Workshop

HOMO LOGICUS

Logic at the Edges of Humanity. Historical, anthropological, philosophical approaches

European University Institute, Sala Europa, Villa Schifanoia, Florence, Italy

8-9 September 2016

Convenors :

Julie Brumberg-Chaumont (CNRS), Antonella Romano (EHESS), Stéphane Van Damme (EUI)

ABSTRACT

The symposium addresses the ways in which the definition of logic as a norm for human thought and the delimitations of humanity have historically interplayed. The limits are either internal (women, infants, slaves, barbarians), external (apes, angels, computers), or in-between (primitive peoples, salvages, pigmies). The focus is on the history of the various anthropological discourses produced in ancient, medieval and modern periods, with a special stress on the debates raised by Lévy-Bruhl's notion of a "pre-logical mentality".

With the support of:

PROGRAMME and ABSTRACTS

8 September 2016

9.30   Introduction by Julie Brumberg-Chaumont (CNRS-LEM)

10.00   Claude Rosental (CEMS-IMM, CNRS-EHESS, Paris):

Referring to logic to assess the peoples' rationality. Reflections on selected case-studies in the history of the social sciences

To what extent do social scientists refer to logic to assess the peoples' rationality? And what does "logic" mean for them? In order to address these issues, I examine selected case-studies in the history of the social sciences. In particular, I study how Lucien Lévy-Bruhl defined his notion of "prelogical mentality" and what Marcel Granet meant by Chinese "ways of thinking." I analyze also how Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, Peter Winch and David Bloor assessed the Azande's rationality.

10.45   Coffee Break

11.00   Frédéric Keck (Musée du quai Branly/Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale, Paris)

"Humans are birds" : a logical enigma and its anthropological solutions

Lucien Lévy-Bruhl borrowed to the ethnographer Karl von den Steinen, who brought it from Amazonia, the statement « Bororo are Araras ». He explained it by a logic of participation different from the logic of contradiction. I will examine the discussion of this statement in analytic philosophy, phenomenology and structural anthropology. Then I will frame it in the moral reflection of Lévy-Bruhl on responsibility and divination, and open it to contemporary ethnographic examples from my work on Avian Influenza.

11.45   Antonella Romano (EHESS, CAK, Paris)

"Who needs a "Mexican Logic"? Commenting Aristotle from the New World: Antonio Rubio (1548-1615), New Spain, and the Ancients

The Spaniard Antonio Rubio, the first professor of philosophy at the Jesuit College opened in New Spain, Mexico City, is well known by historians, as well as by historians of philosophy, as he published a complete commentary of Aristotle's philosophy at the beginning of the 17th century. The aim of this paper is, first, to analyze this edition at the crossroad of an individual trajectory, an institutional history (the Society of Jesus and its global network of Colleges), and an imperial dynamic (molded by the competition between institutions of knowledge both in the Iberian Peninsula and in the New World). Second, it will investigate the reasons why Rubio's first book on logic circulated under the title "Logica Mexicana". What kind of "localism" does the American writing of Aristotle's commentary express in this book? How is it connected with the other parts of Aristotle's commentary facing natural history and "locality"? In short, by elaborating on Rubio's case it is possible to open a broader investigation on European philosophy as an epistemic genre faced with the challenge of building universal knowledge, and its relationship with empires' needs of science.

12.30   Lunch

14.00   Silvia Sebastiani (EHESS, CRH)

"Made up of contradictions": Man in Monboddo's Aristotelian Enlightenment

Man appears to be made up of contradictions; for he has intellect, and he has not intellect; he is a biped, and he is not a biped; he is a land animal, and he is not a land animal…he is, according to Aristotle gregarious and not gregarious; to which may be added, political, and not political. He is therefore as much mixed in mind, as… in body… a compound of all species". In the heart of the Scottish Enlightenment, the Judge of the Court of Session, James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, took Aristotle as a guide for his extensive works on the Origin and Progress of Languages (1773-92) and Antient Metaphysics (1779-99), both consisting of 6 volumes, published in parallel and close dialogue. In his broad and inclusive definition, Monboddo considered man as a comparative and a historical animal, emerging from a mutus et turpe pecus, following in Horace's footsteps. In this talk I'll focus on Monboddo's "History of the Species Man", placing it at the crossroads of ancient philosophy and modern anatomy, within the context of the Scottish Enlightenment

14.45   Julie Brumberg-Chaumont (CNRS, Paris)

Albert the Great and the Logic of Subhuman

Albert the Great's anthropologic reflection on logic offers a new synthesis of pre-existing elements within the Aristotelian traditions, some of them recently rediscovered, such as the Arabic long Organon. It addresses two long-term problems I wish to connect here. On one hand, Albert proposes a fully developed theory of the intermediary status of pygmies, between monkeys and men : various criteria are instrumental, such as the existence of an erect position, a similar face, the use of the hand as an instrument of instruments, language and communication, care of others, memory and experience, but where the use of logic is decisive. On the other hand Albert offers a strong concept of logic as a natural, self-building, activity for men defined by the possesion of an intellect yet to be formed. Recent studies has shown the influence of Albert (and other medieval masters) have had on Edward Tyson's work on orang-outang/pygmies (J.J.M.H. Thyjssenn 1995, 2009), as well as the long lasting impact of his conception of logic on early modern and modern debates about « natural », « acquired » and « artificial » logics, for educated men, laymen, and animals (M.J.F.M. Hoenen 2010).

15.30   Coffee Break

15.45   Barbara Bartocci (KU Leuven)

Philosophical Anthropology in Aristotle's Topics and in their Medieval and Renaissance Reception

In his Topics, Aristotle exposes the rules of the dialectical exchange, in order to make it advantageous to philosophical wisdom. At the end of the last chapter of the treatise, the Stagirite affirms that for the dialectical game to contribute to knowledge, the participants must not only be well equipped with dialectical and logical skills, acquired through the right method, but they should also have a "bonum ingenium". Indeed, those men possessing "a certain natural ability to choose the true and shun the false" can easily pick out what is best "by a right liking or disliking for whatever is proposed to them" (Top. VIII. 14, 163b12-16). This few lines of Aristotle's work did not passed unnoticed to medieval authors. They thought that the "logica naturalis" should be nurtured and honed with the help of dialectic, a useful instrument for detecting "more easily the truth and the error about the several points that arise" (Top. I. 2, 101a34).

In my paper I will analyze how the idea of a natural distinction among human beings, grounded on men's higher or lower inclination to acknowledge the truth, relates to the widespread ancient and medieval notion of endoxic probability. As well known, Aristotle states that dialectical discussions and argumentations start from the *probabilia*, which are the reputable opinions or propositions that "are accepted by everyone or by the majority or by the wise – i.e. by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable and reputable of them [maxime notis et probabilibus]", Top. I. 1, 100b21-23). The most common understanding of the *probabilia* in medieval exegesis allows identifying a twofold hierarchy of men, where what is natural and what is social often overlaps and coincides. At the basis of the pyramid of humanity is the multitude, namely the uneducated people whose opinions are valuable only for

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empirical issues, insofar as based upon sensorial capacities common to all men. Climbing the pyramid, the natural equality gradually makes way to social differentiation, so that only wise men can ascent to the top. Wise men, in turn, participate in wisdom (*sapientia*) to different degrees, since their being *probabiles* depends on their diverse natural aptitudes (their being "bene nati") as well as on their intellectual training and competences, certified by their academic role and social status.

16.30   Martine Pécharman (CNRS, CRAL)

Adam's Fall and the New Logic: Some Reflections on Bacon and his Legacy

In Bacon's project of a *novum organum*, logic is viewed as a means of recovering the pristine "commerce" between the human mind and the natures of things that existed before Adam's Fall. While Augustine had emphasized the corruption of the will in the post-lapsarian condition of mankind, Bacon emphasized the loss of the Edenic knowledge of the natures of things and of their true names. Because from an epistemological standpoint Adam's sin is a cause of error and ignorance, logic must restore the faculties of the human mind to their first perfection so that the original mastery over nature can be recovered. This conception of the role of logic is reasserted in seventeenth-century England through a series of proposals for educational reform. A similar focus on the need to regain prelapsarian human knowledge is also found in a series of attempts to construct an artificial universal language. My aim in this paper is to analyse both the philosophical assumptions and the import for the modern redefinition of logic of the links between Bacon's logical legacy and the early modern millennialist ideal of a purified mind.

9 September 2016

9.30   Steven Mithen (University of Reading)

 Homo logicus: an evolutionary perspective

All 7.4 billion people alive on the planet today are members of a single species: Homo sapiens. often referred to as 'modern humans' 200,000 years ago, when Homo sapiens first appeared in Africa, there were several other types of humans living in the world, notably "homo neanderthalensis" (the Neanderthals) in Europe and Homo erectus in East Asia. Soon after 100,000 years ago small numbers – perhaps no more than a few hundred - of Homo sapiens dispersed from Africa in Asia and then Europe. By 35,000 years ago all other types of humans were extinct (with few remnant exceptions, that hung on for a few more millennia). Homo sapiens then spread into the New World, invented agriculture, towns and civilization – cultural achievements never even attempted by our ancestors and relatives. What was different about Homo sapiens? Was it a fundamentally different way of thinking - a different logic - that differentiated modern humans from not only all other animals but all other types of humans? How does this evolutionary perspective influence the way we think about ourselves today? Is our way of thinking sustainable, or will our own cultural success be the ultimate cause of our extinction?

10.15   Denis Vidal (IRD)

Questioning naturalism and animism with humanoid robotics: An alternative approach to the 'ontological' turn in anthropology today

The anthropological debate recently focused on the question of 'animism', of 'naturalism' and, more generally, on the distinction between humans and non-humans in different cultures and societies (cf. Tim Ingold, Philippe Descola, Viveiros de Castro, and others). Up to now, however, the debate remained largely confined to the academic world if not only to social anthropology. I intend to show in this paper that such debate can be renewed both theoretically and empirically, when one realises that it does'not concern only academics today; it does imply as well the general public and various categories of professional while being confronted to the ambiguities of humanoid robotics, either because they are concretely dealing with their making or because they are confronted to them for the first time.

11.00   Coffee Break

11.30   Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Colombia University, New York)

The Organon in West Africa: Logic, Languages, and Translation

Is logic universal? Lévy-Bruhl famously answered such a question by affirming, then recanting the existence of an a-logical or pre-logical "primitive mentality" (characterizing Africans among other non-European peoples). I will argue that the problem was not so much his notion of the "pre-logical" than the very posture of looking for logic in the "mentality" of the people instead of what is taught by their scholars to be the laws and rules of valid reasoning; Thus, I examine the questions posed by the Arabic translation of classical logic and its teaching in Islamic centers of erudition in the Muslim world in general and, in particular, places in West Africa such as Timbuktu. I then discuss the issues raised by contemporary African philosophers such as Alexis Kagame and Kwasi Wiredu concerning the dependency of Aristotelian logic on Greek grammar and the need to take into account the logic of African languages.

12.15   Lunch

13.45   Christian Jacob (EHESS, CNRS, ANHIMA)

Cognitive alterity : Anthropology and the Greeks

In this paper, I will discuss the status of langage and rationality (*logos*) as a way to define and describe cognitive and cultural identity and alterity in the Ancient Greco-Roman world. I will focus on the patterns of difference, inversion, paradox and absurdity in ethnographic literature, as discursive and intellectual tools allowing to build up forms of savage and barbarian life, and to reinforce the self-representation of Greek civilization and reason. In a broader perspective, I will question cognitive alterity within Greek culture itself, with a short critical discussion, from E.R. Dodds's *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951) to the new anthropology of the Classical world promoted by Jean-Pierre Vernant, Marcel Detienne and their followers.

14.30   Nadja Germann (Freiburg i. B./Geneva)

"Logos" is Said in Many Ways: al-Fārābī on human reason and discourse

Al-Fārābī (d. 950) can be considered the founding father of the Arabic logical tradition which became established as part and parcel of the *madrasa* curriculum sometime around the 13th century. Among his contemporaries, however, probably no one would have predicted the impact his commentaries and treatises would have. Given his social and cultural background – the Baghdad of the late 9th and early 10th centuries – al-Fārābī's engagement with and deliberate appropriation of ancient Greek philosophy (chiefly Aristotle and the late-antique commentators on the Stagirite's œuvre) does not go without a saying. The fact that his approach to logic became generally accepted and integrated into a wide range of traditional (religious) disciplines, can only be explained in the light of his sophisticated engagement with competing traditions of his time. It is in the frame of his (virtual) debate with, particularly, the linguists and theologians that, ultimately based on Aristotle's 'long' *Organon* – including the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* – al-Fārābī developed a sound epistemological foundation of logic, a nuanced account of the relation of language and logic, and a coherent theory of human discourse, thus paving the way for what can be labeled the Arabic logical tradition, associated with names such as Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna; d. 1037), al-Abharī (d. 1265), and al-Kātibī (d. 1276). Therefore, in view of al-Fārābī's impact as well as the conceptual wealth of his account, his philosophy of human *logos* (*nuṭq*) shall be at the center of my contribution.

15.15   Coffee Break

15.45   Andrea Robiglio (KU Leuven)

Probable Men and Improbable Women : Logic and Gender in the Renaissance

This paper contributes to a larger question concerning the modern genealogy of the concepts of evidence, reliable knowledge, and value. These are studied in relation to cognate notions such as trust, epistemic authority, and recognition. A first element is the nature and the role of "probable thinking" as it has long been employed in both Law and Logic. This involves the legal pre-modern origins of the innovative notion of "certainty": how is it possible to rely on human knowledge beyond the precincts either of deductive or of empirical evidence? As a consequence, the second element is the role of testimony in the constitution of reliable knowledge. Which are the anthropological requirements for any reliable testimony in matters concerning truth? Two additional elements are to be taken into account. The first one is the ingenuity of the persons involved, having in mind that one of the ancient meanings of the word "probable" did not concern state of affairs, but rational agents instead. The "vir probabilis" for the Renaissance readers of Cicero and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, is the "expert", the man who is able to provide a successful, dialectic argument (*habilis ad probandum*) in support of his statements. The second element is reputation, which includes social dignity, gender, and the construction of authority. Beyond individual skills and qualities, it addresses the intersubjective dimension of conversation, the role of peers' assessment, and the very notion of a shared, commonly accepted, set of values. The juridical treatises *De testibus* are commonly preceded by a section dedicated to analysis of the character and the debate on human nobility. The anthropological premise is meant to explain the witness's trustworthiness, while it implies the exclusion of testimonies which turn out to be unreliable source for dialectical reasoning. In fact, the above mentioned requirements exclude entire groups of people, discriminated on the basis of their mental, sexual, ethnical, or political status. Few writings from the Quattrocento, however, cast doubt upon such discrimination: the women, for instance, may be good logician, as we read in the vernacular dialogue called *Il Paradiso degli Alberti*. Momus, the anti-hero of Leon Battista Alberti's eponymous comedy (1450), vindicates the "logic of folly", the right of the outsider to criticize the established ways of thinking. Against such a background, the paper focuses on figures of women who did logic, either actively (like Dante's Beatrice) or passively (like in the case of the female readership of some logically loaded writings). Thus, we shall also try to explore the place and role of the *mulier probabilis*.

16.30   Conclusions by Stéphane Van Damme and Julie Brumberg-Chaumont