

Articoli/3

Posthumanism and Animality

Felice Cimatti

Articolo sottoposto a *peer review*. Ricevuto il 21/07/2016. Accettato il 03/12/2016

Homo sapiens has always been an animal species which somewhat ‘exceeds’ its own nature. Therefore, transhumanism is not that different from humanism. In fact, the latter is but another form of humanism, while posthumanism is a condition completely beyond humanity. More specifically, posthumanism means a form of life which is beyond ‘subjectivity’. Such a subjectless life places itself beyond ethics and politics too. Therefore, posthumanism implies a non-humanistic humanity, that is, a form of humanity that finally is *animal*.

Nudus humi iacet, infans, indigus omni
vitali auxilio, cum primum in luminis oras
nixibus ex alvo matris natura profudit¹.

1. Human Being is Not That Human

Homo sapiens has never been *simply* human². Not ‘being simply human’ means that what characterizes the animality of such an animal is not fully enclosed in its own genetic endowment³. Take the case of that extraordinary human capacity of comprehending and speaking a natural language. In order to actually *speak* a language, even a strong nativist like Noam Chomsky admits that one has to be exposed to an environment where someone already speaks such a

¹ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* (5, 223-225). This is the famous John Dryden translation: «Thus like a sailor by the tempest hurled / Ashore, the babe is shipwrecked on the world: / Naked he lies, and ready to expire; / Helpless of all that human wants require: / Exposed upon unhospitable earth. / From the first moment of his hapless birth» (see S. Greenblatt, *The Swerve. How the Renaissance Began*, London 2011, p. 592).

² See F. Cimatti, *Ten Theses on Animality*, «Lo Sguardo», XVIII, 2015, 2, pp. 41-59.

³ Nevertheless, *any* animal and vegetal being more or less extensively modifies its own environment (See K. Laland, B. Matthews, M. Feldman, *An Introduction to Niche Construction Theory*, «Evolutionary Ecology», XXX, 2016, 2, pp. 191-202). Since any living being adapts itself to its own environment, this means that it adapts to an environment that it in turn somehow constructs. Therefore, any living being to some extent constructs itself. Life is always a trans-life.

language. If a child is not exposed to such an environment within the so-called «critical» or «sensitive period»⁴, it will lose the ability to develop a full linguistic competence. Since ‘humanity’ is deeply involved in language, this means that a human infant becomes *human* – in the sense that if she is able to speak she can actively participate to an enormous set of knowledge and traditions that otherwise remain unattainable – through an extensive interaction with its own environment only. Put in other words, this means that the ‘humanity’ of every member of the *Homo sapiens* species is not contained within ‘its’ original bodily endowment. What makes it fully human is something that is *outside* the boundaries of ‘its’ own body and karyotype. The key point is that such an ‘outside’ is as relevant as what is ‘inside’ the body. What is at stake here is not a late resumption of the dated ‘nature’ vs ‘nurture’ debate⁵. The point is that *Homo sapiens* is an animal that always had to construct itself. The human being is an animal born incomplete. Humanity is this incompleteness.

In what is one of the founding texts of Philosophical Anthropology, the Italian humanist Pico della Mirandola in the *Oratio de hominis dignitate* (1486) explicitly distinguishes non-human animals from human animals: «*Bruta simul atque nascuntur id secum afferunt [...] e bulga matris quod possessura sunt*»⁶, that is, the very nature of non-human animals («bruta») is somewhat predetermined at their birth. What a frog could become is *quite* completely prescribed by ‘its’ own karyotype. This does not mean that such a karyotype is an immutable destiny. A frog, like any other living being, somehow transforms the potentiality of life it received from its ancestors in *its* own peculiar way of living. The difference is not that while the frog is signed by a biological destiny the same does not apply to human being. The point is rather that the very humanity of *Homo sapiens* requires *working* on it. Such a point was already clear to Pico, when he stressed the point that the very condition of ‘humanity’ is somewhat a matter of choice more than biology. More precisely, the peculiar human biology is an inextricable interplay between biological endowment and artificial and cultural strain⁷:

Igitur hominem accepit indiscretæ opus imaginis atque in mundi positum meditullio sic est alloquutus: «Nec certam sedem, nec propriam faciem, nec munus ullum peculiare tibi dedimus, o Adam, ut quam sedem, quam faciem, quae munera tute optaveris, ea, pro voto, pro tua sententia, habeas et possideas. Definita caeteris natura intra praescriptas a nobis leges coercetur. Tu, nullis angustiis coercitus, pro tuo arbitrio, in cuius manu te posui, tibi illam prefinies. Medium te mundi posui, ut circumspiceres inde comodius quicquid est in mundo. Nec te celestem neque

⁴ See H. Uylings, *Development of the Human Cortex and the Concept of ‘Critical’ or ‘Sensitive’ Periods*, «Language Learning», LVI, 2006, 1, pp. 59-90.

⁵ E. Fox Keller, *The Mirage of a Space between Nature and Nurture*, Durham 2010.

⁶ «As soon as brutes are born, they bring with them, from their dam’s bag [...] what they are going to possess» (Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, ed. by C. Wallis, P. Miller, D. Carmichael, Cambridge, MA 1998, p. 5).

⁷ See F. Cimatti, *Biologia e dialettica nell’animale umano*, in *Dialettica. Tradizioni, problemi, sviluppi*, a cura di A. Burgio, Macerata 2007, pp. 273-295; F. Cimatti, *La vita che verrà. Biopolitica per Homo sapiens*, Verona 2011.

terrenum, neque mortalem neque immortalem fecimus, ut tui ipsius quasi arbitrarius honorariusque plastes et fctor, in quam malueris tute formam effingas. Poteris in inferiora quae sunt bruta degenerare; poteris in superiora quae sunt divina ex tui animi sententia regenerari⁸.

While the ‘frogness’ of the frog is largely ‘inside’ the very frog’s body, the humanity of a human being is ‘outside’ her/his body. In this sense, the same human body is an instrument at her/his disposal. The very human body has been the first *technical object*⁹. Take the case of the hand. From an anatomical point of view, *Homo sapiens*’ hand is not that different from the hand of a chimpanzee or of a gorilla¹⁰. At the same time, notwithstanding such an anatomical and neurological similarity, a three-year-old child can use those hands to play Mozart, while at the same age a little chimp can use its own hands to ‘fish’ termites. It seems that the differences do not reside in the anatomical structure of the hands (at least, not *only* there), but in the artificial and cultural environment where they take place. The child makes something of its own hands, while it seems that the chimp uses them in a very ‘natural’ way, that is, the chimp does not seem to work on them in order to improve their ability. Before directly working on the piano keys, the child works on her own *hands*. Conversely, it seems that the chimp does not consider them as a direct object of activity. In this sense, the child hands are an *instrument* at her own disposal.

This means that from the very beginning, both phylogenetically and ontogenetically, the very same human body is the first and most important *artificial object* on which human beings are naturally called to work on. In human evolution, according to Friedrich Engels, hand and tool form a couple of terms each implying the other: «the specialisation of the hand – this implies the *tool*, and the tool implies specific human activity, the transforming reaction

⁸ He [God] spoke to him as follows: «We have given to thee, Adam, no fixed seat, no form of thy very own, no gift peculiarly thine, that thou mayest feel as thine own, have as thine own, possess as thine own the seat, the form, the gifts which thou thyself shalt desire. A limited nature in other creatures is confined within the laws written down by Us. In conformity with thy free judgment, in whose hands I have placed thee, thou art confined by no bounds; and thou wilt fix limits of nature for thyself. I have placed thee at the center of the world, that from there thou mayest more conveniently look around and see whatsoever is in the world. Neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal have We made thee. Thou, like a judge appointed for being honorable, art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul’s reason into the higher natures which are divine» (Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, cit., pp. 4-5).

⁹ See A. Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, Cambridge, MA 1993.

¹⁰ See W. Hopkins, K. Bard, A. Jones, S. Bales, *Chimpanzee Hand Preference in Throwing and Infant Cradling: Implications for the Origin of Human Handedness*, «Current Anthropology», XXXIV, 1993, 5, pp. 786-790; E. Lonsdorf, W. Hopkins, *Wild Chimpanzees Show Population-level Handedness for Tool Use*, «PNAS», CII, 2005, 35, pp. 12634-12638; R. Parry, G. Dietrich, B. Brill, *Tool Use Ability Depends on Understanding of Functional Dynamics and not Specific Joint Contribution Profiles*, «Frontiers in Psychology», XXIII, 2014, 5, p. 306; M. Linde-Medina, *Adaptation or Exaptation? The Case of the Human Hand*, «Journal of Biosciences», XXXVI, 2011, 4, pp. 575-585.

of man on nature, production»¹¹. As the tool exerts a strong evolutionary pressure on the anatomical structure which can grab it, at the very same time the hand 'selects' tools which are easily grasped. Through the tools, the hand literally constructs itself, that is, a hand that is more and more able to grasp and manipulate objects. The very 'domestication' of the natural world depends on such an activity of self-domestication: the human animal «has accomplished this primarily and essentially by means of the *hand*. Even the steam-engine, so far his most powerful tool for the transformation of nature, depends, because it is a tool, in the last resort on the hand. But step by step with the development of the hand went that of the brain»¹². What Engels stresses is the specific character of human evolution: *Homo sapiens* treats every object, starting from its own body, as a technical object. Therefore, every object joins in a socio-technical history made of progressive improvements and refinements. The case of the hand clearly shows that such a technical 'destiny' applies to the entirety of the human body. Consequently, human beings worked on their own way of walking¹³, on their own tongue for molding it for communicating verbal sounds¹⁴, on their own brain to make it capable of abstract reasoning¹⁵. The actual human body is not 'natural' at all, since it is the artificial result of thousands of years of hard work for improving it in all respects¹⁶. In this sense, what we did to wolves¹⁷, transforming them into domestic dogs, we previously did to ourselves¹⁸.

2. Transhumanism is Still a Humanism

The first implication of such a zoological condition is that *Homo sapiens* has always been somehow a trans-species. In fact, the main tenet of transhumanism is that

we are creatures driven to adapt and survive on a planet of powerful natural dynamics, surrounded by a universe of even greater forces. These forces and our relationship with them over time have led us to the point in human history where we have grasped the fact that we are now a species directing and guiding – in the way that

¹¹ F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, in K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 25, New York, 1975, p. 330.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ See M. Mauss, *Techniques of the Body*, in *Techniques, Technology and Civilization*, ed. by N. Schlanger, New York 2006, pp. 77-95.

¹⁴ See D. Bickerton, *Adam's Tongue*, New York 2009.

¹⁵ L. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, ed. by A. Cole, Cambridge, MA 1978; A. Clark, *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*, New York 2003.

¹⁶ See I. Tattersall, *Masters of the Planet. The Search for Our Human Origins*, New York 2012.

¹⁷ See J. Clutton-Brock, *Origins of the Dog: Domestication and Early History*, in *The Domestic Dog: Its Evolution, Behaviour and Interactions with People*, ed. by J. Serpell, Cambridge 1995, pp. 7-20; C. Driscoll, D. Macdonald, S. O'Brien, *From Wild Animals to Domestic Pets: An Evolutionary View of Domestication*, «PNAS», CVI, 2009, 1, pp. 9971-9978.

¹⁸ See A. Gibbons, *How We Tamed Ourselves – And Became Modern*, «Science», CCCXLVI, 2014, 6208, pp. 405-406.

beginners do and often with many fits and starts – our own physical, social, cultural, and planetary evolution¹⁹.

However, such a technological attitude towards itself is not a recent human acquisition. The technological fact that at present we – as a species – can *explicitly* and *voluntarily* ‘improve’ our own anatomical and cognitive capacities does not mean that the very same process of ‘improvement’ was not operative when human animals were not so conscious of what they were doing to themselves and to the environment. Take the case of one of the first known sign of Hominini ‘external’ instrument, the use of a shell as a cutting tool²⁰. Such a fossil evidence dates back to 1.5 million years ago, well before the *Homo sapiens*’ appearance. What is such a shell? The usual answer is something like ‘an external tool’ used by someone in order to achieve some goal in the ‘external’ world. This traditional answer assumes that a neat separation exists (or could exist) between what a body *is* and what lies ‘outside’ the body (that is, what the body is *not*). The point is that such a presumed obvious separation is not that clear. The case of the hand clearly shows that in ‘our’ phylogenetic lineage the body has always been treated like a technical object; that is, like a ‘tool’. From this point of view, the very distinction between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ of the body becomes much more confuse and explanatorily useless. From the very beginning, in the Hominini tribe body and ‘external’ objects have the strong tendency to form complex assemblages, where is not that clear where the body ends and the objects begins, and vice versa²¹. Is the shell an extension of the hand? Or, on the contrary, is the hand an ‘external’ part of the shell? It seems that the need to divide neatly the body from the object it ‘uses’ is more a consequence of an ancient religious and anthropocentric prejudice than something due to an explicative need. In fact, such a separation is the kernel of the humanistic project, according to which human being is separated from – and superior to – the rest of nature²².

When one does not assume the existence of such a deep gap between the body and the environment where it lives, the philosophical question of transhumanism becomes much less clear: «our posthuman predicament is simply that we have exponentially more power and more knowledge than our ancestors could have possibly imagined»²³. To the contrary, in fact, in the original project of transhumanism lies a very strong *humanistic* attitude. Take the case of the

¹⁹ M. Crow, *Science, Technology, and Democracy*, in *Building Better Humans? Refocusing the Debate on Transhumanism*, ed. by H. Tirosh-Samuels and K. Mossman, Frankfurt 2011, p. 13.

²⁰ For example, see K. Choi, D. Driwantoro, *Shell Tool Use by Early Members of Homo erectus in Sangiran, Central Java, Indonesia: Cut Mark evidence*, «Journal of Archaeological Science», XXXIV, 2007, 1, pp. 48-58.

²¹ K. Aizawa, *Extended Cognition*, in *The Routledge Handbook of Embodied Cognition*, ed. by L. Shapiro, Oxford 2014, pp. 31-38.

²² See R. Braidotti, *Posthuman Humanities*, «European Educational Research Journal», XII, Year?, 1, p. 2.

²³ W. Grassie, *Is Transhumanism Scientifically Plausible? Posthuman Predictions and the Human Predicament*, in *Building Better Humans?*, cit., p. 466.

seminal Huxley paper where one can find one of the first occurrences of the word 'transhumanism':

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.

«I believe in transhumanism»: once there are enough people who can truly say that, the human species will be on the threshold of a new kind of existence, as different from ours as ours is from that of Peking man. It will at last be consciously fulfilling its real destiny²⁴.

What Huxley aims at is not a future where finally *Homo sapiens* will live in a radical different way in respect to the other living beings and to the world. The 'trans' Huxley speculates about is something which is completely and exclusively *human*. The point is not to imagine to transform humanity into a kind of living being capable of being at home into the world; the point is to make human beings smarter, healthier, more long-lived (possible immortal). Above all, according to Huxley, 'transhumanism' finally implies that «we must explore and make fully available the techniques of spiritual development»²⁵. Such a 'spiritual' goal makes explicit that 'transhumanism' is entirely part of the traditional humanistic project. The very aspiration to 'refine' humanity – that is, to make humanity *perfect* like God is perfect – clearly shows its deep religious origin²⁶: «transhumanism extends in a secularized idiom a form of transcendent religiosity that has deep roots within the Western Christian tradition»²⁷. If transhumanism implies more or less explicitly religion, it has nothing to do with mere nature and the bare life of the world. When transhumanism speaks of the body, in fact, it still speaks of God.

That transhumanism has not cut its links with humanism (and therefore with religion) is apparent when one takes into account what its critics say about it. Take the case of Fukuyama. What he wants to preserve is «human nature»: «what is ultimately at stake with biotechnology is not just some utilitarian cost-benefit calculus concerning future medical technologies, but the very grounding of the human moral sense, which has been a constant ever since there were human beings»²⁸. Transhumanism threatens the integrity of human nature. What is at stake here is such a threat: why should we preserve human nature? Is there something sacred in it? Maybe is there any *sin* in trying to change it? According

²⁴ J. Huxley, *Transhumanism*, in Id., *In New Bottles for New Wine*, London 1957, p. 17.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ See H. Tirosh-Samuelson, *Transhumanism as a Secularist Faith*, «Zygon» XLVII, 2012, 4, pp. 710-734.

²⁷ L. Cady, *Religion and the Technowonderland of Transhumanism*, in *Building Better Humans?*, cit., p. 100.

²⁸ F. Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*, New York 2002, p. 102.

to Fukuyama, «human nature is the sum of the behavior and characteristics that are typical of the human species, arising from genetic rather than environmental factors»²⁹. This is a definition that is at odds with what we have just seen in the case of the hands. The anatomy of the hand tells us about a world of tools, a history of gestures, and a biological ontology. There is not on one side the hand, and on the other side the object it manipulates. There is the hand *and* the world. There are always hand-tool-hand assemblages. Human nature is such a mobile and open space between body and world. On the contrary, according to Fukuyama human nature practically coincides with the genome. Therefore, a human essence exists; it is made of the 46 chromosomes contained in the 'nucleus' of every cell of the body. It is apparent how such a model of what 'humanity' is transforms it in something not far from what religious thought calls the 'soul'. Therefore, any attempt to change such a 'soul' represents what in religious tradition is a 'mortal sin'. Even if Fukuyama does not make use of any religious jargon, the very idea of a «human nature» independent from «environmental factors» recalls such a religious tradition. Fukuyama's critique of transhumanist biotechnology as a serious threat to «human dignity»³⁰ is exactly the critique one would expect when an established religion defends itself from a new heresy. Because to speak of «human dignity» means that inside humanity there is something which has an *intrinsic* value. Fukuyama and transhumanism disagree about what to do with 'human nature'; but on the other hand, both views agree in considering human nature a value. Therefore, transhumanism is but another form of humanism. It is the final and refined version of humanism.

3. Humanism, Anthropocene and Posthumanism

What is at stake is not the question of human enhancement, since humanity has been but the continuous strive to enhance itself³¹. The only difference with the past is that at present time such an enhancement is simply faster and more efficacious. Therefore, such a question is not an ethical question³², rather, it is an ecological question. The point is whether such an unrestrainable process of human self-modifying – *Homo sapiens* is such a process – in the end will make impossible the life on planet Earth. Both humanism and transhumanism share a common point: humanity represents a value in itself. In respect to such a supreme value, all the rest of nature is definitely subordinate. When one listens carefully to the majority of ecological speeches, it is apparent the underlying anthropocentric bias of much of current ecological worries. The main concern is always the survival of *our* species. From this point of view, anthropocentrism

²⁹ Ivi, p. 130.

³⁰ Ivi, p. 148.

³¹ See N. Bostrom, *In Defense of Posthuman Dignity*, «Bioethics», XIX, 2005, 3, pp. 202-214; U. Wiesing, *The History of Medical Enhancement: From restitutio ad integrum to transformatio ad optimum?*, in *Medical Enhancement and Posthumanity*, ed. by B. Gordijn and R. Chadwick, Amsterdam 2009, pp. 9-24.

³² A. Buchanan, *Human Nature and Enhancement*, «Bioethics», XXIII, 2009, 3, pp. 141-150.

is but a corollary of humanism (and transhumanism). Therefore, the urgent problem is not to enhance or preserve humanity; the problem is to imagine a way of being human that does not imply the destruction of nature. Posthumanism faces precisely such a question.

Posthumanism poses the question of another kind of humanity, which is no longer humanistic. The 'post' of posthumanism does not refer to an improved form of humanity. 'Post' still means a human animal, however an animal who does not think of itself in a humanistic manner. That is, it does not think of being something special in respect to the rest of nature and life. Someone – or something – who does not think that such a thing like 'human dignity' exists. Maybe such a *posthuman* being does not think at all about itself. In fact, the hallmark of humanity is such a capacity to think about itself³³. On the contrary, posthumanism aims to attenuate or cancel all the proud and presumptuous humanistic characters of humanity. As Cary Wolfe writes, «posthumanism is the *opposite* of transhumanism, and in this light, transhumanism should be seen as an *intensification* of humanism»³⁴. While transhumanism still places the human at the very center of the world, posthumanism radically decenters it; a posthuman world has no center at all. The humanistic and transhumanist world divides itself into higher and lower regions: in the higher ones live only humans, in the lower non-human animals and the rest of nature. On the contrary, the posthuman world is ontologically *flat*. For this reason, if a radical *ecological* thought exists, this is only posthumanist. This is why posthumanism 'naturally' intersects the question of the anthropocene. Because both posthumanism and anthropocene mainly regard the question of *Homo sapiens*' position in respect to a non-human world.

Anthropocene is a growing and tumultuous field of research and political action, which focuses on the awareness of the irreversible human impact on the very material constitution of the planet³⁵. Literally, 'anthropocene' means a geological Era *made of* the effects – climate change, buildings, trash, waste and so on – of 'our' action upon and against the planet. There is an apparent connection between humanism (and transhumanism) and anthropocene. The humanist project explicitly implies that the 'natural'³⁶ world must be adapted to the needs and desires of human beings.

Take the case of non-human animals³⁷. Even if there is a growing interest in non-human animals' welfare and rights, so far nobody has really put into question the very philosophical question of why humans should have the power

³³ F. Cimatti, *La scimmia che si parla. Linguaggio, autocoscienza e libertà nell'animale umano*, Torino 2000.

³⁴ C. Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, Minneapolis 2010, p. xv.

³⁵ P. Crutzen, *The 'Anthropocene'*, in *Earth System Science in the Anthropocene*, ed. by E. Ehlers and T. Krafft, Berlin 2006, pp. 13-18; P. Dukes, *Minutes to Midnight. History and the Anthropocene Era from 1763*, London 2011.

³⁶ J. Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*, Cambridge, MA 2015.

³⁷ See M. Tønnessen, K. Armstrong Oma, S. Rattasepp (eds.), *Thinking about Animals in the Age of the Anthropocene*, Lanham 2016.

to rule over them. It is one thing to say that non-human animals also have the 'right' to a safe and healthy life; another is to say that there should be no animal species claiming to itself the right to decide who has the right to a certain kind of life and who has no right at all.

The blind spot of the animal rights movement is precisely its own position in respect to other forms of life. In fact, *Homo sapiens* plays a double role in the great game of life; on the one hand, he is a player like any other player, on the other he is the referee of the very game. Therefore, *we* 'decide' – just as happened to the monkey called Red Peter in the famous Kafka story *A Report to an Academy* – what kind of existence all non-human living (and non-living) beings should have. The problem lies in the peculiar 'nature' of the juridical discourse, which always *entails* and *presupposes* the presence of a 'subject', that is, of a self-conscious human animal³⁸.

The metaphysical point is that someone can enter with full rights into the juridical world if, and only if, she is a 'subject'. However, the prototype of what is a subject is a human being³⁹. Therefore, it is the very nature of the juridical discourse which somehow obliges the defenders of animal rights to apply to non-human animals the juridical and psychological categories applied to human beings. Consequently, animal rights rhetoric is forced to transform non-human animals into *quasi* subjects, that is, to transform them into a less gifted variant of *human* beings. Take the following case, the entry *Animal Liberation Ethics* in the *Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare*: «the moral status of members of other species should be the same as the moral status of members of our own species at a similar psychological level. This means giving basic rights to most of the individual animals whom humans use as means to their ends»⁴⁰. Notwithstanding the noble aim of such a statement, there are some points worthy of attention. Take the case of the «moral status» of non-human animals. From the point of view of a snake, there is not such a thing like the *moral status* of anything. 'Moral' worries human beings only. However, we have no doubts about the absolute relevance for snakes of *our* – and only ours – point of view. Since moral is important for us, it must be important for *all* living beings. There is another quite disturbing point worthy of attention, where it is said that such a moral status should be granted to non-human animals which are «at a similar psychological level» than our psychological level. Is there any reason to consider *our* «psychological level» – whatever this might mean – like the psychological standard? Is there something special in human psychology? Also the defenders of animal rights seem incapable to put aside our own anthropocentrism. Such a point is terribly clear when it is said that the moral status will be granted to «most of the individual animals whom humans use as means to their ends». This simply means that the life of a rabbit has some moral value, while the life of a

³⁸ G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford 1998.

³⁹ See Cimatti, *La scimmia che si parla*, cit.

⁴⁰ M. Bekoff (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare*, Santa Barbara 2010, p. 22.

sardine has no moral value. Who decides who will have the possibility to live a livable life and who will not have such a possibility? The answer is obvious, an exemplar of the *Homo sapiens* species. That such an exemplar could be a bioethicist, an ethologist, a sympathetic veterinary, or someone who really loves cats and dogs, does not make *any* difference from the *unique* point of view worthy of attention, the sardine point of view. The problem is that *this* is exactly the only point of view nobody takes into account.

Actually, *Homo sapiens* is a cumbersome species, incapable of placing itself in a non-dominant position in respect to nature. The whole question of anthropocene lies in such an impossibility⁴¹. Therefore, there are strong links between anthropocentrism, humanism, transhumanism and anthropocene⁴². All have at their very center the *anthropological* question of humanity. Such a question is not an ethical question, as is often and idly said. Anthropocene is a direct effect of humanism; the former is the other side of the same coin. The fact of human invasiveness in respect to nature is not due to our bad consciousness. The point is that, from the point of view of the Earth, *Homo sapiens* is a weed species, just as from a pine tree point of view ivy is a weed species, or just as from *our* point of view, rats are a weed species.

This is the crucial point where the question of posthumanism is situated. That is, the question of a way of being human, which is no longer based on the «ontologically closed domain of consciousness, reason, reflection»⁴³. In this sense, posthumanism faces the problem of a humanity beyond humanism. A humanity, which finally can become animal⁴⁴ (and vegetal⁴⁵).

4. Human Animality

The question of posthumanism is inseparable from the question of animality, that is, it situates itself within the contemporary 'animal turn'⁴⁶. Such an 'animal turn' properly does not refer to the problem of animal rights, and not even to the recently much studied relationship between mind and body (as in the recently much debated 'embodied' or 'situated cognition'). What is at stake with *animality* is a radically different way of thinking the very question of humanity. According to the humanistic project, the 'subject' is a *subject* just because it is not an animal⁴⁷. Therefore, if humanism implies subjectivity, posthumanism implies a post-subject condition. The posthuman wager is that is still possible a human-animal life that does not base itself on subjectivity and on a deep separation between the socio-economic entity known as the *psychological* 'I' and the world.

⁴¹ See V. Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, New York 2002.

⁴² See W. Ruddiman, *The Anthropogenic Greenhouse Era Began Thousands of Years Ago*, «Climatic Change», LXI, 2003, pp. 261-293.

⁴³ C. Wolfe, *What is posthumanism?*, cit. p. xxv.

⁴⁴ F. Cimatti, *Filosofia dell'animalità*, Roma-Bari 2013.

⁴⁵ See E. Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*, Berkeley 2013.

⁴⁶ See H. Ritvo, *On the Animal Turn*, «Daedalus», CXXXVI, 2007, 4, pp. 118-122.

⁴⁷ G. Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, Stanford 2003.

The posthumanistic human being is still a *human* being; however, a human being that does not dwell in the world in the way of the *Dasein*. The specific character of such an entity, the «*being of man* [,] *being-there, Da-sein*»⁴⁸, is the «being-away [*Weg-sein*]» from the world: «in such being absent we are precisely concerned with ourselves, or with something else. Yet this not-beingthere is nonetheless a *being-away*». The peculiar way of *Dasein* to be at home in the world properly is *not* to be only there. The *Dasein* simultaneously is and is not in the world: «this being-away pertains to the essence of being there [*Dasein*]. It is not something which happens arbitrarily from time to time, but is an essential characteristic of man's very being that indicates *how* he is, so that a human being – insofar as he or she exists – is, in his or her being there, also always already and necessarily away in some manner»⁴⁹. What is at stake is precisely such «*being-away*» of the *Dasein* in respect to the world. The humanistic human becomes a human *animal* when she is able to be completely at home in the world. Such an entity is not simply a non-human animal, like a rat or a bee, because it is still that animal that once *was* a *Dasein*. Therefore, it was once such a being marked by the «being-away» from the world. The animality of the human being is such a condition that no *Homo sapiens* ever experienced. The human *animal* is that animal incarnating the memory of having been a *Dasein*.

When a living being is at home in the world, without worrying about the fact that it is at home, that is, when it lives a completely immanent life⁵⁰, then such a life simply is an *animal* life. Human animality can show itself when a human being is not a *Dasein*. Being not a *Dasein* means that there is no separation between body and consciousness, body and world, body and life. Posthumanism is such an abandonment of the typically humanistic «being-away» from the world. Posthumanism means that the human body connects with other living and non-living bodies. Posthumanism is this radical relatedness, without the typical humanistic fear of losing the boundaries (humanism *means* boundary). Posthumanism is such a living space *between* the bodies. Such a perspective,

far from surpassing or rejecting the human – actually enables us to describe the human and its characteristic modes of communication, interaction, meaning, social significations, and affective investments with *greater specificity* once we have removed meaning from the ontologically closed domain of consciousness, reason, reflection, and so on. It forces us to rethink our taken-for-granted modes of human experience, including the normal perceptual modes and affective states of *Homo sapiens* itself, by recontextualizing them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of 'bringing forth a world' – ways that are, since we ourselves are human animals, part of the evolutionary history and behavioral and psychological repertoire of the human itself. But it also insists that we attend to the specificity of the human – its ways of being in the world, its ways of knowing, observing, and describing – by (paradoxically, for humanism) acknowledging that it is fundamentally a prosthetic

⁴⁸ M. Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics. World, Finitude, Solitude*, Bloomington 1995, p. 63.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ See F. Cimatti, *Linguaggio e immanenza. Kierkegaard e Deleuze sul 'divenir-animale'*, «Aut Aut», CCCLXIII, 2014, pp. 189-208.

creature that has coevolved with various forms of technicity and materiality, forms that are radically 'not-human' and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is⁵¹.

Post-human is such a human-animal, which is not immediately an animal, because *Homo sapiens* has never been only an animal. It is such a not-yet experienced condition of the «becoming-animal», which Deleuze and Guattari describe, for example, in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*: «To the inhumanity of the 'diabolical powers', there is the answer of a becoming-animal: to become a beetle, to become a dog, to become an ape, 'head over heels and away', rather than lowering one's head and remaining a bureaucrat, inspector, judge, or judged»⁵². «Becoming animal» is these «absolute deterritorializations»⁵³ placing what once was the humanistic subject into the very relatedness of the world. A posthuman living being is no longer that humanistic «being-away» which makes so heavy the *Dasein*; it is an animal body – that means sensibility, life, world, and immanence – though a body which retains all the socio-cultural prosthesis of human history. In this sense, it is still a *human* life. At the same time, it is a life not afraid of the world. Therefore, «becoming-animal» is not simply a metaphor:

it is a map of intensities. It is an ensemble of states, each distinct from the other, grafted onto the man insofar as he is searching for a way out. It is a creative line of escape that says nothing other than what it is. [...] the becoming-animal lets nothing remain of the duality of a subject of enunciation and a subject of the statement; rather, it constitutes a single process, a unique method that replaces subjectivity⁵⁴.

Posthumanism is the «becoming-animal» of the *Dasein*. From this point of view, such a concept completely changes the usual – still humanistic – way of treating the problems raised by the Anthropocene. When one thinks that such a problem could be faced ethically or politically, then one is still inside the humanistic project. Ethics and politics imply and presupposes the presence of 'subjects'. More precisely, ethics and politics are devices which produce subjectivity. Therefore, they re-produce humanism. Anthropocene is nothing but the complete realization of humanism. Consequently, the solution of the problems posed by humanism cannot be humanistic in turn. If one wants to take seriously posthumanism, one has to imagine a posthuman ethics and a posthuman politics. Take the case of ethics. A posthuman ethics⁵⁵ is without subjects (without psychology, without empathy, without dialogue, as well as without the Law, the Values and God). Hence an ethics without any discourse

⁵¹ C. Wolfe, *What is posthumanism?*, cit., p. xxv.

⁵² G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Minneapolis 1986, p. 12.

⁵³ Ivi, p. 13.

⁵⁴ Ivi, p. 36.

⁵⁵ See G. Whitlock, *Post-ing Lives*, «Biography», XXXV, 2012, 1, pp. v-xvi; P. MacCormack (ed.), *Posthuman Ethics: Embodiment and Cultural Theory*, London 2012; A. Kroker, *Exits to the Posthuman Future*, New York 2014; P. Sheehan, *Posthuman Bodies*, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, ed. by D. Hillman and U. Maude, New York 2015, pp. 245-260.

of rights and duties. It is not at all clear if such an ethics is still an ethics. However, this is *exactly* the point. In such a posthumanistic landscape, there are lives only. Because a life, as Deleuze writes, «is A LIFE, and nothing else»⁵⁶. Posthumanism is this condition where human life simply is a *life* like any other lives. From this point of view, posthumanism is the complete emptying out of any form of anthropocentrism. Since anthropocentrism is connate to *Homo sapiens*, posthumanism is a concept challenging the very nature of human being. Posthumanism is the «becoming-animal» of the only animal – *Homo sapiens* – that has never been *really* an animal. Posthumanism means a life, which is «the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence»⁵⁷. This life is *a life* which is neither afraid of a subjectless existence nor of technology, because they are but two aspects of the same condition, *human animality*. It is important to stress that there are no tigers in human animality. On the contrary, human animality is technological and prosthetic, otherwise it does not exist. In fact, such an animality is a «becoming-animal» which incorporates all the human prosthesis and technology. The human «becoming-animal» does not imply a condition made of instincts and brute violence; quite the contrary, it means a way to hold together the human prosthetic world (from language to the robotic exoskeleton) with the very animality of life. Posthumanity means human animals made of flesh and blood on the one hand, and human traditions and technologies on the other. What lacks in human animality is any reference to a neo-liberal proprietary subject.

As Donna Haraway wrote, there are two major risks to avoid when discussing about the future of humanity: «the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now»⁵⁸. What such a risk entails is to miss completely the actual concreteness of the body, of that life which is *a life* and «nothing else». Because animality is *this* life. The second risk – in a time with such a weird mix of scientism and technophobia – is «an anti-science metaphysics, a demonology of technology», instead of «embracing the skillful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, in communication with all of our parts». Human animality does not mean at all a refuse of the human modern technical world, otherwise it would be but another form of reactionary longing. Human animality «means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, spaces, stories. Though both are bound in the spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess»⁵⁹.

Felice Cimatti, Università della Calabria

✉ felice.cimatti@gmail.com

⁵⁶ G. Deleuze, *Pure Immanence. Essays on a Life*, New York 2001, p. 27.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ D. Haraway, *A Manifesto for Cyborgs*, in *The Haraway Reader*, Oxford 2004, p. 39.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*