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Some Types of Philosophical and Cultural Anthropology

Abstract

The aim is to offer a fundamental outline of a human being, which could be the backbone of the conception of open culture.

By analyzing the focal points of philosophical and cultural anthropology:

A) philosophical anthropology (Aristotle, Thucydides, etc.):

   a) passivist conception,

   b) activist conception;

B) cultural anthropology (18th century, Sapir, Malinowski, etc.):

   a) closed culture,

   b) open culture;

we must ensure the conception of an open vs. the closed (paternalistic) culture. In multicultural associations, it would seem that the latter often hinders progress, so it is necessary to find parameters open cultures can use for early recognition of the negative attributes of patriarchal culture.

Key Words

Culture, anthropology, multiculturality

The topic "Human Beings and Culture" requires, of course, first of all an assessment of what a human being is, and it is only a second task to inquire into the relation of human beings to culture. That is why we here attempt an analysis of human beings for which the most relevant approach is that of philosophical anthropology. At the same time we shall seek a corresponding answer concerning the question of culture from cultural anthropology. A dilemma of philosophical anthropology arises from the perspective of passivism versus activism of human beings, and a dilemma of cultural anthropology arises from the demands raised by concepts of open versus closed culture.

A) Philosophical Anthropology

Though philosophical anthropology could be dated back to Ancient Greece (Socrates, Thucydides), and its questions are debated since the 18th century, for example in the enlightenment and by Kant, nonetheless the term "Philosophical Anthropology" is ascribed to M. Scheler (1927). However, it should be noted that the term is also used, in thorough fashion, by K. Marx in his *Economical-Philosophical Manuscripts* (the man is a being of genius, the essence of cosmos, because he is all the world, 1844) and by L. Feuerbach in his *The Essence of Christianity* (the qualities ascribed to God are really

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the characteristics of human essence,1845). Scheler tries to determine what a human being is outside of the traditional divisions in terms of theist, rationalist, naturalist-irrationalist, decadent-vitalistic, and anthropological interpretations. His cosmological anthropology draws attention to its central questions – the question of the uniqueness of human beings at the crossroads of the rationalist and irrationalist aporia of Scheler's axiological intentions. The question is raised, in fact, to the extent of a radical break with all attempts to trace out its infrastructure in a certain sphere. Husserl, nonetheless, considered it to be a form of ontological idealism (metaphysics). In 1931 Husserl wrote *Phenomenology and Anthropology*, which is still today interesting to many readers, even though we could consider it as part of metaphysics because of its longing for absolute truth. Philosophical anthropology was indeed typical for the 19ᵗʰ century, yet after the development of cultural anthropology all that remained for it was to synthesize the discoveries about human beings in physical anthropology. It seems that the topic of human beings has always posed great difficulties for western philosophy (E. Paci, 1962).

a) The Passivist Conception

The Ancient Greek philosophers sought an appropriate kind of life for human beings, and Aristotle points to the role of philosophy as stimulating contemplation of the sublime virtues, which approaches human life to divinity.

When consciousness and contemplative life are allotted a privileged role, such as in Saint Augustine, Descartes, and Bergson, and when this is the source of all knowledge about moral, social and cultural values, then this is an invitation to inaction. Indeed, even if activism is emphasized, as does Husserl in the aforementioned lecture, it is difficult to justify it. For, according to Husserl, human beings are passive after all, because anthropology cannot be founded on the essence of human beings but only on transcendental subjectivity, which effectively secures only the need for universal *epohé*, which alone secures the formation of judgment. The question remains how to attain activism in human beings when one is after an apodictic judgment.

However, in our immediate history, Heidegger's philosophy expresses the clearest and most pronounced form of passivism. Heidegger neglects everything that Husserl and Dilthey developed concerning history and temporality. For him the primary importance lies in establishing the 'topology of being', and not human beings and their existence, since he designated humanism as anthropologism (1947). He could have published only his conversation with the Japanese professor Tezuka from 1953/54, because it reveals the whole history of his views on language, human beings, and essence. Everything Heidegger writes takes the direction of condemning human beings to passivism. Language speaks, not the human being, because the latter is predestined to keep quiet and listen. What's at stake is not the being of human beings but of being itself, so that the human being just is on a walk through the field (*Feldweg*, 1950), on the crooked paths through the woods (*Holzwege*, 1957), and through the access to the path (*Unterwegs*…, 1959). Being hides and reveals itself, and there is nothing more we can do than entrust ourselves to it (*Gelassenheit*, 1959). – It is impossible to better express passivism.

b) The Activist Conception

Plato holds that philosophy ought to guide human beings in all of life's endeavors, and especially in attaining a just and happy society. From there arises

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the question about human beings – the question about socratic ἀρετή, that is, Socratic virtue, which in fact Plato has a hard time elucidating, since the Ancient Greeks lost a sense of the universality of human beings, so that already then the question arises whether there is one virtue for three classes in the state – the philosophers, guardians, and workers, and thus it is shown that human beings are reduced to one function (Paci, 56).

G. B. Vico draws a clear distinction between human beings as they are and how they would like to be (65). That is why Paci considered him to be the founder of modern anthropology (170). Kant distinguished human beings as physiological beings, in the sense that nature causally affects them, and also as free beings who make up themselves, (Abbagnano, *Diz*. 54), which certainly corresponds to the activist conception.

Hegel saw, even before Marx, that the most basic human characteristic is its economic function. Then he brings up the role of societal controls and education, and the all encompassing function of politics. However, we should note that already Machiavelli and Hobbes drew attention to this (Paci, 164). In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* there is a break between the individual and humankind, which Hegel calls the process of the genus (62) – human beings are "sick" because they are not in agreement with themselves and won't be (52). Human beings are sick in their essence (45), which is to say that their essence is not only to be an animal, but neither immediately a human being (65). It is certain that in such an assessment of human beings we can note an implicit impetus to some favorable human activity. It is evident that a central point of philosophical anthropology is the question what human beings should be, compared to what they are.

Scheler develops Humboldt's idea of the natural determination of human beings (Abb, *Diz*. 54). He emphasizes that instinct lends human beings their capacity to act, and values are the axis of orientation for what a human being should be. Humans are beings capable of saying "No" to instinctual drives, in contradistinction to animals, and are thus distinct from them in virtue of their spirit. This idea is accepted by H. Plessner, A. Gehlen, T. Litt, and others, but they attempted to reject its metaphysical consequence (*Enciclop. Garzanti*, 37). Essentially, Scheler interpreted human beings as an act of "ideation", as that which is altogether in its actions – though it remains open where they could take it.

Husserl emphasizes activity in comprehending the stream of my "cogitationes" when "we have to pursue the essential connection between the cogitationes and their corresponding faculties – the "I can", the "I am doing", I have an abiding faculty "for", which are capacities for being active (Husserl, *Phen. and Anthrop*. 176). The question remains how the activity of transcendental subjectivity can go after apodictic truth.

In this sequence it is also interesting to note the view of A. I. Kroeber who, while emphasizing human individuality, holds that human beings have lost their drives and have for that reason become a "genus" (Paci, 158). They artificially create techniques that are analogous to other species, and such a capacity we call a genus. That is why a genus has a kind of universality that a species lacks (160–161).

All these positive conceptions of activism we find systematically and thoroughly built into a philosophical view that places special emphasis on anthropology and bears the appropriate name of *positive existentialism*. Its author, Nicola Abbagnano, claims from the outset that the problem of human beings and humanity is the most intimate problem in philosophy, and he holds that

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humanity in its greatest extent is an autochtone sphere of existence-humanity as a lost or yet-to-be-found horizon of human living: "a brave and conscious return of human beings to themselves" (*Fil. rel. sci*. 7). Abbagnano's approach to the problem of human beings reveals that he is not anarchist, but neither he is a fantasist who would lack a foundation in a real platform, and neither does he hold on to preconceptions that would guarantee him rationalist underpinnings. As a mode of being, human existence consists of complex situations. Human relations are nothing other that relations to people and problems. Existence is really a continuous opening to the world and to others. Individual existence is always bound up with the existence of others – it is an entering into a community of existents, that is coexistence. (Here he acknowledges this as Heidegger's term, "Mitdasein", *Dizion*. 129). Thus human beings are finite and incomplete, but their relations are not because of that an effort in vain. The human way of being is problematic, and that is why existence, in fact, is a possibility that is realized over and again, driven from its deepest foundations by value as a guarantor for one's relationships with others. Situations that arise are conditioned by and condition human beings' powers of anticipation and projection. Surrounded by instability and guided by norms of coexistence, human beings are to find "a point of orientation for regulated and humane existence" (*Fil. rel*. 6). Human problems are not solved just rationally through theory, but neither through immediate experience, because in that way "they would lose their significance" (*Introd*. 7). Human beings are neither masters nor slaves of the world, but workers or, rather artisans, dedicated and disciplined (*Per o*, 28). The survival of human beings rests on their capacity to chose and plan activities. As feedback on projects can be negative, human beings' path is long and requires patience. They meet their difficulties and failures with "self-correcting techniques" (26). Orientation in choices and solutions is only by name for human beings. Abbagnano holds that moral, political, and judicial systems, and criteria of valuing and choosing in general, appear as closed totalities which as such have to be accepted or rejected, because in themselves they don't posses self-correcting techniques (26–27). Human beings as free beings have to continuously secure through adequate choices better and better circumstances for life. That is why Abbagnano emphasizes human rights, arguing that though they are theoretically acknowledged, they are de facto egregiously violated (127). Those are rights to freedom (of speech, press, and gathering), social rights (to education, labor, and labor protection), and rights to opinions (customary or public, which is in conflict with racial or religious intolerance, 127). It is necessary to find a foundation for these rights, or, rather, a justification that would precisely determine these rights, secure their defense, and indicate ways of resisting those who prevent their realization. Since Ancient natural right (the Stoics, Cicero, Middle Ages), as well as Grothius's right from the 17th century, which is based on reason, ceased to be a foundation, the aforementioned rights amount to demands, but it is evident that nothing can secure them.

Even if we accept the interpretation of human beings as free beings who have to defend their rights from themselves, that is, from their low drives, as well as from the tyranny of societal institutions, we still do not know whether this interpretation can apply to all human beings. That is how we come to the question whether, if we distinguish personality and human beings as such, we should be concerned with, like liberals, personal rights and not human rights. It is evident that the activist conception also demands the application of results from the philosophy of law and politics, as well as various subdisciplines of psychology, sociology and bioethics. It also draws attention to the fact that

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only a defense of personal rights can include a defense of individual rights from oneself and from the tyranny of institutions and other man.

B) Cultural Anthropology

It would definitely be necessary to find at least an approximate answer to the question what culture and to assess the consequences of this answer. It appears that culture is the complete way of life of an individual, a community, or a people. A way of life should reveal activity with the appropriate functions. Research should show which interpretation best characterizes these relations, so that it could be ascertained with greater certainty which type of culture is more plausible – that is, which culture is open and which is closed and as such promises no changes and least any progress.

Cultural anthropology appears first in the 18th century in the guise of *anthropological physics*, that is, the study of physico-organic and racial characteristics of human beings. This frequently led to interconnections with ethnology, and later with archeology, linguistics, psychology, history, and sociology.

It is held that Herodotus, Caesar, Tacitus, Chang Tang, and Marco Polo are precursors of cultural anthropology (*Enciclop. Garz*. 35). Greater interest in cultural anthropology arises with the affirmation of positivism, evolutionism and sociology in the 19th century, and with the incorporation of linguistic research (W. v. Humboldt, 1797: F. Bopp, 1833–52), with the comparative and systematic collection of ethnographical documents (G. Klemm,1843), (J. J. Bachofen, 1861; F. B. Taylor, 1871; H. J. Morgan, 1877). That is when researchers were faced with ambivalence between linear and polycentric approaches (F. A. Graebner, 1911; W. Schmidt, 1926), with changes in various methods (G. Klemm, comparative; A. I. Kroeber, historical, anthropological, 1952), with the emergence of different schools ("the specificity of cultures" E. Sapiro, 1921; "models of culture" R. Benedict, 1934,1946), with changes in scientific method, such as B. Malinowski's (1936), with theory of functions, neoevolutionism, structuralism, and even the development of instruments in the exact sciences (statistical and mathematical models). All of this was directed towards answering the question what a human being is.

Malinowski introduces the concept of a function (1884–1942), and for many he is in fact the inventor of real cultural anthropology and the founder of the functionalist school. According to R. Brown, the term "function" is to be replaced with the term "structure", though it is held that both terms are ambiguous (Paci, 16). According to Malinowski, cultural anthropology studies the system of functions which are shown to be the best means for a civilization to adjust to an environment and satisfy its needs. However, it is not sufficient just to consider the first order of a function, but also in its use and distribution, and that includes rules, sanctions, customs, as well as legal, ethical and conventional norms. A system of controls constitutes the second order of a function, and a system that transmits these functions, the educational system, is constitutes the third order. All of this is preserved on the fourth order by the function of the political. Paci objects that it is unclear why Malinowski is considered to be such a genius after Machiavelli, Hegel and Marxism (164).

Structuralism was more promising, yet some structuralists accepted only the synchronic method (I. White, 1949; J. Steward, 1955). In contrast, Levy Strauss accepted both methods, including the diachronic one. In his synthetic opus *History and Anthropology* (1949), he attempted to explain conflicts between ethnology, anthropology, and history. Through a study of Native

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Americans in Mato Grosso, he formulated the thesis that solutions to family problems mark a society. The relation between family and language reveals three kinds of structure: familial, linguistic, and economical (Paci, 175–176). It is especially important that he uses a cybernetic interpretation of communication (177). Also important is his insistence on a link between cultural anthropology and the exact sciences, such as geography and geology, and also to so-called humanistic sciences, such as linguistics and historiography, since cultural anthropology is really located in between them In effect, Strauss's structuralism identifies societal structures with general and abstract formulas of interpersonal relationships, the result of which is a set of transformation rules which the researcher constructs by abstracting from empirically observable relations. The concept of structure is here used differently than in history and experience (*L. Universale*, 1116).

The last decades of the past century saw the downfall of functionalism, structuralism, and Marxism (C. E. Leach, F. Barth, 1969). New specialities emerged, such as ethno-science, semiotics, and network systems.

American cognitive anthropology studies how one ethnic group creates a specific categorization of the natural and social world (W. Goodenough, P. Berlin, R. Key, 1969). Semiotics interprets culture as a semiotic entity which is found in the "field of communication" and within which new meaning is continuously produced and reproduced from a range of infinite possibilities for interpretation (R. Wagner, 1951; F. Barth, 1983).

However, the concept of 'structure' is supplemented by the concept of a 'network'. In order to determine the mutual relations in real experience, the issue concerns the individualization and reconstruction of existing relationships between the observed units. A network is, in the end, made up out of societal structures (P. V. Marden, N. Lin, S. D. Berkovitz, 1985: *L'Universal fil*. 1116). It is evident that for the purposes of fruitful research results, semiotics and network based anthropology are the most promising, because they try to capture existing as well as changing states. That is to say, they can offer a description of culture that points to those elements which make a culture closed or open.

Nowadays the problems of philosophical and cultural anthropology are, one could say, popular, because they can be found in many descriptions of courses offered at important universities, such as U.C. Berkeley. Cultures are diverse. On the fringes are, on the one hand, folkloric and, on the other hand, elite cultures. However, contemporary civilization is pervaded by subcultures, and they appear to replace individual, often opposed conglomerates (Christian, Islamic, Western culture, etc.), and they often impede progress, with ephemeral authorities of the show business, with stars and starlets. This reveals a thorough lack of orientation concerning societal values and often leads to political apathy. Patriarchal culture and the subcultures, stand in the way of the process, which has solid Mediterranean roots – namely the process of enriching the world.

Therefore, in any discussion about human beings, one must look for elements that favor activism in the sense of building an open culture whose recognizable red thread leads to – an enrichment of the world.

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Neki vidovi filozofske i kulturne antropologije

Sažetak

Cilj je dati temeljni ocrt čovjeka koji bi mogao biti okosnica koncepcije otvorene kulture. Analizom uporišnih točaka filozofske i kulturne antropologije:

A) filozofska antropologija (Aristotel, Tukidid, itd.):
  a) pasivistička koncepcija,
  b) aktivistička koncepcija;

B) kulturna antropologija (18. st., Sapir, Malinowski itd.):
  a) zatvorena kultura,
  b) otvorena kultura;

treba doći do osiguranja koncepcije otvorene vs. *zatvorene (paternalističke) kulture. U multikulturalnim svezama izgleda da se potonja češće ispriječava daljem napredovanju pa je neophodno naći parametre kojima otvorene kulture mogu što ranije prepoznati negativna obilježja patrijarhalne kulture.*

Ključne riječi

Kultura, antropologija, multikulturalnost

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Einige Aspekte der philosophischen und der Kulturanthropologie

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Arbeit soll die Konturen eines Menschen zeichnen, der als Grundlage zur Konzeption einer offenen Kultur dienen könnte. Die Stützpunkte der philosophischen und der Kulturanthropologie sind:

A) Philosophische Anthropologie (Aristoteles, Thukydides usw.):

   a) passivistische Konzeption

   b) aktivistische Konzeption;

B) Kulturanthropologie (18. Jh., Sapir, Malinowski usw.):

   a) geschlossene Kultur

   b) offene Kultur.

Durch eine Analyse der genannten Stützpunkte muss die Konzeption einer offenen vs. geschlossenen (paternalistischen) Kultur erarbeitet werden. Bei multikulturellen Beziehungen scheint sich die Letztere zuweilen einer Weiterentwicklung zu entziehen, sodass neue Parameter gesucht werden müssen, anhand deren offene Kulturen möglichst frühzeitig die negativen Merkmale einer patriarchalen Kultur erkennen können.

Schlüsselbegriffe

Kultur, Anthropologie, Multikulturalität

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Quelques aspects de l'anthropologie philosophique et culturelle

Résumé

L'objectif est de proposer une ébauche élémentaire de l'homme susceptible de constituer l'axe de la notion de culture ouverte.

En analysant les points focaux de l'anthropologie philosophique et culturelle :

A. l'anthropologie philosophique (Aristote, Thucydide etc.)

   a) la conception passiviste

   b) la conception activiste;

B. l'anthropologie culturelle (XVIIIe siècle, Sapir, Malinowski etc.)

   a) la culture fermée

   b) la culture ouverte;

il faut renforcer la conception de la culture ouverte par opposition à la culture fermée (paternaliste). Dans les rapports multiculturels, cette dernière semble souvent brider le progrès, de sorte qu'il soit nécessaire de trouver des paramètres dont les cultures ouvertes peuvent se servir pour repérer le plus tôt possible les caractéristiques de la culture patriarcale.

Mots-clés

Culture, anthropologie, multiculturalisme