The purpose of this paper is to draw the attention of social anthropologists to developments in philosophical anthropology which may be relevant to their understanding of their own discipline. I advance three main arguments. First, that philosophical anthropology is in transition and needs to take a post-modernist turn. Second, that philosophical anthropology, in so far as it takes such a turn, is relevant to social anthropology. Third, that social anthropology should cease to be confused with philosophical anthropology, especially since post-modernist philosophical anthropology contains the promise of a richer interchange provided such confusion is avoided.

The term 'philosophical anthropology' is not in common use in English-speaking countries, although historians of philosophy refer to the 'philosophical anthropologies' of philosophers such as Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Adam Smith and Hegel. In Europe however the term 'philosophical anthropology' is commonly used to refer to both the philosophy of man in a comprehensive or speculative sense, and to philosophical inquiries into more limited aspects of human behaviour. Indeed in Europe philosophical anthropology is an established university subject with chairs in several countries and
an intimidating literature. The European movement in philosophi-
cal anthropology in the 'thirties and 'forties centred on the
attempt to reassert the uniqueness of man against reductionism
and objectivism. It sought to inherit insights from philosophi-
cal biology, Lebensphilosophie, existentialism and phenomenology
in a way which would overcome the fragmentation of the special
sciences with their tendency to totalise partial disciplinary 'im-
ges of man', and lead to a new unified image of man, capable of
both sustaining human aspirations and acting as a critical stand-
ard by which dehumanising tendencies in contemporary society
and culture could be judged. The works of Buytendijk, Uexküll,
Plessner, Portmann, Scheler, Rothacker, Groethuysen, Gehlen,
Cassirer, Landmann, Strasser, Donceel and Kamlah can be seen as
attempts to realise this ambitious goal.

Today European philosophical anthropology is in transition.
The older movement, with its attempt to establish the uniqueness
of man showing an anthropological difference, is in some disarray,
partly because the first attempts to show such a difference were
rather premature. It may be true that man is fundamentally dif-
ferent from other animals by virtue of his possession of certain
powers, for example the power to use language or to act rationally;
but to show such a difference requires long-term empirical study
of both human and ethological data, and conclusions based on very
incomplete studies cannot support the 'grand ends in view' which
the older generation of European philosophical anthropologists
tended to entertain. Moreover, in so far as such research is
empirical, it is inherently doubtful whether it could ever sup-
port the kind of affirmativist politics of the subject to which
these philosophical anthropologists were committed.

It may be that man ought not to accept denigrating modes of
self-ascription which tend to inhibit his powers of self-realisa-
tion, but, if so, this is a political decision which needs to be
made on political grounds, which themselves can be rationally
articulated. It is a mistake to look to empirical materials to
make such decisions for us. In so far as such a naturalisation
of the politics of human self-ascription characterised the work
of many of the older philosophical anthropologists, contemporary
European philosophical anthropology tends to distance itself
from their achievements, to insist on a less phenomenological,
less Romantic approach to natural scientific data and to break up
the utopia of a unified philosophy of man into sub-departments,
one of more of which may be given a leading role in organizing
and interpreting the immense bulk of relevant data.

Hence, contemporary European philosophical anthropology has
tended to dissolve into various sub-disciplines, called philo-
sophical anthropology, but really requiring re-description, viz.:
(1) theories of human nature; (2) the study of images of man;
(3) accounts of the human condition; (4) phenomenology of action
and experience; (5) philosophical psychology; (6) psychoanalysis;
(7) artificial intelligence; (8) the study of formal languages;
(9) philosophy of action; (10) philosophy of culture; (11) phil-
osophy of history; (12) philosophical biology; (13) philosophical
ethology; (14) thematisations of the results of the natural sciences; and (15) social philosophy. Such a development may not be wholly undesirable, although current attempts to revive the utopia of a unified philosophy of man based on the philosophy of action suggest that it may not be permanent.

In contrast to the existing, established trends in European philosophical anthropology I argue that philosophical anthropology needs to take a post-modernist turn. Clearly the notion of a 'post-modernist turn' requires some explanation. The term 'post-modernism' can bear at least two distinct senses. Post-modernism in the first sense can be characterised as modernism without the subject, the death-gasp of modernism as avant-garde cultural politics. Post-modernism in this sense can now be found in almost all the arts, most strikingly in literature, painting, ballet and architecture. It is a theoreticist aesthetics, oriented to trends in criticism: the exhaustion of a style, not something genuinely new. As such, it has some value, especially as a demonstration of where its assumptions lead, but it is not seriously post-modern. It comes after modernism, but as something more modern and more up-to-date.

Post-modernism in the second sense can be characterised as an emerging trend which attempts to take account of the fact that the parameters which defined the modern period from 1500 onwards are coming to an end, and that other, radically different parameters are beginning to emerge. Post-modernism in this sense is not more modernism. It is not an 'ism' to be set beside post-impressionism or constructivism. It is not an aesthetic, but a set of open and still-developing responses to an emerging post-modern situation in world economy and society. In the case of philosophical anthropology, a post-modernist turn involves an attempt to re-think structures of priorities and question-orderings inherited from the modern period to deal with a situation to which the inherited collections and cohesions may cease to apply. Specifically, it involves a transformation of the inherited anthropological questions ('What is man? What is his nature? What properties and powers does he possess?') into questions opened forwards, towards both new developments and new levels of articulation and choice where both self-ascription and self-constitution are concerned.

Such a turn is substantive; it is also political, in that it implies that individuals may acquire opportunities to make conscious choices of conceptual and linguistic frameworks in the context of both new questions, and questions which in the past were not regarded as proper matters for the exercise of individual judgement. Above all, such a post-modernist turn is procedural. It has no answers to impose, no doctrines to invoke. Instead, it implies that a radical differentiation of (1) questions, (2) discourses and (3) purposes is now becoming possible, which both delimits the scope and application of traditional answers and allows for unprecedented innovation at the level of multi-variable individual self-constitution.
A philosophical anthropology which has taken the post-modernist turn is relevant to social anthropology to the extent that it can provide differentiations which may illuminate social anthropologists' concerns. Many methodological controversies in social anthropology seem to insist on a confusion of strata or on monistic conceptions of the order of discourses, as if discourses formed a single uniform system, itself isomorphic with the way things are. Here the post-modernist philosophical anthropologist can assist the social anthropologist to make more complex distinctions between strata and between discourses and to expel the remnants of traditional philosophical anthropology from social anthropology on the grounds that philosophical anthropology is a different inquiry from social anthropology. He can also suggest differentiations which might allow the projects of earlier social anthropologists (Kardiner, Boas, Lévy-Bruhl, Malinowski, Kroeber) to be rehabilitated, provided those projects are disentangled from the ambitions and methodologies which encompassed their historical articulation.

Again, the post-modernist philosophical anthropologist can assist the social anthropologist by offering interpretative schema which can be used to interrogate rival psychological theories (Luria, Chomsky, Piaget) and to evaluate psychoanalytical systems. He can also provide delineations which may be relevant to contemporary anthropological debates about such concepts as 'natural logic', 'natural symbols' and 'natural categories'. To take the example of 'natural categories', post-modernist philosophical anthropology delimits the theoretical discourse or discourses in which 'natural categories' arise. It then insists that the precise meaning of both 'natural' and 'categories' be specified for such discourses, as opposed to what these terms may mean in ordinary language and analytical philosophy.

The question is particularly urgent since both words are used in contemporary anthropological discourse in unclear and inexact senses, and there would seem to be a special need to exclude from social anthropology senses of 'natural' and 'categories' which derive from Aristotle's metaphysics and may not reflect any results derivable from data. Those who speak of 'natural categories' often seem to mean either that such categories reflect abiding features of the 'natural' (i.e. physical) world, or that such categories are common because they reflect recurrent proclivities of the human mind. On the first view, the problem of how far the socially-interpreted perception of the physical world can be said to be 'natural' is occluded. On the second, it is unclear how it is proposed to show that such proclivities belong to an alleged natural (i.e. physical) substratum
(e.g. the brain) rather than to its socially-mediated operation after the emergence of social labour.

Similarly, talk of 'categories' is unhelpful unless clear distinctions are drawn between (1) categories in the sense of classifications, for example, according to kind or type; (2) categories in the sense of concepts; (3) categories in the sense of aspects (e.g. quantity, quality); (4) categories in the sense of exclusive partitions; and (5) categories in the sense of divisions which are held either by the actors or the anthropologist to be categorical in the sense of admitting no more basic re-description or referral. Moreover, even these distinctions may overlap and are insufficiently precise. In the context of post-modernist philosophical anthropology it is crucial to distinguish not only the classifications admitted by the actors from the re-descriptions of the social anthropologist, but also the metaphysical implications of the world hypothesis implicit in the social anthropologist's discourse from such features as might conceivably hold in other or all discourses, assuming a plurality of world hypotheses.

Again, post-modernist philosophical anthropology is relevant to social anthropology in so far as it is bound to investigate the politics and meta-philosophy of a variety of categorical schemes, to thematise the implications of different orderings and interpretations of world strata, and to develop historically-specific inventories and theories of the impostulates which currently govern such human activities as self-description, social explanation and self-ascription. This does not imply that social anthropologists should import the tentative conclusions of post-modernist anthropology, but only that a comparative awareness of the distinctions that others find useful, and where and how they choose to draw them, may be valuable.

III

Post-modernist philosophical anthropology also implies that social anthropology should cease to be confused with philosophical anthropology. The tendency to confuse social anthropology with philosophical anthropology runs through the whole history of social anthropology and has provided social anthropologists with many of their most ambitious goals. In a post-modernist context it is important to emphasise that such a thesis does not imply that social anthropology should not be 'philosophical' - in the sense of being philosophically literate, self-critical or self-aware. Nor does it imply that social anthropology cannot benefit from
the work of philosophers. On the contrary, it is clear that philosophical considerations may be important in distinguishing genuine from spurious questions in social anthropology, that a tolerance of inexact and confused distinctions constitutes one of the major obstacles to the furtherance of social anthropology as a discipline, and that a philosophically-informed clarification of the objects of social anthropology (and so of the meaning of such central terms as 'structure', 'symbol', 'category' and 'function') provides an alternative to eclecticism or the absolutisation of methodologism.

Nor does such a thesis imply the utopia of dispensing with utopia. It does not denigrate or underestimate the immense contribution made by social anthropologists who have pursued questions concerning the philosophy of man in their social anthropological inquiries. Obviously, the subject would be poorer without Bastian's concept of Elementargedanken, Lévy-Bruhl's postulate of a universal mystical mentality or Lévi-Strauss's quest for the innate structure of the human mind. Moreover, both Herder's project of a comparative anthropology and the attempt to determine the question of the psychological, logical and moral unity of mankind have produced detailed investigations of the highest order.

In a post-modernist context however it is necessary to define the limits of disciplinary inquiries more precisely and so the range of any general conclusions which they might reach. Post-modernist philosophical anthropology implies a distinction between the choice of a metaphysical scheme maintained in a philosophical discourse for philosophical purposes, and the choice of a mode of conceptualisation within a special science for purposes internal, though not necessarily exclusive, to it. Because post-modernist anthropology is procedural, and aims to leave particular decisions about choices of conceptual and linguistic frameworks at the level of self-ascription to the proleptically free decisions of individuals, such anthropology rejects any attempt to decide questions at this level by the special sciences. Such a move has the advantage that it helps the special scientist, in this case the social anthropologist, to distinguish between the limited theoretical claims which his researches may lead him to formulate, and the far wider need to decide on frameworks of self-ascription for which such claims are necessarily inconclusive.

The argument of this section however has wider implications. Post-modernist philosophical anthropology implies that social anthropology cannot be the philosophical study of man. It also implies that social anthropology may need to break with the dream of a unification of the sciences based on man. This dream has taken many forms - the dream of basing a philosophy of man on a unification of the sciences, the dream of using a philosophy of man to interpret the various sciences, and the dream of developing a 'science' of man as a foundation for the sciences in general. Here it is not uncommon to cite Hume's famous declaration in A Treatise of Human Nature:

'Tis evident, that all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature; and that however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back
It is less usual to notice the radical implications of Hume's project, including the implication that many questions cannot be decided 'with any certainty' until such a science is at hand.

Hume of course was by no means alone in his belief that a science if human nature could provide a foundation for the sciences in general. Indeed the quest for 'constant and universal' laws of human nature has influenced many social anthropologists. In a post-modernist context it is important to be clear about what a theoretically-informed empirical inquiry such as social anthropology cannot do.

No empirical inquiry can establish the metaphysical claim that there is such a thing as human nature, although such terminology could be pragmatically employed by one or more special sciences. Similarly, no empirical inquiry can establish the metaphysical claim that the human being has a mind, although empirical studies can influence the selection of distinctions used in describing human thought processes and behaviour. Similarly, it is difficult to see how any empirical inquiry could establish 'constant' or 'universal' laws of human nature, especially given the state of the pre-historical record and the difficulty of committing the future in advance to reproduce current characteristics. Such a conclusion provides no support for unduly narrow specialisms, but it does suggest that social anthropology, like many of the sciences dealing with man, would do well to clarify its objects and also the kinds and range of knowledges which can be achieved by the methods which it employs. In so far as the history of social anthropology can be read in terms of the asymmetries between its projects and the methods adopted to realise them, post-modernist anthropology can contribute a sense of the contexts in which various matters can be regarded as certain, and in which various theories can be treated as true.

The thrust of this paper may seem to reserve the wider questions for a new-fledged and little-known discipline, post-modernist philosophical anthropology. In so far as post-modernist philosophical anthropology is procedural, this is not the case. I simply argue that social anthropology cannot hope to settle questions which properly belong to philosophical anthropology. This may

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imply that some of the high purposes which social anthropologists have set themselves cannot be achieved by the methods they propose. But in a difficult world, this may not be a wholly unwelcome implication.

WAYNE HUDSON

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Oxford University Anthropology Society

Announcement

The Oxford University Anthropology Society was founded on January 28th, 1909 with Professor Tylor as President and G.C. Robson as Secretary and Treasurer. The Society has recorded minutes of its meetings since it was first formed. Beginning in the next issue of JASO a series of selected extracts from these minutes will be presented by the current Secretary, Mike Hitchcock.