

Posthumanism in the Age of Globalization

Rethinking *The End of Education*

To return to play its purely profane vocation is a political task.

—Giorgio Agamben, “In Praise of Profanation”

I introduce this volume of essays on the urgent question of the human in the post-9/11 age by returning to my beginning over twenty years ago—in the aftermath of the Vietnam War—specifically, to my then controversial book *The End of Education: Toward Posthumanism* (1993)—from the liminal vantage point of the post-9/11 occasion, an expanse of volatile historical time that has borne witness to the implosion of the Soviet Union and the renewal of the United States’ initiative (following its “kicking of the ‘Vietnam syndrome’” at the time of the first Gulf War) to achieve global hegemony. I am referring to the American imperial initiative, precipitated, above all, by the *al Qaeda* bombing of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which, in providing the United States with a “new frontier” (enemy),¹ “justified” the George W. Bush administration’s declaration of an unending global “War on Terror,” which is to say, not only to undertake, in the name of “the clash of civilizations,” unilateral “pre-emptive wars” against “rogue states” and the imposition of ventriloquized governments on them (“regime change”), but also, and equally, if not more important, particularly as it pertains to the issue of higher education (knowledge production) and the American polity, the announcement of the Homeland Security State, that is, the establishment of the state of exception as the

universal norm. This return to the beginning of my engagement with the question of humanism and humanist education has not only offered me the pleasurable opportunity to reread for the first time what I wrote about higher education in the United States so long ago at such a volatile time but also, given the epochal transformations, both local and global, that have ensued in the interim, a certain anxiety about some of the recommendations concerning the university, humanist studies, and, not least, the “post-human” I proffered in the concluding chapter of that book. In the following remarks about *The End of Education*, written retrospectively from the vantage point of the fraught local and global post-9/11 occasion, I will first posit what I continue to think is not only valid about my initial understanding of the idea of humanism but, because it remains inadequately thought, in need of further elaboration: that humanism is not simply a worldly/historical, but also and at bottom an *ontological* phenomenon, that is, a way of representing (the truth of) being at large. Second, I will suggest that the modern University had its origins in the disciplining of being in the age of the Enlightenment. Third, I will show that the poststructuralists’ de-centering of Man constituted a revolution—an event, in Alain Badiou’s sense of the word—that was immediately betrayed by their failure to perceive the ontological de-centering of Man as a de-centering that also occurred at the more “worldly” sites on the continuum of being. Fourth, I will suggest that this betrayal, aided and abetted by the United States’ globalization of the free market in the post–Cold War period and, after the bombings of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by *al Qaeda* on September 11, 2001, its apotheosis of the “Homeland Security State” and the normalization of the state of exception, enabled an invasion of the University by neoliberal capitalism intended not only to recuperate but to aggrandize the control over knowledge production it lost during the turbulent Vietnam decade. I am referring to the corporate initiative tacitly (in the name of the failing economy) but massively committed to the obliteration of both the residual traditional function of the humanities (the production of good—nationalist—citizens of the nation-state) and, above all, the function of the humanities inaugurated by the protest movement in the 1960s and 1970s that would supersede the former—the *instigation of critical consciousness*—in favor of reducing them to *service* departments: instrumentalist apparatuses for providing students—native and foreign—with the skills (particularly “global English”)² to operate the electronic tools of the neoliberal global free market. Fifth, and in keeping with the lesson of the betrayal, I will attempt to radicalize

the concept of humanism (and of the secular with which humanism has been perennially associated) to more clearly distinguish it from the traditional Western understanding of the term, which identifies it with Western civilization. Sixth, I will return to the question of the post-human—and its implications for the University and the coming *polis*—as it has re-emerged in the context of the in-between time I have called an interregnum inaugurated by the self-de-struction of the American exceptionalist ethos with the United States' declaration of its unending war on terror. Taking my directives from the time of the now precipitated by this self-de-struction of the American calling, I will, finally, seventh, proffer a number of recommendations concerning higher education that the post-9/11 occasion has compelled into urgent visibility.

2

As I argued in *The End of Education* by way of an in-depth critical analysis of the influential discourses of exemplary modern post-theological, i.e., “secular,” humanists—such as Matthew Arnold, Irving Babbitt, I. A. Richards³—and those modern university administrators (particularly at Harvard) who institutionalized their theoretical recommendations—humanism is not only a cultural (or worldly) but also an *ontological* category. Despite the obviousness of this point (as its apparent antithetical relation to theology testifies), traditional humanists, theorists and practitioners, from the Renaissance to the present, almost systematically failed to attend to the critical imperatives of this reality. They insistently represented God and Man, *Theologos* and *Anthropologos*, in binarist terms, but in failing to think (or in shrinking back from thinking) this opposition radically, they also failed to perceive that the new worldly (secular) dispensation demanded a radically different—anti-theological or *de-centered*—understanding of being, including human being. Unwilling in the last instance to abandon the ordering *Logos* (the Word), they posited a self-identical concept of Man that was the mirror image of the Self-identical God they were ostensibly rejecting. In the period of the Enlightenment (modernity), the *Theologos* became the *Anthropologos*. God as the measure of all things became Man the measure of all things. And the more complex secular world Man made was modeled on God's Creation. It became a natural supernaturalism in which the “Word” of Man—the *Anthropologos*—was determinative.

To put this historical continuity between medieval Theology and Renaissance Anthropology alternatively (in the Anthropological language culminating in Enlightenment modernity), the ontological interpretation of being in the “new” dispensation remained *metaphysical*. The *be-ing* of being—the transience of time, the radical temporality or *nothingness* that produces anxiety (that emotion that has no thing as its object)—was represented from a transcendental (other-worldly) perspective: *meta-ta-physica*, from above or beyond or after the (temporal) thing themselves. Thus, as in theology, this humanist ontology privileged the all-seeing eye as the agency of knowledge production at the expense of the other (“adulterating”) senses. In so doing, this end-oriented or panoptic perspective *vis-à-vis* knowledge production also produced a binarist logic that unerringly privileged Identity over difference, Oneness over the transience of time, which is to say, endowed Man with a will to power over his differential others. As a result this metaphysical reduction, the *be-ing* of being underwent a momentous transformation. In *representing* being from the fixed, Archimedean panoptic perspective, the “new” humanist/secular interpretation of being, like the old theological one, also reduced the anxiety-provoking temporality of the secular world to a reified Being or *Summum Ens*—or, in the language of poststructuralism, to a totalized (spatialized) *structure*: the all-encompassing centered circle. I quote Jacques Derrida’s definitive, but still to be adequately registered, poststructuralist analysis of the function of the circle in the *Western* “logocentric” tradition at length not only to underscore the continuity in this tradition between the Sacred and the Secular, God and Man, Theology and Humanism, but also to retrieve the inaugural revolutionary impact of its de-centering of the Anthropological Center:

It has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted the very thing within structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality. This is why classical thought concerning structure could say that the center is, paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside it*. The center is the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its center elsewhere*. The center is not the center. The concept of centered structure—although it represents coherence itself, the condition of the epistémé as philosophy or science—is contradictorily coherent. And as always, coherence in contradiction always expresses the force of a desire. The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a play based on a fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which

itself is beyond the reach of free play. And on the basis of this certitude anxiety can be mastered, for anxiety is invariably the result of a certain mode of being implicated in the game, of being caught by the game, of being as it were at stake in the game from the outset. And again on the basis of what we call the center (and which, because it can be either inside or outside, can also indifferently be called the origin or end, *arché* or *telos*), repetitions, substitutions, transformations, and permutations are always *taken* from a history of meaning [*sens*]—that is, in a word, a history—whose origin may always be reawakened or whose end may always be anticipated in the form of presence. This is why one perhaps could say that the movement of any archeology, like that of any eschatology, is an accomplice of this reduction of the structurality of structure and always attempts to conceive of structure on the basis of a full presence which is beyond play. If this is so, the entire history of the concept of structure, before the rupture of which we are speaking, must be thought as a series of substitutions of center for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the center. Successively, and in a regulated fashion, the center receives different names. The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix . . . is the determination of Being as *presence* in all sense of this word. It could be shown that all names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence—*eidós*, *arché*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia* (essence existence substance), *aletheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth.⁴

In positing humanism as an ontological category in *The End of Education*, however, I did not intend, as all too many “anti-humanist” poststructuralists, including Derrida, in effect, did, to restrict humanism—and the thinking of its operations—to the ontological register at the expense of the more “worldly” sites. On the contrary, I was attempting to retrieve the worldliness it lost in the wake of the modern Western humanists’ division of being into disciplinary categories. More specifically, I was trying to show that being, far from being a worldless phenomenon, as it came to be understood under the aegis of post-Enlightenment humanism (then forgotten as a question, as Heidegger famously observed⁵ in *Being and Time*), was, in fact, an indissolubly related dynamic continuum, however unevenly developed at any historical moment, ranging from being, the subject, and language (knowledge production), the ecos, to the alleged “more worldly” sites: culture, gender, race, economics, the social, the political, and the global. My purpose, in so doing, was to suggest that the very idea of the West, particularly as it emerged in the Renaissance (the rebirth of Roman civilization in the wake of the

medieval “dark ages”), was grounded in a metaphysical interpretation of being that privileged a mode of knowledge production that was complicit with the will to power, and to suggest that a worldly critique of the Western nation-state and its imperialist politics that did not attend to the ontological site was inadequate, if not self-defeating, since these “more worldly” sites have their structural origins in the structure of the Western interpretation of being.

This complicity between ontology (metaphysics) and world, knowledge and power, informing the emergent Western humanist paradigm—this ultimately *dehumanizing* logic of Renaissance humanism—was the witness of Martin Heidegger in his famously provocative “Letter on Humanism,” written in the immediate aftermath of World War II in response to Jean Beaufret’s question, “*Comment redonner un sens au mot ‘Humanisme’?*” (How can we restore meaning to the word “Humanism”?), where he traced the origins of modern Western humanism to Rome—its metaphysical reduction of the Greek understanding of truth, *a-letheia* (unconcealing), to *veritas* (the adequation of mind and things), that is, an originative thinking to a derivative or calculative apparatus of capture, and pointed to the complicity of Humanist ontology with worldly power: not only with education (disciplinary knowledge production) but also with Roman imperialism:

Humanitas, explicitly so called, was first considered and striven for in the age of the Roman Republic. *Homo Humanus* was opposed to *homo barbarus*. *Homo humanus* here means the Romans, who exalted and honored Roman *virtus* through the “embodiment” of the *paideia* [education] taken over from the Greeks. These were the Greeks of the Hellenistic age, whose culture was acquired in the schools of philosophy. It was concerned with *eruditio et institutio in bonas artes* [scholarship and training in good conduct]. *Paideia* thus understood was translated as *humanitas*. This genuine *romanitas* of *homo romanus* consisted in such *humanitas*. We encounter the first humanism in Rome: it therefore remains in essence a specifically Roman phenomenon which emerged from the encounter of Roman civilization with the culture of late Greek civilization. The so-called Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy is a *renascentia romanitatis*. Because *romanitas* is *what matters*, it is concerned with *humanitas* and therefore with Greek *paideia*. But Greek civilization is always seen in its later form and this itself is seen from a Roman point of view. The *homo romanus* of the Renaissance also stands in opposition to *homo barbarus*. But now the in-humane is the supposed barbarism of gothic Scholasticism in the Middle Ages. Therefore a *studium humanitatis*, which in a certain way

reaches back to the ancients and thus also becomes a revival of Greek civilization always adheres to historically understood humanism.⁶

But it is in the later uncannily proleptic essay “The Question of Technology,” which addresses the developed modern (Enlightenment) version of Western humanism—its “Enframing” mode of revealing (*Ge-stell*)—that Heidegger articulates the full import of its dehumanizing logic:

What kind of unconcealing is it, then, that is peculiar to that which results from the setting upon that challenges? Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed, to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve [*Bestand*]. The word expresses here something more, and something more essential, than mere “stock.” The word ‘standing-reserve’ assumes the rank of an inclusive rubric. It designates nothing less than the way in which everything presences that is wrought upon by the revealing that challenges. Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object.⁷

In thus reducing being to standing-reserve, Man himself under the aegis of this Enframing of humanism, Heidegger goes on to say, becomes “standing-reserve”—or, as I prefer to translate *Bestand* for the sake of highlighting the proleptic implications of this extreme form of dehumanizing reduction to which I will return often in the chapters of this book, “disposable reserve”:

Yet when destining reigns in the name of Enframing, it is the supreme danger. This danger attests itself to us in two ways. As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but does so, rather, exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth. In this way the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final illusion. It seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself. . . . *In truth however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence.* Man stands so decisively in attendance on the challenging-forth of Enframing that he does not grasp enframing as a claim, that he fails to see himself as the one spoken

to, and hence also fails in every way to hear in what respect he ek-sists [is an ontic-ontological, outside-insider], from out of his essence, in the realm of an exhortation or address, and thus *can never* encounter only himself. (308; emphasis in original)

Seen in this light, Heidegger's genealogy of humanism is not only proleptic of the post-structuralist Michel Foucault, who, a generation later, pointed to the complicity of modern Western humanism with the reduction of politics to biopolitics, but also, as I will show at length in chapter 4, of those radical post-posthumanists—Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Jacques Rancière, Judith Butler, among others—whose theoretical discourses have, in one way or another, underscored “bare life,” life that can be killed without its being called homicide, as the fulfillment of the logic of modern Western humanism.

3

To put the centered circle, the founding metaphysical humanist re-presentation (or cartography) of being in its productive modern (Enlightenment) historical/worldly form—the form, not incidentally, that became the model for the structure of the modern University—the humanist spatialization or structuralization of the secular world took the synecdochical form of the classificatory table inaugurated and developed by humanist biological scientists such as Buffon, Linnaeus, and Cuvier; humanist economists such as Adam Smith and Ricardo; military theorists such as J.A. de Guibert; architects such as Nicholas Ledoux; and political scientists such as Jeremy Bentham. This was the panoptic structure, enabled by thinking being *meta ta physica*, decisively analyzed by Michel Foucault. Deeply aware of its multiple applicability (and thus of the indissoluble relationality of the multiple sites of the continuum of being), Foucault was enabled by this genealogy of the “disciplinary society” to perceive the Panopticon as a polyvalent apparatus of capture, which, by way of reifying and individualizing the multiple and then assigning each to its proper place in the larger whole, enabled modern (Anthropological) Man to turn the anxiety-provoking (threatening) differences that time always already disseminates into “docile and useful” bodies:

The first of the great operations of discipline is . . . the constitution of “*tableaux vivants*,” which transforms the confused, useless or dangerous

multitudes into ordered multiplicities. The drawing up of “tables” was one of the great problems of the scientific, political and economic technology of the eighteenth century: how one was to arrange botanical and zoological gardens, and construct at the same time rational classifications of living beings; how one is to observe, supervise, regularize the circulation of commodities and money and thus build up an economic table that might serve as the principle of the increase of wealth; how one was to inspect men, observe their presence and absence and constitute a general and permanent register of the armed forces; how one was to distribute patients, separate them from one another, divide up the hospital space and make a systematic classification of diseases: these were all twin operations in which the two elements—distribution and analysis, supervision and intelligibility—are inextricably bound up. In the eighteenth century the table was both a technique of power and a procedure of knowledge. It was a question of organizing the multiple, of providing oneself with an instrument to cover it and to master it; it was a question of imposing upon it an ‘order.’”⁸

This anthropological/panoptic disciplinary table became the model of the structure of the modern/secular Western University, not only for its architecture (the administration building at the center of surrounding buildings of instruction, the classroom that structurally privileges the panoptic professor), but also for its departmental divisions. As I have noted, the panoptic Anthropological table (and its binarist logic) assumes the multitudinous to be both wasteful and threatening; it thus reifies/spatializes and individualizes its amorphous elements and then assigns them their proper place in the large Whole—that is, renders them docile and useful, or, in Heidegger’s equally resonant term, “standing reserve” (i.e., disposable reserve). Similarly, the modern University assumed that being as an indissoluble continuum is wasteful and/or threatening in its amorphous primitive form and thus reified/spatialized “it” as a total structure and then compartmentalized its elements into individual disciplines—Sciences (geology, physics, chemistry, biology, and so on); Humanities (English, romance languages, classics, arts, history); Social Sciences (anthropology, sociology, geography, political science)—that took their dutiful/productive place in the larger whole.

Analogously, the student body, under this Anthropological paradigm, was assumed to be a primitive, amorphous, and errant multitude, and thus a waste and/or a threat to the community; but, like the multiple phenomena of being under the aegis of the classificatory table, it was an amorphous multitude informed by a principle of Presence (or

Center) that cultivation would bring to fruition. What “cultivation” meant, according to the dictates of this paradigm, was, as in the case of the multiple phenomena of the classificatory table, the reification and individualization of this student multitude not only for the purpose of defusing the threat of its volatility, but also, like the phenomena of the classificatory table, for the purpose of taking their productive place in the larger (national) whole. Accordingly, fruition meant not only the discovery of the student’s latent Self but also of his/her mature vocation—servitude to the call of the secular nation. In Althusser’s anti-humanist poststructuralist language, which remains resonant to a contemporary audience in its pointing to the complicity of the secular capitalist world with theology, cultivation/fruition means interpellation:

The duplicate mirror-structure of ideology ensures simultaneously:

1. the interpellation of “individuals” as subjects;
2. their subjection to the Subject;
3. the mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, the subjects’ recognition of each other, and finally the subject’s recognition of himself;
4. the absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right: “Amen—So be it.”

Result: caught in this quadruple system of interpellation as subjects, of subjection to the Subject, of universal recognition and of absolute guarantee, the subjects “work,” they “work by themselves” in the majority of cases, with the exception of the “bad subjects” who on occasion provoke the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State Apparatuses. But the vast majority of (good) subjects work all right “all by themselves;” i.e. by ideology whose concrete forms are realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses. They are inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs [Ideological State Apparatuses]. They “recognize” the existing state of affairs . . . , that “it really is true that it is so and not otherwise,” and they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to de Gaulle, to the boss, to the engineer, that thou shalt “love thy neighbor as thyself,” etc. Their concrete, material behavior is simply the inscription in life of the admirable words of the prayer: “Amen—So be it.”

4

The poststructuralist de-centering of the Western Center in the early 1970s, in the wake of the decolonization of the Western empires and particularly the Algerian and Vietnam Wars, constituted a global revolutionary initiative, indeed, an “event” in Alain Badiou’s sense of the word, one that—if being is understood as an indissolubly related, however unevenly, developed continuum encompassing being as such, the subject, language, gender, race, economics, education (knowledge production), the ecos, the social domain, domestic politics, and the global order—not only threatened to subvert the globally hegemonic truth discourse of the West, but, in disclosing the nothing (*das Nichts*) that is ontologically prior to structure, also enabled the imagination of a new, commons-oriented community by way of thinking the positive possibilities of the multiple “differences” that the Western secular humanist tradition had relegated to non-being in the name of (Western) Man.

Though I did not emphasize the revolutionary implications of the “anti-humanist” poststructuralist initiative in *The End of Education*, it is this “evental” potentiality that I was intuiting in the immediate wake of the Vietnam War. But the revolutionary potential enabled by this event—this decisive theoretical de-centering of Man—was almost immediately betrayed in two related initiatives that emerged after the war, one at the site of “theory,” and the other at the site of institutional pedagogy.

At the site of theory, the poststructuralists, blinded by their onto-textual insight, failed to extend or, rather, to underscore the indissoluble relationality between their ontological (Heidegger), psychological (Lacan), textual (Derrida) insight into the de-centering of the Western *Anthropologos* to the other more obvious “worldly” sites on the continuum of being. Despite the transdisciplinary imperatives of their de-centering of the anthropological center, they remained not only vestigially disciplinary but also, in focusing almost exclusively on the sites pertaining to textuality, nonpolitical. This poststructuralist tendency was rightly highlighted by Edward W. Said, who criticized the poststructuralists, particularly the deconstructionists, not simply for being “unworldly” in focusing almost exclusively on the textuality of texts, but also for denying human agency.¹⁰ As I have argued elsewhere,¹¹ Said was not condemning the poststructuralist initiative as such, but rather its failure to extend its de-centering onto-psycho-textual insight into the repressive operations

of the *Anthropologos* to the other more worldly sites on the continuum of being. Unfortunately, however, Said's followers—and the majority of academics in the humanities who were sympathetic with the students' clamor for a pedagogy of "relevance"—(mis)interpreted Said's critique of poststructuralism as a mandate to put the "unworldly" ontological/textual theoretical initiative into a binary opposition with the worldly initiative. The result of this unfortunate reductive bifurcation was the splintering of a potentially powerful, unified, multi-situated critical movement into warring factions.

This betrayal of the event by the practitioners of theory manifested itself at the institutional site of pedagogy in the 1980s and 1990s. Following the bifurcation of ontology and world, textual critique and political critique, at the site of theory, oppositional teachers in the humanities, particularly English departments, recuperated a form of disciplinarity that it had been one of the fundamental purposes of the original de-centering event to delegitimize. Despite their initial partial success in opening traditional male, white, and Anglo humanities departments to women, blacks, gays, and other minorities, and introducing a promising global perspective on English language literature by way of exposing the complicity of the canon (the "core curriculum") with racism, nationalism, and imperialism, these teachers, influenced by the argument of the "worldly" critics against "unworldly" poststructuralist "theory" (particularly deconstruction), perpetuated the division until it became a virtual given. The all-important ontological de-centering at the origins of the discursive revolution was forgotten, and the polyvalent (ontological, psychological, ecological, cultural, social, and political) revolutionary implications of the continuum of being it had disclosed were marginalized. Having blinded themselves to the polyvalent implications of the de-centering of the *Anthropologos*, "progressive" teachers of literature—many of them deriving from various minority backgrounds and beneficiaries of the de-centering—had no other option but to teach "their thing." As a result, this recuperated disciplinary orientation rendered impossible what, in *The End of Education*, I called, after Antonio Gramsci, the establishment of "historical blocs": the solidarity of different oppressed cultural identities—women, gays, blacks, working class, ethnic minorities, immigrants, and so on—in the struggle to revolutionize the humanist University and, more broadly, for emancipation from a system of cultural and political belonging that renders the constituencies they represent as useful and docile bodies, at best, and bare life at worst.

5

At the time I was writing *The End of Education*, the main object of my criticism was the post-Vietnam movement on the part of deputies of the government such as William Bennett and neoconservatives such as Allan Bloom and their University administrator allies to recuperate the “core curriculum” that was being eroded by the anti-war, civil rights, and feminist movements. I mean, more specifically, that humanist-based *studia humanitatis* that had emerged during the Enlightenment to produce good citizens of the nation-state (*eruditio et institutio in bonas artes*, to recall Heidegger’s genealogy) in behalf of the United States’ Cold War against Soviet communism. Since then, particularly after the implosion of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War and the United States’ inauguration of its War on Terror in the wake of 9/11, the University has undergone something like a revolutionary transformation, a restructuring of its nation-state-oriented structure that was intended to serve the global reach of neoliberal capitalism. Simultaneous with the anti-canonical globalization of humanistic cultural studies in the University in the aftermath of the Cold War and the spectacular rise of the Internet as the essential means of planetary communication, that is, another, antithetical, form of globalization emerged in the West, under the aegis of the United States, to challenge the status quo of the nation-state: the expansion of the free market endemic to neoliberal capitalism. Given the essential importance of instrumental thinking and simultaneous communication to this free-market form of globalization, it is not surprising that the corporate capitalist apparatuses of capture—taking advantage of the dysfunctional state of the humanities and the predisposition of the new, globalized university administrators toward privatization, the sciences, particularly technology, and a quantified/consumerist concept of academic excellence¹²—would massively intervene to render the University an instrument of global capitalism. As Arif Dirlik writes in a deeply disturbing essay tracing the itinerary of this invasion:

The shifting of capitalist competition to a transnational level demands a new kind of knowledge of sites of production, marketing, and consumption. Combined with technologies such as the internet, which has given substantial reality to globalization, the demand for “just-in-time” knowledge has invited the business invasion of higher education, in turn inducing or reinforcing the business turn in the organization and management of the

university. In a global economy where knowledge itself has come to be regarded as “a force of production” (the so-called knowledge economy), universities are visibly pressured to assume greater strategic responsibilities by rescuing themselves from the ambivalent image of “ivory towers” into functional units of the global political economy. This also means there is pressure on knowledge production to produce the kind of knowledge that responds to the needs of the global economy.¹³

One of the most significant of the many changes that the University has undergone in the wake of the corporate intervention and the pressure it has mounted to “produce the kind of knowledge that responds to the needs of the global economy” has been the globalization of the student body. I refer to the massive initiative of American universities, private and public, to enroll foreign students, primarily from technologically and economically advanced, globally oriented countries such as China, South Korea, and India. Represented by American university administrators as “diversification” in the name of a democratic “multiculturalism,” this globalizing initiative, however progressive it sounds, is, in fact, a masquerade. It produces the antithesis of the critical consciousness that is implied by “diversification.” A university that is capable of achieving an authentic global multiculturalism would have to undertake structural changes that facilitate the dialogue (*Auseinandersetzung*) between American and foreign students that is its *sine qua non*: above all, the globalization not simply of the humanities but of the very idea of the human. The University, under the pressures of neoliberal capitalism, has not inaugurated such changes in the structure of the traditional nation-state-oriented university. On the contrary, the structural changes it has administered have been intended to facilitate and privilege a mode of knowledge production that reduces the student “diversity” to a de-differentiated student body of consumers, whose vocation is to serve the totalizing logic of neoliberal capitalism. This dehumanizing reduction is demonstrated by the University’s extraordinary privileging and overdetermination of the theoretical sciences and the technology departments over the arts and the humanities in such a way as to appeal to foreign students, the vast majority of which come to major in these fields. Also, and more ominously, it is demonstrated by the radical downsizing of the humanities division (the cutting of faculty lines in these departments and the elimination of entire programs such as the classics and certain foreign language departments that are deemed to be no longer pertinent to the global market arena) and, above all, the initiative to reduce the English Department, the traditional center of the University and the

nation-state it reflected, to a service department intended to serve the interests of neoliberal global capitalism. I am referring to the University administrators' initiative, motivated by the massive influx of foreign students deficient in English language skills, to pressure English departments into overdetermining "Global English," that purely instrumentalist (and dehumanized) apparatus of communication that has become the *lingua franca* of the global free market.¹⁴

Simultaneous with the dehumanizing effects on the student body resulting from the invasion of the University by global neoliberal free market capitalism are the dehumanizing effects at the site of higher education incumbent on the United States government's establishment of the Homeland Security State in the wake of the *al Qaeda* bombings of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. This juxtaposition is essentially contradictory, since the former privileges the global order of the free market at the expense of the nation, and the latter privileges the nation at the expense of the global order of the free market. But in the case of the United States this contradiction is not, at least temporarily, a contradiction. And this is because, as a nation that has perennially represented itself as an exceptionalist nation, indeed, the chosen "redeemer nation" to all the others, and, since World War II, has possessed the military power and weapons of mass destruction to enforce this self-representation, the United States, in the context of the globalization of the free market, has been enabled to represent itself not only as the globalized nation *par excellence* but also as the primary sponsoring nation of the global free market, the nation that controls the logic of its global economy, and the nation that polices its operations to protect them from abuse.

In invoking the establishment of the Homeland Security State in the context of the post-9/11 University, I mean, above all, the establishment of the state of exception as the norm—at all the sites of the continuum of being, not least, the site of knowledge production—in which, as Giorgio Agamben has decisively shown by way of radicalizing Heidegger's disclosure of the reduction of ek-static/in-sistent man to disposable reserve (*Bestand*) under the aegis of technology and Foucault's disclosure of the biopoliticization of man under the aegis of the disciplinary society, the human (*bios politikos*) is reduced to *zoé*, "bare life" (*vida nuda*) that can be killed with impunity:

We have already encountered a limit sphere of human action that is only ever maintained in a relation of exception. This sphere is that of the sovereign decision, which suspends law in the state of exception and

thus implicates bare life within it. We must therefore ask ourselves if the structure of sovereignty and the structure of *sacratio* might be connected and if they might, from this perspective, be shown to illuminate each other. We may even then advance a hypothesis: once brought back to his proper place beyond both penal law and sacrifice, *homo sacer* presents the originary figure of life taken into the sovereign ban and preserves the memory of the originary exclusion through which the political dimension was first constituted. The political sphere of sovereignty was thus constituted through a double exclusion. An excrescence of the profane in the religious and of the religious in the profane, which takes the form of a zone of indistinction between sacrifice and homicide. The sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life—that is, life that may be killed but not sacrificed—is the life that has been captured in this sphere.¹⁵

As in the case of knowledge production endemic to the neoliberal global free market, knowledge production under the aegis of the national security state, in which the state of exception has become the rule, becomes “banalized” (in Hannah Arendt’s dehumanized sense of the word). As an instrument of banalization, which renders thinking “thoughtlessness,”¹⁶ it lends itself to the reduction of the essential human capacity to *care* to indifference and thus, as I will show more fully in chapters 3 and 4, to the ominous modern momentum that is reducing human life to bare life—life that can be killed without the killing being considered murder.

6

The patent failure of oppositional intellectuals, both humanist and “anti-humanist” poststructuralists, of the post-Vietnam era to resist the massive momentum toward the banalization of knowledge production and the dehumanization of humanity inaugurated by neoliberal corporate capitalism’s and the American state’s invasion of the University in the name of the global free market and homeland security, respectively, calls, as I have been suggesting, for a radical rethinking of the traditional idea of the human, humanism, the humanities (*studia humanitatis*), and the domain of the secular to which these are bound. I refer to a rethinking that underscores the existential resonance of humanity’s “de-centering” or, more starkly, its ontologically exilic condition, that, in other words, eradicates the last vestiges of the transcendental homeland that have tra-

ditionally softened its “fall” into time—its “thrownness” (*Geworfenheit*), in Heidegger’s chillingly provocative language, into the not-at-home (*die Unheimliche*), the irreparable transience of time or the nothingness of being. This world in which humanity at large finds itself thrown is not, as the Western humanist tradition has all too unthinkingly assumed, a realm of appearance that conceals a subsuming, higher *Telos*. Nor is the human being an essentially self-present subject whose earthly vocation is to cultivate that potential into fruition. That vocational interpretation, as we have seen by way of Louis Althusser’s decisive critique of the traditional humanist subject, is the result of the interpellation of the human subject by a higher Subject: a call that renders the human subject a “subjected subject,” the willing servant (under the guise of mastery) of a transcendental (unworldly) cause (the Law), who must, in the name of his or her vocational essence, postpone full existential engagement with the transient world of time (his or her “occasion”¹⁷)—who, in short, must give up his or her radical freedom.

To radicalize the traditional idea of what it means to be human, then, we must entirely dissociate it from all forms (onto-theo-logical) of thinking *meta-ta-physica*. For such thinking—which puts the temporality humans think in a binary opposition with the identical *Logos*, thus allegedly elevating Man to the status of “master of all things”—renders him, in fact, as we have seen, the servant of a higher Caller, dehumanizing the living human. To break the insidiously tempting hold of this apparatus of capture, then, humans must acknowledge the radical transience of time—its profane essence, as it were. Or, to invoke the suggestive interpretations of Walter Benjamin’s paradoxical materialist “messianic” understanding of time proffered by the post-poststructuralists Giorgio Agamben and Alain Badiou, to fulfill the worldly imperatives of the eventual de-centering of humanist Man in their remarkable books on the apostle Paul, humans must acknowledge that they ek-sist/insist in the “the time of the now” (*ho nyn kairos*), that *in-between* time that remains after the structured time of traditional humanism has been de-structured. For only such a radical, anti-vocational comportment toward being is capable of freeing humanity from servitude to the unworldly cause of Anthropology and its dehumanizing binary logic of belonging. As Agamben puts this paradoxical double emancipatory project:

According to the apostle, this movement [of the calling—*kletos*, from *kaleo* (I call)] is, above all, a nullification: “Circumcision [the Law of the Jews] is nothing, and the foreskin [the law of the Greeks or Gentiles] is

nothing.” That which, according to the law, made one man a Jew and the other a *goy*, one a slave and another a free man, is now annulled by the vocation. Why remain in this nothing? Once again, *meneto* (“remaining”) does not convey indifference. It signifies the immobile anaphoric gesture of the messianic calling, its being essentially and for most a *calling of the calling*. For this reason, it may apply to any condition; but for this same reason it *revokes* a condition and radically puts it into question in the very act of adhering to it.¹⁸

As I have elsewhere interpreted this resonant passage that, in Agamben’s resonant word, renders the traditional understanding of calling/vocation as interpellation “inoperative”:

The Greco-Roman (Onto-logical), the Judeo-Christian (Theo-logical), and the Humanist (Anthropo-logical) vocation alienates human beings from the transient or finite time—the time of the now (*ho nyn kairos*), of being *inter esse* (in the midst of the inter-esting, of the occasion—coercively turns their minds’ eye away from *this (unheimliche) world* to one (*heimliche*) beyond, to a future *Telos*. The eventual “vocation,” on the other hand, is, according to Agamben, “the revocation of every vocation.” In the resonantly suggestive terms he borrows from Paul, it renders the Law, its binary logic, its dialectical promise-fulfillment structure, and its vocation to a higher cause “inoperative” (*katargein*). The law (and Works)—as opposed to faith (*pistis*)—its binary logic, its promise/fulfillment structure, its imperatives of belonging, and its vocation are not annulled; they remain, but they no longer work in the invisible polyvalent oppressive way they did, before the event, under the aegis of the Law.¹⁹

It is this “revocation of every vocation,” this rendering of a system of naming and of belonging based on the metaphysical principle of Identity in the sense of self-presence (*nomos*, “the Law”) and its binary logic of belonging *inoperative*, that comes readily to hand in the effort to radically rethink the Western idea of humanity, humanism, and the *studia humanitatis*. Following the directives of the time of the now that remains after the de-struction of the teleological time of metaphysics, we are enabled to say that the traditional (Anthropological) idea of humanity (and the secular world it has produced) is not a truth but a fabrication or fiction. That is, ontologically prior to this self-present humanist self is the nothing (*das Nichts*). Man, as Vico and Said have said, “makes his world.” But what needs to be emphasized is that, in being an ek-sistent/

in-sistent (ontic/ontological) being—irreparably inside and outside the world—what he or she makes can be unmade when history discloses it to be inadequate to its dynamic imperatives.

Thanks to its consciousness, human life is in some sense privileged over the other phenomena of being. The Western humanist tradition, under the imperatives of the calling, interpreted this ontological difference as a justification for mastering all phenomena on the continuum of being—flora, fauna, and all humans who did not think, speak, and act like humans. It saw the Friend/foe binary as the principle mode of comportment toward the various phenomena of being. From the perspective of *ho nyn kairos* (and the potentiality *as such*—“means without end”²⁰—it enables), however, this justification for mastery is rendered inoperative. The ontological privilege remains, but in the time of the now, the earlier priority of the Answer over the question becomes the priority of the question over the Answer, and the right of mastery becomes the humility of *care*, a profound and abiding responsibility, or, as this term implies, a “loving strife,” an unending, mutually productive dialogic relationality.

Let me return at this juncture to an historical context, later than the one addressed in *The End of Education*, in which the debate over the viability of humanism (and the secular) in the globalized age of the waning nation-state re-emerged. I am referring above all to Edward W. Said’s posthumously published *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, in which he vigorously, if all too casually, defends humanism against the powerful systematic critique of the poststructuralists. Because it was written by and large as a response to its (“unworldly”) textual-oriented poststructuralist critics, this text has all too often been read by “worldly” critics, particularly those who, following Said too literally, have represented poststructuralist textuality as unworldly, in such a way as to suggest that it constitutes a general defense of the Western secular humanist tradition. What this criticism has been blinded to by its worldly insight—its strange refusal to think humanism as a worldly ontological category—is a critical gesture, pervasive, if not adequately developed, in Said’s text, that is uncannily similar to Agamben’s gesture that renders the binary logic of the Law (Identity) inoperative (*non-piu-in-opera*: no-longer-at-work). I have analyzed Said’s immensely suggestive gesture at some length elsewhere.²¹ For the sake of economy, I will restrict my commentary here to a crucial but overlooked passage in Said’s text—that, it should not be overlooked, builds on his determinative notion of the exilic (in-between) consciousness:

The task of the humanist is not to occupy a position or place, nor simply to belong somewhere, but rather to be both insider and outsider to the circulating ideas and values that are at issue in our society or someone else's society or the society of the other. In this connection, it is invigorating to recall . . . Isaac Deutscher's insufficiently known book of essays, *The Non-Jewish Jew*, for an account of how great Jewish thinkers—Spinoza, chief among them, as well as Freud, Heine, Deutscher himself—were in, and at the same time renounced, their tradition, preserving their original tie by submitting it to the corrosive questioning that took them well beyond it, sometimes banishing them from the community in the process. Not many of us can or would want to aspire to such a dialectically fraught, so sensitively located class of individuals, but it is illuminating to see in such a destiny the crystallized role of the American humanist, *the non-humanist humanist as it were*.²²

Just as Deutscher's corrosive questioning of the logic of belonging endemic to the Jewish people renders him a "non-Jewish Jew," so under the corrosive questioning of the humanist tradition Said becomes a "non-humanist humanist," an exilic figure. As such a paradoxical figure of in-betweenness, the identity intrinsic to traditional (Western) humanism and its logic of belonging are rendered inoperative. That is, they no longer demand, as they did under the traditional hegemonic version, a sense of vocation that pits the humanist against the non-humanist in a Friend/foe war to the end. The humanist remains a humanist, but his or her humanist identity is now understood as an historical construct. And the binary logic of belonging of Western humanism remains oppositional, but the violence of its traditional operations undergoes a metamorphosis: the war to the end becomes loving strife, in which strife enriches rather than degrades the antagonists.

7

Most readers of *The End of Education* have mistakenly taken its subtitle, *Toward Posthumanism*, to mean a rejection of the human in favor of a yet to be articulated non-human way of comportment toward being. This, no doubt, is partly because my critique of traditional humanism, mounted when the poststructuralists' massive attack on humanism was at its most intense, was read as another example of its anti-humanism. Above all, it was because, not having thought the human radically enough at that time, I was uncertain as to the meaning of the "post." In using the term "posthumanism," I was not, in fact, rejecting the human