Rethinking Humanism
An interdisciplinary conference

Thursday 28 June – Friday 29 June 2012

University of St Andrews
Institute of European Cultural Identity Studies & Centre for Cosmopolitan Studies

with the support of the University of St Andrews’ Schools of Modern Languages, Philosophical, Anthropological and Film Studies, Classics, English, History, and International Relations, and the Russell Trust

http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/modlangs/Research/Centresandinstitutes/IECIS/ForthcomingConference/

‘Humanism certainly needs an infusion of audacity if it is to stand its ground against superstition, bigotry and fundamentalist rant.’ (Malcolm Bowie)

* (Lily Perkins, Las sirenas, Punta del Este. Photo GSR)
PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 28 JUNE: THE HISTORY OF HUMANIST THINKING

9.10 am: Welcome and Introduction to the Conference—Day 1
Lecture Theatre, Arts Building

Professor Chris J Hawkesworth FRS, Deputy Principal and Vice-Principal (Research); Gustavo San Román, IECIS & Nigel Rapport, CCS, St Andrews.

9.30 – 11.00  Panel 1: The origins of Western thinking about humanity

Humanism and classical philosophy – how in Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, the theologising of reason (including human reason) gives humanism a twist with very different implications from those of the post-Christian kinds.

Chair: Sarah Broadie, Philosophy, St Andrews.

1. Elizabeth Pender, University of Leeds. ‘Human and divine reasoning from the Pre-Socratics to Plato’.

2. George Boys-Stones, University of Durham. ‘Challenges to humanism in later ancient philosophy’.


11.00 – 11.20: COFFEE

11.20 – 12.50  Panel 2: Studia Humanitatis: Humanism versus Renaissance

The term humanista was initially developed to describe a very specific type of intellectual, emerging from a distinctive set of cultural, historical and political circumstances between the 14th and the 15th centuries. The intellectual movement that was later identified as ‘humanism’ was the result of this group of individuals’ specific and conscious need for cultural and intellectual identity. This panel will explore the movement’s defining characteristics, interests and objectives, and how these relate, if at all, with its later developments and transformations.

Chair: Claudia Rossignoli, Italian, St Andrews.

1. Anna Lesiuk-Cummings, Mount Angel Seminary, St. Benedict, Oregon, USA. ‘The humanist subject and its others’.

2. Maude Vanhaelen, University of Warwick. ‘Marsilio Ficino: The humanist philosopher’.


2
12.50 – 1.45: LUNCH

1.45 – 3.15  Panel 3: Enlightenment humanism

The concept of humanity and the rights of man from Hume and Kant to Paine and Mill. Humanism as a cosmopolitan project to discover the scientific truths about the human condition and to put this knowledge to good effect in designing social conditions that are universally just, fair and peaceable.

Chair: Tom Jones, English, St Andrews.


2. Eva Ulrike Pirker, Freiburg University. ‘Whose humanism? Humanist discourse, the science of the “human”, and radical critique around the turn of the 19th century’.

3. Nigel Wood, Loughborough University, UK. ‘Adam Smith’s thought from 1759 (his Theory of Moral Sentiments) to 1776 (his Wealth of Nations)’.

3.15 – 3.35: TEA

3.35 – 5.05  Panel 4: Religious humanism

A panel that explores the intersection between world religions and humanist paradigms. It will be concerned with questions such as: to what extent are humanist perspectives enriched by religious worldviews; what is the legacy of religious thought on the human; and what is its relevance to modernity?

Chair: Oliver Smith, Russian, St Andrews.

1. Sarah Macmillen, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh. ‘The sceptical or religious humanism of Moby Dick’.

2. Laurens ten Kate, University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht (paper); Andrew Hass, General Executive Editor, Literature and Theology, OUP (responding paper). ‘Posthumanism between religion and secularity: Taylor, Nancy’.

3. William Desmond, University of Louvain. ‘The measure that is beyond measure: Being human between ethics and religion’.

5.05 – 5.30: BREAK
5.30 KEYNOTE SPEAKER: School 3, St Salvator’s Quad. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Martha Nussbaum, Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago:

‘Capabilities: humans and animals’

The paper will try to show how adopting the capabilities approach for humans enables a graceful and appropriate extension to the entitlements of animals.

7.00 END OF DAY 1

FRIDAY 29 JUNE: RECENT DEBATES IN HUMANISM

9.10 am: Welcome and Introduction to the Conference—Day 2
Lecture Theatre, Arts Building

Nigel Rapport, CCS, & Gustavo San Román, IECIS, St Andrews.

9.30 – 11.00 Panel 5: Non-Western humanism

This panel explores the humanism (or humanisms) existing on the margins of, or underneath, or outside Western traditions. Are ‘Western’ and ‘humanist’ tautologically defined? Do Western expectations place a priori limits on what counts as humanistic morality and intellectualism? What are we to make of humanisms that, for example, acknowledge non-humans as equal moral agents? or of humanisms that divert from Euro-American common sense regarding body and mind, or life and afterlife? The panel treats with non-Western humanism and its conditions of translatability.

Chairs: Mark Harris & Huon Wardle, Social Anthropology, St Andrews.

1. Ronald Stade, Malmö University, Sweden. ‘Human incapability: Life before and after eccentricity’.


11.00 – 11.20 COFFEE
11.20 – 12.50 Panel 6: Sustainable Humanism

What is the idea of ‘humanity’ that lies at the core of the Sustainable Development discourse and agendas? What kind of ‘human being’ are this discourse and these agendas imagining and speaking to? Is sustainable development just another (perhaps more sophisticated) Western grand narrative or are there more creative ways of looking at it? Can it provide a space and opportunity to ‘think otherwise’?

**Chair:** Emilia Ferraro, Geography, St Andrews.

1. Tony Crook, Social Anthropology, St Andrews. ‘Undermining humanism’.

2. Susan Morrison, Texas State University, San Marcos. ‘Reading waste: Metaphor and obligation’.

3. Tim Ingold, University of Aberdeen. ‘Knowing from the inside’.

12.50 – 1.45: LUNCH

1.45 – 3.15 Panel 7: Posthumanism

In 1977, Ihab Hassan observed that ‘humanism may be coming to an end as humanism transforms itself into something one must helplessly call posthumanism’. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, currents of posthumanism have appeared in diverse but complementary domains of thought and practice, for example, in the work of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles and Brian Massumi. This panel will:

- address what posthumanism, or the posthuman condition, might be;
- consider how it differs from previous notions of humanism, which have been complicated by:
  - the third industrial revolution, that of biotechnology;
  - philosophical antihumanist thought such as that of Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Althusser, Derrida and Deleuze;
  - changing perceptions of the relationship between the human and nonhuman animal, and between the human and matter or the material;
  - assess the possibility, or desirability, of achieving a posthuman future.

**Chair:** Sarah Dillon, English, St Andrews.

1. Veronica Hollinger, Trent University, Canada. ‘The post/human “I” in science fiction’.


3. Robert Pepperell, Cardiff School of Art and Design, UK. ‘Rethinking posthumanism’.

3.15 – 3.30: TEA
3.30 – 5.00  Panel 8: Humanism and the political present

Humanism remains a vital, if contested concept at the intersection of International Relations and Politics, Theology, Philosophy, and History. What can we say, however, concerning the role of humanism and the capabilities of humanism in dealing with the contemporary and globalizing political landscape—of developing states, ‘failed states’, and possibly ‘post-states’? And what can we say about the possibilities of humanism in the context of contemporary retreats from the modern to various forms of irrationalism? Can it resist such changes? Should it? Is there a ‘postmodern humanism’? And what might it look like?

Chair: Nicholas Rengger, International Relations, St Andrews.

1. Amanda Beattie, Aston University. ‘Jacques Maritain’s integral humanism and the twenty-first century’.

2. Alexis Crow, Royal Institute for International Affairs, Chatham House. ‘Humanism and humanity’.

3. Adrian Pabst, University of Kent. ‘The return of “Integral humanism” and the rise of post-liberal politics’.

5.00 – 6.30: BREAK

6.30: KEYNOTE SPEAKER – School 3, St Salvator’s Quad. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Terry Eagleton, Distinguished Professor in English Literature at the Department of English & Creative Writing at Lancaster University and Visiting Professor of English Literature at the National University of Ireland, Galway.

‘Tragic humanism’.

8.00: Conference Dinner, Lower College Hall

END OF CONFERENCE