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Postdigital Humans: Transitions, Transformations & Transcendence

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Fundamental issues for the C21

- We seek to grasp ‘the ungraspable’
- Matters of truth, being human, ethics and value, theology and religion, transcendence, esp:
- (1) Technics and the lifeworld;
 - We have come to counterpose Humanity:Nature
 - But now the digital and technics – a 3rd realm interposing itself?
- (2) The problem of control/ power – ‘on tap or on top’?
 - (cf the internet of things; who designs the software?)
 - (Each morning, turning on the computer and smartphone)
- (3) Being human as such:
 - Is ‘the postdigital human’ an oxymoron?
 - Will the digital be superceded (cf the telephone)

On being human

– and *Begging the question*

- Have we ever been human?
 - The idea of ‘human’ is ‘normative’
 - The concept has been destabilized
 - » Now, we are obliged to confront the issue
- The matter of being human has been broken open
 - Can we now be human outside of the digital environment?
- The digital revolution is a prompt – just one prompt – in this direction
 - Human being is now dislodged into open contexts – of space, time, understandings, obligations
 - » Being human is controversial
- What are the particular provocations of the digital revolution?

The end of the book?

- The end of the book?
- Matters of
 - Understanding (deep reading) - the very concept
 - Critical engagement
 - Conversations (with the dead)
 - Neurology of 'reading' on-line;
- The human squeezes into an analogue world –
 - Instantaneity – loss of persistence
- The postdigital is itself a normative concepts
 - - and is fundamentally a matter of *culture*

The matter of recognition

- The digital both reduces and opens recognition
- Surface level: email to the next room rather than head round the door
 - But the local seminar becomes the worldly webinar
- Moreover, sense that the webinars are more spacious
- Less hierarchical
 - More opportunities for participation
 - More individuals can join the conversation, can be recognized
- But individuals can also be excluded.
- Who monitors the internet activities in webinars?
 - There are (geo)political and (geo)corporate matters here
 - ie matters of structure as well as agency (largely ignored?)

(5) Educational paradoxes

- (1) The matter of *locale* – more empathy with the dispossessed of the world than with those in one's neighbourhood
- (2) The place of *serendipity* - its possibilities, for provocations;
 - BUT the appeal of the coffee-bar? (We have our own bubbles in the digital world?)
- (3) The problem of apparent *fluidity*
 - BUT the digital is a series of dislocated events?
- (4) Greater efficiency/ greater *vitality* – ie, enervating/ energising?
 - BUT corrupting/ de-energising (the 'entropy'/ 'negentropy' problem)
- (5) *Assessment*: the digital promises greater reliability
 - BUT lesser validity?

The problem(s) of ecology

- (Lack of) interconnectedness, between humans, knowledges & the world
- The digital encourages separation or integration?
- In the responses to the pandemic, it is the bio-digital that counts, not the humanities, or anthropology/ sociology and the cultural studies
 - ie the digital encourages epistemic hierarchy
 - Not an ‘ecology of knowledges’?
- The digital revolution is being driven by interests that are not those of ecology, of care, of patience, of empathy ...?

Endpoints: Provocations

- The postdigital raises 8 fundamental & pressing matters:
 - Culture
 - Being Human (being inhuman)
 - Education
 - The university – ‘the porous’/ ‘the infinite university’
 - Truth
 - Value
 - Authority
 - State-citizen relationship
 - The jury is out on all of these matters
- But will it come to a decision on them **or** will the postdigital world come to its own (fateful) decisions without waiting for the academic world to issue its own pronouncements?*



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