

Conclusion

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As stated in the Introduction, the diverse contributions to this volume aim to provide readers with an overview of the dynamic but also multifaceted evolution that the humanities are currently undergoing. The chapters clearly demonstrate that there is no crisis in the field, rather growth, self-criticism, and innovation. But they also testify to the fact that the current evolution is not linear, nor governed by one single ruling principle, but is rather primarily driven by the internal imperative of the humanities to constantly 'overcome themselves'. This drive also requires constant negotiations with – rather than mere passive adaptation to – fast-moving external challenges.

As we indicated at the outset, the contributions to this volume deliberately present a specific 'unity without homogeneity'. The *unity* of the chapters consists of the fact that they all respond to the challenges that the humanities are facing – economic, environmental, technological, political, medical – in both conventional and disruptive ways. The authors go beyond the necessary measures of advocacy – the call to 'preserve' the humanities, in view of their distinguished past. Or alternatively, the suggestion to 'open' them up to 'new trends' – usually economically induced ones – or even to 'apply' them within society at large. Not the least of these applications is their role in edifying the knowledge, cultural background and imagination of the public, thereby playing an auxiliary role in public debates, the construction of discerning citizens, and the defence of democracy. We consider all these advocacy suggestions important and relevant, but also insufficient as institutional measures and inadequate as representations of the force of the contemporary humanities.

Each chapter tends therefore to further probe these commonplace understandings and envision a more complex and 'dialogical' relationship between the humanities and the various other societal spheres, processes and challenges they are confronting. The volume offers different concrete instances of what can be seen, retrospectively, as a shared sensibility of this volume about the relational force of the humanities. These relations strike in several directions; the two-way relationship between the humanities and the world of natural sciences is now broadened to include the relationship between the three cultures of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The notion of the humanities as SHAPE – Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy – points at an even larger spectrum of fields of application, which include technological innovations, education systems, public spheres and political dynamics, the arts and media world, transnational environmental activism, public health equality, and many others. All the analyses seem to be underpinned by the commitment to this relational approach and the conviction that the humanities should try to understand, and learn from, the specific

dynamics and actors populating the various realms they interrelate with and grasp the potentialities for social change and human flourishing inherent in them. At the same time, however, all the contributors emphasise that the humanities also try to enhance the capacities of the actors engaged in these societal arenas by bringing in their own unique set of 'navigational tools', methods and terminologies characterised by reflexivity, experimentality, and non-instrumentality.

The *heterogeneity* of this unifying sensibility running through the volume's contributions, on the other hand, consists of the fact that there is not one single ruling principle organising the humanities' contemporary growth. It is neither possible nor desirable to expect a substantive normative, political, epistemological or methodological core concept among the contributors as to what this dialogical relationship between the humanities and other dimensions of social reality should look like. One may even suggest that each author develops a unique combination regarding the normative, political, epistemological, and methodological positions and analyses of different aspects of the current predicament of the humanities. Does this heterogeneity weaken the overall case we are arguing here? On the contrary, the volume's combination of a unanimous challenge of the conventional dichotomy of the 'humanities versus the rest of social reality' – supported by different approaches and strategies, methods, and norms – can be seen as emblematic of the ideal of the transformed humanities that we argued for in the Introduction. That is, the ideal of the humanities grounded in a more inclusive and heterogeneous notion of 'humanity', one that de-centres anthropocentrism and expands our understanding of humanism, agency, emancipation and political subjectivity, and that at the same time overcomes the binary logic of instrumentality.

In incorporating these crucial insights, this book highlights the chief challenges facing the humanities at the moment. It subsequently offers recommendations on how to further develop the humanities along the lines of these research and teaching areas. On the basis of this work, more concrete recommendations for the promotion of the humanities were also developed for UNESCO. The authors of the European Hub of the World Humanities Report demand not only the acceptance of these novel approaches to the humanities, but also the active support and promotion thereof.

They insist in this context that the member states of the EU or relevant institutions should recognise that the humanities are connectable to all areas of human life. They should acknowledge the social fields that are here identified and treat them with urgency. Attention must be afforded to the wider context of the connections between these fields and the effects of their change on private and social life. The humanities possess a rich body of experience for all contexts of human existence. They have a productive capacity for transformation not only of their own institutions, but also their academic mindset, to an unparalleled extent. As has been demonstrated in the report, this includes, *inter alia*, the ability to redefine their conceptions of humanity and the human actor, as well as the ability for interdisciplinary cooperation, which may alleviate the human vacuum within technocratically dominated (world) social processes. The humanities have the potential for both intercultural cooperation, thus overcoming centrisms of all kinds, as well as for addressing and vanquishing issues of imbalanced representation and bias. Bias towards cultures, languages, races, genders, and physical attributes may thus be overcome in- and outside of the academic context.

Furthermore, essential interrelationships should be recognised, as they are shown in the World Humanities Report. In Europe, the humanities stand in the context of all human and non-human life, as the Environmental Humanities of Utrecht have established. The

humanities are connected to processes of internationalisation and cooperation, as the Intercultural Humanities of both the Göttingen and London universities have shown. Further, based on the insights provided by the SHAPE-ID group from Dublin, the humanities can flourish by developing fruitful interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary relationships. They are and further should be involved in policy-making, thus strengthening the area of Public Humanities which has been put forth by Belgrade. As Göttingen and Bologna have illustrated, they should also be considered with regards to digitalisation. Finally, the humanities are part of the countless transformations which shape the world, not only in the sense presented by the GUNi group from Barcelona.

The authors therefore further agree on the following framework conditions, which are necessary for the support and promotion of the humanities and thus for global welfare. Firstly, a culture of meaningful and honest engagement with diversity and inclusion in the humanities must be established. Secondly, a climate of recognition and equal opportunities must be supported. Democracy as a basis for free scientific work should be further promoted. There need to be more advocates for research and development in both the private and the university sectors, leading to increased cooperation in all areas. Better financial upkeep in terms of equipment, institutions and personnel is vital; supporting the mobility of knowledge as well as scholars is a *sine qua non*. Internationalisation and polylogues must be advanced through education, research and academic or non-academic programmes. Additionally, the support capacity for building interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research through education, training and career incentives at universities must be extended significantly. Finally, a more substantial involvement of the humanities in designing and evaluating interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary funding programmes is strongly advised.

Apart from these larger tenets, some recommendations directly related to the humanities are to support the humanities' research profile and its role as a knowledge producer. Humanistic education must be defended – for the erosion thereof may prove to be catastrophic. Subsequently, one should also recognise that higher education needs to cultivate the highest possible excellence in the disciplines, including advanced critical thinking and evaluation skills, as well as more technical academic prowess.

Within contemporary culture, member states and relevant institutions should prevent the reduction of university research to the level of a provider of intellectual commodities. Instead, they should maintain the firm conviction that the discussion about excellence needs to be open and comparative. Critical engagement is needed to discuss the paradigms at work in the making of contemporary science and scholarly research. This discussion requires an interdisciplinary approach and a dialogue among different disciplines from the humanities and social sciences, but also the natural and exact sciences. The necessity to develop adequate means and analytical tools to assess the digital aspects of the world must be recognised. Research already points in the direction of a new interdisciplinary area, which could be called 'the posthumanities'. Aspects thereof include 'humanistic informatics', 'Digital Humanities' or 'Environmental Humanities'. Emphasis must be placed on the international dimension of education and research today. Both within the new European Union and in the globalised world, the university community needs to compare its century-old tradition of cosmopolitanism to the realities of the global flows of capital today.

Overall, the enduring and current importance of the humanities is beyond question. Based on a shared interest with the historical and cultural sciences, the humanities confirm that crises are in fact not new – neither are they always engaged with objectively nor with the help of numbers and so-called 'hard facts'. The fields of medicine and economics,

which have so far been considered paramount to human existence, still neglect the human experience. There is a distinct lack of discussion and consideration of the interrelationships which constitute the networked social and global connections of human life. The humanities not only help to understand the multitude of new impacts on society, they can also illuminate possible pathways into the future. The forthcoming changes are, after all, already being foreshadowed. Innumerable areas of society are being reshaped and placed in new relationships to one another. When it comes to the question of how we want to live (together) in the future, these ideas can be formulated with the help of the humanities. They can prepare people to assume personal and social responsibility and provide instruments for the necessary further acquisition of knowledge for the future.

In conclusion, we therefore recommend enlarged and more elaborate funding, but also a downsizing of the boundaries between disciplines in order to do justice to the networking of the emerging fields and their interdependencies. There should be increased support for internationalisation by allowing researchers, teachers and students, as well as knowledge, to move freely. We strongly encourage the active promotion of a culture of engagement with diverse cultural traditions, ontologies, epistemologies, and practices in the humanities. This may be achieved in multiple ways, which should henceforth be combined, by doing justice to the emerging fields and their interdependencies, along with the deliberate elimination of ethnocentrism and racism from the humanities curriculum and pedagogy, and, finally, by critically assessing traditional as well as alternative research and teaching methodologies and resources.