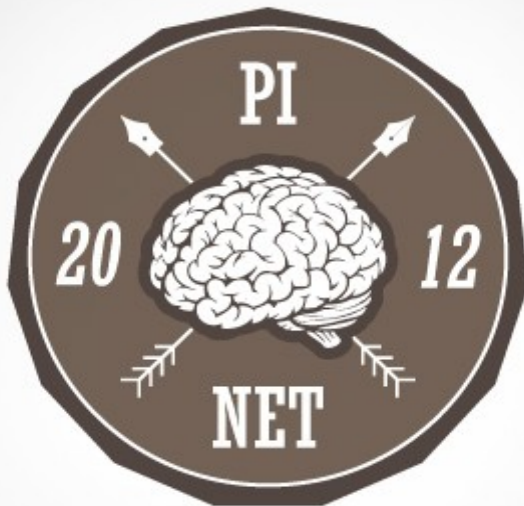


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Postgraduates' International Network

**GOOD GOVERNANCE, SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT AND THE EDUCATION
OF THE FUTURE
GENERATION OF SCIENTISTS**



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FABIANA DIMPFLMEIER

TOWARDS A PATH OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES BETWEEN HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

"Yet it is clear that one cannot regain (at the level of scientific reliability as well as of civil commitment) a credibility that the most aware rightly feel is in danger, if we do not strive to use the reconstruction and analysis of the past of this branch of study [anthropology] as the preliminary tool to recognize its present responsibilities and tasks."

(Angioni 1973: 21)¹

"In short, for the ethno-anthropologist, more than for others, the restoration of that ancient unit of 'man-scholar', 'ethos-intellect' is requested: unless one is willing to admit, as man, the unreal, ahistorical and surreptitiously conservative nature of his research or, as scholar, to be satisfied to appear and be judged on a human level as an insignificant entity."

(Lanternari 1974: 376)

1. Anthropology as relation and anthropology in relation

Anthropology is not only the result of the reflections on world conditions and changes. Importantly, anthropology is also the examination and growing consciousness of the way of using concepts and categories of thought, of the discipline in our formulations and their strict connection with the context of production. The 'discourse on man' today can be considered as a continuous overlapping of analyses which is based on a relational and critical model of knowledge. This implies a deep and essential comparison with contemporary history, and the history

¹ All the quotes in the text, originally in Italian, have been translated into English by the author of the present article.

of our representations. Anthropology is a sophisticated and critical tool for the comprehension of new processes, aiming to define a connection between phenomena and their representations, comparing them with past ones.

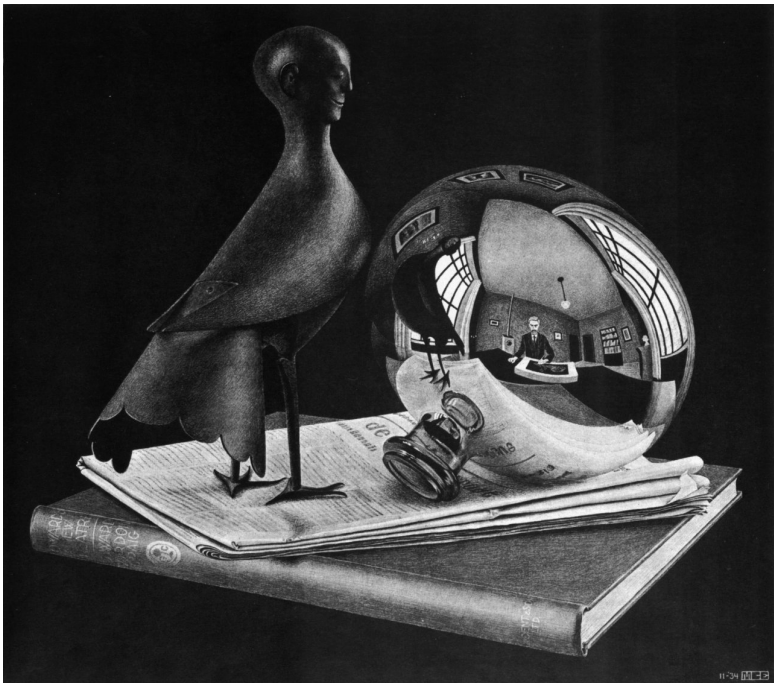
The anthropological discipline itself and her object can be defined 'relational' at different levels. The first level conceives the meaning of otherness as a dynamic dialectic played out between self and other. This process of building and destroying occurs inside each person and between the subject and the others in the construction of culture. The second level refers to the sense that otherness, considered as cultural whole has for us – or the other way around – in the construction of identity and in the representations and categories used in everyday life. The first and second level are both part of the *antropologia implicita* [implicit anthropology] of every society [35].²

The third level is provided by the considerations on the encounters, and their consequential representations, in relation to the different historical periods that produced or used them, including the present. The categories of representation are displaced along the time axis on the basis of the ever-changing relationship between 'us' and 'them'. The fourth level corresponds with a first internal disciplinary evaluation and reflects on the appearance and use of specific anthropological categories

² It should be noted that often in modern times the relationship between self and another has a 'cross-cultural' character, i.e. it is played directly between individuals on a global scale thanks to the technological development of the new media, which allow an immediate comparison between cultures distant in space (see [8]).

in different historical periods, influenced by diverse cultural, economic and political situations. On the time axis there are also the categories of analyses used by the anthropologist.

The 'relational' anthropology shown in this model can be compared to the 1934 lithography of Maurits Cornelis Escher titled "Still life with spherical mirror", in which the observer can see himself intent in building his own work.



Maurits Cornelis Escher Still life with spherical mirror (1934)

Currently, then, thanks to a process which analyses its conditions of knowledge production in a growing circuit of investigations, anthropology has gained back historical and cultural thickness, becoming in the words of Francesco Pompeo “an invaluable tool for the understanding of unknown processes, and precisely because, as critical sophisticated device, combines the search for a direct relationship with the occurred events and the actual reflection on their representations, even comparing them with past ones” [32]. Therefore, the insight provided by the discipline represents an original and innovative form of knowledge that guarantees a totally alternative and strongly reflective vision on everyday contemporary processes.

According to Marc Augé, the disturbance in the encounter with the other consists “in the conception, utterly subversive of Western notions, of identity and alterity, and especially of the relationship between self and others” [9]:

“Anthropology is first and foremost the anthropological study of the others’ anthropology. This because no society exists that has not defined, more or less strictly – that is instituted or symbolic – relations between generations, first-born children and their siblings, men and women, allies, lineages, age groups, free persons and captives, indigenous members and foreigners, and so on. An anthropologist’s first task is to draw the map of this relative identity and otherness.” (ivi: XVI).

The relationship between ‘self’ and ‘other’ is what provides, therefore, the meaning of ‘implicit anthropology’, whilst the anthropological discipline takes into account

the meaning that human beings give to their social existence, where culture and identity are two inseparable concepts that apply simultaneously to the individual and the collective reality: "In fact, it is as if the same logic were operating at the level of human individuality, as if individual identity were thought or conceived in the same terms as group identity – unless it's the reverse, or better yet, a combination of the two" (ivi: 17). This 'reversed' anthropology moves from the individuals to the culture. In Augé's words: "[...] A culture (which is also a society) or a society (which is also a culture), could be defined as the imposed zone of consensus about *le réglés de je/jeu* (the rules of 'I'/game) – the play on words being merely an awkward way of pointing out the necessity of having a single point of view on the singular/plural person" [9].³

The relation between 'self' and 'other' that constitutes human identity exists at different levels. Identity (or otherness) can be intimate (referring to the concept of person), social (opposing to a system of established differences) or complete (in respect of 'foreigner'), and at all levels consists of a distinction and an opposition (we/

³ In Augé's opinion, the presence-absence of individual reality in anthropological analysis reappears in anthropologists' thought as a symptom of anxiety, as a never clarified issue: who do anthropologists talk about when they talk about those they are talking about? "Now, in the media age and with the death of exoticism, a kind of short-circuit is produced that confronts each individual directly with the image of the world. Difficulty in symbolizing relations between people is stimulating a multiplication and individualization of cosmologies. This phenomenon itself constitutes for the anthropologist an object of study that is multiple, fascinating, paradoxical, and new" (ivi: 121).

others) – i.e. classifications [35]. However, one could also say that identity is made of *acts of mutual recognition* that establish the dependence of ‘self’ and ‘other’, so that their existence can be evaluated only at the border of the two: a boundary that is essentially cultural and “tracks all the problematic places of a culture” [9].

From this point of view, identities must be analysed as complex and dynamic systems that have significant and ever-changing internal differences, as well as relational and comparative elements. The classification and representation of otherness are constitutive moments of every society and their more or less implicit anthropology: so that once one has started to probe the diversity of the others, one cannot but question one’s own identity.

The Italian anthropologist Ernesto De Martino dealt with this issue starting from what he called the scandal of the mutual incomprehension often occurring during the most diverse encounters, so that “the representatives of the more distant alien cultures think of the white man as a ghost who returns from the land of the dead and the white man instinctively inclines to recognize in them shocking examples of the *genus brutorum hominum*” [18].

According to the Neapolitan scholar, the quest for the challenge offered by the culturally alien, grounds the very possibility of anthropology, involving the exposure to an outrage of our own cultural memories (ivi: 393). The relationship between ‘primitive’ cultures and Western society is the cornerstone of his thought: “An ethnology good for the needs of modern humanism, says De Martino, must be aware that its object is not simply

the discipline of low level technology, non-literate or 'so-called primitive' cultures, but rather the discipline of their relationship with Western culture, starting from the ethnographic encounter as the theme of this relationship" (ivi: 389). In fact, faced with diversity, anthropologists are led to reflect on the relationship between alien cultural behaviours and the categories they use in their analysis,

"in order to achieve that universally human substratum in which the 'own' and the 'alien' are surprised as two historical possibilities of being human, that substratum, therefore, from which 'we' also could have taken the road that leads to the alien humanity that lies before us in the initial scandal of the ethnographic encounter; in this sense, the ethnographic encounter is the opportunity for the more radical reflective self-examination possible to Western man" (ivi: 391).

Anthropology for De Martino is then the result of an expansion of consciousness that implies constant critical activity towards the use of her own categories, resulting in what he calls 'ethnographic humanism'. However, in his opinion, the categories used in anthropological discourse are impossible to be abandoned, as unlikely as is to rescind ethnocentrism, and however critical: anthropology must be committed to the "sense of our Western history", because without it, without this 'loyalty', says De Martino, one could not understand the meaning of the 'others' nor who we are.

Augé, instead, warns us to understand this return to the ‘us’ as a simple way to find ourselves enriched by the experience of the “other”, and suggests rather to see it as a “turning back to and reconsideration of the questions we have addressed to those others, whose meaning and importance we are perhaps better able to measure when we ask them of ourselves” [9].

Franesco Remotti comes to a similar conclusion using Clyde Kluckhohn’s parable of “the long ride”, considered as the fundamental round trip of the discipline. The anthropological journey contributes not only to the knowledge of ourselves, but also and more generally to the reflection on how the ‘us’ is formed and transformed. Once back from the trip, we are allowed to see our society through an operation of ‘primitivization’, to see “us as savages”. Anthropologists can thus investigate structures, meanings and implications, replacing – albeit slowly and laboriously –, the concepts belonging to modernity with “those shaped little by little through the intensive study of otherness” [35].

For example, providing the scholar with a new conception of the multi-ethnic society in which we live, considered as “dynamic [and] attentive to the ‘work’ of singularities, [...] capable of giving an account of, and accounting for, this society’s present, of enabling us to imagine its future”, anthropology today allows the measurement of “[...] the formidable mechanisms of artificial identity production, collective as well as individual, which our societies are putting into operation” [9].

In *“A Sense for the Other. The Timeliness and Relevance*

of Anthropology” Augé takes into account the change of scenarios and the current spread of supermodernity, considering the contact phenomena as “an anticipation of what today become our common lot, our present contemporaneity” [9].⁴ The death of exoticism becomes the starting point from which we can understand that what the discipline studied some time ago, “actually anticipated and corresponded to an acceleration of history, a shrinking of space, and an individualization of consciousness that, prolonged and amplified, characterize fairly accurately our supermodernity” [9].

The study of *contact zones* [16] has allowed us to overcome the view associated with the *raison ethnologique* ([ethnological reason] [4]) born in relation to European nationalism and expansionism. We become aware that what must be studied are the limits and boundaries, and the each time different constructions of sealed identities, distinctions or racisms. The starting point is no longer the culture considered as a closed and impenetrable universe, but the exchange and the contact: what Amselle defined as the original syncretism, that allows us to replace the *raison ethnologique* with the *logiques métisses* [mestizo logics] (see [4]; [32]).

But not only. Let’s reflect on immigration, new ethnic groups’ identity claims, e.g. former Yugoslavia, or the Rwandan conflict, different xenophobic expressions, the

4 “Supermodernity happens when history becomes current events, pace becomes images and the individual merely a gaze”. It is defined by three excesses: of time, space and individualism” (Augé 1998: 103-104).

Italian Partito della Lega Nord [North League Party], new philosophies based on the rhetoric of 'security': present times are full of identifications made in the name of culture. Pompeo suggests that today "cultural difference becomes a practice of legitimization for new multicultural characters or for the legitimation of new differential racist exclusions" [32].

When in the Sixties Augé was leaving for his first field work, a long debate ensued, that strongly influenced modern anthropological reflection. There was a 'way' of understanding and doing anthropology strictly connected with inner disciplinary formulations that had serious repercussions in society: 'the unspeakable culturalist temptation', whose dangers, according to the French anthropologist, were obvious:

"Not only does such an approach unduly substantialize and fix notions, distracting attention from the problematic, unstable, dialectical aspects of culture, the internal differences and tensions of the social, the unstable, relational, dynamic character of the individual personality; it also privileges a terminology whose lay use, even when it means to be moral, may lead to a segregationist vision of the world or of complex societies. Respect for differences, the idea of the right to be different, the notion of a 'multicultural' society all these, while generating noble-sounding expressions, may actually furnish an alibi to a ghetto ideology, an ideology of exclusion" [9].

What was criticized is the concept of culture as something stable, a fixed and cohesive element, easily recognizable by sharp boundaries, that infuses a particular and unique spirit to the people who are part of it. Something that by its

very nature, and thanks to the improvement of the discipline, can be distinguished from other fields of knowledge. The risk – in the Sixties as today – was “to replace the ‘final causes’ view of culture with the obscurantist theme of culture-as-mystery”: “the danger was all that much greater in that paradoxically the experience of culture as second nature was becoming more familiar to us every day” (ivi: 5). Indeed, as pointed out by Lila Abu-Lughod, “culture is the essential tool for the making of the other”, whilst “as a professional discourse that elaborates on the meaning of culture in order to account for, and understand cultural differences, anthropology also helps construct, produce, and maintain it. Anthropological discourse gives cultural difference (and the separation between groups of people it implies) the air of the self-evident” [1].

This complaint of the ‘objectifying trend’ highlights all the inner limits of culturalism, obliging one to deeply reflect on the many uses and abuses to which ‘culture’ has undergone in our contemporary world. In fact, the concept often triggers second level mechanisms in the creation of new and fictitious identities for political purposes [7] ceasing to be primary sources of social existence, identities become themselves a secondary product [33].

The same is true for cultural relativism, that can be considered a reaction to the previous ethnocentric vision of the ‘other’, the result of specific historical and disciplinary condition and first moment of reflection on the alien [35]. In fact, in its diffusion and strong grip on the lay public, cultural relativism has led in time to the idea of a total untranslatability and lack of communication between cultures

that seems to make others forever strangers and exotic. The concept of ethnicity, the invention of administrators and professional ethnologists, is also an artificial fusion of the ethnic characteristics of specific groups with a particular social and cultural structure. Ethnic groups, then, surreptitiously appeared in history and maps as separate entities with clearly defined and immutable boundaries that promoted a discontinuous vision of the planet's population, revealing a Western way of projecting our categories in relation with environment, culture and state [5]. In the end it is not superfluous to recall that these types of references are currently used to describe minority groups linked to migration, in an ethnicization of the social that promotes classification based on ethno-racial categories.

The concepts of culture, identity [35], cultural relativism and ethnicity (and their derivatives) are historical products that need to be analysed and linked with our contemporary world. At the same time they must be replaced if they are not capable of explaining the world around us, or are used as new substitutes of the concept of race [32].⁵ Paradoxically, one has to write 'against culture' [1] and 'relativize relativism' (see [32]).

⁵ "Modern racialism, which is better known as 'culturalism', originates in the writings of Renan, Taine, and Le Bon; it replaces physical race with linguistic, historical, or psychological race. It shares certain features with its ancestor, but not all; this has allowed it to abandon the compromising term 'race' (and thus the first 'proposition' of classical racialism). Nevertheless, it can continue to play the role formerly assumed by racialism. In our day, racist behaviors have clearly not disappeared, or even changed; but the discourse that legitimizes them is no longer the same; rather than appealing to racialism, it appeals to nationalist or culturalist doctrine, or to the 'right to difference'" [40].

2. 'Presentism' and 'historicism' reinforced

These reflections, resulting from the critical analysis of the discipline, permit the addition of a fifth level to the relational model initially postulated, showing the way to connect scientific engagement with contemporaneity: that is, with the universe in which researchers live and work and for which they have responsibility. In the end it becomes necessary, or at least desirable, to be able to contextualize the production of assumptions, theories and methodologies, as well as their adaptation and subsequent use in the unfolding of the many and varied historical conditions.

The historicizing process of the scientific disciplines which took place around the Sixties of the twentieth century and started from the Kuhnian consideration of paradigm, pushed strongly toward this need, helping us to consider:

“A body of knowledge as a set of propositions ‘together with the questions they are meant to answer’, to understand the ‘reasonableness’ of points of view now superseded, to see historical change as a complex process of emergence rather than a simple linear sequence – in short, to understand the science of a given period in its own terms” [39].

In particular, the study of the history of anthropology is becoming more important with regard to the understanding of the relationship that consciously or unconsciously is established between the postulates creat-

ed by the discipline in academia and society. Already G.W. Stocking Jr. mentioned the ideal of a ‘historically sophisticated and anthropologically informed’ history of anthropology: “I do not expect it to resolve issues confronting anthropologists in the present. But perhaps it can place them in some broader and more meaningful historical context. Perhaps it can relate what was bugging earlier anthropologists to what is bugging anthropologists today” (ivi: XVIII).

It is also a question of investigating the double link that connects the researcher (anthropologist or historian), who is influenced by his belonging to the present time, contrasted with the past ones whom he is studying, and that have influenced the cultural configurations he analyses. In fact,

“if we were to limit our understanding of a historical phenomenon to that available to its enactors, we should foreswear not only depth psychology and the sociology of knowledge, but also our knowledge of the consequences of their action – which, however imperfectly envisioned by them, were in fact very much part of the terms of their historical activity, and, however inadequately known to us, are part of the terms of our historical understanding. Historical understanding thus presupposes a continuing tension between past and present, not only a historian’s present and the past he studies, but between that same past present and all of its consequent futures. Among the latter, there are good pragmatic as well as methodological reasons for privileging the standpoint of our own present” (ivi: XVII-XVIII).

It is necessary to go beyond and consciously use both of Stocking Jr’s approaches identified in his methodological manifesto “On the Limits of ‘Presentism’ and ‘His-

toricism” which appeared in 1968. If we consider ‘presentism’ as the tendency to find in the past phenomena of actual interest that can detect and select some particular events or persons and hide others – sometimes creating false and supportive genealogies totally decontextualized – then in one way or another we cannot avoid characterizing each researcher as a ‘presentist’, i.e. influenced by contemporary questions, theories and methodologies. History can no longer be considered as primarily made by events, characters, diachrony, sources, archives, or documents. One cannot relegate as secondary the role of the historian, who works on the basis of multiple variables of methodology, theory, historiography, and/or on purely subjective factors, like politics, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality. One cannot ignore the different ways in which the historical discourse is structured in given contexts (where and how is addressed or written, who does it, in front of which public etc.). The essence of history is not only constituted by those events, phenomena and materials that historians study and write about. It is also a product of their invention and creation; it is subject to countless suggestions and influences; it is the fruit of long meditated assumptions, and sometimes just the result of occasional choices or circumstantial influences completely fortuitous.

The same documents analysed are symbolic structures, not neutral facts, meaning constructions made by historians or anthropologists, traces of sense in the ‘here and now’, the *Jetzt-Zeit* of Walter Benjamin [10]. In this way history is not considered the account of memory

which reconstructs past facts and opinions with the help of documents and material sources anymore, but rather a work that elaborates and brings into existence the document itself [24].

Concurrently, if 'historicism' is considered the commitment to comprehend the past 'for the love of the past', the contextual reasonability more than the a-historic rationality, we cannot forget the impossibility of attaining an understanding of the raw and naked fact. The profession of the historian, which was based on the clear distinction between scientific and literary scripts – characterized by aspects of narrative fiction – from the Fifties and the Sixties, began in fact to lose value due to the American linguistic and literary currents of the *New Criticism*, and the reflections of Hayden White and Roland Barthes. The post-modernists, on the base of the theory of language formulated by Ferdinand de Saussure in 1916 in his *Course in General Linguistics*, and Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man in particular, postulated that it is not thought that utilizes language to describe reality, but that is the linguistic structure that give form to thought. The scholar is then a prisoner of his own way of thinking, his thoughts are conditioned by the categories of his language, giving form and structure to reality, while at the same time undermining its existence and objectivity.

In Benjamin's opinion, the task of the historian, once the linearity of the historical succession has disappeared (the past is discontinuous: it depends on singular gazes, it's a 'story for'), shows itself as the attempt to express

how people, in a precise *Jetzt-Zeit* look at their past and live it through an act of imagination. The dream metaphor used by Benjamin in order to describe the discontinuous activity which is represented through past images, however, also contains the possibility of a re-awakening from the dreaming: the 'now' allows not only to imagine the past, but also, at the same time to become conscious of the act of dreaming, creating a distance and a consciousness of this imaginative process [10].

Therefore, it seems to be important to identify and study the diverse theoretical and methodological approaches of anthropology and history, including the relationships between the two disciplines, and highlighting the advantages resulting from their collaboration. Historiography, in its 'classic' form, has become an institutionalized discipline in the nineteenth century. Recognizable in the work of Leopold von Ranke, and practiced in some academic circles until the post-war period, it was based on three implicit assumptions [23]: the assumption that human actions were the mirror of the intentions of the actors (*assumption of intentionality*); a theory of truth, which presupposes that the historian could come to know things 'as they had really happened' (*assumption of reality*); and the use of a conception of time, progressive and unidirectional, characterized by chains of cause and effect (*assumption of temporal sequence*). Its professionalization had also led to the construction of a canon of 'scientific' writing, modelled on the late nineteenth-century naturalists novels, and purged as much as possible from literary rhetoric to distance itself from the expres-

sive forms of amateur historians [34].

Similarly, anthropological writing grew stronger, emphasizing the distinction between travel writings and notes of informants, and scripts elaborated by those who, hidden behind a desk, could elaborate a better understanding of the 'primitives'. This, at least up to the Twenties, when the Malinowskian re-establishment of the discipline led to the adoption of a specific method that helped distinguish anthropology from other social sciences: ethnography, that allowed a single person to collect, analyse, and theorize field data. Unlike explorers and travellers, driven by the passion of the unknown and its intrinsic romance, the ethnographer was supposed to operate 'scientifically', and to work aimed at safeguarding 'savages' in danger of extinction, and helping the colonial enterprise. Thus ethnographic writing assumed precise literary conventions, called 'ethnographic realism', which included a holistic description of the culture studied (typical of functionalism), a comparative I-them aspect, and the authority of the presence of the researcher in the field.

All of these assumptions have been subject to major revision over the last hundred years, opening the doors to different ways of practicing and thinking history and anthropology, and to theories, methodologies and sources, including the very possibility of a confrontation between the two disciplines. In researching historical anthropology, in fact, one can consider different approaches, but always operates choices from the above mentioned three assumptions. Moreover, if today one can affirm that both

disciplines have the same object of study – i.e. human societies investigated in one of their many aspects under detailed temporal and spatial boundaries – it is true that the difference between history and anthropology resides in the use of diverse conceptual and methodological instruments [27].

3. History & Anthropology: introductory notes

Since the beginning of the twentieth century – but with particular vehemence after 1945 – the *assumption of intentionality* dominant in the first historiographical approaches was called into question by a strong demand for a history concerning society, economy and culture. The attention previously focused on individuals, ‘important men’, events, politics, and diplomacy moved on in considering social structures and changing processes. The viewfinder pointed on society, developing ways to do and write history marked by social sciences. The new approaches, differing from country to country and ranging from quantitative and economic analysis to the *Annales School* in France to Marxist class analysis represented a gradual progress towards a ‘democratization of history’. Their opening to the study of new segments of population was a clear mirror of the progressive democratization and massification of the contemporary society. At the same time, turning history into a coherent and systematic social science and bringing it closer to the natural sciences, they emphasize the need to analyse causal explanations. While criticizing the assumption

of intentionality, then, this new 'societal history' underlined the fact that the historian, as scientist, could achieve an objective knowledge of reality.⁶

During this period, which lasted up to the late Sixties, the relationship between history and anthropology was sporadic [41]; [23]. After the Fifties a slight change occurred, thanks to the birth of *ethnohistory* and the research work of African historians. In fact, the study of written sources on Native American lands and peoples preserved in historical archives in the United States, and collected since the early years of the twentieth century, enormously increased around the Fifties due to the approval of the Indian Claim Act – that promised Natives Americans a compensation for the land unjustly confiscated, after demonstration of their tribal affiliation. With the beginning of decolonization in Africa, one began to consider the study of colonial archives. However, it was only with the work of the historian Jan Vansina (*Oral Tradition. A Study in Historical Methodology*, 1965) that a shift occurred in the use of oral sources in the reconstruction of the past of those who until then were considered 'peoples without history'.

⁶ It should be noted that the relationship with social sciences was understood in a more flexible way by scholars such as Berr, Pirenne or the American New Historians than it was by Durkheim, Simiand, Marx, Lamprecht and Weber at the beginning of the last century. In addition, from the beginning of the Sixties and Seventies, one has to make a distinction between the slavish application of quantitative methods, operated by the *New Social History* or *Histoire Serielle* to ensure a greater 'scientification' of the discipline, and their occasional use as support (Iggers 1997: 43-47). Much of the *Annales School*, from Bloch to Duby, worked, for example, on qualitative sources while remaining open to the most diverse approaches and scientific methods.

The notion of social structure used in anthropology, as highlighted by anthropologists such as Meyer Fortes, Max Gluckman or Raymond Firth, was too simplistic and static. The functionalist theory, in fact, could not give account of the major changes that were taking place in the post-colonial period in 'primitive' societies. Edward Evans-Pritchard was the first to declare that a society cannot be adequately studied without knowing its previous history and that anthropology, rather than closer to the natural sciences, was a kind of historiography: not a science voted to *erklären* [explain] but an art of *verstehen* [understand], as typically were the *Geisteswissenschaften* [Arts and Humanities]. His preparatory work – which had already made proselytes among British historians – found partial fulfilment in the 1968 A.S.A. annual conference on accusations and confessions of witchcraft [41]. What was clear from the meeting was that, as already suggested in 1921 by Margaret Murray in *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe. A Study in Anthropology*, rather than seeking new documentary sources, scholars had to start asking new questions of existing sources, encouraging a process similar to the 'immersion' that occurs when trying to understand the point of view of the native.

This sensitivity towards new perspectives was the outcome of a general awareness of the crisis in modern Western culture. People had become more and more aware of the consequences of the Second World War, and of the tragedy of the Holocaust; the end of colonialism, the denial of several independent histories, the existence of multiple otherness within the nations themselves.

They became conscious of the Vietnam War controversies; the transition from an industrialized society to one steeped into the age of information technology, and of the downsides of the economic growth on the environment and quality of life. To use the words of Iggers, “the destructive qualities of the civilizing process increasingly moved into the center of awareness” [23].

From the Seventies on, a general dissent from modernity made itself evident. Modernity started being criticized in its desire of building systems, theories, and encompassing interpretations; as a system that believes in rationality, in the positive value of science and technological intervention, in the progress of historical development and thought. It was the moment of post-modernism, which emphasized the ambiguous and contradictory qualities of rationality, and stood critically against science and technology, proposing a concept of knowledge contrasting the foundational ideas of the modern society.

The direct consequence on historiography was an increasing fragmentation. Whilst modernity lost its primacy and Western society returned to being just one among many civilizations,⁷ history opened the door to ‘others’ histories, to women and feminism, ethnic minorities, and to a ‘bottom up’ perspective. Going beyond the classic paradigm of historiography, this new history adopted the social scientific approach, previously having been too focused on large impersonal structures and

⁷ Emphasizing the relativity and the stratification of different time dimensions, the *Annales School* was an exception since the time of Bloch and Braudel (Iggers 1997: 51-64).

totally neglecting the political aspects. The new centre of interest was culture, understood as the study of the conditions and experiences of ordinary people in their everyday life; what occurred was a shift from a 'social history of culture' to a 'cultural history of society' (see [15]).

In the United States particular importance assumed the interpretative approach of Clifford Geertz, to which many historians began to refer, unhappy with the macro-social theories in force. According to Geertz, the anthropologist's job was similar to a 'penetration of a literary text': "Doing ethnography is like to read (in the sense of 'construct a reading of') a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, of incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but not written in conventional graphs of sounds but in transient examples of shaped behavior" [20]. Culture was an opaque, dark and not directly understandable text, in need of an interpretation. Geertz provided a new concept of culture less confusing and more useful than those previously available in the American scenario until Kluckhohn; a concept essentially semiotic that drove the anthropological discipline away from the research of laws, and addressed it to the interpretation of meanings (again towards the *verstehen* rather than the *erklären*).

Geertz's work reflected the strong change that occurred between the Sixties and the Seventies in French and American philosophical thought. It indicates the return to a narrative history that was the bearer of a deeper debate on the objectivity of the text, whether intended

as a real account or as a network of meanings inscribed in culture. In fact, the transformations since the Second World War had flawed the confidence in science as rationalist paradigm, supporting the process of Western civilization. In *Against Method* (1975), Paul K. Feyerabend drastically compared science with poetry, while Thomas Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1960), presented a new interpretation of science as historically and culturally determined. But while working at a better understanding of the connection between science and reality, Feyerabend questioned the very possibility of a rational scientific discourse.

The postmodern critique, in its less extreme strands, brought significant insights with respect to the way of thinking and writing of history (see [15]). It is impossible nowadays to postulate the absolute objectivity and scientific nature of historical knowledge, or the lack of influence of the researcher on his study. Notwithstanding, the historian continues to be an expert working critically on sources referring to a 'real' past – not an imaginary one, though only accessible through his mind. As scholar he works on the basis of a methodology that draws on abstract criteria of truth and objectivity, whose parameters of truth and falsehood are established within the community of researchers. In this regard, one may add that the same 'historicity' of the scholar, i.e. the same fact that he lives in history, doesn't drive him away from the 'truth', but rather allows him, as owner of an historical knowledge, and thus of a certain culture, to prove the past documents as 'real'. In fact, the scholar's deductions

may be 'true' only if connected to knowledge of the past that is built on an inherited knowledge.

Turning to anthropology, in the same period, a reflection tied to the questioning of the ability of representing other realities marked the transition to a post-paradigmatic phase and to an overcoming of the approaches linked to functionalism and linguistics [28]. What became increasingly clear was that the anthropologist constructed his own object of research in the act of writing in retrospect. The researcher manipulates the representation of the other, by expressing his own culture more than that of the native, an acknowledgement that opened several reflections on the nature of the anthropological discipline and its way of doing science. According to James Clifford, "literary processes – metaphor, figuration, narrative – affect the ways cultural phenomena are registered, from the first jotted 'observations', to the completed book, to the ways these configurations 'make sense' in determined acts of reading" [17]. The elaboration of the text, under the influence of deconstructionist criticism, revealed itself to be an operation characterized by fiction; the publication of the outrageous diary of Malinowski promoted then the 'return of an ethnographic amnesia': the presence and authority of the narrating ego, concealed for years in ethnographic writings.

The shift from behaviour and structure to symbols, meanings and mentality, typical of interpretive anthropology, was joined by an in depth examination of the work on the field as distinctive method of ethnograph-

ic research. This important turn was then followed by a reflection on the non-historical and uncritical nature of ethnographic writing, in strict connection with an investigation into the relationship between anthropology, colonialism and post-colonialism.⁸

Within this general framework, thanks to the inclusion of new thematic horizons and the use of specific methodologies or theories, occurred a strong opening of the historical discipline toward anthropology. Within the *Annales School*, for example, the approach – seen by some historians as a real marriage proposal, a *nouvelle histoire* often called ‘anthropologie historique’ – took place principally in respect of symbolic anthropology, and scholars such as Erving Goffman, Victor Turner, Pierre Bourdieu and Michael de Certeau, whose ideas were “adopted, adapted and used for the construction of a ‘more anthropological’ history” ([13] ; [12]).⁹ Jack Le Goff devoted almost twenty years of his life to the reconstruction of the cultural history of the Middle Ages. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie was the author of *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (1975), one of the most famous and discussed examples of historical anthropology. The book aimed at reconstructing the life of a small medieval village through the use of a portion of the records

⁸ One can think, for instance, of the numerous works of Leiris, Balandier, Hymes, Leclerc, Asad and Lanternari.

⁹ In general, it should be noted that from the very beginning in French historical studies transpire a special form of implicit anthropology, an attention to culture and its various aspects that favors the establishment and deepening of cultural concepts, anticipating the shift occurred during the Seventies and Eighties.

of investigations conducted by Bishop Jacques Furnier to eradicate the Cathar heresy. The interrogations were analysed by Le Roy Ladurie as interviews, and the information reorganized along the lines of a typical study of community (Redfield), in the attempt to revive the material culture and the mentality of the villagers. For the first time the records of the Inquisition were used to reconstruct the daily life and attitudes of past characters through their own words. Le Roy Ladurie acted as an anthropologist in the process of transcription of the native's point of view. Montaillou, therefore, intended to be a histological research, an early example of 'microhistory': through the 'total' reconstruction of a microcosm it tried to represent a vaster society.¹⁰

During the same period, the proponents of an approach valorising everyday life and individual experiences gathered in Italy around the journal *Quaderni Storici*, published since 1966, and focusing on a critique of macrostructural (especially Marxist) and quantitative history. Carlo Ginzburg, Carlo Poni, Giovanni Levi, and Edoardo Grendi all believed that, in the words of Iggers, "is not that social science is not possible or desirable but social scientists have made generalizations that do not hold up when tested against the concrete reality of the smaller-scale life they claim to explain" [23]. The *microstorici* (as they called themselves) did not share at all the Geertzian propensities to a literary approach to

¹⁰ The book, despite its huge public success, was harshly criticized by post-modernists and anthropologists, and particularly by Renato Rosaldo

the 'text'. In their opinion historical narratives referred to an objective reality that could be known. The method by which they thought to reach this knowledge, however, was 'mediated' by a constant dialogue with their own survey questions. Thanks to this way of writing history, they could inform the reader of their continuous advancements and choices, showing the processes of the research.

Furthermore, their approach, unlike the Geertzian one, did not consider culture as uniform, but as characterized by strong social differentiation. Therefore, they sought to "enrich the analysis of social variables making them more numerous, more complex and also more mobile" [38]. The main purpose was a 'total reconstruction', possible only in a highly circumscribed environment and following a method very similar to the prosopographic one. The importance given to individuals in the reconstruction of the cultural complex derived from the influence of Firth, Bourdieu, Barth, Bailey and Jeremy Boissevain (*Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*, 1974). Within their model, known as 'strategic', social actors could choose whether or not to obey to certain social norms, applying transactions. An anthropologist's task was to rebuild together the braided of these transactions, i.e. the personal network that allowed to highlight the agency and the active role of the individual, and therefore, even the plurality and contradictions of the cultural system.

The changing social conditions that returned attention to individuals and forgotten segments of West-

ern culture, thanks to the end of colonialism, opened up more and more to the history of the so called 'secondary' characters. A narrative that dealt with 'everything that was not western' already existed in the form of colonial history, but it was limited to contacts with non-European countries and was focused mainly on the expansion and interests of the colonizing nations. Only the study of the Bible and of linguistics favoured the creation of departments of Middle East studies and Arabic or Indian civilization. Since the end of colonialism, for internal and external causes, the focus of interest shifted to 'others' economy, politics and society. The same ex-colonies, dominated by a need for a fast economic development and the building of a national identity, begun to study and build their own stories.

The twentieth century saw the slow, but gradual decline of European universalist thought and its conception of history as summarizing logically and morally the story of humanity, with time representing "the universalistic instance and space the relativistic one" [21]. After the Sixties emerged the possibility to replace the previous model, hierarchical and unbalanced, with a globalist balanced model. However, although "a distinction between contemporary chronology and history, between European 'development' and other continents 'backwardness', [... appeared] more and more inadmissible", it didn't produce an immediate awareness of the relationships between distant realities: "a plural vision of the world [was disseminated], but [it didn't emerge] an historical vision able to link together the stories of different civilizations" (ib.: 47).

Common was the belief that the former colonies in a short time would have entered in the world existing balance between East and West, thanks to their Westernized or Sovietized elites. The new countries emerging from the ruins of colonialism should have easily fallen within a general history dominated by a gradual but inevitable levelling of the differences along the path of modernization. The Eurocentric and evolutionary universalism threatened to find last refuge in the theory of modernization, dominated by an idea of progress implying the clear identification between modernization and Westernization, "little aware not only of the variety of non-Western routes to modernity, but also of the specifics of the routes taken by different European societies towards it" (ib.: 51).

However, the clear failure of these optimistic predictions soon forced to move the debate on the influences between 'North' and 'South' of the world. But if the overcoming of the concept of 'other histories' as an appendix of Western history had led to the formal dichotomy (the 'formal decolonization') between colony and nation-states, remained to take into consideration the influence and role the West continued to have in and on the general history of the world [42]. The underdevelopment of the colonies, always regarded as a direct result of cultural factors, thanks to the studies of André Gunder Frank and *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* of Immanuel Wallerstein (on the trail of Paúl Prebisch concept of *dependencia*), from the

mid-Sixties, begun to be explained as internal dynamics of a single economic system. The economy of the *satellite areas* (Gunder Frank), or *suburbs*, according to Wallerstein, was considered as inversely proportional to the development of the western areas of the planet, which were relying on them to support their modernization. This 'development of the underdevelopment' was a commercial zero-sum game ignited by the crisis of feudalism, and established between 1550 and 1560, well before the Industrial Revolution.

Starting from these considerations, the way in which civilizations have influenced each other became the focus of a growing interest, going to swell the tide of the so-called *Global* or *World History*, or encouraging researches like the 1982 study of Eric Wolf, *Europe And The People Without History*, in which he analysed the resistance made to European expansionism over the centuries, and the way in which different cultures had reshaped its influences, emphasizing how globalization corresponded to the history of these populations.¹¹

However, to revolutionize the way one perceives the relationship between Western history and 'other'

¹¹ World-historians are divided between those who consider the chronological development of the story from a global perspective, but as a result of European expansion (McNeill, *The Rise of the West. A History of the Human Community*, 1964), and a second current based on historical macrosociology, which isolates a specific phenomenon and compares it in time and space with similar ones (Wesseling 1991). More recently, many World-historians, and McNeill himself (*The Great Frontier. Freedom and Hierarchy in Modern Times*, 1984), turned to a unified global and comparative analysis.

histories was Marshall Sahlins's book *Islands of History* (1982). Re-contextualizing and examining the logbooks of James Cook, Sahlins emphasized the existence of a parallel coding of same events. What the anthropologist discovered was that, according to the European point of view or Hawaiian, a certain fact could take on a different meaning. Included within a totally different conception of time, linear or circular, one could affirm that different significance was given to same events according to the culture of belonging, and that there were different ways of 'thinking' the past. This was an epochal passage, as pointed out in the introduction to Kirsten Hastrup's volume *Other Histories*:

"we [anthropologists] have dealt with societies and cultures as entities separated from one another in space. By contrast historians have dealt with periods or epochs. A truly 'historical' anthropology must include reference to both space and time, not only because 'history' is the unfolding of society through time but also because 'society' is the institutional form of historical events" [22].

In conclusion, we may add that the influence and role played during and after colonialism on former colonies by (ex-)imperialist nations is at the centre of interest of a field of study that potentially connects history and anthropology on several levels. The (post-)colonial studies developed in the late Seventies as a result of decolonization processes, post-Fordism, and social sciences epistemological debates in their post-modernist, deconstructionist and de-structuralist relapses. In fact, the rethinking of the notions of

power, ideology, subjectivity, resistance, discourse and representation related to the setting of the third-world paradigm and the entry into a 'culture of limits', led to the emergence of a field of study half way between epistemology and ontology. On the one hand postcolonial is the condition of contemporary socio-historical subjects and cultures once subjected to colonialism; on the other side it is a critical approach to the question of cultural identity, based on post-structuralist assumptions [30].

In short, "postcolonial becomes a metaphor of the postmodern condition" (ib.: 48-49), in which the (post-) prefix indicates simultaneously rupture and continuity with respect to a condition of Western imperialism. The reflections of the (post)-colonial studies, in fact, considers colonial marginality as the result of the comparison between cultures in relation of subordination in the new contexts of national fight for emancipation and liberation. They started off with Edward Said' reflections on colonialism and imperialism (*Orientalism*, 1978), and later developed with Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and F. Barker's *Europe and its Others* (1984). (Post-)colonial Studies are difficult to define as a single school of thought. Rather considered a nebula of positions, they have seen a growing popularity thanks to the different possibilities of investigation they allow in different areas, such as the formation of the empires; the impact of colonization on the post-colonial history; the economy, science and culture of the new nations; the literary and cultural production of the colonized societies; feminism; and the construction of marginalized peoples identity (See [30]; [14]).

4. Logos *and* ethos: *towards a path of social responsibility*

The fluctuating world around us can be considered as the result of centuries-old contacts, and the anthropological discipline as the means by which we have “the opportunity to wonder about the logic of globalization, showing its historical foundations and its ‘popular’ consequences, ultimately working to challenge the structures of power and knowledge” [32]. Accordingly, we have to consider, more than ever, historiography as the best ally in the study of past and present society. In fact, it potentially allows operating continuous reassessments inside western society, well known as being characterized by a strong incapacity to make internal (past) and external (the others) comparisons.

The short notes here presented are intended to be just a partial sketch of the diverse theoretical and methodological approaches of anthropology and history, as well as their relationships through time. A complete and faceted history still awaits to be written. In the meantime, it is at least desirable, whilst working on our researches, to apply a second level ‘historicism’ and ‘presentism’, i.e. a methodology aware of its limitations and pernicious tendencies, as well as of the relationship that exists between past and present. A continuous mediation has in fact to occur between sources and interpretation, explicating necessarily the categories and methodologies used in the elaboration and writing of our work.

Only such an approach can lead to the analysis and

understanding of the axiopoiesis, i.e. the intellectual penetration “of those formative processes from which the values with difficulty develop, through stages of ethical and socio-cultural disintegration, contrasts between levels, groups, societies or nations, find their consistency, and take active effectiveness in the further history” [25]. This approach can account for the need to “recover the lost unity between knowledge and practice, between science and responsibility, in short, between *logos* and *ethos*, especially considering *ethos* as ethical and socio-political ratio” (ivi: 401).

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