

Ernst Cassirer Summer School
Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Study,
August 17- August 19, 2006

Life Politics. Habermas, Foucault, Agamben, and Philosophical Anthropology.

Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* ended with new conflicts regarding the grammar of life forms. Facing new medical therapies, he demanded a *Gattungsethik* (ethics for the human race) in his essay *The Future of Human Nature*. Contrary, Foucault drafted a conception of *bio-power* and *bio-politics*. Human bodies are normalized in practices of discourse that are productive in terms of power. Agamben criticized and modified Foucault's approach in his project *homo sacer* including his lessons from *Auschwitz* and from the *state of emergency* (Ausnahmezustand) in permanence. For the purpose of comparing these different critiques, we understand *Life Politics* in a broader way than *bio-politics*. The implementation of new technologies (bio-medical, social-cultural, and information technologies) challenges to re-ask anthropological questions. In anthropological terms, all these authors seem to presuppose that human beings must be grasped as discursive beings (who participate in reason or in discursive power or in hermeneutics and deconstruction). Is this focus on language, combined with describing the dangers of Naturalism and Essentialism outside of language, sufficient to meet the anthropological challenges? Or can philosophy dissolve the occupation of nature by reductionism?

Philosophical Anthropology (originally developed by Max Scheler and Helmuth Plessner in the 1920s 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 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?

Such questions oppose the mainstream of Cartesian-like dichotomies including body or mind, and at present outside of language or inside of language. Rather, they ask for historical connections between nature and culture, including the indeterminacy of the absolute. They are also invitations for interdisciplinary collaboration among different anthropologies (bio-and medical anthropology, social and cultural anthropology, historical anthropology).

Invited Speakers and teachers: Hans-Peter Krüger (University of Potsdam, Uppsala), Gesa Lindemann (TU Berlin), Dieter Thomä (University of St. Gallen),

German Postdocs and PhD students: H. Demuth (Graduate School Potsdam-Frankfurt/O.), Dr. Olivia Mitscherlich (Uppsala), Dr. Matthias Schloßberger (Roma), Dr. Dirk Setton (Graduate School Potsdam-Frankfurt/O), Björn Sydow (Graduate School Potsdam-Frankfurt/O),
4 Swedish postdocs or advanced PhD-students; 4 Finnish postdocs or advanced PhD-students

Thursday, August 17, 2006, 10 o'clock a. m.

Hans-Peter Krüger: *Life Politics. A philosophical-anthropological Access*

Friday, August 18, 10 o'clock a. m.

Gesa Lindemann: *Homo sacer* and Beyond. On the Analyses of Societal Border Regimes

Saturday, August 19, 2006, 10 o'clock a. m.

Dieter Thomä: The Masterless: Life and Politics in Agamben and Beyond