a conveyor belt of technical reproduction. A work of art is becoming more and more like an art product, an art project, as a corresponding art product, which is actively offered with the help of modern media technologies. Therefore, it should be borne in mind that the analysis of the modern art market is at the intersection of economics, politics, culturology, art history and requires unique research methods and modern pedagogical approaches to reveal its values to young people and include them in their own inner world. This will allow young people to more adequately and independently resist the powerful onslaught of modern media technologies with their stamps of influence on the formation of life values far from the aesthetic and ethical nature of man. It is known that the modern international market considers works of fine art or art product not only as a result of private artistic creativity (as a significant part of the nation’s culture), but also as an international capital asset. This contradiction is the driving force for many aspects of human culture, but when it grows into an artistic universal and begins to serve a great dialogue of cultures (which leads to the definition of specific epistemological properties of a particular culture, it reaches the highest level of cultural reflexive consciousness which can fully express (explicate) itself in the art form, although it aims at the general conditions of existence of human culture. Thus there are holistic, artistic and non-artistic at the same time
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(if we take them in the unity of textual and contextual conditions), stylistic phenomena that deserve to be defined as metahistorical styles of culture, to the perception and understanding of which should prepare young people by all educational means, including media. In the world of powerful media communications socio-political and ideological commitment of creative intentions, leveling its essence, manipulation of mass consciousness lead the individual to a state of existential crisis—a confused search for himself in life and culture, wandering in the maze, absurdity and reasonableness. In fact, the era of global computerization is a huge maze in which you can wander in different directions, at various levels.

A systematic understanding of the spiritual crisis (synergetic diagnosis of the crisis of culture) allows us to understand the ways to overcome it in a specific historical space and time. Ukrainian realities require the solution of a number of mutually conditioned tasks, the most important of which are: 1) real provision of economic transformations not only as material and production, but also as the main direction of cultural development of society; 2) the development of interpersonal communication in the context of the values of culture and cooperation, and not as confrontation and hostility; 3) the formation of high spirituality of the new subject of management from the lowest to the highest (including public) management; 4) education of cognitive-aesthetic (and moral) competencies, a sense of the beauty of human life of every citizen, the level of his responsibility and participation in the life process.

“Beauty will save the world”, F. Dostoevsky once wrote. Continuation of this thesis lies in the plane of understanding beauty as “the beauty of a man who lives by the laws of culture”. The center of this beauty is art—a kind of slice of human life, which through specific images of the world expresses its generalized meanings. The synergetic approach forms a universal paradigm of seeing culture as the meaning of the “beauty” of man in this world, the greatness of his humanity and the prospects of establishment in modern realities and in the future.

In this regard, it is appropriate to mention the words of the English theoretical physicist, director of research at the Center for Theoretical Cosmology at Cambridge University Stephen Hawking (1942–2018), aimed at understanding the fate of man and humanity in historical terms, in the contradictory present and in the future: “right now, humanity needs to work together, more than ever. We have faced environmental challenges—climate change, food production, epidemics, ocean oxidation. All this suggests that the most dangerous moment in human history has come. We have come up with technologies that will allow us to destroy our planet. But we have not yet found a way to leave it. Maybe in a couple of hundred years we will go to the stars and create our own colonies. But so far we have only one planet, and we must work together to protect it. This requires breaking down barriers between countries, not building them. For this to happen, world leaders need to acknowledge their failure. Most resources are now in the hands of a small number of people, and we will have to learn to share them. Not only jobs are disappearing, but also entire industries, and people need to be helped to retrain and support them financially during this period. If countries cannot cope with the growth of migration, we need to support global development—this is the only way to make millions of
migrants look for a happy future in their homeland. We can do this—I am, in a way, a huge optimist. This will require elites—from London to Harvard, from Cambridge to Hollywood—to learn from last year’s events. And above all, learn our measure of humility” [10].

These words indicate the importance of developing various forms of human communication, the culture of interpersonal communication at the level of individuals, social groups, elites, and finally, countries that are able to “break down barriers between countries”, to create an open space for exchanging cultural values, teach to share, show ethical responsibility and generosity.

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