

of any hegemonic universalism seek to impose a particular way of life to the detriment of others, but the supporters of relativism and cultural particularism who deny any common horizon represent another dead end, since they can generate hostility between peoples. Moreover, they leave the way open to the Anti-Enlightenment as well as to those who want to defend the status quo and business as usual instead of achieving ecological transition.

The paradigm of this intercultural hermeneutic or of this balance between universalism and historicity is translation.⁷³ Just as humanity is both one and plural, things can be said in other ways and thus be different each time. Translation actually forces one to find in one's own language an equivalent of what is said in another idiom. In so doing, the translator thinks between languages, opening up to another way of mapping reality and rediscovering at the same time their own language. Things can be put differently, whether in another language or even by a reformulation in one's own language. We can thereby be enriched by a real dialogue with other cultures that can enlighten us, in particular on questions relating to our relationship with death, nature, and with other living beings.

7 Suggestions for the way ahead

It is time to bring the full range of humanistic and social-scientific knowledge to bear on the urgent issues of our time in an institutional context of large-scale cooperation. For this, we need a new 'spirit of trust', as Brandom (2019) calls it in his book with the same title, which allows us to rethink the global social formations within which human becoming takes place in the 21st century.

The approach of the New Enlightenment project re-couples value perspectives with large-scale cooperation between different sectors of society and hence may restore the link between theory and practice. It invites a number of contextual and trans-sectoral research endeavours, including the following:

Coping with complexity

Social complexity involves the first-person perspective. Subjective experience is an indispensable dimension of social formations. Systemic thinking presupposes recognition of the socio-economic, historical situatedness of human agency in context. Thus, the humanities and social sciences are ideally suited to (i) describe the development of social complexity and to (ii) reshape the societal scheme within which sensemaking takes place. Thereby they contribute normative guidelines to desirable change by investigating the complex entanglement of different normative spheres from the individual to the collective level and vice versa. Social complexity has a circular or feedback loop structure. At the core of this structure is human becoming that both influences and is influenced by its integration into natural and social conditions.

The humanities and social sciences can develop tools for coping with complexity. They can orient themselves towards the future by designing realistic utopias and models for positive social change which respect the irreducible complexity and contingency of our individual and collective value orientation. For this reason, they are precisely not in the business of reducing complexity in order to generate quick, but unsustainable solutions. Shifting the solution space towards sustainable modes of ethical transformation consists in creating a culture of creativity that can appreciate the need to come to terms with the multiple facets of complex phenomena.

Complexity does not undermine decision-making; it rather conditions its successful realization. This crucial fact of the human condition is made visible by the various disciplines of the human and social sciences that allow us to identify possible and realizable future goals so as to then identify appropriate means for socially desirable goals.

Interdisciplinary integration of the humanities and social sciences strives for trans-sectoral cooperation. While genuine multi-perspectivity transcends the boundaries of academic knowledge-acquisition, it ought to integrate the humanities and social sciences and bring their knowledge to the table of a future-oriented mode of transformation. The critical tools of the humanities thereby contribute to positive design by adding knowledge of value representation and academically rigorous value-judgements to the large-scale New Enlightenment project of shaping novel visions of the good on a level with the global challenges of the 21st century.

Welcoming otherness

False universalism, dismissive of difference and otherness, suppresses crucial sources of knowledge by those individuals and collectives that do not fit under its hegemonic concepts. The universalism of the New Enlightenment, by contrast, is not static, but involves continuous decolonization and dynamic universalization. Shared humanity is a task and a process of ongoing making and remaking, a task that requires both trust and creativity. For this, a posture of welcoming otherness, compassion, empathy, and listening to others, is required. This means not knowing ahead of time what others will bring, being radically challenged and possibly uprooted, and remaining in a stance of openness in the name of building togetherness. While welcoming otherness is not without tension and difficulty, it does not mean that there are not true universals we share in virtue of who we are as humans. The 'we' is both constructed and denied, again and again, in the ongoing process of making sense in common, on the basis of both a shared humanity and diverse knowledge perspectives. This presupposes large-scale cooperation across sectors, including politics, business, the arts, media, and public discourse, which constitutes the self-understanding of a given social formation.

The New Enlightenment brings together diverse knowledges across sectors, cultures, and problem spaces. There is much to learn from building perspectives across cultures on a wide array of issues. What are various ways that human beings conceive of the relationship between humankind and the natural world? Transcultural, value-rich perspectives on soil, water, landscapes, and animals help with creatively imagining alternative structures of governance and ownership, ones hospitable to both human and planetary wellbeing. Shifting mental maps towards greater social cohesion in virtue of shared ends and pursuits can be sparked by examining different architectures and narratives through which cultures balance the authority of the individual with the social.

Ecologizing systemically

In the face of climate change and environmental degradation – crises driven by a dominating rationality that decouples technological progress from ethics – society, politics, and the economy are to be ecologized. The project of ecologizing must be systematic, cut across many sectors of society, and bring together different actors. For this

to succeed, it is indispensable to work from a truly ecological perspective, one that sees humans as engaging in activities of niche construction alongside other living beings within interdependent ecosystems. Only with such a perspective will the socio-economic, political transformation towards a sustainable way of life to be true to its name.

One of the main challenges today is how to fill the gap between theory and practice; many know what needs to be done, yet action stalls year after year. This calls for value-based, sociological investigation into successful strategies for shifting production and consumption patterns at both individual and institutional levels. Research is required to understand the practices and mindsets that motivate and enable individuals, singularly and collectively, to overcome unsustainable production and consumption patterns. Investigation into existing alternative practices of ecologically minded living, such as transition towns and cooperatives, can inspire new approaches. What values undergird the practices there? What binds people to these values and to one another? What are their conditions of success and failure? What are the possibilities of scalability, and what resources might be helpful for such scalability? Since new practices and mental schemes require new value representations, creative arts and literature are crucial contributors to building stories, narratives, songs, and cosmologies that see the human embedded within nature.

Reconfiguring public health

The past decades have witnessed a dramatic increase in the privatization of healthcare markets, increasing intermediaries and middlemen between doctors and patients, and the involvement of multinational companies. Healthcare has become more bureaucratized, politicized, privatized, and differentially accessible based on factors like class, race, and nation. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, we see how fragile and interdependent our local, national, and global healthcare systems are. The pandemic demands new ways of thinking about what is in the public interest. The commercialization of health must be analysed and criticized. What kind of good is health? What does it mean to be healthy? What follows for society when health is considered a public good, or, indeed, a human right? How much should society spend in the health sector?

A new value-based approach requires that we rethink the objectives of a new health system, rediscovering health as a public good after a long phase of neoliberalism capitalizing on public health issues. A healthcare system responsive to the human condition begins with the recognition that we are finite, vulnerable beings who depend on one another's care. Which national healthcare systems and global health architecture improve access and diversify quality options for people? How must future local and global health institutions be structured to ensure the necessary level of collective action and rapid response for future health crises?

Reconciling technology and culture

The tremendous growth of technical knowledge has brought advancements in critical infrastructure, education, communication, commerce, transportation, food production, health, and has raised living standards across the world. AI is facilitating dramatic shifts in education, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, where personalized learning has come even more to the fore. At the same time, the technologically facilitated domination and exploitation of nature is a major driver of climate change and has contributed to the rise of echo chambers, political polarization, and social fragmentation in our media networks. AI comes with the risks of authoritarian surveillance and control, endangering the values of individual liberty and human rights, and exacerbating inequality within and across countries as monopolies over data grow.

Technologies can only facilitate freedom and flourishing if they are created and situated within ethical horizons of thinking about values and outcomes. Research is required to elaborate the values and normative foundations that undergird global standards with regard to the sustainability as well as the responsible development and use of AI infrastructure. Successful adoption of AI will drive economies, reshape societies, and determine which countries set the rules for the coming century.