

ENGAGED HUMANITIES. NEW PERSPECTIVES OF EXPERIENCE-ORIENTED HUMANITIES

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Abstract. The term engagement was used in critical cultural studies as a term that name an attitude of scholars, and a feature of cultural and scientific texts, that are based on the experience of an individual or a group of people. In the recent two decades, many of Polish academic narrations on the field of cultural production focused on the issue of engagement. In the article, a phenomenon of engagement in the context of disability studies is considered. The main objective of the article is the analysis of disability studies as a new model of experience-oriented discipline. What is particularly interesting is a possibility to relabel experiences of the disabled as a significant report on the status of modern narrations, which should include different minority bodies. The main aim of disability studies is to present a project of engaged attitudes towards social sustainability that is not based on exclusions of any social groups of people. Studies on disability are also introduced as an experience-oriented discipline in the field of engaged humanities. This article aims at presenting critical narrations on the issue of engagement in other to connect disability studies to the engaged humanities. Promoting engagement in many areas of culture and social life seems to be a way of introducing more open politics towards difference, and social sphere of life that is equally accessible for everyone.

Keywords: disability studies; engagement; experience-oriented humanities; difference; new humanities

Introduction

The question of engagement in the theory of culture became a vital issue whilst considering an intersection among culture, politics and the experience of an individual in the 20th and 21st centuries. Through engaged activities, we discover, unveil and describe mechanisms of dominant narrations, recognize cultural locations of artists and their audience and plan how particular socio-political situation might be changed. Engagement is a type of acting in political and social sphere – and thus this sphere is a subject of every engaged act.

Nowadays, the issue of engagement was directly linked with criticism of present state of the field of culture, division of spheres of influence, institutional surveillance and forms of discrimination. From time to time, this issue is being once more brought to light by scholars whose scientific background is cultural studies. Engagement is a feature of their scientific activity and – what is particularly important – a challenge for the humanities. In this article, I will analyse engaged humanities as a significant contemporary perspective of human sciences. Then, I take into consideration some elements of the history of disability studies as a new model of experience-oriented discipline. I believe that experiences of people with disabilities are significant report on the situation of modern narrations that should include different minority bodies. Inclusion is one of the most essential aims of engaged humanities.

Literature review

The theoretical background for this article is cultural studies – an intellectual and a cultural movement that promotes attitudes of engagement through various ways of acting in social spheres, for example, by using people-based research practices. In the context of disability studies, these practices are claimed to be insufficient, thus we face ‘exhaustion of people-based research practices’ (Snyder, Mitchell 2006). In other words, experiences of individuals and groups of people were treated as an object of survey that did not bring owners of experiences a significant improvement in their particular

status or some measurable benefits. What also needs to be highlighted here is the fact that cultural studies, engaged humanities and disability studies – that are presented here as an example of engaged and experience-oriented discipline – are still developing, have new theoretical and practical versions and are new performers. I use a noun ‘performer’ in order to signify an active and a creative aspect of intellectual work (work of performing knowledge in a public sphere) of researchers in cultural studies. I consciously combine art and science, acting and delivering knowledge in order to present boundaries and relationships of discourses that we established in the 20th and 21st centuries in the context of engagement.

During its development, cultural studies were frequently a subject of criticism. Some of the most common arguments against cultural studies were presented by Ien Ang. I would like to point out some of these arguments in order to debate the context of development of engaged discipline. First, cultural studies are believed not to have consistent identity, definite subject of research, established methodology and real influence on social sphere (Ang 2006). Second, the claim that cultural studies are political and can apply in political context was questioned by opponents of cultural studies’ eclecticism, syncretism and undefined status among disciplines at modern university. The opponents represented common belief that human sciences, among others, cultural studies were presented earlier from the view of their opponents, do not have enough persuasive forces to intervene in and change public sphere or politics of a government (Ang 2006; Nycz 2017). The criticism of cultural studies did not withdraw the aspiration of engagement in these fields of studies. On the contrary, it elicited debates on the future of the discipline and its inclusive character. By inclusive character, I mean an ability to include different voices that are present in shared spheres of lives of people. As Ang put it, ‘it is the opening up to such questions from the outside – and taking them seriously – that enables innovation and renewal in cultural studies, preventing it from closing in within its own consolidated boundaries’ (Ang 2006).

Narration on the engagement of cultural studies raised a great number of questions to discuss. Recent Polish debates on the engagement have shown that it is a crucial issue for contemporary cultural analysis, which prompts researchers to occupy clear political position and adopt an ‘opening-up-attitude’. These changes of perspectives were caused by the so-called ‘political turn’ in the humanities in Poland after democratic transition of the year 1989. Many of the political and cultural changes occurred at that time. Democratic transition that put an end to the People’s Republic of Poland led to the foundation of a democratic government. That transitional moment determined ‘political turn’ in many spheres of public and private life of the Poles.

From that time, politics of culture was related, to some extent, to the question of engagement. This new discursive relation was based on the social longing for a change in the political and cultural landscape. However, in Poland, after democratic transition, an attitude of engagement was treated as a product of the ideology, which serves as a tool for constructing social models of behaviour that could be controlled by the People’s Republic of Poland’s power apparatus. It took around 10 years to discursively modify the meaning of engagement and implications of using the term in social and cultural context. Democratic transition led not only to political change but also a change in languages that describes and compares two realities (pre-1989 and post-1989 realities) and built new normality diametrically opposed to communist regime that started to become a past (Czapliński 2009).

Cultural narrations in Poland – that is, narration in the field of cultural criticism and literary, film, art studies and so on – again adopted a term ‘engagement’ after around two decades of democracy. The term was distributed in public sphere as an ideal to reach, as an attitude of people thinking critically and constantly examining the *status quo* around them. The term ‘engagement’ was also linked to the (new) leftist political movement and was treated (and appropriated to some point) as a leading slogan of that transmuted political force. Thus engagement is both political and cultural idea placed in the context of political and cultural freedom and emancipation.

In most of debates concerning engagement, in Poland, attention of participants was concentrated on political aspects of cultural practices, such as creating a literature, literary texts that – as was believed – have a real power to modify post-transformational reality and to project future shape of this reality. The basic assumption that dominated narrations on culture in that time was politics cannot be

separated from literature (or in general: from cultural production or texts of culture). As Przemysław Czapliński put it,

‘The previous practice of omitting political references was followed by the forceful ideologization of everything and everyone. This tendency gained its power with lightning speed, so a few years later, at the turn of 20th and 21st century, translating culture into political terms became a norm.’ (Czapliński 2009)

In consequence, such ideologisation brings to literary criticism new ways of describing represented world in relation to (politicized) reality. Sometimes ideologisation is perceived as a simplification of complexity of experiences of reality and complexity of interpretations of this reality. That is why political interpretation of culture was criticised (especially, for interpretations that comes down only to proving someone’s political view). However, political and cultural engagement in the contemporaneity should be inseparable from ethics that is inclined to differentiate rather than simplify. Ethics protects us from an abuse of ideology and is a necessary context and necessary horizon for engaged cultural practices. When we add up ethics to engagement, we built a political sphere that is sensitive to the needs and problems of minority groups, such as the people with disabilities. In the article, I analyse possibilities of establishing new, engaged perspective of human science that includes excluded minority bodies.

Methodology

In this preliminary research on new perspectives of experience-oriented humanities, I apply methods of cultural analysis. Initially, I examine disability studies as a current of contemporary cultural studies in the context of the issue of engagement. I summarise some discussions on the status of disability studies as a discipline that combine theory with performance of knowledge in the public sphere. What is crucial in this context is a problem or a challenge of engagement. It is worth to take into consideration contemporary analysis of engagement not only as a sort of political attitude but also as one of the objectives of modern scientific disciplines, especially of disciplines such as disability studies or – in general – minority studies.

In the article, disability studies are perceived from global perspective as a scientific practice that is still developing and applying new theoretical approaches to disability as social, cultural and political phenomenon. I present few important aspects of the identity of this discipline of cultural studies in order to introduce the narration on new, engaged and experience-oriented perspective of cultural studies. This perspective includes disability studies as an example of engaged discipline that creates critical narration on contemporary representations of disability based on the analysis of the experience of people with disabilities and disability communities.

Results

I would like to start with adding an overview of the issue of engagement in the context of disability studies in general because of the fact that it is yet almost impossible to distinguish Polish current studies of disability in order to analyse the question of engagement in my country in the context of disability. What I have in mind is academic, systematic reflection on disability and, of course, not cultural practices on behalf of the people with disabilities. What needs to be done in Poland in the near future is basically to present history of Western disability studies (by, e.g. translations of the most important publications on disability studies) and recognise country’s own level of presence of disability representations for centuries.

On the ground of disability studies, the question of engagement seems to be an obvious matter, methodologically assumed and proven through every act in favour of the people with disabilities, because offering help is an activity that performs something new that is motivated by a belief that some situation can be improved or even completely changed. However, something that is obvious is not necessarily perceived from the outside as significant for the discipline, because it was labelled as ‘obvious’ and – as a result – is well known to everyone and, to some point, well established. That notion leads us to creating some presumptions on general issues that influence the way we as

researchers perform our work. So we must again and again repeat a question: what does it mean for the discipline of disability studies to be engaged, to be an engaged way of performing research and distributing knowledge about the biggest minority in the world, that is, about people with disabilities and their experience presented in many different forms of contemporary culture? And in addition, what does it mean to be at a position of engaged researcher? And what sort of relationship do we have with the sphere of politics as a sphere of legal action (action that creates and changes the public laws and practices)?

These questions raise some of the most basic ('obvious') matters regarding disability studies as a discipline. But the discipline differs from some of contemporary currents of cultural studies. It cannot be criticised for not having a well-defined subject of research. It is also one of the youngest disciplines in the field of cultural studies that may have, as I believe, a crucial meaning for other currents and its development.

According to Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell, disability studies will keep their consistency and identity on the condition that the discipline will remain 'wild' or 'feral' (and, we may add, 'engaged'). The future of research on disability is determined by the openness of the discipline for experiences and collaboration of disability communities (Snyder, Mitchell 2006). Mitchell and Snyder indicated three main areas where disability studies can 'continually reinvigorate its radical potential':

'(1) through its continuing proximity to, and critique of, the adjustment-based and pathologizing professions; (2) through the active inclusion of activist and art-based communities to the relevance of its own disciplinary insights; and (3) through its commitment to play self-reflexive host to a growing international disability movement that will inevitably challenge the Western bias of the field.' (Snyder, Mitchell 2006).

What seems to be particularly interesting for analysis of new perspectives of human sciences, such as cultural studies, especially studies on disability, is a perspective of future change in the humanities as – when putting Mitchell's and Snyder's words into more general overview – discipline 'playing self-reflexive host' to international movements that challenge some commonly shared assumptions. Engaged perspective of human sciences involves issuing challenges to common beliefs and hosting different attitudes towards various human experiences.

Furthermore, I would like to focus on four ideas and objects of research: experience, resistance, emancipation and challenge. I will place these ideas in the context of disability studies and, in general, in the broader context of cultural studies. Then, in the next part, I would link ideas that I mentioned with narration on new perspectives of engaged humanities.

One of the most widespread argument against establishing cultural studies as academic discipline was based on the conviction that this discipline do not have defined subject of research and established methodology (Ang 2006). Nowadays, every current of cultural studies has its own specific object of research, and some are specific and appropriate for the subdiscipline of methods of research. Subdiscipline is a discipline that is included in the field called 'cultural studies' and its critical variants (e.g. critical disability studies). It is hard to create a coherent interpretation of the theory of cultural studies, because of their diversification. This state of disciplinary pluralism is – in my opinion – a sign of contemporaneity that seeks to find the most adequate interpretation of every problem that humanity (may) face. A future aspect of 'may' is also a significant aspect of cultural studies as a sort of human sciences. Cultural studies aim performatively to create future concepts of today's issues in order to stimulate resistance and allow emancipation.

Taking into consideration a question of object of research, we may say that every current of cultural studies examine experience. It is not only human experience (cf. animal studies) but also an experience described from human perspective and interpreted and presented by people as a new knowledge. The object of description includes not only one particular experience but also social, cultural, political and environmental contexts of the experience as well as forms of sharing this experience with other creatures that have an ability to react and interpret the experience.

Experience is a fragile subject of research, because it always belongs to her or him or is connected to someone or something. Every researcher who analyse experiences and their conditions should keep

cultural sensitivity in mind and adapt, to some extent, to that experiences and particular conditions. That is why experience cannot be treated as objective phenomenon, as it is something that can be examined outside the context in which it appeared. Experience might also be described in another way – as an ephemeral, intangible reality (Jay 2005). But in cultural studies, every experience is bound to a person or a group of people (community), her/his/theirs autobiographical narration, life, social status or affective state. What is particularly important is the fact that every experience is to some extent mediated by oral narration, written narration, a piece of art, a movie and so on. So experience is placed in the mediatory sphere between reality and available forms of expression.

For the researcher, somebody's experience as an object of research is a challenge. Experience is sometimes unspoken, or hidden, but is important for someone and for other people, who search for answers for similar problems. In this situation, narration is helpful, because it offers a form for the experience to be unveiled and shared. Then, experience sometimes has its own language in which it appears in visible form. Some people find their mother tongue insufficient to describe their formative experience and they decide to create an original language of their own experience based on the language(s) they know. Following this, we may use a term 'text of experience' to name a visible form of 'bare' experience. Furthermore, we may distinguish a 'bare experience' from an 'experience as narration'. The first one is an experience because it touches a person in a particular moment. 'Experience as a narration' appears later, after some time and some consideration; it has its own form (e.g. a form of a picture).

In Polish contemporary art, there is the artist – Karolina Wiktor – who created a new, autonomous world called Aphasia, in which she allowed herself to use new vocabulary of Aphasia citizen. Her experience, described in the book *By Volga Through Aphasia* (2014), resulted from brain damage caused by a stroke; aphasia is a consequence of the stroke. Writing and creating graphics related to experience of losing life balance and ability to speak (amongst others) were a kind of her own therapy that is still being performed. Wiktor's activities include creating works of art (she usually uses new media), exhibitions and conferences. She is constantly developing her own project of coming back to reality from the world of aphasia. This 'written' and 'performed' therapy allowed her to recover from brain trauma, to regain some of her lost memories and abilities and once again to learn how to use language and in what way use a grammar structures that order a stream of everyday experiences. Wiktor's case prove how powerful art is and also how plastic our brain can be.

Wiktor's history is one of the many examples of survivors' stories about experience – an event that might be sudden and its consequences are unpredictable. What needs to be highlighted here is that experience can also be challenging and confrontational, because it is an encounter with unfamiliar reality, which is experienced and created by someone else. This confrontation prepares us for future experiences that may change the way we perceive and interpret elements of life.

Finally, experience is a challenge for a researcher who examines a described form of someone else's experience (other people's property, we may add). As was said previously, a researcher should remain sensitive for such property. But what exactly does it mean that researcher should be sensitive? Is it a necessary feature of his or her professional attitude? I will begin with answering the second question: no, it is not a necessary, essential feature of professionals, but when considering experience, what a researcher will definitely learn or achieve through the process of analysis is sensitivity for other people's experience. In practice, it means a change in attitude towards the object of survey, a growth of responsibility for the interpretation of somebody's experience, and a raise of performative activity on behalf of those whose text of experience we are interpreting. The expression 'performative activity' needs an explanation: it is an activity that creates some new value or even a new state (e.g. a state of not knowing something is substituted by a state of illumination). From my point of view, written scientific analysis can have a performative, illuminating power; writing can be treated as a performative act. In other words, scientific activity gains new aspect and new perspective: performative aspect, with all its implications, and a perspective of sensitive researcher who makes an effort to perform a significant change in some *status quo*.

When we adapt arguments and ideas discussed in the above paragraphs in this section of the article to disability studies, we may describe experience-oriented discipline using an adequate example. The

descriptive term ‘experience oriented’ suggests that experience is the most important element of a particular discipline; some discipline can be just labelled as experience oriented. Furthermore, in this context, performative activity of the researcher is oriented to experience and forms of its expression. In the field of disability studies, relationship amongst (1) a researcher, (2) an experience of disability that is taken into consideration, (3) an owner of the experience and (4) a socio-political context of revealing and distributing narration on experience needs to be defined in every scientific practice. The object of research is fragile – it is an experience of disability, sometimes located in the culture that exclude people perceived as ‘deviant’, ‘abnormal’, ‘creeps’, ‘imbeciles’ and ‘freaks’ of the public sphere. Before approaching a particular experience of disability, a sensitive researcher must consider a complex background of dominant culture and dominant representations of disability that are often copied or imitated without thinking about their implications. In addition, a performative activity includes a deep recognition of conditions and narrations that influence a general perception of disability in a particular country or community and forms of its expressions. Such activity is a serious, time-consuming, but rewarding, scientific activity that needs an inter-disciplinary or a transdisciplinary approach.

Disability presented and analysed as an experience – not as a trauma, stigma, abnormality, medical problem or a state of lack of something – reveals its potential of radical resistance towards dominant representations of disability, superstitions, stereotypes and procedures of normalisation (medical, social, political and cultural). It is not only the idea of disability as experience that might be perceived as a cultural practice of resistance but also a presence of the disabled body that can trigger radical change.

Elizabeth Barnes used a term ‘minority body’ to describe a mode of presence of the disabled body in a public space. According to Barnes, ‘(...) to be physically disabled is not to have a defective body, but simply to have a minority body’ (Barnes 2016). Disabled body is an object that is ‘wrapped’ in a different discourse of normal body and compared and criticised according to them. But Barnes argued that physical defect is not a feature that constitutes a person or a person with disabilities. It is only a trait or an element that differentiates a person from other individuals. Difference is not a negative experience; it is something that prompts a change and modifies social uniformity. In another of her works, Barnes stated that disability is simply another way of being different (Barnes 2009). She also compares two main approaches to disability: (1) disability as a difference marker and (2) disability as a negative difference marker (Barnes 2009). First approach has been already described: it is an approach that defines disability as a state of being different from the majority of a community. Second approach, however, puts emphasis on the assumption that disability is ‘a way of being different which makes one worse off because of that very difference’ (Barnes 2009). Second approach is more traditional, according to Barnes. She is explicitly in favour of the first approach: disability as a difference marker, but – what needs to be explained here – she never denies that disability to some point can be a harm. She herself has an experience of disability and is a sensitive researcher who speaks from the inside of a community of people with disabilities.

Adding up Barnes’ point of view seems to be crucial for the recognition of a set of ideas that needs to be taken into consideration in the process of analysing the issue of experience, ideas related to disability (difference, disabled body, minority body, resistance), positions of researchers and some of the most important aspects of cultural studies as experience-oriented discipline. Disability studies served in this part of the article as an example of the current of cultural studies that is oriented to experience of both disability body and disability as an element of somebody’s identity. Studies on disability approach, one of the most complex experiences of individuals, analyse its representations, performative potential and possibilities of resistance and of promoting a positive difference (i.e. a difference that is affirmed, not used as a justification for exclusion). In this aspect, this experience-oriented discipline can also be described as an engaged discipline of the humanities.

Engaged and experience oriented are the two adjectives that can be used to describe not only disability studies but also another disciplines of science. Engagement might be accomplished by practicing different attitudes that concentrate on well-being of an individual and sustainable development of social sensitivity. Disability studies as an example of engaged human science focus on one particular phenomena – an experience of disability. In order to diversify social and political discourses, we are

almost obliged to present minority bodies in culture to finalise a process of emancipation of the people with disabilities, which begun around 1980s and 1990s in the United States (Barnes, Mercer 2004).

Disability studies evolved from social movement that brought to light the rights of the people with disabilities. Roots of disability studies determined their engaged status; they will always be tightly bound to some practices of resistance that were performed by the people with disability. One of the examples of such practice was presented above – it was writing therapy that helped Karolina Wiktor to recover from brain trauma. Activity of the people with disabilities was named as a practice of resistance, because, nowadays, it is constantly in opposition to common belief that a person with disability is disabled, which means unable to do something without the help of able-bodied people. New artistic practices proved that disability is not a state of ‘unableness’.

I would like to place disability studies not only in the context of cultural studies, engagement and experience-oriented disciplines but also make a strong reference between disability studies and new projects of engaged humanities. I will extend a map of engagement issue and include a new methodological perspective of the New Humanities as a movement invigorated by the development of cultural studies in Europe, especially in Poland.

Project of engaged humanities is one of the elements of general paradigm of the New Humanities that can be recognised as an attempt to revise some scientific attitudes, methods and functions of narration on contemporary culture (Nycz 2017). This paradigm was introduced by Polish researchers from the Faculty of Polish Studies at the Jagiellonian University and their scientific partners. Now the New Humanities function as a handy concept that is used in order to describe possible changes in the field of human science and is used as a response to crisis that various contemporary disciplines within the humanities are going through.

The New Humanities offers are different (heterodoxic, ‘heretical’ (Bourdieu 1996)) from the current (orthodoxic) approach towards phenomena from the field of aesthetics, existence and politics – with emphasis on research on relationship and common grounds of these phenomena. The New Humanities differ from ‘classically modern humanities’, because, first, it becomes an advocate of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary researches; secondly, it becomes an opponent of dualistic notional schemes that organised narration on cultural process, forcing an existence to accept usually inadequate epistemological constructions; third, it becomes more favourable to aporia, to lack of final interpretations, and have more positive attitude towards innovations.

These are some elementary characteristics of the New Humanities. It indicates a trend of modernisation of humanistic research, adjusting it to constantly changing social, political and cultural reality. Engagement in this context can be interpreted in many different ways and have many different discursive ‘incarnations’. It is a name for an epistemological activity that includes activity in the field of aesthetics, existence, ethics and politics and asks questions about emancipatory power of ideas and representations within the sphere of culture. One of the examples of such activity is creating works of art, a performance, an exhibition, a novel or a drama as well as creating a scientific book, public performance, new invention or thematic course at university. Products of this activities (both material and immaterial) are objects of research of engaged humanities, which should focus on alliances between discourses and their creators, on creating or re-creating environments of life that allows coexistence of living creatures, building relationships and promoting exchange. This project of engagement, supported by vigorous social practices of resistance and emancipation, can stop increase of particularisms, exclusions, orthodoxies and radicalisms.

Engagement is an existential project with political background and consequences. Sometimes it can be even aestheticised in order to promote itself and promote the attitude of obeying ethical rules. Every dimension of engagement, existential, aesthetical, political and ethical, needs to be discussed and constructively criticised (constructive criticism suggest modifications according to classical, critical imperative of improvement, and the New Humanities does not leave behind this tradition of self-development). First dimension of engagement – existential – is crucial for achieving a sensitive attitude towards somebody’s experience. It is necessary to compare experiences of life in order to, for example, create a supportive narration for those who share the same experience (e.g. disease). Second dimension of engagement – aesthetical – is not only related to the arts (artistic representations of

experiences) but also to the practice of storytelling. Experience exists through representations. Researchers have an access only to the experience that is mediated by texts of culture. Following this, mediation is, to some extent, a creation, and creation is a matter of aesthetics. This simple connection amongst representation, mediation and aesthetics reveals that experience is submitted to aesthetics, to a form expression that allows presenting the experience.

Another two dimensions of engagement – political and ethical – might be considered in mutual relation. As I suggested before, engagement is a type of activity that is performed in some specific public sphere, in front of some specific audience and in the specific context. The sphere, the audience and the context are defined, so it is necessary to take them into consideration when examining conditions of engagement. This refers to the most general meaning of the term ‘politics’, which means something that is performed in public and related to the whole community. What is significant, whilst approaching to the community, an ethical dimension starts to play a dominant role. It organises a structure of freedom of those who belong to the community and creates a social situation in which engagement is oriented to the experience of one of the members of the community. Here, a communication based on experience leads to the extension of the public store of representations of a particular experience (e.g. disability).

Four dimensions of engagement indicate four main directions of analysis and interpretation of experience. They are also four main dimensions in which we perform everyday actions. Moreover, within these four dimensions, we may place the experience of disability that has been discussed here as an example of existential belonging that became a basis for disability studies as an academic discipline. Engagement is manifested by different performative activities that has consequences (the consequence is like a trace of engagement). Many of the supporters of project of changes in the humanities pay close attention to the way in which disciplines modify its methods in reference to renewed concepts, such as experience and engagement (Snyder, Mitchell 2006). These concepts also modify their meaning, so it is crucial to constantly verify their significance.

Conclusions

In the field of cultural studies, a question or an extent of engagement serves as an indicator of identity of the discipline. Theoretical analysis of the terms and general assumptions that constitute a particular discipline may be beneficial for developing narrations on contemporary culture and experiences as well as analysing future consequences of practices performed today.

Traces of engagement can be found in many cultural and scientific practices that take into account relationship amongst an individual, a community, an environment, discourses and experiences of past and present. What needs to be highlighted is the fact that in order to chase an engagement, a historical background should be taken into consideration. In the article, democratic transition in Poland proved how many changes can one concept perform. It now became a sort of universal category that is used by scholars from various cultural and scientific fields.

Another vital aspect in this context is an intellectual movement of cultural studies and its role in modifying an attitude towards disciplinary issues. By briefly analysing a disability studies movement, I tried to present a dynamics of spreading ideas related to the experience of disability. Studies on disability are not only a revelatory cultural and scientific practice but also, as I believe, a model of performative discipline that triggers a revision of some of the most common presumptions regarding corporality, mutual relations, minority bodies and dominant narrations. This intellectual ferment caused by cultural studies, and amongst them disability studies, will probably last for some time and cause various different modifications of the humanities.

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