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Civilization and the Domination of the Animal

Abstract
Claims about a 'Standard of Civilization' are frequently based upon a notion of what it means to be human. Those that assert membership of a higher civilization do so on the basis of the extent to which a particular grouping has been able to separate itself and become independent of nature. Such contentions reproduce the duality between the human and non-human nature in that the civilized are considered as separate/superior to the non-civilized, and on the grounds of that superiority have a right of dominion over them in ways that parallel human relations with non-human nature. The process of othering that any claim of civilization requires thus involves a claim about the less than human status of the other.

Following a brief discussion of posthumanism, we assess the considerable literature on the 'Standard of Civilization' and assess, focusing on the language of race, the ways in which claims about civilization are based on notions of a separation from nature. In the third section we assess the implications of such a separation. In the final section we turn the notion of civilization on its head, by pointing to developments that suggest that those groupings who make the claims to be most separated from nature are those posing the gravest ecological threats.

Keywords
Standard of Civilisation, posthumanism, animal, colonialism

The notion of a 'standard of civilization' was a keystone of international law during the late nineteenth, early twentieth centuries, with the underlying assumption that certain states either were or were not eligible to join the society of nations based upon certain perceived standards of their behaviour. An idea of standards of civilization would still seem to operate amongst theoreticians of international relations,[1] and amongst practitioners.[2] In the aftermath of the Second World War it was not good politics to refer to civilization given the barbarities that had been perpetrated in Europe, the supposed cradle of civilization. But, following this retreat, the 'standards' of civilization now seem to be back in vogue, together with questions about the inter-relationships between civilizations. In this paper we offer a posthuman perspective on civilizational analysis. In our view a posthuman approach has much to offer these discussions, because, as we will argue, standards of civilization or barbarity revolve around questions about what it means to be human – and such issues relating to human non-human boundaries have been at the forefront of posthuman analyses.

[1] Most famously, of course, being Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
[2] See Tanja Collet, 'Civilization and Civilized in post-9/11 US Presidential Speeches', *Discourse & Society*, 20, no. 4 (2009), 455-475.

The core of our argument is that the 'standard of civilization' is primarily based on a notion of separation, or detachment, from nature – with those societies that are perceived as being most detached being regarded as the most civilized, while those that are mired in nature are perceived as in some ways as less civilized. This detachment from nature is based on a theme running through Western thinking, both religious and secular: that human beings either have some form of dominion over non-human nature (as indicated by those religions that share the book of Genesis); or that the faculty of reason divides us from non-human nature.[3] This latter, 'post-Christian' position articulates a faith in the certainty of human distinction and pre-eminence and the notion of progress as being a move from necessity, away from our embodied condition as human animals.[4]

Posthumanism can be invoked in another form with reference to ideas about civilization. This is in the form of 'after humanity'. There is a growing literature pointing to the potentially disastrous outcomes of the continued pursuit of carboniferous capitalism. The predicted outcome of such a path, some suggest, will be the end of civilization. It is those states who have been at the forefront of claiming to set the standard of civilization, that are making the claim to be the most detached from nature, that are most responsible for the ecological disruptions that provide the threat to the continuation of civilization. This situation might suggest that now would be an appropriate time for, at a minimum, a re-thinking of civilization, at the forefront of which would be the overthrowing of that long-held western notion of a separation from the rest of non-human nature.

This paper is divided into four sections. We begin with a very short discussion of posthumanism, locating our own position within the rather diverse literature on the subject. We then turn to discussions of civilization, pointing to the ways in which civilizational standards have been underpinned by questions of humanity, in particular the view that communities that do not meet up to the standard of civilization are less than human in some respects. We then move on to discuss the implications of such a perspective – drawing parallels with the treatment of non-human nature. Finally, in response to predictions that we may now be literally be confronting a post-human condition, we suggest a re-thinking of the standard of civilization, at the forefront of which is an acknowledgement of human embeddedness within non-human nature.

A Few words on Posthumanism

The term posthumanism has been understood in a variety of different ways, and

[3] For example, the view that non-human animals can be conceived as acting like machines. See René Descartes, (1999 [1637]) 'Discourse on the method for guiding one's reason and searching for truth in the sciences' in *Discourse on Method and Related Writings*, trans. by Desmond M. Clarke, (London: Penguin, 1999 [1637]), p. 42.

[4] In *The Silence of Animals* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), John Gray makes a trenchant argument along these lines.

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hence to avoid confusion we will explain our use of the term.[5] A good starting point for approaching posthuman perspectives would be to say that it represents a reaction against the view of human exceptionalism (or anthropocentrism/ humanocentricism). This view that humans are marked off from the huge diversity of non-human animal life because of their 'exceptional characteristics', such as the possession of syntactical language or the possession of 'free will' is, as John Gray remarks, 'a Christian inheritance'.[6] It is a problematic inheritance in that it fails to recognise the significance of Darwin's arguments for the concept of species as about differentials; and of the complexity of 'life' shaped by interdependencies. [7] Human exceptionalism, for Donna Haraway is 'the premise that humanity alone is not a spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies'.[8] In other words it is a reaction to view that human beings hold some extraordinary position within nature. For William Connolly such exceptionalism is 'a central danger of our time', and while humans perhaps reflect more about their mortality and place within nature this does not excuse the species from 'from thinking closely about the complex relations between the human estate and a host of nonhuman processes with variable degrees of agency. It, rather, accentuates the latter need'.[9]

Posthumanism, from this perspective, marks a challenge to the view that human beings as a species then can be seen as separated from the rest of non-human nature. This view needs to be distinguished from other uses of the term of posthumanism. One of these other uses refers to issues of body modification, in particular in the form of the cyborg.[10] We prefer to use the term transhumanism (or even superhumanism) to describe work in this area.

While there are uses of the term to indicate a time 'after humanity', [11] we would again want to distinguish our use of the term. In essence, our use of posthumanism is to indicate the understanding of 'humanity' as embedded in networks of relations of dependency with the non-human lifeworld, to emphasise the fragility of embodied life. In addition, we want to emphasise the importance of a posthumanist lens in examining phenomena which, in international politics, are often seen as exclusively human such as the practice of war, the delivery of welfare and security, the distribution of resources, the recognition of rights and indeed, the development of ideas about 'civilization'.

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[5] Cary Wolfe notes that the term 'generates different and even irreconcilable definitions'. See Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xi.
[6] John Gray, *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (London: Granta, 2003), xii.
[7] Certainly as much as by competition, if Darwin's writings on hybridism and mutual affinities are considered. See Charles Darwin *The Origin of Species* (Ware, Herts.: Wordsworth Classics of World Literature), 187-211 and 311-345.
[8] Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 11.
[9] William E. Connolly, 'The "New Materialism" and the Fragility of Things', *Millennium* 41, no. 3 (2013), 400.
[10] Again, Haraway's interventions have been significant here, especially, 'Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s', *Socialist Review* 80 (1985): 65-108.
[11] For example, John Cairns, 'Avoiding a posthuman world', *Science and Society* 3, no. 1 (2005): 17-28.

The Standard of Civilization and the Question of the Human

The question of what it is to be human is one that confronted encounters between different social groups. In certain encounters the question was raised whether the members of other social groups were even human. According to Sven Lindquist, William Perry was one of the first to articulate the view that there was more than one species of human being, 'of which some were considered to be closer to animals'.[12] A theological basis for such a multi-species humanity was found in the notion of polygenism – the view that 'white genealogies proceed from a different act of creation to that of non-whites'.[13] Such ideas were challenged by Darwin's evolutionary theories (although these also provided the basis for differentiating different social groups related to their evolutionary status) yet managed to survive into the twentieth century.

Following the encounter with the 'new world' as a result of Columbus' voyages of discovery there was much heated discussion in Spain about the status of the indigenous population. Some of the early Spanish explorers raised doubts about whether the people they met were indeed human or of another species. For example, a Dr Chanca, who accompanied Columbus on his second voyage, remarked of the indigenous population that 'their bestiality is greater than any beast in the world.'[14] John Elliott notes that 'it was precisely the question of the humanity, or the degree of humanity, of the peoples of America which was the cause of such agitated debate throughout the sixteenth century'.[15] The upshot of these arguments was that 'from the beginning there were sharp disagreements about the nature of American man.'[16] In the view of the legal theorist Vitoria the indigenous population 'really seem little different from brute animals'.[17] While debates over the status of the indigenous population continued throughout the sixteenth century, the status of these communities as human was eventually accepted though the extent to which they achieved perceived criteria of humanity, such as rationality and the receptiveness to Christianity, 'remained a matter of continuous debate.'[18]

Debates about the status within the human species of different societies re-emerged following Captain Cook's encounter with the Australian continent. The indigenous population, with a radically different culture, sparked much dispute, particularly given the desire of the British to claim the continent. Raymond Evans quotes an early Spanish visitor to the colony as noting that the Aboriginal population appear to 'to

[12] Sven Lindqvist, *Exterminate all the Brutes* (London: Granta, 1977), 100.
[13] See Raymond Evans (1999) *Fighting Words: Writing about Race* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), 42.
[14] Quoted in J. H. Elliott, (1970) *The Old World and the New: 1492-1650* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), 42.
[15] Elliott, *The Old World*, 41.
[16] Elliott, *The Old World*, 42.
[17] Quoted in Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea*, (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 114.
[18] Elliott, *The Old World*, 43.

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occupy the last grade of man before passing on to the ape family'.[19] Similar observations were made about the populations of Africa. The first lecture of the Anthropological society in 1863 was entitled 'On the Negro's Place in Nature', and 'emphasized the negro's close relationship to the ape'.[20] The comments of the legal theorist Carleton Kemp Allen recalls Descartes' comments about the mechanical character of non-human species, when he noted that 'there is not a vast difference between the automatism of an ant and the tribal habits of an Australian aboriginal; the ant, indeed, in many respects has the better of the comparison'.[21] In Raymond Evans' words the settler population became 'human blind', seeing the Aboriginal peoples 'as a subhuman linkage to other mammal species, and Australian folk racism was thereby suffused with imagery melding Aboriginality with animality'.[22] A contributor to the *Mayborough Chronicle* writing in 1870 suggested that the difference between the settler community and the Aboriginal peoples was that they were 'created specifically different as the owl and the eagle… [They were] mere vermin differing from other wild animals that infest the country only in their greater capacity for inflicting injury and annoyance on the settlers and consequently to be shot and hunted down without scruple.'[23] The perception that Australian Aborigines were a separate species persisted into the twentieth century, with the view expressed in 1910 that 'the "blacks" are "mere animals"'.[24]

An alternative to polygenesis thinking was the notion of the great chain of being, an idea also popular in the eighteenth century. Under this set of ideas a hierarchy ran from the creator to the lowliest creatures on the planet. Such a chain designated 'white men the superior "species" and descended through racialized others and women only to bottom-out at the level of the animal'.[25] Within human societies, Europeans and their descendants occupied the highest position, with other races occupying lower positions until at some point human being merged with the more intelligent monkey species. In this analysis Australian Aborigines occupied the lowest points. Henry Reynolds quotes a commentator who in 1841 described Aborigines as the 'lowest race in the scale of humanity'.[26]

As an alternative to the concept of a great chain of being, an alternative hierarchical classification of human societies emerged – again, the underlying principle here can be seen as degrees of separation from nature. Here societies could be seen as on a

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[19] Raymond Evans, '"Crime without a Name": Colonialism and the Case for Indigenocide', in Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History' ed. Moses, A. Dirk (New York: Berghahn, 2008), 147n43.
[20] See Lindqvist, *Exterminate all the Brutes*, 129. Also see Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism. 1830-1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 184-5.
[21] Quoted in Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization*, 118.
[22] Raymond Evans, '"Crime without a Name"', 143.
[23] Quoted in Raymond Evans *Fighting Words: Writing about Race* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), 42.
[24] Quoted in Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988), 77.
[25] Carrie Rohman, *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 30.
[26] See Henry Reynolds, *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land*, (St. Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin), 110.

continuum between savagery and civilization.[27] There was a direct link between the place on this spectrum and the level of civilization, and hence the form of response any society was likely to get from the most civilized. As Brett Bowden observes, ‘standards of civilization are a direct consequence of the twin concepts of civilization and progress and the associated idea of a civilizational hierarchy ranging from savages to the civilized.’[28]

Within this classificatory spectrum the savage was seen as primarily a hunter, with little or no permanent settlement, the barbarian as the inhabitant of societies with a degree of reliance of livestock. This form of classification was based on the assumption that certain forms of human organization were to be preferred, and that those outside of these preferences were to be either brought within these forms of society, or would naturally die out or be exterminated. That there was a path from savagery to civilization that could be traversed drew very much on Darwin’s evolutionary theory, and through the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century it became an accepted expectation that societies would either make that transition or would be overwhelmed. In this sense one interpretation of Darwin provided the justificatory basis for the extermination of social groups that were seen as too close to nature. Summing up this perspective Jacques Depelchin poses the question, ‘after all, weren’t the Natives of all conquered / colonized / occupied lands accused of being too close to Nature and therefore in need of civilisation?’[29]

John Locke was also an influential source of ideas about the character of social formation, and in particular with the relationships with the rest of society. For Locke the hallmark of a civilized society was the use of labour to subdue the land. And the process of working the land (as opposed to merely enjoying its fruits), gave the right to owning it. Locke comments that ‘subduing or cultivating the earth, and having dominion, we see are joined together... God, by commanding to subdue, gave authority so far to appropriate.’[30] If land was not put into productive use, in a European sense, it was regarded as wasted, and if there were no formal deeds of property to the land then no one had a claim on that land. Therefore to exploit the land was an obligation. This was the point made by Vattel when he stated that agriculture was an ‘obligation imposed upon man by nature’. Those who survived on the ‘fruits of the chase’ should not be too surprised ‘if other more industrious Nations should come and occupy part of their lands’.[31]

Arguments about the character of civilization have therefore focused centrally on the character of human relations with the rest of nature. Ultimately a social group being ‘valued according to its perceived distance from irrational instinctual animal,

[27] Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization*, 53.
[28] Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization*, 103.
[29] Jacques Depelchin, ‘The History of Mass Violence Since Colonial Times – Trying to Understand the Roots of a Mindset’, *Development Dialogue* 50 (2008), 24.
[30] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration,* ed. Ian Shapiro (New Have, CO: Yale University Press, 2003), 114.
[31] Quoted and discussed in Bruce Buchan and Mary Heath, ‘Savagery and Civilization: From Terra Nullius to the “Tide of History”’, *Ethnicities* 6, no. 1 (2006), 8-9.

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according to it “progress” upward from animality’.[32] These distinctions have taken various forms. As we have seen in this section, the status of other societies was a focus for analysis and discussion. Some Europeans on encountering other societies posed the question of whether the humans they met were really of the same species – a view which, to an extent, continued to persist into the twentieth century. As an alternative explanation of the differences between social groups, Darwin’s ideas were used to develop the notions of societies going through processes of evolution with the concomitant conclusion that some societies were less adapted and would, in the face of competition from more ‘evolved’ and ‘civilised’ societies, would die out. Yet these were not just classificatory ideas – the position on the savagery-civilized spectrum had multiple consequences.

The Standard of Civilization and the Domination of the Animal

As we have seen in the previous section, being human, in the Western Enlightenment canon, involves being able to differentiate ourselves from nature and those groups of humans who are heavily naturalized. This section investigates the ways in which the distinctions of civilization are linked to discourses around the transcendence of our embodied conditions as animals, and to increasingly exercise degrees of separation from our animal condition.

Whilst the sociologist Norbert Elias was concerned with the way in which the standard of civilization was constituted in contradistinction to the notion of non-Europeans as ‘savage’ and ‘barbarian’,[33] his focus was to understand civilization not as a standard, but as a process. *The Civilizing Process* discusses the development of notions of European superiority from the fifteenth century (in relation to Medieval European forebears and the culture of non-European peoples) in terms of the relations between changes in individual discipline (patterns of social behaviour) and the development of new formations of social life and political power. The focus moves from the development of court etiquette and the ‘taming’ in particular of warriors[34], to its dissemination amongst the secular aristocracy and on to lower social groups.[35] The work is often read as a progressive account of the ‘civilizing’ of manners in modernity, yet this should not be understood as teleological. The civilizing process is a fragile one, and the processes of ‘decivilisation’ are ever present.[36]

Elias considers how post-medieval European mores on matters of sexuality, bodily functions, violence, table manners and speech were transformed over time through the internalization of self-restraint. Changing table manners, such as the introduction of cutlery, were a product of the restraining of violence (transforming

[32] Rohman, *Stalking the Subject*, 30.
[33] See in particular Norbert Elias and John Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders* (Dublin: University College Dublin, 2008).
[34] Norbert Elias *The Court Society* (Dublin: University College Dublin, 2006), 4.
[35] See Norbert Elias *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
[36] The books were first published in 1939 when Elias was a refugee from Nazi Germany.

weapons such as knives into eating tools) and 'expanding the threshold of repugnance'.[37] The development of forks was a result of the increasing distaste for eating with hands. This was part of a wider development which eschewed dirt and the public presence of anything gory and bloody.[38] Thus the killing of domesticate animals for food was undertaken in buildings and located in poorer parts of cities, and public executions were removed from public spectacle. This control of violent behaviour and restrictions on the freedom to engage in belching, farting, scratching, copulating and so on in public is about the taming of the human animal. The civilized European subject was to expunge their animality via self-discipline.

In animal studies, Elias' work on civilizing processes has been used to explain the development of other forms of the control of nature, such as conservation, and the control over, and welfare of, wild and domesticate animals. Whilst sixteenth century European crowds, of commoners and royalty alike, might be entertained by spectacles of the burning, maiming, killing and fighting of non-human animals, many of these practices are now banned and widely regarded as 'cruel' and 'inhumane'. Historians and sociologists have contended that the growth of animal welfare mores and a revulsion against the use of violence against both humans and other animals emerged with European industrialization and urbanization as more people became less directly involved in working with animals in agriculture.[39] This is accompanied by an increase in sentimentalized relations and the development of non-human animals as subjects of moral concern. Consequently, the mass slaughter of animals for food had to be hidden out of sight behind the scenes of everyday life, and cruel practices such as the public torture of animals for entertainment, or their use as 'tools' in scientific research came to be questioned. In more recent work, Elias has been at pains to emphasis how the control of the animal undergirds much of contemporary daily life for all things that remind people of their animality, such as illness and the processes of dying must be 'screened' from public view.[40]

Elias has been important in demonstrating the ways in which the condition of 'civilization' is a process that is unstable and transitory. The rise of Nazism and fascism in the Twentieth Century and the assertion of neo-Nazi and fascist politics in contemporary Europe provides poignant illustration of the fragility of 'civilization' and that the boundaries of who is considered 'properly human' is a dynamic construction. Even when civilization appears to be in the ascendant, we must be cautious. As Andrew Linklater reminds us, the intrusion of Western notions of the 'civilized' and the 'barbaric' are still the subject of anti-colonialist concern for:

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[37] Elias *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 71.
[38] *The Civilizing Process*, 103.
[39] Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1983); Keith Tester, *Animals and Society: the Humanity of Animal Rights* (London: Routledge, 1991). Also see Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).
[40] Norbert Elias, *The Loneliness of the Dying* (trans. Edmund Jephott). (New York: Continuum, 2001).

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> Western societies, or particular strata within them, have not shed earlier beliefs in cultural and indeed racial superiority, notions of the 'standard of civilization' survive in discourses concerning human rights and the rationality of market civilization…[41]

We would now like to move away from the domination of the Western, white, human animal, to examine the ways in which constructions of civilization have been deployed in the exercise of domination over both non-human animals, and naturalised and animalised human populations, and it is here that the notion of civilization is revealed to be highly problematic.

Current writers in the posthumanist frame seem often to ignore the long expressed concern, particularly within feminism, of the ways in which discourses of the civilized in Western culture have been bound up with various interlinked forms of social domination. A particularly important intervention here has been the work of Val Plumwood who considers that the "master" narratives of western culture are grounded in a philosophy of separation which has led "civilized" humanity to see itself as pre-eminent. The origins of such perceived human/nature separation can be traced further back than the Enlightenment 'at least into the beginnings of rationalism in Greek culture'[42]. The roots of the Western tradition of political thought is rooted in 'the oppositional account of reason and the associated master account of human identity and denigration of nature'.[43] One of the key means by which this master narrative has become ascendant, is through the creation of a series of dualisms which are apparently irreconcilable:

culture / nature
reason / nature
male / female
mind / body (nature)
master / slave
reason / matter (physicality)
rationality / animality (nature)
reason / emotion (nature)
mind, spirit / nature
freedom / necessity (nature)
universal / particular
human / nature (non-human)
civilised / primitive (nature)
production / reproduction (nature)
public / private
subject / object
self / other

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[41] Andrew Linklater, 'International Sociology and the Civilizing Process' in *Ritsumeiken International Affairs*, 9, (2011) 17; see also Linklater's 'Norbert Elias and the Civilizing Process and International Relations' *International Politics* 41, no. 1 (2004), 3-35, and Stephen Mennell, 'Globalization of Human Society', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 7 (1990), 359-371.
[42] Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993), 72.
[43] Plumwood, *Feminism*, 74.

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Such dualisms create hierarchy, with the subordinated and oppressed counterpart on the right of the list.[44] For Plumwood, the dualistic pairs are interlinked and interrelated. 'A dualism,' she says,

> is more than a relation of dichotomy, difference, or non-identity, and more than a simple hierarchical relationship. In dualistic construction, as in hierarchy, the qualities (actual or supposed), the culture, the values and the areas of life associated with the dualised other are systematically and pervasively constructed and depicted as inferior.[45]

These interlinked dualisms, or as we prefer, intersectionalised forms of social domination,[46] are exemplified in the ways in which, for example, the peoples of colonised Africa were understood as lacking rationality, as holding inferior belief systems and were naturalized as primitive, bound by necessity and akin to non-human animals.

For Kay Anderson, the assumption of universal baseline in biological nature from which humanity emancipated itself – or at least, some humans, to some degree – is a 'major stumbling block' to any move beyond speciesism and racism[47]. The Western sense of what it meant to be human was nothing if not a provincial one, developed in the light of particular forms of humanity in particular contexts.[48] The Western narrative of 'civilization' implied transformation from an animal condition, and Anderson argues the racialized notion of civilization cannot be extricated from its cementing in European colonial encounters with unfamiliar people and their 'exotic' cultures. In Western cultural conventions, particularly those which identified 'civilized humanity' on one side of a culture-nature divide, the 'animal' is a baseline for what is understood to be properly human. There are divergent cultural conceptions of the notion of civilization, one associated with the capacity for cultivation and another associated with civility and the polity of urban-based, free individuals, but these discourses of cultivation and civility were conjoined by the notion of civilization as a process of improvement away from an inferiorized animal condition.[49] As Barbara Noske notes, this characterization of species as biologically determined rather than culturally constituted is a distinctly Western historical phenomenon,[50] and Western civilization narratives characterized by human development as an ascent from nature and from the animal are fundamentally racialized.[51] European culture was advanced to the extent that it had managed to extricate itself from nature and the animal.

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[44] Plumwood, *Feminism*, 43.
[45] Plumwood, *Feminism*, 47.
[46] Reference removed for reasons of anonymity.
[47] Kay Anderson 'The Nature of "Race"', in Bruce Braun and Noel Castree (eds.) *Social Nature: Theory, Practice and Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 76.
[48] Kate Soper, *What is Nature?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 66.
[49] Anderson, 'The Nature of "Race"', 77-78.
[50] Barbara Noske, *Humans and Other Animals: Beyond the Boundaries of Anthropology* (London: Pluto, 1989).
[51] Glen Elder, Jennifer Wolch and Judy Emel, 'Race, Place and the Bounds of Humanity', *Society & Animals*, 6, no. 2 (1998),183-202.

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In practical terms, the management of an 'exotic' and extreme form of nature in colonized territories became a mechanism for civilizing colonial non-human life, through, for example, the introduction of particular means of cultivation such as the plantation system.[52] Exotic nature was understood to be filled with pestilence and menace (particularly in terms of insect life) unlike the more temperate nature of the lands of the European colonizers.[53] For the animalized peoples of colonized territories, civilization was imposed by cultural mores and practices. With practices of direct rule in French and Portuguese colonies in particular, the 'civilizing mission' involved linguistic acculturation. 'Civilized French Africans' for example could in theory become French citizens by demonstrating fluency in French, and in Portuguese colonies a 'civilized' as opposed to an 'uncivilized' human being was one who could read and write Portuguese.[54] Under the extended history of fascist rule in post-war Portugal in particular, this element of the civilizing mission extended until the 1970s, and resonates today.[55]

Thus, the standard of civilization was achieved by a process of distinction and uncertain improvement for those on the underside of the hierarchy. The human was civilized by 'manners' that sublimated human animality in Europe. European encounters with unfamiliar animals, human and otherwise in colonized lands, led to the racialization of this animalized notion of the 'uncivilized' and to the domination (through policies of extinction and replacement, or control) of the human, non-human animals and plant life that offended the 'temperate' culture of the colonizing powers.

Re-Thinking the Standard of Civilization

[52] David Arnold, *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
[53] Derek Gregory, '(Post)colonialism and the Production of Nature', in Bruce Braun and Noel Castree (eds.) *Social Nature: Theory, Practice and Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 102-107.
[54] Adebeyo Iyebode, 'Colonial Political Systems', in Toyin Fenlola (ed.) *Colonial Africa 1885-1939*, volume 3 of *Africa* (ed.) Toyin Fenlola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002); David Corkhill and José Carlos Pina Almeid, 'Commemoration and Propaganda in Salazar's Portugal: The Mundo Portugeuse Exposition of 1940', *Journal of Contemporary History,* 44 (3), (2009) 331-99.
[55] Rosa Cabechinhas and Joao Feijo, 'Collective Memories of Portuguese Colonial Action in Africa: Representations of the Colonial Past amongst Mozambiquean and Portuguese Youth', *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 4 (1), (2010), 28-44.

While there is far from being a consensus on these issues, there is a growing body of literature which suggests that we are at critical point for the human species in its relations with the rest of nature. This has been summed up most directly by Stephen Emmott, 'I think we're fucked'.[56] Making a very similar argument, though rather more elegantly, James Lovelock has observed that 'the bell has started tolling to mark our ending… only a handful of the teeming billions alive now will survive.'[57] Such comments are at perhaps the extreme end of the literature, though even more cautious writers assume that we are unlikely to get through the next 100 years without major upheavals.[58]

In Plumwood's view, the civilized master narrative 'must end either with the death of the other on whom he relies, and therefore with his own death, or with the abandonment of mastery, his failure and transformation.' She is rather less gloomy than Malthusians such as Lovelock however and suggests the possibility of transformation inspired by 'new, less destructive guiding stories' drawn 'from subordinated and ignored parts of western culture'. Finding such stories, complete with 'new main characters, better plots, and at least the possibility of some happy endings', is an imperative for she warns, echoing Lovelock, that we are entering the final stage of the process: 'Devouring the Other'.[59]

What seems evident from these discussions is that we can't go on as we are, and that either we need to make some major changes in our behaviour – which will be painful, or changes in our behaviour will be forced upon us – which is likely to be both more painful, and the impacts of which will be more widely felt. In relation to the notions of 'civilization' is that those whose impact on the rest of nature rather closely and embarrassingly coincides with those most likely to make claims about the civilized character of their societies.

The Ecological footprint is a measure of the amount of resources used by humans and the pressures that we exert on the global environment. It measures how fast we consume resources and generate waste compared to nature's capacity to reproduce resources and absorb waste. This is expressed as a global hectare. A global hectare is an accounting measure and refers to the area that an individual requires to reproduce their particular lifestyle. This can be compared to the amount of area that is available on the planet. Averaged out across humanity each of us has 1.8 global hectares available to supply out needs and absorb our wastes. By calculating the number of global hectares each of us require we can calculate the discrepancy between our lifestyles and the capacity of the planet to support that lifestyle. So, for example:

> In 2007, humanity's total Ecological Footprint worldwide was 18.0 billion global hectares (gha); with world population at 6.7 billion people, the average person's Footprint was 2.7 global hectares. But there were only 11.9 billion gha of biocapacity

[56] Stephen Emmott, *10 Billion* (London: Penguin, 2013), page needed.
[57] James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia: Why the Earth is Fighting Back – And how we can Still Save Humanity* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), 147.
[58] See, for example, Al Gore, *The Future* (London: Allen Lane, 2013); Martin Rees, *Our Final Century: A Scientist's Warning.* (London: William Heinemann, 2003).
[59] Plumwood, *Feminism*, 196.

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> available that year, or 1.8 gha per person. This overshoot of approximately 50 percent means that in 2007 humanity used the equivalent of 1.5 Earths to support its consumption.[60]

These figures can be broken down by individual society. So for example, the Ecological Footprint for US citizens in 2007 was 8 gha per person. If this level of demand on the environment was replicated across the species almost 4 ½ planets would be required to support the level of consumption.[61] For the United Kingdom the Ecological Footprint is 4.89 gha a level of consumption which if enjoyed globally would require almost 3 planets.

As with all statistics these can be deployed in various ways – so for example, China alone makes the highest demand on the world's bio-capacity at 24%, although the average for its individual citizens, 2.21gha, is only slightly above the available bio-capacity equaled out across the globe. A number of countries are in credit. So for example, if levels of consumption in countries such as Zambia, Pakistan, Malawi, Bangladesh and Afghanistan was replicated globally the demand on the earth's resources would less than half of the available capacity.

One useful way of using the statistics has been to combine them with the UN's Human Development Index, so that demand on the planet's resources can be matched with elements of the index that includes life expectancy, education and income. Combining these two measures points to a quadrant that combines a high level of human development (above 0.8), with a sustainable level of consumption. A number of countries fulfill one or other of these criteria, but very few either – and in 2013 probably none. One problem that the human species confronts is that as global population increases the gha per person shrinks – the central reason why, for Stephen Emmott, population levels will be the drivers of a soon to come ecological crisis and likely collapse.[62] One form of re-thinking the standard of civilization could then conceivably be the easily measurable criteria of societies with HDI's of over 0.8, and whose citizens consume within the carrying capacity of the planet – which varies depending on global population.

For feminists however, there have been a variety of responses stressing the ways in which the language of carrying capacity and population pressure have been used, in policy terms against poorer people often from the poorer regions of the globe.[63] The fracturing of the human population in terms of patterns of inequality and consumption and their impact on the environment is beginning to be better understood. Contributions to global warming for example, are not only shaped by the power relations of wealth but by gender too.[64] Re-thinking the standard of

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[60] Global Footprint Network, *Ecological Footprint Atlas 2010* (Oakland, CA: Global Footwork Network, 2010), 13. Available at http://www.footprintnetwork.org/images/uploads/Ecological_Footprint_Atlas_2010.pdf,
[61] Global Footprint Network, *Ecological Footprint Atlas 2010,* Table 6.
[62] Emmott, *10 Billion*, 38.
[63] See for example, Germaine Greer, *Sex and Destiny: The Politics of Human Fertility* (London: Pan, 1985).
[64] Mieke Spitzner, 'How Global Warming is Gendered', in Ariel Salleh (ed.) *Eco-sufficiency and Global Justice: Women Write Political Ecology* (London: Pluto, 2009), 218-24.

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civilization in terms of a nuanced notion of global footprint might be a useful way forwards. Yet such a nuanced notion must eschew notions of the 'average citizen' of the United States, or Brazil, or France, or Malawi but consider the differential impact of populations within different political regions in terms of their 'power to pollute'.

For Plumwood this would be too simple a move and heavily shaped by the dominant culture of reason that undergirds our established notion of what a civilized life might look like. The failure of contemporary Western cultures to attain sustainability or even to move in any committed way towards it, is rooted in systemic problems of a type of rationality whose 'simple, abstract rules of equivalence and replaceability do not fit the real, infinitely complex world of flesh and blood, root and web on which they are so ruthlessly imposed'. Ultimately, she suggests that 'ecological crisis is the crisis of a cultural "mind" that cannot acknowledge and adapt itself to its material "body," the embodied and ecological support base it draws on in the long-denied counter-sphere of "nature"'.[65] Plumwood argues that indigenous people offer ways of thinking from which the West might learn. Europeans traditionally focus their thinking and their efforts on themselves and small groups associated with them, a process that marks other people and, indeed, the rest of the world as the "Other" and prioritises the needs wants and desires of those few in our sphere of interest. Cognisant of the diversity of indigenous cultures and their worldviews, and careful to note that no claims are universally true of all indigenous peoples, Plumwood draws on particular examples (primarily from aboriginal Australian and Native American cultures) to argue that interspecies communicative ethics is not an abstract philosophical ideal but an ancient and still-present cultural practice. Such cultures, she argues, are grounded in an ethics of belonging and community (rather than conquest and private property) and on flourishing (rather than wealth). Such an ethic of nourishment and interdependency between diverse groups of humans and nonhuman nature must replace the institutional structures and dominant conceptions of rationality found in capitalist modernity and the conceptions of the disembodied and exclusionary self. Plumwood argues that an ethical emphasis on value and rights (and private property) inevitably creates rankings that replicate the myth of the Great Chain of Being and continue to measure all other life in comparison to (elite) humans.[66] Instead of thinking of the project of ethics as a matter of extending the boundaries of human-centered thought and recognizing the value of others in relation to human worth, Plumwood suggests that we begin with basic respect for all life and approach others with an ethos of intentional recognition and openness.

Her critical argument is distinctively posthuman. She contends that currently dominant conceptions of rationality make it virtually impossible to see nonhumans as agents in their own right and as communicative beings and systems that are "mindful" in myriad ways often highly unlike our own.[67] If we begin however, from

[65] Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 14-15.
[66] Developing her arguments on individuality and private property, see Piers H. G. Stephens, 'Plumwood, Property, Selfhood and Sustainability', *Ethics and the Environment*, 14, no. 2 (2009), 57-73.
[67] Reference removed for reasons of anonymity.

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the position that the Other is potentially communicative, we will find that although different peoples and their cultures and non-human animal worlds are decidedly not 'like us' the world is communicatively rich and even full of "mind". What we need to cultivate are means for understanding the worlds which are currently so Other to our own, and she argues that by reading "embodied action" we can cultivate a dialogue with all kinds of peoples and all kinds of species.[68] This dialogue is not based on language. We have seen in the previous section that the colonial notion of what it meant to be "civilized" was one in which acquisition of European language often made a distinctive mark. For Plumwood and other ecological feminists, colonialism is very much with us still.[69] Displacing the power of syntactical language for other modes of communication is a key element in change.

Drawing on the work of indigenous American and aboriginal Australian writers, Plumwood articulates a notion of spirituality that assumes embodied material interdependence, rather than seeking deliverance from the world. We need to end quests for transcendence and immortality and understand that we are embodied creatures, amongst others, grounded in place and sustained by socialnatural systems.[70] Interestingly, this is very close to the avowedly secular Gray, who argues that it would help our relations with other peoples and certainly with the planet and its myriad species, if we could stop seeking redemption from ourselves and simply appreciate our being in the world.[71]

For Gray, civilization is a dangerous myth. It is part of the story we have created for ourselves, a story of 'human history' that reflects the interests of those who helped to write it. These Western stories of progress are premised on a conceit that 'humans are necessary in the scheme of things, whereas other animals are not.'[72] For Gray, the current impact of humanity on patterns of change in natural systems, means we might be simply tossed aside as a species. While Gray smirks at the demise of arrogant humankind, those such as Plumwood argue for a relationship to both the human and the non-human that is not colonialist. This search for a non-colonialist way of being in the world is the frame for the 'post-development' or de-development agenda. For Wolfgang Sachs, we need to turn our notions of progress on their head, because as currently constituted, all notions of 'development' are incarnations of colonialism (or imperialism, in his words):

> I believe that the idea of development stands today like a ruin in the intellectual landscape, its shadows obscuring our vision. It is high time we tackled the archaeology of this towering conceit, that we uncovered its foundations to see it for what it is: the outdated monument to an immodest era…Development was the conceptual vehicle that

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[68] Plumwood, *Environmental Culture*, 192.
[69] In particular, the work of Vandana Shiva, for example, *Monocultures of the Mind* (London: Zed, 1993); *Biopiracy: the Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* (Dartington: Green Books, 1997), *Soil Not Oil: Climate Change, Peak Oil and Food Insecurity* (London: Zed, 2009).
[70] Plumwood, *Environmental Culture*, 223.
[71] John Gray, *The Silence of Animals* (London: Allen Lane, 2013) 164, 208. We should add that we suspect Gray is a Taoist, however.
[72] John Gray, *Straw Dogs*, 48.

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> allowed the USA to behave as herald of national self-determination while at the same time founding a new type of worldwide domination: an anti-colonial imperialism.[73]

Sachs' vision for 'greening the North' takes us on a radically different path to the 'ecocratic' agenda of Green capitalist development proposed by some academic interventions in policy fora.[74] Rather, Sachs' view for German (de)development takes on board the notion of lifestyles and planetary capacities discussed above, but takes on board the call for a more radical configuration of the way in which 'we', in wealthier countries of the globe, now live. Sachs suggests alternatives to capitalist development and a different framing for our notion of rights, human and otherwise.[75]

Where, then, does this leave a notion of civilization? The civilizing mission of European colonialism was to both exert cultural superiority and subject 'barbaric' cultures to a form of uplift - albeit that the animalized subjects which occupied barbaric cultures might find this practically impossible to realize. In her anti-war pamphlet of 1915, Rosa Luxembourg suggested that imperialism "annihilated" civilization and that the choice before Europe at that time was one of 'socialism or barbarism'.[76] We are in a different era, but one still structured in terms of power and domination and in terms of humanity at a point of crisis. Those such as Plumwood and Sachs, operating with wider conceptions of imperialism or colonialism that encompass a range of dominations involving living matter, raise is the very difficult problem that 'all Humanisms, until now, have been imperial'.[77]

The posthumanist critique raises vital questions for human being in the world and demands qualitative and quantitative shifts '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.'[78] Enlightenment humanism in Europe informed a historical model of a 'civilizing process' that as we have seen has had disastrous consequences for many peoples and non-human lifeworlds. Currently, the humanist notion of civilization articulates itself, as Linklater suggests, in the language of human rights and market capitalism. It has also been deployed as an emancipatory crusade in the 'liberation' of women for example, where the West has claimed exceptional cultural status.[79]

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[73] Wolfgang Sachs 'Development: a guide to the ruins', *New Internationalist* (June 1992, retrieved on 30 September 2013 at: http://newint.org/features/1992/06/05/keynote/). See also Sachs introduction and chapter on the environment in Sachs (ed.) *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. (second edition, London: Zed Books, 2010).
[74] In the UK context see for example, Nicholas Stern *The Global Deal* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009). Sachs uses the notion 'ecocratic' in *The Development Dictionary…*, 35.
[75] Wolfgang Sachs (et al.), *Zukunftsfähiges Deutschland in einer Globalisierten Welt (Sustainable Germany in a Gobalized World)* (Frankfurt: Brot für die Welt, eed and BUND – Fischer, 2008), see also Wolfgang Sachs, 'Climate Change and Human Rights.' *Development*, 51 (2008), 332–337;
[76] Rosa Luxemburg, *The Junius Pamplet* (1916) retrieved on 24 September 2013, at http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1915/junius/ch01.htm
[77] Tony Davis, *Humanism* (London: Routledge, 1997), 141.
[78] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 2.
[79] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 36.

Does this mean that such emancipatory agendas cannot be disentangled from the imperialist mission of Western civilization? We would agree with Edward Said that:

> It is possible to be critical of Humanism in the name of Humanism, and that, schooled in its abuses by the experience of Eurocentrism and empire, one could fashion a different kind of Humanism…[80]

Many of us working within the posthumanist critique wish to advance an agenda which opposes the domination of life in all its variety; and argues for a politics that appreciates difference and respects diversity. Yet as emancipatory politics has learned to its cost, there are many dangers in universalist schemas of all kinds and conceptions of liberty, rights, wellbeing and so on are fraught with contradiction.

The revisiting of humanism and its reinvention in the light of posthumanist critique has little need, in our view, to be attached to a notion of civilization. Humanism might sensibly appreciate the qualities of the human animal, but we would hope it might radically consider the extent to which these are entirely unique given the multiplicity of species. A critical humanism must also abandon its history of humancentrism and be highly attuned to the domination of the animal that is not human, in addition to the animal which is. It must then, in our view, be *post*humanist. Civilization is, as Elias informs us, a process. But it is a process of distinction embedded in duality and it is hierarchical by its very definition. As Luxembourg reminds us, crisis demands a new politics, and the current crisis which the Earth-bound animal faces, is not assisted by re-inventing civilization. Thankfully, this is likely to be the end of civilization as we know it. Let us hope that for us, and for many Other animals, it is not the end of the world.

[80] Edward Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, (New York: Colombia University Press), 11.