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VIEWPOINTS/CONTROVERSIES

# The significance of new humanism for education and development

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**Abstract** The purpose of this contribution is to consider what the significance of the new discussion taking place around humanism is for the ways in which we think about development and education. It attempts to hold the idea of development in a frame in which we can think more constructively and less instrumentally about the place of education within it. It attempts a restatement of the idea of development that draws on the consensus about its meaning that is emerging out of the SDGs, and that also brings to bear the discussion concerning new humanism. What is this *new humanism*? the article asks. What is it a response to? To what are scholars and commentators in the development arena, particularly people such as Hans d'Orville, reacting in their emphasis on the urgency of the moment?

**Keywords** Education and development · New humanism · Inclusive development · SDGs

In 2015, the advisor to the Director-General of UNESCO, Hans d'Orville (2015, p. 91), made the point in the build-up to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that "the need for an inclusive, sustainable concept has never been so critical. Sustainable development with its three pillars—economic, social and environmental—has come to be the central plank of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. … Arguably, at the heart of this agenda lies the notion of a new humanism".

In this contribution, I critique the ways in which the ideas of *development* and *education* are held together, and the significance of the new humanist movement for development. I seek to frame the idea of development such that we can think more constructively and less instrumentally about the place of education within it. To begin, I attempt to restate the idea of development. In that discussion, I draw on the consensus concerning the meaning of development that has emerged around the SDGs. I then look at the question of the state

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of the larger socioeconomic space in which we find ourselves, and I conclude with a focus on what *new humanism* is. What is this new humanism? What is it a response to? To what are scholars and commentators in the development arena reacting in their emphasis on the urgency of the moment?

## The development idea

But, first, let us recapitulate where we are with respect to the idea of development. Ubiquitous and commonplace as the idea is, it remains immensely contested. In its dominant form, it is built around the notions of modernism and modernity, and the theory that societies progress through stages from their traditional forms to modernity. Technological evolution is an essential feature of this understanding, as is the belief that all human beings are motivated by rational, self-interested acquisitiveness (Crewe and Harrison 1998, p. 25). Versions of this explanation have informed the thinking of most development agencies. They present themselves as the *humanist* ideal. This ideal was, and still forms, the baseline for thinking about human development: "[It] gives meanings to representations of reality and lend[s] shape to the way people recreate their past experience of the world … [a]nd plan the future" (Crewe and Harrison 1998, p. 25). This orthodoxy, projected here as "old humanism", has influenced much global thinking in deeply determinative ways. Some, however, have critiqued it as an "unstable" concept in its simultaneous availability as a socioeconomic blueprint for human progress and a theoretical field for sense-making; a "contextual" concept that takes its normative orientation from Western epistemologies and ontologies; a "binary" idea that dichotomously separates Europe and North America from the rest of the world (see Tetior n.d., and Klugman et al. 2011, p. 8). Out of these critiques have emerged now-established schools of thought concerning development, including those that approach the concept using modernization theory, dependency theory, social justice theory, and human capital theory.

Interestingly, the advent of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its commitment to 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has significantly tempered the discussion amongst these different approaches and facilitated the emergence of a rough consensus about what development should include. To be sure, criticism of the SDGs from across the political spectrum continues. The *Economist,* at one end, describes them as "worse than useless". More middle-of-the-road commentators see them as "senseless, dreamy and garbled", and more left-leaning critics argue that they fail to engage with the structural causes of poverty and depend on problematic consumption-driven growth models that have no respect for the environment. But even the most acerbic of critics, in their assessments of what the SDGs stand for, accord them some value (see Easterly 2015; Kirk 2015; Kumar 2017).

What is the idea of development in the SDG universe? It is essentially the commitment to development "in its three dimensions—economic, social and environmental—in a balanced and integrated manner" (UNDESA 2015).

To emphasize, then, it is not the politics of the SDGs, their utopianism, their impracticality, or their lack of specificity that I address. Important for my purpose here is the new meaning that has come to be associated with the idea of development. The argument I am making is that we have, in this new meaning, a conceptual advance from where we had been before. Current usage brings together the economic and the social in ways that acknowledge earlier critiques of development as too economistic, too unselfconsciously ethnocentric (as reflected by the structural-adjustment paradigm) and that begin to embrace development's multidimensionality. Into the discursive frame comes an awareness of

human development as a social experience that must be managed at both the individual and the social ends of the scale. Prompting this new convergence has been, first of all, the Brundlandt Commission's ecological intervention, which defines development as "that [which] meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987, p. 43), and, secondly, the contribution of Sen (1999) in his radical repostulation of "development as freedom": the freedom people have to develop the capacities they themselves value. These improvements give us a more comprehensive grasp of development not as a process that is *done to* people but as one that requires their participation; a sense of its inextricable relationship with social justice, equity, and quality; and, not least of all, an awareness and a sensitivity to value—that is, of development as a deliberate project underpinned by a commitment to the value of all lives. This definition of development acknowledges the individual's capacity to grow cognitively, spiritually, and materially across all the domains of his or her existence, and it locates the individual in social time and space. It works with his or her human agency in relation to this time and space. It acknowledges, too, that individuals live in bounded communities and societies in which a multiplicity of forms of power operate that include and exclude and rank and order, and that they are part of complex ecological systems that they share with other sentient forms and with which they share responsibility for its sustainability. It presents itself, moreover, as the outcome of a reasoned and pragmatic sociology, an understanding of human development without the hubris of modernist developmentalism, either in its free-market or command-economy form. Standing behind it is an analysis of what has gone wrong in the world—an appreciation of the equal capacity and potential of human beings everywhere to think critically. Lorenzo Fioramonti (2017, p. 13) calls this the "wellbeing economy" approach: "In the wellbeing economy, development lies not in the exploitation of natural and human resources but in improving the quality and effectiveness of human-to-human and human-to-ecosystem interactions, supported by appropriate enabling technologies". It is in this sense an advance on the instrumental, impositional, and bias-laden nature of development. It is this sense of development—allied with the notion of a wellbeing economy—that I use here.

## The state of the world

What, however, is the state of the world to which this new convergence responds? In talking about the role and relevance of the work that all of us here are committed to, the work of education, we cannot avoid an assessment of the state of our world today.

One thing very striking about this world is its extreme contradiction and unpredictability. Contradiction characterizes our material, social, and psychological world. How we think, live, and manage ourselves in relation to our pasts, our presents, and our futures is hallmarked by contradiction.

As I write, I have two books open in front of me: Julia Kristeva's (1989) *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*; and Diane Ackerman's (2014) *The Human Age: The World Shaped by Us*. At the end of a chapter on beauty, Kristeva writes,

> The imaginative capability of Western man, which is fulfilled in Christianity, is the ability to transfer meaning to the very place where it was lost in death and or/non-meaning. This is a survival of idealization—the imaginary constitutes a miracle, but it is at the same time its shattering: a self-illusion, nothing but dreams and words,

> words, words…It affirms the almightiness of temporary subjectivity—the one that knows enough to speak until death comes. (p. 103)

Ackerman (2014), writing 25 years after, and without reference of course to Kristeva, says,

> Without meaning to, we've created some planetary chaos that threatens our well-being. Yet despite the urgency of reining in climate change and devising safer ways to feed, fuel, and govern our civilization, I'm enormously hopeful. Our new age, for all its sins, is laced with invention. We've tripled our life span, reduced childhood mortality, and, for most people, improved the quality of life—from health to our daily comforts—to a staggering degree. Our mistakes are legion, but our talent is immeasurable. (p. 14)

The two texts are quite different. Kristeva speaks to the depths of human subjectivity, its temporality; Ackerman, to the character of our age, the Anthropocene. It is the extraordinary tension in these texts—the first from one of our leading psychoanalysts, the other from an important public intellectual—that strikes me; it is the tension of despair and hope.

Predictably, this contradiction finds expression most visibly and most determinatively in economic terms. One of the most important indicators of this contradiction is the dramatic difference in the directions in which poverty and inequality are moving in the world. As Helen Clark, the former administrator of the United Nations Human Development Programme (UNDP), said in the Foreword to the 2015 Human Development Report,

> [There has been] impressive progress on human development over the past quarter century. Today people are living longer, more children are in school and more people have access to clean water and basic sanitation. Per capita income has gone up and poverty has gone down, resulting in a better standard of living for many people… Work has contributed to this progress by building people's capabilities…Considerable challenges remain, from persistent poverty and grinding inequalities to climate change and environmental sustainability in general, and to conflict and instability.

The UNDP *Human Development Report 2013* puts it even more dramatically:

> Never in history have the living conditions and prospects of so many people changed so dramatically and so fast… . This is primarily the success of some of the most populous countries in eradicating extreme poverty: Brazil, China and India have all dramatically reduced the proportion of their people who are income poor—Brazil from 17.2% of the population in 1990 to 13.1% in 2009, China from 60.2% in 1990 to 13.1% in 2008, and India from 49.4% in 1990 to 32.7% in 2010. (UNDP 2013, pp. 11–13)

And yet, as the same report makes clear, inequality continues to grow exponentially around the world. Thomas Piketty's work and the earlier work of Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) in *The Spirit Level* emphasize the centrality of the concept of income inequality. Income inequality can be, as *The Spirit Level* seeks to show, if not causally responsible for, certainly related to, a host of problems seen everywhere in the world. *The Spirit Level* asserts that health and social problems are worse in countries with greater income inequality. It lists these problems: low life expectancy, low maths and literacy attainment, infant mortality, homicides, imprisonment, teenage births, lack of trust, obesity, mental problems (including drug and alcohol addiction), and lack of social mobility. Critically, it argues that these problems have a level of autonomy in rich countries not seen in poor and emergent

economies. In rich countries, it states, health and social problems are not related to average income. However, rich nations with high degrees of economic inequality are much more susceptible to social and other problems than rich countries that are more equal. Further, the dangers of such inequality are intense, argues Oxfam (2016, p. 1):

> The global inequality crisis is reaching new extremes. The richest 1% now have more wealth than the rest of the world combined. Power and privilege is being used to skew the economic system to increase the gap between the richest and the rest. A global network of tax havens further enables the richest individuals to hide $7.6 trillion. The fight against poverty will not be won until the inequality crisis is tackled.

Most significant about these developments are that they have implications well beyond the economic. Throughout the world, in contexts where the populace is assured that they have rights and entitlements, people find that their access to such benefits is limited by difference and *inequality*. Access to material resources is people's first point of engagement with the social spaces in which they find themselves. Whether they have the basic resources to be able to live matters. But political and cultural access—and thus, dignity—is also available differentially. Some people have a bounteous sense of providence, beyond the material; they have the confidence to be what they want to be, to do things they wish to do. Others, by contrast, feel only debilitating affliction—affliction that impacts their sense of self, of self-worth, and of possibility. They doubt themselves intensely. A few have the privilege of enjoying both physical and mental well-being. Many have neither. Enablement and disempowerment are distributed very disparately.

These developments of, on the one hand, diminishing and improved well-being and enhanced life-chances for some, and, on the other, the intensification of risk and danger and intensification of experiences of inequality for others, are real.

## New humanism

It is precisely into this space beyond the material and into the psychosocial that new humanism speaks. It is both a critique of old humanism, traces of which are still evident in the emerging consensus around development, and an attempt at reconstituting the discussion around the category of the "human" and "his" or "her"—or however people seek to identify themselves in order to acknowledge gender and identity multiplicities—place, rights, entitlements, and accountabilities in the world. It marks, in both these evolutions—the critique of old humanism and the excavation of new ground in thinking about the human—a turning point in the human development discussion.

So, how can we explain what this new humanism is? The first point to make is that, as with all turning points, it does not emerge with singular and cohering clarity. It is uneven in its theoretical and analytic register; it is polyvocal and has a multiplicity of points of departure. Binding it, however, is dissatisfaction with the old humanism. An explicit expression of this dissatisfaction is available in the work of Rosi Braidotti. Most critical about this intervention is its emphasis on the normative—the privileging of particular forms of thinking and the instantiation of this thinking in both common sense and the law. The kind of humanism that remains dominant in the world today, to which the new humanism seeks to react, has its roots in the European Enlightenment and is given expression in the major European revolutions, the so-called world wars and the colonial experience. The opening lines to Braidotti's (2013) book, *The Posthuman,* are immensely helpful. She says,

> At the start of it all there is He: the classical ideal of "Man", formulated first by Protagoras as the "measure of all things", later renewed in the Italian Renaissance as a universal model and represented in Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man.* An ideal of bodily perfection which, in keeping with the classical dictum *mens sano in corpore sano,* doubles up as a set of mental, discursive and spiritual values…That iconic image is the emblem of Humanism as a doctrine that combines the biological, discursive and moral expansion of human capabilities into an idea of teleologically ordained, rational progress…This model sets standards not only for individuals, but also for their cultures. Humanism historically developed into a civilizational model, which shaped a certain idea of Europe as coinciding with the universalizing powers of self-reflexive reason…This self-aggrandizing vision assumes that Europe is not just a geo-political location, but rather a universal attribute of the human mind that can lend its quality to any suitable object…As a civilizational ideal, Humanism fuelled the imperial destinies of nineteenth-century Germany, France and, supremely, Great Britain. (p. 13)

Following this line of logic, Tony Davies says, "All Humanisms, until now, have been imperial. They speak of the human in the accents of a class, a sex, a race, a genome. Their embrace suffocates" (as quoted in Braidotti 2013, p. 15).

It is to this "suffocation" that new humanism attempts to speak. Its point of departure is that globalization and its most recent technologies have constituted the world as not just being irretrievably connected but now also completely interdependent. There is virtually no part of the world, no community, and certainly no individuals who can abstract themselves from this connectedness. It reads the world and everything in it—the human species and other forms of life—as being bound together as never before. It suggests that our ontologies are entirely defined by our awareness of each other's presences. Interdependence as a material/physical reality, but also in ontological, epistemological, and axiological terms, is the most relevant condition that defines this stage of human development.

The significance of new humanism is its attempt to speak to this interdependence. I identify two versions of new humanism that have arisen in relation to this situation. The first is evident in the discussion of the SDG development community, and the second is emerging in discussions taking place amongst a community of scholars associated with the emergence of humanities institutes and centres around the world; this community includes such important cultural theorists as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Paul Gilroy, and Mahmood Mamdani. We can describe the first version as "soft", to the extent that it seeks to repair what it thinks are the distortions of the human that occurred during the European Enlightenment. We see its project most clearly in the thinking of Irina Bokova, former UNESCO Director-General, in the appeal she makes to foundational commitments in the European Enlightenment. The second version is harder. Like the soft version, it states its indebtedness to the European Enlightenment, but its critique of those ideas impels it to want to move away from it, beyond it, and into new discursive territory. Both the "soft" and the "hard" versions take their impetus from the global crisis of neoliberalism and the deepening fissure between the rich and the poor. Both find themselves at a point where scholars, policymakers, and others have come to subject Western certainty to deep scrutiny. Both, significantly, have footprints in the establishment—the soft, inside established institutions in the global development community; the hard, in the humanities and social science sections of the Academy. Neither, again significantly, is, in the final analysis, able to determine the development agenda. They do have things to say, however. What are these things?

The grouping in the SDG development community has been able to influence the development discussion in important ways. This influence begins with a critique of dominant developmentalism; its primary object of critique is globalization. It says that opportunity has arisen for some parts of the world, manifested in tremendous material wealth, but, as David Harvey has argued, the neoliberal form in which this globalization has come, has "primarily worked as a system of justification and legitimation for whatever needed to be done to achieve the goal [of neoliberalism]" (2007, p. 29). Globalization has deepened existing economic and social division in the world and exacerbated social inequalities and injustice. It has accelerated ecological and environmental degradation and imposed on the world its "growth-only strategic orientation" to development (Harvey 2007, p. 29).

To this critique, scholars in the SDG development community bring their version of new humanism, which goes as follows:

> The notion of new humanism entails a holistic approach to human progress focusing on both the search for the full realization and emancipation of the individual as well of his or her feelings of belonging to a single human community, superseding differences of origin, ethnicity, culture, religion or gender. A concrete implementation of such ideals can only be achieved through a strong and sincere commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism, which cannot be attained without reintroducing humanism as an inclusive feature. Therefore new humanism's societal vision is essentially based on the promotion of education for all, of a democratic participation of all, and an economic development including and benefitting all. In order to achieve a more just, equal and prosperous society, international politics has to concentrate on widening and deepening collective efforts in the fields of education, science, culture and access to information. (D'Orville 2015, p. 97)

This new humanism rests on three pillars. The first is social development, constituted in fundamentally inclusive ways. It is conscious of the multiple forms through which discrimination and marginalization have operated in older articulations of humanism. A key break that it makes with old humanism is to say that "[t]oday, no single country has the solutions to all global challenges. No culture holds a universal monopoly" (D'Orville 2015, p. 98), and, to realize this, it accords education pride of place in the process of social development. New Humanism's task is "to evoke intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding and enrichment and thus serve as a basis for establishing a global culture of humanism" (D'Orville 2015, p. 98).

The second pillar is environmental development. Alongside education, it urges the need for a "change of mentality, which overcomes selfish, egoistic and indeed unsustainable approaches of consumption and instead focuses on the preservation of our planet and the well-being of the overarching global society" (D'Orville 2015, p. 98).

This new humanism is defined in party by its emphasis on the need for a new moral vision for humanity, one based on new concepts of solidarity. Thus, the third pillar is economic sustainability, which has, at its heart, solidarity—as opposed to consumption-preoccupied individualism. To developmentalism's emphasis on economic growth–led development, it proffers the development of "social protection floors" for people everywhere as the normative basis for global development.

The "hard" new humanists from the humanities community are, like their SDG counterparts, not all of one school of thought. They overlap with the "soft" school in important ways. Like their "soft" counterparts, they emphasize all the questions of the social, the environment, and the economy. There is, however, a critical edge to their work not evident in the new humanism of the SDG community. This edge is rooted in a fundamental

questioning of dominant developmentalism's working assumptions around the meaning of the "social" and the modes of "knowing" the social. What are the epistemological entailments of social knowing? What logics does social knowing deploy? The "social", as in the accounts of some of the more prominent theorists such as Achille Mbembe, is the site around which the conceptual framing, interpretation, and making of what it means to be a human are worked out conceptually and enacted in public policy and, critically, in such disciplines as sociology, anthropology, psychology, politics, and history. Significant about this critical edge are its deep knowledge entailments. It has as desirable outcomes enlarged practices of solidarity, generous-minded social action, courageous cultural resistance, and self-conscious agency, but it seeks to recover knowledge commitments and practices—discourses—that constitute the social in different terms than those of old humanism.

In a demonstration of what such a recovery was all about, Mahmood Mamdani of Makerere University in Uganda referred to what he described as "spirited exchange" between Ali Mazrui and Walter Rodney, arguing that:

> Mazrui, in coining the concept of "mode of reasoning", argued that "compared to political inculturation, ideological orientation is both superficial and changeable. To be in favour of this and that country, to be attracted to this system of values rather than that, all are forms of ideological inversion.
>
> Under a strong impulse one can change one's creed, but it is much more difficult to change the process of reasoning which one acquires from one's total educational background". (Omar 2017)

The target of this new humanist recovery is old humanism's proclivity to classify and mark the "social". The criticism is not against classification per se but its founding assumption that the point of reference from which to begin is Europe—and, particularly, the Europe of the last 400 years in its Kantian, Hegelian preoccupation of a binary split between an exemplary whiteness and a scorned and to-be-pitied *otherness.* In the opening of his book, *A Critique of Black Reason,* Achille Mbembe (2017, p. 1) says, "I envision this book as a river with many tributaries, since history and all things flow toward us now. Europe is no longer the center of gravity of the world. This is the significant event, the fundamental experience, of our era… Whether such a revelation is an occasion for joy or cause for surprise or worry, one thing remains certain: the demotion of Europe opens up possibilities—and presents dangers—for critical thought".

What are the possibilities and the dangers of this significant event of new humanism? The possibilities are finding new reference points for thinking about the social. The most critical of these reference points is that of social difference and the urgency of making what Mbembe calls "co-belonging" on the planet the point of departure for thinking about the social, sociality, and difference. In his latest publications he makes much of the broader ecological sensibility that this social knowing must develop. Do humans, he asks, have a separate existence from the rest of the world? His concern is about the ontological grounds of dichotomization that are embedded within Western thinking. It is how the category of the "human" itself has been rendered in that dichotomization that is most pertinent for this discussion. Its hallmark, Mbembe argues, has been ethnocentricism. He remarks, "Since the beginning of the 18th century Blackness and race have constituted the unacknowledged and often denied foundation, what we might call the nuclear power plant, from which the modern project of knowledge—and of governance—has been deployed. Blackness and race, the one and the other, represent twin figures of the delirium produced by modernity" (Mbembe 2017, p. 2). Race

and racial classification sit behind and unacknowledged, interstitially inside modern knowing of the social. They provide understandings of the social with deep ontological fixities, blackness as otherness, whiteness as self-referential certainty. These fixities insinuate themselves into the everyday, where they are installed as natural and eternal attributes of the human. To whiteness falls the civilizational obligation of leading the *other* out of and away from themselves. Mbembe (2017, p. 2) says that "race, operating over the past centuries as a foundational category that is at once material and phantasmic, has been at the root of catastrophe, the cause of extraordinary psychic devastation and of innumerable crimes and massacres". To this founding conceit Mbembe talks, instead, of "becoming—with-others. What makes us human is our capacity to share our condition—including our wounds and injuries—with others" (as quoted in Donker et al. 2017, p. 12). Critically, there is in this projection of the social and its articulations of difference a deliberate rejection of the idea of race (and it needs to be said, of gender), and a commitment to problematizing the idea of origins each and every time it is invoked; and so, as Hardt and Negri state, installing in a new humanist logic the idea that "[e]very identity, … must be defined by its remainder, those outside of it, call them the excluded, the abject or the subaltern" (as quoted in Donker et al. 2017, p. 17).

What are the dangers? The danger, as many new humanists put it, in working with the demotion of Europe and its installation as one site of reference in the human experience, is how the politics of knowing in a post-European episteme of the social are managed. Talking about the wave of protests that has engulfed South African universities and the decolonization movement, Mbembe describes this response to dominance as a '"psychic state more than a political project in the strict sense of the term" (as quoted in Donker et al. 2017, p. 10). Three elements characterize this decolonization moment: "a politics of waiting has been supplanted by one of impatience; … an identity politics of pain, suffering and anger has replaced the affirmation of blackness, worldliness and cosmopolitanism, and … the ideal of reconciliation … has been dislodged in favour of the settling of accounts" (as quoted in Donker et al. 2017, p. 10). Mbembe's central anxiety is the libidinous way in which the evocation of whiteness, pain, and suffering, as the essential problems that have to be resolved, reinstantiates, reproduces, and reaffirms the original problem of dominant knowing, of keeping the discursive economy of classification and its modalities of superiority and inferiority in place. Does not "the black man live", Mbembe (2017, p. 7) asks in a world shaped by loss and separation "cultivating a dream of returning to an identity founded on pure essentialism and, therefore, often on alterity? At what point does the project of a radical uprising in search of autonomy in the name of difference turn into a simple mimetic inversion of what was previously showered with malediction?". Produced in this historical moment, say Donker and colleagues (2017, p. 13), is Deleuze's repetition—a repetition that maintains dominant classification's binaries, even, as here, the mask of whiteness shifts position and gives way to other masks of dominance. What is called for, they maintain, is stepping out of the classificatory regime of dominance and working out "new concepts, setting afoot a new man" (Donker et al. 2017, p. 14).

Where does this take one? The answer, as Mamdani suggests, is by no means self-evident (Omar 2017, para. 25). He even uses the term "the unknown unknowns" to signal the scale and drama of the rupture between where the world is and toward where it should go in relation to thinking about the social. Its animating impulse, however, as Mbembe (personal notes, 13 August 2017) tried to explain, is its commitment to experiment, to look for new knowledge, new social platforms, being aware of innovations beyond the established institutions—but, critically, inside them too.

## Implications for education and development

What makes people want to go into the unknown? It is the desire for a better world—in Mbembe's (2017, p. 162) terms, "this irrepressible and implacable quest for liberty". The powerful do not want it. They seek to hold on to their privilege and comfort. The rest of the world wants it: a better world. That better world, the new humanists say, in both their softer and harder versions, is one that has to be made. How this making is to happen relies on reasoning that remains underdeveloped and, thus, lays open the new humanists to criticism. Where is their theory of change? one needs to ask. In talking about change, however, the softer new humanists are more explicit. Building a new humanism requires the need to "consciously strengthen [the process of] countering … cultural stereotyping, prejudices and intercultural misunderstandings" (D'Orville 2015, p. 96). They urge that education will achieve this. And so their plan, with instruments and measures such as the SDGs, is to push the world toward increased levels of education. Education serves as a multiplier "as it empowers people in all spheres of life" (D'Orville 2015, p. 98). In recent years, this discourse has foregrounded the question of educational quality and emphasized the urgency of providing, for young people everywhere, forms of education that will not only make them employable but also critical citizens of the spaces in which they live.

Implicit in the harder version, however, is the requirement for a scepticism of dogma and doctrine. This scepticism repositions the idea of critical thinking. Critical thinking has to be, as Mbembe (2017, p. 161) said of Fanon's approach to thinking, *situated thinking,* one that was able to take risks "where the thinking subject reflected in full awareness on his history, his very existence, and his own name, and in the name of the people to come, those yet to be born". What this means in educational terms is by no means clear. Recently, Mbembe suggested seven keys for moving into a new space of thinking:

1. Coming to terms with the poverty of dominant approaches to the social and their philosophical and methodological correlates.
2. Looking critically at what he calls "the iron cage" of development studies and its preoccupation with economic growth as the only basis for development.
3. Approaching global understanding outside of the "area studies" mentality. Area studies, he says, is largely about racial difference and particularity; it operates on ethnocentric models of difference.
4. Thinking about cultural and ideological borrowing differently. This means not only rethinking the conventional wisdom that the social, cultural, and economic examples of development wait to be exported from the West into the economically developing world, but also taking a critical view even as to frameworks such as decoloniality, postcolonialism, and hybridity.
5. Thinking critically about inversionary approaches to knowledge such as Afro-pessimism.
6. Looking closely at sites of noninstitutional knowledge, such as social movements, where new forms of analysis of the social are emerging.
7. Taking the planetary turn and thinking about the state of the entire planet in its full articulatedness.

This is helpful. That it needs to have our attention in the education community is beyond question. It is not a discussion that precedes or follows what happens in education. And in this sense, inarticulate as they may be, the hard new humanists are implicitly questioning what happens in dominant education. It is not simply a matter of having more of it, or

of raising its quality. It is what is in it. There is, in this development in new humanism, I would like to suggest—and here make my own position plain—a much-needed problematization of the relationship between knowledge and power, and an attempt to place it at the heart of what a good education is intended to make possible. That is, a good education develops one's capacity to broach the unthinkable in full awareness—awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses, and the strengths and weaknesses of one's multiple historical and potential capital: material, cultural, spiritual, moral, and cognitive. It provides for the time and space for the world to find a set of points of departure. Against the prevailing hegemonic order with its narcissistic individualism, its rapacious consumerism, and its apathy in the presence of suffering, it offers an important framework for thinking through the politics of what it means to be human, how human beings share the common space in which they find themselves, and, most significantly, how they use their knowledge to make it possible to bequeath to their offspring a liveable world.

How this new humanism translates into education outside of the university is, however, a challenge. How this transfers into educational systems around the world—structured around ethnocentric and egocentric ideals of what it means to be human, underpinned by state formations which themselves depend on these conceits—is the issue. As the contributions of Mbembe and the new humanists suggest, however, we have reached a turning point. The world, in Judith Butler's terms, is at a point of shared vulnerability—what she has called "precarity". It is this precariousness that constitutes the ontological urgency for what we in education now need to see as our immediate task.

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