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L'Homme as a Cornerstone of Descartes' Anthropology

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Introduction

Every historic period has its own view of Descartes' legacy. Current disappointment in technocratic utopia had led to a demand in creating anthropological dimension of philosophical research. It is evident that the attention given to the legacy of French philosopher is based on revolution in Cartesian philosophy science and makes recent scientific research and findings quite significant. We believe that contemporary philosophical perception of the early modern period should be focused on understanding conceptual development of anthropology, which is reflected in the works of Descartes (Antoine-Mahut D. & Gaukroger S., 2017), as well as other thinkers and D. Hume in particular (Malivskyi A., 2016). Over the last decades there is a certain interest in the Cartesian legacy in scientific literature, which reveals new observations and facets of this philosophy.

The interest and attention are high mainly due to understanding of his search, as well as conceptual peculiarity of modern perception of Descartes compared to previous periods, especially traditional perception of

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his views as naive. Methodological principle of J.L. Marion, an expert in Cartesian science, can be a kind of summary of current achievements. He mentions that Descartes is still one the most contemporary thinkers.

Nowadays consistent explication and interpretation of Cartesian anthropology implies first, deconstruction of traditional explanation of his basic search intention associated with technocratism, panrationalism, etc.; and secondly, a way of conceptual understanding of anthropology as a response to the demand of time, which is typical of the early modern period.

Today every person who is trying to grasp the meaning of *L'Homme* by Descartes can conceive the greatness of his idea towards understanding a comprehensive anthropological project that will influence all his further work (Antoine-Mahut D., 2016).

However, it is reasonable to substantiate and understand this idea for broader audience of scientists. It is essential to focus on invariant character of anthropological direction stated in *L'Homme* that can draw attention to the intention of comprehensive understanding of human nature, importance of anthropology for the thinker and clarification why it was concealed from colleagues and researchers.

The **purpose** of the article is to understand actualization factors of anthropology in the text of *L'Homme* by describing the development of Descartes' anthropological project, by analyzing key aspects of the text reception in modern investigations, by conceiving the expression forms and intentions to conceal personal viewpoint in his works.

Methodology shift in scientific literature

For a long time the scientists who studied Descartes had been neglecting the main significance of the text *L'Homme* to develop anthropology in European philosophy.

Thus, nowadays an increasing tendency over the recent years to rehabilitate Descartes' anthropology project should be given a special attention. An outstanding event was a conference proceedings publication concerning new viewpoint, which united scientists from all over the world. Namely, it is *Descartes' Treatise on Man and Its Reception in the series "Studies of History and Philosophy of Science"* edited by D. Antoine-Mahut and S. Gaukroger, and published in 2017 (Antoine-Mahut S. & Gaukroger S., 2017).

It is worth mentioning the monograph *Descartes Philosophical Revolution: A Reassessment* by Hanoch Ben-Yami (Ben-Yami H., 2015). The author

aims at reconsidering and distancing from stereotypes. The Hungarian scientist makes us understand a completely new image of Descartes as a result of rethinking the approaches of previous generations of scientists. But these results cannot be considered as satisfactory in terms of modern science. Moreover, analyzing the intentions of Descartes to develop his own metaphysics, the author only emphasizes the necessity to ground new physics neglecting relevant factors and concealing anthropological dimension of philosophizing, so significant for Descartes.

What is an authentic context of Cartesian anthropology formation?

A new worldview development and genesis of anthropology

Anthropology as a component of physics

Scientific revolution of the early modern period was a way to express radical worldview transformations provided with new perspectives and possible search to understand it.

Nowadays some interest in Descartes' legacy should be taken and focused on the phenomenon of a man (human), as well as critical views that prevent us from understanding his authentic viewpoint. We will schematically consider some interpretations both in modern scientific papers and in retrospective view of the French thinker.

The early stage of Descartes' creative work needs special attention, since it was influenced by scientific revolution of the early modern period. It was expressed in the early text of *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, which deals with the basic search of Descartes' work. From this point of view, it is necessary to pay attention to intellectual biography of Descartes written by S. Gaukroger, where he emphasizes the understanding of new perspectives and intensive search for the corresponding expression forms. The researcher admits that Descartes' thinking is known only to some extent, and his philosophical views "are something of a mystery" (Gaukroger S., 1995, p. 126). D. M. Clarke, another biographer of Descartes, acknowledges bright mind of the thinker and recollects a lot of projects that remained incomplete (Clarke D.M., 2006). It is difficult to deny that it was the time when Descartes was concentrated on a formidable task of general methodology development based on the methodology of mathematics. His findings showed that it was impossible to implement (Clarke D.M., 2006, p. 81, 86, 90), and, as a result, his enthusiasm and interest in mathematics faded.

The issues concerning changes in Descartes' views and thinking after this methodology failure are still under great discussion. There are different versions: from the methodology search of natural sciences continued in *Rules* to radical changes in his approach.

Taking into account the situation described, it is relevant to focus on the text of *Discourse*, where Descartes is giving his own development of anthropological thought and view in retrospective way. It is said about a man who perceives and conceives himself as a being without any orientations, stays in the darkness and aims at preventing himself from downfall (Descartes, AT VI, p. 16–17).

We strongly believe that this appeal to a human is not incidental but significant for the legacy of the thinker in general. Descartes planned to state conceptual development of his personal anthropological position in treatise *Le Monde*, which is almost lost today and *L'Homme* as its final chapter.

This historic period is peculiar because of the incomplete Copernicus revolution, where the task of creating a new worldview was of high priority. In other words, Descartes' main task as a person of his epoch was in logical development of physics. He had great hopes to have *Le Monde* treatise published, as he wrote in his letter to Mersenne on 13 November 1629: *Le Monde* has to explain nature in general, i.e. physics in whole" (Descartes, 1996, AT I, p. 70).

This original view of rationalism founder is his idea to move beyond inanimate nature and holistic worldview in contrast to Galileo.

For Descartes the anthropology status was closely connected with physics in its broad sense, since it included anthropology as an element. It is about comprehensive character of the thinker's interest in phenomenon of a human as a part of the universe. This approach is evident both in his early texts and his late works, namely *The Principles of Philosophy* and *The Passions of the Soul*". In *Discourse* Descartes stressed the necessity to change a description of plants and bodies to a description of man as an important element: "to describe [...] men" (Descartes, 1996, AT VI, p. 45).

Comprehensive character of anthropological measurement of Descartes' philosophy was expressed in the text of Introduction to *The Principles* in ten years later in 1647.

The relevance of a human nature was emphasized as a constituent moment of universe creation. It was about the importance of the research "to examine ... the nature of plants, of animal and, above all, of man". Returning to this idea in a few pages, he almost literally reproduced it (Descartes, 1996, AT IXB, p. 14, 17).

One more significant way to stress the importance of physics in the general structure of philosophical system is observed in the letter to Elizabeth of 14 August 1649, which is published as the Introduction to *Passions*. Physics here was characterized as research methodology of soul passions (Descartes, 1996, AT XI, p. 326).

The title of the first chapter of *Passions* "The Passions in General and incidentally the whole nature of Man" is also a sign of broad vision of the world including nature of man as a constituent moment.

Reception of the text and intention of *L'Homme* in scientific literature

How is the above mentioned text evaluated in modern scientific literature? Analyzing reception peculiarities of *L'Homme*, it is worth paying attention to the perception of *Le Monde* treatise, which was intended to be its last chapter. Understanding and conceiving evaluations and reviews of the text, contemporary researchers consider its significance as the most ambitious project of Descartes. This is the opinion of S. Gaukroger, who translated *Le Monde* into English.

The role of anthropology in the general structure of *Le Monde* was interpreted and limited to the idea that there was no anthropology at all: "Initially and for a long time Descartes had no intention to elaborate general description of nature of man", according to one of Cartesian scientists (Alban-Zapata G., 2016, p. 159). To find a persuasive argument, the authors addressed to Descartes' contemporaries – La Forge and Clerselier. Similar evaluation of initial intention of treatise is observed in the text of *L'Homme*. There is still no clear understanding of the purpose and focus among scientists on the pages of *Historical dictionary of Descartes and Cartesian philosophy* (2015).

Today the prime importance for us is to understand to what extent in his early text Descartes moved beyond the concept of human nature limited to *res cogitans*. The thinker used the method of hypothetical reconstruction and imaginary creature to state his own opinion in the treatise *L'Homme*. Descartes singled out and listed those essential components of human nature that will be the objects of study in his further works, namely mind, body and their substance unity (Descartes, 1996, AT XI, p. 119–120).

Human body as a part of nature "a statue or machine made of earth" is of high priority here. It is admitted that the God used all his power "of making it as much as possible like us".

As it is known, he stopped writing the text and only the first task was fulfilled. Thus, with a brief perception of *L'Homme* it is difficult to avoid a delusion, since Descartes' vision was limited to mechanical model of a man.

It is natural that for Descartes a man in the text of *L'Homme* was more significant and distinctive than autonomous corpus. He stressed it in the beginning of the third part of the text, where he was telling about feelings as a way to express unity of mind and body "when God unites a rational soul to this machine [...] that the soul will have different sensations" (Descartes, 1996, AT XI, p. 143). The latter, as known, were fundamentally described and conceived on the pages of the last work of the thinker, *Passions*.

The authors of this paper are for the scientists who comprehensively take Descartes' philosophical project as radical reevaluation of the role of body.

The valuable finding was an attempt to reconstruct the chapter in the text of *L'Homme*, omitted by Descartes, which was devoted to soul and its unity with body illustrated as embodied understanding.

A considerable argument to support Cartesian view is to understand nature of man as an organic unity of mind and body, presented by metaphoric character of a sailor (*Discourse* and *Meditations*), who was "a true man".

This concept is a key one in the process of understanding and discussing anthropology of Descartes, as it shows his way of thinking in philosophy and holistic nature of man "After all, I described a rational soul, and showed that, unlike the other thing of which I had spoken, it cannot be derived in any way from the potentiality of matter, but must be specially created. And I showed how it is not sufficient for it to be lodged in the human body like a helmsman in his ship, except perhaps to move it limbs, but that it must be more closely joined and united with the body in order to have, besides this power of movement, feelings and appetites like our and so constitute a real man" (Descartes, 1996, AT VI, p. 59).

How was the role of anthropology changed in the further work of Descartes when *Le Monde* was not published?

Descartes about ambivalent status of anthropology in *Discourse* on the method

Consistent understanding of modern methodology interpretation of Cartesian legacy is in recognition of crucial significance of his philoso-

phical worldview that enables to understand his intention to show holistic nature of man in the text of *L'Homme*. The detailed explanation of his position in this text that he was beyond the early modern period associated with technomorphism, which considerably impoverishes an image of a man.

To prove the last point, it is necessary to focus on broader vision of philosophizing, which is not often of great interest among Cartesian scientists.

Notes. Having reviewed and analyzed some scientific literature in order to understand authenticity of thinker's views, it is essential to state profound and fair interpretation of John Cottingham, who emphasizes the importance of philosophical and worldview problems, as well as conceptual tradition with anthropology of Socrates: "Just as Socrates leaned to trust his 'inner voice' over the opinion of other or the lure of expediency, so anyone who aspires to philosophize must, like Descartes, learn to set aside book learning and uncritical reliance on external authority, in the struggle to achieve a rationally secure understanding of what we can know, how we should live, and what is our human place in the scheme of thing" (Cottingham J., 2008, p. 10).

It is necessary to outline invariant significance of philosophical and worldview issues, which are basic to study. And it is proved in the texts of private letters. For instance, in a letter to Chanut of 15 June 1646, Descartes was writing about the importance of worldview issues: "Of course, I agree with you entirely that the safest way to find out how we should live is to discover first what we are – he writes – what kind of world we live in, and who is the creator of this world, or the master of the house we live in" (Descartes, 1996 AT IV, p. 441).

In the text of the other private letter to Chanut of November 1, 1646, Descartes continued to list those worldview issues, new and unknown before: "So what would they not say I undertook to examine the right value of all the thing we can desire or fear, the state of the soul after death, how we ought to love life, in order to have no reason to fear lousing our life?" (Descartes, 1996 AT IV, p. 536–537).

From the biography of the thinker, it is possible to assume that he did not dare to publish this ambitious intention to show this holistic vision of the world. Only his private correspondence can explain and show his reasons, expectations, as well as his personal emotional tragedy because of declined publication of *Le Monde*. Having known about the inquisition's dealings with *Galileo*, *Descartes experienced strong shock directly proportional to those ambitious expectations described in his letter to Mersenne at the end of November 1633*: "I was so astonished at this

that I almost decided to burn all my paper or at least to let no one see them” (Descartes, 1996, AT I, p. 270–271).

In the result of all transformations there was a fateful stage for Descartes to expound and defend physics as a new vision of the world without taking any risk to suffer the same fate as Galileo. The situation was complicated due to the fact that no compromises were possible – “I must admit that the view is false, so to the entire foundation of my philosophy, for it can be demonstrated from them quite clearly” (Descartes, 1996, AT I, p. 271).

Thus, the way to defend new physics for him was only as an indirect form of its apology, namely through philosophy but, to be precise, through developing anthropology as a completing form of the Copernicus revolution. He specified that communicating his own method was a key to axiomatic reception of the principles of his physics.

The first title of *Discourse* can be given as a compelling argument that anthropology was a rational for new physics for Descartes – “The Plan of a Universal Science which is capable of raising our Nature to the Highest Degree of Perfection”, written in the letter to *Mersenne* in March 1636, where mind (as a nature of man) is a means of justification of genuine new view of the world. The given title looks as accidental both in the context of conventional scientific vision of Descartes search and in the process of addressing to his metaphysics, which is interpreted as independent from his anthropological search. In other words, the text of *Discourse* (especially, its metaphysical content) is usually understood beyond anthropocentrism in scientific literature. Moreover, this text is evaluated as immature naive form of metaphysics known to us from his metaphysical work.

We are convinced that the opposite position can be appropriate and justified, i.e. it is necessary to consider the text of *Meditations* through the lens of *Discourse*, first of all, with regard to its anthropological intention. In other words, both texts should be considered as two versions of the developed anthropological metaphysics, under the condition that the first one is a naive version, but the second is more mature and authentic.

One of the arguments concerning the semantic relation of both texts is in the fact that in each case Descartes was looking for the way to solve the same problem – to justify physics addressing to the nature of a man. This task set provided the search for reliable basis in the text of *Discourse*, which is about the search of hard foundation – “to come upon the rock”, and about aspirations to find something reliable and solid, like Archimedes did himself, in *Meditations*: “certain and unshakeable” (Descartes, 1996, AT VII, p. 24).

More detailed interpretation of philosophical system was demonstrated in the Introduction to *Principles* in 1647, where physics was regarded in its broad sense as a trunk of a tree.

It is significant for us to move beyond narrow technomorphic vision of nature. i.e. reference to “the entire universe” in this investigation.

Having analyzed the causes of anthropological interest implementation, it is worth addressing to the private letters. In his published texts, and in *Discourse* in particular, Descartes slightly opened up giving his view and demonstrating the priority of personal values over public good. Descartes aimed to be useful for people, he was not willing to be derived of time and balance of spirit in order to save, which he would not agree to take “honorable position in the world”.

Private correspondence can help better understand the intentions to conceal anthropological dimension of philosophy. Taking into account how unsafe was to declare the anthropological significance, Descartes explained his intentions of concealing his ethical position in the letter to Chanut of November 1, 1646 pointing to aggressive reception of his contemporaries: “Had I dealt with moral philosophy, then perhaps I would have reason to hope that she might find my writing more agreeable; but this is a subject which I must not get involved in writing about. The Regents are so worked up against me because of the harmless principles of physics they have seen, and they are so angry at finding no pretext in them for slandering me, that if I dealt with morality after all that, they would never give me any peace” (Descartes, 1996, AT IV, p. 536).

Later in his talk Burman he returned to the explication of this context and avoided to be accused of negligence and no respect to religion.

Taking into account the above mentioned motives, there was no point for Descartes in describing anthropological philosophical knowledge when he was preparing *Discourse* to be published. Therefore, in the text of *L'Homme* and the letter to Chanut, where the role of anthropology was evident, a tendency to conceal its key role in *Discourse* was traced.

Certain emphasis on a basic role of physics was a way to conceal it, but the authors of this paper believe that today authentic understanding of *Discourse* is possible only through simultaneous attention to both interpretation variants of the basic intention of the text represented in the first and second title of it.

Conclusions

Traditionally the priorities of Descartes' texts were not taken too seriously, more like integral parts of physics. In conditions of the revolution in Cartesian science and the relevance of anthropological project of Descartes this approach is not satisfactory anymore.

The authors of the investigation suggest looking for appropriate way to overcome the dissonance by clarifying the relevant factors and reasons for revealing and concealing Descartes' anthropology. Modern reception of his texts implies a holistic view of his intention, namely attention to dominant and concealed dimension of his study. It is essential to draw attention to ambivalent position of the thinker, where physics is a form of revelation and concealment of anthropology at the same time.

Contemporary understanding of Descartes' intentions to hide his own position in *Discourse* makes possible to recognize the existence of anthropological project in all his works. The analysis of his letters helps conceive the importance of anthropological dimension for his philosophical search. Detailed informative evaluation of the statement about the text *L'Homme* as a cornerstone of Descartes' anthropology contributes to special attention to its interpretations in his late works and their perception in contemporary literature. We strongly believe that it is reasonable to consider the text of *Meditations* through the lens of *Discourse*, first of all, its anthropological intention.

L'HOMME JAKO PODSTAWA ANTROPOLOGII KARTEZJUSZA

(STRESZCZENIE)

Zdaniem autorów w dotychczasowych badaniach nad spuścizną Kartezjusza nie zostało jeszcze wystarczająco docenione znaczenie, pozostawionego przez Kartezjusza w postaci niedokończonej tekstu *L'Homme*. Analiza tej rozprawy pozwala dostrzec, że dla Kartezjusza, czemu filozof ten dał wyraz zwłaszcza we wczesnym okresie swej działalności, priorytetowe były kwestie światopoglądowe, a w szczególności rozumienie człowieka i jego miejsca w rzeczywistości. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych analiz autorzy dochodzą do wniosku, że we wszystkich pracach Kartezjusza, nawet tych, które bezpośrednio nie odnoszą się do problematyki antropologicznej, a poruszają kwestie z zakresu fizyki, zawarta jest wizja człowieka, którą Kartezjusz naszkicował w *L'Homme*.

L'HOMME AS A CORNERSTONE OF DESCARTES' ANTHROPOLOGY

(SUMMARY)

According to the authors, in the current research on the legacy of Descartes, the significance of the text left by Descartes in the form of an unfinished text *L'Homme* has not yet been sufficiently appreciated. The analysis of this dissertation makes it possible to see that for Descartes, which this philosopher expressed especially in the early period of his activity, the worldview issues were of priority, and in particular the understanding of man and his place in reality. On the basis of the analyzes carried out, the authors conclude that in all of Descartes' work, even those that do not directly refer to anthropological issues and raise physics issues, there is a vision of the man Descartes sketched in *L'Homme*.

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