Chapter 10: Making Humans Better: Posthumanism 'Beyond' Violence

What Is Wrong with Humanism? or, We Have to Get Better

In a not particularly subtle scene from the science fiction classic *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*,[1] young John Connor, future leader of the human resistance in 'our' final war against intelligent machines, watches his peers pretend-shoot each other with toy guns. Disillusioned, he remarks to his cyborg protector and *Ersatz* father figure, Arnold Schwarzenegger: "We're not gonna make it, are we? People I mean." In doing so, he invokes the topos of violent humanity that is condemned to ultimately destroy and exterminate itself. The fighting machine's rather laconic answer is not without a certain irony: "It's in your nature to destroy yourselves".

Here we have, in a sense, a summary of everything that seems to be wrong with 'us' as a 'species'. From an evolutionary standpoint we are 'unique' by all standards of biology, culture and science, capable of the greatest achievements as well as the most abject deeds, rulers of nature as well as its most brutal destroyers, almost godlike at times as well as capable of radical evil, successful yet incredibly vulnerable, and so on. An animal yet also something entirely other – an animal that no longer wants to be one and detests and rejects its own animality. An animal that wants to exorcise its own residual animality, a "monster [*Untier*]," as Ulrich Horstmann called it, in his most radically negative of all negative anthropologies. A Non-animal that attributes everything it hates about its human self to its repressed animal nature from which it constantly wishes to escape. Horstmann links this most human of attitudes to what he calls an "anthropofugal perception of the world [anthropofugale Weltwahrnehmung]", or 'our' escapism from our human-animal condition.[2]

What are we to think of all this aggression then that humans keep displaying, this destructiveness, this sadism, all the suffering and this 'inhumanity' everywhere? From where can we still draw hope? Sarah Connor, the mother of John, future saviour of humans in the *Terminator* films, mentioned above, seems to go to the heart of the, as one might call it, 'transhumanist' matter: "if a machine can learn the value of human life, maybe we can too". Machines are thus, according to this view, to serve as 'our' moral navigation systems and to show humans how best to behave in a humanly humane way…

Critical Posthumanism Between Post- and Trans-, or, Better Not...

Taking apart this primitive but crucial scenario above that the *Terminator* film plays out, this little piece of cultural technology, as one might call it, with all its basic assumptions and values, and putting it back together differently, i.e. deconstructing it, is the task of a critical posthumanism (CPH). The logic of self-overcoming through a perfection or improvement of humans and their so-called 'nature', however defined, as well as the role that technology is supposed to play in this process of 'hominisation', are the two aspects that need to be problematised from the perspective of CPH, because both – human improvement and the

[1] *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, rir. James Cameron, Tri Star Pictures (1991).

[2] Ulrich Horstmann, *Das Untier: Konturen einer Philosophie der Menschenflucht* [1983] (Berlin: Johannes G. Hoof, 2016), p. 10; all translations unless indicated otherwise are mine. The German '*Untier*' is untranslatable, it 'undoes' the notion of '*Tier*' (animal) in a similar way as Freud's '*unheimlich*' (uncanny) undoes the notion of '*heimlich*' (homely, secretive). In fact, it functions not unlike the 'un' in 'unlearning' which is the common thread of this volume (see esp. Chapters 6 and 8).

instrumentalisation of technology – have in fact been and continue to be major sources of unspeakable violence, against 'ourselves' and against myriad nonhuman 'others'.

At least since the two World Wars, the Holocaust and the (abiding) threat of nuclear self-destruction, humanism, including all its neohumanist attempts at its revival, has found it very difficult to legitimate itself. Even important humanist achievements such as universal human rights now seem more like a postcolonial rearguard action in view of the ongoing violence of humans against fellow humans, and the ever-growing economic, social and ecological inequality and injustice between different human groups and populations. All of this makes it very difficult to still speak of (a) humanity and (shared) humanness in the universalist humanistic sense. Instead, the current planetary ecological crisis and the accelerated technological development further expose the precarious situation of (some) humans, 'their' environment, as well as the enormous social, economic and ecological differences between groups and even individual 'specimens'. It suffices to look at the geographical distribution of people who are most affected by 'climate change' in the era of the so-called 'Anthropocene' when, As Rosi Braidotti puts it, "'We' Are In *This* Together, But We Are Not One and the Same".[3] Humanism, as a discourse that is based on a concept of a universal and exclusive human nature or 'essence', and which thereby seeks to distinguish humans from both (nonhuman) animals and (non-organic) machines, has become untrustworthy in many respects. The various posthumanist reactions consequently take up the conceptual problems and self-contradictions within humanism, radicalise, but also eventually relativise, them.

CPH in particular sees itself as the inheritor of this human chaos for which humanism is at least partly responsible, and therefore also of the injustice and the existential threats to human and nonhuman life it has helped to cause or at least did not prevent. The pragmatic value of the prefix 'post' does therefore not so much signal an overcoming (of humanism, even less of the human); it rather signals a working through process in the psychoanalytic sense. It is a gradual, 'parasitical' or deconstructive process that detects gaps and contradictions in humanism itself and exposes them in the hope of, ultimately, producing an entirely different (self)understanding of humans and their humanity.

Transhumanists, on the other hand, seem to want to rely solely on an "affirmation of technology", to which, as Stefan Sorgner claims, there is *de facto* "no alternative":

> What is crucial is that we are on the path to becoming superhuman. Either we evolve or we die out. We need the latest technologies to adapt to constantly changing environmental conditions and improve our quality of life (…). Only through appropriate use of technology can we achieve inclusive sustainability in the long term.[4]

Sorgner, like most transhumanists, thus sees no alternative to anthropocentric modernity and indeed advocates a further radicalisation of it as the only way 'forward'. Transhumanism is therefore incompatible with any posthumanist, that is postanthropocentric, ethics, which seeks a new balance between humans, technology and nature and is concerned with the intrinsic value of all (current and future) life.

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[3] Rosi Braidotti, "'We' Are In *This* Together, But We Are Not One and the Same", *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* 17 (2020): 465–469.

[4] Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, *Übermensch: Plädoyer für einen Nietzscheanischen Transhumanismus* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2019), p. 105.

Rosi Braidotti, certainly one of the main representative of CPH, formulates the current challenge of our "posthuman condition" in the following stark terms:

> The posthuman condition implies that 'we' – the human and non-human inhabitants of this particular planet – are currently positioned between the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Sixth Extinction (…). Striking a balance between these conflicting forces, so as to keep the broader picture in mind, is the current posthuman[ist] challenge.[5]

Within these two discourses – post- and transhumanism – CPH is, however, only one and relatively minoritarian position, one that tries to steer a course between posthumanisation and dehumanisation.[6] Alongside it there are also, apart from the transhumanist technoeuphorians, many uncompromising misanthropes, apocalyptists and collapsologists who tend to give free rein to their nihilism. This is not at all surprising since wherever one looks, the spectre, the anxiety and the fascination of extinction – of humans, of life, of the planet – are omnipresent. Ulrich Horstmann's '*Untier*' is part of these nihilistic responses to 'our posthuman condition'. It is an "announcement of the imminent self-abolition of the 'monstrous' human [*das Untier Mensch*]".[7] With this spectre – a world without humans – both, in a sense behind us, given the ubiquity of extinction scenarios fed to us by science fiction, as well as the memory of past and current genocides, *and* still awaiting us, I would argue (without in the least wishing to deny the temptation and sometimes even the strategic benefits of a little nihilism), that (radical) nihilism, ultimately, is something we had better not give in to. Instead, let us take a closer look at the entrails of the so-called "anthropological machine", as Giorgio Agamben calls it,[8] the (humanist) *dispositifs* or appartuses that are supposed to 'make us human', and we might well realise that…

There's Something Wrong with Perfectibility, or: Get Better Soon!

Miriam Meckel's novella *Next: Erinnerungen an eine Zukunft ohne uns* (Next: Memories of a Future Without Us)[9] looks back from the future on the digitalisation of humans from the dual perspective, of that of the algorithm and that of the 'last human':

> Virtually everyone wanted to perfect themselves. Perfection was the mantra of this time. And as long as they felt like they could control the process, they went for it like crazy.[10]

These 'last humans' are an allegory of 'us' and of 'our time', of course. If, as Sorgner provocatively claims, transhumanism is "the most dangerous idea in the world",[11] then it is probably because it seems to take Nietzsche's 'explosive' potential and his idea of the

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[5] Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), p. 2.
[6] Cf. The Conclusion to this volume on post- versus dehumanisation.
[7] Frank Müller in Horstman, *Das Untier*, p. 143.
[8] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. K. Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).
[9] Miriam Meckel, *Next: Erinnerungen an eine Zukunft ohne uns* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2011).
[10] *Ibid*., p. 50.
[11] Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, *Transhumanismus: „Die gefährlichste Idee der Welt"!?* (Freiburg: Herder, 2016).

impending arrival of the superman (maybe a little too) literally.[12] However, given the current global threat of climate change and the return of war to Europe, one would almost be inclined to agree with Sorgner when he writes that "[e]ither we continue to evolve and adapt to our environment, or we will soon no longer exist".[13]

A typical response to this predicament, and this is what constitutes the core of a specifically transhumanist approach, "lies exclusively in affirming the use of the latest technologies in order to promote the likelihood of a good life", Sorgner writes.[14] This is the trust that transhumanists display in their 'affirmative' approach to the technologically induced transformations of the present and future and their biological and social potential.[15] It is based on the belief that "in the not too distant future we will overcome numerous previous limits to our humanity".[16] In this sense, transhumanism de facto becomes the main proponent of a call for a contemporary "renewal of humanism":

> [Transhumanism] embraces and amplifies central aspects of secular and Enlightenment humanist thought, such as belief in reason, individualism, science, progress, as well as self-perfection or cultivation.[17]

What, however, could be so dangerous about the good old humanistic idea of self-improvement? Are humans as such not defined by their desire for self-optimisation or by the old Rousseauist principle of perfectibility, at least from a humanist perspective?[18]

Peter Sloterdijk, on the other hand, sees humanism merely as what he calls a traditional form of "anthropotechnics",[19] or as a technique of "self-taming", but "[w]hat can tame man, when the role of humanism as the school for humanity has collapsed?", Sloterdijk asks, in his provocative "Elmau speech", published as "A Response to the [Heidegger's] *Letter on Humanism*":

> What can tame men, when their previous attempts at self-taming have led primarily to power struggles? What can tame men, when, after all previous experiments to grow the species up, it remains unclear who or what educates the educators and for what purposes?[20]

From a CPH perspective, one would have to further ask about Sloterdijk's attempt to find "rules for the human zoo" – and this question, again, concerns the fundamental difference between posthumanism and transhumanism – who exactly is this 'self' that sesms to constantly presuppose the need for its own 'self-optimisation'?

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[12] Cf. Sorgner, *Übermensch*, p. 7.
[13] *Ibid*.
[14] *Ibid*., p. 10.
[15] Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 7-8.
[16] Sorgner, *Übermensch*, p. 11.
[17] Ranisch and Sorgner, *Post- and Transhumanism*, p. 8.
[18] Cf. Also the previous chapter in this volume (Chapter 11).
[19] Cf. Kevin Liggieri, "Anthropotechnik", in: Martina Heßler und Kevon Liggieri, eds., *Technikanthropologie: Handbuch für Wissenschaft und Studium* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2020), p. 309.
[20] Peter Sloterdijk, "Rules for the Human Zoo: a response to the *Letter on Humanism* [1999]", trans. Mary Varney Rorty, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27 (2009): 20, translation modified.

This question about the human self-awareness of its imperfection is, so to speak, the necessary prerequisite for any idea of perfectibility, improvement, optimisation or enhancement of the human 'as such', and – this is the key issue – it is a question that is inextricably linked to the question about the origin of violence and the desire for justice I opened up above. The point here is not to question this question as such, because basically we all somehow wish for humans to become better, fairer, less violent, more prudent, more ecologically compatible, more sustainable, more intelligent, more empathetic, more satisfied with themselves and others, and so on. This in itself is already a form of 'moral' or 'ethical enhancement', one might say. However, it appears to have become increasingly urgent in times of climatic extinction threats and recurring or ongoing military conflicts between humans.

Would not the greatest improvement to the human be to make 'it' a little less aggressive and thus to prove the terminator wrong, namely that it is not necessarily in our so-called 'nature' to kill each other and in that process to also willingly accept the (collateral) damage done to nonhuman others, environments and objects this causes. The point here is not, as for example Michael J. Sandel does in his argument against perfection,[21] to call for or against a more precisely defined ways of enhancing the human, ways which are now supposedly available through so-called new technological, genetic of pharmacological, means. It is also not a question of whether a 'posthumanist' or even a 'posthuman' war (two very different notions) would be somehow 'better' than Russia's still fairly conventional war of aggression against Ukraine and the Western support for Ukraine's legitimate self-defense. It is rather unlikely that either a posthuman war (e.g. 'cyberwarfare') or indeed a posthumanist understanding of it would be less cruel to human and nonhuman animals and their environments just because it could be operated with drones, robots, cyborgs and AIs, rather than human soldiers andtheir 'conventional' weapons, even if this vision undoubtedly forms one of the militaristic aspects that has been inherent in posthumanist discourse since its beginnings in the 1980s.[22]

In the specific context of my argument here, however, I am more concerned with exploring the question of why war and violence persist *despite* humanism and *despite* the apparently innate desire for perfectibility and self-optimisation in humans. There are it seems two fundamentally different approaches in this respect: one that simply wants to further optimise this human 'self' and does so in following and continuing an Enlightenment trajectory, underpinned largely by Darwinian arguments and a notion of technology firmly based on instrumentalisation, even though, increasingly, technology and its development is seen as somehow 'autonomous'. This, transhumanist, approach places all its bets on technology and actively works towwards an evolutionary replacement of humans, on the grounds that human intelligence and moral nature are simply not well prepared enough for the inevitable outcome

[21] Michael J. Sandel, *The Case against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[22] Cf. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century [1985]", in: *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 149-182; and Chris Hables Gray, ed., *The Cyborg Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 1996). For the idea of 'posthuman war' and animal suffering see Tim Blackmore, *War X* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) and Erika Cudworth und Steve Hobden, "The Posthuman Way of War", *Security Dialogue* 46.1 (2015): 513-529.

of technological progress, or in other words, they are simply 'antiquated' beyond any retrofitting.[23]

The other, CPH, approach aims for an improvement not only of humans, but of the entire planetary situation, namely through a dismantling of the human(ist) self-image, or for its further 'decentering' and the deconstruction of anthropocentrism. The motivation for this is ethical, but its implementation is of course radically political. And it is in this sense, *pace* Sorgner, that one can certainly perceive CPH as much *more* dangerous or radical than any form of transhumanism and its idea of human self-surpassment.

Posthumanistic Politics Beyond Good and Evil, or, Let's Do the Correction Now!

If one looks for approaches to posthumanist politics, one immediately notices that there are very different forms. Braidotti's neo-materialist feminism following Haraway and others has already been mentioned. Bruno Latour's 'ecological turn' in his more recent texts towards 'terrianism'[24] embraces the strategy of making humans reconnect with nature, as Delphine Batho says in her *Écologie intégrale: Le Manifeste*: "The aim is to turn our belonging to Nature into the new engine of history".[25]

On the other hand, the impending natural and cultural catastrophes mean that we cannot avoid a confrontation with technology and the proponents of its apparent ever-increasing autonomy. Already early on in current the age of nuclear threat, Ernst Tugendhat wrote in *Nachdenken über die Atomkriegsgefahr und warum man sie nicht sieht* (Reflections on the Danger of Nuclear War and Why We Can't See It):

> There is no rethinking of the fundamentally new forms of politics that would be required today. So humanity will probably perish because it can't seem to free itself from the political pressures and forms of behaviour that were adapted to a technological environment that now belongs to the past.[26]

Tugenhat's anti-nuclear stance today, ironically, serves as one of the most important arguments used by transhumanists for moral enhancement: technical and especially pharmacological intervention, they claim, is necessary to catch up with the pragmatic

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[23] The notion of human 'antiquatedness' or 'obsolesence' can be found in Günter Anders's work, although the conclusions he draws from, what he calls the "Promethean shame", that humans experience with regard to technological objects that surpass their creators' abilities, is of course very far removed from any transhumanist techno-euphoria. Cf. Christopher John Müller, *Prometheanism: Technology, Digital Culture and Human Obsolescence* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). See Chapter 13 for a more detailed discussion.

[24] Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), and Latour, *Où suis-je? Leçons du confinement à l'usage des terrestres* (Paris: La Découverte, 2021).

[25] "Il s'agit de faire de notre appartenance à la Nature le nouveau moteur de l'histoire". Delphine Batho, *Écologie intégrale: Le Manifeste* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2019), p. 13.

[26] "Ein Umdenken über die grundsätzlich neuen Formen der Politik, die heute erforderlich wären, findet nicht statt. So wird die Menschheit wahrscheinlich daran zugrunde gehen, daß sie sich offenbar von den politischen Druck- und Verhaltensformen nicht lösen kann, die zu einer technischen Umwelt paßten, welche der Vergangenheit angehört". Ernst Tugendhat, *Nachdenken über die Atomkriegsgefahr und warum man sie nicht sieht* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1986), p. 84.

advantage technology has gained over the human and its moral obsolescence, or, as Jamie Suskind put it in *Future Politics: Living Together in a World Transformed by Tech*: "We are not yet ready – intellectually, philosophically or morally – for the world we are creating".[27] Which means that this is all about future politics – taken literally, namely, about the politics of the future, the future of politics and the future *as* politics. This cannot work without different levels of anticipation, or more precisely, without *constructions* of the future. What is central in this political process is the distribution of power when it comes to the 'cultural technology' of anticipation. No wonder that science fiction is a key genre of our time, except that it is no longer about fiction but about *faction* – the deliberate and strategic blending of fiction and fact – or, 'science faction'.[28]

In the meantime, however, the war of aggression, as mentioned above, has returned to Europe – even though it had of course never completely disappeared, but was merely repressed from Europeans' minds. The war in Ukraine threatens (along with the conflict between Israel and its 'neighbours' again flaring up) to expand into a war that despite, or precisely because, of the intensifying global entanglement of technological, economic, social and microbiological 'networks' is becoming a war of all against all: military, civilians, hackers, states, media, terrorists and increasingly dangerous 'invisible' enemies such as viruses, algorithms and 'disruptive' technologies that threaten to bring about the so-called 'great disruption' [*der große Umbruch*], as Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret call it.[29] Interestingly, the English title of the book, *The Great Reset*, uses a computer analogy to highlight the digital context in which this upheaval is taking place. The idea behind the 'great reset' is thus to transform or disrupt the global digitalised 'base', or the planetary infrastructure, and 'reset' it. It is worth pointing out, however, that the idea of a reset is also one of the central ideologemes of what Frédéric Neyrat calls contemporary transhumanist 'geoconstructivism'. In *La Part inconstructible de la terre: Critique du géo-constructivisme*[30] Neyrat speaks of an underlying dangerous phantasm, namely that "geo-constructivism (…) maintains that the Earth, and everything on it – ecosystems and organisms, human and nonhuman – can and must be rebuilt, reshaped and reformed. Entirely".[31]

It is, however, a purely phantasmatic future policy, for this other, new planet does not exist, of course, and evoking it solely aims is to distract us from current power structures and inequalities – all in the name of a "biopolitics of catastrophes", as Neyrat calls it,[32] and always ultimately motivated by and in the name of some humanism.

War, aggression and counter-offensive, violence and retribution are ultimately always waged for more or less cynically 'humanistic' reasons – claimed by both sides! There *is* no opposition

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[27] Jamie Suskind, *Future Politics: Living Together in a World Transformed by Tech* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 1.

[28] Cf. Stefan Herbrechter, *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 107-134.

[29] Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret, *Covid-19: Der große Umbruch* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2020); Schwab and Malleret, *Covid-19: The Great Reset* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2020).

[30] Translated as *The Unconstructable Earth: An Ecology of Separation*, trans. Drew S. Burk (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018).

[31] "[L]e géo-constructivisme […] soutient que la Terre, et tout ce qu'elle contient – écosystèmes et organismes, humains et non-humains –, *peut* et *doit* être reconstruite, réformée et reformée. Entièrement". Frédéric Neyrat, *La Part inconstructible de la terre: Critique du géo-constructivisme* (Paris : Seuil, 2016), p. 11.

[32] Frédéric Neyrat, *Biopolitique des catastrophes* (Paris: Éditions MF, 2008).

between humanism and war, rather a kind of problematic interdependence between violence and justice, an aporia that Walter Benjamin was well aware of[33] and one that Derrida fully exposed.[34] The cynicism of contemporary cosmopolitan and humanistic 'war-peace [*Krieg-Frieden*], as Ulrich Beck called it, is, so to speak, the ultimate example of this aporetic alliance between violence and justice:

> The hope that after the end of the bipolar order a cosmopolitan world idyll would emerge and that nations would join hands in peaceful coexistence under the canopy of international law has fallen apart. At the beginning of the third millennium, it is not the peace of law, but open, unlimited, molecular violence that forms the signature of the emerging second modernity (…). A trap of double blackmail has opened up: if you are against humanitarian interventions, then you are for ethnic cleansing, for crimes against humanity; however, if you are against ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, then you must approve of the new 'war-peace' of 'military humanism'.[35]

How can one still make any coherent sense of this? How can one accept the inevitability of military, technological, microbiological or ecological catastrophes, or indeed a combination of all of these, and still believe in a new, better humanity? But maybe the politics of the future are not about future utopias at all, but rather about a certain *unlearning*.

Unlearning *Humanism and the Question of Justice, or, Better Does not Necessarily Mean Good*

It is not just digitalisation or biotechnology or their combination that is causing humanism and its educational policies to fail as 'taming techniques', to use Sloterdijk's term. A new "digital humanism" as called for by Julian Nida-Rümelin and Nathalie Weidenfeld would have to be "both technology and human-friendly". [36] However, even if that were possible, this would still fall short of tackling the real question of moral enhancement and human improvement. Because all of this is still avoiding the analysis of the origin of human violence and the willingness to use it against its own and other species, a behaviour that has made humans so successful from an evolutionary, demographic and economic perspective. Successful as well as devastating, harmful and cruel from an ecological as well as social point of view, both for (at least a significant part of) humanity itself and for its nonhuman companions, slaves, rivals and enemies.

Today, more and more humans seem to be thinking that the world would probably be a better place without humans, or that there would be less violence and more justice 'after' or 'without' humans. Maybe, some argue, it might even be better if humanity or humans had never existed – the ultimate form of repression, one might say. Better (for whom?), obviously, does not necessarily mean good. Achieving non-violence, or at least radically reduced

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[33] Walter Benjamin, "Zur Kritik der Gewalt [1920/21]", in: *Sprache und Geschichte: Philosophische Essays* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1992), pp. 104-131.

[34] Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'", in: Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson, eds., *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 3-67.

[35] Ulrich Beck, *Der Kosmopolitische Blick, oder: Krieg ist Frieden* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004), pp. 232-233.

[36] Julian Nida-Rümelin and Nathalie Weidenfeld, *Digitaler Humanismus: Eine Ethik für das Zeitalter der Künstlichen Intelligenz* (München: Piper, 2018), p. 15.

violence, and ethical-political-social justice would must remain central, earthly, goals for CPH. Even if CPH evidently cannot position itself 'beyond' violence, it is committed to the ongoing "critique of violence" in the sense of a Benjamin, a Derrida and also a Judith Butler. However, this cannot simply mean that there will be an entirely other, non-violent, posthuman future *without* violence, as for example some transhumanists might imagine, based on the idea that technologically enhanced posthumans will be *beyond* violence. Nevertheless, non-violence necessarily must remain the horizon of any moral human improvement, as Mahatma Ghandi famously demanded, in 1946, with the atrocities of WWII still freshly in mind: "The world of tomorrow will be, must be, a society based on non-violence."[37]

Judith Butler's approach to the question in fact comes very close to conceiving a no-longer-quite-humanistic notion of non-violence. In *The Force of Non-Violence*[38] she takes up her concept of "grievability",[39] and pursues her inquiry of "when is (a) life grievable?" and situates it within the framework of a theory of non-violence. She begins by outlining the original social connection between violence and non-violence:

> There is a sense in which violence done to another is at once a violence done to the self (…). [I]f the one who practices non-violence is related to the one against whom violence is contemplated, then there appears to be a prior social relation between them; they are part of one another, or one self is implicated in another self. Nonviolence would, then, be a way of acknowledging that social relation, however fraught it may be, and of affirming the normative aspirations that follow from that prior social relatedness.[40]

Butler thus presupposes an interrelation that actually *precedes* any possible use of violence and which is a precondition for the emergence of a separation between self and other in the first place – which, in fact, represents a combination of Levinasian and Derridean ethics. The question of (legitimate) self-defense, which is normally used in this context to undermine or delimit the idea of non-violence, is not ignored by Butler, but it is itself questioned: the self, which is always already presupposed in the idea of self-defense and which, precisely, is what must necessarily be defended with 'just' force, is, however, *itself* the result of a previous selection process. This selection process alone can create the kind of 'ipseity' or the possibility of autoaffection', as Derrida would probably call it, that is necessary to speak of and as a self. Hwever, it is this selection that is then, only subsequently, used to define what can count as a self, and which then becomes 'grievable' once violence is used against it, or when its right to a life of non-violence becomes enforceable. Butler consequently asks:

> Once we see that certain selves are considered worth defending while others are not, is there not a problem of inequality that follows from the justification of violence in the service of self-defense?[41]

Thus far Butler's far-reaching questioning of the connection between violence, non-violence and legitimate self-defense is probably still compatible with (even if a somewhat radicalised understanding of) humanism. However, in the process, Butler also opens up an entirely other

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[37] Mahatma Ghandi, "World of Tomorrow", *The Selected Works of Mahatma Ghandi*, vol. 5, *The Voice of Truth*; available online at: https://www.mkgandhi.org/voiceoftruth/world.htm (accessed 12/11/2023). .

[38] Judith Butler, *The Force of Non-Violence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (London: Verso, 2020).

[39] Cf. Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009).

[40] *Ibid*., p. 9.

[41] Butler, *The Force of Non-Violence*, p. 11.

perspective, without consistently pursuing it herself, when she writes: "The relations that bind and define extend beyond the dyadic human encounter, which is why non-violence pertains not only to human relations, but to all living and inter-constitutive relations".[42] And this, I would argue, is exactly where CPH's criticism of violence would have to begin to pursue an idea of non-violence *before* and perhaps even *without* humans so to speak.

Even in the extreme case of war (between humans), as we know, there is never only human loss to mourn. Not only do humans commit unspeakable violence against other humans, but (even in what human my call peacetime), they inflict even greater violence on nonhumans. Within an anthropocentric-humanist paradigm, however, nonhuman life forms are rarely 'grievable' in Butler's sense. And that is exactly what needs to change, not out of pure love for nonhuman animals or some sentimentality – this is not some 'luxury problem' in the age of global violence – but for very pragmatic as well as normative reasons. What is needed, one could say, is a transition from the predominant forms of 'anthropolitics', which always focus on human interests, to a 'postanthropolitics', a move that would also go beyond the usual violent dialectic of dehumanisation and animalisation. In other words, the greatest moral improvement for humans and nonhumans would be if humans could finally overcome their ambivalent attitude towards their own animal bodies. This is precisely where the metaphysics of humanism is most to blame. It is the humanist notion of human exceptionalism that has always relied on and sanctioned the repression of our own biological physicality and our resulting fundamental and violent separation and exclusion from nonhuman animals – an exclusion mechanism that as a 'technique' can also function in all sorts of other contexts, as Florence Burgat says in her foreword to Patrice Rouget's *La Violence de l'humanisme*: "[W]hy do we have to persecute animals? (…) what metaphysical humanism forges is the mechanism of exclusion, which then can slide like a cursor".[43]

Cary Wolfe goes to the core of this process in an interview with the *New York Times* with the title "Is Humanism Really Humane?":

> As long as you take it for granted that it's O.K. to commit violence against animals simply because of their biological designation, then that same logic will be available to you to commit violence against any other being, of whatever species, human or not, that you can characterize as 'lower' or more 'primitive' form of life.[44]

According to Lynn Worsham, anthropocentrism is ultimately based on a kind of "deflection", a form of "self-distraction" or repression that allows one to speak of "humans" (as such) in opposition to "animals" (as such). It is this categorisation that legitimises violence and which is closely linked to a logic of substitutive victims.[45] This can only be explained as a distraction from the primal traumatic realisation that we are all transient as biological beings. It is a "reaction-formation" that serves to "deflect awareness" and to repress "what we human and

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[42] *Ibid*., p. 9.

[43] "[P]ourquoi nous faut-il persécuter les animaux? […] ce que forge l'humanisme métaphysique, c'est le mécanisme de l'exclusion, dont il fait uniquement varier le curseur". Florence Burgat, "Preface", in : Patrice Rouget, *La Violence de l'humanisme: Pourquoi nous faut-il persécuter les animaux ?* (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 2014), pp. 9-10.

[44] Cary Wolfe, "Is Humanism Really Humane?" Interview with Natasha Lennard, *The New York Times* (9 Jan 2017); available online at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/09/opinion/is-humanism-really-humane.html (accessed 14/11/2023).

[45] Lynn Worsham, "Toward an Understanding of Human Violence: Cultural Studies, Animal Studies, and the Promise of Posthumanism", *Review of Education, Pedagogy & Cultural Studies*, 35.1 (2013): 721ff.

nonhuman animals share", in Worsham's words. It our "problematic relationship to our own animality".[46]

This must therefore form the starting point for CPH's critique of violence, namely to keep insisting on the common vulnerability and finiteness of all living things so that we may come to terms with and continue to deconstruct the traumatising logic of victimisation and the expressions of violence it sustains. Again, it is precisely here – to return to the differentiation between CPH and transhumanism – that the transhumanist dream of a technological transfer of our animal body into some kind of digital immortality runs the risk of being nothing else than merely a continuation of this violence-producing primordial repression.

And Finally: Best Wishes… from the Terminator

To return one last time to the terminator and to let 'him' have the last word in a kind of test case scenario – which, after all, is 'his' purpose, namely to have and be the last word on the question of humanity and its hope that the machine will make it somehow better. At the end of the film, the terminator is duly 'sacrificed' according to the same logic that all other 'subhuman' species are subjected to according to their 'killability' under anthropocentric-humanist conditions. Even the terminator thus falls victim to human violence – symbolically at least. After the machine has shown us what might actually make us human, it must pay the ultimate price and disappear. And, since Arnold is now a 'good' machine, 'he' sees, or even suggests, this 'himself', and switches 'himself' off voluntarily. However, more and more humans seem to doubt that the 'machine' will carry on doing us this favour in the future. Some can hardly wait for this to happen. However, until the history of human violence is fundamentally addressed and worked through, it is difficult to imagine how any posthuman (again, certainly not the same as a posthuman*ist*) future could be in any way better than the past.

[46] *Ibid*., pp. 730ff.