

## **The Factuality of Human Being, a pedagogical anthropological insight**

*Workshop of the network Pedagogical Anthropology (Cologne, 29.-30. September 2019)*

In this post-truth age, we live with fundamental uncertainties regarding even elementary questions. In light of the conflicts between fiction and reality, the simultaneity of evidence-backed claims to truth and constructivist alternatives, the progress, influence of digitization and technologisation, the emergence of identity fundamentalism and ever-more pressing ecological and ethical crises, the questions of epistemological, political and ethical orientations come to the fore.

What possible perspectives and insights does pedagogical anthropology offer in view of our post-truth age? Any approach to education necessarily brings with it understandings of human nature and how this nature relates to practices, theories and more that have to do with the interpersonal task of bringing up or educating another. It is these understandings, whether explicit or implicit, that constitute pedagogical anthropology. The first point of reference for pedagogical anthropology in our post-truth era is the concept, which, viewed historically and systematically, is central to different approaches to fact or factuality. The attempt to comprehend (and grasp) humans conceptually is an unceasing challenge. Wulf (2006) asserts that the human being remains hidden from itself and can be grasped only in fragments. (Un-)Concealment characterizes human's anthropological factuality, which requires constant historical as well as cultural explications and (re-)interpretations.

In utilizing a multi-perspective approach to pedagogical/anthropological research, many different mundane or worldly facets and phenomena come into consideration. The question concerning the factuality of human being touches upon philosophy and its terminological reflections; it additionally incorporates concerns regarding economics, democracy, and political identity. The multitude of approaches to pedagogical anthropology that already exist shows how the concrete conceptions and the empirical variability of human being are at the center of various ethnographic and philosophical approaches. We see many recent works dedicated to the pedagogical discourse of human that consider the contingency of humans in cultural and sociological philosophical research (etc.). How is pedagogical anthropology conceivable in the face of the phenomenon of the post-fact (as a true-speaking fiction)?

A Foucauldian perspective on the analysis of power, for example, sensitizes people to historical images of human beings, which Foucault explored in more detail in his thesis on "Madness and Civilization". Foucault has already delineated knowledge, even medical knowledge, humane, well-meaning knowledge, is always permeated by power relations rather are constitutive of knowledge than can stigmatize and limit their effects. The question of the possibility of madness and unreasonableness arises in a special way amid the background of a relativistic arbitrariness that is accompanied by – or even supported by - a strengthening of new identity fundamentalisms.

From an existential-philosophical perspective, on the other hand, the concept of factuality expresses the truth (Alethia) and solidarity of the human, which Heidegger has described with the formula “*being-in-the-world*”. Contrary to objectivist “truth” or understandings of reality, the anthropologically interesting dimensions of factuality open up here. Truth, therefore, is not a fact that only informs about further facts, but rather an existential way of experiencing and being aware of them, of their happening, of our encounter with them, and of their rearrangement and transformation (Heidegger 1990/[1959]). These are all dimensions of corporeality, connectedness, liveliness, generativity and concern or care.

On the one hand, from a psychoanalytical point of view, the relationship of the subject to the truth is of crucial interest (in search for what constitutes that which is human at the core): “How can the subject discern his truth, the truth of his desire and unconscious?” (Lacan cited in Sarasin 2005, S. 22). On the other hand, in a neopatriarchal period under the cynosure of the imperative of enjoyment (cp. Žižek 2006; Soiland 2015), the search for the true self (become who you are!) and for individual happiness, becomes a new form of domination. Within the neo-patriarchal structure of unlimited enjoyment, criticism or subversive practice are increasingly losing ground and orientation.

Recent theoretical movements such as artificial intelligence, post-humanism, the new materialism or speculative realism, on the other hand, appear as examples of post-factuality, suggesting a virtual transcendence and fascination of a *virtual being*. These movements also celebrate the interpretation and subversion of gender in new ways, culminating in phenomena such as post-gender-identity or so-called post-humanism. Using the example of the virtual body, the human can (might) always design herself as someone other than who s/he/x is and can always overcome their simple existence and thus work for freedom, for a future being. A deepening of the question of reality can be found in the (neo-)truth debate, which stages forms of a radical humanism and sees the postmodern body as a place of lived possibilities, is crucial.

The workshop of the network ‘Pedagogical Anthropology’ builds on these considerations. With the aim of approximating the mentioned multi-perspectivity of pedagogical-anthropological research, the workshop sees itself as a discussion space in which diverse, controversial questions, perspectives, and insights on ‘The Factuality of Human Being’ are negotiated. The network conference will be closed with a speech by Prof. Dr. Dieter Mersch in a panel discussion on Monday and at the same time, will open the annual conference of the pedagogical anthropology at the University of Cologne.

To require sufficient time for discussion (ca. 20 minutes), we warmly invite proposals of 20 minutes length with an abstract of max. 1.500 characters. For further questions please do not hesitate to contact us: Thomas Senkbeil ([Thomas.senkbeil@puk.zh.ch](mailto:Thomas.senkbeil@puk.zh.ch)), Oktay Bilgi ([oktay.bilgi@uni-koeln.de](mailto:oktay.bilgi@uni-koeln.de)) und Steffen Wittig ([steffen.wittig@uni-kassel.de](mailto:steffen.wittig@uni-kassel.de)). **Deadline for proposals is May 31th, 2019.**