

A Summary of Doctoral Dissertation:

A Title: "Semiotic Concept of Culture by Clifford Geertz"

In this dissertation, the issue of culture is addressed, with Clifford Geertz emerging as the anthropologist who adeptly defines and names this phenomenon. His theory is significant here for two reasons, hence the focus on this subject matter. Firstly, it is its semiotic dimension. Much has been written about Geertz's theory in the context of interpretivism and local knowledge, but little about semiotics. However, it is precisely this aspect and the concept of "meaning" that play a crucial role in his theory of culture. Geertz almost builds his conception of culture upon it. The second reason is culture itself. Geertz is specifically interested in culture. His thoughts revolve around it in various ways. In his theory, culture is something that creates and sustains what we humans call "humanity." Although culture cannot be seen, it almost entirely constitutes human existence. Culture possesses some sort of power, he argues. The power of making our world human and understandable. It assists people in navigating the world. Therefore, culture should be perceived not only as a set of behavioral patterns and customs but also as a set of control mechanisms. It is what programming is to a computer scientist. Culture, in some way, directs our human behavior. However, culture is also something without which humans cannot survive at all. Humans are not so much dependent on these control mechanisms, on culture, as they are interdependent. Culture, therefore, is strongly rooted, in Geertz's view, in history, in tradition. Because culture is about transmission.

The dissertation attempts to answer the question of the contemporary shape of culture. According to Geertz, culture is what needs to be preserved. However, it needs to be given a new, contemporary, and appropriate form. Today, no one knows what culture is, and that is why this topic needs to be addressed. And Geertz does just that. Contrary to all odds, he says; culture is necessary for us, culture means something.

The topic of my work is culture. Its modern way of functioning. In my work, I put forward the thesis that culture is a social phenomenon. I refer here to Clifford Geertz's theory, which helps me verify this thesis. Geertz understands the concept of the phenomenon very specifically. Similarly, what is social and, as a result, the very concept of culture is very specific. Culture is real, something like an objective reality, but for Geertz culture is not objective, but social. Its reality and presence/phenomenal nature result from its social nature. In this work I will try to show why and how it is social, what the social nature of culture means. Its social character consists of several elements. They are: text, meaning and rhetoric. Hence, the work was divided into four chapters. I started by talking about ethnography. At the very beginning of his reflections on culture, Geertz calls himself an ethnographer. Not without reason. Ethnography turns out to play an important role here. It is a key element of his concept of culture. There are two basic concepts around which Geertz's social thought moves. They are text and writing.

Being an ethnographer, according to him, is strictly linked to the process of writing. His anthropology is almost entirely focused on ethnography, and Geertz understands culture precisely in an ethnographic manner. In this part of the work, he shows why this is the case, what a text is, and why it constitutes an expression of the social character of culture. In the second chapter, I discuss the problem of the semiotics of culture. It is said that Geertz created a semiotic theory of culture. In this part of the work, I will try to present the basic components of his theory of culture, which, in his opinion, influence its contemporary functioning and its social character. Here, the main role will be played by the concept of meaning, as it is the expression of the social character of culture. Geertz often repeats that cultural phenomena are systems of meaning, and that culture is a system of meaningful symbols. Meaning is at the center of Geertz's anthropological considerations. In the second chapter, I will try to show why this is the case. However, meaning and semiotics, in Geertz's theory, are connected with ethnography and the ethnographic understanding of culture. In the third chapter, I will show why. Alongside ethnography, semiotics forms a whole that - one might say - enables an understanding of what culture is, how culture functions today, and what its uniqueness consists of. Culture is a network of meanings in which we are entangled, and which we have woven ourselves. Culture consists of socially established structures of meaning. Meaning is important for Geertz because it somehow points to the social aspect of culture. In the third chapter, I will show how he does this. At this point, Geertz invokes Wittgenstein, as well as Peirce and Ricoeur. From their theories, he constructs his own concept of the semiotics of culture. Hermeneutics and pragmatism guide the anthropologist in unraveling the mystery of our invisible entanglement in culture, helping to understand the mechanisms of its functioning. Our functioning in the world and our understanding of it, using Geertz's words, depends on "[...] a better understanding on our part of how culture, the meaning frame of human life and form shaping our beliefs, identities, and bonds of solidarity, becomes a force ordering human affairs.

In Geertz's theory, ethnography and semiotics reveal the social nature of culture. Anthropology, if it aims to study culture, must reject individualism and rationalism, the anthropologist would say, because reason opposes culture. Ethnography is an expression and a necessity of the social nature of culture. However, Geertz understands this social nature in a specific way. Here, social means local. Ethnography explores the concept of "meaning" because culture is a network of meanings. But interpreting them is possible by relating them to local frameworks, to the local social context. Because culture is contextual. Because the meaning of culture is a local matter. Geertz will say more, that culture is rhetorical. In the fourth chapter, I will attempt to explain this matter, to show what this locality consists of and how it relates to meaning, and how this locality relates to the rhetoric of culture. Ultimately, it turns out that the semiotic concept of culture is the rhetoric of culture. In the fourth chapter, I will show why. As a result, we will obtain an answer to the question of the social nature of culture. It is simultaneously an answer to the question of why culture means something.

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