

HOMO SAPIENS FABER

Human Being Creative – an Anthroposophical- phenomenological view of the human being

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As a trainer of personal development with a holistic perspective it is my obligation to my students from time to time to step back from the details and to create a fresh picture of what the human being is from that perspective. Can a being have perspective upon itself? It is a good question. I cannot claim to be objective about myself. But then, the objective observation of the human being is limited in scope, as we are not objects. Being in our own experience subjects who live inside the observable phenomena – may justify a subjective point of view about the subject named human being. Also – if we humans will not create our own self-concept about who we are – who will do it for us?

Images of what the human being is are as multiple as the approaches to philosophy, sociology, psychology and religion. We were called many things: ‘The Dressed Angel’, ‘The Naked Ape’, ‘The unfinished animal’, ‘a coincident’, ‘a biological machine’, ‘The crown of creation’, ‘a soul’ (Plato), ‘A being in search of meaning’ (Plato), ‘What a man is in a potential, it is his work in a reality (Aristotle), ‘a social creature’ (Marks), ‘Intervals in the symphony of life’ (Nietzsche), ‘A cog in the machine’ (Josef Stalin), ‘Homo Economicus’ (Margaret Thatcher); a being of ‘Intuition and Concept’ (Kant), ‘an animal endowed with the capacity of reason’ (Kant), ‘A book, where all mysteries are contained, is a person’ (Bohme). And, the best definition of them all: **We are slowed down sound and light waves, a walking bundle of frequencies tuned into the cosmos. We are souls dressed up in sacred biochemical garments and our bodies are the instruments through which our souls play their music.** Albert Einstein. But it was William Shakespeare who put it most beautifully:

*‘What piece of work is a man,
how noble in reason,
how infinite in faculties,
in form and moving, how express and admirable
in action, how like an angel
in apprehension - how like a god!’ (Hamlet).*

Take your pick. But at one point one has to take a stand, especially if you are a trainer of personal development. Here is my chosen perspective and methodology for the purpose of this article: I am here to offer a view of the human being from an Anthroposophical-Phenomenological perspective, and I will soon define what I mean by these terms.

But first I have to explain the title: ‘*Homo sapiens Faber*’. ‘Homo sapiens’ is the common scientific term for the species of human beings, established in 1758 by the Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus in his ‘*Systema Naturae*’ and has been in common use ever since. It literally means ‘man of wisdom’. The term ‘*Homo Faber*’ was coined much earlier, some 2,300 years ago by the Roman consul and dictator Appius Claudius Caecus in the 3rd century BC in his book ‘*Sententiæ*’ to describe what is unique to the human being: “*Every man is the artifex* of his destiny*”, namely that human beings are the architects creating themselves. The term ‘*Homo sapiens Faber*’ is a combination created by the Russian scientist Vladimir Vernadsky (1860-1945), the founder of the terms *Geosphere*, *Biosphere* and *Noosphere*, to define the unique creative nature of human beings and their impact on nature.¹ |

¹ from a speech given by Vernadsky to the Society of Naturalists of Leningrad on February 5, 1928. 21st CENTURY, Spring-Summer 2012

*an artist (latin)

took this Vernadsky composite term '*Homo sapiens Faber*' as the most suitable starting point for this article.

The Anthroposophical-Phenomenological perspective is rarely available to the public in this country (Slovakia). Phenomenology was defined by its founder, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), as "*the reflective study of the essence of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view.*"² He declared that mental and spiritual reality are independent of any physical basis³. Anthroposophy was defined by its founder, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) as "*let the human being in you speak. Speak of what is beneath as well as what is above you, and you have anthroposophy. It is the wisdom spoken by man*"⁴.

So in order to fulfil the expectation that I myself created by posing the above title as the purpose of this article – I took my position to be a first-person point of view, and allowed the human being in me to speak of my own experience of being a human being. That is to say: I took the Anthroposophical-Phenomenological approach to speak of the being that I hereby call: *Homo sapiens Faber*.

I decided to take the approach known as 'First Philosophy'⁵ and ask myself the question: what do I really know about the human being from my direct experiential knowledge, sons all premeditated and read concepts, second-hand information and jargon? I realise that apart from a constant stream of sensations that keeps changing from waking up to falling asleep, which cannot really constitute knowledge – all that I really know first-hand of the phenomenon known as the human being, being myself an exemplar of it, emanates from my observation of what the human being *does*. As the list of that directly observable reality survives all passing sensations – it can indeed and it can be known, the human being can be known through this observation, and it can be considered knowledge.

So what does a human being do? What do I do?

First I all – **I sense the world around me**, including my own body, right from the first moment of my life, and perhaps before. To sense anything requires at least 3 factors: 1) I have to be there, present and awake; 2) there must be something to sense. 3) There has to be an instrument for sensing, a sense organ bridging me and the world. We normally count five such sensing organs: sight, touch, smell, taste, hearing. In reality there are seven more organs of perception for seven more aspects of the world phenomena: a sense of balance, a sense of warmth, a sense of movement, a sense of well-being, a sense of intonation, a sense of thought and the sense that tells us that there is another human being there: a sense for the 'I' of another person. Every healthy baby senses these impressions from the world, and sensing is the first and the on-going foundation stimuli for all other human functions. So the human being is a Sensing Being. We are ***Homo sapiens Sentientia***.

Next – I feel. I experience an inner resonance resulting from my sensation of the world, and that internal resonance outlasts the sense experience. Feeling has its own life in me, in response to anything outside and inside of me, and even to itself. Feelings are personal, they are the core

² Husserl, E. 1931. *Ideas: A General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1931),

³ Husserl, E. 1935. "It is my conviction that intentional phenomenology has for the first time made spirit as spirit the field of systematic scientific experience, thus effecting a total transformation of the task of knowledge." [Crisis of European Humanity](#).

⁴ Steiner, R. 1909, *Anthroposophy*, lecture 1.

⁵ 'First Philosophy' is a term for a philosophical return to the fundamentals of philosophy, asking primary questions, evaluating primary sources of knowledge, used every time a philosopher 'starts again' from fresh reflection on human conditions, experience and cognition, establishing one's own independent world view. This can happen at any point in the evolution of thinking. It is often used in reference to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* which is his response to the question of the meaning of being itself, namely: Ontology.

element of personality, what makes us human. It is the core life of the soul, the reality of all human relationships and the source of personal meaning. We are indeed ***Homo sapiens Affectum***.

And, of course, we think. I am doing thinking now. Experience is not all that we are, we also think about our experience, make sense of it, conceptualising our perceptions, give them meaning, create reality out of this combination, create mental pictures that long outlive the experience that stimulated their creation, build new connections between existing pictures, remember them and create learning. *Cogito Ergo Sum* might not be a statement about the whole human being, but it sure is a statement about a huge component of being a human being. We are evidently ***Homo sapiens Cognito***.

Then we memorise. Our impressions and experiences combined with the meaning we give them become stored in an unknown location in our constitution through the act of *memorising* and a lot of it is made available upon request to our *remembering* activity. All human learning, language, knowledge, culture – is based on human memory. Memories connect to memories in the creation of new possibilities and become triggered through associations, giving the deep personal meaning to new experience. We are, without a doubt, **Homo sapiens Memoriali**.

Then we are busy all our life ***Living*** and ***Dying***. We grow, develop, regenerate – and we degenerate, deteriorate, decline, like every other living being, all the time. Youth is when the living process prevails, ageing is when the dying process prevails in us. We are very busy with the tension between the two. We are in this light ***Homo sapiens Viventem at mori***.

And we desire a lot. In common with animals, desire animates us throughout our life. We desire much more than basic physical existential satisfaction. Our desire reaches from the basic bodily needs to the heights of human cultural fulfilment with the whole gamut of human development, economy and relationships in between. The desire is the engine of our earthly life: attraction & repulsion; longing & fulfilment; sympathy & antipathy; interest and boredom. **Homo sapiens Cupidus**.

With our will we act. We change the world and we change ourselves through action. We work, create, change, care, make decisions and act on them or not, make commitments, change our lives, till the ground, build a house, start relationship and stop them. We do. Huge preparatory process is required for intention to become an action or a reaction. Human will is the potential for action, and human will is a mystery. So many aspects of will have to combine for action. ***Homo sapiens Actio***.

And we create. We humans are that part of creation that keeps creation going out of itself. We create new possibilities all the time, possibilities and realities that nature has not created. We the creatures create. Every aspect of human life undergoes the unstoppable transformational process called human civilization. Everything that is given is for us a raw material for new creation. ***Homo sapiens Creo***.

And we love. All living beings procreate and all animals care for their young ones, but we actively love. Love is not only a feeling, it is something that we do out of feeling, sometimes out of a sense of duty or an idea, but we know when an act is a loving one or not. The ancient Greek had at least three words for love: Eros for sexual love, Philia for emotional love and Agape or spiritual love. Human life without love is less than human. Love gives us the deepest meaning of life and motivates us to the greatest deeds. ***Homo sapiens Amandum***.

We do Freedom. This is a unique human occupation: to set ourselves free, to emancipate, to liberate, to expand beyond old limitations, to set ourselves free. We do so much in this direction. So much of human history is shaped by the struggle for freedom. ***Homo sapiens Liberto***.

We do relationships. We create, maintain, transform, develop and destroy relationships all the time. Take relationships out of anyone's biography – and it will be someone else, not very human. To relate is to be human. The human being of relationship – ***Homanum esse de necessitudine***.

And we are spiritually active. One does not have to believe in the spiritual world in order to observe that there is a whole range of activities human beings are busy with which can only be called spiritual: we create purpose and meaning and direction for our life; we develop identity; we create and struggle with and apply morality; we philosophise: love of wisdom, we create religions and we have spiritual experiences. We are spirits, and therefore we are Spirit. It is an activity, it is something that we do. ***Homo sapiens in Spiritum.***

And above all – we develop. Up to a certain point nature, family and society move us in our development, and from some point onwards we have a choice in this matter: we can choose to evolve further or to stagnate and repeat established patterns. We evolve consciously or not, individually and collectively. One of the most distinct characteristics of human beings is that we evolve continuously, creating unstoppable human progress, good or bad. ***Homo sapiens Progressio.***

This is a list of the basic human activities which are common to the absolute majority of humanity, at least in the past 500 years, starting in Europe and progressively spreading as global characterisation of what it is to be a human being. In fact it is difficult to imagine a human being, a human community and society in which people do less than the above list of activities. Here is a proposed scientific term for this particular creature: ***Homo sapiens Faber, Sentienta, Affectum, Cognito, Memoriali, Viviento at Mori, Cupidus, Actio, Creo, Amandum, Liberto, Homanum esse de necessitudine, in Spiritum Progressio.*** We combine in our human constitution, at the very least, a living body, sensation of the world, a living thinking, feeling, willing soul, an active individual spirit, active participation in human relationship, and we are loving, creative, evolving beings. We are not less than all that. This is who we are, available to direct, unbiased observation, factually.

How do we do all this? What must a constitution be to enable such a rich range of activities? What is the structure of the human constitution which enables us such life and how did it come into being?

All these questions will have to be the topics for the next article.

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