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Prospectus
for
the Flying University of Transnational Humanities
at Cornell University
on July 10 ~ 14, 2016

Title: ***the Future of the Humanities and Anthropological Difference***
- Beyond the Modern Regime of Translation

The disciplines for modern knowledge production on human nature – generally referred to as the Humanities or human sciences - have been accommodated within the historically-specific bi-polar structure that consists of two orientations. Subsumed under the first orientation are the group of normative sciences without geopolitical modifiers, disciplinary forms of knowledge production, such as psychology and philosophy, on what has been regarded as *humanitas* or human beings in general. Subsumed under the second are particular disciplines of knowledge production on what have been seen as *anthropos* or human beings in their specificity, whose particularity is marked by geopolitical adjectivals such as Indian and Chinese in Indian and Chinese philosophies. It is widely believed that those names of normative sciences without modifiers have been handed over from the European tradition, and that they developed as the disciplinary forms of knowledge, as universities transformed themselves into modern educational and disciplinary institutions for modern territorial and national sovereignties within Europe. The assumed universality of *humanitas* and its normative status have been endorsed within the framework of the modern national state. In contrast, human sciences for *anthropos* have dealt with human natures in their regional, cultural, or historical specificities, and with exotic knowledge as Europe expanded and came across strange peoples and places. In other words, the humanistic sciences on *anthropos* are supposed to cover Europe's encounter with its others, with the rest of the world. To the extent that Europe assumes the position of centrality, European humanity serves as the standard for knowledge production, as the norm for the Humanities. It has been assumed, therefore, that human sciences on *humanitas* must be given a normative status and their knowledge be deployed in the modality of universality, whereas human (and social) sciences on *anthropos* must be given a derivative status with their knowledge in the modality of particularity.

These two distinct orientations in humanistic knowledge have been based upon the presumed *anthropological difference*, thanks to which one unique type of life attitude – that has been characterized as the spiritual shape of European or Western humanity – is distinguished from the other types to be found in the remaining the global humanities.



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In the Flying University of Transnational Humanities to be held at Cornell University in 2016, the main subject-matter we propose to address is primarily not this bipolar-structure of humanistic knowledge. In the last several decades, the Eurocentric structure of humanistic knowledge has been exposed and critiqued in a number of academic accomplishments. We do not plan to launch another round of such critique. Instead, relying on the consequences of such expositions, we are concerned with why such a structure of knowledge based upon *anthropological difference* remains largely intact in the disciplinary configuration of the Humanities even today, as well as what sorts of attempts can be encouraged and cultivated to undermine the bipolarity of the Humanities.

For this reason, as the central themes for the 2016 Flying University of Transnational Humanities, we have decided to adopt the future of the Humanities and the changing status of area studies in the Humanities and social sciences at universities and higher education in general in the world.

Area studies is an interdisciplinary arrangement in which both normative human sciences and regional and local knowledge were mobilized to produce knowledge on areas. Unlike the notion of territory, which is closely affiliated with population and state sovereignty in the modern international world, the area is essentially an apparatus by which to capture, regulate, manage, and reign a region or populace that is a remote or exotic object of concern. Unlike territory that defines the extent of sovereignty for the sovereign state in the system of international law, therefore, area is a colonial apparatus, an extension of the imperial governmentality beyond the land space of territorial national state sovereignty. This is one reason why, despite repeated attempts, area studies has been applied only to regions *outside* the north Atlantic – sometimes called the West - in this case, namely, Western Europe and North America.

In this respect, area is a notion specific to the post WWII world of *Pax Americana* that retains *colonial governmentality under erasure* and also reflects a new synthesis of the principle of territoriality and colonial governmentality. However, it is important to keep in mind that the principle of territoriality, which represents the integral unity of the nation-state sovereignty, is not totally discarded. Consequently the national disciplines organized under the general rule of territoriality – national history, national literature and so forth – in countries of the Rest are in a peculiar complicity with the disciplines of area studies in the United States.

Since the 18th century, some notable disciplines such as national history, national literature and historical linguistics have been constituted in order to cultivate national subjectivity for nation-states. These disciplines have indeed been framed within the notion of national territory. In the formation of the state and its subject population, each of the nation-states tried to create its national history,



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literature, language, and so forth even though the development of these institutions did not necessarily follow the same chronology.

Accompanying the formation of the territorial national state sovereignty was the invention of the national language as the basic medium in which academic conversation was conducted. The core project in the production of national subjectivity has been the formation of national translation. Prior to the establishment of modern human sciences, academic knowledge was expressed and conserved in such classical languages as Latin, Sanskrit, Arabic, and Classical Chinese, each of which was independent of a particular nation, ethnicity, or national territory. Of course, local languages were often used in pedagogy, correspondence and debates in academia, but the authorized form of academic knowledge was most often sought in those universal, cosmopolitan languages, which were seen as the exclusive media for the Truth. And knowledge not expressed in these universal languages was rarely granted the status of authentic and eternal verity.

From the outset of the Reformation in Western Europe, however, the relationship between the classical universal languages and the local particular ones has undergone radical changes. What we refer to as "*the modern regime of translation*" played the decisive role in forming the new configuration of national languages, on which the development of human sciences has been dependent. In the eighteenth century, a new type of state sovereignty – territorial national sovereignty – emerged in North America and Western Europe, and a new style of polity, nation-state, and an equally new kind of community, the nation, came into existence. Modern universities were indeed conditioned by the results of these historical vicissitudes, and modern human sciences or the disciplines of the Humanities have been involved in the task of producing national subjectivity in accordance with national languages. In order to understand the Humanities as a historical trajectory, therefore, it is impossible to overlook the significant role played by *the modern regime of translation*.

Accompanying the formation of the nation-state and the national community was the emergence of the international world. The notion of the international world was closely associated with the system of international law, generally referred to as the *Jus Publicum Europæum*; in the early phases of modernity it did not mean the comity of the states covering the entire earth as it does today. The international world meant the part of the world in which the territorial sovereign states ruled, and, in due course, the rest of the world that did not accept the system of international law was excluded from the international world. Consequently the disciplinary configuration in the Humanities reflects this political reality of the modern world and has developed within the institutional framework that, in recent decades, has been referred to as "the West and the Rest" and as the distinction implied above of *Humanitas* from *Anthropos*. While knowledge production in the Humanities has been legitimated by a universalistic search for human nature in every historical era and every location on the planet earth, the disciplines of human



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sciences have been organized according to a historically-specific economy of generality and particularity for more than two centuries.

The community, “nation,” is an entirely new social formation, in which the principle of kinship affiliation has played only a restricted role in creating the sense of individual identity. The nation introduced an entirely different form of individual identification and camaraderie, and a strict distinction of insiders from outsiders of the national community of sympathy. The nation is unprecedented as a social formation because what constitutes the bonds of collective attachment among its members is an aesthetic construct, described as “the sentiment of nationality” by British Liberalism. Corresponding to this sentiment of nationality is the idea of the national language, which supposedly inheres in every *native* member of the nation, and is imminent in the feeling of its collective identity. Nationalism holds that the national language can be traced back to a prehistoric origin. But, of course, this is a fiction that helps sustain the reality of the nation as a fictive ethnicity.

Despite the myth of its origin, however, the national language itself is always a product of internationality, of a comparative procedure by which one language is posited as external to another. It does not derive from the past of the remote origin. Rather it is constituted in relation to another language, through what Naoki Sakai has elsewhere called *the schematism of co-figuration*. All the modern national languages, English, German, French, Japanese, Chinese, and so on were formed through the modern regime of translation at the demise of the authority associated with classical universal languages. Ever since the birth of the modern university in the eighteenth century in Europe, the disciplines in the Humanities have been organized with a view to the production of national subjectivity, as what Jon Solomon called “the subjective technology of national translation.”

In an ambiguous relationship with these national disciplines, the disciplines of area studies were constituted under the principle of interdisciplinarity. This interdisciplinary formation of area studies presupposes the putative object of their inquiry quite differently from the normative human science, whose object presumably is one aspect or another of universal human nature. What binds the disparate disciplines, literature, economic, sociology, history, linguistics, religious studies, ethnography and so on in area studies is not one or another aspect of human nature but the region or people of an area. Subsumed under Chinese Studies as an area studies are Chinese literature, sociology of rural development in China, historical linguistics of Chinese languages, history of Chinese politics and thought, and legal studies of Chinese law and so forth, none of which shares common epistemic objects with other disciplines of the same area studies except for the very area, China, and its people.

Area studies follows a different grammar, so to say, in terms of which the object of its inquiry is differently organized from the normative sciences in the Humanities. As has been suggested above, this ambiguous distinction between



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normative human sciences and area studies boils down to the difference between *humanitas* and *anthropos*.

Let us apprehend this principle of a binary configuration as pertinent to one type of what Étienne Balibar called *anthropological difference*, the distinction of one kind of humanity from the rest, in terms of which knowledge in the Humanities has been produced, organized and justified in order for the rules of academic conduct, the protocols of research, the methods of teaching, and the significance of attained truths to be institutionalized with respect to the positionalities of researchers, audiences, academic managers such as faculty members, apprentices or students, university administrators and staff, and so forth. In short, *anthropological difference* is a matter of *power* that has sustained the production of knowledge in the Humanities.

But, it is also important to note that *anthropological difference* pertains not only to the difference between *humanitas* and *anthropos* but also differences in animality (*human vs animal*) and intelligence (human vs machine). Of course, it also pertains to the difference in gender (*male vs female*, and *heterosexual normalcy vs gender heterogeneity*).

Today it is only too obvious that the legacies of the Cold War in the historical formation of area studies must be discarded. Furthermore, the disciplines of the Humanities in higher education are in turmoil not only in the United States but also everywhere, including Western Europe and East Asia, in the world. Regardless of whether or not one agrees, there is no denying that the Humanities are in transformation. Responding to this contemporary situation facing the Humanities today, therefore, we propose to hold the Flying University of Transnational Humanities on the theme of *anthropological difference* and the end of area studies, in which the institutional framework of “the West and the Rest” and of the opposition of *humanitas* and *anthropos* is discussed. It is important to note, however, that one aspect of anthropological difference is to be focused on in isolation of other aspects of it: differences in animality (*human vs animal*) and intelligence (human vs machine). Of course, it also pertains to the difference in gender (*male vs female*, and *heterosexual normalcy vs gender heterogeneity*). We propose that the general issues of anthropological difference and area studies be discussed with respect to the following topics:

- 1) We must call into question “the modern regime of translation” as well as the consequences brought about by this regime that are institutionalized in the disciplines of the Humanities. We must pursue how the new image of translation transformed knowledge about human nature; and how the transformation of our images of translation would affect the modes of knowledge production in the Humanities.



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- 2) How can the distinction of the general human sciences from area studies still be maintained? For example, Indian or Chinese philosophy is most often taught in area studies programs and is excluded from philosophy-proper. Then, how should we deal with philosophical debates discussed in translation, in non-European languages, which refer to modern European or American philosophy, and in other disciplines, anthropology, sociology, art criticism, media studies, and gender studies?
- 3) The two binary oppositions, “the West and the Rest,” and “*humanitas* and *anthropos*,” are premised upon the unity of the West and “the shape of the European spirit” (*humanitas* according to Edmund Husserl). Unless the unity of the West is presumed, these binary oppositions cannot sustain its conceptual coherence. Then, how can the unity of the West be possible? How was it historically constituted? On what grounds can these “Western” national philosophies be distinguished from “non-Western” national philosophies such as these of Brazil and Japan?
- 4) What roles does *anthropological difference* play in the production of local knowledge in national histories and cultural studies in the West as well as the Rest? How do human and social sciences contribute to either the transformation or consolidation of *anthropological difference*? How is the reference to the West indispensable in the formation of cultural nationalism in national histories in non-Western countries? And, perhaps the most immediate concern for those engaged in university education, and one we cannot evade is the following: What roles does *curriculum* in the Humanities and social sciences in undergraduate and graduate education play in the conservation of *anthropological difference*?
- 5) How do demographic changes in area studies affect the positionality of the area expert? For instance, in the early phases of area studies – prior to the 1980’s - virtually no or only a few indigenous scholars or students were present in the classrooms for area studies courses at American universities. An area and its inhabitants were distant objects with which area experts assumed no or little personal relations. Most often the very few students from the object area who happened to be present there were treated largely as “native informants.” Today a sizable portion, or sometimes the majority, of such a class consists of students from the object area or who are ethnically related to it. Clearly this is closely related to the issue of *diversity*, whose importance the university community cannot afford to ignore.



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- 6) In the global processes of capitalist commodification known as globalization or imperialism (distinct from pre-modern imperialism), commodity exchange nullifies existing differences of rank and status and gives rise to a homogeneous space of a market, while generating wide schisms in wealth and cultural capital. How can the binary oppositions of the West and the Rest and of *humanitas* and *anthropos* still be maintained unless in terms of the individual accumulation of cultural capital, rather than in terms of race, ethnicity or civilizational background? Or, are these oppositions losing their efficacy today? Are they transforming themselves, so that the West operates in different registers? How are these factors redefining our perception of *diversity* on the university campus today?
- 7) In order to assess the future of the Humanities, one aspect of *anthropological difference* – *humanitas* vs *anthropos* – cannot be focused on in isolation from its other aspects. Already this has been discussed in the studies of racism and postcoloniality in relation to difference in gender with respect to the differential dynamics not only of the *male* and the *female*, but also of *heterosexual normalcy* and *gender polivalency*. It must now be articulated to differences in animality (*human* vs *animal*) and intelligence (*human* vs *machine*). How can the disciplines of the Humanities possibly transform themselves so as to accommodate these diverse aspects of *anthropological difference*?
- 8) In view of the anticipated end of the old disciplinary formation of area studies, what are their purposes still worth preserving? How should we transform area studies so as to rejuvenate the intellectual productivity and critical relevance of the Humanities to current global situations? Or should we abolish the Humanities and replace them with an entirely new disciplinary formation?

The **Flying University of Transnational Humanities at Cornell** will be held on the Ithaca campus of Cornell University from the 10 through the 14th of 2016.