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Citation: Susen, S. (2020). Intimations of Humanity and the Case for a Philosophical Sociology. Journal of Political Power, 13(1), pp. 123-160. doi: 10.1080/2158379X.2019.1701822

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Link to published version: https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2019.1701822

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Intimations of humanity and the case for a philosophical sociology

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this article is to examine central issues discussed by Daniel Chernilo in his *Debating Humanity: Towards a Philosophical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). To this end, the analysis is divided into two parts. The first part, in addition to giving a brief overview of the book's thematic structure, considers some of its key arguments. The second part scrutinizes its most controversial aspects and highlights its principal limitations. By way of conclusion, the paper argues that Chernilo's study is a powerful reminder of the fact that a truly comprehensive understanding of society requires a critical engagement with the concept of humanity.

KEYWORDS

human nature; humanism; humanity; philosophical anthropology; philosophical sociology; posthumanism

Introduction

The main purpose of this article is to examine central issues discussed by Daniel Chernilo in his *Debating Humanity: Towards a Philosophical Sociology*[1] (2017). To this end, the analysis is divided into two parts. The first part, in addition to giving a brief overview of the book's thematic structure, considers some of its key arguments. The second part scrutinizes its most controversial aspects and highlights its principal limitations. By way of conclusion, the paper argues that Chernilo's study is a powerful reminder of the fact that a truly comprehensive understanding of society requires a critical engagement with the concept of humanity.

1. Key arguments

Chernilo's *Debating Humanity* is a major contribution to contemporary social theory. It explores the multiple ways in which important scholars in sociology and philosophy have made, and continue to make, sense of the distinctiveness of our existence as a species by employing foundational concepts such as 'humanity', 'the human', 'human being(s)', and 'human nature'. The book focuses on the works of several prominent thinkers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Chernilo describes his undertaking as a *philosophical sociology*,[2] which is based on three presuppositions:

(1) 'The *anthropological features* that define us as human beings are to a large extent *independent* from, but cannot be realized in full outside, social life.'[3] In other words, the constitutive characteristics that we share as members of the same species are irreducible to the historically variable conditions in which we find ourselves situated when relating to, interacting with, and working upon our natural and social environments. Chernilo identifies and scrutinizes seven of these – in his view, distinctively *human* – properties by drawing on the writings of seven influential intellectuals: *self-transcendence* (Hannah Arendt), *adaptation* (Talcott Parsons), *responsibility* (Hans Jonas), *language* (Jürgen Habermas), *strong evaluations* (Charles Taylor), *reflexivity* (Margaret Archer), and *the reproduction of life* (Luc Boltanski).

(2) Our species-distinctive features serve as both the most viable and the most reliable *foundation for justifying normative arguments* – including those concerning emancipatory ideas (and ideals) such as justice, dignity, democracy, and the good life. On this account, a '*universalistic principle of humanity* is to be preferred over particularistic conceptions of race, culture, identity, and indeed class',[4] since the former transcends both the structural and the agential contingency of the latter. Put differently, whereas human interests are universalizable, individual and group-specific interests are socially exclusive.

(3) *Symbolic forms* – including ideas, ideals, and ideologies – are '*irreducible* to the material or socio-cultural positions that humans occupy in society'.[5] Their existence and development hinge on our cognitive 'capacity to reflect on what makes us human'[6] – and, one may add, on our performative capacity to participate in the historical construction of what defines us as 'human'. If, as members of the same species, we were not equipped with a set of anthropological competences, we would not be able to project ourselves into the future, let alone to engage in practices of individual self-realization and/or societal transformation. Without these species-distinctive features, it would be hard, if not impossible, to explain the normative constitution permeating all social arrangements.

As Chernilo acknowledges, the use of the label *philosophical sociology* signals that philosophy and sociology are intimately intertwined. Arguably, the label also suggests that we should give programmatic priority to the latter, rather than the former. It is no accident, then, that Chernilo does not characterize his programme as a *sociological philosophy*, since this concept would, so to speak, turn 'the terms and conditions' of his endeavour upside down. Chernilo's key point in this respect, however, is that it would be erroneous to construct an artificial and counterproductive opposition between philosophy and sociology.[7] In his eyes, the connections between these two disciplines have been, and are still being, reconceptualized at three levels:

(1) From a *positivist* point of view, philosophical thought constitutes 'sociology's *pre-scientific heritage*'[8] – that is, it serves the epistemic function of forming a presuppositional background horizon on which researchers in the humanities and social sciences draw when producing evidence-based knowledge. On this – arguably Comtean and Durkheimian – account, empirically oriented investigations, rather than speculative philosophical inquiries, will dominate future

developments of institutionalized forms of human cognition, as illustrated in the increasing influence of the natural and social sciences.[9]

(2) From a *socio-reflexive* point of view, philosophical thought allows for – and, indeed, encourages – '*epistemological self-clarification*'[10] in the social sciences in general and in sociology in particular. Following this approach, philosophy is assigned the role of 'underlabourer',[11] rather than that of 'masterbuilder'. Instead of providing *foundational* insights (notably with regard to existential concerns such as the nature of being, knowledge, morality, logic, and aesthetics), philosophy's function is *orientational* in that it offers guidance on how to produce reliable epistemic tools and frameworks in the social sciences. Paradigmatic dichotomies – such as positivism vs. interpretivism, materialism vs. idealism, realism vs. constructivism, objectivism vs. subjectivism, determinism vs. voluntarism, collectivism vs. individualism, inductivism vs. deductivism – reveal profound intellectual divisions in the social sciences, all of which are, to a greater or lesser degree, informed by philosophical assumptions about the nature of being, knowledge, and logic. On this – arguably Weberian – account, it is vital for social scientists to reflect on the relationship between theoretical debates (including epistemological disputes) and empirical work (including evidence-based research).[12]

(3) From a *normativist* point of view, philosophical thought serves as 'a source from which to draw various *normative motifs*'.[13] Philosophy is concerned not only with the way things *are*, but also, crucially, with the way they *could* and *should* be. This commitment is articulated especially in moral philosophy, but also, to a considerable extent, in social and political philosophy. A normativist outlook is prominent in 'critical' versions of sociology – such as Marxism[14] and critical theory,[15] but also feminism[16] and postcolonialism[17] and several other, explicitly 'critical', approaches. It indicates that sociology deals with normative questions, particularly those related to the critique of power and domination as well as those motivated by the search for human empowerment and emancipation. It may also be found, however, in 'conservative' positions, which express a certain amount of nostalgia for, and a desire to re-establish, the socio-historical conditions of the past.[18]

The strengths and weaknesses of each of these perspectives notwithstanding, all of them oblige us to take the relationship between sociology and philosophy seriously – not only historically and institutionally, but also analytically and normatively. As Chernilo puts it, '*good sociological questions are always, in the last instance, also philosophical ones*'.[19]

In a genealogical fashion, Chernilo reminds his readers that the idea of a *philosophical sociology* is inextricably linked to previous attempts to develop a *philosophical anthropology*.[20] This endeavour aims to combine scientific and philosophical knowledge about the nature of the human condition, especially in terms of its dual constitution:

- as partly *natural* entities, humans are 'controlled by their urges, emotions, and physico-chemical adaptation to the world'[21];
- as partly *cultural* entities, humans – owing to their species-constitutive capacities, such as normatively codified behaviour, language, consciousness, self-awareness, and reason – are 'defined by their intellectual, aesthetic, and indeed moral insights'.[22]

Rather than being immersed in the world as purely instinctual creatures, humans grapple with the mysteries of their existence and of their environment. Thus, '*a human is a being who asks what is a human being; humans are beings who ask anthropological questions*'.[23] Humans are equipped with the capacity to make rational decisions, to recognize their fellow members as sharing a set of species-constitutive endowments, to cope with their immersion in both the natural world and the cultural world, and to call potentially everything – including their own existence – into question.[24] If, in Chernilo's view, there are two classical sociologists who succeeded in bringing together the two intellectual genres in which he is primarily interested (that is, sociology and philosophy), then these are Karl Marx and Max Weber.[25]

The ability to differentiate between *philosophical/normative* and *empirical/scientific* concerns is essential to developing a conceptually sophisticated, methodologically rigorous, evidence-based, and – ultimately – critical sociology. The question remains, however, what distinguishes *homo sociologicus*[26] from other discipline-specific *homines* in the social sciences – above all, *homo oeconomicus* and *homo psychologicus*.[27] The first is shaped by social roles, norms, conditions, performances, forces, structures, and practices. The second is motivated by 'the calculation of possibilities for personal gain'[28] based on rational decisions. The third is composed of behavioural patterns that are driven by 'unconscious motifs'[29] embedded in cognitive dispositions. According to Chernilo, the three scientific branches committed to the systematic analysis of these *homines*, irrespective of their differences, share at least two characteristics: (1) They are interested in the *relationship between individual and society*, notably in relation to their points of intersection. (2) Rather than allowing for the formulation of a comprehensive theory of human nature, each of them tends to underscore the significance of *one specific anthropological feature* – that is, a species-constitutive trait that is particularly suitable to confirm the validity of the disciplinary perspective from which the intertwinement of individual agency and social forces is interpreted.

A noteworthy criticism that Chernilo levels at 'mainstream contemporary sociology'[30] is that it 'does not seem to have learned the right lessons'[31] from history in terms of taking the issue of normativity seriously and recognizing that the comprehensive study of social life requires 'a universalistic principle of humanity that offers a richer account of our defining anthropological features'.[32] In Chernilo's opinion, even the most influential French sociologist of the late twentieth century, Pierre Bourdieu, although he engages with normative issues, 'does not conceptualize normativity *sociologically*'.[33] As a result, we are – according to Chernilo – confronted with a '"*normative-less*" depiction of social life',[34] which is tantamount to 'sociology's very own self-fulfilling dystopia'.[35] If, he concludes, we fail to grasp the value-laden constitution of human realities, then there is no place for the concept of 'the normative' within our – arguably reductive – 'ontologies of the social'.[36]

The rise of *posthumanism* has made recent debates on the nature of humanity even more complex.[37] Crucial in this regard is the contention that we have entered a 'posthuman world'. Controversies over the role of artificial intelligence, cognitive science, biotechnology, and digital technology, as well as disputes over climate change and the status of other living creatures in our environment, indicate the emergence of a world in which traditional boundaries – such as those between 'the nonhuman' and 'the human', 'the natural' and 'the cultural', 'the objective' and 'the normative' – appear to be increasingly blurred. The question of 'what makes us human'[38] remains a source of heated discussion.[39] Scholars whose works are rightly or wrongly associated with the label 'posthumanism' tend to 'reject the foundationalism that underpins traditional 'humanist' ideas'[40] about the world in general and society in particular. Exploring key tenets of this antifoundationalist stance, Chernilo covers three versions of *posthumanist thinking* – namely, the contributions made by Bruno Latour,[41] Rosi Braidotti,[42] and Andy Clark.[43]

- *Latour* has made a case for developing an actor-network theory that transcends the traditional human/nonhuman dichotomy. An important part of this endeavour is the attempt to locate agency in networks, which, by definition, are composed of both human and nonhuman elements. Networks, in the Latourian sense, can be described as 'series of association(s)', 'series of instauration(s)', and 'chains of reference(s)'.[44] Paradoxically, their stability, solidity, and universality cannot be divorced from their malleability, flexibility, and particularity.[45] In a world that is constituted by 'an endless flow of networks',[46] traditional dualistic ontological categories (such as 'nature'/'culture' and 'individual'/'society') need to be understood as hybrids, rather than as independent – let alone isolated – realms of existence.
- Drawing on the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Braidotti* presents a radical critique of humanism. In a post-Heideggerian fashion, she conceives of '*H*umanism' as a 'violent and exclusionary master-ideology of the West',[47] which embodies the negative and detrimental, if not evil, dimensions of the project of modernity.[48] On this view, as Chernilo points out, humanism no longer serves as a 'viable articulation of our contemporary normative sensibility',[49] since it is '*already* dead'.[50] A stern critic of anthropocentrism, androgenism, and racism (among other forms of discrimination),[51] she seems to have 'no difficulty in ubiquitously appealing to these same traditional humanist values'[52] that she aims to deconstruct in her attack on humanism. Paradoxically, then, her approach is simultaneously promodern and antimodern: *promodern*, in the sense that her intellectual undertaking involves 'the need to speak "on behalf"'[53] of marginalized groups, thereby addressing 'a quintessentially modern political issue'[54]; *antimodern*, in the sense that she is suspicious of 'the values and institutions of the modern world',[55] given their complicity with, if not outright endorsement and proactive creation of, mechanisms of social domination. A striking limitation of these kinds of posthumanism is that they 'cannot consistently articulate their normative positions because they are unable to clarify what [. . .] the human core for which they *are* prepared to make a positive case'[56] actually is. In short, they are guilty of being caught in a 'performative contradiction'[57] in that, effectively, they subscribe to an 'antinormativist normativism' and a 'normativist antinormativism' (and, correspondingly, an 'antihumanist humanism' and a 'humanist antihumanism'), depending on which side of the argument they emphasize in a particular context. We cannot have it both ways.
- *Clark*, who is one of the proponents of the 'extended mind' thesis,[58] insists on the pivotal role that *external* factors – including technological devices – play in the unfolding of cognitive processes. This approach can be considered an externalist version of posthumanism, which 'points towards the *softening* – if not the downright *dissolution* – of a self-contained idea of the human being and its agential powers'.[59] On this account, our environment forms an integral element, if not the ontological foundation, of our mental apparatus. Chernilo draws attention to three presuppositions underlying this perspective:

> (1) Human actors are 'defined by the constant interplay between mind, body, and world'.[60]
> (2) The design of robots, notably in terms of their intelligence and mobility, provides clues into the features that make us human and, as Clark eloquently puts it, into the fact that '[t]he human agent [. . .] is nature's expert at becoming expert'.[61]
> (3) In the current era, humans have been elevated to 'natural-born cyborgs'.[62] Owing to constant technological innovation, evolutionary developments are increasingly shaped by the interpenetration and hybridization of plants, animals, and humans.
>
> For Chernilo, these three assumptions are part of the posthumanist journey, on which our species appears to have embarked in a way that demonstrates not only that *the natural can teach the artificial* but also that '*the artificial can teach the natural*'.[63] Whether we focus on plants, animals, humans, robots, or cyborgs, the posthumanist moment reflects the end of the modern dream of 'human supremacy and exceptionalism'.[64] In this context, it is imperative to acknowledge that '[i]ndividual cognizing [. . .] is *organism-centred even if it is not organism-bound*'.[65] Thus, *cognitive expansion* is inconceivable without, but not necessarily determined by, an *organic core*.[66]

What follows in subsequent chapters is a *tour de force*. In Chapter 1, Chernilo contextualizes modern debates on humanism. He does so by elucidating the contributions made by Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida to our understanding of 'humanist values' and 'the anthropological question'. In the remaining chapters, he explores what he regards as seven important anthropological properties by drawing on the writings of seven prominent thinkers: *self-transcendence* (Arendt), *adaptation* (Parsons), *responsibility* (Jonas), *language* (Habermas), *strong evaluations* (Taylor), *reflexivity* (Archer), and *the reproduction of life* (Boltanski). Each chapter offers an in-depth analysis of one of the aforementioned properties from the perspective of the respective scholar. Finally, the 'Epilogue'[67] comprises a succinct, yet critical, overview of the main issues examined in the book. Given their relevance to Chernilo's overall argument, these issues are worth considering in detail.

The idea of a *philosophical anthropology* – as proposed by thinkers such as Max Scheler,[68] Ernst Cassirer,[69] and Helmuth Plessner[70] – faces a dilemma: on the one hand, it may be rejected as 'poor science' for being 'too philosophical'; on the other hand, it may be discarded as 'poor philosophy' for being 'too empirical'.[71] A similar line of criticism may be levelled at the project of *philosophical sociology* – and, more broadly, social theory. Philosophy, in particular, has the reputation of being a discipline that is systematically protected by academic gatekeepers, who are reluctant to admit scholars from adjacent – notably social-scientific – realms of inquiry, including anthropology and sociology.

In relation to his own undertaking, Chernilo maintains that his 'purpose was never to offer a complete or exhaustive set of anthropological features with which to define the human in human beings'.[72] Rather, his aim is to shed light on 'those *anthropological features* that are of key importance at two levels'[73]: first, they are '*autonomous* vis-à-vis society even if their actualization is itself social'[74]; second, they permit us 'to articulate more explicitly the grounds on which *normative* claims are made in society',[75] regardless of whether these are raised by laypersons or experts. Having examined seven anthropological properties, all of which – in his view – meet these two requirements, Chernilo seeks to demonstrate that their careful consideration permits us to 'rearticulate a universalistic idea of humanity as something that human beings have themselves created'.[76] He summarizes the main idea underlying this venture as follows:

> Only an idea of humanity that results from humans' own properties, and then allows humans to reflect further on themselves as the creators of their own ideas and institutions, can then [be] turned into a normative one: *a human is a being who does philosophical anthropology*.[77]

Based on this vision, Chernilo – in his 'Epilogue'[78] – scrutinizes several themes that run through his argument.

To begin with, there is the idea of '*normative descriptions*'.[79] As Chernilo illustrates throughout the book, '[t]he *tension* between descriptive and normative claims has proved central in the development of the social sciences of the past 150 years'.[80] Social scientists are confronted with a double-task: (1) to offer accurate and reliable *representations* of the world; (2) to make *value judgements* about the quality, desirability, and defensibility of social constellations and practices. In other words, social scientists grapple with both the *diagnostic* question of how the social world *is* organized and the *normative* question of how the social world *ought to be* organized. Chernilo's insistence on the concept of 'normative descriptions', however, adds a level of complexity to this issue. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's work,[81] and stressing the validity of her contention that 'concentration camps are, *literally*, "hell on earth"',[82] he reminds us that the *description* of some (objectively existing) social phenomena depends on our cognitive (and, effectively, evaluative) capacity to account for their *normative* dimensions. This perspective is inextricably linked to three commitments:

(1) a universalist conception of *humanity*, according to which all individuals – irrespective of the degree to which they are divided by sociological variables, such as class, ethnicity, gender, age, and ability – are regarded, and treated, as members of the same species, united by a set of anthropological capacities;
(2) an evaluativist conception of *normativity*, according to which the quality of behavioural, ideological, and institutional forms of sociality is assessed in terms of the extent to which they promote or obstruct 'the development of our generic human potentials'[83];
(3) a critical conception of the *social sciences*, according to which their 'explanatory register [. . .] reconnects with the normative questions'[84] that are commonly posed in, and associated with, philosophical modes of inquiry.

Another theme that runs through Chernilo's analysis is what he describes as '*the scandal of the human need for an anthropology*'.[85] This issue refers to what Chernilo considers a significant dilemma in Immanuel Kant's anthropology, namely the *scandal of reason* (as discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4).[86] According to Chernilo, this dilemma consists in the following presuppositional tension:

- On the one hand, reason is, so to speak, *trans-anthropological*, in the sense that 'the logical integrity of the categories of understanding',[87] including the categorical imperative of Kant's deontological ethics, rests on 'a claim to universality'[88] that, due to its quest for rational purity, 'is *not* specifically human'.[89]
- On the other hand, reason is, so to speak, *intra-anthropological*, in the sense that the socio-historical constitution of *our* categories of understanding, including the spatiotemporal contingencies permeating context-laden constructions and applications of morality, hinges on the presence of particularities that, while 'tailored anthropocentrically to human needs',[90] cannot be divorced from the cognitive and performative resources by virtue of which we build structurally variable societies.

Reflecting on the *scandal of reason*, we are faced with another problem: it appears that, precisely in relation to the existential issues that are most important to us, we, as members of the same species, have found it difficult, if not impossible, to provide satisfying answers to 'the big questions' by virtue of reason. Both *transcendental* questions – for instance, about the meaning of life and death, the (non)existence of God, and the (im)possibility an afterlife – and *immanent* questions – for instance, about how (not) to live one's life – continue to be matters of concern that, the epistemic power of human rationality notwithstanding, will never be resolved in a categorical, conclusive, and irrefutable manner. Chernilo's argument with respect to this challenge is threefold:

(1) As a knowledge-seeking species, we *never* have been, and *never* will be, *satisfied* with the (essentially tentative) answers we provide to existential questions, including the question of what makes us human.
(2) The search for answers to these questions is not only a *cognitive* but also a *normative* affair.
(3) What we may call '*everyday anthropocentrism*' is built into our condition as a species in that 'human beings are a key theme and cause of concern only for humans themselves'.[91]

Another salient topic of Chernilo's book is '*the relationship(s) between science and philosophy*'.[92] Defending the project of a 'philosophical sociology' (notably in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 8), Chernilo insists that 'philosophical concerns are no longer independent from scientific ones'.[93] As illustrated in the rise of posthumanism, hardly any major philosophical standpoint – notably in fundamental areas of inquiry such as ontology, epistemology, ethics, logic, and aesthetics – can be defended unless it is informed by cutting-edge insights from both the natural sciences and the social sciences.

This is not to suggest that philosophical explorations are no longer relevant to human life in general and to scientific investigations in particular. Rather, this is to recognize that, within the numerous realms of the production and circulation of knowledge, the balance of power has shifted. Instead of conceiving of the relationship between philosophy and science in terms of an epistemic antinomy, it is vital to grasp their interdependence. Far from seeking 'to create the conditions for its own dissolution',[94] philosophy needs to concede that it finds itself in the tricky position of having to 'explain *philosophically* how the debacle of its own claims to knowledge has actually come about'.[95] Arguably, 'the big questions', including the spatiotemporal variability of the ways in which they are posed, will always remain issues whose comprehensive study requires a combination of philosophical and scientific inquiries.

The quest for knowledge about our status in the universe may be considered 'a transcultural and transhistorical constant',[96] in the sense that it forms an integral part of the human condition. At the heart of this journey lie the construction of 'self-knowledge' and processes of 'self-objectification',[97] whereby humans can define their place in the universe, while mobilizing their cognitive resources to stabilize their 'organic adaptation',[98] permitting them to adjust to their natural and social environments. Just as '*self-knowledge* as a *cognitive* proposition does not necessarily lead to *self-legislation* as a *normative* claim',[99] however, *Verstand* (reason) is no guarantee of *Vernunft* (prudence), let alone of *Urteilskraft* (power of judgement).

Another central issue discussed by Chernilo is what he refers to as '*the intractability of human nature in the social sciences*'.[100] The question of 'human nature' will not go away; it will continue to be posed and debated by social scientists – even (or perhaps especially) by those, such as social constructivists, who reject the very idea and associate it with biological essentialism and/or determinism. As illustrated in Chapters 3, 5, and 7, Chernilo subscribes to the view that 'ideas of the social need to be looked at in their own right'.[101] Contrary to methodological individualism, social phenomena cannot be explained by reference to personal preferences, subjective motivations, and/or rational choices. Sociality, however, is not an exclusively human phenomenon. Other species – such as 'ants, bees, dolphins, or chimpanzees'[102] – are *also* profoundly social.

The question, therefore, is to what extent human sociality *differs* from that of other species. Species-constitutive elements – such as culture, language, consciousness, self-awareness, morality, aesthetic judgement, and reason – need to be taken into account when addressing this matter. If Chernilo is right to assume that other 'species do not dwell on the scandal of reason'[103] (or, indeed, on the scandals of culture, language, consciousness, self-awareness, morality, or aesthetic judgement), then it is likely that our cognitive capacities, which we develop by interacting and communicating with our fellow beings [*Mitmenschen*], represent an essential part of what makes us 'human'. It is in this – broadly anthropological – spirit that Chernilo seeks 'to offer an explicit account of those human properties that allow humans to reflect on their own specificity and worthiness'[104] and, hence, on the characteristics that, although they do not raise them 'above' nature, make them – at least in some respects – fundamentally different from other creatures.

Finally, there is '*the problem of anthropocentrism*'.[105] Drawing on the work of Edmund Husserl,[106] Chernilo affirms that 'science and philosophy are not particularly concerned with the human being'.[107] In terms of their investigative outlook, the former focuses on 'the nature of organic life and the structure of the cosmos',[108] whereas the latter centres on 'reason and intentionality'.[109] In order to challenge anthropocentrism, however, it is necessary to engage in 'a dual act of decentring'[110]:

(1) Humans must overcome their proclivity to put themselves 'at the centre of their explanations about the functioning of the cosmos, culture, and society'.[111]
(2) Humans need to be ready to 'accept that there is nothing necessary about their own existence'.[112]

The 'Copernican turn'[113] teaches us not only that the sun, rather than the earth, is at the centre of our solar system, but also that, from a scientific point of view, it is advisable to be wary of philosophical and theological concerns arising from the relativization of humanity's position in the universe. If the deconstruction of anthropocentrism involves ensuring that humans stop turning 'themselves into the standard with which to measure everything that takes place in the world'[114] (and beyond), then such a decentred viewpoint is eye-opening in that it permits the earth's dominant species to put its existence, including its self-righteous ambition to rule a tiny part of the universe as a planetary hegemon, into perspective.

Granted, 'the fact that human beings are *not* at the centre of the universe does not change the fact that they are at the centre of their own human life'.[115] After all, we learn to relate to both the external world and our inner world by relating to other human beings. There is no development of *Verstand* (reason) without one's ability to engage in processes of *Verständigung* (communication). The semantic connection between *Verstand* and *Verständigung* is no accident: it hints at the evolutionary intertwinement of our (cognitive) capacity to reason and our (recognitive) capacity to relate to the world by relating to one another.[116] 'It is from mouth to mouth that we have grown from *Mund* to *Mündigkeit*.'[117] In accordance with this intersubjectivist spirit, *Debating Humanity* does not attempt to uproot us from the social core of our existence. Rather, it draws attention to the fact that sociality permeates *all* species-constitutive features of humanity.

Let us, in the remainder of this article, consider some controversial aspects and limitations of Chernilo's book.

2. Critical reflections

2.1. Straw-man claims?

A noteworthy weakness of Chernilo's analysis is that, on several occasions, it creates a straw man to defend the author's version of 'philosophical sociology'. Let us, for the sake of brevity, consider only one example: while 'ideas of human supremacy and exceptionalism'[118] may be a constitutive part of modern anthropocentric imaginaries, it is difficult to think of any contemporary social scientist who would seriously argue that '*humans are self-contained*'.[119] One finds numerous straw-man claims of this kind in Chernilo's book. Admittedly, they serve the vital function of illustrating the essence of one's position by contrasting it with the relatively arbitrary construction of radically opposed views. Straw-man assertions remain a fallacy, however, in that they are based on erroneous propositions invoked to make one's argument appear stronger, and perhaps also more original, than that of the alleged opponent(s). Of course, most academics and researchers are, to a greater or lesser degree, culpable of this 'straw-man practice' when developing and defending their arguments. This self-critical acknowledgment, however, does not provide straw-man claims with epistemic validity.

2.2. A methodological limitation as a substantive limitation?

A striking limitation of Chernilo's book is that each chapter focuses only on one (or two) text(s), which – in Chernilo's view – is (are) particularly useful in terms of illustrating a scholar's conception of the human.[120] This methodological approach is problematic for a number of reasons.

(1) It is far from clear what *criteria* Chernilo applied when making his respective choice. The decision to opt for one (or two) text(s) in which '*I think* they succeed in making apparent their conception of the human'[121] is a fairly arbitrary methodological move (and criterion), since other commentators may suggest *they think* they can accomplish this, in an even more convincing fashion, by drawing on *other* texts by the *same* authors.
(2) To focus *only* on one (or two) text(s) per author seems hardly sufficient, since this represents a rather *narrow* sample of sources, especially in light of the fact that the scholars in question have produced numerous important works. If we confine our sample to one (or two) text(s) by each of them, we run the risk of providing a limited and simplistic account of what, in reality, may be a far more complex and, in many cases, tension-laden picture.
(3) Most major thinkers go through different intellectual phases – say, an 'early', a 'middle', and a 'final' phase. Most of them revise their main positions on key subjects, often in a radical fashion. A matter as fundamental as that of their respective understanding of the human is unlikely to be dealt with (implicitly or explicitly) in an entirely consistent manner by any of these scholars. In order to provide an accurate picture of their conceptions of the human, which may vary across different stages of their careers, it seems necessary to cover at least one seminal work from *each* phase, spelling out – if and where necessary – the *tensions* within their intellectual trajectory with regard to a particular issue of significance.

2.3. Whose humanity?

Seven (or, if we include Chapter 1, ten) thinkers feature centrally in Chernilo's analysis: Arendt, Parsons, Jonas, Habermas, Taylor, Archer, and Boltanski (as well as Sartre, Heidegger, and Derrida). In terms of the underlying 'demographics' of Chernilo's study, these scholars can be classified as follows[122]:

- Gender:
  - *female* (Archer, Arendt)
  - *male* (Boltanski, Derrida, Habermas, Heidegger, Jonas, Parsons, Sartre, Taylor)

  → The overwhelming majority of the main scholars featuring in this volume are *male*.

- 'Race'/ethnicity:
  - *white* (Archer, Arendt, Boltanski, Derrida, Habermas, Heidegger, Jonas, Parsons, Sartre, Taylor)

  → All main scholars featuring in this volume are *white*.

- Religion/ethnicity:
  - *Catholic* (Archer, Boltanski, Heidegger, Sartre, Taylor)

  - *Jewish/Jewish-secular* (Arendt, Boltanski, Derrida, Jonas)
  - *Protestant/Congregationalist* (Habermas, Parsons)

  → In terms of their ethno-cultural background, the majority of the main scholars featuring in this volume are *Judeo-Christian*.

- Geographical origin:
  - *Anglo-European* (Archer)
  - *continental European* (Arendt, Boltanski, Derrida, Habermas, Heidegger, Jonas, Sartre)
  - *North American* (Parsons, Taylor)

  → The overwhelming majority of the main scholars featuring in this volume are *continental European*, two are *North American*, and one is *Anglo-European*. No major intellectual figures from other continents play a pivotal role in Chernilo's analysis.

- National origin:
  - *British* (Archer)
  - *Canadian* (Taylor)
  - *French* (Boltanski, Derrida, Sartre)
  - *German* (Habermas, Heidegger)
  - *German-American* (Arendt, Jonas)
  - *US-American* (Parsons)

  → The majority of the main scholars featuring in this volume are *German/German-American*, with *French* scholars in second place and *British, Canadian*, and *US-American* scholars in joint-third place. No non-European or non-Anglo-American nationalities are represented.

- Linguistic specificity:
  - *Anglophone* (Arendt, Parsons, Jonas, Taylor, Archer)
  - *Francophone* (Boltanski, Derrida, Sartre)
  - *Germanophone* (Arendt, Habermas, Heidegger, Jonas)

  → The overwhelming majority of the main scholars featuring in this volume are *Anglophone* and/or *Germanophone* and/or *Francophone*. Thus, in terms of the linguistic specificity of their major writings (that is, in terms of their main working language[s]), their oeuvres are firmly situated in the hermeneutic horizon of the three most influential (and arguably hegemonic) European languages in the humanities and social sciences.

- Epochal situatedness:
  - scholars whose works were produced in the *early modern/modern* period (early- and mid-twentieth century) – i.e. Heidegger (1889–1976), Parsons (1902–1979), Jonas (1903–1993), Sartre (1905–1980), Arendt (1906–1975)
  - scholars whose main works were produced in the *contemporary* or *late modern* (mid-/late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries) – i.e. Habermas (1929–), Derrida (1930–2004), Taylor (1931–), Boltanski (1940–), Archer (1943–)

→ Broadly speaking, the main scholars featuring in this volume are *modern or late modern thinkers* – that is, they produced their key works either in the early- and mid- twentieth century or in the mid-/late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

- Generational belonging:
  - born in the *last decade of the nineteenth century (1890–1899)* – i.e. Heidegger (1889–1976)
  - born in the f*irst decade of the twentieth century (1900–1910)* – i.e. Parsons (1902–1979), Jonas (1903–1993), Sartre (1905–1980), Arendt (1906–1975)
  - born in the *mid-twentieth century* – i.e. Habermas (1929–), Derrida (1930–2004), Taylor (1931–), Boltanski (1940–), Archer (1943–)

  → Broadly speaking, the main scholars featuring in this volume (with one exception) were born in the *early or mid-twentieth century*. Their respective works were all, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by the political climate of post-war periods (i.e. after World War I and World War II, respectively).

- Discursive/ideological positioning:
  - *reactionary-conservative* (Heidegger)
  - *moderate-conservative* (Jonas, Parsons)
  - *moderate-progressive* (Archer, Derrida, later Habermas, Taylor)
  - *radical-progressive* (Arendt, Boltanski, earlier Habermas, Sartre)

  → The overwhelming majority of the main scholars featuring in this volume are, broadly speaking, *progressive* in terms of their normative positioning.

- Disciplinary background(s) and/or speciality(ies):
  - *philosophy* (Arendt, Derrida, Heidegger, Jonas, Sartre, Taylor)
  - *sociology* (Archer, Boltanski, Parsons)
  - *philosophy and sociology* (Habermas)

  → Six of the ten main scholars featuring in this volume are known primarily as philosophers, three of them as sociologists, and one of them as both a philosopher and a sociologist.

There is not much point in taking this 'demographic' perspective on Chernilo's study too far. It illustrates, however, that critics may complain that his inquiry suffers from the typical '-isms' that – according to social researchers interested in intersectionally constituted power relations – need to be challenged, deconstructed, and subverted: *canonical sexism* ('malestream'); *canonical racism* ('all white'); *canonical ethnocentrism* (predominantly Judeo-Christian); *canonical Western-centrism* (exclusively European or Anglo-American); *canonical nationalism* (predominantly European and North-American nationalities); *canonical linguacentrism* (Anglocentrism, Germanocentrism, and/or Francocentrism); *canonical modernism* ('all modern'); *canonical ageism* (from 'old' generations); *canonical ideologism* (all placeable within the left-right political spectrum); *canonical tribalism* (all sociologists or philosophers).

Thus, his detractors – including postmodernists, poststructuralists, postcolonialists, feminists, and intersectionalists – will object that Chernilo's choice of thinkers is biased towards male, white, Judeo-Christian, Western, Northern, Anglo-/Germano-/Francophone, modern, 'old', politically predictable, and largely discipline-bound scholars. In short, Chernilo may be accused of remaining trapped in the established canons of the humanities and social sciences. What emerges, on this account, is an understanding of humanity that, although it may be nominally 'universalist', is effectively 'particularist'. Regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with this line of criticism, it would have been useful if Chernilo had explicitly addressed this – increasingly common – source of controversy in further detail.

2.4. *Between foundationalist and contextualist normativism?*

Chernilo's entire project is based on the assumption that 'our shared anthropological features as members of the human species remain the best option to justify normative arguments'.[123] As promising as such a universalist – and, by implication, cosmopolitan – premise may seem, we need to concede that it applies mainly to *foundational*, rather than context-specific, arguments. To be precise, the previous supposition should be reformulated as follows: 'our shared anthropological features as members of the human species remain the best option to justify *foundational* normative arguments'. Thus, the validity of Chernilo's preceding assertion, which is crucial to his universalist undertaking, depends on the *kind* of claim one seeks to defend. It certainly applies to foundationalist arguments, but it does not necessarily apply to nonfoundationalist (i.e. context-specific) arguments.

Do our anthropological features, as Chernilo implies, really remain the best option to justify normative arguments about who should do the washing-up, whether there should be another UK referendum on EU membership, or how much milk powder – or condensed milk – milk chocolate should contain? Admittedly, some central normative arguments (including those made in the area of social policy) are intrinsically *related* to our anthropological features – notably issues regarding the asymmetrical distribution of resources and power, due to the pervasive influence of key sociological variables such as class, ethnicity, gender, age, and ability. Even in realms of social inequality, however, our shared anthropological features – although they may serve as a general reference point to justify normative positions – do *not* ultimately determine the ways in which, in the best-case scenario, the unforced force of the better argument[124] or, in the worst-case scenario, the forceful force of the greatest legitimate power[125] will pan out.

2.5. *False dichotomies?*

A striking feature of Chernilo's argument is that it is based on a number of dichotomies, some of which unsympathetic critics may find, at best, problematic or, at worst, untenable. Let us consider some of them.

- *Natural vs. Conscious:*

> [. . .] a dual approach to human beings results from, and must be preserved, because of the duality of the human condition itself: humans are partly *natural* bodies that are controlled by their urges, emotions, and physico-chemical adaptation to the world *and* partly *conscious* beings that are defined by their intellectual, aesthetic, and indeed moral insights.[126]

The natural/conscious dichotomy is far from unproblematic. Humans are not the only species equipped with a complex cognitive apparatus.[127] Granted, the capacity to develop *intellectual* skills may well be a species-distinctive privilege of human beings. Yet, there is considerable evidence to suggest that other species *also* have a sense of *aesthetic* appreciation of the world as well as a sense of *moral* judgement.[128] Unless we link these properties to rationality (in the threefold sense of *Verstand, Vernunft*, and *Urteilskraft*), it is far from obvious to what extent the aforementioned 'anthropological' properties are exclusively human. If they are not, then Chernilo's natural/conscious dichotomy collapses.

- *Bio vs. Socio*: Chernilo is right to assert that '[t]he proposition that humans are *social* beings is [. . .] only another [. . .] way of restating the obvious'.[129] The same applies to the proposition that humans are *biological* beings. Thus, 'approaches such as socio-biology are insufficient',[130] since they fail to address 'the *existential* aspects of the question what is a human being'.[131] This insight, however, does not overcome the bio/socio dichotomy, which – especially in terms of the nature/nurture divide – continues to be central to current debates on the relationship between genetic and environmental factors in shaping the human condition. Moreover, it is far from clear what 'the *existential* aspects'[132] defining what makes us human actually are – not to mention the fact that, arguably, these have both biological and sociological components. One may focus on culture, language, consciousness, self-awareness, morality, aesthetic judgement, reason, or any other 'existential aspect' of humanity. *All* our species-constitutive features have developed, and continue to develop, out of a complex *interaction* between genetic and environmental factors. This interaction lies at the core of human evolution. Given the intimate intertwinement of genetic and environmental factors, one may call both the validity and the usefulness of the very distinction between 'bio' and 'socio' into question.

- *Natural vs. Cultural*:

> The human body has an ambivalent position for humans themselves: it is an object in the natural world, it is the 'container' of our anthropological features *and* it is also a cultural artefact.[133]

At first glance, this statement offers a succinct and accurate way of describing the ambivalence of the human condition, drawing attention to our immersion in both the natural world and the cultural world, both of which have left their imprint on the genealogy of the human body, which serves as a carrier of our species-constitutive capacities. On closer analysis, however, the above statement is problematic on several counts:

(1) It applies not only to humans but also to animals, since other species – including nonhuman primates – *also* develop culturally variable and context-specific patterns of behaviour.[134]
(2) It gives a dualistic, rather than multilayered, account of our existential involvement in the world. As such, it captures our spatiotemporal situatedness in

physically constituted and socially codified realms of existence. Yet, it does not highlight the degree to which an actor experiences both 'the' *objective* world and 'our'/'their' *normative* world through 'his' or 'her' *subjective* world, to which he or she has privileged access.

(3) It fails to elucidate the extent to which the *conceptual* differentiation between 'natural' and 'cultural' is based on the epistemic – and, hence, interpretative – construction of ideal types.[135] These ideal types, however, may distort the *ontological* intertwinement of 'the natural' and 'the cultural' in human life forms.

It comes as little surprise, then, that Chernilo makes the anthropocentric claim that 'the most fundamental human trait is the fact that we come into a world that, because it pre-exists us, is posed to us as a challenge'.[136] Once again, we need to acknowledge that other living beings *also* experience the world as a challenge and that it *also* pre-exists *them*. One may argue (in an anthropocentric fashion) that – due to our psychological make-up and owing to the multiple ways in which we engage with, attribute meaning to, and act upon the world – our existence is even more of a challenge. If we add species-constitutive elements – such as culture, language, consciousness, self-awareness, morality, aesthetic judgement, and reason (along with the triadic interplay of *Verstand, Vernunft*, and *Urteilskraft*) – to the equation, then this challenge becomes even more complicated. It would be presumptuous, however, to jump on the anthropocentric bandwagon of human exceptionalism, let alone human supremacy, by disregarding the fact that, by definition, *any* living creature experiences the world as a *challenge* when seeking to find its place within it and to fulfil its *will to live*. In other words, the capacity to experience the world as a challenge is not 'the most fundamental *human* trait', but, rather, *one* of the most fundamental traits of *any* living being. In this sense, we need to replace somewhat narrow forms of anthropocentrism with existentially inclusive forms of vitalism.[137]

Viewed in this light, the following contention is problematic:

> What is uniquely human is the original impulse that leads us to play games at all: having fun, socializing, creating and improving on rules, getting better at them, etc.[138]

Homo sapiens may be conceived of as *Homo ludens*.[139] Admittedly, it is important to account for our playful nature, including the potential for creativity that is built into the most habitualized forms of human action.[140] We need to recognize, however, that *other* species – including dolphins and chimpanzees[141] – *also* have playful and creative ways of relating to and acting upon the world.

- *Transcendental vs. Immanent*: Discussing 'the scandal of reason' in Kant's thought, Chernilo draws a distinction between '*transcendental* questions about the existence of god and the possibility of life after death and *immanent* ones about how I am to handle my own free will'.[142] This distinction, however, is far from uncontroversial. Questions about life, death, and divine powers may be considered an *immanent* part of the human condition. At the same time, questions about one's life course, individual and collective decision-making processes, and the (im)possibility of free will may be regarded as *transcendental* challenges, whose presence and relevance surpass the transient scope of spatiotemporally delimited life forms. Put differently, the immanence of transcendence and the transcendence of immanence lie at the heart of the human condition.

- *Scientific vs. Philosophical*: Crucial to Chernilo's analysis is the distinction between 'the scientific' and 'the philosophical'. As he spells out, 'the project of *philosophical* sociology works within a contemporary context in which philosophical concerns are no longer independent from scientific ones'.[143] The problem with this assertion, however, is that it fails to concede that philosophical concerns have *never* been independent from scientific ones. From the beginning of its evolutionary journey, *Homo sapiens* has distinguished itself from other creatures as a *sapient species*. Science is the systematic attempt to generate knowledge on the basis of testable descriptions, analyses, interpretations, and explanations of particular aspects of the universe. Philosophy provides the discursive theatre for the in-depth inquiry into fundamental questions – notably those related to the nature of being, knowledge, morality, logic, and aesthetics. Ever since we entered the historical stage, we have embarked on an evolutionary journey as knowledge-seeking and knowledge-generating entities. The level of development of epistemic standards in ancient human life forms and early civilizations notwithstanding, science and philosophy have been intimately intertwined ever since they came into existence.

  Chernilo is right to insist that 'it is not enough for philosophy to *accept* that it has indeed lost its position of privilege vis-à-vis scientific knowledge'.[144] We may add to this contention that, for some, the relationship between the two has, in the history of human inquiry, always been the other way around: *science*, owing to its empirical outlook and capacity to drive technological developments, has always been in a *position of privilege* vis-à-vis the somewhat speculative character of philosophical knowledge. Irrespective of one's interpretation of this epistemic rivalry, it does not follow from the previous reflection that philosophy has to 'explain *philosophically* how the debacle of its own claims to knowledge has actually come about'.[145] In fact, it may choose to do so both philosophically *and* scientifically. Philosophy's epistemic validity claims have always been, and will always remain, closely interwoven with those raised in scientific endeavours.

  Rather than lamenting 'the *inability* of European sociology to differentiate between philosophical/normative concerns, on the one hand, and strictly empirical/scientific ones, on the other',[146] we need to acknowledge their profound interdependence and interpenetration. Furthermore, we must avoid linking (1) 'the normative' *primarily or exclusively* to 'the philosophical' and (2) 'the empirical' *primarily or exclusively* to 'the scientific'. *Scientific* inquiries are permeated by *normative* assumptions, principles, conventions, and standards; indeed, the former may serve to define the latter. *Philosophical* inquiries are informed by *empirical* facts, considerations, studies, and insights; indeed, the former, insofar as they engage with the 'real' world, are shaped by the latter. The picture that emerges, then, is far more complex and amorphous than Chernilo appears to suggest.

- ‘*Intra-Existential*’ *Laypersons vs.* ‘*Meta-Existential*’ *Experts*: Chernilo seems to presume that the practice of posing ‘the big questions’ – notably with regard to the nature of human beings and the meaning of life – is more common among experts than among laypersons:

  > while the ‘what is a human being’ question may not often be posed by individuals themselves (with the exception of professional intellectuals who do so in their ‘expert’ capacity), questions about god, freedom and immortality *are* key existential questions about the ‘meaning of life’ in both its transcendental and [its] immanent dimensions.[147]

  This view is problematic in at least two respects: it is *empirically* flawed, because ordinary people *do* grapple with ‘the big questions’ (and, arguably, do so more frequently than Chernilo is willing to admit), not least when they are faced with existential challenges and dilemmas; it is *normatively* flawed, because it portrays everyday life as a largely unreflective affair, in which the main participants, due to a lack of critical capacity and intellectual curiosity, remain caught in a cloud of doxic misperceptions, misinterpretations, and misrepresentations. Social life, however, is *always already* both an intra- and a meta-existential affair – not only for those who study it, but also for those who construct and experience it.

- *Descriptive vs. Normative*: Throughout his study, Chernilo draws a distinction between ‘the descriptive’ and ‘the normative’. In the context of his inquiry, this conceptual separation is problematic for several reasons.

  (1) As Chernilo implies in his Arendtian take on ‘normative descriptions’,[148] the aforementioned distinction is questionable in that these two levels of epistemic involvement are inextricably linked. Drawing on Arendt, Chernilo gives an illustrative example (that is, a concentration camp as ‘hell on earth’[149]). He does not concede, however, that, strictly speaking, *all* descriptions have a (covertly or overtly) normative character. This normativist insight obliges us to reflect on the social contingency pervading the production, circulation, and consumption of *all* knowledge:

  > First, given that knowledge is always socially embedded, it is necessarily normative (*Erkenntnisnormativität*). Second, since knowledge is always generated from a specific position in the social space, even so-called descriptive knowledge is situation-laden (*Erkenntnisstandpunkt*). Third, to the extent that bodily actors, regardless of whether they are laypersons or experts, take on particular roles in society, knowledge is permeated by the relationally constituted functions fulfilled by those who make use of it in accordance with their contextually defined interests (*Erkenntnisfunktion*). Fourth, considering that cognitive actors are discursively competing entities, the production of knowledge is permeated by scientific power struggles (*Erkenntniskampf*). Fifth, because symbolic and informational resources can be used in various ways and for multiple reasons, the production of knowledge can be instrumentalized for extra-scientific – notably, economic – purposes (*Erkenntnisnutzung*). In short, the positivist quest for objectivity loses credibility when confronted with the relational constitution of epistemic enquiry. The conditions of knowledgeability are impregnated with normativity, positionality, functionality, conflictuality, and instrumentality.[150]

(2) As elucidated in preceding sections, 'the idea of a normative description coheres around three basic commitments'[151]: a universalist conception of *humanity*, an evaluativist conception of *normativity*, and a critical conception of the *social sciences*. What is striking about Chernilo's justification of these three commitments, however, is that it focuses on 'normative descriptions' at the *abstract* level of intellectual, academic, scientific, or institutional discourses, rather than at the *concrete* level of people's lifeworlds. Unsympathetic critics may object that such an abstract conception of normativity is 'pale, male, and stale' – that is, largely disconnected from the heterogeneity, diversity, and complexity of people's everyday lives across different sectors of society.

(3) As subjects capable of speech, reflection, and action, we are able to produce *numerous* types of knowledge:

  (i) as representational beings, we are able to produce *descriptive* knowledge;
  (ii) as analytical beings, we construct *systematic* knowledge;
  (iii) as reflexive beings, we are capable of developing *explanatory* knowledge;
  (iv) as critical beings, we generate *normative* knowledge;
  (v) as communicative beings, we participate in the exchange of *discursive* knowledge;
  (vi) as learning beings, we build on *cumulative* knowledge;
  (vii) as projective beings, we can make assumptions about the future on the basis of *predictive* knowledge.[152]

If we focus exclusively on the descriptive and normative aspects of human knowledge production (even if we recognize their intertwinement), then we fail to account for the multiplicity of its empowering functions. Human actors can draw on manifold types of knowledge when engaging with the world in a purposive, communicative, discursive, and/or creative manner.

- *Universal(ist) vs. Particular(ist)*: Chernilo affirms that a '*universalistic principle of humanity* is to be preferred over particularistic conceptions of race, culture, identity, and indeed class'.[153] On this view, the former transcends both the structural and the agential contingency of the latter. Such a universalist stance, then, insists that our species-distinctive features serve as both the most viable and the most reliable foundation for justifying normative arguments. As members of the same species, we pursue human interests, which are, by definition, universalizable. As individuals and members of different groups, we pursue personal and social interests, which are, paradoxically, both unifying and divisive. Chernilo provides little in the way of a critical analysis of the extent to which 'particularist' categories (including the ones he mentions) *can* – rightly or wrongly – be invoked as 'universalist' foundations of human emancipation. Marx's account of class struggle is based on the assumption that, eventually, it will culminate in 'universal' or 'human' (rather than 'particular' or merely 'political') emancipation, once a classless society emerges. Fascists presuppose the allegedly 'universalist' nature of their project, asserting that nature's 'survival of the fittest' principle is present in struggles for 'national and/or racial supremacy'. Religious proselytizers believe in, and propagate, the universalist nature of redemption. In brief, ideological metanarratives – even if they may be deconstructed as reflecting an essentially particularist outlook on the world – are 'universalist' in the sense that they claim to be all-encompassing.[154] The universalism/ particularism dichotomy is more blurred than Chernilo seems to admit.

- *Anthropological vs. Social*: Chernilo contends that '[t]he *anthropological* features that define us as human beings are to a large extent *independent* from, but cannot be realized in full outside, *social* life'[155] – that is, they are 'autonomous vis-à-vis society even if their actualization is itself social'.[156] The problem with this assumption is that, once again, it is based on a misleading dichotomy between 'anthropological' and 'social'. He is right to insist that our *anthropological features* cannot be realized outside *social life*. He needs to go a step further, however, by highlighting that the former are always and unavoidably *dependent on*, rather than independent of, the latter – and vice versa. We may focus on the 'anthropological features' discussed in this volume: *self-transcendence, adaptation, responsibility, language, strong evaluations, reflexivity*, and *the reproduction of life*. Moreover, we may take into consideration other elements, which are rightly or wrongly associated with the human condition: *culture, language, consciousness, self-awareness, morality, aesthetic judgement*, and *reason* – to mention only a few. None of these species-constitutive elements can be empirically or historically dissociated from social life. The former owe their very existence to the latter. Chernilo's 'universalist transcendentalism' understates the significance of the *sociality* that pervades *all* species-constitutive dimensions of humanity.

2.6. Average members?

Chernilo maintains that '[a]verage members of the human species are *all* similarly endowed with general anthropological capacities that make a key contribution to life in society'.[157] It is far from clear, however, how it is possible to determine what an '*average member* of the human species' is supposed to be, let alone how to measure the degree to which *all* of them are equipped with 'general anthropological capacities'. In fact, these capacities are profoundly shaped by the asymmetrical distribution of resources and power, owing to the stratifying influence of key sociological variables such as class, ethnicity, gender, age, and ability.

Does a person's limited access to social resources – which, if available, allow for one's cognitive, intellectual, emotional, physical, linguistic, and moral development – make her 'less human' than a person who is equipped with numerous (notably social, cultural, political, educational, economic, financial, and symbolic) forms of capital? Is a person who is 'exceptionally cultured', 'extremely eloquent', 'highly intelligent', and 'always guided by reason' essentially 'more human' than a person who is (partially or entirely) deprived of these 'capacities'? Is an underclass, indigenous, female, homosexual, elderly, physically and mentally disabled person 'less human' than a bourgeois, white European, male, heterosexual, young, physically and mentally healthy person? Obviously, the answer is no.

Chernilo's 'anthropological universalism', however, runs the risk of endorsing a hierarchy of desirable skills and attributes whereby those 'at the top' are closer to his ideal of humanity than those 'at the bottom'. One need not be an expert in the history of eugenics to grasp the enormous dangers arising from arbitrary (socially constructed) hierarchies according to which some humans are better equipped with 'general anthropological capacities' than others.

2.7. Imaginary cosmopolitanism vs. real-world tribalism?

In a universalist fashion, Chernilo affirms that '[h]uman beings recognize one another as members of the same species because of these shared anthropological endowments'.[158] In Chernilo's defence, this assertion is accurate, both in a *realist* sense and in a *normativist* sense:

- In a *realist* sense, it is accurate because human actors are not able to build a society unless they recognize each other as creatures belonging to the same species and sharing a number of fundamental features, even if and when they do so implicitly and/or unconsciously. For instance, when subjects capable of speech and action communicate with one another linguistically (that is, by raising validity claims on the basis of the morphological, semantic, syntactical, grammatical, phonetic, and pragmatic resources of their language), they *presuppose* that those involved in the process are equipped with the anthropological endowments necessary to function as fully fledged members of a speech community.
- In a *normativist* sense, it is accurate because there is no point in making a case for individual and collective forms of emancipation unless we assume that *all* humans share a number of species-constitutive characteristics, to which – especially in moments of struggle for universal(ist) ideas (and ideals), such as justice, dignity, democracy, and the good life – they may make explicit and/or conscious reference. For instance, when *some* subjects capable of speech and action are temporarily or permanently *deprived* of the right to communicate with others linguistically, they may *challenge* the discriminatory mechanisms leading to their exclusion by insisting on their status as fully fledged members of humanity in general and of a speech community in particular.

Irrespective of the realist and normativist value of Chernilo's argument, however, he *overestimates* the (universalist) force of *cosmopolitanism* and *underestimates* the (particularist) force of *tribalism*. People's sense of connection to particular social groups – expressed in the implicit or explicit defence of their tribal identities – is often more powerful, tangible, and decisive than their sense of attachment to the somewhat abstract notion of humanity. Tribal affiliations with particular social groups (defined by class, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, and/or other key sociological variables) may be both a bonding and a divisive force: just as they provide people with a sense of belonging and inclusion (in relation to 'insiders'), they foster a sense of demarcation and exclusion (in relation to 'outsiders').

Consider, once again, the example of speech communities:

- Speech communities are *internally divided* (that is, *within* specific languages) by the stratifying power of key sociological variables (such as class, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, etc.). These divisions are reflected in hierarchies of legitimacy, reproduced by socially defined patterns of intelligibility, and sustained by the triadic interplay of linguistic fields, habitus, and capital.[159]
- Speech communities are *externally divided* (that is, *between* different languages) by the stratifying power of language itself. Different languages are based on different (morphological, semantic, syntactical, grammatical, phonetic, and pragmatic) rules and standards.[160]

Given its *social* function (in terms of providing a sense of belonging and cohesion) and its *interpretative* function (in terms of providing a 'house of being' inhabited and experienced as a 'treasure of meaning'), it is no accident that language is both a *bonding* and a *divisive* force: we can relate to those who speak the same language as we do, because it is through them that we attribute meaning to the world in a hermeneutically sound fashion; we cannot (or may find it difficult to) relate to those who do not speak the same language as we do, because we do not share their culturally codified and symbolically mediated horizon of meaning.[161]

The same dialectic of universality and particularity applies to all other anthropological characteristics – including culture, consciousness, self-awareness, morality, aesthetic judgement, and reason. In short, the orbit of anthropological endowments is as much a context-transcendent realm of species-constitutive universality as it is a context-dependent sphere of species-divisive particularities.

2.8. Disciplinary confusion?

Some assertions that Chernilo makes in relation to the academic disciplines in question are rather confusing. For example, it is not accurate to state that, at the time of Husserl's intellectual dominance in Germany, 'philosophical anthropology seemed second-rate *philosophy*'.[162] If anything, it might have been considered 'second-rate *anthropology*' (with a strong philosophical component). In a similar vein, unsympathetic critics may reject the project of 'philosophical sociology' as 'second-rate sociology' or 'abstract sociology' (with a strong philosophical component).

On a more substantive note, one may ask whether or not it may *also* be promising to pursue the project of a 'sociological philosophy'. Admittedly, 'social philosophy' and 'political philosophy' are well-established areas of inquiry, drawing on sociology (notably social theory) and political science (notably political theory). It would be difficult, however, to come across a large number of scholars defining themselves as 'sociological philosophers'. The gatekeeper mentality shared by some (but by no means all) philosophers expresses a disciplinary attitude that shows little intellectual appreciation for the conceptual toolbox of an empirical discipline such as sociology.

Strictly speaking, one may argue that both labels – that is, both 'philosophical sociology' and 'sociological philosophy' – are tautological: there is no serious *sociological* research unless it is informed by *philosophical* reflections on the nature of being, knowledge, morality, logic, and aesthetics; likewise, there is no comprehensive *philosophical* investigation unless it takes into account *sociological* insights into the extent to which all human life forms are fundamentally shaped by socially contingent practices, structures, and constellations.

What about the role of *homo sociologicus, homo oeconomicus*, and *homo psychologicus*?

- To conceive of *homo sociologicus*,[163] first and foremost, 'as stable and predictable role-conforming behaviour'[164] does not require us – as implied by Chernilo (referring to Dahrendorf) – to give up on the possibility of 'describing the nature of man accurately and realistically'.[165]
- The notion that *homo oeconomicus*[166] is, above all, about 'the calculation of possibilities for personal gain'[167] based on rational decisions is problematic in that it overlooks the fact that numerous strands in economics (especially those borrowing from sociology and social psychology) recognize that human behaviour is profoundly influenced by social factors.
- To associate *homo psychologicus*,[168] primarily, with the study of 'unconscious motifs'[169] is misleading insofar as this investigative focus is shared by some (notably psychoanalytic), but by no means all, branches in psychology.

Interdisciplinary studies of *homo sociologicus, homo oeconomicus*, and *homo psychologicus* aim to grasp 'that particular point at which the individual and society intersect'.[170] It is reductive, however, to suggest that '*none offers a comprehensive theory of human nature* but is instead construed as a *unilateral exaggeration of one particular anthropological feature* that has proved particularly useful from one, equally particular, disciplinary point of view'.[171]

Granted, it has become unpopular to defend the notion that there is such a thing as 'human nature'. Indeed, numerous intellectual traditions in the humanities and social sciences – notably constructivism, perspectivism, deconstructionism, postmodernism, post-structuralism, postcolonialism, and feminism – reject the idea of 'human nature' altogether, not least because it can be (and has been) used as an ideological weapon of social domination to legitimize social inequalities, especially those based on 'class', 'race', 'sex', 'age', and 'ability'. Still, the aforementioned disciplines – that is, sociology, economics, and psychology – *have* produced foundational conceptions of human nature within major currents of thought (such as Marxism, functionalism, evolutionism, rationalism, structuralism, etc.). They have done so, to a considerable extent, by cross-fertilizing knowledge from neighbouring areas of investigation. Of course, Chernilo is right to stress that every discipline tends to mobilize (if not, to exaggerate) key epistemological and ontological presuppositions that sustain its own *discipline-specific* horizon of inquiry. Most disciplines do so, however, by drawing on *multiple* treasures of knowledge and, hence, by *transcending* (admittedly, to different degrees) epistemic boundaries. One reason for this is that comprehensive (and remotely satisfying) answers to 'the big questions' can be developed only by building on several disciplines. Another reason for this is that most prominent intellectual traditions are embedded in, and developed through, diverse (co-existing and competing) disciplinary and subdisciplinary frameworks.

2.9. Bourdieu's 'normative-less' humanity?

In relation to Bourdieu's work, Chernilo makes at least three claims that deserve to be examined.

(1) He asserts that Bourdieu 'does not conceptualize normativity *sociologically*'[172] and that 'normative *ideas* are not included as an actual dimension of the social world because conflict and power struggles are deemed enough for a fully formed ontology of the social'.[173]
(2) He affirms that Bourdieu puts forward 'a reductionist notion of self-interest at the anthropological level',[174] which is coupled with 'an equally reductionist conception of the social as a space of constant struggle'.[175]
(3) He contends that Bourdieu remains trapped in an 'irrationalist conception of human nature',[176] which 'mirrors those offered by equally one-sided arguments on, say, primordial authenticity'.[177]

On this view, Bourdieu is guilty of endorsing (1) a '"normative-less" depiction of social life',[178] (2) a reductive understanding of the social in general and of human self-interest in particular, as well as (3) a one-sided and 'irrationalist' interpretation of human nature. This reading of Bourdieu's work, however, can be challenged on the following grounds:

(1) Bourdieu *does* conceptualize normativity *sociologically*; his approach *does* include normative *ideas* as an actual dimension of the social world; conflict and power struggles are *not* deemed enough for a fully formed ontology of the social. In fact, Bourdieu's concepts of *illusio, doxa*, and *symbolic power* – not to mention his early writings on *ideology* – clearly indicate an acute awareness not only of the pivotal role that normativity plays in the construction of social life, but also of the multilayered constitution of human existence. Bourdieu may overstate the significance of conflict and power struggles, leading to a form of socio-ontological fatalism. This does not mean, however, that he fails to present a rich analysis of normativity – notably with regard to symbolic forms – in his writings.[179]
(2) Bourdieu's conception of (self-)interest, although one may have good reason to question its validity, is more complex and fine-grained than Chernilo suggests. According to Bourdieu, agents have (and pursue) a *multiplicity* of interests, in accordance with the *multiplicity* of social fields in which they find themselves immersed: cultural, political, educational, economic, linguistic – to mention just a few. To the extent that Bourdieu posits that, ultimately, every social action is not only *power- and interest-laden* but also *power- and interest-driven*, his social ontology is indeed reductive. To the extent, however, that he provides a *polycentric* (if not centreless) account of multiple competing fields, his social ontology is multifaceted.[180]
(3) Not least due to his radical critique of biological essentialism, Bourdieu does not endorse *any* conception of 'human nature', at least not explicitly. One may object that he *effectively* (i.e. implicitly) subscribes to a fatalistic notion of 'human nature', insofar as he portrays social life as a conglomerate of social fields, which are tantamount to 'social games', shaped by *constant* struggle for access to vital forms of capital and resources.[181] This, however, does not justify the claim that he remains caught in an 'irrationalist' conception of human nature.

In short, Chernilo's reading of Bourdieu's work, which essentially accuses him of reductionism, is reductive itself. It is true that Bourdieu's 'critical sociology',[182] unlike Boltanski's 'sociology of critique',[183] privileges the epistemic authority of scientists and experts over that of ordinary people, thus paving the way for 'sociology's very own self-fulfilling dystopia'[184] and a somewhat fatalistic view of everyday life.[185] This substantial limitation, however, does not mean that, from a Bourdieusian perspective, social life is essentially 'normative-less'.

2.10. Between universalism and constructivism?

Drawing on Michel Foucault,[186] Chernilo announces that '[i]deas of humanity are of course socially constructed, change historically and are full of highly problematic assumptions at cognitive, theological, and normative levels'.[187] He does not convincingly explain, however, how it is possible to reconcile social *constructivism* with the normative *universalism* that underlies his argument. If human rights are socially constructed, then they cannot be universally binding and those who advocate them cannot seriously defend their cross-cultural, let alone context-transcending, validity. We may endorse *either* a constructivist/contextualist *or* a universalist/foundationalist conception of human rights, but we cannot have it both ways. Chernilo rightly criticizes posthumanists for failing to 'articulate their normative positions because they are unable to clarify what [. . .] the human core for which they *are* prepared to make a positive case'[188] actually is. If, however, we aim to make a case for a normative position based on merely constructivist grounds, then the criteria invoked are categorically uncategorical and, hence, largely arbitrary. Categorical imperatives may be categorically uncategorical, in the sense that they are contingent upon normatively and/or subjectively variable criteria and circumstances. If, however, one wishes to subscribe to such a constructivist approach, then there is not much – if any – room left for the pursuit of a viable normative universalism.

2.11. Our (non)shared humanity?

Chernilo announces that 'our shared humanity has become increasingly important (but also challenging) for humans themselves'.[189] One issue with this statement is the tautological nature of the concept of 'common humanity'. If humanity is what all members of our species have in common, then it is, by definition, shared. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as 'a nonshared humanity'. Another problem is the issue of species-constitutive (in)equality. Cynics may provocatively declare that *just as some are more 'equal' than others, some are more 'human' than others*. In other words, a noteworthy problem with identifying a set of 'anthropological features' (such as culture, language, consciousness, self-awareness, morality, aesthetic judgement, and reason) is that some actors may be better equipped with them than others. This takes us back to the aforementioned issue of inventing evolutionary hierarchies in terms of varying degrees of 'general anthropological capacities'. Finally, is 'our shared humanity' really more important (and challenging) for us *now* than it was for previous generations in, say, *1789, 1848, 1914, 1918, 1933, 1939, 1945, 1986*, or *1989/1990*? Granted, climate change and the possibility of global nuclear destruction present challenges of unprecedented scale. Instead of overstating its current relevance, however, we should recognize that 'our shared humanity' has been a central concern in previous chapters of human history.

2.12. The human, the social, and the normative: between optimism and pessimism?

Chernilo rightly insists that '*our conceptions of the human underpin our normative notions in social life*'.[190] It is no less important, however, to acknowledge that, at the same time, *our normative notions in social life underpin our conceptions of the human*. An *optimistic* conception of the human may underlie a *romantic* notion of social life, and vice versa; at the same time, a *pessimistic* conception of the human may underlie a *fatalistic* notion of social life, and vice versa.

- Consider the major political ideologies of the modern era. Advocates of anarchism, communism, and socialism tend to conceive of humans as co-operative, altruistic, and relatively malleable. Supporters of conservatism, by contrast, tend to portray humans as competitive, selfish, and relatively unmalleable. The former's (*optimistic*) conception of the human is reflected in the belief that it is possible to construct a society largely, if not entirely, free of mechanisms of exploitation, exclusion, and domination. The latter's (*pessimistic*) conception of the human is illustrated in the dictum that a strong state is necessary to ensure law and order and that, furthermore, social institutions are needed to guarantee that individuals' actions are guided by a sense of duty and responsibility to 'their nation'.
- Consider major explanatory frameworks in academic disciplines concerned with the constitution of human existence. Proponents of social constructivism assume that humans are, to a significant extent, products of their socio-cultural environments. Believers in biological determinism, on the other hand, presuppose that humans are, largely or entirely, determined by their genetic make-up. The former's (*optimistic*) conception of the human is expressed in the view that people can flourish and realize their emancipatory potential as long as the right social conditions that allow them to do so are put in place. The latter's (*pessimistic* – or, as some may argue, *realistic*) conception of the human is articulated in the contention that people are equipped with a set of genetically determined predispositions, which – although their development is contingent on their interactions with spatiotemporally variable conditions – largely or entirely determine the scope of their practices.

In brief, *just as our conceptions of the human underpin our normative notions in social life, our normative notions in social life underpin our conceptions of the human*. Chernilo's project, however, understates the extent to which normativity is a central, rather than peripheral, element of social existence:

> Philosophical sociology does not claim that normativity is the centre of social life but contends that social life cannot be fully accounted for *without* this kind of explicit normative orientation.[191]

Normative orientations are as much part of scientific attempts to study different aspects of social life as they are part of social life itself. In fact, they are a *constitutive* component of human life forms, in the sense that *all* social practices, structures, and arrangements are culturally codified and, hence, permeated by contextually variable normative standards. As sociological studies of the seemingly most mundane human activities (such as thinking, walking, speaking, eating, sleeping, washing, engaging in sexual intercourse, etc.) demonstrate, normativity lies at the heart of social life.

Arguably, Chernilo is guilty of *socio-ontological romanticism*, in the sense that he suggests that the quality of behavioural, ideological, and institutional forms of sociality can be assessed in terms of the degree to which they promote or obstruct 'the development of our generic human potentials'.[192] This, of course, is a laudable undertaking, but we need to accept that there are not only *productive* and *emancipatory* but also *destructive* and *malevolent* 'generic human potentials'. Chernilo tends to overstate the significance of the former and to understate the significance of the latter. Just as we need to generate behavioural, ideological, and institutional forms of sociality that foster the development of the former, we need to create historical conditions that hinder the unfolding of the latter. A realist view of social life faces up to the fact that a set of profound normative tensions – such as good vs. evil, co-operative vs. competitive, altruistic vs. egoistic, peaceful vs. violent, serene vs. aggressive, friendly vs. belligerent, reason-guided vs. impulsive – is built into the human condition.[193] We cannot simply focus on the 'generic human potentials' that suit us when anchoring the normative foundations of a philosophical sociology in the ontological foundations of humanity. We also need to include those 'generic human potentials' that expose the dark side of humanity if we seek to develop a truly comprehensive notion of normativity, capable of accounting for the tension-laden nature of society.[194]

Summary

Debating Humanity is a major contribution to contemporary social and political thought. Chernilo's attempt to develop an outline of a 'philosophical sociology' is a worthwhile endeavour, especially at a time when it has become increasingly unpopular to defend universalist conceptions of the human – not least due to the wide-ranging influence of largely socio-constructivist approaches (notably those associated with postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, feminism, and intersectionalism) on the humanities and social sciences. Some parts of Chernilo's argument are highly perceptive and thoughtful; others, however, remain contentious and problematic. Regardless of its controversial aspects and limitations, Chernilo's study is a powerful reminder of the fact that a truly comprehensive understanding of society requires a critical engagement with the concept of humanity.

Notes

1. Chernilo (2017). In my analysis, I shall focus on the Introduction (pp. 1–22) and the Epilogue (pp. 229–236), as they provide a useful overview of the main arguments underlying Chernilo's study. Cf. Guhin (2019).
2. Cf. Chernilo (2014). Cf. also Chernilo (2013).
3. Chernilo (2017), p. 1 (italics added; quotation modified).
4. Ibid., p. 1 (italics in original; punctuation modified).
5. Ibid., p. 1 (italics added).
6. Ibid., p. 1.

7. On this point, see ibid., p. 2. See also, for example: Adorno (2000 [1993]); Cordero (2017), pp. x, 7–8, 11, 153, 155, 160, 161*n*27, and 162; Manent (1998 [1994]); Susen (2017a), pp. 102–103 and 108–109.
8. Chernilo (2017), p. 2 (italics in original).
9. See, for example: Durkheim (1964 [1960]); Durkheim (1982 [1895]); Durkheim (2010 [1951/1953]). See also, for instance: Gane (1988); Giddens (1978); Lukes (1973); Susen (2015a), pp. 48–63.
10. Chernilo (2017), p. 2 (italics in original). Cf. Susen (2016b).
11. See Chernilo (2017), p. 2. See also, for example: Benton (1977); Benton and Craib (2001), pp. 13–49; Susen (2015a), pp. 48–63.
12. See, for example: Weber (1978 [1922]); Weber (1991 [1948]); Weber (2001/1930 [1904–05]). See also, for instance: Albrow (1990); Baert (2005); Susen (2016b); Turner (1992); Whimster (2001).
13. Chernilo (2017), pp. 2–3 (italics in original). See also Ginsberg (1968) and Hughes (1974).
14. See, for example: Marx (2000/1977 [1845]); Marx (2000/1977 [1859]).
15. See Chernilo (2017), pp. 2–3. See also for example: Habermas (1988 [1963]); Marcuse (2000 [1941/1955]).
16. See, for example: Butler (1990); Walby (2011).
17. See, for example: Bhambra (2014); Go (2016).
18. See Chernilo (2017), pp. 2–3. See also, for example: MacIntyre (1981); Nisbet (1967).
19. Chernilo (2017), p. 3 (italics in original).
20. On this point, see ibid., pp. 3–7. See also, for example: Borsari (2009); Fischer (2009); Gebauer and Wulf (2009); Rehberg (2009). In this context, however, Chernilo draws mainly on Cassirer (1972 [1923/1925/1929]) and Schnädelbach (1984 [1983]).
21. Chernilo (2017), p. 4 (punctuation modified).
22. Ibid., p. 4 (punctuation modified).
23. Ibid., p. 4 (italics in original). Cf. Blumenberg (2006).
24. See Chernilo (2017), pp. 4–5.
25. See ibid., p. 5. Cf. Löwith (1993 [1932]).
26. See Chernilo (2017), pp. 7–10. See also, for example: Dahrendorf (1965); Dahrendorf (1968 [1965]); Dahrendorf (1968), see esp. his essay on ‘Sociology and Human Nature’.
27. See Chernilo (2017), pp. 7–10.
28. Ibid., p. 8.
29. Ibid., p. 8.
30. Ibid., p. 9.
31. Ibid., p. 9.
32. Ibid., p. 9.
33. Ibid., p. 9 (italics in original; quotation modified).
34. Ibid., p. 10 (italics added).
35. Ibid., p. 10.
36. Ibid., p. 10.
37. See ibid., pp. 10–18. See also, for instance: Badmington (2000); Braidotti (2013); Braidotti (2019); Fukuyama (2002); Hayles (1999); Herbrechter (2013 [2009]); Hollis (2015 [1977]); Mahon (2017); Nayar (2014); Peterson (2018); Taylor (1989).
38. Chernilo (2017), p. 11.
39. See, for example: Archer (2000); Atanasoski and Vora (2019); Habermas (2003 [2001]); Fuller (2011); Fuller (2013); Fuller and Lipińska (2014); Honneth and Joas (1988 [1980]); Pinker (2002); Pinker (2018); Scheler (2009 [1928]); Sloterdijk (2009); Steane (2018); Wilson (2004 [1978]).
40. Chernilo (2017), p. 11.
41. See, for example: Latour (1990); Latour (1993 [1991]); Latour (2005); Latour (2013 [2012]).
42. See, for example: Braidotti (2013); Braidotti (2019).
43. See, for example: Clark (2001); Clark (2008).
44. See Chernilo (2017), p. 12.

45. On this point, see ibid., p. 11. See also Latour (2013 [2012]), pp. 33 and 154–162.
46. Chernilo (2017), p. 13.
47. Ibid., p. 14.
48. See Braidotti (2013), pp. 13–30.
49. Chernilo (2017), p. 14.
50. Ibid., p. 14 (italics in original). See also Davies (2008 [1997]).
51. See Chernilo (2017), p. 15.
52. Ibid., p. 15.
53. Ibid., p. 15.
54. Ibid., p. 15.
55. Ibid., p. 15.
56. Ibid., p. 15 (italics in original).
57. On *the Habermasian notion of* '*performative contradiction*', see, for example: Habermas (1987 [1981]), p. 308; Habermas (2001), pp. 10–11 and 31; Abdel-Nour (2004), pp. 83–87 and 91–92; Jay (1992); Matustik (1989), esp. pp. 143–148, 169, and 172; Morris (1996); Schoolman (2005), pp. 336, 356–358, and 364; Susen (2007), pp. 77 and 98*n*68; Susen (2015a), pp. 234, 255, 256, 257, 281, 333*n*7, and 340*n*190.
58. See Chernilo (2017), p. 16. See also Clark (2001) and Clark (2008).
59. Chernilo (2017), p. 16 (italics in original).
60. Ibid., p. 16 (punctuation modified). Cf. Clark (2008), p. 30.
61. Clark (2008), p. 75. See Chernilo (2017), p. 17.
62. Chernilo (2017), p. 17.
63. Ibid., p. 17 (italics in original, except for the article 'the' before 'artificial').
64. Ibid., p. 17.
65. Clark (2008), p. 123 (italics in original; quotation modified). See Chernilo (2017), p. 17.
66. See Chernilo (2017), p. 18.
67. See ibid., pp. 229–236.
68. See, for instance, Scheler (2009 [1928]).
69. See, for instance, Cassirer (1972 [1923/1925/1929]).
70. See, for instance, Plessner (1970 [1941]).
71. See Chernilo (2017), p. 229.
72. Ibid., p. 229.
73. Ibid., p. 229 (italics added).
74. Ibid., p. 229 (italics added; quotation modified).
75. Ibid., p. 229 (italics added).
76. Ibid., p. 229.
77. Ibid., p. 229 (italics in original).
78. See ibid., pp. 229–236.
79. See ibid., p. 230.
80. Ibid., p. 230 (italics in original).
81. See, for instance: Arendt (1967 [1951]); Arendt (1953); Arendt (1998 [1958]); Arendt (2005).
82. Chernilo (2017), p. 230 (italics in original).
83. Ibid., p. 230.
84. Ibid., p. 230.
85. See ibid., pp. 230–231.
86. Surprisingly, Chernilo does not mention, let alone draw upon, Azmanova (2012).
87. Chernilo (2017), p. 230.
88. Ibid., p. 230.
89. Ibid., p. 230 (italics in original).
90. Ibid., p. 230.
91. Ibid., p. 231.
92. See ibid., pp. 231–233.
93. Ibid., p. 231.

94. Ibid., p. 231. Cf. Marx (2000/1977 [1845]), Marx (2000/1977 [1859]), and Marx and Engels (2000/1977 [1846]).
95. Chernilo (2017), p. 231 (italics in original). Cf. Blumenberg (2006).
96. Chernilo (2017), p. 232. Cf. Voegelin (1962).
97. See Chernilo (2017), p. 232. Cf. Blumenberg (2006).
98. Chernilo (2017), p. 232.
99. Ibid., p. 232 (italics in original).
100. See ibid., pp. 233–234.
101. Ibid., p. 233.
102. Ibid., p. 233 (punctuation modified).
103. Ibid., p. 233.
104. Ibid., p. 234.
105. See ibid., pp. 234–236.
106. See, for instance: Husserl (1972 [1939]); Husserl (1973 [1939]); Husserl (2012 [1913/1931]).
107. Chernilo (2017), p. 234.
108. Ibid., p. 234.
109. Ibid., p. 234.
110. Ibid., p. 234.
111. Ibid., p. 234 (punctuation modified).
112. Ibid., p. 234.
113. See ibid., pp. 234–235.
114. Ibid., p. 235.
115. Ibid., p. 236 (italics in original).
116. On this point, see, for example: Susen (2009), pp. 91–93, 94–95, and 107–108; Susen (2015a), pp. 76–77, 81–82, and 87; Susen (2017c), pp. 363–363.
117. Susen (2015a), p. 82.
118. Chernilo (2017), p. 17.
119. Ibid., p. 17 (italics added).
120. See ibid., p. 21.
121. Ibid., p. 21 (italics added).
122. On the use of most of these (and other) criteria in a different study, see Susen (2015a), pp. 23–31.
123. Chernilo (2017), p. 1.
124. On this point, see, for instance: Habermas (2001 [1984]), esp. 94–99; Habermas (2001), 13, 44, 45, and 79; Habermas (2018 [2009]), esp. pp. 88, 96, 102, 103, 117, 120, and 156; Susen (2007), pp. 88–89, 114, 244, 251, 265, and 286.
125. On this point, see, for example: Bourdieu (1992); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992); Bourdieu (2013 [1978]); Susen (2013a); Susen (2013b).
126. Ibid., p. 4 ('and' italicized in the original; italics added to 'natural' and 'conscious') (punctuation modified).
127. See, for instance: Boly, Seth, Wilke, Ingmundson, Baars, Laureys, Edelman, and Tsuchiya (2013); Lund (2002); Willingham and Riener (2007 [2000]); Wynne (2001); Wynne and Udell (2013 [2001]).
128. See, for example: de Waal (2016); de Waal, Macedo, and Ober (2006); Høgh-Olesen (2019); Monsó, Benz-Schwarzburg, and Bremhorst (2018); Peterson (2011); Watanabe and Kuczaj (2013).
129. Chernilo (2017), p. 233 (italics added; quotation modified).
130. Ibid., p. 233.
131. Ibid., p. 233 (italics in original). Cf. Wilson (2000 [1975]) and Wilson (2004 [1978]).
132. Chernilo (2017), p. 233 (italics in original). Cf. Wilson (2000 [1975]) and Wilson (2004 [1978]).
133. Chernilo (2017), p. 5 (italics in original).
134. See, for example: Bonner and La Farge (1980); de Waal (2001); Durham (1990); Heyes and Galef (1996); Hurley and Chater (2005); Laland and Galef (2009).

135. On *the concept of* ‘*ideal type*’, see, for example: Haug, Haug, and Küttler (2004); Rosenberg (2016); Susen (2015a), pp. 57, 100, 204, 205, 207, and 217.
136. Chernilo (2017), pp. 233–234.
137. See, for example: Colebrook (2010); Fraser, Kember, and Lury (2006); Greco (2005); Marks (1998).
138. Chernilo (2017), p. 18 (quotation modified).

139. See, for example: Susen (2013a), p. 228; Susen (2013b), p. 330, 372, and 373.
140. Cf. Joas (1996 [1992]).
141. See Chernilo (2017), p. 233.
142. Ibid., p. 231 (italics in original).
143. Ibid., p. 231 (italics in original).
144. Ibid., p. 231 (italics in original).
145. Ibid., p. 231 (italics in original). Cf. Blumenberg (2006).
146. Chernilo (2017), p. 7 (italics in original); see also ibid., p. 9. Cf. Dahrendorf (1968 [1965]), p. 78.
147. Chernilo (2017), p. 231 (italics in original).
148. See ibid., p. 230.
149. See ibid., p. 230.
150. Susen (2015a), p. 61. On this point, see also Susen (2007), pp. 164–165, and Susen (2013b), p. 224.
151. Chernilo (2017), p. 230.
152. On these points, see, for example: Susen (2013b), p. 224; Susen (2012b), pp. 714–715; Susen (2015a), pp. 54–55.

153. Chernilo (2017), p. 1 (italics in original; punctuation modified).

154. On *the concept of* ‘*metanarrative*’, see, for instance: Susen (2015a), esp. Chapter 4. See also Susen (2016d) and Susen (2017b).

155. Chernilo (2017), p. 1 (italics added; quotation modified).
156. Ibid., p. 229 (quotation modified).
157. Ibid., p. 4 (italics in original).
158. Ibid., p. 4 (quotation modified).
159. See Susen (2013a) and Susen (2013b).
160. See Susen (2018a) and Susen (2018b).
161. Cf. Susen (2018a), esp. pp. 1281–1282.
162. Chernilo (2017), p. 6 (italics added).
163. See ibid., pp. 7–10. See also, for example: Dahrendorf (1965); Dahrendorf (1968 [1965]); Dahrendorf (1968), see esp. his essay on ‘Sociology and Human Nature’.
164. Chernilo (2017), p. 8.
165. Dahrendorf (1968 [1965]), p. 94. See Chernilo (2017), p. 8.
166. See Chernilo (2017), pp. 7–10.
167. Ibid., p. 8.
168. See ibid., pp. 7–10.
169. Ibid., p. 8.
170. Ibid., p. 8.
171. Ibid., p. 8 (italics added).
172. Ibid., p. 9 (italics in original; quotation modified).
173. Ibid., p. 9 (italics in original).
174. Ibid., p. 10.
175. Ibid., p. 10.
176. Ibid., p. 10.
177. Ibid., p. 10 (punctuation modified).
178. Ibid., p. 10.
179. On this point, see: Bourdieu (1992); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992); Bourdieu (2013 [1978]). See also, for example: Addi (2001); Collins (1998); Grenfell (2010); Hanks (2005);

Honneth (1986 [1984]); Jenkins (1994); Ledeneva (1994); Susen (2013a); Susen (2013b); Wacquant (2002 [1993]); Wacquant (2013).

180. On this point, see, for instance: Susen (2007), pp. 174, 241, and 252; Susen (2011a), pp. 450, 453, and 460; Susen (2013a), pp. 225–226 and 228; Susen (2014 [2015]), pp. 330–331; Susen (2016c), p. 221.
181. On this point, see, for instance: Susen (2007), esp. Chapter 7 and Chapter 8; Susen (2011b), p. 181; Susen (2011c), p. 68, 70, and 74; Susen (2013a), esp. pp. 210, 214–218, 222, 226, and 229; Susen (2014); Susen (2016a); Susen (2016c), pp. 202, 210–212, 217, and 222.
182. See Susen and Turner (2011).
183. See Susen and Turner (2014). See also Susen (2012b) and Susen (2015b) as well as Susen (2014 [2012]) and Susen (2014 [2015]).
184. Chernilo (2017), p. 10.
185. On this point, see Susen (2007), esp. pp. 221–226.
186. Cf. Foucault (2002 [1966/1970]).
187. Chernilo (2017), p. 11 (punctuation modified).
188. Ibid., p. 15 (italics in original).
189. Ibid., p. 232.
190. Ibid., p. 1 (italics added).
191. Ibid., p. 230 (italics in original).
192. Ibid., p. 230.
193. Cf. Pinker (2002), Pinker (2011), and Pinker (2018).
194. On this issue, see, for example: Holloway and Susen (2013), p. 33; Susen (2007), pp. 13, 121–125, 226, 260, 261, 268, and 308; Susen (2012a), pp. 296, 306, 309, 311, 312, 319*n*84, 319*n*85, 323*n*148, and 324–325*n*165; Susen (2016b), pp. 74–75; Susen (2013a), pp. 229–230; Susen (2013b), pp. 327, 329, 343, 354, 372, and 373; Susen (2016e), p. 137.

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