

## TITLE

### Human rights (education) in a posthuman world: thinking with curriculum inquiry

Professor Shan Simmonds

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#### Abstract

The transformatory potential of human rights education lies in its ability to make visible the material-discursive complexities of human rights. Human rights education can provide a language to interrogate society and how it continues to normalize ways of living and being in the world. However, South Africa's national curriculum remains "un-critical, monolithic, depoliticized and largely de-contextualised" (Zembylas, 2020:2). This is due to the liberal universalist and humanistic tendencies of human rights (education) in the curriculum. Posthumanism, understood as an opportunity for humanity to re-invent itself, can thus be embraced as one avenue to displace and dispose humanness as the presumed ground or anticipated outcome of education. In my intellectual work, I playfully enact the possibilities of posthumanism to (re)think human rights (education) with curriculum inquiry. I argue for the possibilities vested in posthuman rights as a generative space to reconfigure human rights (education) by shifting subjectivity and relationality. This image of critical posthumanism invigorates an affirmative ethics to create new assemblages in which *zoe/geo/techno* relations can be generative and enduring in ways that enable the becoming of all life (including pedagogical lives).

**Keywords:** human rights (education), curriculum inquiry, posthumanism, posthuman rights, affirmative ethics

#### INTRODUCTION: GROWING UP IN SOUTH AFRICA

When South Africa was declared a democratic state in 1994, I was aged 11. Although only a young school child, I was able to recognise how things were changing around me. However, I could not understand the deeper discourses that infused these. What I saw and experienced was the handful of black learners who entered our formally whites only farm community school. I was in the boarding house, so this experience was intimate. It was not long before the numbers of black learners increased. Although there was no change in the teaching staff, I did not experience any sense of racial divide or discrimination. For me, all aspects of school life such as the classrooms, sports teams, dormitories, and learner body had become diverse and different but not hostile. My high school years were similar. A white teaching staff and a diverse learner body. I never questioned the race of the teachers; in fact I never questioned the race of anyone. This is just how it was and what I can remember of my school years.

University was very different from school. Did it have to do with this educational space being inter-generational? Could it be because higher education offers students a platform for activism and academic freedom that is uncommon in schooling (except during iconic school boycotts such as Soweto Uprising 1976)? Was it contextual? The university where I was studying was a formerly white university that (at that time) still upheld male-dominated, white supremacy through various dimensions such as medium of instruction (Afrikaans), transition to the first black Vice-Chancellor after a history of 25 different white vice-chancellors (only one being a white woman) and a 70% white student body?

The divide was explicit. The generations before me came across as activists who were hesitant to let whites into their scholarly spaces. They were the freedom fighters who bore the scars of years of discrimination. Some were angry. But mostly, they were determined to protect what was theirs. What they and generations before them had fought for, including access to formally white universities, were often viewed as the source of privilege, being denied to all but a few and assumed by them as something I took for granted. Then there was my generation, those who were trying to find where they belonged. They were between a rock and a hard place: were they the 'new' black generation or were they becoming white? Names like "top deck" (white on top but brown underneath) were common slang. While I tried to understand the deeper stories of my peers, I was often side-lined for being "white" and not knowing the struggles of being a person of colour who was trying to belong in a "new" South Africa. I often had the impression that my black peers felt that they would be betraying their ancestors if they 'united' with whites. Among my other peers who grasped the opportunities they were being afforded through avenues like financial support often felt guilty about those left with little hope at home in a very unequal South Africa of struggle to survive each day. The stories of white people were side-lined because they are the privileged (all of them, without exception). But what did all this mean? My black peers would not let me in, and my white peers were resistant to the hurdles of race. I found myself in a tensioned space that generated a mixture of confusion, anger, and sadness, and so many questions. I longed to understand. I found comfort in academia. Academia created a platform for me to ask questions that did not have "personal" insult to my peers. Through academia I came to learn the discourse of human rights.

#### SOUTH AFRICAN CURRICULUM REFORM

One means of addressing South Africa's apartheid past has been to anchor it in human rights, inclusivity and social justice. This has aimed to transform South Africa's politically as well as socio-economically divided and discriminatory past. Education was, and remains, the key to transforming society. As a United Nations member state, South Africa takes account of international human rights legislation such as the 1948 *United Declaration of Human Rights*, the ongoing *World Programmes for Human Rights Education* dating back to the first phase of this programme in 2005 and numerous other initiatives such as the more recent 2021 UNESCO *Education Futures Report*. In addition to this, South Africa has also taken its own unique approach to designing the curriculum and infusing it with a culture of human rights.

The *National Education Policy Act of 1996* (Department of Education, 1996) set the stage for transformation in education. Its vision, the holistic development of each learner: "moral, social, cultural, political and economic development" and "the advancement of democracy, human rights and the peaceful resolution of rights" (Department of Education, 2001b:9). In the years that followed, stakeholder participation emerged in what was previously a very authoritarian education system. Politicians, academics, intellectuals, departmental officials, researchers, educators and members of non-governmental organisations were invited to participate in deliberations where the design and development of a 'new' curriculum, underpinned by the democratic Constitution, could be imagined (Department of Education, 2001a). Human rights became a buzzword and was regarded as central to attaining a democratic and socially just education system. During this curriculum reform, the Department of Education openly proclaimed that it celebrated human rights in the curriculum but acknowledged that it is largely "misunderstood" as a concept (Department of Education, 2001b:4). In fact, research conducted by the Department soon after the implementation of Curriculum 2005 showed that 78,4% of teachers believed that honouring human rights as central to their teaching practices and the content that they teach "leads to problems in [the] classroom" (ibid). The reasons for this were plentiful and ranged from lack of resources, insufficient training of teachers, inadequate time to meet the demands of the curriculum and the impression that the Department of Education was siding with learners by giving them a new-found freedom, which was the converse of a teacher-centred and often totalitarianism approach to education in the previous dispensation (Department of Education, 2000a:15).

Professor Kader Asmal, the then Minister of Education, was at the forefront of this shift in thinking and a more democratic approach to designing the curriculum. He initiated formal working groups and task teams on values in education in February 2000 (Department of Education, 2000a). Teasing out and troubling human rights education as a value and moral construct is an ongoing national concern. Iconic reports include: *SAAMTREK Values, Education and Democracy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (Department of Education, 2000a), *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (Department of Education, 2000b), *The framework on values and human rights in the curriculum* (Department of Education, 2003), *Values and human rights in the Curriculum* (Department of Education, 2005), *A Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth of South Africa* (Department of Education, 2008) and *Values in Action* (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

Kader Asmal (Department of Education, 2000a:11) proffered, it is because of the moral fibre of education that human rights values "cannot simply be asserted" through education, they must "be debated, be negotiated, be synthesised, be modified, [and] be earned" as a process and not a product to be achieved. However, from my own research, human rights are often instrumentalist and judicial. They are used to teach right from wrong, while instilling in the youth what they are entitled to and the responsibilities of these entitlements. My research has revealed that primary school learners experience human rights as abstract, superficial and detached from their everyday lives (Du Preez, Simmonds & Roux, 2012). To some extent, this is because of the inability of curriculum content and teachers practices to deal with ethical contradictions that arise in the classroom. For high school learners, my research has shown that the curriculum prioritises human rights injustices and discriminations through emphasising inequalities that manifest in society such as, gender-based violence, racial inequality, xenophobia and political dishonesty. Although South Africa is riddled with inequality, the tendency to portray society as irrevocably damaged obscures the beauty of difference and diversity and its potential for cohesion, and the generative possibilities of the hope needed to realise social justice and equality ideals (Simmonds, 2014). The research that I have conducted with university students has shown that human rights can create binaries that reinforce the 'othering' of some groups of society along racial, gendered and class lines. When viewed in this way, human rights are not always transparent and emancipatory. They become a double-edged sword that can work both in one's favour and to one's disadvantage (De Wet, Rothmann & Simmonds, 2016).

My research findings have led me to trouble and (re)think how we do and think human rights education *with* our curriculum.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION: TWO INTER-RELATED CRITQUES

The transformatory potential of human rights education lies in its ability to make visible the complexities of human rights as both a discourse and a material reality (Keet, 2012:9). I am not denying that human rights can provide our youth with a language to interrogate society and how it continues to normalise ways of living and being in the world (Gibson & Grant, 2017:226). Although this is the case, the application of human rights education in South Africa remains "un-critical, monolithic, depoliticized and largely de-contextualised" (Zembylas, 2020:2).

I will outline two inter-related reasons for this. The first, lies in the universalistic tendencies of human rights that invoke individualism, governmentality and advanced capitalism. When human rights are viewed as universal, the epistemic locus of enunciation interprets human rights as if "they were uni-versal and good for all" (Mignolo, 2009:19). Mignolo (2009:7) posits that human rights, as described by the 1948 *Universal Declaration*, "presupposes that 'human' is a universal category accepted by all and that as such the concept of human does justice to everyone". Braidotti (2013:26) warns that sameness of this kind is a regulatory mechanism that transposes a specific mode of being human into a generalised standard. For Gearon (2019:271), this universalistic image of human rights fuels hegemonic global governance and moves towards ethical-legal standards and the dictation of a global moral compass. The possible danger of this is that human rights are commodified as the structures that govern our society. The result is a majoritarian model of rights, which valorises power and capitalist social organization. Foucault's (1977) notion of dynamic normalisation

applies in this regard. Dynamic normalisation, as surveillance or the awareness of being observed, has the potential to stifle individuality and create conformity. People are normalised when they end up acting, thinking, and being the same for fear of being caught out or punished (Foucault, 1977). As an instrument of power, dynamic normalisation imposes homogeneity and self-governance (Foucault, 1977). In some sense, human rights become representationalist. Representationalism, “is based on the belief that practices of representing have no effect on the objects of investigation” (Barad, 2007:87). So when the world is held at a distance, human rights is largely just an object of discourse. Barad (2007:87-88) poignantly avers that representationalism is founded on the premise that “words, concepts, ideas, and the like accurately reflect or mirror the things to which they refer” (Barad, 2007:86). This leads to reflecting on representations like a mirror image with no effect on the objects of investigation and in a sense being “nothing more than iterative mimesis” (Barad, 2007:88). When human rights are held at a distance, they become a separate object and a form of inter-action wherein representations are “set up to look for homologies and analogies between separate entities” and as a result “reflecting on the world from the outside” (Barad, 2007:88). What this could resort to is human rights premised on rationality and the types of transcendental reasoning that dictate power hierarchies. An unquestioning faith in the power of reason and transcendental thinking fuels cognitive capitalism and its profit motives. When neo-liberal governmentality capitalises on the curriculum to instil human rights in ways that will increase universalism, and sustain surveillance and regulation, it perpetuates mainstream developments of advanced capitalism (Braidotti, 2019:115). This gaze is a disguise to claim equal status among human beings in a world that has largely been dictated by a history informed by European Renaissance, Western Christianity, and the enlightenment concept of the rationality of man. Thus, the second reason lies in the liberal humanistic tendencies of human rights.

Described as the invention of European humanists of the fifteen and sixteen centuries, Westerners disassociated themselves from co-existing communities that they regarded as a threat. The resultant classifications have served the evils of colonialism and led to Western Christian dominance over gender, class, race, and religious groups, particularly in terms of “absolute possession and control of knowledge and the denial of it to all the people classified outside and below” (Mignolo, 2009:9). This also led to the reduction of non-Western others to sub-human statuses, such as the sexualised other (woman), the racialised other (the native) and the naturalised other (animals, the environment or Earth) to be devalued as different from and less than 'disposable others' (Braidotti, 2013:28). Although feminists, post-colonialists, posthumanists and other radical thinkers advocate for de-linking the human agent from liberal individualist views of the subject, society is still haunted with the complexity of “who speaks for the human” (Mignolo, 2009:13) and the ongoing difficulties inherent in overcoming the way humanism has condoned intellectual traditions, normative frames, and institutionalised practices (Braidotti, 2013:30). This is closely linked to human rights as a colonial, Euro-Western, phallogocentric and Enlightenment construct. Coloniality lives on through human rights because “the concept of the human is loaded with ideas about secularism, individualism, and racism” (Maldonado-Torres, 2017:131). Coloniality, like human rights systems, “refers to the logic, culture and structure of modern world-systems” (Maldonado-Torres 2017:117). The organisation of colonial discourses and practices has normalised the human as a single homogenised being engrained in the “white European ‘Man’ as a rational, masterful and civilised being” (Zembylas, 2020:16). In some respects, human rights are caught up in cultural imperialism and fuelled by polycentric capitalist economies with “experts in human rights addressing the denial of various sorts of rights” (Maldonado-Torres, 2017:130).

Braidotti’s (2019) pedagogical tool of defamiliarization proves insightful. Braidotti (2019:139) contends that as a knowing subject, humans should disengage themselves from accustomed and dominant normative visions of what it means to be human. This form of decoding makes it possible to de-link and trouble power relations so that one can unlearn the deeply vested Eurocentric humanist and anthropocentric habits of thought that still dominate today. Braidotti (2019:140) believes that it is through defamiliarization that one can unlearn and decolonise one’s imaginary so that one can make room for new ways of being through “dis-identification from century-old habits of anthropocentric thought and humanistic arrogance”. Although

defamiliarization can involve a sense of loss and pain because it involves dis-identification of cherished habits of thought and representation, it can also be emancipatory through “active processes of becoming that enact in-depth breaks with established patterns of thought and identity formation” (Braidotti, 2019:140). For Braidotti (2019:140) “productive forms of conceptual disobedience” are invigorated so that radical repositioning is possible and necessary. Braidotti (2019:140) elaborates, “being disloyal to one’s civilization is at times the best way to honour it, out of love for its underdeveloped potential as well as its actual norms”. For her, this can be sustained when presented as a process of consciousness-raising towards unlocking the complexity of dis-identification as well as recognising that it can be sustained only through collaborative relations. Through acknowledging and embracing defamiliarization as a complex and risky pedagogical tool, socially embedded and historically grounded communities can potentiate a much-needed abandonment of “undifferentiated unity, totality and One-ness” (Braidotti, 2019:141). Through Braidotti’s (2019) conception of defamiliarization, we can begin to think anew about human rights education where the human, humanity and rights all remain contested areas of tension in the curriculum. For Mignolo (2009:20) human and rights should not only be entrusted to Western initiatives and a rhetoric of salvation but also to a process of decolonisation. In this regard, Mignolo (2009:20) asks “how is it that human relations become ‘enclosed’ in relation to rights and not in other terms?” To me, this signals the need to think more critically about how our curriculum often takes for granted a universalistic conception of rights, without questioning the multi-layered and complex make up of what such rights infer. This presents a static, abstract, disembodied and binary conception of human rights. Zembylas (2020) opines that human rights education needs to move beyond familiar theories vested in liberal, multicultural, and cosmopolitan orientations and instead invoke its ethical and incessant possibilities. This calls for hopeful and generative experimentations in thinking with curriculum to change the terms of human rights (education), and not just its content (Mignolo, 2009).

#### THINKING HUMAN RIGHTS (EDUCATION) WITH POSTHUMANISM

Human rights (education) remains universalistic and humanistic in the South African curriculum because of the deeply anthropocentric nature that continues to occupy curriculum studies and other humanist forms of intellectual labour (Snaza et al., 2014:52). Educational institutions and curricula continue, whether consciously or not, to be places for learning what it means to be human and to prepare young people to participate in a human-centred world. Posthumanism, understood as an opportunity for humanity to re-invent itself, can thus be embraced as a means of displacing and disposing humanness as the presumed ground or anticipated outcome of education. In my intellectual work, I playfully enact the possibilities of posthumanism to (re)think human rights (education) with curriculum inquiry.

Braidotti (2013) depicts the times that we live in as a posthuman condition. The posthuman condition concerns a qualitative shift in our thinking about what the unit of reference for human now is, given how human lives are imbricated with other inhabitants of the planet and with advanced technologies. Human lives have, of course, always been imbricated with other inhabitants of the planet. Haraway (2003) argued that the distinction between biophysical and social is flawed and she depicts the synthesis between the two in her concept ‘natureculture’. Appreciating this synthesis has become important in contemporary times because human arrogance has produced false dualisms between nature (the given) and culture (the constructed) that has resulted in human destruction of the earth and accelerated the possibility of the Sixth Extinction. As technologies produced by humans have advanced, human lives have become entangled with such technologies. Haraway (2003) went as far as to aver that we have become “cyborg” because the distinction between humans and technology has already collapsed, and there is no turning back. Just as human life has become entangled with technologies, so too have human rights (a man-made construction) dictated much of humankind’s behaviour, use of power and ways of living on this earth.

Braidotti (2013) proposes that the posthuman condition is characterised by a posthuman predicament. This predicament divulges that “the concept of the human has exploded under the double pressure of contemporary scientific advances and global economic concerns” and this has necessitated a “qualitative

shift in our thinking about what exactly is the basic unit of common reference for our species, our polity and our relationship to the other inhabitants of this planet” (Braidotti, 2013:1-2). This has given rise to new age visions of advancement and development in robotic, prosthetic, neuroscientific and biogenetic technologies that provoke both elation and fear because of the possibilities these present for de-centring ‘Man’ as the measure of all things (Braidotti, 2013:2). In a world dominated by the Anthropocene (human impact on the planet), humans are making their lives comfortable, compatible, and convenient through biotechnology, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology and the Internet of Things. In so doing, these technological advancements have also accelerated what Haraway (2015) terms ‘Capitalocene’. Coined by Jason Moore in 2009, this term rests well with Haraway (2018) because she deems the humanist universalism of the Anthropocene as false and arrogant. Capitalocene signifies neoliberal capitalism as the core of immense and irreversible destruction of humans and non-humans because it is driven by processes “for making wealth through radical simplification, rooted in global transportations of peoples, plants, animals and microbes and in slavery, colonialism, hetero-normative familialism, racism and other forced systems of production and reproduction” (Haraway, 2018: 80). Such assemblages of human-biophysical-technology can be destructive when these ensembles are driven by human arrogance and greed through the negative form of power, *potestas*.

To overcome Capitalocene, Haraway (2018: 79) argues that we should become Chthonic “of and for the earth, of and for its unfinished times”. She avers that life on earth should not have a Capitalocene gaze, but rather a Chthulucene one that recognises “a kind of time-place for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth” (Haraway 2018: 81). When life on earth is not dominated by a neoliberal capitalist agenda, it could demonstrate and perform “the material meaningfulness of earth processes and critters” as entangled “myriad temporalities and spatialities and myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages – including the more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman and human-as-humus” (Haraway 2018: 81-82). What this could mean is that as cyborg, we become entangled with the tensions created by a world that stands in the cracks of power forces (such as universalistic human rights) of a more destructive Capitalocene and that recognises the Chthulucene as one pathway to navigate this space in a manner that is productive. In thinking about this, one might ask: As cyborg, how do we think about human rights (education)? How do we engage with human rights (education) in ways that are not destructive to humans and the planet, to advance all of life productively?

The posthuman predicament is “an opportunity to empower the pursuit of alternative schemes of thought, knowledge and self-representation” so that we undertake generative experimentation to “think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming” (Braidotti, 2013: 12). The nature-culture continuum creates one possible avenue towards thinking about who and what we are becoming in the posthuman condition. As a continuum, nature and culture are not seen as binaries but rather multiple assemblages, “the self-organising (or auto-poietic) force of living matter” that blurs any boundaries between the given (nature) and constructed (culture) so that they are in intra-action with each other (Braidotti, 2013: 3). Boundaries between nature and culture have been blurred or displaced by the complex configurations entangled in scientific and technological advances and in ways that have shifted the anthropocentric gaze that has long sustained life on earth (Braidotti, 2013:145). This continuum leads to considering how a human rights culture (constructed culture) is performing and dictating how we intra-act and exist with nature. Central to this is the invoking of a new image of the subject (human, non-human, more-than-human) and of knowledge (curriculum inquiry and human rights education) as “a complex assemblage of human and non-human, planetary and cosmic, given and manufactured” (Braidotti, 2013:159). A matter-realist image, which accounts for the workings of power in advanced and cognitive capitalism grounded in specific locations and immanent relations, is proposed as it foregrounds transversal connections among and within the material and symbolic (Braidotti, 2013:159). Matter-realism, according to Braidotti (2013:158), is central to understanding the nature-culture continuum because it recognises all life (human and all other) “as a non-essentialist brand of contemporary vitalism and as a complex system”. Viewed in this way, it makes it possible

to invigorate lines of flight that creatively embrace the challenges of the posthuman world, without giving into melancholy or panic at the potential for the Capitalocene to destroy all life, as the planet remains on the brink of ecological disaster. The Sixth Extinction of both human and non-human inhabitants is looming.

The twenty-first century presents a “multi-dimensional complexity” that recognises an affective relationality between humans, the environment, technology and all other forms of life that yearn for “a sustainable present, and an affirmative and hopeful future” (Braidotti, 2019: 3). How might this help us imagine posthuman rights?

#### POSTHUMAN RIGHTS: THINKING WITH CURRICULUM INQUIRY

Posthumanism directly challenges the ways in which humanism has dictated politics and education and is an urgent call for humans “to begin exploring new, posthumanist directions in research, curriculum design, and pedagogical practices” (Snaza et al., 2014:40). For too long, whether consciously or not, as educators we have approached “schools as places where humans dwell together to learn what it means to be human and to accumulate the kinds of skills and habits required to participate in human societies as adults. This occurs in spite of the fact that schools are connected with the nonhuman world in so many explicit and implicit ways” (Snaza et al., 2014:39). It pinpoints the critical need for new engagements with and for education in ways that question “who matters and what counts” when we think *with* the curriculum, how we design and enact the curriculum and the knowledge it espouses (Taylor, 2016:5). To some extent this requires becoming posthuman, “to undo the *telos* of humanism” and its humanising effects so that the human is not a separate category from all others, but in mutual relation with others (Taylor, 2016:8). Becoming posthuman is contentious and fraught with difficulty. It should be regarded as “a continuing and incisive practice, not one done easily or ‘once and for all’” (Taylor, 2016:9).

Scholars like Patrick Hanafin (2018), Jannice Käll (2017) and Upendra Baxi (2007; 2008), challenge the “majoritarian model of human rights”, as the thinking of the human that is constructed as the white and neoliberal male, to a micropolitics of posthuman rights (Hanafin, 2018:352). A micropolitics of rights “is one which is practiced by embodied beings who act to reshape their position in relation to both law and biopower” (Hanafin, 2018:353). Opening ways to critique utilitarian liberal models of rights, Braidotti (2011) argues for a minoritarian thinking of rights as posthuman. A liberal rights model fails to recognise the singularity and differential nature of human beings and thus “in order to be included within the protective clothing of liberal rights protection one must first divest oneself of one’s singularity and become human, where human is figured as the abstract and always already male subject” (Hanafin, 2018:353). As stated already, Braidotti (2020) avers that this involves becoming-minoritarian as premised on philosophical nomadism. For her, minoritarian subjects have historically been the sexualised others (women, LBGTQ+); the racialised others (non-Europeans, indigenous); and the naturalised others (animals, plants, the Earth), the less-than-human others, that have long been dehumanised or excluded from full humanity. Braidotti (2011:116-117) speaks about becoming-minoritarian as the desire of “becoming one with all that lives outside the human”, and “becoming woman/animal/world[/machine]”.

This invigorates a deep yearning for a shift in subjectivity, relationality and ethics.

The essentialising masculine ego of the Western Enlightenment modernist self “exemplifies Descartes *cognito*, the knowing subject who stands apart from the world to observe, describe, measure and know it” (Taylor, 2016:10). Keeping a distance from the world, a separation of self/world and division of self/other reinforces binaries of inter-acting with the world from a distance. It positions the human as a rational subject, who represents the world as discursive and with an Enlightenment ego of rational thought towards transcendental universalisms. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) question the human as the supreme “I” whose rationality produces absolute truth and knowledge, and advocates instead a rhizomatic mode of being and knowing that is characterised by non-linearity, multiplicity and connectivity through assemblages. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987) the human “I” is on an immanent plane, in a way that strips it of its ontological

privilege to reproduce binaries, divisions, or hierarchies so that the human is not a self-contained individual entity. To embrace a subjectivity that functions in a nature-culture continuum of non-linearity (without dualisms and universalisms), the posthuman subject is relational, ethical, situated, embodied, embedded, embrained and continuously becoming (Braidotti, 2018:340). When subjectivity is ecological, it fosters co-operation and not competition through a oneness of self and the cosmos in ways that are caring towards other humans and the more-than-human world. For Le Grange (2019:221) finding vectors of escape from an arrogant 'I' (Western individualism) to generate new connections that open up alternative pathways towards becoming a humble 'I' (embodied, embedded, extended and enacted) are key to posthuman subjectivity as Being on an immanent plane, without a prescribed transcendental morality (Le Grange, 2019:221).

As viewed by Barad (2007:391) "subjectivity is not a matter of individuality but a relation of responsibility to the other". This resonates with Barad's (2007) new feminist materialist theory of agential realism. Part of this is an ethico-onto-epistemology (entanglements between the ontological, the epistemological, and the ethical) that sees knowing and being as a material practice of engagement as part of the world in its differential becoming. Relationality is thus not only non-linear, but also intra-active. With each intra-action a "manifold of entangled relations is reconfigured" and this invigorates responsibility and accountability that "entails an ongoing responsiveness to the entanglements of the self and other, here and there, now and then" (Barad, 2007:394). Barad (2007:394) explains "our (intra)actions matter – each one reconfigures the world in its becoming – and yet they never leave us; they are sedimented into our becoming; they become us. And yet even in our becoming there is no 'I' separate from the intra-active becoming of the world". She develops this into a profound insight (Barad, 2007:396):

Intra-acting responsibly as part of the world means taking account of the entangled phenomena that are intrinsic to the world's vitality and being responsive to the possibilities that might help us flourish. Meeting each moment, being alive to the possibilities of becoming, is an ethical call, an invitation that is written into every matter of all being and becoming. We need to meet the universe halfway, to take responsibility for the role that we play in the world's differential becoming.

Braidotti's (2019) affirmative ethics, framed in critical posthumanism, offers some perspective. Critical posthumanism presents a highly generative moment underpinned by affirmative ethics "as a collective practice of constructing social horizons of hope, in response to the flagrant injustices, the perpetuation of old hierarchies and new forms of domination" (Braidotti, 2019:156). One aspect of this is experimenting with human rights (education) as becoming-posthuman. When we become-posthuman we invigorate affordances of posthuman rights that are hopeful through decentring *Anthropos* (human as distinct and superior species) and *bios* (life of humans organised in society) in favour of *zoe/geo/techno* relations as a transversal entity that is "fully immersed in and immanent to a network of human and non-human relations" (Braidotti 2019:158). When *Anthropos* and *bios* are decentred, the human is removed from its ontological pedestal and placed on an immanent plane with animals and non-humans: *bios* (life of humans is organised in a socially constructed society) becomes *zoe* (life of all living beings - human and non-human) and *Anthropos* becomes *zoe*-centred egalitarianism.

The affirmative ethics that Braidotti (2019) argues for, is a *zoe*-driven ethics of affirmation. Such affirmative ethics require us to think differently about ourselves, and to recognise that ethics cannot be restricted to relations with other humans, but are open to intra-actions with non-human, post-human and in-human forces. Such ethics overcome moralistic notions such as the normative distinction between right and wrong or good and evil. The posthuman subject therefore invigorates lines of connection with other humans and non-humans, recognising the vital force of Life present in all entities, which makes such entities (modes of life) endure and continue to become other-than-itself. The posthuman subject is neither trans-humanist nor anti-human. Trans-humanists want to correct the flaws and limitations of the embodied human brain by using "robotics and computational sciences, plus clinical psychology and analytic philosophy, to enhance

neural capacity, so that our brain can function at the same speed [and agility] as the computational networks that we [humans] have created” (Braidotti, 2019:59). This image remains humanistic as the human remains a meta-rationalistic entity striving to become super-human on anthropomorphic grounds (the attribution of human characteristics or behaviour to objects or things). The posthuman subject is also not anti-human because its intent is not inhuman nor vindictive of “indifference towards and lack of care for humans” (Braidotti, 2019:61). Instead, it “interrogates the self-representations and conventional understandings of being human, which ‘we’ inherited” (Braidotti, 2019:41). This requires being critical that humans are not a homogenous collection, namely, “‘the people’ as a unitary category” that claims ethnic purity as a defining feature of “authoritarian, nationalist and nativist political regimes” (Braidotti, 2019:52). For Braidotti (2019:52-54) as “A people” of heterogeneous multiplicity “we-are-(all)-in-this-together-but -we-are-not-one-and-the-same” because ‘we’ are embodied, embedded and embrained in processes of actualisation through “networks of natural, social, political and physiological relations”. As such, the posthuman subject invigorates processes of actualisation as lines of connection and desire that generate an affirmative empowerment so that life (in all its forms) is advanced for the betterment of all. As Braidotti (2019:167) writes “affirmative ethics is a clinical practice [of] detoxing from the poison of un-freedom, servitude and betrayal of our inner nature as dynamic entities of desire. The ethical good is accordingly equated with radical relationality aiming at affirmative empowerment”. The ethical project, therefore, is to rework assemblages where human rights (education) has become the handmaiden *Anthropos* (human as distinct and superior species) and creates new assemblages in which *zoe/geo/techno* relations can be generated to ensure the enduring and becoming of all life (including pedagogical lives).

#### IN PARTING

When we invent practices that *use* posthumanist theories in education in shallow or superficial ways, the imagining of the human, as a sufficient ground for thinking, remains intact (Snaza et al, 2014:47). The challenge of these posthuman times is not to use our curriculum for anthropocentric and autotelic ends that provide clear cut (often humanistic) solutions. Instead, we need to continuously experiment with what posthuman rights could become in *zoe/geo/techno* intra-active relations in hopeful and affirmative ways that can reconfigure the world in its differential becoming.

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