



**The International Conference of Comparative Studies**  
organized by  
**the Université Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris, France**  
and  
**the Jan Długosz Academy, Częstochowa, Poland**

under the aegis of the  
**Polish Comparative Literature Association**

**The lenses and eye of the sage. A dialogue between the  
humanities and modern-day physics.**

**23-24 November 2015**

**Częstochowa**

**Call for Papers**

The antinomy of humanities and sciences has a long history. The dispute between the literary intellectuals and the scientists appears to be growing. As Father Michał Heller once wrote, “these two groups are divided by an abyss of mutual misunderstanding, or even (particularly among their younger representatives) of open aversion and hostility; most of all, however, of lack of mutual understanding. Both groups are characterized by peculiarly distorted views on each other”<sup>1</sup> (own translation). The conflict between the scientists and humanists is further intensified by certain, not always successful, attempts to apply the

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<sup>1</sup> M. Heller, *Czy fizyka jest nauką humanistyczną?*, [in:] M. Heller, S. Krajewski, *Czy fizyka i matematyka to nauki humanistyczne?*, Krakow 2014, p. 27



language of science to describe humanistic issues, which is exemplified by the once famous dissertation by Jean Bricmont and Alan Sokal, entitled *Fashionable Nonsense* (2004). The two physicists revealed the ignorance and incompetence of well-known literary intellectuals, who reduced the scientific terminology to quasi rhetorical functions, in order to endow their reasoning with allure and scholarly air.

Despite the fact that the intellectual history of the Western civilization originates from the idea of a single scientific culture, nowadays it seems impossible to speak of the cultural identity of physics, mathematics, history, sociology, or philology. The division into two separate and incompatible views of the world and man is now a fact. Hermeneutic attempts at separating the natural sciences from the spiritual sciences failed to yield the expected effects. We see “the world of things, not the world of loving”, while the “dead truths” are opposed to the living ones. On the other hand, one cannot help but see the presence of the “truth” in both phrases extracted from Adam Mickiewicz’s ballad *The Romantic*<sup>2</sup>.

The abyss between the representatives of sciences and humanities is further deepened by the influence of the postmodern variation of scientism, based on the belief that the empirical reality is subject to conclusively determinable algorithms. This belief is reinforced by the neoliberal economic discourse, which, in a way, naturalizes the ideological myths of efficiency and usefulness of sciences for the purpose of economic modernization of a state. Hence the category of measurable effect becomes the sole criterion of cultural progress.

The originator of the conference *Lenses and learning. A dialogue between the humanities and modern-day physics* is Professor Zbigniew William Wołkowski of the Sorbonne University. The conference is organized by the Comparative Cultural Studies Laboratory at the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa. Our invitation is addressed to scholars representing both the modern physics or mathematics and the diverse movements within the social sciences, humanities, theological studies, or arts. Our goal is to start a debate on a transdisciplinary dialogue, in its broad sense, and to mark a possible meeting point for the literary intellectuals and the scientists. The obviously non-exhaustive list of topics includes the issues of the so-called second (Charles Percy Snow) and third (John Brockman) culture,

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted fragments of translation by W.H. Auden.



related to the applicability of empirical methods to description of the structure of reality. A vital element of the planned discussion would be the issue of efficiency of diverse methodologies and meta-discourses in interpreting cultural phenomena, as well as the question of mutual inspirations of the scientific and humanistic cultures. It also appears worthwhile to ponder on such issues as:

- Metaphor in science;
- Perception of cultural texts through a discourse of mathematics and physics;
- Perceptions in natural sciences and humanities;
- Affects in science;
- *Logos* and *mythos* in science;
- Artists vs. science;
- Scientists vs. Arts;
- Physics and religion;
- Science and values;
- Experiencing beauty;
- Physics and metaphysics;
- Cultural articulations of chaos and cosmos;
- Literature and cognition;
- Revelation and cognition;
- Scientific and artistic vision of the world;
- Cosmology and eschatology;
- Scientific and artistic imaginaria;
- Method, system, truth;
- Complementarity and disparity in science and art;
- Physics and postmodernism;
- The role of intellectuals in the creation and destruction of the world: “dangerous ideas” (John Brockman);
- Insignificant and serious complexes of the humanists (Leszek Kołakowski);



- Is the “third culture” indispensable for salvation? Reflections on John Brockman’s idea: “The third culture consists of those scientists and other thinkers in the empirical world who, through their work and expository writing, are taking the place of the traditional intellectual in rendering visible the deeper meanings of our lives, redefining who and what we are.”

We welcome academics representing all kinds of humanistic disciplines and areas of research. There is a registration fee of 100€ (75€ for postgraduate students and doctoral candidates) that will cover the costs of organization, conference materials, accommodation and board, as well as the preparation of the conference proceedings for publication.

The deadline for submissions is 15 October 2015. Please send paper proposals of up to 200 words for 20-minute presentations together with your personal data and professional affiliation (see registration form attached) to [pkk@ajd.czest.pl](mailto:pkk@ajd.czest.pl). More detailed information will be sent along with the notification of acceptance by 31 October 2015.

Organizing committee:

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