

Beyond Humanisms

Rafael Capurro

International Center for Information Ethics (ICIE) (<http://icie.zkm.de/>), E-Mail: rafael@capurro.de

Abstract

In the first part of this paper a short history of Western humanisms (Socrates, Pico della Mirandola, Descartes, Kant) is presented. As far as these humanisms rest on a fixation of the 'humanum' they are meta-physical, although they might radically differ from each other. The second part deals with the present debate on trans- and posthumanism in the context of some breath-taking developments in science and technology. Angeletics, a theory of messengers and messages, intends to give an answer to the leading question of this paper, namely: 'what does it mean to go beyond humanisms?' The conclusion exposes briefly an ethics of hospitality and care from an angeletic perspective.

Keywords: humanism, posthumanism, angeletics, ethics, metaphysics

Manuscript received 20 December 2011, revised 10 January 2012, accepted 19 January 2012.

Copyright note: This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that the original work is properly cited.

Introduction¹

Who are we at the beginning of the 21st century? We are a globalized humanity driven by science and technology no less than a tribalized humanity cannibalized by all kinds of conflicts and wars based on oil, religion, and mutual exploitation. Who is the 'we' in this question? In whose name and by whom is this question stated? Based on what and whose values and interests? What is the self-understanding of humanity in our time? Whose time? Facing what challenges?

We know today that the hominisation (anthropogenesis) goes back up to more than 6 million years ago through various ramifications. Our family tree shows a deep and complex genetic intertwinement not only with other primates but with all living be-

ings.² The natural evolution of the human race or 'hominisation' and the cultural evolution or 'humanisation' are related but of different order. The distinction between nature and culture has become blurred nowadays not only because we have learnt to transform nature according to our needs and desires, but also because we are able to manipulate, change and even produce new kinds of living beings. We are in a process of transforming ourselves after having learnt – or believing we have learnt – to dominate, but in fact often to destroy nature in the name of man, placing ourselves at the center of reality.

We live in a time of the crisis of humanisms that have a long history recently addressed by Charles Taylor in his monumental book *A Secular Age*.³ What answers do we as ethicists give to this challenge that "calls for thinking"⁴ today? I consider this

¹ Keynote paper at the international conference "Information Ethics: Future of Humanities," organized by the Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics, the Uehiro Foundation on Ethics and Education, and the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, St Cross College, Oxford, 8-9 December 2010. First published in: Rafael Capurro / John Holgate (eds.), *Messages and Messengers. Angeletics as an Approach to the Phenomenology of Communication*, Munich 2011, 161-179.

² See the eleven papers on *Ardipithecus Ramidus* in: *Science*, Special Edition, October 2, 2009.

³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge MA 2007.

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?*, Tübingen 1971 (Engl. Transl. *What calls for Thinking?*, in: *Basic Writings*, Martin Heidegger, ed. by David Farrell, London 1993, 365-391).

question to be at the core of information ethics as far as it concerns our dwelling or ‘ethos’ in a shared world shaped by information and communication technology. Ethics is a way of interpreting and transforming our being-in-the-world.⁵ I call a comparative ethical reflexion focused on information and communication technologies in different historical and cultural contexts intercultural information ethics.⁶ Do we need a new kind of humanism facing the challenges of the information society? What is the difference between present and past humanisms? What is behind the discourses on trans- and posthumanisms? What is the place of humans with regard to non-human living, artificial and hybrid beings? These are far-reaching questions that need a broad historical and systematic analysis. This paper is a small contribution to the issue addressed by this conference concerning ‘the future of humanities.’

In the first part, I present a short history of Western humanisms. As far as these humanisms rest on a fixation of the ‘*humanum*’ they are metaphysical, although they might radically differ from each other. In the second part I point to the present debate on trans- and posthumanism in the context of some breath-taking developments in science and technology. I explain how angeletics, a theory of messengers and messages, can give an answer to the leading question of this paper, namely: what does it mean to go beyond humanisms?⁷ The conclusion deals with an ethics of hospitality and care from an angeletic perspective.

⁵ See my first steps on these questions particularly with regard to the information age, Rafael Capurro, *Leben im Informationszeitalter*, Berlin 1995.

⁶ Rafael Capurro, *Intercultural Information Ethics*, in: *The Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics*, ed. by Kenneth E. Himma and Hermann T. Tavani, New Jersey 2008, 639-665. Online: <http://www.capurro.de/iiebangkok.html>.

⁷ My interest in angeletics or theory of messengers/messages goes back to my PhD on the concept of information in: Rafael Capurro: *Information. Ein Beitrag zur etymologischen und ideengeschichtlichen Begründung des Informationsbegriffs*, Munich 1978, 46-49. Online: <http://www.capurro.de/info.html> followed by several contributions particularly in the last ten years: Rafael Capurro *Angeletics – A Message Theory*, in: *Hierarchies of Communication*, ed. by Hans H. Diebner and Lehan Ramsay, Karlsruhe 2003, 58-71. Online: http://www.capurro.de/angeletics_zkm.html; Rafael Capurro, *On the Relevance of Angeletics and Hermeneutics for Information Technology*, in: *International Journal of Applied Research on Information Technology and Computing (IJARITAC)*, 2010, 1, 2, 233-239. Online: <http://www.capurro.de/tsukuba.html>; Rafael Capurro/Makoto Nakada, *A Dialogue on Intercultural Angeletics*, in: *Messages and*

I

A Short History of Western Humanisms

We begin this short history of Western humanisms with Socrates’ critique of the poets that I interpret as the birth of philosophy based on turning over the communicational or angeletic relationship between the human and the divine. After some hints on Christianity and Renaissance, taking as an example Pico della Mirandola, I deal with Descartes’ humanism. The ‘new humanism’ of the 18th century culminates with the philosophers of the Enlightenment and particularly with Kant⁸ whose transcendental humanism I briefly analyze. The critique of humanisms becomes particularly virulent with the social-critical and anti- or postmetaphysical movements in the 19th and 20th century, particularly with Karl Marx, Ludwig Feuerbach, Friedrich Nietzsche, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor W. Adorno, Louis Althusser, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Claude Levi-Strauss, Albert Camus, and Jacques Lacan.⁹

1. Socratic and Christian Humanisms

At the beginning of the *Phaedrus* Plato tells how Socrates and Phaedrus leave the city walking without sandals along the river Ilissus – it was a hot day but, in fact, Socrates apparently never used sandals – looking for a quiet place under a plane-tree where “there are shade and gentle breezes, and grass on which we may either sit or lie down” (*Phaidr.* 229b). Socrates praises the beauty of the place and points to the myths related to it dealing with hippocentaurs, chimeras, Pegasus, and the Gorgons. All these stories could be considered, according to Socrates, from the viewpoint of their probability (*to eikós*) in which case we need “a sort of rural wisdom” (*agroíko tina sophía*) as well as a great deal of time (*scholé*). But he, Socrates, has no leisure for such enquiries. Why? Because, as he

Messengers, ed. by Rafael Capurro/John Holgate, Munich 2011, 67-84. Online: http://www.capurro.de/intercultural_angeletics.html

⁸ Clemens Menze, *Art. Humanismus, Humanität (I)*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. by Joachim Ritter et al., Darmstadt 1974, 1217-1219.

⁹ Reinhard Romberg, *Art. Humanismus, Humanität (II)*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. by Joachim Ritter et al., Darmstadt 1974, 1219-1225; Joseph Pape, *Art. Humanismus, Humanität (III)*, in: Joachim Ritter et al. (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Darmstadt 1974, 1225-1230.



says, he must first know himself following the Delphian inscription. And he adds:

[...] am I a monster more complicated and swollen with passion than the serpent Typho, or a creature of a gentler and simpler sort, to whom Nature has given a diviner and lowlier destiny? (Phaidr. 230 a)

In other words, Socrates rejects being a mere receiver and believer of mythical messages and divine messengers. He also rejects messages coming from nature. He says:

[...] I am a lover of knowledge, and the men who dwell in the city are my teachers, and not the trees or the country. Though I do indeed believe that you have found a spell with which to draw me out of the city into the country, like a hungry cow before whom a bough or a bunch of fruit is waved. For only hold up before me in like manner a book (*'biblíois'*), and you may lead me all round Attica, and over the wide world. And now having arrived, I intend to lie down, and you should choose any posture in which you can read best. (Phaidr. 230d-e)

This provokes the following astonishing comment by Phaedrus:

[...] What an incomprehensible being (*'atopótatos'*) you are, Socrates: when you are in the country, as you say, you really are like some stranger who is led about by a guide. Do you ever cross the border? I rather think that you never venture even outside the gates. (Phaidr. 230b-d)

In the dialogue *Ion* Socrates explains his critique of the myths as transmitted by poets and rhapsodes, particularly by the Homerides. Poets transmit messages coming from the god who is “the one who really speaks” (Ion 534d). They are just hermeneuticists (*'hermenés'*) or interpreters of the god(s) and the muses “getting inspired and possessed by them” (Ion 534e), passing on their messages through the rhapsodes. Socrates opposes ‘knowledge’ (*'téchne'*) acquired through a horizontal and critical dialogue to vertical message transmission performed by the poets guided not by reason (*nous*) but by divine inspiration (*'theia moira'*). The messengers of the gods do not have knowledge of the matters they deal with and they are not free, that is to say, they are possessed by the gods, not being in their right mind and being able to produce similar effects “on most of the spectators” (Ion 535d). He compares them with a magnetic stone:

This stone not only attracts iron rings, but also imparts to them a similar power of attracting other rings; and sometimes you may see a number of pieces of iron and rings suspended from one another so as to form a quite long

chain: and all of them derive their power of suspension from the original stone. (Ion 533d)

Socrates praises the horizontal and bottom-up '*logos*' of philosophy opposing it to the god-inspired vertical message transmission. Plato avoids in most of his dialogues the word '*angelía*' – except in its colloquial use – that as a '*terminus technicus*' was deeply rooted in the contexts of myth, poetry, and political power. It is through dialogical reason, particularly in its oral form (*'logos'*) – the *Phaidros* provides with the myth of the Egyptian god Theuth, the inventor of writing, and its Greek equivalent Hermes, the first media critique of Western philosophy (Phaidr. 274c-275b – that humans can go 'beyond' their mortal condition and not by way of the myths and their intermediaries. Socrates' humanism is a bottom-up theocentrism. Contrary to mythical theocentrism, god is a higher intellect and not a magnet force that “ways the souls of men in any direction” (Ion 536 a). The vertical, heteronomic, top-down poetic practice is substituted by a horizontal bottom-up dialogue guided by reason. The philosopher is a messenger that passes on (*'dia'*) ideas through the medium of the critical and autonomous '*logos*' instead of proclaiming a mythical truth coming from above. Philosophy is born out of this angeletic turn concerning the relation between sender, messenger, message and receiver. It implies a new information ethics based on dialogue and reasoning striving beyond nature towards the metaphysical divine. It is a metaphysical humanism.

Christianity combined paradoxically the heteronomic concept of message (*'angelía'*) as the 'good news' (*'euangelion'*) coming from above with the autonomous '*logos*' of philosophy by turning the latter into an instrument for understanding and distributing the holy message.¹⁰ This is eventually possible because of the double nature, divine and human, of the messenger, Jesus, who is the 'good news' – without being himself an angel – and the '*logos*'. The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the only legitimate messenger and interpreter of the 'good news.'

This claim was questioned by Martin Luther (1483-1546). The Reformation gave the Christian believer a theoretical and practical angeletic autonomy not only thanks to the translation of the Bible

¹⁰ See Rafael Capurro, Information. Ein Beitrag zur etymologischen und ideengeschichtlichen Begründung des Informationsbegriffs, Munich 1978, 46-49. Online: <http://www.capurro.de/info.html>; *ibid.*: *Leben im Informationszeitalter*, Berlin 1995, 99.



into German – vernacular translations had been done already, for instance, of the Hebrew Bible into Greek by the Septuaginta (LXX) or into Latin with the Vulgata – but also by proclaiming the autonomy of the individual receiver and believer as a legitimate interpreter of the ‘good news.’ The believer and receiver of the Christian message becomes a critical sender. At the same time, Christian humanisms keep and proclaim the movement beyond the human towards the divine. They are religious humanisms. The autonomy of the religious receiver has also political implications by giving individuals the legitimacy for questioning any message and messenger coming from above and claiming absolute truth without allowing critical and autonomous self-reflection as well as the possibility of becoming a sender.

2. Humanisms in Renaissance and Modernity

Humanists in the 15th and 16th century looked back to the Greek and Roman tradition. In his *Oration on the Dignity of Man (De hominis dignitate)* Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) answers the question about humanity’s place in the “chain of being”¹¹ by stating

[...] that man is the intermediary between creatures (“creaturarum internuntium”), that he is the familiar of the gods above him as he is the lord of the beings beneath him; that, by the acuteness of his senses, the inquiry of his reason and the light of his intelligence, he is the interpreter of nature, set midway between (“interstitium”) the timeless unchanging and the flux of time; the living union (as the Persians say), the very marriage hymn of the world, and, by David’s testimony but little lower than the angels.¹²

For Pico, human dignity is based on this metaphysical beyond from where the true messages come that we as intermediaries should emulate:

Let us not even yield place to them, the highest of the angelic orders, and not be content with a lower place, imitate them in all their glory and dignity (“et dignitatem et gloriam aemulemur”). If we choose to, we will not be second to them in anything.¹³

Pico’s answer to the question of how to achieve an “angelic life” is a Christian and Socratic one, namely through the study of philosophy and the practical emulation of this angelic ideal. Our dignity consists

in this capacity of self-transformation through liberal arts (“per artem sermocinalem sive rationariam”), that leads us beyond earthly life. This intellectual activity makes the big difference between the blind activity of the poetic messengers criticized by Socrates and the intellectual nature of the angels traversing in ascensions and descents the ladder of Jacob (Genesis 28, 12ss).¹⁴ Humans are located between animals and angels. This is a classic philosophical and theological topos. It was used by humanists like Herder as well as by authors like Pascal, Montaigne, and Paul Valéry. It comes back today within a technological framework with the idea of a super-intelligent computer in the 1970s as well as in some transhumanist speculations. Humans are then in-between animals and an artificial super-intelligence.¹⁵

While in Renaissance and Reformation humanisms are mostly theocentric, modern humanisms like the ones of Descartes and Kant are anthropocentric or, more precisely, reason-centered. René Descartes (1596-1650) was educated at the Jesuit school of La Flèche. In winter 1619 when he was in the German city of Ulm he had a dream dealing with the question: “Which kind [way] of life shall I choose?” (“Quod vitae sectabor iter?”),¹⁶ a quotation from the Latin poet Ausonius (ca. 310-393). This ethical question is typical of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Jesuit Order. Descartes performs a secular twisting of the religious practices of the Jesuits. Descartes’ *Rules for the Direction of the Mind (Regulae ad directionem ingenii)* are the basis of his scientific methodology. They concern the education of the scientific spirit in a similar way as Ignatius of Loyola developed his *Rules for the Discernment of Spirits* in the *Spiritual Exercises* based on a religious “Principle and Foundation” that states: “Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.”¹⁷ Descartes’ first three rules read:

Rule I The aim of our studies must be the direction of our mind so that it may form solid and true judgments on whatever matters arise.

¹⁴ Ibid., 14.

¹⁵ See Rafael Capurro, *Leben im Informationszeitalter*, Berlin 1995, 78.

¹⁶ René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, ed. By Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, Paris 1996, X, 179.

¹⁷ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises* (Transl. E. Mullan, S.J.) 1914. Online:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/ignatius/exercises.titlepage.html>

¹¹ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being. A Study of the History of an Idea*, Harvard 1964.

¹² Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate. Über die Würde des Menschen*, Hamburg 1990, 2.

¹³ Ibid., 10.

Rule II We must occupy ourselves only with those objects that our intellectual powers appear competent to know certainly and indubitably.

Rule III As regards any subject we propose to investigate, we must inquire not what other people have thought, or what we ourselves conjecture, but what we can clearly and manifestly perceive by intuition or deduce with certainty. For there is no other way of acquiring knowledge.¹⁸

Descartes' method is based on intuition and deduction. His methodological skepticism leads him to doubt the truth of all messages and the trustfulness of all messengers, particularly those coming from the senses, including from someone "very powerful" ("potentissimum") and "malign" ("malignum") who would be willing to deceive him. In the second meditation he tells how he found a firm foundation ("quod certum sit & inconcussum") in a "knowledge" ("notitiam") – the French text says: "cette notion & connaissance"¹⁹ – coming from himself that he himself "speaks out" ("a me profertur"), namely "Ego sum, ego existo".²⁰ All this is the product of a lonely meditation, a secular practice closed as well as opposite to the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* and their meditation technologies. At the beginning of the first meditation Descartes writes:

Today, then, since I have opportunely freed my mind from all cares [and am happily disturbed by no passions], and since I am in the secure possession of leisure in a peaceable retirement, I will at length apply myself earnestly and freely to the general overthrow of all my former opinions.²¹

Descartes methodological mistrust finds its end when he discovers in his own subjectivity the only messenger upon whom he can eventually rely, namely his own thinking in the process of thinking ("cogito"). The sender of this message is his own being as thinking substance. Human subjectivity as "res cogitans" becomes thus separated from the body as well as from the world as "res extensa." Both are the 'beyond' over which the "res cogitans" strives to be the master.

¹⁸ René Descartes, Rules for The Direction Of The Mind, in: *ibid.* Philosophical Writings (Transl. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach, London 1954, 153-180). Online: <http://faculty.uccb.ns.ca/philosophy/kbryson/rulesfor.htm>.

¹⁹ René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, op.cit., IX, 22.

²⁰ René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, op.cit., VII, 24-27.

²¹ René Descartes, *Meditations* (Transl. J. Veitch) A Trilingual HTML Edition, ed. by David B. Manley and Charles S. Taylor. Online: <http://www.wright.edu/cola/descartes/meditation1.html>

In the treaty *Passions of the soul*, dedicated to Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, he underlines that there is no soul that "if well managed, cannot achieve an absolute power over its passions" ("estant bien conduite, acquerir un pouvoir absolu sur ses passions").²² In the *Discourse on Method* he opposes "speculative philosophy" ("Philosophie speculatiue") to scientific knowledge as the only "kind of practice" ("une pratique") that allows us to become "masters and owners of nature" ("maistres & possesseurs de la Nature").²³ There is "the law" ("la loy"), he writes, that prohibits us from keeping secret this knowledge that can be used "for the welfare of everybody" ("le bien general de tous les hommes"), including personal health and "other goods of this life" ("les autres biens de cete vie").²⁴ "Even the spirit depends strongly on the temperament and the organization of the bodily organs" ("mesme l'esprit depend si fort du temperament, & de la disposition des organes du corps") in such a way that "if there is anything that makes human beings more wise and practical" ("s'il est possible de trouuer quelque moyen, qui rende communement les hommes plus sages & plus habiles qu'ilst n'ont esté iusques icy") then it is "medicine" ("la Medecine") and not "moralities" ("les meurs") or "speculative sciences" ("sciences speculatiues").²⁵

Princess Elisabeth writes to Descartes that she cannot understand how an "immaterial being" ("un estre immateriel") can move a body and be moved by it if it is not itself "informed" ("par information") by the intelligence, that is to say, if the soul is not itself something material, a possibility that Descartes excludes. It is also difficult to understand, adds Princess Elisabeth, how the soul can be "governed" ("regie") by the body, having nothing in common with it.²⁶ Princess Elisabeth argues from an Aristotelian perspective, where the soul "informs" the body building a unity with it. Descartes uses the same word, namely "inform," when referring to the, as I would call it, angeletic relation between the ideas and the intellect. In this case 'to inform' it means that the ideas communicate ("informant") something to the intellect when the intellect turns its attention to the pictures ("depictae") located on

²² René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, op.cit., XI, Art. L, 68.

²³ René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, op.cit., VI, 61-62.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 61.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 61-62.

²⁶ René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, op.cit., III, 685.



bodily imagination (“phantasia corporea”). Such pictures, Descartes adds, are not to be called ideas at all because ideas are “forms of thought” (“cogitationis formam”) and they are not “pictured” (“depictae”) in some part of the brain.²⁷ This remark is against the Aristotelian theory of the forming or ‘information’ of the senses as well as of the intellect that abstracts the ideas out of such ‘pictures’ or ‘phantasmata’.²⁸ According to Descartes, the mind communicates directly with the ideas, and in turn with the brain without any kind of substantial ‘informational’ process.²⁹

In his answer to Princess Elisabeth, Descartes distinguishes between three kinds of ideas, one kind dealing with the soul that can be grasped only by the “pure intellect,” another kind dealing with the body that can be grasped by the intellect with the help of imagination, and finally those ideas concerning the unity of body and soul which remain problematic for the intellect and even for the imagination and can be grasped “very clearly” (“tres-clairement”), as Descartes ironically remarks, by the senses. This is the reason why people “who never philosophize” (“ceux qui ne philosophent iamais”) have no doubt about how the soul moves the body, as they remain at the level of the senses where there is no such distinction between soul and body.³⁰ But, in fact, the soul is like a “well-digger” who manages the pipes of the well³¹ communicating with them through the ideas in his mind. As Peters states:

The ‘doctrine of ideas,’ developed initially by Descartes, was central to early modern philosophy, both rationalist and empiricist. Abandoning the “direct perception” of the scholastics – the immediate communion of Intellect and Nature – Descartes interposed “ideas” between the two. An “idea” was something present to the mind, an image, copy, or representation, with a problematic relation to real things in the world. For empiricists (like Locke), the stream of ideas was the raw material from which genuine knowledge could be built; for rationalists (like Descartes), it was a veil of illusion, to be pierced by logic and reason.³²

Descartes substituted the Aristotelian hylemorphism with an angeletic model using the communicational meaning of the concept of information that originally, that is to say, in its Latin root (*informatio*), meant ‘giving a (substantial) form to matter’ as well as ‘moulding the mind’ or ‘communicating something (new) to somebody’.³³ Modernity retained only this last meaning.³⁴ Descartes’ humanism is anthropocentric. The sender of the ideas or (!) messages which the mind can eventually trust is the human mind itself based on the trust on its own existence. What is beyond the being of the thinking subject? No more and no less than the world itself. Descartes’ humanism is, as Heidegger remarks, worldless.³⁵

For Immanuel Kant human beings have two natures. On the one hand, they are natural beings or “homo phaenomenon” subject to natural determinism and, on the other hand, they are of “noumenal” nature or “homo noumenon,” that is to say, they belong to a transcendent or metaphysical community of “intellectual beings” (“vernünftige Wesen”)³⁶ which build the “kingdom of ends in themselves” (“Reich der Zwecke”). Kant considers such a kingdom “a useful and acceptable idea as an aid to reasonable belief,” although we cannot know anything theoretically about it.³⁷ In the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* he stresses several times that humans are not the only “intellectual beings” or “persons” that have a “dignity” (“Würde”) based on their autonomy and not a “price” (“Preis”).³⁸ All natural beings are heteronomous or subject to laws imposed on them, whereas “intellectual beings” are characterized by autonomy, that is to say, by the capacity to act on the basis of principles, independently of any kind of (sensory) object of the will that would imply some kind of external influence on it.

This means that freedom itself cannot be explained as if it were a natural phenomenon, for this would contradict its essence. There is a basic dualism

²⁷ René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, op.cit., VII, 160-161.

²⁸ Rafael Capurro, *Information*, op.cit., 153.

²⁹ René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, op.cit., VII, 160-161.

³⁰ René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, op.cit., III, 691-692.

³¹ René Descartes, *Oeuvres*, op.cit., XI, 131.

³² John D. Peters, *Information: Notes toward a critical history*, in: *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 1988, 13. See also *ibid.*: *Speaking into the Air. A History of the Idea of Communication*, Chicago 1999, 82.

³³ Rafael Capurro, *Information*, op.cit.

³⁴ Rafael Capurro/Birger Hjørland, *The Concept of Information*, in: *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, ed. By Blaise Cronin, Vol. 37 (2003), 353. Online: <http://www.capurro.de/infoconcept.html>.

³⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen 1976, 95.

³⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten: Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre*, Frankfurt am Main 1977, A65, 550.

³⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, Frankfurt am Main 1974, BA125, 100.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, B78, 68.

between natural laws and the autonomy of freedom. The moral law is the message that humans receive from their other nature or their “true self” (“das eigentliche Selbst”) commanding them to respect humanity in their own person.³⁹ The moral law says what natural laws do, namely, to make being possible. Because humans belong to two separate worlds, the form of the moral law, namely “ought” (“das Sollen”), is not the same as for other “divine” beings who, due to the perfection of their will, do not need the (categorical) imperative: “The will in itself is necessarily in accordance with the law.”⁴⁰ In other words, we are as “intelligible beings” the origin or sender of this message that “raises humans beyond themselves (as parts of the sensory world” (“was den Menschen über sich selbst (als einen Teil der Sinnenwelt) erhebt.”). Kant’s humanism is not anthropocentric but reason-centered as far as humans are not the only kind of “intellectual beings” of which there might be “divine ones”.⁴¹ Being ourselves an “intellectual natural being”, there might be, we can infer, intellectual artificial beings or artificial agents, as we usually call them today. But from a Kantian perspective such agents can never become moral beings or members of the noumenal world.⁴²

Humans are autonomous and heteronomous beings at the same time. As natural beings they are confronted with the fact of the moral law or the call of moral conscience coming from their “true self.” This messenger as well as its message are practically unconditional but theoretically problematic because we can have no theoretical knowledge about them. The moral law comes from beyond the sensory nature, but it does not come from a god. It comes from the “noumenal” nature of humans. This ‘beyond’ is ‘inside’ ourselves. The “moral law within me” (“das moralische Gesetz in mir”) as well as “the starry heaven above me” incite Kant’s great admiration.⁴³ Both are immediately related to his consciousness and his being in and beyond this world, without being “shrouded in obscurity or rapture”.⁴⁴ The

“starry heaven” decenters our natural being while the moral law decenters the whole “sensory world” (“Sinnenwelt”).⁴⁵ Kant’s practical defence of human autonomy is metaphysical. The laws of morality are grounded in human reason, but human reason is beyond nature. We are senders and receivers of our own freedom but this ‘we’ is not identical with our natural ‘we.’ Its messages are of a completely different kind from the ones coming from the natural world that determine us as natural beings. The sender of such messages is within us, but beyond us as natural beings. Thanks to this hybrid nature as deterministic and free beings, we can intervene in natural processes, including our own nature. Charles Taylor summarizes the duality of Kantian anthropology as follows:

We have the power as rational agency to make the laws by which we live. This is something so greatly superior to the force of mere nature in us, in the form of desire, that when we contemplate it without distortion, we cannot but feel reverence (Achtung) for this power. The place of fullness is where we manage finally to give this power full reign, and so to live by it. We have a feeling of receptivity, when with our full sense of our own fragility and pathos as desiring beings, we look up to the power of law-giving with admiration and awe. But this doesn’t in the end mean that there is any reception from outside; the power is within; and the more we realize this power, the more we become aware that it is within, that morality must be autonomous and not heteronomous.⁴⁶

In the introduction to *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant distinguishes between physiological and pragmatic anthropology. Physiological anthropology deals with “what nature makes out of humans,” while pragmatic anthropology considers humans as free actors dealing with what “they make, or what they can and should make out of themselves” (“was er, als freihandelndes Wesen, aus sich selber macht, oder machen kann und soll”).⁴⁷ Kant is skeptical about the possibilities of physiological anthropology. He writes:

He who ponders natural causes, for example, the ones the faculty of memory may rest on, can speculate back and forth (in Cartesian style) about the traces of impressions remaining in the brain, but in doing so he must admit that in this play of his representations he is a mere observer

³⁹ Ibid., BA118, 95..

⁴⁰ Ibid., BA40, 43.

⁴¹ Immanuel Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, op.cit., A3, 508.

⁴² Rafael Capurro, *Toward a Comparative Theory of Agents*, in: *AI & Society 2011* (in print). Online: <http://www.capurro.de/agents.html>.

⁴³ Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, op.cit., A289, 300.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, op.cit., 8.

⁴⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie*, in: *ibid.*, *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik*, Darmstadt 1975, BAIII, 399.

and must let nature run its course, for he does not know the cranial nerves and fibers, nor does he understand how to put them to use for his purposes. Therefore all theoretical speculation about this is a pure waste of time.⁴⁸

After two hundred years, things have changed. This quotation takes us with a big leap into the present debate.

II

Beyond Humanisms

Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto*⁴⁹ and Katherine Hayles' *How we Became Posthuman*⁵⁰ are landmarks of the early discussions dealing with the potential changes of human self-manipulation brought about by modern science and technology such as digital technology, nanotechnology, brain research, and molecular biology, to name just a few. The question about the humanness of the human and its 'beyond' is not any more concerned with the relationship between the human and the divine as was the case with the classical humanisms in Antiquity, Renaissance and Reformation, nor with the self-introspection of the subject as in Modernity, but with the hybridization of the human, particularly through the digital medium as well as through the possibilities to change the biological substrate of the human species. A common buzz-word for these issues is 'human enhancement.' According to Nick Bostrom, one of the main propagators of transhumanism through 'human enhancement,' the word "transhumanism" appears to have been used for the first time by

Aldous Huxley's brother, Julian Huxley, a distinguished biologist (who was also the first director general of UNESCO and a founder of the World Wildlife Fund). In *Religion without Revelation* (1927), he wrote⁵¹: The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself – not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way – but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a

name for this new belief. Perhaps transhumanism will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature.⁵²

Other famous writers of scientific humanism in the 20th century were Herbert G. Wells (1866-1946), Julian Huxley (1887-1975), John Desmond Bernal (1901-1971), and J.B.S. (John Burdon Sanderson) Haldane (1892-1964). Haldane inspired Norbert Wiener and such famous science-fiction authors as Arthur C. Clarke (1971-2008), and Robert Heinlein (1907-1988).⁵³

In the introduction to a recent book on human enhancement, Bostrom and Savulescu write:

Are we good enough? If not, how may we improve ourselves? Must we restrict ourselves to traditional methods like study and training? Or should we also use science to enhance some of our mental and physical capacities more directly?⁵⁴

These possibilities do not come from 'above' or (not solely) from 'inside' ourselves, but from scientific knowledge and the technologies intertwined with it. According to Bostrom and Savulescu, some of the ethical questions that arise are:

Precisely what capacity is being enhanced in what ways? Who has access? Who makes the decisions? Within what cultural and sociopolitical context? At what cost to competing priorities? With what externalities? Justifiable ethical verdicts may only be attainable following a specification of these and other similarly contextual variables.⁵⁵

Transhumanism aims at transforming the human condition or at least some of its basic capabilities. It is an exaggerated humanism or hyperhumanism. Transhumanists talk about the future of the human species as a transhuman species. The rhetoric oversees that, under realistic premisses, it is a about some individuals of this species at least as far as such changes are not genetic. It is about the enhancement of (some) humans. The world remains unenhanced. This worldless self-transcendence is deeply rooted in Modernity as we have already seen in the case of Descartes. Even considering the possibilities opened by synthetic biology, the creation of a transhuman

⁴⁸ Ibid. (my translation, RC)

⁴⁹ Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto. Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*, 1985. Online: <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html>.

⁵⁰ N. Katherine Hayles, *How we Became Posthuman. Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, Chicago 1999.

⁵¹ In fact, Huxley wrote this in an essay on transhumanism in the late 1950s, and it was only then that he started to use the word "transhumanism," probably inspired by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). Afterwords it also appeared in revised editions of *Religion without Revelation*. (I thank Christopher Coenen for this critical note, RC).

⁵² Nick Bostrom, *A History of Transhumanist Thought*, in: *Journal of Evolution and Technology* (2005), 7.

⁵³ Christopher Coenen/Stephan Gammel/Reinhard Heil/Andreas Woyke (Ed.), *Die Debatte über „Human Enhancement“*. Historische, philosophische und ethische Aspekte der technologischen Verbesserung des Menschen, Bielefeld 2010.

⁵⁴ Nick Bostrom/Julian Savulescu, *Human Enhancement*, Oxford 2009, 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 3.



species is extremely hypothetical and ethically problematic, to say the least.⁵⁶ There is a naive optimism as well as an ideological belief in the transhumanist rhetoric that aims at surmounting the fragility and givenness of human existence.⁵⁷ It also omits to talk not only about possible breakdowns of enhancing technologies, as in case of ‘any’ technology, but also of their possible turning into human ‘de-enhancement’ as described, for instance, in works by Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), Clive S. (Staples) Lewis (1898-1963), and J.R.R. (John Ronald Reuel) Tolkien (1892-1973).⁵⁸

Transhumanism and posthumanism are antithetical. The posthumanist debate is rooted in cultural critique and systems theory, particularly in the work of thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, Jacques Derrida, Niklas Luhmann, Bernard Stiegler, and Bruno Latour, to mention just a few. Posthumanists do not aim at enhancing but at decentering the human subject. As Cary Wolfe in his comprehensive study *What is Posthumanism?* remarks:

posthumanism in my sense isn’t posthuman at all – in the sense of being ‘after’ our embodiment has been transcended – but is only posthumanist, in the sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself, that Hayles rightly criticizes.⁵⁹

On this line of thinking, Rosi Braidotti makes a stand for overcoming anthropocentrism by relating the concept of ‘*bios*’ or human life to the broader one of ‘*zoe*’ or life.⁶⁰ But Braidotti is aware that the contingency of history and contexts cannot be surveyed and assessed, and that we need a kind of web-like approach of different situations for the embedded and embodied subject. A distinction between ‘*zoe*’ and ‘*bios*’ does not imply necessarily a hierarchy.

⁵⁶ European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE), Opinion 25, Ethics of Synthetic Biology, 2009. Online: http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/avis/index_en.htm.

⁵⁷ Andreas Woyke, Human Enhancement und seine Bewertung – eine kleine Skizze. In: Die Debatte über „Human Enhancement“. Historische, philosophische und ethische Aspekte der technologischen Verbesserung des Menschen, ed. by Christopher Coenen, Stephan Gammel, Reinhard Heil, Andreas Woyke, Bielefeld 2010, 21-38.

⁵⁸ Christopher Coenen, Zum mythischen Kontext der Debatte über *Human Enhancement*, in: Die Debatte über „Human Enhancement“. Historische, philosophische und ethische Aspekte der technologischen Verbesserung des Menschen, ed. by Christopher Coenen, Stefan Gammel, Reinhard Heil and Andreas Woyke, Bielefeld 2010, 63-89.

⁵⁹ Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, Minneapolis 2010, xv.

⁶⁰ Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions*, Cambridge 2006.

Advocating that human life (‘*bios*’) as embedded beings is linked to all living (and non-living) beings (‘*zoe*’) does mean to have a commanding view of the dimensions related to the human self with its unique cultural and historical expressions that deserve care and respect no less than what we owe to all living beings.

According to Bruno Latour “we have never been modern,” which means “we have never left transcendence, that is to say, staying in the presence thanks to the mediation of the message (“nous n’avons jamais quitté la transcendance, c’est-à-dire le maintien dans la présence par la médiation de l’envoi”).⁶¹

There is no opposition between transcendence and immanence as in metaphysics. Both dimensions belong together. Every transcendence is an immanent world-transcendence. Latour writes: “The world of meaning and the world of being are one and the same world, namely the world of translation, substitution, delegation, passing on” (“Le monde du sens et la monde de l’être sont un seul et même monde, celui de la traduction, de la substitution, de la délégation, de la passe.”)

In the *Letter on Humanism* from 1946 published in 1947, Heidegger answers Jean Beaufret’s question “How can we restore meaning to the word “Humanism” (“Comment redonner un sens au mot “Humanisme”?)” with the remark: “I wonder whether that is necessary” (“Ich frage mich, ob das nötig ist.”).⁶² Why? Because of the danger that such a concept implies in case the ‘*humanum*’ is conceived as some kind of perennial essence and this thinking becomes an ‘-ism’ that, like any other ‘-ism’, we should mistrust. To go beyond humanism(s) does not mean to be against the ‘*humanum*’ but against the fixation of the humanness of the human by failing to see the dimension that allows us to transform ourselves and the world. From this perspective, that Heidegger calls “fundamental ontology” – in opposition to “metaphysics” as well as to “ontology” understood within the framework of metaphysics⁶³ – he proposes to decenter human self-understanding that aims at fixing essentialistically or existentialistically

⁶¹ Bruno Latour, *Nous n’avons jamais été modernes. Essai d’anthropologie symétrique*, Paris 1994, 176 (my translation, RC).

⁶² Martin Heidegger, *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit. Mit einem Brief über den „Humanismus“*, Bern 1954, 56 (*Letter on Humanism*, transl. David F. Krell, in: M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, New York 1977).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 109.



the humanness of the human, forgetting the open and finite dimension of Being.

Turning the relation between essence and existence, as in Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism* – a conference held in Paris in October 1945 and published in 1946⁶⁴ – is still essentialistic.⁶⁵ Thinking beyond humanisms means learning to see “the true dignity of the human being” (“die eigentliche Würde des Menschen”) from a different perspective than that of the dominance of beings, leading to an apparently unquestionability of their being.⁶⁶ Deryck Beyleveld and Roger Brownsword define human dignity

“as a particular practical attitude to be cultivated in the face of human finitude and vulnerability (and, concomitantly, the natural and social adversity that characterizes the human condition).”⁶⁷

Heidegger teaches us to see ourselves as being-in-the-world from the perspective of Being. Being does not mean, as Thomas Sheehan rightly stresses, the “Big Being” of metaphysics, but the finite transcendence of open possibilities ‘as what’ things can be understood.⁶⁸ For a finite transcendence this ‘as’ can never be fully understood. Every interpretation of something ‘as’ something implies a retreat of other possibilities. We are as knowers and agents decentered by the finite givenness of the being of beings, but also open to such potentialities as well.

Heidegger's formula for such finite transcendence, namely “Dasein” or the ‘here’ of Being, seems at first sight anthropocentric if the interpreter does not perform the ‘anamorphic switch’ from what IS to AS what something is being seen. Once this unusual change of perspective is performed it is possible to see what the normal “ontic” perspective oversees, namely Being.⁶⁹ A famous example of such anamorphic blindness is the anamorphic skull in Hans Hol-

bein's painting *The Ambassadors*.⁷⁰ Being is the uncanny ‘as’ seen from the natural attitude.⁷¹ It is the dimension that decenters the natural anthropocentric attitude of humanisms that consider it as noise and conceives humans only and originally as senders and receivers of messages about beings. From this uncanny perspective, humans ‘are’ messengers of Being and the message they pass on is the world, that is to say, a possible way in which messages about beings can be interpreted ‘as’ being this or that within a framework of understanding. Being gives us ‘as’ messengers the potentiality to transcend a given ‘as’ of things or a possible world disclosure. An example of this transcendence are paradigm changes in science⁷² when ‘facts’ that are supposed to support and prove a theory are re-interpreted from another, unusual perspective from which now presuppositions, instruments, institutions, traditions, etc. are put into question or “falsified”.⁷³

The possibility of questioning not only a theory but a world-openness can lead to strong opposition by the defenders of the ‘status quo’ including the condemnation and disparagement of the messenger, as in the case of Socrates and many others. This opens the question about the ethical criteria for making a distinction between a messenger of Being and its opposite, namely a charlatan, with all degrees in between. The Socratic criterion for this difficult ethical task of “discernment of spirits” (Ignatius of Loyola) – always endangered by manipulation and self-deception – is whether the messenger holds on to the openness of Being or proclaims an absolute truth that eventually turns into a political, religious, or (pseudo-) scientific ideology, with all degrees in between. In this case the messenger turns into an almighty sender. This is the reason why ‘-isms’ that veil and unveil such fixation should be ontologically, that is to say, ethically mistrusted. If today's world-openness is characterized by the horizon of digitizability of beings – which my colleague, the Australian philosopher Michael Eldred, and I call digital ontol-

⁶⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, Paris 1946.

⁶⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Brief über den “Humanismus”*, op.cit., 68.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁶⁷ Deryck Beyleveld/Roger Brownsword, *Human Dignity in Bioethics*, Oxford 1991, 2. See also European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies 2009, op.cit., 39.

⁶⁸ Thomas Sheehan, *A Paradigm Shift in Heidegger Research*, in: *Continental Philosophy Review*, XXXII, 2 (2001), 1-20. Online: <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/relstud/faculty/sheehan/pdf/parad.pdf>.

⁶⁹ I owe this insight about the anamorphic view of Being to John Holgate.

⁷⁰ Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Les perspectives depravées*, Tome I, *Anamorphoses*, Paris 2008.

⁷¹ Donald Kunze, *The Natural Attitude versus The Uncanny*, 2010. Online: http://www.arch.mcgill.ca/theory/conference/papers/Kunze_Donald_revised_June6_07.pdf.

⁷² Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago 1962.

⁷³ Karl R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge. An evolutionary approach* (Rev.ed.), Oxford 1979.



ogy⁷⁴ – then there is the danger that those who proclaim or follow this call of being might believe that things ‘are’ only as seen from this perspective. I call this kind of ideology digital metaphysics.

Every being ‘as’ a being shares the world-openness and ‘is’ a messenger. Humans as messengers of Being allow a hospitality for beings to disclose and pass on through the world-openness – Pico’s “creaturarum internuntium” –, sharing it in different ways without ever occupying a center, in which case the openness turns closed and the dynamic of the ‘as’ is blocked.⁷⁵ After Niklas Luhmann we know that a message (“Mitteilung”) is a meaning-offer and has no definite content until the receiver makes his/her choices.⁷⁶ Cybernetics has taught us that every receiver can turn into a sender. Lacanian psychoanalysis underlines the indefinite and indefinable nature of “the object” addressed in the long run by human desire.⁷⁷ The psychoanalyst ‘as’ a messenger enables the analysand to take a detour to himself/herself. This relationship, called the transference phenomenon, takes place from both sides.⁷⁸

In *Being and Time* Heidegger calls this relationship the “hermeneutic circle” (Heidegger 1976). Following some hints in his late writings,⁷⁹ we can say that the “hermeneutic circle” is in fact an ‘angelic circle’ insofar as it concerns the relation be-

tween senders, messengers, messages and receivers. As seen from the uncanny perspective, Being is sender and receiver insofar as a world is always a potential perspective for understanding. Heidegger writes: “The messenger must already come from the message. But he must also already have gone towards it.” (“Der Botengänger muß schon von der Botschaft herkommen. Er muß aber auch schon auf sie zugegangen sein.”).⁸⁰ The usual German term for “messenger” being ‘Bote,’ ‘Botengänger’ seems to underline the pure dynamic fact of bringing the message. It is the opposite to the kind of messengers called ambassadors (“Botschafter”). There is a belonging-together of Being and “Dasein” or humans as messengers that Heidegger calls “Ereignis”.⁸¹ It means that we cannot fail to interpret the meaning of Being, since our being is being-in-the-world. From the uncanny perspective we live in a heteronomous relation to Being. We are, in Lacanian terms, a divided or “crossed” (“barré”) subject⁸² or a subject characterized by the finitude of its being addressed by the Other⁸³ that can annihilate him/her. Loneliness and anxiety are moods through which we unveil the truth, that is to say, the finitude of being-in-the-world-with-others. We receive and pass on – and sometimes try to bypass – the message of Being.

Conclusion

Who are we at the beginning of the 21st century? We are a message society, that is to say, a humanity linked via various means of communication, particularly through digital networks enabling synergies of various kinds for human inter-plays within and beyond political, ethnic, economic and cultural borders and differences, but mostly at war because of such borders and differences. At the same time, humanity is at war with nature, leading to ecological disasters that could end with ecocide.⁸⁴ In other words, we are a ‘*de iure*’ united humanity, as far as we as political agents belong to common global institutions such as the United Nations, sign universal declarations and promote global actions. But we

⁷⁴ Michael Eldred, *The Digital Casting of Being*, Frankfurt am Main 2009. Online: http://www.artefact.org/dgtlon_e.html; Rafael Capurro, *Digital Hermeneutics*, in: *AI & Society* 2010, 35-42. Online: <http://www.capurro.de/digitalhermeneutics.html>; Rafael Capurro, *Towards an Ontological Foundation of Information Ethics*, in: *Ethics and Information Technology* 2006, 175-186. Online: <http://www.capurro.de/oxford.html>.

⁷⁵ The criticism of humanism and the ‘non-blocking’ perspective are common to the Taoist tradition. See Zhang Xianglong, *Heidegger and Taoism on Humanism*, 2010. Online: <http://www.confuchina.com/07%20xifangzhexue/Heidegger%20and%20Taoism.htm>; Katrin Froese, *Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Daoist Thought. Crossing Paths In-Between*, New York 2006; François Jullien: *Nourrir sa vie. À l’écart du Bonheur*, Paris 2005; Rafael Capurro, *Go Glocal. Intercultural Comparison of Leadership Ethics*, in: *EGE Newsletter Ethically Speaking* 2008, 9-11, Online: http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/publications/docs/issue10_en.pdf as well as in: http://www.capurro.de/DB_Akademie.html.

⁷⁶ Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, Frankfurt am Main 1987.

⁷⁷ Jacques Lacan, *Le transfert*, Livre VIII, Paris 1991; Rafael Capurro, *Hablar de amor*, in: *Litoral école lacanienne de psychoanalyse*, Almar 2006, 183-201. Online: http://www.capurro.de/hablar_de_amor.html.

⁷⁸ Jacques Lacan, *Le transfert*, op.cit.

⁷⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache*, in: *ibid.*, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*. Pfullingen 1975, 83-155.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁸¹ Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. GA 65, Frankfurt am Main 1983.

⁸² Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, Paris 1971, II, 168.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁸⁴ Luis Tamayo, *La locura ecocida. Ecosofía psicoanalítica*, México 2010.

are also a *'de facto'* divided humanity. Between these two poles there are not only various forms of local and global conflicts and collaboration, but also a complex cultural history that includes our relationship to nature. Nature has brought about biodiversity. We humans have produced cultural diversity reflected in academic disciplines we call the humanities. If we want to avoid the pitfalls of humanisms, we must pay attention to the uncanny potentiality of the 'as' coming from Being, beyond a fixation on humanisms, in order to render hospitality to humanities in the double sense of the word.

The ethics of universalism can be transformed into one of openness and situatedness. The autonomy of the subject can become the capacity of messengers to pass on the message of finitude that in the Buddhist tradition is called compassion. Instead of an ethics of moral imperatives coming from within and beyond the individual, we can develop an ethics of hospitality and care coming from in-between the plurality of humanities articulated in the 'here' of a shared world. Instead of looking for strategies of fleeing or mastering the world, it is up to us to take care of it beyond utilitarian calculations. Such an ethics is not about universal laws, but about messages of hope. In short, it is not primarily about us but about a shared world. We are called to make sense of Being. It is an uncanny call and, as far as we know, it is our call – beyond humanisms.

Acknowledgements

I thank Michael Eldred (Cologne) and John Holgate (Sydney) for their substantial support to content and form of this paper.

