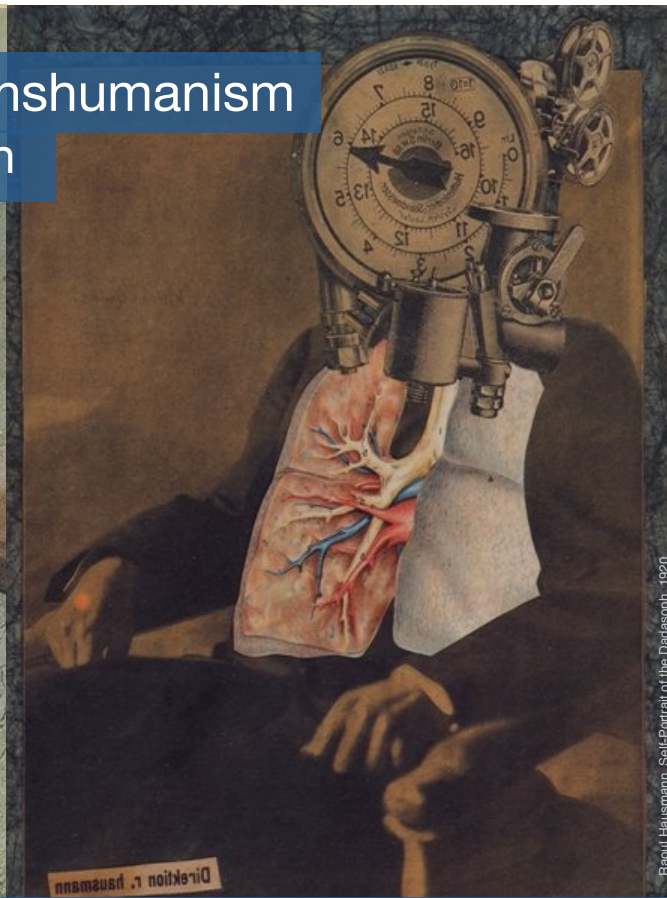
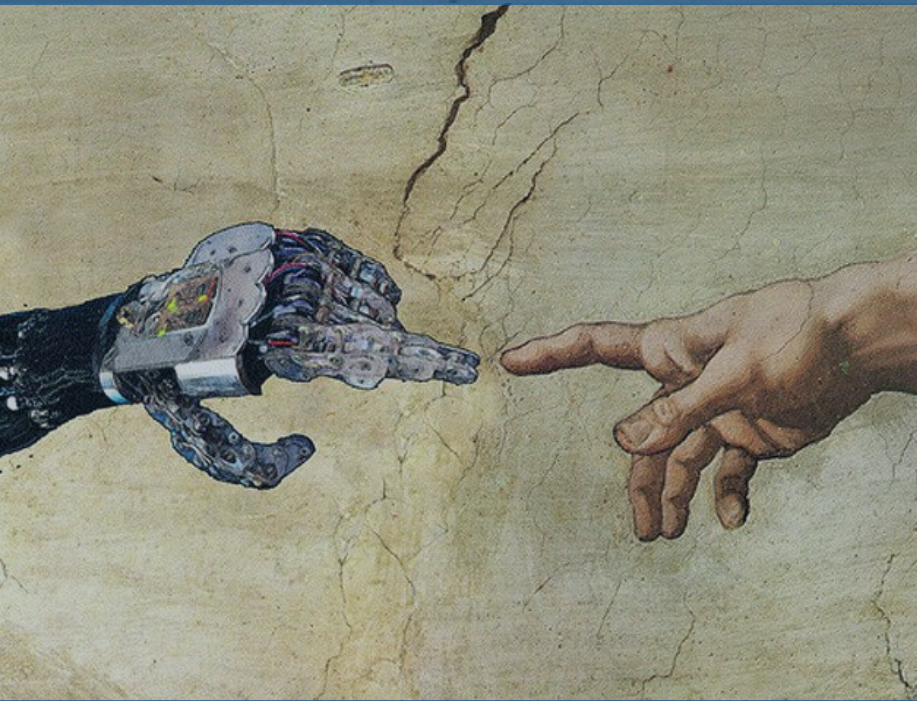


# Humanism, Posthumanism, and Transhumanism Toward a Sociology of the Non-/Human



Josef Barla | SoSe 2019 | SOZ10-BA-ST, SOZ-BA-ST, SOZ-BA-S2, SOZ-BA-S3 SOZ10-BA-SP, GS-BA-5

## contents

As biotechnologies, nanotechnologies, and artificial intelligence are converging, not only the human body but also what it means to be human becomes at stake in whole new ways. While Enlightenment humanism promised freedom and progress for every human being by stressing the idea of a “universal essence of Man”, in its practices it often failed to meet its own ideals, and hence could not fulfill its promises. Contesting the very dichotomy of culture and nature, ‘we’ and ‘them’, humans and nonhumans, feminist and postcolonial scholars emphasized the existential need for decentering and deconstructing the anthropocentrism, essentialism, and universalism inherent to Enlightenment humanism. Shifting the focus to the marginalized and marked—that is, to “all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self”, as Donna Haraway put it—posthumanist theories aim for novel critical figures and tropes in a world thoroughly transformed by technobiopower and the technosciences. At the same time, transhumanism gains a foothold as a kind of technophilic hyper-humanism that seeks to take control over human evolution itself through the means of existing and hypothetical future technologies such as cognition enhancing drugs, nanotechnologies, cryotechnologies, and whole brain emulation. In this seminar, we will critically reconstruct these debates and explore their promises and dangers. In doing so, we will discuss how the authors are engaging with the question of what it means to be non-/human and how human bodies are being transformed by rapid advances in science and technology. What is our relationship to the ‘natural’ world? Do new biotechnologies, nanotechnologies and information- and communication technologies determine the ways we think, act, and feel both as individuals and societies? And how do we construct a politics and common world in this new era of the posthuman?

Requirements **Teilnahmeschein**: **attendance** and **presentation**

Requirements **Leistungsschein**: **attendance**, **presentation**, and a **term paper** (expanding on a topic of the course, 15 pages, deadline September 30, 2019).

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schedule and literature

Monday 16:15-17:45 | SH 5.104

## 15 April | Introduction

### 29. April | The Human Condition

Barthes, Roland. 1991 [1957]. *Mythology*. New York: Noonday Press. Chapter “The Great Family of Man”, pp. 100-102.

Arendt, Hannah. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, S. 1-21.

### 6 May | The Emergence of Biopower

Foucault, Michel. 2003 [1976]. *Society Must Be Defended. Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*. Ed. by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana. New York: Picador, pp. 239-263.

### 13 May | Cybernetic Organisms

Clynes, Manfred E., and Nathan S. Kline. 1960. “Cyborgs and Space.” *Astronautics* (September 1960), 26-27 & 74-76.

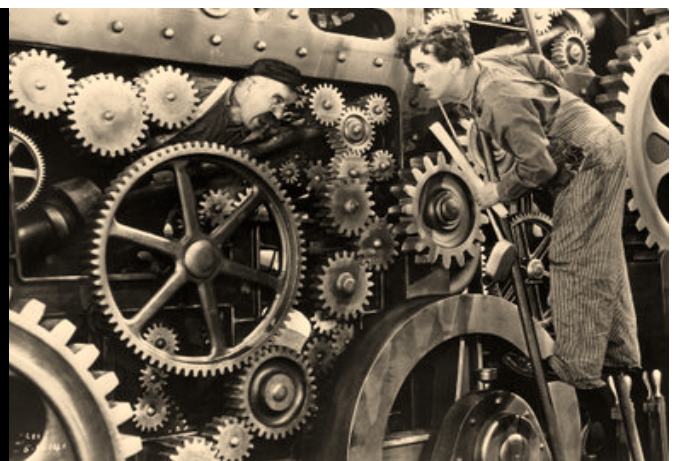
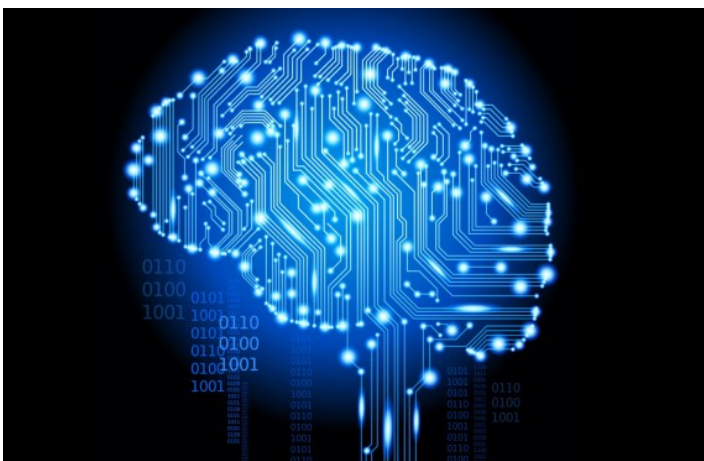
Haraway, Donna. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*. New York and London: Routledge. Chapter “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century”, pp. 149-181.

### 20 May | Networks of Human and Nonhuman Entities

Latour, Bruno. 1999. *Pandora's Hope. Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter “A Collective of Humans and Nonhumans”, pp. 174-215.

### 27 May | The Future of Humanity?

Bostrom, Nick. 2009. The Future of Humanity. In Olsen, Jan Kyrre Berg, Evan Selinger, and Søren Riis (Eds.): *New Waves in the Philosophy of Technology*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 186-215.



"Machine intelligence is the last invention that humanity will ever need to make"  
(Nick Bostrom)

"Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves are frighteningly inert."  
(Donna Haraway)

### 3 June | Human Enhancement

Habermas, Jürgen. 2003. *The Future of Human Nature*. Cambridge: Polity, pp. 16-74.

### 17 June | New Materialisms

Barad, Karen. 2003. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28 (3): 801-831.

### 24 June | Critical Theory in the Anthropocene

Braidotti, Rosi. 2017. "Posthuman Critical Theory." *Journal of Posthuman Studies* 1 (1): 9-25.

Haraway, Donna. *Staying With the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. Chapter "Making Kin: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene", pp. 99-103.

### 1 July | The 'Human' is Always Already More-Than-Human

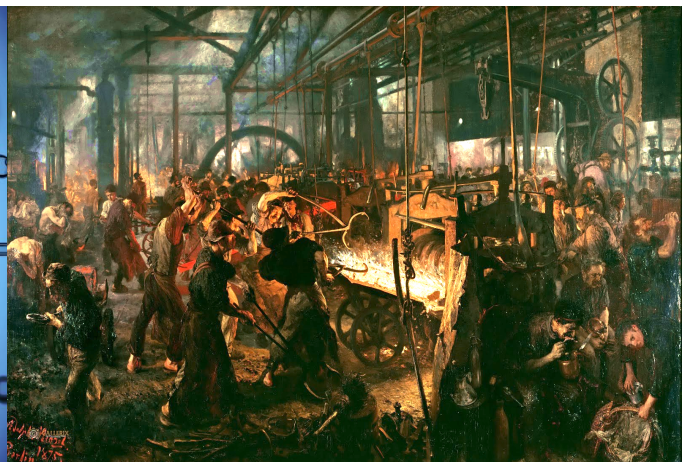
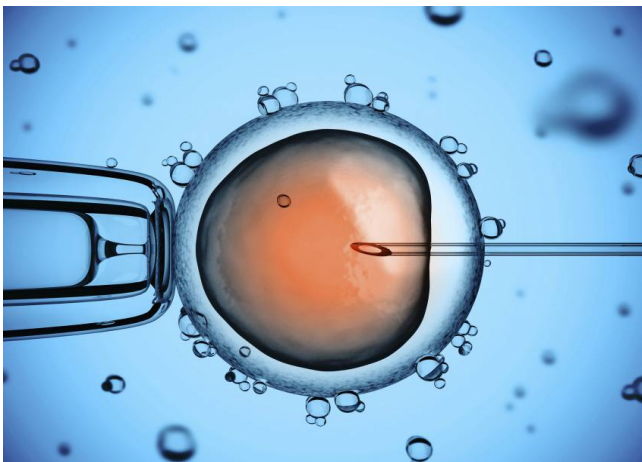
Sagan, Dorion. 2013. *Cosmic Apprentices: Dispatches From the Edges of Science*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press. Chapter "The Human is More Than Human", pp. 17-32.

Latour, Bruno. 2017. *Facing Gaia. Eight Lectures on the New Climate Regime*. Cambridge: Polity. Chapter "Third Lecture: Gaia, a (Finally Secular) Figure for Nature", pp. 75-110.

### 8 July | Race and the (Post-)Human

Ellis, Cristin. 2018. *Antebellum Posthuman. Race and Materiality in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. New York: Fordham University Press. Chapter "Posthumanism and the Problem of Social Justice: Race and Materiality in the Twenty-First Century", pp. 135-170.

### 15. July | Course Wrap-Up and Reflection



"What is at stake is a dedifferentiation, through biotechnology, of deep-rooted categorical distinctions which we have as yet, in the description we give of ourselves, assumed to be invariant."  
(Jürgen Habermas)

"To conceive of humanity and technology as polar opposites is, in effect, to wish away humanity: we are sociotechnical animals, and each human interaction is sociotechnical."  
(Bruno Latour)