

Hans-Peter Krüger, Third Ernst Cassirer Lecture, Göteborg University, June 2nd, 2006

*Philosophical Anthropologies in Comparison.
The Approaches of Ernst Cassirer and Helmuth Plessner*

Third Ernst Cassirer Symposium, Göteborg University, June 3rd, 2006:

What is Philosophical Anthropology?

Philosophical Anthropology is concerned with the advantages and the limits of bio-anthropology, medical anthropology, social and cultural anthropology, and historical anthropology. Why and in which sense could the different anthropologies fit together? Why and in which sense do they exclude or ignore each other? What are the presuppositions and consequences of these anthropologies with regard to leading a human life? In which sense can philosophy integrate anthropologies into one framework? Is philosophical anthropology a general or meta anthropology, or is it rather more a philosophy that limits all anthropological claims?

During his exile in Sweden (and later on at Yale University), Ernst Cassirer gave lectures about Philosophical Anthropology (1939/40 and 1944/45) and drafted a first version of his later "Essay on Man" under the title of philosophical anthropology. These lectures and drafts were published for the first time at the end of 2005. On this occasion, and in the context of the renewed interest in philosophical anthropology, Cassirer's approach should be compared with other approaches.

Philosophical Anthropology - originally developed by Max Scheler and Helmuth Plessner in the 1920ies in Germany - has been revitalised and newly founded in Central Europe during the last decade. It offers a philosophy of living nature in order to specify human living beings. It proposes a phenomenological method to discover phenomena that perform the specifics of living beings in difference to non-living beings. It includes also a semiotic - broader than linguistic - method to reconstruct the presuppositions of understanding life at different levels (pre-conscious, simple-conscious, linguistically mediated self-conscious level of interaction). It is concerned with the following questions: What are the characteristics of *homo sapiens* in difference to other living beings? Do different human cultures agree about common features of human life? Why do personal living beings need history in order to become *selves*? Why is their nature from the very beginning and in permanence an artificial one, a kind of *second nature* (Aristotle)? In which sense is power an irreducible aspect of human life? Facing a rupture in human conduct, of which kinds of negativity do we have to take care? Which combination of methods (phenomenology, hermeneutics, dialectics, transcendental procedure) enables to answer these questions? What are the limits of all anthropological definitions with regard to leading a human life?

Coming from very different directions, philosophers will discuss the topic of Philosophical Anthropology at present.

Invited Speakers: Mathias Gutmann (Marburg), John Michael Krois (Berlin), Hans-Peter Krüger (Potsdam, Uppsala), Olivia Mitscherlich (Potsdam, Uppsala), Christian Thies (Rostock), Volker Schürmann (Leipzig),

Saturday, June 2, 2006,

Morning Session, Chair: Björn Wittrock (Uppsala)

10 o'clock a. m.

John Michael Krois (Berlin): Cassirer's Philosophical Anthropology and the Embodied Cognition Paradigm

11: 30 o'clock a. m.

Mathias Gutmann (Marburg): Life and Spirit. Cassirer's Programme of a philosophical Anthropology and that in Göttingen

1 o'clock p. m. Lunch

Afternoon Session, Chair:

2 o'clock p. m.

Olivia Mitscherlich (Potsdam, Uppsala): Man as Foundation of philosophical Orientation in Modernity? - Plessner versus Cassirer

3:30 o'clock coffee break

4 o'clock p. m.

Volker Schürmann (Leipzig): What is Sceptical Anthropology?

5: 30 o'clock p. m.

Christian Thies (Rostock): Between Metaphysics and Biology. About the Relation between Philosophy and the Sciences According Scheler, Plessner, and Gehlen