

Human Conditions

The first part of the course offers a systematic overview of the main subjects and concepts of Philosophical Anthropology and its relationship to other philosophical disciplines, such as ethics and social philosophy, and the empirical sciences and humanities. Our starting point is Kant's transcendental philosophy, which is then deepened and challenged in Nietzsche and early phenomenology (Husserl and Heidegger). Next we explore a biologically informed account of philosophical anthropology with Plessner, adopt a political-theoretical perspective with Arendt, and shift from biology to technology with Anders. We then shift to a different but related tradition in Foucault, who diagnoses the disappearance of the human and transforms ideas already found in the likes of Kant and Nietzsche. Stengers is our final witness to our current 'catastrophic' times and ways of thinking about science in the present. Through all these means, the course offers insights into what characterizes human existence and what conditions underlie this existence.

At the end of this course students can:

1. Reflect on implicit and explicit human images in everyday life, scientific undertakings, and philosophy itself
2. Understand the historical predicaments of the first-person perspective in Western Philosophy
3. Make adequate use of key concepts of philosophical anthropology
4. Recognize the repercussions of Kant's transcendental philosophy for the nineteenth and twentieth century
5. Closeread texts in the philosophical-anthropological tradition
6. Experiment with 'stirring' ways of thinking about (one's own) human existence