

PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AS THE SCIENCE OF MAN AND THE FOUNDATION OF PHILOSOPHY *

"The whole interest of my reason, whether speculative or practical, is concentrated in the three following questions:

- 1
What can I know?
- 2
What ought I do?
- 3
What may I hope?" ¹

These three questions, however, are those with which the three disciplines of true metaphysics, i.e., *metaphysica specialis*, are concerned. Man's knowledge is con-

cerned with nature, with that which is actually given in the broadest sense of the term (cosmology); man's activity concerns his personality and freedom (psychology); finally, man's hope is directed toward immortality as bliss, as union with God (theology).

These three fundamental interests do not determine man as a natural being but as a "citizen of the world." They constitute the object of philosophy as a "matter of world citizenship," that is, they define the domain of philosophy. Hence, Kant states in the introduction to his course of lectures on logic wherein he develops the concept of philosophy in general: "The field of philosophy as pertaining to world citizenship can be reduced to the following questions:

- 1
What can I know?

* By permission from Heidegger, M., *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, James S. Churchill, translator. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind., 1962, ~~55~~ 36-38.

¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A 804, B 832f., NKS, p. 635.

2

What should I do?

3

What may I hope?

4

What is man?"²

Here, a fourth question is added to the three previously cited. But when we consider that *psychologia rationalis* as a discipline of *metaphysica specialis* already treats of man, are we not constrained to believe that this fourth question relative to man is only superficially added to the other three and is, therefore, superfluous.

However, Kant does not simply add this fourth question to the other three, for he says: "Basically, all these can be classified under anthropology, since the first three are related to the last."³

With this, Kant states unequivocally the real result of the laying of the foundation of metaphysics. The attempt to repeat the laying of the foundation also receives thereby a clear indication of the task involved. To be sure, Kant mentions anthropology only in a very general way. However, in the light of what has been said above, it seems true beyond a doubt that only a philosophical anthropology can undertake the laying of the foundation of true philosophy, i.e., *metaphysica specialis*. Is it not necessary to conclude, therefore, that a repetition of the Kantian laying of the foundation pursues as its specific task the development of a "philosophical anthropology" and hence that the idea of such an anthropology must be determined beforehand?

The Idea of a Philosophical Anthropology

What does a philosophical anthropology include? What is anthropology in general and how does it become philosophical? "Anthropology" denotes the science of man. It comprises all the information that can be ob-

tained about the nature of man as a being composed of a body, a soul, and a mind. The domain of anthropology includes not only those given verifiable properties which distinguish the human species from plants and animals but also man's latent abilities and the differences of character, race, and sex. And inasmuch as man not only appears as a natural being but also as a being that acts and creates, anthropology must also seek to know what man as an active being can and should "make of himself." His powers and obligations depend finally on certain basic attitudes which man as such is always capable of adopting. These attitudes are called *Weltanschauungen* and the "psychology" of these includes the whole of the science of man.

Since anthropology must consider man in his somatic, biological, and psychological aspects, the results of such disciplines as characterology, psychoanalysis, ethnology, pedagogic psychology, the morphology of culture, and the typology of *Weltanschauungen* must converge in it. Hence, the content of such a science is not only vast but also fundamentally heterogeneous because of basic differences in the manner of formulating questions, the necessity of justifying the results acquired, the mode of presentation of the facts, the form of communication, and finally the essential presuppositions [of each of the component disciplines]. Insofar as all of these differences and, in certain respects, the totality of the essent as well can be related to man and thus classified under anthropology, anthropology becomes so comprehensive that the idea of such a science loses all precision.

Anthropology today, therefore, is not only the name of a discipline; the term denotes a fundamental tendency characteristic of the present position of man with regard to himself and to the totality of the essent. According to this tendency, a thing is known and understood only when it receives an anthropological explanation. Today, anthropology not only seeks the truth concerning man but also claims to have the power of deciding the meaning of truth as such.

² *Works* (Cass.), VIII, p. 343.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

No other epoch has accumulated so great and so varied a store of knowledge concerning man as the present one. No other epoch has succeeded in presenting its knowledge of man so forcibly and so captivatingly as ours, and no other has succeeded in making this knowledge so quickly and so easily accessible. But also, no epoch is less sure of its knowledge of what man is than the present one. In no other epoch has man appeared so mysterious as in ours.⁴

However, is not the very fact that the problems of anthropology are characterized by this breadth and uncertainty conducive to the formation of a philosophical anthropology and to the encouragement of its further development? With the idea of a philosophical anthropology do we not acquire that discipline in which the whole of philosophy must be concentrated?

Several years ago, Max Scheler said of philosophical anthropology: "In a certain sense, all the central problems of philosophy can be reduced to the question of man and his position and metaphysical situation within the totality of Being, the world, and God."⁵ But Scheler also saw, and with great clarity, that the many determinations relative to the essence of man cannot be simply packed together, as it were, in a common definition. "Man is so broad, motley, and various a thing that the definitions of him all fall a little short. He has too many sides."⁶ This is why Scheler's efforts, which in his last years became more intense and more fruitful, were directed not only to the attainment of a unitary idea of man but also to the working out of the essential difficulties and complications connected with this task.⁷

Perhaps the fundamental difficulty of a philosophical anthropology lies not in the problem of obtaining a systematic unity insofar as the essential determinations of this

multifarious being, man, are concerned, but in the concept of anthropology itself. This is a difficulty which even the most abundant and "spectacular" knowledge can no longer explain away.

How, then, does an anthropology become philosophical? Is it only because its knowledge acquires a degree of generality which differentiates it from empirical knowledge, although we are never able to determine precisely the degree of generality at which knowledge stops being empirical and becomes philosophical?

Certainly, an anthropology may be said to be philosophical if its method is philosophical, i.e., if it is pursued as an inquiry into the essence of man. In this case, anthropology strives to distinguish the essent we call man from plants, animals, and every other type of essent, and by this delimitation it attempts to bring to light the specific essential constitution of this particular region of the essent. Philosophical anthropology then becomes a regional ontology of man, coordinated with other ontologies with which it shares the whole domain of the essent. Thus understood, philosophical anthropology cannot be considered without further explication as the center of philosophy; above all, this last pretension cannot be based on the internal problematic of this anthropology.

It is also possible for anthropology to be philosophical if, as anthropology, it determines either the objective of philosophy or its point of departure or both at once. If the objective of philosophy lies in the development of a *Weltanschauung*, then anthropology must define the "position of man in the cosmos." And if man is accepted as that essent which, in the order of establishing an absolutely certain knowledge, is absolutely the first given and the most certain, then it is inevitable that, following the plan of a philosophy thus conceived, human subjectivity be placed at the very center of the problem. The first task is compatible with the second, and both, as modes of anthropological inquiry, can avail themselves of the method and the results of a regional ontology of man.

⁴ Cf. Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*, 1928, p. 13f.

⁵ Cf. *Zur Idee des Menschen, Abhandlungen und Aufsätze*, Vol. I (1915), p. 319. In the second and third editions, the volumes have been published under the title *Vom Umsturz der Werte*.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Cf. *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*.

But just these diverse possibilities of defining the philosophical character of an anthropology are sufficient in themselves to show the indeterminateness of this idea. This indeterminateness is increased if one takes into account the diversity of the empirical-anthropological knowledge on which, at least in the beginning, every philosophical anthropology relies.

As natural and self-evident as the idea of a philosophical anthropology may appear in spite of its ambiguity, and as irresistible as the urge to reaffirm it may be in spite of these objections, still it is inevitable that "anthropologism" in philosophy will always be combated. The idea of philosophical anthropology is not only insufficiently determined, its role within philosophy as a whole remains obscure and indecisive.

The reason for these deficiencies is to be found in the limitations inherent in the idea of a philosophical anthropology. This discipline has not been explicitly justified with respect to the essence of philosophy but only with respect to the object and point of departure of philosophy as seen from without. Thus, the delimitation of this idea ends by reducing anthropology to a kind of dumping-ground for all basic philosophical problems. It is obvious that this way of considering anthropology is both superficial and, from the standpoint of philosophy, highly questionable.

But even if, in a certain sense, anthropology gathers to itself all the central problems of philosophy, why may these be reduced to the question: What is man? Is this reduction possible only if someone decides to undertake it or, on the contrary, must these problems lead back to this question? And if the latter is true, what is the basis of this necessity? Is it perhaps that the central problems of philosophy have their source in man, not only in the sense that man propounds them but also that in their intrinsic content they bear a relation to him? In what respect do all central philosophical problems find their abode in the essence of man? And, in general, which problems are essential and wherein lies their center? What is the mean-

ing of the expression "to philosophize" if the philosophical problematic is such that it finds its abode and its center in the essence of man? . . .

It is now a matter of asking why the three questions—1. What can I know? 2. What should I do? 3. What may I hope?—"admit of being related" to the fourth? Why can "all these be classified under anthropology"? What do these three questions have in common? In what respect are they one and, hence, capable of being reduced to the fourth? How must this fourth question itself be formulated in order to include the other three and sustain them in its unity?

The most profound interest of human reason forms the connecting link between these three questions. In them are brought into question a power, a duty, and a hope of human reason.

Where there is a question concerning a power and one delimits its possibilities, there is revealed at the same time a non-power [*Nicht-Können*]. An omnipotent being need not ask, "What am I able to do?", i.e., "What am I not able to do?" Not only does such a being have no need to ask such a question; it is contrary to its nature to be able to ask it. This not-being-able is not a deficiency but the absence of all deficiency and all "negativity." Whosoever asks, "What am I able to do?" betrays thereby his own finitude. And whosoever is concerned in his innermost interests by such a question reveals a finitude in his innermost nature.

When an obligation is brought into question, the being who raises the question hesitates between a "yes" and a "no," thus finding himself tormented by the question of what he should do. A being fundamentally concerned with his duty understands himself through a not-yet-having-fulfilled, so that he is driven to ask himself what he should do. This not-yet of the fulfillment of something still indeterminate reveals a being who, because his duty is his most intimate interest, is basically finite.

Whenever a hope is brought into question, it is a matter of something which can be granted or denied to the one who asks. What

is asked for is such that it can be expected or not expected. All expectation, however, reveals a privation, and if this privation involves the most intimate interest of human reason then the latter is affirmed to be essentially finite.

Thus, not only does human reason betray its finitude by these questions, but also its innermost interest is concerned with this finitude. It is not a question of eliminating the power, the obligation, and the hope in order to evade the finitude but, conversely, it is a question of becoming certain of this finitude in order to hold oneself in it.

Hence, finitude is not merely an acci-

dental property of human reason; the finitude of human reason is finitization [*Verendlichung*], i.e., "concern" [*Sorge*] about the ability to be finite.

It follows that human reason is not finite only because it propounds these three questions, but, on the contrary, it propounds these three questions because it is finite and so radically finite, indeed, that in its rationality this finitude itself is at stake. It is because these three questions concern this unique [object], i.e., finitude, that their relation admits of being established to the fourth question: What is man?