DiGeSt – Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies

The *Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies* (*DiGeSt*) is a bi-annual, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the intersection of diversity and gender studies. It welcomes contributions from a broad array of disciplines in the arts and humanities (such as sociology, philosophy, anthropology, history, arts, and literature) but also from the natural sciences. *DiGeSt* aims to provide a forum for debate on current research regarding gender and diversity in Belgium, yet also has a keen interest in practices and research on other countries and societies. It comments on topical and/or coming trends that affect research in these areas. In highlighting the significance of ongoing research for knowledge, culture and daily life, it aims to appeal to both a specialist and a wide audience.

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Editorial

DiGeSt is one of the first (if not the first) scholarly journal(s) to cover research focusing on both diversity and gender studies. It is dedicated to diversity, gender and their intersections, since femininities and masculinities are always classed, raced, and shaped by sexuality and (dis)ability in structurally differentiated ways. *DiGeSt* explores the ways in which the rich tradition of research on sexual difference, with its established critical frameworks and methodologies, can both further advance and build on research that in many different domains addresses the questions "what is diversity?", "what is difference?", "what challenges and opportunities does it bring forth?", and "why is it so important to understand these questions?"

In order for the power systems and mechanisms of exclusion – in our societies and environments at large as well as in our everyday lives, our thinking, our beliefs and (cultural) production – to be brought to light, we need to map the ways in which gender inequality relates to other processes that select, structure, and set standards. We want to examine the hurdles modern societies need to cross so as to be the "open" and just societies they claim they are or want to be. Social categories such as sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, race, class, age, disability, and (chronic) illness continue to define individual life chances and the formation of social boundaries in ways that do not correspond with the proclaimed openness of modern societies and their members.

DiGeSt provides a forum for debate on current research regarding gender and diversity in Belgium, and comments on topical or upcoming trends that affect research in these areas. The journal also has a keen interest in ongoing practices and research in other countries and societies. By highlighting the significance of research in these fields for knowledge, culture, and daily life, it aims to appeal to both a specialist and a wide audience. It offers contributions from a broad array of disciplines in the arts and humanities (such as sociology, philosophy, history, arts, and literature) but also from the natural sciences.

This double issue of *DiGest* opens with two contributions on the posthumanities. In her article "Yes, There Is No Crisis: Working Towards the Posthumanities", **Rosi Braidotti** discusses how critical theory may be updated for the third millennium by taking a radical postanthropocentric position. According to Braidotti, we

live in a multi-layered and complex world that goes beyond traditional divides of Wo/Man, culture/nature, matter/reason. We are confronted with "complex systems of data feedback, interaction and communication transfer", instead of dichotomies. Consequently, we need new schemes of thought that do justice to complex systems. For Braidotti, this means breaking anthropocentric epistemologies and national (Eurocentric) paradigms that still dominate the production of knowledge in many European institutions.

Like Braidotti, **N. Katherine Hayles** believes that there is "no crisis in the humanities". Rather, there is "a change or a transformation in our human condition to which the humanities need to respond". For Hayles, this change in condition can be situated in the domain of digital media and technology. Digital media change not only social and humanistic practices but also human neural structures: they literally change the way we think. In order to confront these new conditions, we need to pay attention to "enwebbed complexities", intra-actions between various domains, including the sciences and the humanities.

Following the contributions on the posthumanities, there is a special section on "intersectionality", edited by **Karen Celis**, **Eline Severs** and **Alison E. Woodward**. This special section is based on a series of reading seminars, workshops, and lectures on the concept of intersectionality held at the VUB Centre of Expertise on Gender, Diversity, and Intersectionality (RHEA) in 2013 and 2014. The lecture series was part of the Policy Research Centre on Equality Policies ("Steunpunt Gelijkekansenbeleid"), an inter-university research consortium comprising the Universities of Antwerp, Hasselt, Brussels, Ghent, and Leuven, supported by the Flemish government ministries of Scientific Research and Equality Policies.

Central to the reading seminars, workshops, and lectures, was the question of whether, and in what way, the concept of intersectionality should inform both policy-oriented research and equality laws and policies. As Myra Marx Ferree contends in her contribution to this special section, "Despite the current popularity of intersectionality as the theory *du jour*" (emphasis in original), it is often the case that "the underlying dynamics of power still remain all too invisible to feminists both in academia and in policy positions." The special section reflects intellectual exchanges and debate among senior and junior researchers across disciplines and scientific strands, and considers how to make the workings of intersectionality visible. The overall aim is to provide examples from various fields and strands in order to show how intersectionality – understood as a theory, concept, and heuristic device – can be incorporated in policy-oriented research, laws, and policies.

The special section kicks off with a round table including four pointed essays on intersectionality. The first two contributions focus on the academic use (and misuse) of the concept. **Myra Marx Ferree**'s central claim is that the travel of intersection-

ality from the highly racialized context of the United States to the European context implies that feminist scholars should be much more attentive to their proper white (and other) privileges. Because of these privileges, they cannot delegate the responsibility of articulating and representing the positions, differences, and lived oppressions of "the others" to "them", thus reinforcing "our" privilege. Power, she argues, is a relationship, and intersectionality can therefore only be understood in a dynamic fashion: relations and power struggles – with varying and simultaneous winners and losers – need to replace stable categories and antipodal positions.

The second round table contribution by **Helma Lutz** adds in an important way to the development of guidelines on how to incorporate intersectionality in an intelligible way in research. Lutz conceives of intersectionality as a heuristic device or a method that allows for uncovering both visible and invisible strands of inequality and processes that underpin privilege and disadvantage. For her, Mari Matsuda's call to "ask the other question" – i.e. if we see something sexist to ask the question where the heterosexism and racism is – should guide not only the initial phases of research and law and policy-making but also the investigation on how "intersectionality is done": structures of racism, sexism, and class discrimination mould individuals' identities and actions, yet individuals also resist and negotiate those interacting structures.

The final two essays of the round table are more explicitly invested in the incorporation of intersectionality in equality policies and equality laws. They deal with the ardent question of how to envision equality policy and non-discrimination law in our intersectional times. **Mieke Verloo** addresses the issue of whether positive action is still desirable. By highlighting the impact of positive actions on multiple intersectional categories, Verloo shows the need to take into account specific effects if positive action is to establish equality. Furthermore, policy-makers need to be very careful in defining intersectional categories, since they are always contextualized. This is necessary since intersectional categories can resonate with, and reflect, the positions of "anti-equality actors". **Dagmar Schiek** takes us to another field of the feminist and intersectional battle: EU non-discrimination law. Can it still do justice to persons situated at the intersection of several discrimination grounds? Schiek contends that it can, but only if it alters its traditional approach to inequality. Non-discrimination law tends to approach intersectional inequalities as "layer upon layer", reiterating an additive approach. A more intersectionally sensitive approach – one that is attentive to the interactions of inequality strands – focuses on the overlap between the nodes of sex, race, and disability. The node concept turns "overlap", that is, intersectionality or multiple discrimination, into the norm rather than the exception. It enables us to see all aspects and not just one ground of a discrimination case.

The points made in the round table essays are elaborated and substantiated in the eight original research articles included in the special section. Speaking to Verloo's

claim that target group policies are desirable (if well designed and not dangerous), **Petra Meier**, **Dimitri Mortelmans**, **Laura Emery**, and **Christine Defever** convincingly show how apt quantitative methods are for delineating specifically vulnerable groups at the intersection of social class and migrant backgrounds. Their study demonstrates that young lower-class adults with a migrant background accumulate inequalities in the transition to young adulthood and would therefore benefit from equality policies. Gender equality policies do not seem to be of importance in this specific case. This finding helps underscore the relevance of the nodes approach introduced by Schiek: interaction between grounds of discrimination is a fact but varies across contexts.

Tina Goethals, **Elisabeth De Schauwer**, and **Geert Van Hove** convincingly show that qualitative methods can also be productive to identify intersectional groups and needs. Their inclusive, reflexive, and anti-essentialist approach results in cooperative knowledge production and, as such, forms an excellent illustration of how the "us-them" trap as defined by Ferree can be avoided. This article, like that of Meier, Mortelmans, Emery, and Defever, exemplifies the added value of intersectionality as a heuristic framework, discussed by Lutz.

Highly complementary to these two articles, is the contribution by **Serena D'Agostino**, which presents a framework for establishing to what degree intersectionality is implemented in, and part and parcel of, policy tissue. Building on an analysis of policies for Roma women in Central and Eastern European Member States, the framework developed by D'Agostino puts forward criteria to measure the extent to which and the ways in which intersectionality is incorporated in policy-making processes. Interestingly, the criteria target not only institutions and law but also intersectional vocabulary, implementation efforts, and civil society organisations.

Speaking to the plea that careful attention should be given to how "intersectionality is done", and more specifically to the potential dangers of reinforcing dichotomies and stigma in that very process, **Sara de Jong** points at a problematic aspect of an Austrian policy initiative in which migrant women are recruited as mediators between migrant communities and Austrian society. Adding to Ferree's concerns about the extent to which intersectionality can travel in a European context, De Jong observes that intersectional analysis in Europe gains from paying attention to its position vis-à-vis colonial discourses. Similarly, **Eline Severs**' analysis of the debate on how to denote a migrant population – e.g. "allochthons", "new Flemmings" – shows the dangers of intersectionality in practice. Citizens with migrant backgrounds are racialized and blamed for their own position by the "simple" use of such concepts. Changing the way "we" talk about "them" is, as Severs and Ferree claim in unison, useless in the absence of a broader reflection on power relations.

The three final articles are textbook examples of how intersectionality as a power mechanism creates complex patterns of privilege and oppression. **Ov Cristian Norocel**'s analysis of the ethno-nationalist project of populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe and their performance of masculinity, shows how the normative dynamic between masculinity, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation generates the "normal Romanian man" versus the "Ethnic Other". **Heleen Huysentruyt**, **Petra Meier**, and **Alexis Dewaele** similarly point at processes of inclusion and exclusion of homosexuals in the gay neighbourhood in Brussels based on structural socio-economic position, sexism, racism, ethnicity, and class. The very process of turning the gay neighbourhood into a public space has led to the exclusion of homosexual non-white minorities. More precisely, the LGB public space of Brussels belongs to the white, middle-class gay man of working age. **Soumia Akachar**'s analysis of the discourse concerning gay Muslims in the Netherlands reveals a similar process of marginalization. To embrace homosexuality and to identify with Islamic values is presented as mutually exclusive. As a consequence, the existence of gay Muslims is being ignored.

Taken together the essays and articles in the special section present a wide variety of methods and analyse a diverse set of country cases and intersecting identity markers. More importantly, they show that intersectionality is a fruitful research area feeding into policy and law-making. While not an exhaustive set of guidelines for future research, law, and policy-making, the contributions in this special section, underscore the assertion that the success of future research and policy development will, in part, depend on its attention to the (sometimes subtle) processes of intersectional privileging and disadvantaging, and the ways in which academia, law, and policy-making are respectively involved in these processes. The guest editors thank the contributors to the special section for their willingness to engage in this intellectual enterprise, and the Flemish government and Policy Research Centre on Equality Policies for providing the opportunity and funding that made this project possible.

The next issue of *DiGeSt* will again be a general issue. Contributions reflect on the concept of vulnerability, especially in light of the Paris attacks. They continue the debate on migration, highlight experiences of Belgian queer Muslims, and research the correlation between gender and technology. The issue after that will be a special issue on "Silence and Diversity", edited by Pieter Verstraete and Josephine Hoegaerts.

The editorial board
The guest editors, Karen Celis, Eline Severs, and Alison E. Woodward

Yes, There Is No Crisis.
Working Towards the Posthumanities[*]

Rosi Braidotti

There is widespread consensus in the Humanities scholarly community that it is inappropriate to speak of a "crisis" of our field. But nobody is denying that we spend a disproportionate amount of time actually justifying or defending our existence to the public. I want to argue that this is a constitutive contradiction of the Humanities today and that it reflects not only public concern about our relevance, but also significant internal fractures within the Humanities, that cannot be mended just by good will, healthy self-confidence or downright denial. In this paper, I want to look more closely at some of these inner fractures.

It is almost inevitable that the debate about the status and function of the Humanities today will raise broader issues, notably the constructions of the human within contemporary Humanities scholarship and an array of anti-humanist and posthumanist positions (Braidotti, 2013). The starting point for me is the anti-humanist death of Wo/Man, which marks the decline of some of the fundamental premises of the Enlightenment and modernity. Those are the dualistic schemes of thought that position Man/reason/culture on the one side and Woman/matter/nature on the other; the progress of mankind through a self-regulatory and teleological ordained use of reason; secular scientific rationality allegedly aimed at the perfectibility of "Man"; and a unitary subject position. My general hypothesis is simple: the Humanities can and will survive their present predicament and contradictions to the extent that they will show the ability and willingness to undergo a major process of transformation in response to both technological advances and geo-political developments. We need schemes of thought and figurations that enable us to account in empow-

ering terms for the changes and transformations currently on the way. We already live in permanent states of transition, hybridisation and nomadic mobility, in emancipated (postfeminist), multiethnic societies with high degrees of technological mediation. These are neither simple, nor linear events, but rather multilayered and internally contradictory phenomena. They combine elements of ultra-modernity with splinters of neo-archaism: high-tech advances and neo-primitivism, which defy the logic of excluded middle. The Humanities therefore need great creativity to cope with these challenges.

The debate is framed at the outset by the legacy of one of the great controversies of the 1980s, namely the issue of humanism and posthumanism. For scholars in continental French philosophy, gender, cultural and postcolonial studies, as well as the interdisciplinary field of environmental, science and technology studies, the question of what notion of the "Human" is, implied in the practice of the Humanities, emerged as a central concern.

The idea of the "Human" implied in the Humanities, that is to say the implicit assumptions about what constitutes the basic unit of reference for the knowing subject, is the image of Man as a rational animal endowed with language. This is the humanist core of the classical vision of "Man", which includes both an ideal of bodily perfection and a set of mental, discursive, and spiritual values. This vision combines belief in human uniqueness with faith in a teleologically ordained view of rational progress through scientific development.

On the critical front, anti-humanists over the last thirty years have questioned both the self-representation and the image of thought implied in the humanist definition of the Human, especially the ideas of transcendental reason and the notion that the subject coincides with rational consciousness (Foucault, 1970; 1977). This flattering self-image of "Man" is as problematic as it is partial in that it promotes a self-centered attitude.

The humanist model does not only set standards for individuals, but also for their cultures. Humanism historically developed into a civilisational model, which shaped a certain idea of Europe as coinciding with the universalising powers of self-reflexive reason. This self-aggrandising vision assumes that Europe is not just a geo-political location, but rather a universal attribute of the human mind that can lend its quality to any suitable object. Equal only to itself, Europe as universal consciousness transcends its specificity, or rather, posits the power of transcendence as its distinctive characteristic and humanistic universalism as its particularity. This makes Eurocentrism into more than just a contingent matter of attitude: it is a structural element of our cultural practice, which is also embedded in both theory and institutional and pedagogical practices.

This paradigm implies the dialectics of self and Other, and the binary logic of

identity and Otherness as the motor for universal Humanism. Central to this universalistic posture and its binary logic is the notion of "difference" as pejoration. By organising differences on a hierarchical scale of decreasing worth, this humanist subject defined "himself" as much by what "he" excluded from as by what "he" included in "his" self-representation. Subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behavior, whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart. Insofar as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as Others. These are the sexualized, racialized, and naturalized Others, who are reduced to the less than human status of disposable bodies. We are all humans, but some of us are just more mortal than others. Because their history in Europe and elsewhere has been one of lethal exclusions and fatal disqualifications, these Others raise issues of power and exclusion.

On the creative side, over the last thirty years, new critical epistemologies have offered alternative definitions of the "human" by inventing interdisciplinary areas which call themselves "studies". These include gender, feminism, ethnicity, cultural, postcolonial, media and new media and Human rights studies (Bart, Didur & Heffernan, 2003). Claims to universalism were critiqued as being exclusive, androcentric, and Euro-centric. They were shown to support masculinist, racist or racial supremacist ideologies that turn cultural specificity into a fake universal and normality into a normative injunction. This image of thought perverts the practice of the Humanities, and in particular theory, into an exercise of hierarchical exclusion and cultural hegemony. The alternative views about the human and the new formations of subjectivity that have emerged from the radical epistemologies of Continental philosophy in the last thirty years do not merely oppose Humanism but create other visions of the self. Sexualised, racialised, and naturalised differences, far from being the categorical boundary-keepers of the subject of Humanism, have evolved into fully-fledged alternative models of the human subject. They bring about the displacement of the Human to an enormous extent. In sum, what has emerged as a potentially fatal flaw at the core of the Humanities is their structural anthropomorphism and perennial methodological nationalism (Beck, 2007). Let me discuss this briefly before focusing on the postanthropocentric turn.

Structural anthropomorphism translates into sustained hostility towards, or genuine incompatibility with, the culture, practice, and institutional existence of science and technology. Methodological nationalism challenges the Humanities' ability to cope with two of the distinctive features of our times: firstly the scientific rise of "Life" sciences, and technologically mediated communication and knowledge transfer. Secondly, the need to take into account cultural diversity, notably between different geo-political areas but also within each one of them.

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The issue of methodological nationalism is crucial in that it is in-built into the European Humanities' self-representation. Edward Said reminded us that Humanism must shed its smug Euro-centrism and become an adventure in difference and alternative cultural traditions. This shift of perspectives requires a prior consciousness-raising on the part of Humanities scholars: "Humanists must recognise with some alarm that the politics of identity and the nationalistically grounded system of education remain at the core of what most of us actually do, despite changed boundaries and objects of research" (Said, 2004, p. 55). We shall see later how the changed institutional structure of the contemporary university both rests upon the decline of the nation state as the horizon for research and also has the potential to contribute to a postnational perspective.

Contemporary European subjects of knowledge must meet the ethical obligation to be accountable for their past history and the long shadow it casts on their present-day politics.[1] The new mission that Europe has to embrace entails the criticism of narrow-minded self-interests, intolerance, and xenophobic rejection of otherness. Symbolic of the closure of the European mind is the fate of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, which bear the brunt of racism in contemporary Europe.

Postanthropocentrism

The posthuman dimension of postanthropocentrism can consequently be seen as a deconstructive move. What it deconstructs is species supremacy, but it also inflicts a blow to any lingering notion of human nature, *anthropos* and *bios*, as categorically distinct from the life of animals and non-humans, or *zoe*. What comes to the fore instead is a nature-culture continuum in the very embodied structure of the extended self. This shift can be seen as a sort of "anthropological exodus" from the dominant configurations of the human as the king of creation (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 215) – a colossal hybridisation of the species.

Once the centrality of *anthropos* is challenged, a number of boundaries between "Man" and his Others go tumbling down, in a cascade effect that opens up unexpected perspectives. Thus, if the crisis of Humanism inaugurates the posthuman by empowering the sexualised and racialised human Others to emancipate themselves from the dialectics of master-slave relations, the crisis of *anthropos* relinquishes the demonic forces of the naturalised others. Animals, insects, plants and the environment, in fact the planet and the cosmos as a whole, are called into play. This places a different burden of responsibility on our species, which is the primary cause for the mess. The fact that our geological era is known as the "anthropocene"[2] stresses both the technologically mediated power acquired by *anthropos* and its potentially lethal consequences for everyone else.

Many of the assumptions and premises of the postanthropocentric universe are somewhat counterintuitive, although the term has acquired widespread currency nowadays. In mainstream public debates, for instance, the posthuman is usually coated in anxiety about the excesses of technological intervention and the threat of climate change, or by elation about the potential for human enhancement. In academic culture, on the other hand, the critique of anthropocentrism has even more shattering implications than the transformative agenda of posthumanism. The postanthropocentric turn, linked to the compounded impacts of globalisation and of technology-driven forms of mediation, strikes the human at his/her heart and shifts the parameters that used to define *anthropos*.

Dipesh Chakrabarty addresses some of these concerns by investigating the consequences of the climate change debate for the practice of history. He argues that the scholarship on climate change causes both spatial and temporal difficulties. It brings about a change of scale in our thinking, which now needs to encompass a planetary or geo-centered dimension, acknowledging that humans are larger than a biological entity and now wield a geological force. It also shifts the temporal parameters away from the expectation of continuity which sustains the discipline of history, to contemplate the idea of extinction, that is to say, a future without "us". Furthermore, these shifts in the basic parameters also affect the content of historical research, by "destroying the artificial but time-honoured distinction between natural and human histories" (Chakrabarty, 2009, p. 206). Although Chakrabarty does not take the postanthropocentric path, he comes to the same conclusion as I do: the issue of geo-centred perspectives and the change of location of humans from mere biological to geological agents, calls for recompositions of both subjectivity and community.

The geo-centred turn also comes with other serious political implications. The first concerns the limitations of classical Humanism in the Enlightenment model. Relying on postcolonial theory, Chakrabarty points out that the "philosophers of freedom were mainly, and understandably, concerned with how humans would escape the injustice, oppression, inequality or even uniformity foisted on them by other humans or human-made systems" (Chakrabarty, 2009, p. 208). Their anthropocentrism, coupled with a culture-specific notion of Humanism, limits their relevance today. The climate change issue and the spectre of human extinction also affect "the analytic strategies that postcolonial and postimperial historians have deployed in the last two decades in response to the postwar scenario of decolonization and globalization" (Chakrabarty, 2009, p. 198). I would add that the social constructivist approach of Marxist, feminist and postcolonial analyses does not completely equip them to deal with the change of spatial and temporal scale engendered by the postanthropocentric or geo-centered shift. This insight is the core of the radical postanthro-

pocentric position I want to defend, which I see as a way of updating critical theory for the third millennium.

Many scholars are coming to the same conclusion, through different routes. For instance, postanthropocentric neo-humanist traditions of socialist or of standpoint feminist theories (Harding, 1986) and of postcolonial theory (Shiva, 1997) have approached the issues of environmentalism in a postanthropocentric, or at least non-androcentric, or non-male dominated, manner.

How Are the Humanities to Cope with This?

The question of the future of the Humanities, the issue of their renewal and the recurrent threat of death of the disciplines, is aggravated by one central factor: the new ''human-non-human linkages, among them complex interfaces involving machinic assemblages of biological 'wetware' and non-biological 'hardware''' (Bono, Dean & Plonowska Ziarek, 2008, p. 3). What is the place of the Humanities as a scientific enterprise in this globalised network culture that no longer upholds the unity of space and time as its governing principle (Terranova, 2004)? In the era of citizens' science and citizens' journalism, what can be the role of academic research institutions?[3]

The dualistic distinction nature-culture has collapsed and is replaced by complex systems of data-feedback, interaction, and communication transfer. This places the issue of the relationship between the two cultures at the centre of the agenda again. The anthropocentric core of the Humanities is displaced by this complex configuration of knowledge dominated by science studies and technological information. Far from being a terminal crisis, however, this challenge opens up new global, ecosophical dimensions. Against the prophets of doom, I want to argue that technologically mediated postanthropocentrism can enlist the resources of bio-genetic codes, as well as telecommunication, new media, and Information Technologies to the task of renewing the Humanities. Posthuman subjectivity reshapes the identity of humanistic practices, by stressing heteronomy and multifaceted relationality, instead of autonomy and self-referential disciplinary purity.

Today, environmental, evolutionary, cognitive, biogenetic, and digital transdisciplinary discursive fronts are emerging around the edges of the classical Humanities and across the disciplines. They rest on postanthropocentric premises and technologically mediated emphasis on Life, and foster species egalitarianism, which are very promising for new research in the field (Braidotti, 2006). Probably the most significant example of the excellent health enjoyed by the postanthropocentric Humanities is the recent explosion of scholarship in the fields of Animal Studies and of Eco-criticism. Both areas are so rich and fast-growing that it is impossible to even attempt to summarise them.[4] Where do these developments leave the scholarship in

the Humanities? Or rather: what has the human got to do with this shifting horizon? And what are the implications for the future of the Humanities today?

The vitality is high, as shown by the ongoing proliferation of new discursive fields. The end of the Cold War led to the emergence of Centers for Conflict Studies and Peace research and since then we have seen the development of Humanitarian management, Human Rights-oriented medicine, trauma and reconciliation studies, Death Studies – the list is growing still. These are institutional structures that combine pastoral care with a therapeutic function to deal with the inhumane and painful aspects of historical horrors. They perpetuate and update the transformative impact of the Humanities in an inhumane context, but they do so by exploding the boundaries of classical Humanities disciplines.

Therefore, instead of turning backwards to a nostalgic vision of the Humanities as the repository and the executors of universal transcendental reason and inherent moral goodness, such as Martha Nussbaum (1999; 2010) proposes, I suggest that we move forward into multiple posthuman futures. We need an active effort to reinvent the academic field of the Humanities in a new global context and to develop an ethical framework worthy of our posthuman times. Affirmation, not nostalgia, is the road to pursue: not the idealisation of philosophical meta-discourse, but the more pragmatic task of self-transformation through humble experimentation.

This is not as abstract as it may sound at first. Let me give you some concrete examples. The first is the fast-growing field of the environmental Humanities, inspired by the awareness that human activity has a geological influence. Also known as sustainable Humanities (Braidotti, 2006) and as "anthropocene Humanities",[5] this interdisciplinary field of study introduces major methodological as well as theoretical innovations. For one thing, it spells the end of the idea of a denaturalised social order disconnected from its environmental and organic foundations, and calls for more complex schemes of understanding the multilayered form of interdependence we all live in. Secondly, it stresses the specific contribution of the Humanities to the public debate on climate change, through the analysis of the social and cultural factors that underscore the public representation of these issues. Both the scale and the consequences of climate change are so momentous as to defy representation. The Humanities, and more specifically cultural research, are best suited to fill in this deficit of the social imaginary and help us think the unthinkable.

In his analysis of the implications of climate change research for the discipline of history, for example, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues for a more conceptual shift towards "Deep History". This is an interdisciplinary combination of geological and socio-economic history, which focuses both on the planetary or earth factors and on the cultural changes that have jointly created humanity over hundreds of thousands of years. It combines theories of historical subjectivity with "species thinking". This is,

in my eyes, a postanthropocentric configuration of knowledge, which grants the earth the same role and agency as the human subjects that inhabit it.

The scale of these mental shifts is such as to almost defy representation, as I suggested above. Chakrabarty suggests further critical reflection on "the difference between the present historiography of globalization and the historiography demanded by anthropogenic theories of climate change" (Chakrabarty, 2009, p. 216). This forces us to bring together categories of thought which were till now kept apart not only by disciplinary boundaries – between the earth sciences and literature and history, for instance – but also by the anthropocentric bias that has sustained the Humanities. Far from being a crisis, this new development has enormous inspirational force for the field. It also calls into question some of the current ideas about the negative formation of a new sense of "the human" as bound together by shared vulnerability in relation to the possibility of extinction. Chakrabarty's insights about a critical climate change-driven Deep History also challenges some of the given assumptions about postcolonial critiques of the Western universal – quite a programme.

Another illuminating example of the advantages of a posthuman scientific position is the One Health Initiative.[6] The movement is inspired by Rudolf Virchow (1821-1902), who coined the term *zoonosis*, arguing that there should be no dividing lines between animal and human medicine. This position has been gathering momentum in the last fifteen years. The One Health Initiative is a rather daring interdisciplinary alliance that unites physicians, osteopaths, veterinarians, dentists, nurses, and other scientific-health and environmentally related disciplines, on the basis of a simple hypothesis, which is the isomorphism of structures between humans and animals in immunology, bacteriology, and vaccine developments. This means that humans are both exposed and vulnerable to new diseases, like bird flu and other epidemics, which they share with animal species.

A response to the new pandemics that have emerged in the global era, like Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), better known as "mad cow disease", the One Health Initiative stresses the variety of shared diseases that tie humans and animals. For instance, animals suffer from many of the same chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, asthma, and arthritis as humans. It follows that we should develop comparative medicine as the study of disease processes across species and that therefore we should also connect doctors and veterinarians in their daily practices, both therapeutic and research-based. Environmentally embedded, the One Health Initiative pursues both ecological and social sustainability and has large social repercussions. It is the perfect postanthropocentric concept that brings together human health care practitioners, veterinarians, and public-health professionals for the sake of environmental social and individual sustainability.

Another significant example is the fast growing-field of the Digital Humanities – pioneered by Katherine Hayles – which deals with a rich agenda of thematic and methodological issues. One of them is the continuing relevance of the science of texts and the role of the press, from Gutenberg to 3D printing, in shaping human knowledge. Just as the Humanities led these discussions in the sixteenth century, when the printing press was introduced in the Western world, so are they at the forefront of contemporary frontiers of thought. And they are not alone.

Conclusion

I have argued throughout this paper that posthuman theory rests on a process ontology that challenges the traditional equation of subjectivity with rational consciousness, resisting the reduction of both to objectivity and linearity.[7] A collectively distributed consciousness emerges from this, a transversal form of non-synthetic understanding of the relational bond that connects us. This places the relation and the notion of complexity at the centre of both the ethics and the epistemic structures and strategies of the posthuman subject (Braidotti, 2006).

This view has important implications for the production of scientific knowledge. The dominant vision of the scientific enterprise is based on the institutional implementation of a number of Laws that discipline the practice of scientific research and police the thematic and methodological borders of what counts as respectable, acceptable, and fundable science. In so doing, the laws of scientific practice regulate what a mind is allowed to do, and thus they control the structures of our thinking. Posthuman thought proposes an alternative vision of both the thinking subject, of his or her evolution on the planetary stage and the actual structure of thinking. As a consequence, one can venture the preliminary conclusion that the main implication of posthuman critical theory for the practice of science is that the scientific Laws need to be retuned according to a view of the subject of knowledge as a complex singularity, an affective assemblage, and a relational vitalist entity.

It follows from all this that the Humanities in the posthuman era of the anthropocene should not stick to the Human – let alone "Man" – as its proper object of study. On the contrary, the field would benefit by being free from the empire of humanist Man, so as to be able to access in a postanthropocentric manner issues of external and even planetary importance, such as scientific and technological advances, ecological and social sustainability, and the multiple challenges of globalisation. Such a change of focus requires assistance from other social and scientific actors as well. This does not mean that "human" should become an obsolete category – rather, we need to update our understanding of what counts as "human" and what new forms the Humanities research is able to acquire.

The question is whether the Humanities are allowed to set their own agenda in relation to contemporary science and technology, or whether they are confined to places they did not choose in the first place. There is in fact a distinct tendency, for instance in the public debates about climate change, or biotechnologies, to assign to the institutionally under-funded field of the Humanities all subjects related to the human component of these complex debates. This tendency has made the institutional fortunes of ethics, which is expected – and often claims itself the prerogative – to issue new meta-discourses and normative injunctions suited to the dilemmas of our age. This meta-discursive claim, however, is unsubstantiated. It moreover perpetuates the institutionalized habit of thought – reactive and sedentary – of erecting philosophy to the role of a master theory. The image of the philosopher as the legislator of knowledge and the judge of truth, a model rooted in the Kantian school, is the exact opposite of what posthuman critical theory is arguing for: postidentitarian, non-unitary and transversal subjectivity based on relations with human and non-human others.

My point is that the Humanities need to embrace the multiple opportunities offered by the posthuman condition. The Humanities can set their own objects of enquiry, free from the traditional or institutional assignment to the human and its humanistic derivatives. We know by now that the field of the Humanities is richly endowed with an archive of multiple possibilities which equip it with the methodological and theoretical resources to set up original and necessary debates with the sciences and technologies and other grand challenges of today. The question is what the Humanities can become, in the posthuman era and after the decline of the primacy of Man and of *anthropos*.

In conclusion, I think the Humanities can and will survive and prosper to the extent that they will show the ability and willingness to undergo a major process of transformation in the direction of the posthuman. To be worthy of our times, we need to be pragmatic: we need schemes of thought and figurations that enable us to account in empowering terms for the changes and transformations currently on the way. In addition, we need to embrace non-profit as a key value in contemporary knowledge production, but this gratuitousness is linked to the construction of social horizons of hope and therefore it is a vote of confidence in the sheer sustainability of the future (Braidotti, 2006). The future is nothing more or less than intergenerational solidarity, responsibility for posterity, but it is also our shared dream, or a consensual hallucination.[8] Collini puts it beautifully: "we are merely custodians for the present generation of a complex intellectual inheritance which we did not create, and which is not ours to destroy" (Collini, 2012, p. 199).