PERSPECTIVES IN THE ANTHROPOCENE: BEYOND NATURE AND CULTURE?

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The contributions collected in this volume compare the views of philosophers, literary and cultural theorists, and political philosophers, concerning what in recent years has become a much discussed issue: the Anthropocene.

Although there are no longer any doubts about the reality of this new era, understood as the epoch of significant human impacts on the planet, a wide and controversial debate has developed around the use of this term and on the definition to be given to it. The Anthropocene cannot only be understood as the perpetuation of an anthropogenic and anthropocentric perspective, it can also give rise to a critical paradigm of inquiry into a series of problems such as climate and geological changes produced by humans. As Delio Salottolo states in his paper, "the complexity of the notion of Anthropocene, which can also be defined as a semi-empty signifier", is like that "'blind spot' in the human eye that is 'filled' with the information that the brain acquires from what is around it" (*infra*, p. 84). The semi-empty dimension of this box is the most interesting and stimulating aspect of the Anthropocene, one that invites and stimulates us, sometimes even provocatively, to imagine different scenarios and horizons as alternatives to the present.

The contributions collected here speak to this richness and breadth, and also to the "irritating" nature of this term, Anthropocene.

We choose to open the volume with the paper of Maurizio Ferraris, *In praise of the Anthropocene*, a discourse halfway between funeral oration and acclaim. With the verve of a pamphlet, the author retrieves criticism of human action and technology present in the Anthropocene narrative to overturn its reading and show its contradictory nature. Ferraris' essay is therefore an excellent starting point to put the main questions on the table. If the Anthropocene refers to climate emergencies and environmental damage, it is equally undeniable, the author argues, that the Anthropocene itself has also produced the culture and sensitivity to perceive these as problems and remedy them. Somewhat optimistic and progressive, the "praise"

presents itself as an invitation to grasp not only the dystopian horizons produced by the hand of human beings, but also the progress of political culture, social relations and technological improvement.

The contribution by Carla Benedetti, *From Postmodernism to Anthropocene. Baptisms of an age without a name*, develops an acute reconstruction of the attempts made in recent decades to name the era in which we find ourselves. Making a reconnaissance of all the attempts that have been most successful – although they have not succeeded in establishing themselves to the extent the term "Anthropocene" has – the author emphasizes the link between these new denominations and modernity. Often bringing the traces of modernity explicitly within the modernity self (hyper-modernism, super-modernism, neo-modernism), Benedetti also semantically (as in the case of the Manifesto of the New Realism) traces qualifying aspects of modernity such as the Manifesto of the Communist Party. The "Anthropocene", she highlights, "is not just a name; it is a perspective on human being that offers an alternative to that which has so far dominated modernity – it is a beneficial corrective that mitigates the abstractions of the anthropocentric vision" (*infra,* p. 40). But once the triumph of the Anthropocene is assumed, the author shows its limits and risks, and therefore invites us to transcend the psychological need to find a name in our time, and rather to shift our attention to the way humans perceive themselves, in a dense conclusive reflection on "earthlings."

Felice Cimatti's essay, *Beyond the Anthropocene: emergence, migrations and perspectivism*, invites us to move away from the perspective that determined the Anthropocene, on the basis of Viveiros de Castro's reflections. "To question the concept of the 'Anthropocene', notes Cimatti, means precisely to question this unthought metaphysical assumption according to which only one agent exists, and this agent is the Homo sapiens species" (*infra*, p. 50). The overcoming of the Anthropocene and of the anthropocentric perspective is possible only through a repositioning in the perspective of a "multinaturalism" – that is, the idea that there are "multiple ontologies (natures) but only one 'knowledge' (subjectivity)", in opposition to the logic behind the anthropocene for which instead "the world is only one while there is a multiplicity of points of view". In assuming this perspective, we begin the end of the Anthropocene. This repositioning can lead to the development of a global ethics based on "collaborative survival".

The next two contributions, of Federico Luisetti and Delio Salottolo, both focus on the issue of migration flows. Federico Luisetti, *The Speculative Migrants of the Anthropocene. Human Flows in the Neoliberal Planet*, dwells on the changing horizon in which environmental migrants

have been classified in recent years. Initially they were treated as a threat and an emergency; but the author shows clearly how the recent neoliberal rhetoric has altered such analysis, presenting migration as a challenge to the resilience of individuals. "The neoliberal discourse", writes Luisetti, "celebrates the 'resilience' of migrants, their willingness to be exposed to the pressure of market and environmental selection, their surprising skills at 'survival migration' (Foresight Program 2011, 168) and redesigns international policies as tools to 'facilitate' and 'manage' this migration of the 'vulnerable', which have replaced the 'poor' and their socio-political connotations. Resilience, the magic word of the sorcerers of the neoliberal planet, evokes the subjective side of adaptation, the qualities that the adapting subject must be endowed with to withstand the unknown." (*infra*, p. 73) His paper aims to denounce the narrative of the Anthropocene that is itself an expression of neoliberalist thought.

In his contribution, *The un-appropriable and the mixing: on the Anthropocene and migrations*, Delio Salottolo shows how important it is to overcome the distinctions between nature and culture on which modernity has developed. The relationship between migration and the Anthropocene is thus reconstructed as a terrain on which the possibility of reacting to climate and geological changes produced by humans will be played out. To this end, it will be necessary to overcome the divide between natural and human history, integrating nature and culture. In the author's opinion, to consider the causes of migration as induced by natural climate problems is to "naturalize" the problem instead of tracing the causes of what is happening in the speculative logic of capitalism.

Combining cultural theory- and media research, the contribution of David Levente Palatinus, *The Anthropocene, War and the New Bestialisation of the Human. A Popular Visual Media Perspective*, examines the genealogy of bestialization as a cultural concept, and the important but underexplored role it plays in the proliferation of contemporary war-narratives. The author examines how some film and television texts re-engage the ethics and aesthetics (i.e. spectacularity) of violence in the context of our predicament in the Anthropocene – understood as an epoch of human and geological crises. This article argues that 'bestialization' marks a space where the aesthetic and the politico-ethical dimensions of violence constantly supplement (i.e. replace and extend) each-other.

The essay by Davide Luglio, *La littérature à l'âge de l'anthropocène : les enjeux d'un nouveau récit de la réalité*, is dedicated to the relationship between the Anthropocene and the critique of modernity. Starting from Bruno Latour's analysis, the author confronts the question of the Anthro-

pocene as a tool to recover the contribution of aesthetics and, in particular, of Italian literature, in overcoming paradigms and concepts of modernity. If, as Latour invites us to do, the Anthropocene must be understood as an opportunity to overcome the opposing conceptualizations of modernity, first of all that between nature and culture, art can make a contribution. But what kind of art? Analyzing the development of the forms of realism that have marked Italian literature (starting from the recovery that Auerbach made up to Dante), the essay recovers the anti-hegemonic and anti-ideological capacity of literary realism to serve a new form of aesthetics able to offer categorical elements to overcome the dualism imposed on modernity.

Stefania Achella's contribution, *Gendering the Anthropocene?*, introduces the question of the Anthropocene from a gender perspective. The essay aims to show the close link between a feminist perspective and environmental issues, and presents, with a reconstructive intent, some of the interpretative paradigms that have been developed within feminist movements, from the epistemological to the ontological approach. Beyond the difficulties related to the use of a category such as the Anthropocene, which still recalls too closely the androcentric culture, the essay tries to show how the contribution of feminist thought can be substantial in the rethinking of the Anthropocene era.

The essays of Barbara Henry and Mario De Caro confront the problem of "machines", hybrids, and AI as another expression of the Anthropocene.

Barbara Henry's contribution, *What remains of the human in the Anthropocene? Living between 'nature' and 'culture' in the posthuman condition*, addresses a central aspect of the Anthropocene discussion, namely its link with new technology, cybernetics, and artificial intelligence. This aspect calls into discussion the status of the human being and the two opposing conceptual pairs posthuman–posthumanism, understood as a front of intercourse with the other-than-human, and the terms transhuman–transhumanism, which push in extreme directions the Enlightenment and the anthropocentric perspective, cultivating the idea of the exceptionality of the human being. As the author makes clear, "unlike transhumanist dystopias, the post-humanist conception, being critically based on dynamism and openness to unprecedented contaminations and alliances between instances and entities, is the only one capable of corresponding to the characteristics of a dense, structured, polymorphous interlocution/conversation/interaction, and still to be probed in all its possible and unprecedented deictic and symbolic branches". An interesting reference to Eastern cultures and religions of the Far East indicates the possibility of a different form of relationship

with otherness that could also indicate a way to re-establish not only the relationship with the non-human but also with the hybrid and the artificial.

Mario De Caro's article, *From the Anthropocene to the Machinocene?*, dwells instead on overcoming the challenges of the Anthropocene not in the direction of an anti-speciesist biological reflection, but rather in thinking about the beginning of a new era that he calls the "Machinocene". Starting from this new scenario, the author reviews the debate on the use of technology and AI. Through some enlightening examples, De Caro shows how a new era expressing the machine's domination should not be understood as a necessarily dystopian horizon, but rather it can help us imagine a new and (possibly) positive future.

Closing our collection is the paper of Jason Collins, *Parasite Industrialism: Antonio Gramsci at ILVA*, who dwells on the analysis of a concrete case, the ILVA of Taranto, where the demands of capital against environmental concerns come into conflict. Starting from the Gramscian analyses – in particular the dialectical relationship between structure and superstructure and the interweaving of power, production and culture – Collins tries to apply these categories to deconstruct the hegemonic discourses. "Owing to Gramsci's common applicability across fields of study, academics are employing his theory of hegemony and the intersectionality of cultural and government apparatuses with all facets of industry to new arenas outside of Gramsci's scope, including environmental discourse. This intersectionality of cultural and government apparatuses with industry characterizes the dialectic between structure and superstructure as a circular continuum and normative apparatus". The most original point of the contribution consists in the analysis of the narrative put in place by three different press organs (the *Corriere della sera*, *The New York Times*, and *The Manifesto*) that have incorporated the hegemonic orientation. Hence the need, according to the author, to start a counter-hegemonic narration.

The richness of these contributions expresses a response to our attempt to give voice to different orientations, and we thank all the contributors for having tried not to offer simple solutions, but to weigh the complexity of this theme and to stimulate a deeper reflection.