

Version March 9, 2015

**TITLE:** *Human Diversity in Context: processes of ‘othering’, construction and dynamics of identities, recognition of valuational difference in European traditions*

## **ABOUT THE PROJECT:**

- **General outline**

This proposal is designed to contribute to carrying out the Academia Europaea’s policy for supporting the Humanities research community.

We propose a four year project to produce a substantive collective contribution to contemporary cultural analysis. By design, our project’s structure fosters research plans as they are carried on by members of the AE Humanities cluster, with members’s own university institutions engaged as research deliverers and partners in the project. The aim is to take full advantage of the unique pan-European membership of the Academia and to capitalise on the interdisciplinary strenght of our members in a leading way.

We propose to develop a multifaceted critical examination of the ways, tools and strategies through which European societies historically envision, confront, construct and conceptualize their perception, representation and evaluation of the difference-in-unity of mankind. Our scope ranges from the recognition or reconstruction of moral and religious identities, together with the formation of territorially bounded human collectives, to processes of ‘othering’ vs. dynamics of integration. We shall examine the definitions, varieties and limits of what has been assumed and represented as ‘human’, within Western processes of identifying and distinguishing themselves from (purported) others (‘selfing’) and its valuational diversity.

We take an approach distinctive to other international projects on European culture and the understanding of otherness. Take for instance recent collective publications such as B. Strath (ed.), *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other* (P. Lang, 2010), and G. Abbattista (ed.), *Encountering Otherness. Diversities and Transcultural Experiences in Early Modern European Culture* (EUT, 2011). Despite their wider scope and circulation, when such international studies cover a vast range of institutions, they tend to draw upon a narrower range of disciplines, such as cultural history, social history of ideas, intellectual history or post-colonial studies; or when such studies include a wide range of perspectives, they tend to consider only a few select European institutions. Other studies are produced by research groups of single universities.

Our project is the first to address this constellation of issues in such a comprehensive and cuncurrent manner. Through five flexible strands of research activity, the project emphasizes centrally the heuristic value of multi-dimensional analysis, different perspectives and methodologies of inquiry, by which the variety of the autonomous disciplinary background and specialization of our scholars is integrated and co-ordinated through our common thematic focus.

We will collect our results within a coherent publication, which can be expected to achieve its intended impact at a broad cultural level within Europe, and likely beyond its borders as well.

- **Background**

In the last decade, European countries have been restlessly animated by debate about issues of faith and tolerance; identity and difference; marginalization and integration; heterogeneity and homogenisation; individual freedom and social security, especially when confronting the increasing waves of 'ethnic cleansing', extra-European immigration, growing minorities representing 'other' systems of belief (whether Islamic, or other groups), issues of international and foreign policy and the organising of public opinion regarding forms of intervention (diplomatic, military, economic) in ethnic conflicts at the border of the European area. Integralism is threatening European historical achievement of the idea of non-confessional, universal human rights based upon values such as common humanity, the free exercise of reason and gender equality.

Literary, historical, social and philosophical studies have unveiled the human production of so many alleged 'facts of nature' and the particular rhetorical strategies used to marginalize dominated peoples. These include: identifying the shortcomings of post-structuralist analysis; the post-colonial discourse of Said, Spivak, Chatterjee and Bhabba which voiced issues of the marginal; the coining of new philosophical categories to 'encounter otherness' by Derrida, Lacan and Foucault; works on ethics, politics and phenomenology of 'recognition' by American scholars of Hegel like Robert Williams and Charles Taylor, Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard; and revamping the notion of *Anerkennung* by Habermas and Honneth. These critical developments from the Humanities have left few cultural stereotypes unchallenged.

Despite this general categorical advance in Occidental thought, which urges us all to reflect on 'hospitality', 'mutual recognition', integration and citizenship, socially self-constructed groups (such as those based on race, gender, ethnicity, language, region, sexual orientation, political creed, or religious faith) instinctively see the 'other' as threats to their strength and well-being, and so react by reinforcing their exclusive and excluding sense of identity, habits and practices.

European societies confronts with:

- 1) shifts of significance in symbols, habits and practice due to different cultural contexts;
- 2) contradictions between a community's security concerns and its claims to foster tolerant multiculturalism, and the implications of this contradiction for the state's right to curtail individual freedoms;
- 3) problems dealing with ethnic and religious diversity: whether it can be accepted only when respecting the values of the host country and not opposing mandated assimilation.

On the one hand, Germany is reflecting upon the limits of the current 'welcome-culture' (*Willkommenkultur*), featuring the 'feeling-of-us' (*Wir-Gefühl*) endorsed by President Gauck, which must not be allowed inadvertently and indiscriminately to abet 'barbarisms' such as forced marriages, honor killings, sharia, burquas and antisemitism. On the other hand, European countries with (quite) divergent policies, such as France and Britain, have both been attacked by members of a second generation of immigrants, who turn against these societies in which they feel alienated and marginalized, as also shown dramatically by the growing number of so-called 'foreign fighters'.

In light of René Girard's theories, the radical challenge of violent forms of fundamentalism with their public broadcast of brutal rituals, appears to recreate an original process of (purported) victimization for a sacred founding of a new social and cultural order which rejects the values of

Western civilization and any historical legacy. This radicalization of human difference is pervasive, ranging from social, cultural, political and religious construction of enemies to racial discrimination. In Italy, the nomination of the first black cabinet minister (April 2013) was repudiated in some political circles on both cultural and racial grounds. Her action was continuously subjected to shameful attacks by a party which doubled its public support in the last European election. Throughout Europe, the 2014 parliamentary election showed an increasing number of anti-Europe parties and the upsurge of xenophobic movements.

- **Detailed Rationale**

This the project shall examine and assess conceptions, practices and institutions (formal and informal) concerning 'identity' and 'otherness'; there is need to develop new categories and new critical attitudes to capture and understand what now transpires within Europe and between its member nations and their – our – neighbours. The driving aim of the project is that there is urgent need for a rational and comprehensive, multidisciplinary and pan-European approach to these issues, both theoretical and historical, empirical, normative and pragmatic, which must be grounded in the complexity of the real world and its cultural and religious structures and objects.

Consider two examples. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Kenichi Ohmae developed such categories as 'fluxes', 'hybridations' and 'post-nationalism'. Such concepts have since then collapsed, together with their optimism. At the AE2014 general meeting in Barcelona, Saskia Sassen revealed how the sheer complexity of Western modernity persistently makes it difficult to trace lines of responsibility for the displacements, evictions, and eradications it produces, in part by the use of words, such as 'inequality', which induce passive acceptance and repetition rather than critical reflection, due to conventional associated framing and the belief that one knows what such terms mean. Sassen invites us to adopt analytical tactics to destabilize these strategically, prejudicially stabilized meanings.

- **Proposed analytical articulation of the trans-boundary research activities:**

Strand 1

Key Topic:

*Classics and its others: pathologies of othering, cultural exchanges between East and West and the European traditions of 'selfing'*

Rationale:

Sharing the view that Classics incorporates perhaps the most powerful aetiology of a European self that is currently available, and that 'Oriental Studies' cut across that most archetypal of all European border fences, the Section will investigate some of the ways in which the study of classics, as a technology of national and European 'selfing' par excellence, has been framed, 'sold', defended, funded and practiced post-WWII, specifically in comparison with the extra-European cultures represented by the so-called 'Oriental Studies', as the discipline's unavowed 'other'.

Issues:

Research activities will investigate the following lines of inquiry:

1. Classics and comparative studies: cultural exchanges and dynamics of identities in the ancient world

2. Greek and Roman literature in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern context
3. The legacy of Classics and Oriental Studies: disciplinary commitments within an European context

Research team leader:

Professor Johannes Haubold

Professor Haubold is Head of Department at the Department of Classics and Ancient History, Durham University (UK). <https://www.dur.ac.uk/classics/staff/?id=95>, and he is member of the AE Section Classical and Oriental Studies

## Strand 2

Key Topic:

*Limits of Culture and Humanity*

Rationale:

The reflection on the limits of what the Human may be defines the core of Humanities. This problem is also at the center of literary studies for the simple reason that this reflection cannot work without a major investment of our imaginative capacities. What is beyond what we conceive of as Human can only be grasped in the forms of imaginative writing or other media specific products shaping imaginary scenarios. Hence, and in spite of its ontological dimension, the problem is of a fundamentally historical nature, bound to what humans in changing cultural contexts can imagine to be the limits of their humanity and thus evaluate as human. Therefore, such limits may be seen as limits of cultures to be explored, challenging strategies of intercultural transfer. But they also mark a transhuman domain which across cultures have harbored monsters, the divine, nature, vast and transgressive technologies and other transhuman entities projected as the Other of the human life world, challenging the scale of the human lifeworld. Thus, the limits of humanity is profoundly bound to the media and technologies, imaginative strategies as well as value systems with which we experimentally explore a relation with what we imagine to be located beyond any present image of the limits of culture and of humanity itself.

Issues:

Among a host of possible research activities implied by this set of problems, only a few will be explored here in different institutional contexts, different research teams and projects and with different planned outputs, but facilitated by this framework.

1. The representation of self and other in contemporary narratives in English (Susana Onega, Zaragoza U)
2. The posthuman (Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, Aarhus U)
3. Interlingual and intercultural transfer (Lieven D'hulst, Leuven U)
4. Forgiveness: Challenging Otherness (Svend Erik Larsen, Aarhus U)

Research team leader:

Professor Susana Onega (member of the AE Section Committee of Literary and Theatrical Studies), is Professor of English Studies at Zaragoza University (Spain): [http://www.unizar.es/departamentos/filologia\\_inglesa/personal/profesorado/onega/onega.htm](http://www.unizar.es/departamentos/filologia_inglesa/personal/profesorado/onega/onega.htm)

Team:

- Prof. Mads Rosendhal Thomsen, Associate Professor in Comparative Literature at Aarhus University, Denmark. He is member of the AE Section Literary and Theatrical Studies.
- Professor Lieven D’hulst, full professor of Francophone literature and of Translation Studies at KU Leuven (Belgium) and member of the AE Section Literary and Theatrical Studies: [http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/cetra/people/lieven\\_dhulst](http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/cetra/people/lieven_dhulst)
- Professor Svend Erik Larsen (interim Chair of the AE Class of Art and Letters, Chairman of the AE Section Literature and Theatrical Studies), Emeritus of Comparative Literature at Aarhus University (Denmark): [http://pure.au.dk/portal/en/persons/svend-erik-larsen\(c89b5273-fcc3-443b-bd78-7ab07cbbb334\).html](http://pure.au.dk/portal/en/persons/svend-erik-larsen(c89b5273-fcc3-443b-bd78-7ab07cbbb334).html)

### Strand 3

#### Key Topic:

*Recognizing religious and moral identities: reason, freedom, and valuational diversity in European traditions*

#### Rationale:

Collaborating with the recently established Centre of Excellence in Reason and Religious Recognition Research (University of Helsinki / Academy of Finland, 2014-2019), this Section will focus on problems of recognition and tolerance arising from the need to define and redefine religious (as well as non-religious) and moral identities in an increasingly multicultural Europe. Recognition (*Anerkennung*) is, arguably, something that lies between mere tolerance and full acceptance. Relations of (mutual) recognition can obtain among persons as well as groups or collectives, and in many cases they may be constitutive of the identity of the person or group as someone or something in particular. This Section will explore systematic philosophical models of rational recognition, particularly “mediated” recognition based on the idea that the parties to the act of recognition, even when unable to recognize each other “directly”, can indirectly recognize each other by recognizing some third party (e.g., a mutually binding norm or rational principle) as a mediator. The historical patterns of recognition between various religious (and secular) groups and/or identities will also be studied. The plurality of rational, valuational, and political identities as well as the general diversity of worldviews in the European tradition will thus be taken seriously. In addition to examining general issues concerning reason, values, identities, and multiculturalism from the point of view of recognition theory, special attention will be devoted to the ethically and politically fundamental phenomena of evil and suffering, both in contemporary Europe and in Europe’s moral history.

#### Issues:

Research activities will investigate the following lines of inquiry:

1. Reason and value in multicultural Europe.
2. Rights, toleration, and the freedom of expression: constructing, criticizing, and transforming religious identities.
3. Evil and suffering in the European tradition: recognizing the victims of the horrors of the twentieth century.

#### Research team leader:

Professor Sami Pihlström has been nominated member of the AE Section: Philosophy, Theology, and Religious Studies. He is the Director of the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies and is Professor of Philosophy of Religion, Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki.

<http://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Sami+Pihlström&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>

#### Strand 4

Key Topic:

*Construction and reconstruction of identities and territorialities*

Rationale:

Sharing the view that identities are inherently multiple in nature and constantly shifting, the Section will focus on the construction and reconstruction of identities and territorialities by examining growing economic-political-ethnic ruptures and the geopolitical struggles between ethnic- cultural-economic groups.

Issues:

Research activities will investigate the following lines of inquiry:

1. Dynamics of integration (citizenship) and dynamics of exclusion, self-exclusion and marginalization
2. Europe within a global context: extra-European standpoints on Europe
3. The new regionalisms in Europe: a Europe of Nations or a Europe of Regions?

Research team leader:

Prof. Maria Paradiso. She is full Professor of Geography and Planning, Department of Social Sciences. Geography Unit, University of Sannio (Benevento, I) and member of the AE Social Sciences Section. [http://www.ae-info.org/ae/User/Paradiso\\_Maria](http://www.ae-info.org/ae/User/Paradiso_Maria).

Team:

- Alum Jones is Professor of Geography at University College Dublin and member of the Committee of the Social Sciences AE Section: [http://www.ae-info.org/ae/User/Jones\\_Alun](http://www.ae-info.org/ae/User/Jones_Alun)
- Yale Ferguson is Professorial Fellow in the Rutgers University-Newark (USA), Emeritus Professor of Global and International Affairs. Honorary Professor at the University of Salzburg (Austria) and member of the Committee of the Social Sciences AE Section: <http://dga.rutgers.edu/index.php/faculty/member/yale-ferguson/>
- Prof. Antoine S. Bailly (Chair of the AE Social Sciences' Section), Emeritus of Geography at the University of Geneva (CH): [http://www.ae-info.org/ae/User/Bailly\\_Antoine](http://www.ae-info.org/ae/User/Bailly_Antoine)

#### Strand 5

Key Topic:

*Classifying and measuring human beings: From variety within the human species to different levels of mankind*

Rationale:

To what extent was racial stereotyping, which plagued European culture and societies of the XIX and XX Centuries and is still showing its powerful effects today, a logical consequence of the hierarchical arrangement of the comparative anatomists of the XVIII Century? When and how did

the adoption of (alleged) infallible markers, such as the color of the skin, become symptomatic of a shift from describing human diversity as the result of climatic and geographical conditions and cultural practices to racial classification based upon (alleged) permanently inherited and biologically determined characteristics? Who provided the conceptual justification for racialized thinking and how did Western anthropological culture begin to posit a correlation between physical characteristics and levels of cultural development and intelligence? On which basis did Europeans come to regard the capacity to convert to Christianity as a sign of cultural elevation? How did Western and Eastern societies combine power with racialized thinking? This constellation of issues will be addressed crossing the boundaries of the humanistic and scientific disciplines, involving history of science, history of philosophy, biology and life sciences, anthropology and history.

Issues:

Research activities will investigate the following lines of inquiry:

1. At the origin of the science of man: Buffon, Linnaeus, Blumenbach and Camper. Developments in description, taxonomy, measuring of the homo sapiens;
2. The theoretical foundations of the humanity of mankind: Kant's role in fixing the concept of race. His debate with Herder and Rousseau. Anthropology and Philosophy of Nature in Hegel's explanation of racial diversity.
3. Ruling multiethnic countries: Racial stereotyping and political control in Western and Eastern societies in the XVIII-XIX Centuries.

Research team leader:

Prof. Cinzia Ferrini, is the general research co-ordinator of the project and member of the AE Section Philosophy, Theology, And Religious Studies . She is Aggregate Professor of History of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy. Department of Humanities, University of Trieste (Italy). <http://units.academia.edu/CinziaFerrini>

## **THE NETWORK:**

- Advisor and liaison with the Board of the Academia Europaea: the Chair of the Class of Arts and Letters (Svend Erik Larsen)
- Project leader & general research co-ordinator: Cinzia Ferrini, Department of Humanities, University of Trieste
- Network administrator: the AE executive secretary (David Coates and the London HQ)
- Research team leaders, central partners of the project, with their university institutions (Johannes Haubold, Susana Onega, Sami Pihlström, Maria Paradiso)

The management group is composed by:

- 1) the central partners of the project
- 2) the overall project co-ordinator
- 3) the principal advisor, Chair of the Class of Arts and Letter
- 4) the network administrator.

Each distinct result (1-2 day workshops, seminars, symposia; reading groups, bibliographies, publications etc.) which draws from the above work packages will be the responsibility of each research team leaders.

## **TIMETABLE**

Stage I: Year 1 of the funded project. The first three months will be dedicated to brain-storming about the above Sections' work packages and classifying and ranking the priority of the key sub-topics for research analysis. The process is to culminate in a call for papers or study proposals. To allow proper time for conducting original research, the deadline for submitting manuscript will be 6-9 months after the call.

Stage II (Seminars/Workshops/Conferences): In years 2 and 3, subsequent to peer-review, each research team leader will (co-)organise one or two 'Strand workshops' to bring together the sub-elements of each project's strands of research (including results from any studies funded in Stage 1). Synthesis publications will be produced for each Strand and other relevant results, including publication on a dedicated website. Research leaders may consider to open calls for a 24 months post doc fellowships or a temporary research post.

Stage III: In year 4 the project advisory group will act as organizing committee of the AE general meeting, bringing together all results to formulate a program for a final synthesis congress (also including invited and open call papers) which will produce a comprehensive report and final publication on the main topic.

### **Typology of Estimated Costs**

- Secretariat costs (to cover 4+1 years –to include a wind down year)
- Meetings of the research network at the London Hub to plan, monitor and finalize the activities

Management costs

Outcomes:

Workshops:

kick off

research consumables

Strands:

ii Studies

iii Dedicated web site

iv Publications (ev. translations into English)

v. General AE Meeting 2019