

Guest Editor's Preface

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1. Without further specification, the word «anthropology» has nowadays little to do with philosophy. Rather, especially but not exclusively in English-speaking countries, it is mainly used to denote the field of «cultural anthropology»¹. As we shall see, the names of several philosophers recur in what one may call – to avoid confusion – the pre-history of cultural anthropology. However, the history of cultural anthropology is the history of the development of a scientific community (together with its institutions: private societies, public organisations, academic departments, and so on) recognising itself in a certain methodological approach². Since the core of this methodology, generally speaking, is the «fieldwork», cultural anthropology is clearly independent of philosophy and frequently opposes its «armchair» methodology³.

Therefore, it seems quite reasonable to define the relatively wide field of philosophical investigations concerning man as *philosophical anthropology*. The difference with *cultural anthropology*, i.e. – in nowadays prevalent sense – anthropology *tout court*, is thus clearly remarked. Unfortunately, this move faces us with supplementary difficulties. In fact, the phrase *philosophical anthropology* frequently denotes a specific approach to the question, developed in Germany in the late Twenties of the XX century by Max Scheler and Helmuth Plessner, and later by Arnold Gehlen and others⁴. Recently, Joachim Fischer has proposed to distinguish this historically determined Philosophical Anthropology, with capital letters, from philosophical anthropology in the general sense of a «sub-discipline of philosophy», in which a wide range of philosophical methodologies and approaches (i.e., not only those of Philosophical Anthropology in the above sense) is applied to the question of man, together with «the presentation (*Vergegenwärtigung*) of the history of anthropological self-reflexion»⁵.

Fischer has devoted his outstanding book to the history of Philosophical Anthropology in the first sense: a specific line of thought (*Denkrichtung*) of the Twentieth Century. However, what about the historical development of philosophical anthropology in the other, less determined sense of a «sub-discipline» of philosophy? Is this development simply identical to the general history of moral philosophy since

¹ Obviously, there is also a more general, non-scientific use of the word. One could speak, for instance, of Shakespeare's or Michelangelo's *anthropology*. This case will be not considered hereafter.

² See Stocking 1983, 1987; Barnard 2000; Eriksen and Nielsen 2001.

³ From a history of science point of view, the case under discussion shows some close resemblance to that of psychology, where the adoption of an experimental method plays the central role in distinguishing the discipline from philosophy.

⁴ According to Scheler, in 1928 philosophical anthropology was not anymore a mere «discipline» (Scheler 1928).

⁵ Fischer 2008, 9; see also Fischer 2000, 5.

the Delphic and Socratic *gnôthi seautón*, as someone argued⁶? Or does anthropology necessarily imply, on the contrary, a non-philosophical or half-philosophical attitude, as detractors repeatedly complained⁷?

Somewhere else I argued that the complex relationship of philosophy with anthropology in the history of modern thought cannot be properly understood through oversimplifying evaluations of this kind⁸. Rather, many different methodological approaches must be taken into account. On the one side, sources-oriented researches⁹ and the history of concepts¹⁰ provided some general criteria, partly in connection with the explicit occurrences of the term «anthropology» within philosophical tradition. Yet, many questions still remain open. Did we investigate systematically enough what philosophers meant by using, or avoiding, or explicitly refusing the word anthropology (or any related expressions)? In any case, does this exhaust the question of a philosophical anthropology? On the other side, historians of philosophy, historians of science and historians of ideas have shown – among other things – that even the pre-history of cultural anthropology and of other «sciences of man» has a lot to do with the development of philosophical anthropology. In other words, the undisputed sharpness of nowadays' distinction between cultural and philosophical anthropology blurs considerably when we look at the past, and sometimes results misleading. Actually, modern philosophers have been constantly interested in the results of anthropology and ethnology, which provided valuable empirical tests for philosophical theories concerning the human mind, the political order, language, and so on¹¹. Moreover, direct interaction and mutual influence between anthropologists and philosophers can be established in many cases¹².

2. For many reasons, these questions have not raised enough attention in the last decades. First, Philosophical Anthropologists (with capital letters in the above sense) comprehensibly suggested the idea of a radical gap between their approach and the past ones. Thus, no less than many of their detractors, they ended up by suggesting a radically discontinuous historical development of philosophical anthropology. Secondly, many influential Twentieth-Century philosophers warned against anthropological degenerations of philosophy, sometimes condemned as «anthropologism»¹³. Among them one could list no less thinkers than Husserl, Heidegger, Foucault but also, from a radically different standpoint, Horkheimer and Habermas¹⁴. Properly speaking, they generally attacked on their contemporaries (i.e. on Philosophical Anthropology), yet their negative attitude also deeply influenced the

⁶ Groethuysen 1931; Brüning 1960; Landmann 1962.

⁷ See Foucault 1966; Husserl 1931; Heidegger 1928.

⁸ Martinelli 2004. Please refer to this book for further references concerning many of the themes under discussion.

⁹ Linden 1976.

¹⁰ See Marquard 1965; 1971. For a criticism, see my contribution in this issue.

¹¹ See Landucci 1972; Gliozzi 1977.

¹² For instance, J.F. Blumenbach and Kant: see Lenoir 1980.

¹³ Once more, the parallel with psychology and the question of «psychologism» is quite clear.

¹⁴ Husserl 1931; Heidegger 1929; Foucault 1966; Horkheimer 1935; Habermas 1958.

level of historical reconstruction. Although probably directed against Plessner, Heidegger's criticism, for instance, is formulated against Kant's anthropology; Horkheimer quotes Joseph de Maistre as an example of the link between naturalistic anthropology and reactionary political theory; Foucault's influential criticisms of anthropology essentially refers to the «*âge classique*». Finally, the sharp debate concerning Marx' alleged juvenile «anthropology» reveals some heavy ideological implications. Actually, until not so many years ago, this question was deeply interwoven with the problem of political freedom in East-European communist countries: supporting «anthropology» within Marxism (e.g. following Marx' *Manuscripts*) was tantamount to dismissing orthodoxy in favour of reforms programs – with occasionally dramatic consequences¹⁵.

Almost a century after the birth of Philosophical Anthropology, no such ideological complications are anymore on the way, and a generalised refusal of anthropological perspectives in philosophy makes no sense. New researches on the proposed topic are thus strongly required. Although they offer interesting insights, Plessner's or Gehlen's sketches of historical reconstructions cannot be anymore assumed as *a priori* indisputable authoritative standpoints¹⁶. Nor do similarity or resonance with their (or others') theories represent a privileged criterium to investigate previous developments. However, Twentieth-Century Philosophical Anthropology cannot be isolated and excluded from the task. This claim does not imply any loss of specificity: rather, a better definition of the general context could be helpful in solving some difficulties in understanding the history and defining the limits of Philosophical Anthropology.

3. The following essays focus on different thinkers and problems, aiming in each case at an in-depth access to the roots of the discussed problems. The issue is far from aiming at an exhaustive picture, however a rather wide area is covered. In my own contribution, I tried to undermine Odo Marquard's view of philosophical anthropology as intrinsically opposed to philosophy of history. More frequently, anthropology implies history and contends with psychology for a leading role. Marco Russo is concerned with the intriguing theme of Kant's «*mundana sapientia*» and its importance for anthropology. Faustino Fabbianelli focuses his attention on K.L. Reinhold, J.G. Fichte, and the complex semantics of anthropology, psychology and the «transcendental» at that time. Guido Cusinato underlines Schelling's role in leading the way towards later Philosophical Anthropology. Nina Dmitrieva's essay presents the situation of anthropology from the point of view of Russian Neo-kantianism. Avoiding commonplace reconstructions of Nietzsche's anthropological ideas, Chiara Piazzesi investigates the semantic of passions. Vincenzo Costa considers the problem from the point of view of Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenological analysis, discussing intentionality among humans and non-human animals. Vallori Rasini reflects upon the very sense of philosophical anthropology according to Helmuth Plessner. Alberto Gualandi draws attention on the problem of a philosophy of history from Gehlen's point of view. I wish to express them all of my gratitude for

¹⁵ See Márkus 1966; Lepenies-Nolte 1971.

¹⁶ For instance, Plessner 1937; Gehlen 1940, 1957.

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