ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE POST-EUCLIDEAN STATE
OR FROM TEXTUAL TO ORAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Antonio Luigi Palmisano [*]

Between the drawing up of protocols and dialogue

The actual crisis of anthropology is related to its wide public success. Starting from the 1940's the number of professional anthropologists has increased exponentially and so has the number of students in the universities, as well as the number of B.A., M.A., Ph.D. and Masters programmes in anthropology (social, cultural, applied and so on).

Anthropology has prospered. The anthropologies have proliferated and, becoming more specific, anthropology has mushroomed, going on to enhance many other social and non social sciences. But the theoretical debate has come to a halt over the last decades, with only a few, albeit important, exceptions confined to particular schools.

Both the methodologies and the form of expression of the ethnographic report have developed and then become crystallized around actual protocols. Ethnography is now reduced to a drawing up of protocols: even the ethnic identities have been reduced to mere protocols.

Protocolar identities – identities which are reduced to protocols through the specific practice of ethnography in the post-global era – concern both representation and self-representation and produce the fixation and fossilization of the *persona*, that is a subordinate dependence from the institutions of modernity and the limitation of the social actor to a single role, an object role, which becomes *de facto* coercitive and potentially mercified.[1]

But a critique of the dichotomy Subject/Object, i.e. the key discussion about the notion of *das Fremde* (*Alterität* and/or *Alienität*), and about the relations between *der Wissenschaftler* and *das Irrationale*, speaks for an immanent "non-protocolar" character of anthropology.

Historicisation of anthropology

In its historicisation (Heidegger's *Geschehen*, *Geschichte*, *Geschick*), as a supreme and conscious expression of the many dialogues in the field between the Anthropologist and the Other, anthropology has today become an *Existenzial*.[2] This way, anthropology can finally disappear as a positivist science.

Anthropology embraced the theoretical viewpoint of participant observation not only as a research methodology, but as research as such, as a tension, a drive toward the lifeworld, a form of life, a way of life.

This is why we want now to underline Heidegger's statement:

"Ethnologie setzt selbst schon eine zureichende Analytik des Daseins als Leitfaden voraus".[3]

The *Dasein*analysis, the knowledge pertaining to *Dasein*, is therefore a precondition for ethnology. We are facing now an epistemological question, which is presupposed once we come to ethnology.

What *Dasein* is so critical for anthropologists? What is meant here with *Dasein* is a most obvious and self-evident issue in the eyes of an anthropologist and in anthropological perspective. *Dasein* is "human reality" and as such man's proper way to be.

Together with Heidegger we look at the literal sense of the *Dasein*: *Da-sein*, being-there, is constitutive to man. Man *is* only when he has a *there/here*, a horizon thanks to which he can relate to other entities (*Seienden*). Man *is* only when he has "taken on" a "there" (or "driven out from Paradise"). And he can "take on" a "there",

---

[1] On the notion of "protocolar identity", cf. Palmisano 2010:207-222.

[2] I still use the term *Existenzial* as a substantive. In juxtaposition to *Existenziell*, an *Existenzial* is the character of existence in its "to be" and in its modes to comprehend this "to be" in contrast to *Kategorial*, the concept *Existenzial* denotes existence in general, so that *Existenziell* articulates the specific comprehension that each existence has of itself.

[3] Heidegger, M., *Sein und Zeit*, § 11, pg. 51.

constitute a "there", only together with the Other, namely another "man". By the way, we were two when we were driven out from Paradise.

For Heidegger,[4]

"Das Seiende, dessen Analyse zur Aufgabe steht, sind wir je selbst"; (Par. 9)
"Das „Wesen" dieses Seienden liegt in seinem Zu-sein"; (Par. 9)
"Das „Wesen" des Daseins, liegt in seiner Existenz". (Par. 9)

If *Zu-sein* articulates nothing else than "to have to be", and *Existenz* the *Sein des Daseins*, then we are the *Seiende*. The essence (*das Wesen*) of the *Seiende* consists in our necessary relations to Others (other entities, other *Seiende*), transcending and comprehending oneself in one's own "being". This is a kind of transcendence of the (one)self; a transcendence, which can be obtained thanks to the *Mit-sein* relation, and enter or even penetrate into ourselves. This is a kind of relation that the scientist can have with the so-called *Irrationale*:

"Whoever enters in himself, and transcends himself through this penetration, actually rises toward God".[5]

We come now to the point: the anthropologist is therefore more legitimated than others to define the *Dasein*. First of all, the *Da* represents the theatre/stage of his/ our action as researcher. Then, the *Da* is object of his/our research but also methodological constituent of his/our researching: *Mit-sein*. The object, in fact, is the *Da* and not the tribe alone: the so-called object is the researcher's own *Da* and the tribe's (the group's, the community's and so on) *Da*, namely the *Da* as contemporaneously lived and experienced by both. Fieldwork is construction or experience of a single and common *Da*: this is *Mit-sein*. Finally, the *Da* constitutes the identity of the anthropologist as researcher.

Fieldwork can be understood as *Offenbarung* of *Da-sein*, and *Feld-forschen* is the expressive activity of the anthropologist's *Da-sein*. The *Sein* is *das unbestimmte Unmittelbare* for the anthropologist – as it was for Hegel;[6] but the *Dasein* of the anthropologist allows *das unbestimmte Unmittelbare* to become *das bestimmte (Un)mittelbare*.

The *Da-sein* encompasses a contingent dimension. The anthropologist on the field (who co-builds *In-sein* and *Mit-sein*) has the experience of a post-global world,[7]

---

[4] Heidegger, M., *Sein und Zeit* §. 9 *Das Thema der Analytik des Daseins. Erstes Kapitel, Die Exposition der Aufgabe einer vorbereitenden Analyse des Daseins. Erster Teil, Die Interpretation des Daseins auf die Zeitlichkeit und die Explikation der Zeit als des transzendentalen Horizontes der Frage nach dem Sein.*
[5] Hugo de S. Victore, *De vanitate mundi*, 2.
[6] Hegel, F., *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 1812, 1831; cf. Erster Teil. Die Objektive Logik, Erstes Buch, Die Kehre vom Sein, Erster Abschnitt.
[7] Palmisano, A. L. 2006.

where the *grands récits*[8] have not actually disappeared but are hidden; namely the anthropologist has the experience of a world in which, and for which we continue to "perform" *grands récits*. In other terms, when we anthropologists look at the contemporary world, we observe that the *Dasein* should actually be characterized as a *post-global world*, which means: the order of the world is shaped by the order of the financial markets (stock-markets, *Kapitalmarkt*). The first characteristic of our *Dasein* is in fact that it is anchored in *grands récits,* which remain hidden (articulated in words as signs and symbols, such as race, natural selection – survival of the fittest –, technical and scientific self-deification), although we are dealing with and determined by them. Now we are facing a new order, the order of the financial markets, which exploits everyday life. And the order of the *grands récits* seems to coincide with the order of the financial markets – although this often escapes our attention:

"Toutefois, tout comportement herméneutique (H.G. Gadamer) engage une historicité du comprendre tissée de préjugés et, en l'occurrence, d'un 'inconscient ethnologique'."[9]

Martin Heidegger manifests in *Sein und Zeit* a participant observation, which is "rural".[10] He speaks with the peasants in order to find an answer to the question: "What is philosophy"? but his question must be understood in a telluric sense, as pertaining to the anchorage of the *Dasein* in the *Sein*, which considers the bonds of a philosopher to life. This can be compared to fieldwork so that the following consideration can help us understand Heidegger's ethnological approach:

"La philosophie de Heidegger à la fois éclaire et réhabilite l'être au monde du primitif."[11]

The *être au monde du primitif* is a specific *Dasein*: the world of thought that includes an a-conceptual thought. Heidegger actually tried to work in terms of a-conceptual thought, and he considered that he could do so thanks to his "rural" experience. But the question becomes, even for us, the question raised by Leenhard:

"[Et si] ce qu'on était convenu d'appeler mentalité primitive n'était qu'un aspect universel de la mentalité humaine?".[12]

---

[8] Cfr. Lyotard, J.-F. 1979.
[9] "Each hermeneutical behavior (Gadamer) activates, that is implies, a historicity of comprehension woven with prejudice and, when necessary, with an 'inconscient ethnologique'." (Ouattara, Bourahima 2000, pg. 80).
[10] Cf. Heidegger's situation in his Todtnauberg home (already built in 1922), a kind of refuge where he lived between 1955 and 1973.
[11] Dufrenne, M. 1966, pg. 138.
[12] Leenhardt, M. 1949, pg. 41.

So anthropology has become a *telluric* philosophy, a philosophy, which regains a-conceptual thought patterns and is anchored in the territory. Anthropology actually does so through the praxis of fieldwork. But does it manage to articulate this attitude? And how?

The end of anthropology as *tekhne*

We live in our post-global era. In our era, the only things that become obsolete are those that do not have a market. This is why anthropology became anthropology of development or an applied anthropology. This is also the reason why anthropology has reduced itself to a continuous multiplication and proliferation of anthropologies, as if it were the result of a basic market strategy, a diversification of the product for the market for specific investors.[13] Anthropologists run the risk of imprisoning anthropology in the sciences and maybe, tomorrow, reducing it further and relegating it as *tekhne*, a self-certified *tekhne*.

This is what I have defined as "Atlantic" anthropology, which is an anthropology worthy of the strength of Atlas and of the mythical labour of Heracles.

Eurystheus assigned an eleventh labour to Heracles: he had to fetch golden apples from the Hesperides Garden. It was an extremely difficult task, which required cunning rather than courage and strength. Ladon, an enormous snake, supervised the garden continuously and no one knew exactly where the garden was. Heracles began his extenuating research. During his long search he met Nereus who advised him never to gather the golden apples personally but to leave this work to Atlas. He was actually the father of the Hesperides and had taken care of the garden for a long time, until he was condemned by Zeus to carry the celestial globe or more precisely the celestial axe, forever on his shoulders. When Heracles met him, Atlas was suffering and moaning because of the burden, dreaming even of a short respite. So he immediately accepted Heracles's proposal to carry the fantastic burden while he would go and fetch the golden apples picked by his daughter from the Garden.

But Atlas was afraid of Ladon, so Heracles had to kill him first with his arrows. And so he did. When Atlas came back after having experienced the joy of freedom, he asked Heracles to bring the three apples to Eurystheus, promising that he would come back in a few months. The answer of Heracles was both immediate and cunning: he agreed and asked Atlas to hold the globe just a moment, only the time to put a pad on his head. Atlas was deceived and laid the apples on the ground to resume his burden but Heracles picked up the apples and left with an ironical farewell. And since then Atlas suffers for his burden and complains continuously about his destiny.

---

[13] Talking about shares, Warren Buffett, the financier who "thrives in the storm" and is often compared to the mythical banker J. P. Morgan, the saviour of US economy in 1907, said: "Our favourite holding period is forever. Our strategy goes against the dogma of diversification and many know-all will say that we risk too much. But we don't agree. Wide diversification is only required when investors do not understand what they are doing".

Anthropology has condemned itself to bear Atlas's complaints and therefore to share his destiny.

In *Schwanengesang*, „Der Atlas" (text of Heinrich Heine, from *Die Heimkehr*, 1823-1824), Franz Schubert (1797-1828) let us relive Atlas's tragedy:[14]

Ich unglückseliger Atlas! Eine Welt,
die ganze Welt der Schmerzen muss ich tragen.
Ich trage Unerträgliches, und brechen
Will das Herz im Leibe.
Du stolzes Herz, du hast es ja gewollt!
Du wolltest glücklich sein, unendlich glücklich,
Oder unendlich elend, stolzes Herz,
Und jetzt bist du elend!

Anthropology, considered in the past as a social science, was appointed to carry policies of "development" – in post-modern and post-global perspectives – and the policies of *Unterordnung* of "*das Fremde*" on its shoulders and to legitimize them.

Description and justification supported each other and ultimately coincided. When we are very descriptives we end up delivering a justification and to legitimize, we risk being judges and passing judgement.

Anthropologists were told, and they also told themselves, that "development" was a noble and ethic mission. And these judgements of the anthropologists are *de facto* written down in expertise and ethnographical monographs.

This is "the Atlas complex": to be sentenced and to present the sentence as an honour, as something unique and even as a performance, an identity and unity instituting performance. Many actually shared this view, unaware of the moral and intellectual wretchedness to which they were destined.

Anthropology has become subservient to the *tekhne* of development. But this exploitation of anthropology as *tekhne* clashes with its being an *Existential*.

From this potential – anthropology as *Existential* and the anthropologists as its scholars-adepts – we have proceeded to dissolve the potential, to solve ourselves in an instrument – charitable, with the best of intentions – that is to the cancellation of the anthropological potential.

Anthropology has been "awarded" a sentence: "to save the world". And in such an epic context it is no wonder that applied anthropology should allow us an essay in applied mythology.

Years ago, in a short but meaningful paper Peter Worsley stated:

---

[14] "I, a most wretched Atlas, the huge world,/ The whole huge world of sorrow I must carry./ Yea, the unbearable must bear, though meanwhile/ My heart break in my bosom./ Then haughty heart, thyself hast willed it thus,/ Thou wouldst be happy, infinitely happy,/ Or infinitely wretched, haughty heart!/ And lo! now art thou wretched!". (Translation by Emma Lazarus)

"Two years' work with the Commission on the Study of Peace of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) has convinced me that there is a widespread receptivity to any ideas that anthropologists are able to contribute to the analysis of the major international conflicts and especially of the threat of nuclear warfare."[15]

The arms race, according to Worsely, can be interpreted as conflicts of interest and in a deeper sense of our "images of the Other", based on stereotypes which are similar to those found by the anthropologists in their analysis of inter-ethnical relations. What for instance has been studied by witchcraft anthropology is relevant in the studies of the relations between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. The study of war making and peace making in state and a-cephalous societies

"points out to mechanisms – of mediation, confidence building, alternatives to war – which have their analogues in superpower or other kinds of international hostility."[16]

To design a type of anthropology of the nuclear era and to avoid disaster, Worsley makes a proposal in eight points, in which he shows among other things the need

"To establish in every university and college a course on the anthropology of peace and war (with special reference to global nuclear hostilities)."[17]

In this program, there is also space for Third World countries:

"Because of their cultural distance they can provide more detached perspectives and act as cultural mediators and brokers".[18]

The perspective of the "Other" is thus fixed in its objectivation function within the huge and Atlantic duty of modern anthropology.
This is applied anthropology, applied to the utmost degree: Atlantic anthropology *stricto sensu*. What is here at work if not the positivist paradigm in anthropology? Anthropology is still affected by this paradigm, a paradigm for which the whole world is object, but a positivist anthropology has neither the notion of the *Da* nor of the *Dasein*, and it cannot even know with whom this *Dasein* should be shared.

Here is "Atlantic" anthropology, namely anthropology of development and applied anthropology! With it, in the best case – in the case of unaware ideological exploitation –, anthropology passed from *eros* to *agape*, more or less in the name of

---

[15] Worsley, P. 1986:282-284.
[16] Worsley, P. 1986:281.
[17] Worsley, P. 1986:284.
[18] Worsley, P. 1986:284.

caritas.[19] And anthropology has reduced itself to this kind of anthropology much more than we are prepared to recognize. We could thus agree with the assumption that the era of this anthropology is at its end, but also that it is the beginning of the era of the anthropologists. They, the anthropologists, are the "living texts" and not their writings!

For an anthropologist – within the *ethnologie appliquée*, a *mediator and political delegate of society* (this terminology is in use among the "developmentalists") –[20] the enemy, the adversary, the *Gegner* has been, up to now, the State.[21]

In fact, *Gegner* is whoever does not share or is against and does constitute in that manner the experience of the *Mit-sein*. That is: *Gegner* is whoever does not share the contemporary character of the *Dasein* and intends to transcend it, constituting himself as a new *Seiende*, a new body, configured in corporations such as *transnational holdings* and *multinational corporations*. The *transnational holdings* do not share the *Da-sein* because they only intend the *Über-sein*: in other terms, *das Wesen dieser Seienden* liegt in ihren *Zu-sein* which is only understood as *Über-sein*, arrogance, prevarication and violence.

The *Gegner* is often configured as States, but we do not ignore that States represent a minimal *Mit-sein*, actually for the processes of choice – more or less democratic – that are implicit and continuous in them.

Concerning the relationships between States and anthropologists, there is an interesting exchange of letters between Malinowski, who was teaching at the London Schools of Economics at that time, and his student Audrey Richards, who was doing fieldwork in the 30's among the Bemba of present day north eastern Zambia.

In her letter to Malinowski, Richards complains about the continuous check on her work by the District Commissioner who paid her a visit once every two weeks. In his answer, Malinowski advises her to put someone on watch at the border of the village. He should have warned her of the imminent arrival of the District Commissioner's car as soon as he saw it, and so Richards would have had time to leave the village "to do research" in some unspecified place in the neighbourhood.

Malinowski concluded then with the following comment concerning the relationships between anthropologists and State power and agencies: "Our English is completely different..."[22]

Up to now we have dealt with *Gesellschaften ohne Staat*.[23] Starting from tomorrow, a challenging book title could be: *societies without transnational holdings*.

In fact, the central instance today – in a post-global world and time – is not the State any more but the *transnational holdings*. This can be the *Gegner* in another

---

[19] This post-global society is anyway characterised by a peremptory passage from *eros* to *agape*: the ideology of *caritas* is profoundly inscribed in our language.
[20] Cf. Guille-Escuret, G. 1990:101-103.
[21] Cf. Kramer, F. und Sigrist, Christian (Hrsg.) 1978.
[22] Cf. Malinowski, B. (and others) 1938.
[23] Cf. Kramer, F. und Sigrist, Christian (Hrsg.) 1978.

time, in our time, obviously for the anthropologist, who considers himself a champion of the *Dasein*. The legitimate monopoly on the use of sanctions – mainly economical – has been *de facto* delegated to them for the constitution of the present centralized order, represented by the financial markets (stock markets and *Kapitalmarkt*): it is at the same time a centralized order and a social life permeating order.

Today, the *transnational holdings* represent the *Gegner* of the anthropologist, *mediator and political delegate of society*. They hide very well under their disguise; (cf. post-global era) and they represent the *Gegner* actually within the process of social and dialogical construction of the world performed by social actors and civil society.[24]

In other terms, we are now facing a new not easily detectable Leviathan, which I call "the post-Euclidean State", in lethal competition with the former. This *Gegner* has its seat, locates, in cyberspace rather than in an Euclidean space. But the effects of its activities ravage the Euclidean space and violently colonise the world-of-life, our world, our *Da-sein*, more than any other Leviathan or Behemoth have ever done before.

So the anecdote of Malinowski's suggestions to Richards and his statement on the different language spoken by anthropologists could be seen as old stuff, if we like, but that structure of relations is still the same; the only difference is that the officers of the State have been replaced by the representatives of the post-Euclidean State and that they do not come to pay visit but, as consequence of the colonisation of everyday life, are there all the time.

Here and now is our *Dasein*. What we have done here is a short analysis of the *Dasein* which is certainly not sufficient. The question of the nature of *Mitsein* in cyberspace still remains. It is a very plain outline, but nevertheless a beginning: to recognize the places and the time of the post-global era represents a minimal outline of the analysis of the *Dasein*.

And this is why there is a big gap between the scientific ability of anthropology and the social use (institutional and private) of anthropology and ethnography. Many anthropologists have been complaining about this for a long time[25].

The anthropologists have been driven out, chased away from Paradise, from the Garden of Eden, but what kind of forbidden fruit have they eaten? The fruit of the tree of life?

Anthropological observations, analysis and interpretation are not welcome as participants in the hottest debates of the post-global era.[26] After the anthropologist's speech, is there anything left to say for the others? The others can only say that they

---

[24] And here, I do not understand dialogue and dialogical anthropology as in the '80s, namely I do not understand it as an "on-going dialogue" or as a conversation which is supposed to be at the heart of the anthropological project.
[25] Cf. Guille-Escuret, G. 1990:98-112.
[26] Cf. Guille-Escuret, G. 1990:98-104.

are not interested, namely that it isn't in their interest. The anthropologists have perhaps understood too much, too clearly, too quickly; and there is even a "disenchantment", *Entzauberung*, of the teachers of this discipline.

Fieldwork and dialogue: toward another grammar

The essence of anthropology is in fieldwork. Ethics is immanent to this discipline: participant observation is not an instrument to obtain "facts", which are more probable, useful, precise, reliable "data", but is a vision of the world, a choice, an ethical choice. It is a way to interpret interpersonal relations. It is a praxis, an attempt to create, to ordinate the world – *Herstellen* and *Gestell* are still the terms which could be correctly employed.

In this attempt, participant observation is related to art. It is a joined action in order to realize a superlative analysis. It is a testimony (μάρτυς, μάρτυρος) of the possibility to conceive relations that are not intended in terms of *Unterordnung* and *Überordnung*.

The *Aufhebung* (dissolving) of the Subject/Object dichotomy in the research does not cancel the subject in the chaos of the being-there, *Da-sein*, but promotes the constitution of the subjects, of unique subjects exclusively, as social actors in a co-constructed, dialogical world.

And this: "how the research is done" thus becomes a political and an ethical action, creating the basis for a new political theology. The objectivation of the Other (*das Seiende* par excellence) in the eyes of the ethnographer (sometimes even as a pure linguistic and grammatical form) risks being opened and continuing to open toward the possibilities of an a-moral and in-moral action. The objectivation, the "construction" (*Gestell*), constitutes the "desertification of the world", *die Verwüstung der Erde*:[27] reification desertifies the world.[28]

How might we express the essence (*das Wesen)* of anthropology? Participant observation needs adequate expressiveness if it really should be revolutionary, experience (*Erlebnis*) and ethics. It can be understood as the expression of the *Dasein* of the anthropologist in interrelations with the *Dasein* of the Other: to be communicated and also expressed as such.

When Malinowski discusses the theme of myth interpretation and methodology of anthropology, he clarifies the privileged relationship that the anthropologist has with the "text":

"For the anthropologist – one and only among the many participants in the mythological contest – has the unique advantage of being able to step back behind the savage whenever he feels that his theories become involved and the flow of his argumentative eloquence runs dry".[29]

---

[27] Heidegger, M. 1954, pp. 71-73.
[28] Cf. Löwith, K. 1953, pg. 9.
[29] Malinowski, B. 1926, pg. 17.

In fact, Malinowski formulates this reflection in an even more drastic manner:

"The anthropologist has the mythmaker at his elbow. Not only can he take down as full a text as exists, with all its variations, and control it over and over; he has also a host of authentic commentators to draw upon; still more he has the fullness of life itself from which the myth has been born."[30]

To have the *fullness of life* at his disposal is more important for the anthropologist than to have informants, text or research topics.

How could we then consider anthropology in its capacity to establish relations that found and build reality? "Also as art" would be an answer, perhaps *above all* as art:

"Anthropology is the science of the sense of humour. It can be thus defined without too much pretension or facetiousness. For to see ourselves as others see us is but the reverse and the counterpart of the gift to see others as they really are and as they want to be. And this is the *métier* of the anthropologist. He has to break down the barriers of race and of cultural diversity; he has to find the human being in the savage; he has to discover the primitive in the highly sophisticated Westerner of to-day, and, perhaps, to see that the animal, and the divine as well, are to be found everywhere in man."[31]

This was reconfirmed in the introduction to Julius Lips's work, where Malinowski concludes:

"If anthropology be defined as the art and craft in the sense of humour, then the present book is one of the first contributions to real anthropology –first in rank and first in priority of time."[32]

Is anthropology a science or is it an art? Does it have to remain in the realm of writing or could it reoccupy a place in the world of orality? Is there the possibility of rescuing anthropology from being theorized as *tekhne*? Can one take anthropology away from the "responsibility and guilt" ascribed to it by the "Atlantic" anthropology?

"Antropologists are scientists…". So we were taught, starting with the '60s. But of what kind of *scientists* are we talking about?

Anthropology at least is "the most scientific of the humanities, the most humanistic of the sciences".[33] And again, "(Clifford Geertz 1988 and James Clifford 1988)[34] conceive that anthropologists are first and foremost writers…"[35]

---

[30] Malinowski, B. 1926, pg. 17.
[31] Malinowski, B. 1937.
[32] Malinowski, B. 1937.
[33] Wolf, E.R. 1964.
[34] Geertz, C. 1988; Clifford, J. 1988.
[35] Carrithers, M. 1990:264.

Anthropologists write but they are not *ipso facto Schrifsteller*. Writing is the expression of binary thought, of logical-speculative thought, of conceptual thought. There are the limits of grammar, the limits of syntax subject-predicate-object, SPO; although one should consider that there are SOP grammars, which practice a major transitivity in the action and a minor delineation of the dichotomy actor/acted.[36]

And so we are now facing the main obstacle of anthropology: the problem of the *text*. When we write a text, we fix thoughts. It means that we also found and fix the object: and the text is fixated through the fixation of the object. The text is constituted by objects, which have not solely syntactic properties. A biographical or autobiographical footnote as addition cannot in itself de-objectivise and facilitate dialogue.

But if we practice the anthropology of the anthropologists – these are the new texts for us – we constitute living texts, witnesses of the ethnographic experience, texts that, as such, are not fixed texts. The fixated text belongs to what is in contraposition to the "fullness of life".[37] We deal in fact with commenting social actors not with mere informants. Anthropology has "the fullness of life" to not be wasted.

Writing is a binary achievement: it gives up the dialogical complexity of Being, of to be. Maybe it even denies it.

The dialogical complexity is a situational and contractual complexity, mediated and mediatory, negotiated and negotiatory. This is why the term "dialogical" has nothing to do with the meaning given by "a dialogical anthropology", popular in the late 80's, an anthropology placing "on-going dialogue (conversation), at the heart of the anthropological project".[38]

Instead, anthropologists are [Schrifts]*teller, Erzähler*, narrators pertaining to an "Other" thinking – an analogical or a-conceptual thinking as process of recuperation: *Herstellen* and *Gestell* once again at the centre of the anthropological activity.

Anthropologists are story-tellers: tellers of the society of Others in their own home, tellers of their own society in somebody else's home, in an Other's home.

The dimension of the ethnographic account is more face-to-face and personal and less public and impersonal. It is a way of transferring difference, diversity, alterity, and *Alienität* to relatives, friends, acquaintances, colleagues and students.

So does writing ethnography mean: to tell stories? And does this story-telling follow rules like in all other stories? These are legitimate anthropological questions.

When we write the ethnographic text, we dictate: we are answering specific rules (the Subject/Object relationship). In fact, if we produce the text, we arrange and create a world in terms of objects.

---

[36] This could be our interpretation of Fritz Kramer when he writes "Ethnologie der *passiones*". Cf. Kramer, F. 1984.
[37] Cf. Malinowski , B. 1926:17.
[38] Cf. De Boeck, F. 2003:361.

When I face my ethnographic text I notice that:

I	describe	the Other
subject	predicate	object

This structure is narrative and objectifying: actor-acted/active-passive. If we syntactically stop the Other, the Other is objectified. When we face reification processes, we find that the Other is not a co-actor any more. But even when we "listen" to the "text", the Other is objectified. We can state that the text comments on itself.[39] In fact, we produce the text anyway: through our writing down the entire oral tale we establish Subject/Object.

This might lead to create new grammars, new syntax; that is new languages. "Science" is by now, in the post-global world, inscribed in the language: SPO instead of SOP, for instance.

Are we left only with self-ethnography? Are we only left with Nels Anderson's kind of self-ethnography?

In his ethnography, working on "Hobohemia" – and while working on Hobohemia he was constructing it – Anderson does not only *describe* the areas between West Madison and Jefferson Park of Chicago in the 20's but, above all, he conducts an analytical discussion of the migratory movements taking place within the United States, the *hobos'* extraneity to modernity, their social maladjustment, their social and cultural lack of homogeneity.[40] In other terms, he describes himself in action within a world, which is incredibly evocative. He does this thanks to a great and unique research; a research that Anderson himself has defined as "a research about myself", a research in which Subject and Object do not appear as dichotomies, categories which should be accepted for the sake of scientific knowledge.

It is interesting to read Latin SOP ethnographies, for example – cf. authors from Julius Caesar to Tacitus –: both Subject/Object have a major commonality and the Other results less foreign, less *Fremde* although he is an ennemy. In other ethnographies – cf. Arab authors from Abu al Hassan al Mas'udi (Xth century) to Abu al Abbas al Maqrizi (XVth century) – there is often an attempt to share and to elaborate kinship. The use of the dual form (Greek, Arabic) allows a powerful and different understanding of the Other. The construction of the object is felt very lightly in nominal sentences: the object seems to be almost absent because the verb, in its usual form, is missing.[41]

---

[39] Cf. for instance the Hamar of Ethiopia and Ivo Strecker. (Strecker, I. 1979)
[40] Anderson, N. 1923.
[41] Cf. Wittgenstein on the relation between language and the world. (Wittgenstein, L. 1953)

My analysis as an anthropologist starts from the *Da-sein*. Grammar forces me to produce objects: to be aware of this helps more to constitute and establish communications than to create order and objects:

"Ich fürchte, wir werden Gott nicht los, weil wir noch an die Grammatik glauben."[42]

In being aware of all this, we may be able to move towards an anthropology of dialogue (and not of conversation).[43] But I evolve towards *dialogy* and not towards *dialectic*.

Dialogy is a process of co-building reality within which the dichotomy Subject/Object cancels itself as a contradiction: it does not mean that the Subject or the Object cancels itself but it means that the Subject and the Object are overcome by the dual process of a construction of the world that is performed together with the Other – acknowledgement of *Mit-sein*.

The great contribution of anthropology to the world is an oral contribution. During my fieldwork among the Gurage of Ethiopia I often travelled from Addis Ababa to Workefa, the country home of my adoptive family.[44] I usually told them some days before that I would come for a visit. After a day of travel by car it was pleasant to find that everything was ready and welcoming in the hut where I lived. My co-mates often (but not always) gave a party when I arrived and organized a big dinner with friends and neighbours.

Once I was deeply surprised by what was awaiting me: in my hut, which was more than 15 meters in diameter and was furnished with a thick *zigba* wood floor covered with ensete straw mats, I found more than 20 young men waiting for me. And they had been waiting for more than a day. They came from neighbouring villages and had walked for hours in order to listen to me. They had come to hear about the cooperatives of Emilia Romagna, an Italian region. I was very much surprised by their request for an unscheduled "conference", but I met their expectations and talked for a long, long time. A debate which went on late into the following night. The day after, I asked my age mates why they had organized this meeting and the answer was convincing: "You know that we have many forms of associations: *equb*, *maher*, *iddir* and so on, but we want to know more… This is very important for us, small village dwellers, and our young people should definitely begin to think about and face the world..."

The anthropologist on the field is often requested to do self-ethnography in order to discover the infinite possibilities of the being-there, of the *Da-sein*. What is anthropology if not a dialogue, an interactive construction of a new political and existential program?

During that night the history of the Gurage was recapitulated in a few words: from slaves to masters. The awareness of the adults most representative of the *t'ib*

---

[42] Nietzsche, F. (1888-1889) 1977, II 960 (5).
[43] Cf. for instance questionnaires, interviews and tricky questions.
[44] Cf. Palmisano, A. L. 2008.

was expressed in a single sentence: "Now we can go into politics". The conversation was about the possibility of being able to manage new social networks, to articulate new forms of distribution: and not new forms of production. The discussion was about possible forms of power which were identified through dialogic activity. And this can be realized by transcending the Subject/Object dichotomy, creating duality and remaining firmly anchored to the oral performance but surely not through the struggle in the written form.

Some years later, I had a discussion with University colleagues about similar topics: "According to Jaynes, Western consciousness was born with the end of archaic Greece, when the two cerebral hemispheres connected and from a "compartmental" mind we went on to the "connected" mind..." This is what a colleague metaphorically said,[45] concerning the question I raised about the relation between Subject and Object, that is the question concerning the "author". Was Homer an author? Do we deal in the Iliad and Odyssey with self-evolving poems? Two questions that have not yet received full answers... "Today we witness a return to origins. Any text is a collective emergency. The author dissolves in the text, dissolves as subject, he is a *maieuta*." This is how the colleague proceeded.

I consider, however, that the dissolving of the author does not imply the dissolving of the Subject, and that the dissolving of the Subject does not mean a dissolution of the Object, the construction of the object-(*gegenständlich*) world.

According to the classical world the Gods themselves "give the voices" while we are confined to story telling. The present day use of the web could possibly represent a new way to "be in touch with the voices". This is the recasting of "oracular modality". With it we renounce synthesis and "completeness". But we admit that the world is not fenced and that we do not get involved in building fences. And the colleague concluded as following: "I can gather voices and write notes. For me this is the only way to do science. But I sometimes need at least one "emergency subject". After centuries, we, science philosophers are starting to take voices again".

Unfortunately there are still many anthropologists who intend to remain with objectivity and do not accept dialogue.[46]

As for the priest, the psychoanalyst, the diplomat, the peasant, the artist (singer, painter, sculptor, tattooer and *piercer*...), the great contribution of anthropology to the world is an oral contribution. To ask a "native" about an institution, about a ritual, means to discuss and concord a possible vision of this institution, of this ritual: a vision that helps the Other (the ethnographer this time) to understand his world (the native's world) and vice versa. But even in this process it would be good to adopt the "other" perspective. In the eyes of the Other, the Other is the ethnographer.

Is this a process of social construction of reality, of oral construction of this institution, of this ritual? Is it *Vorstellung*, representation of objects, *Herstellung*, production of objects, and *Gestell*, a "construction" of objects?

---

[45] Conversation with Gianluca Bocchi, December 2009, University of Bergamo.
[46] Cf. Sperber, D. 1985.

This is in essence the construction of a meta-institution or a meta-ritual: the construction of an icon, a useful icon for a situational comprehension; it is the construction of an icon for the expression, some day of a collective, dual experience, *Erfahrung*, ("native"-anthropologists) of this institution, of this ritual; it is an *Erfahrung* conjugated in the dual form. In this way it is not a non-mediated construction of an immediate reality, but the construction of an icon that allows the expression of the *Erfahrung* in order to become *Erlebnis* for two or more *personae*: meta-institution, meta-ritual. Institution and ritual are not de facto *an sich*: they are for the actor ("native") and for the actors ("native" and ethnographer). Ultimately they are for all the actors. They are only thanks to the actors, to all the social actors and to their endless interpretations. This is *Auslegung*, explication, and *Interpretation*, interpretation.

There is obviously a draft (a plot) in this explication and interpretation process – we used to call it "structure" once, "process" then, and "set of symbols", later; after having removed the castrating weight of being a simple function. But the emotions aroused and arising in myself, in ourselves, by the single, unique and multiplied interpretations – shared, sometimes deeply shared – actually allow me and allow us original and unique knowledge, that is the knowledge and the comprehension of this "institution", of that "ritual".

We know that knowledge is politely represented to us as "being impersonal and objective".[47] But the question "related to Clifford's statement of the dialogic "nature" of anthropological knowledge (its essentially interpersonal and intersubjective character): what is the character of anthropological evidence if it is not scientific?",[48] is a misleading question.

And the statement concerning ethnography: "The resulting description is actually what the ethnographer selected from what he understood of what his informants told him of what they understood"[49], is a misleading statement.

Ethnography is in this statement a *one-way process* leading from the informants to the ethnographer. It is like a sort of custom gate for information: red light-green light. Information is here considered as goods and anthropologists as custom officers. This is a brilliant example of ethnography as drawing up of protocols.

This concept of ethnography as one-way process suggests that the "informant" is passive and the anthropologist active so that the "informant" is Object. This process is not dialogic: it is only a mirror image – specular as in any mirror – and positivist thinking, an overwhelming positivist vision: Subject/Object dichotomy, actor/acted upon dichotomy. Finally both of them are acted upon: the one by the spirit of positivism, the other by the spirit of innocence, *Unschuld*.

We know that ethnography is rather a process of reciprocal information and formation, a mutual training: it is a construction of the "facts", it is a construction of

---

[47] Clifford, J. 1988.
[48] Cf. Carrithers, M. 1990, pg. 263.
[49] Cf. Sperber, D. 1985:14-15.

the "data". This construction is private and public at the same time, when facing the transcendence of the "We", i.e. when facing "my" society, in the perspective of each actor – "native" and ethnographer.

The tacit construction of the "data" implies co-responsibility and complicity in the construction and its consequences: that qualifies as error and sin – ultimately as guilt. The public construction of the "data" implies consensus; that is worth: merit. In this hidden theology of anthropology we are actually dealing with a continuous and complete deception, in which both the anthropologist and the native, the Other, are victims.

Here are the "facts", the so-called "data", which were not "facts" until we made them *together* into facts.

Today many consider, and I share their opinion, that the so-called "facts" become facts during the period of fieldwork,[50] It means that there are no "data", but that data are created, *hergestellt*, by the researcher together with the informant:

"When we perceive our environment, it is we who invent it."[51]

Everything is "selected",[52] so that we face a continuous construction. This is difficult to accept: nothing is "given" and everything is "taken".

The construction of this "whole" (taken), does not belong to the ethnographer but is a complex, unanimous process. This construction comes with language, and is also independent of the ethnographer's will and awareness. This is however what no one agrees to admit, otherwise everyone would risk feeling his own presence decreased and not being an actor any more.

In fact, if we are not subject-actor we feel object-acted upon; but since no one agrees to this, what can we do if according to this logic *tertium non datur*? What can we do? Maybe the predicate? This seems rather a messianic prerogative: Jesus Christ is the *Verbum*. And such aspirations are not open to everyone. Obviously everyone intends to fulfil the role of the Subject – in such a framework –, and everyone intends to solve the question of the *Da-sein* in the following terms: as being subject facing the the Being and being-there. But the question is definitely more complex.

We face a unanimous construction, which is also independent of our own intentions. Above all, we find ourselves in a situation, which is remarkably articulated and decidedly unforeseeable, just as life itself is: "Life is infinitely beyond all sciences".[53] And so life cannot be described in terms of Subject and Object, in terms of SPO. Life can thus be described in some form of its being-there, of its *ens*, of its *Seiende* or *Da-seiende*, life can be described through art. I am sometimes inclined to recuperate anthropology to art, or at least some kind of anthropology as art in order to recognize and fully respect its being an *Existential*.

---

[50] Cf. Paul Feyerabend, Heinz von Foerster, Ernst von Glaeserfeld, Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela etc.
[51] Von Foerster, H. 1973:35-46.
[52] Including being driven out from Paradise.
[53] Cf. Bakunin, M. 1882.

Conclusions

We move in juxtaposition to an anthropology conceived as a *tekhne*. Anthropology today contrasts "positivist" anthropology. The authenticity, *Eigentlichkeit,* of the anthropologist underlines that his relation to the world reappears in "telluric" terms.[54]

In Carl Schmitt's *Theorie des Partisanen*, there is already an important reclaim of the "telluric" in his reflection on when and how much we are bound to the earth, to the *Da*, to this *Da*.[55] We do not have anything besides the *Da*, and when we recognize the *Da* we reflect on the *Sein* to become human. Here is a "telluric philosophy", which we call anthropology, a philosophy of the *Da(-sein)* and not of the *Sein*. The question if there could ever be a *Sein* without a *Da-sein* is perpetual.

When we notice the *Da* we encounter man. Do not unfasten him from the *Da*, otherwise we would have something else, but certainly not Existence. Unfastened from the *Da*, "man" could perhaps be better but surely "other" (different) and certainly not the man we know of. It is true that *being* is the foundation of Western philosophy but it is on this *Da* that we should dwell today. The existence is the being of the *Da-sein*, that is the existence is the being of the being-there: we cannot disregard the *hic et nunc*, the here and now.

To reflect upon anthropology means to buy anthropology back from the process of technique, which has transformed culture into a "super-organic" object. Anthropology is a telluric philosophy, a philosophy of the *Da*. But this *Da* is not my home, is not our home. It approximates an anthropology intended as "telluric philosophy", which moves *de facto* toward metaphysics, but not toward the metaphysic of the subject. It rather proceeds beyond the metaphysics of the subject. As Hugo de Sancto Victore indicated: "*perfectus vero cui mundus totus exsilium est*". And this exile is fundamental, because the *here*, the entire world, is exile.

Our analysis of the *Da-sein* cannot disregard the telluric and it can therefore not deny our "being in exile". Without *Da-sein*, we are not even in this condition, which means that we are not even in existence.

The ethnographer and the informant, the immigrant and the native become co-author not only of the ethnography but above all of the world. This concerns precisely a dialogic construction even if the tendency of the Western social actor is rather to be dialectic than dialogic.

An example of what I call dialogy can be offered by a conversation of this kind, according to the criteria of nilo-hamitic oratory:

"Ego: – I have come from Addis Ababa today and I have brought with me three kittens to dispose of…
Alter: – You are coming from Addis Ababa and you want to dispose of them? And they are so cute…

---

[54] Even if the translation of the term *Eigentlichkeit* is mistaken and it has anyway to be contextualized in the post-global era.
[55] Schmitt, C. 1963.

Ego: – They are very cute, and I don't want them any more…
Alter: – You don't want them any more? They would keep you company...
Ego: – They do keep me company, even if I must say that solitude worries me...”

In this example of dialogic conversation the sentence of the first speaker is taken almost fully and revised by the second speaker. The sentence of the second speaker is taken and revised by the first speaker and so on until new themes or maybe unexpected solutions appear. Here is dialogy.

In order to build a dialogue we need to create a different language. The construction of such a different language "will also help us" to free this anthropology from its Atlantic verdict. And this language can be elaborated, together with the reflection about anthropology, as an *Existential*: the *Existential* is a character, in the same sense as anthropology is a character. We cannot speak of character in terms of science or non-science. This is fundamental. In other words, if anthropology is a character then the "scientific" and positivist discourse about anthropology cannot interest me. I am instead interested in reflecting about anthropology as a character, as something that characterizes existence in its being: ethnographic dialogic practice. And this could benefit all but the post-Euclidean State. But as a first step we have to redeem anthropology by considering the possibility of a dialogue among subjects, and to overcome the Subject/Object dichotomy. How can we overcome it? We might envision the construction of a multiplicity of subjects in the absence of objects. The "there" of "being-there" is political par excellence. It means that we are not exploitable, which is not the case when we accept Atlantic anthropology and become pure instruments.

We suggest an anthropology intended as telluric philosophy, a step that entails a revolution in the vision of an *eskaton*: a new era.

Bibliography

Anderson, Nels
- *The Hobo*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1923

Bakunin, Mikhail
- *Dieu et l'État*. Genève: Imprimerie Jurassienne, 1882

Carrithers, Michael
- "Is anthropology Art or Science?", *Current Anthropology*, 31, 3, 1990

Clifford, J.
- "On Ethnographic Self-Fashioning: Conrad and Malinowski". In *The Predicament of Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988

De Boeck, F.
- "Book Review: Dembour, M. B., Recalling the Belgian Congo: conversations and introspection", in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, IX, 2003

Duerr, Hans Peter (Hrsg)
- *Der Wissenschaftler und das Irrationale*. Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1981

Dufrenne, M.
- *Jalons*. La Haye: Nijoff, 1966

Feyerabend, Paul
- *Against method. Outline of an anarchistic theory of knowledge*. London: Humanities Press, 1975

Von Foerster, Heinz
- "On Constructing a Reality", in *Environmental Design Research*, Preiser, W.F.E. (ed.), vol.2. Stroudsburg: Dowden, Hutchinson & Ross, 1973:35-46

Fortes, Meyer
- "The Structure of Unilineal Descent Group", in *American Anthropologist*, 1953:17-41

Geertz, Clifford
- *Works and lives: the anthropologist as author*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988

Glaeserfeld, Ernst von
- *The Construction of Knowledge: Contributions to Conceptual semantics*. Salinas: Intersystems, 1988

Guille-Escuret, Georges
- "Une recherche perdue en son temps: l'ethnologie inappliquée", *L'Homme*, 1990:98-112

Hegel, F.
- *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 1812;1831

Heidegger, M.
- *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, (1927) 2006
- "Überwindung der Metaphysik", in *Vorträge und Ausätze*. Pfullingen: Neske, 1954

Hugo de Sacto Victore
- *De vanitate mundi*. In J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia latina*, 1844-1864, CLXXVI, 703-740.

Kramer, F.
- *Verkehrte Welten. Zur imaginären Ethnographie des 19ᵗʰ Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt am Main: Syndicat Verlag, 1977
- "Notizen zur Ethnologie der *passiones*", in *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie*. Soziologie als Sozialwissenschaft, Sonderheft 26. Opladen, 1984

Kramer, F. und Sigrist, Christian (Hrsg)
- *Gesellschaften ohne Staat*. 2 Bande. Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat Verlag, 1978

Leenhardt, M.
- "Les carnets de Lévy-Bruhl", *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, 1949

Löwith, K.
- *Heidegger. Denker in dürftiger Zeit*. Frankfurt am M.: Fischer Verlag, 1953

Lyotard, Jean François
- *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979

Malinowski, B.
- *Myth in Primitive Psychology*. London: Kegan Paul, 1926
"Introduction", in Lips, Julius E. *The Savage Hits Back*. With an introduction by Bronislaw Malinowski. Translated from the German. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937

Malinowski, B. (and others)
- *Methods of Study of Culture Contact in Africa*. With an Introductory Essay by Bronislaw Malinowski. London: Oxford University Press for the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, 1938, and adapted from issues of the journal *Africa*.

Maturana, Humberto, R. and Varela, Francisco, J.
- *Autopoiesis and cognition: the realization of the living*. With a preface to 'Autopoiesis' by Stafford Beer. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1980

Nietzsche, F.
- *Götzen-Dämmerung. Oder wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert*. In *Werke. Band I-V*. Edited by Karl Schlechta. Frankfurt/Main: Ullstein Buch, (1888-1889) 1977, II 960 (5)

Ouattara, Bourahima
- "Figures ethnologiques de la pensée de l'être", *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, 2000

Palmisano Antonio L.
- *Tractatus ludicus. Antropologia dei fondamenti dell'Occidente giuridico*. CNR, Istituto di Studi Giuridici Internazionali. Monografie 6. Napoli: Editoriale Scientifica, 2006
- *I Guraghe. Lineamenti etnografici di una etnia di successo*. Lecce: Pensa, 2008
- "Le società indigene nell'epoca delle identità protocollari", in *Identità delle Comunità Indigene del Centro America, Messico e Caraibi: aspetti culturali e antropologici*. Palmisano, A.L. (a cura di). Quaderni IILA, Serie economica n. 38. Roma: IILA, 2010:207-222

Schmitt, C.
- *Theorie des Partisanen. Zwischenbemerkungen zum Begriff des Politischen*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963

Sigrist, Christian
- *Regulierte Anarchie: Untersuchungen zum Fehlen und zur Entstehung politischer Herrschaft in segmentären Gesellschaften Afrikas*. Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat Verlag, 1979; (Olten: Walter Verlag AG, 1967)

Sperber, D.
- *On Anthropological Knowledge: Three Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985

Streck, B.
- *Fröhliche Wissenschaft Ethnologie*. Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag GmbH, 1997

Strecker, I.
- *The Hamar of Southern Ethiopia III, Conversations in Dambaiti*. Hohenschäftlarn: Klaus Renner Verlag, 1979

Turner, V.
- *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982

Wittgenstein, L.
- *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953

Wolf, E. R.
- *Anthropology*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964

Worsley, P.
- "Proposal for Anthropology in the Nuclear Age", in *Current Anthropology*, 1988