

Debating Humanity

Towards a Philosophical Sociology

Debating Humanity explores sociological and philosophical efforts to delineate key features of humanity that identify us as members of the human species. After challenging the normative contradictions of contemporary posthumanism, this book goes back to the foundational debate on humanism between Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger in the 1940s and then re-assesses the implicit and explicit anthropological arguments put forward by seven leading postwar theorists: self-transcendence (Hannah Arendt), adaptation (Talcott Parsons), responsibility (Hans Jonas), language (Jürgen Habermas), strong evaluations (Charles Taylor), reflexivity (Margaret Archer) and reproduction of life (Luc Boltanski). Genuinely interdisciplinary and boldly argued, Daniel Chernilo has crafted a novel philosophical sociology that defends a universalistic principle of humanity as the condition of possibility of any adequate understanding of social life.

Daniel Chernilo is Professor of Social and Political Thought at Loughborough University. He has published over forty academic articles in leading scholarly journals and is author of *A Social Theory of the Nation-State* (2007) and *The Natural Law Foundations of Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge, 2013).

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The general idea for this book started life with an invitation to speak at the Colloquium ‘Identities in conflict, conflict in identities’ at the Masaryk University in Brno, the Czech Republic, in 2010. My idea for this talk was, quite simply, to reflect on the elements that constitute the idea of ‘human’ identities. I have since been able to try out some of my arguments in various conferences, workshops and lectures in: Berlin (2014), Brno (2012) Buenos Aires (2011), Cambridge (2015, 2016), Jena (2011), Leeds (2012), Loughborough (2010), Paris (2015), Rome (2015), Santiago (2010, 2013, 2014, 2015), Temuco (2013), Trento (2012), Turin (2013), Valparaiso (2013) and Warwick (2010, 2014, 2015). I am grateful to the organisers and participants of these events; I hope that they will see that their suggestions and criticisms have been put to good use.

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The last part of Chapter 3 builds on: ‘The theorisation of social coordinations in differentiated societies: The theory of generalised symbolic media in Parsons, Luhmann and Habermas’ (*British Journal of Sociology* 53(3): 431–49, 2002).

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