

## **Complexity and reductionism at the source of the current impasse in economic theory and ecology: which model of man for the Anthropocene?**

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### **Abstract:**

Modern economic theory, especially in its neoclassical version, is grounded on methodological and ontological individualism, whereas ecological thought, starting from Haeckel, has developed as a science of connections, integration of living systems in their environment, and more generally of the “whole” seen through its constitutive relations. Two different ontologies underlie the models of man proposed by the two perspectives: a reductionist substantialist ontology and a relational ontology. Some economists as Boulding have never seen the concern for the common “spaceship” earth (1966) and human betterment (1984) as alien to economic theory. These insights have been exploited by models of “positive ecology” as the “circular economy” (Ferry 2021), but a further investigation of the ontological nature of open and closed systems, as adopted in Boulding’s framework, is required. In the spirit of Campagnolo and Gharbi (2017), we think that the contribution that philosophy of economics can provide to tackle the challenges of the Anthropocene should consist in making explicit the ontological presuppositions of the models of man that characterise modern economic theory as well as ecological thinking, making no preliminary normative assumption on which should be the correct model, since these assumptions are never neutral. In this respect we will investigate the models of man that are proposed by some recent contemporary attempts to foster humanism in its different aspects as Baechler (2019, 2020), Brague (2019, 2022), Melé (2014), Morin (2016), Nida-Rumelin (2017, 2021) and Spaemann (2006), since they provide some valuable frameworks for a renewed anthropology with normative implications.