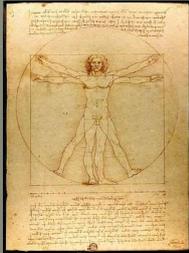


## At the limits of the human



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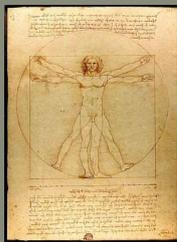
## What makes you human?

Thinks...



## What makes you human?

- Historically: answered in terms of positive qualities, capacities, attributes



Leonardo da Vinci, drawing known as 'Vitruvian Man' ('Le proporzioni del corpo umano secondo Vitruvio'), 1490, showing the ideal proportions of the human body.

## What makes you human?

- Historically: answered in terms of positive qualities, capacities, attributes;
- Most influentially: reason, language: speech (*logos*) as opposed to mere noise (*phonè*);
- Also in terms of oppositions: human/animal, human/machine.

## On the dangers of positive definitions

- Post-WWII: some concentration camp survivors argue that any positive definition allows some people to be excluded from 'humanity' by being described as 'subhuman'.

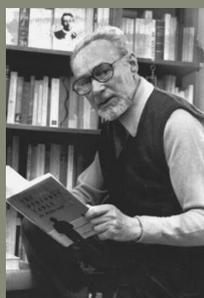
## Robert Antelme



The worst victim can do no other than to affirm that, in its most extreme form, the power of the executioner cannot be other than that of man: the power of murder. He can kill a man, but he cannot change him into something else.

Robert Antelme, *L'Espèce humaine* (1947) (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), p.230.

## Primo Levi



You who live safe  
In your warm houses,  
You who find, returning in the evening,  
Hot food and friendly faces:  
Consider if this is a man  
Who works in the mud  
Who does not know peace  
Who fights for a scrap of bread  
Who dies because of a yes or a no.  
Consider if this is a woman,  
Without hair and without name  
With no more strength to remember,  
Her eyes empty and her womb cold  
Like a frog in winter.

Primo Levi, *If This is a Man* (1947) (London: Abacus, 1987), p. 17

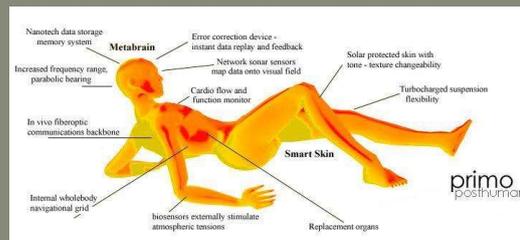
## In place of positive qualities

- Vulnerability, exposure;
- Ineradicable humanity: not as force but as ultimate weakness – no-one can be excluded

## And now?

...

## The 'posthuman':



But it was ever thus...

## Bernard Stiegler

- Human always produced by technics:
- Tool use; fire; language; kinship structures;
- External inorganic memory (writing, mobile phones...);
- We have never been 'human', but always a human-nonhuman assemblage

## Technical prostheses



## And next?



Jesse Sullivan and Claudia Mitchell with their thought-controlled bionic arms, Washington, D.C.

## The human: beyond its limits?

- 1: technical prostheses, from the very beginning;
- 2: so 'transhumanism'?
- 3: or: exposure, vulnerability: excluding no-one – not even nonhumans?