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Lost in translation?  
The odyssey of ‘digital humanities’ in French

*To my late mother,  
who read so many books aloud to me,  
building my cultural memory  
of the forgotten meanings of words*

By examining the case of the French translation of the expression “digital humanities” (DH), this article argues that cultural diversity and multilingualism could be fostered in digital culture. At first glance, the international success of this expression seems to contradict this statement: isn’t it a clear example of English language domination over other Western and non-Western languages? Used in written form for the first time in 2004 (Kirschenbaum 56), tirelessly discussed in DH conferences and works, “DH” has quickly been used in professorship titles, in undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, or to qualify centers, laboratories, and research projects (Author “Title1” 41). If other languages have been invited and forced to welcome this expression, its translations have to be studied since they could potentially have strong epistemological backwash-effects on it. French is an example worth examining: it can be demonstrated that the use of the outmoded French word *humanités* is the most significant element in the two French expressions *humanités numériques* or *humanités digitales*. This single word opens up a specific space for humanist approaches within the open-ended digital approaches.

The introduction below aims to present the specific impact of a study of the phrase “digital humanities” and its translations within the general problematic of the phrase’s definition. The second part of this article summarizes the main progressions and arguments in the discussions surrounding *humanités numériques* (humanities computing) and *humanités digitales* (digital humanities) in the French-speaking sphere. The third section examines the historical epistemology of *humanités* while the final section considers the resulting confrontation between the humanities and the ‘hard’ sciences: this underlines their potential synergy and the proper role of the humanities.

## 1. Introduction

The multitude of debates around the definition and delimitation of “digital humanities” are well-known and prolific. Nevertheless, a clearly prominent progression is an enlargement of the notion during the last few years. In 2009, Patrick Sevansson proposed that there was a “discursive shift from humanities computing to digital humanities”. He suggested that tensions were born from the relative lack of humanities computing engagement with the “digital as a study of object” (“Humanities Computing”). Seven years later, in the second volume of *Digital Debates*, Steven Jones chose to use the word “everted” to qualify the extension, and even the overall presence, of the digital:

New practices and areas of interest for computing in the humanities correspond to changes associated with the eversion of cyberspace in the culture at large. In one sense, the new digital humanities is humanities computing, everted. [...] The term also reflected a larger change: from implying a separation between the stuff of the humanities – manuscripts, books, documents, maps, works of art of all kinds, other cultural artifacts – and computing, to more of a mixed reality, characterized by two-way interactions between the two realms, physical artifacts and digital media. (“The Emergence”)

This “everting digital” is also clearly represented in Bernard Stiegler’s definition of the expression he prefers to DH: “digital studies”, which has a sociological flavor. Indeed, he considers the digital studies as a total global phenomenon: “absolutely all the fields are concerned: all practices, all forms of life, all enterprises, personal or collective” (221).<sup>1</sup> The digital studies should have the purpose to produce “new institutional programs as well as industrial” (218). In questioning or even resisting the overall presence of an “everting digital”, one should examine the words themselves to find limits and complexity, while keeping in mind the work of Jacques Derrida, *Sauf le nom*. His work explains depth of the names, the words: “The name: What does one call thus? What does one understand under the name of name? And what occurs when one gives a name? What does one give then? One does not offer a thing, one delivers nothing, and still something comes to be, which comes down to giving that which one does not have”. (Derrida XIV)

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<sup>1</sup> English versions of French bibliographical references are my own translations. I thank Harley Edwards for the English proof-reading of this article. This article is based on a paper presented in Warsaw on the 10th of May 2017 at the CLE2017 conference.

Consider thus whether something *happens* to the English expression “digital humanities” when other languages try to find their own words to translate it: something “comes down to giving that which one does not have” (Derrida XIV). Consider this in the context of French hesitating between “humanités numériques” and “humanités digitales”, or when Hebrew chooses to speak about *rouach digitalit*, the “digital spirit” to translate DH. The shock that occurs between languages when it comes to DH is sometimes so significant that “digital humanities” can remain untranslated, like a type un-embeddable UFO: the *Manifeste des digital humanities*, written in Paris in May 2010, kept the English expression (Dacos “Manifeste”). The French scholar Olivier Le Deuff relates how he began by using in French writings the English expression “digital humanities” before daring to use *humanités digitales* (“Humanités digitales” 263). Institutions too, sometimes prefer to keep the English phrase, like the national Austrian DH center, the “Austrian Center for Digital Humanities”: all the other institutions on the webpage devoted to the departments in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences have German titles (*Geistes-, Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften*). One gets the impression that DH bears something that is not embeddable in the traditional Humanities.

Digital culture definitively has effects on different languages. The linguistic experiment done at the DH2014 conference enlightened this aspect: the English call for papers was translated into 23 languages, and several of these translations had to choose words to translate the English call (*DH2014 Multilingual Calls*). For example David Wrisley and his team in Lebanon had to find Arabic terms and expressions to give life to DH concepts and landscapes. Such an experiment clearly demonstrated the English constraint on other languages but it also represented a real opportunity for those languages. The French example shows the potential backwash-effect of the translations of “digital humanities”. Similar inquiries should be done in as many languages as possible.

## 2. A French language odyssey: “humanités digitales” versus “humanités numériques”

The French expression “humanités digitales” is a direct translation of “digital humanities”, first used in 2008 by Valérie Carayol and her colleagues in Bordeaux (Le Deuff “Humanités digitales” 263). Simultaneously, another team on the Lausanne campus began to speak about *humanités digitales* (Author “title 2”). In 2015, Carayol

and Morandi published a collection of essays that was supposed to be entitled *Humanités digitales* (“Humanités numériques” 1), but they finally published it as *Le tournant numérique des sciences humaines et sociales*. The collection’s brief introduction thus mentions only “humanités digitales”, without commenting on the discrepancy between the introduction and the title of the book (9–12). Such hesitations, changes, or adaptations between *humanités digitales* vs *numériques*, are visible in diverse circumstances, such as in the titles of the academic degrees for example. In 2015, the University of Lausanne (CH) first started a master's degree specialization entitled “Humanités digitales”, in 2016 it was replaced by a complete and inter-faculty master's degree entitled “Humanités numériques” (*Humanités digitales*). In 2014, Milad Doueïhi noticed, not without a certain Parisian disdain, that *humanités digitales* was used in “certain regions of the French-speaking sphere” (8).

In 2016, Dominique Vinck estimated that “the expression *humanités digitales* is probably going to be abandoned at the expense of the intellectual project associated to its use” (9–10). Inversely, also in 2016, Olivier Le Deuff wrote a blog post entitled “Ten reasons to prefer digital to numeric”, whereas the new journal *Etudes digitales* devoted several pages of its first issue to the debate, with scholars globally supporting *humanités digitales* (13-15, 215-227, 251-268). Previously, ThatCamp 2013 in St-Malo (FR), a French language event, welcomed the pre-general assembly of the future French-speaking DH association. Interestingly, there was a vigorous discussion regarding the name of the association and the distinction between *numérique* and *digital*, the record thereof has been collectively written in online proceedings. A range of arguments were put forth: from Charlotte Touati underlining that German is never afraid to welcome English words, to Aurélien Berra lucidly recalling that the attribution of budgets is often dependent on labels and names (“Humanités numériques” 17). General agreement was reached for nominating a name for the new association, in the end neither *humanités numériques* nor *humanités digitales* was chosen, instead a third option came to the fore. *Humanistica*, proposed by Marin Dacos (“Humanités numériques” 19), was later confirmed as the association’s name (*Humanistica*).

Is such a recent, brief and intense history a signal of “French coquetry” or does it point to something more important? Instead of dismissing this as mere ‘coquetry’, one should consider that deep epistemological dimensions are at stake in this complex history of “digital humanities” reception in French. Names and language are such a

finely cultural phenomenon that it is here only possible to point to some milestones; more can be achieved only within the framework of a collective inquiry. However, there is no doubt that such an inquiry is needed, and hopefully it will occur in diverse languages beyond the examination of only the current French example.

Among the scholars inclined to speak about *humanités digitales* or *études digitales*, a huge consensus appears about the fleshly aspect present in the term *digital/e* that means in English the digit and the finger, the first tool used to count<sup>2</sup>. For Bernard Stiegler, *digital/e* joined to the computing vocabulary underlines in French “*the hand's role, that of its fingers and of what they create, in the generation of thought via its grasp on life, creation and conception*” (217). Whilst the collective *laudatio* of the corporeal aspect of *humanités digitales* is well founded, it is nevertheless surprising that only a few scholars have noticed the return of the outmoded French word *humanités*.<sup>3</sup> In 2012, Aurélien Berra, recalling the Renaissance roots of the expression “*faire ses humanités*” (to study humanities), argued that by translating humanities as *humanités*, the French would enlarge the English academic definition by including the social sciences (3).

However, this is not an easy or light affirmation, indeed, the DH international milieu traditionally does not include the social sciences in its structures such as ADHO or its constituent organizations. At the level of ERIC – the *European Research Infrastructure Consortium* – the Humanities fall under DARIAH and CLARIN, whereas the social sciences are present mainly in CESSDA (*ADHO, CESSDA, CLARIN, DARIAH, ERIC*). While Berra comes to this conclusion by scrutinizing the word ‘*humanités*’, Cormerais and Gilbert similarly expand the definition by focusing on the fleshly dimension of the French word *digital/e*:

The choice of ‘digital’ is an attempt to reintroduce the sensation of touch, this in turn creates a ‘double digitization’: referring, not only to numbers themselves, but to the contact between digits and the calculated matter. [...] We claim this ambivalence between physical carnality [charnalité] and the calculation as the most adequate rendering of the tension inherent to the entirety of digital studies. This is not reducible to either the code or the disciplines that define Humanities. (“Introduction” 14-15)

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<sup>2</sup> See for example *Etudes digitales* 13-15, 215-227, 251-268 ; Le Deuff “10 raisons” ; “Humanités numériques” ; Author “Title 1” 52–53.

<sup>3</sup> See notably Berra 2–3, Author and XX 9, Author “Title 4” 255.

Such an expansion is also present in English when it comes to the most recent debates about the definition of the DH, as evidenced by section 1. Section 3 allows one to test and verify a specific example of a definition by immersing oneself in the history of the French word *humanités*: Is the corporeal dimension evoked by the word ‘*digital/e*’ a recent addition to what would otherwise be a strictly cerebral concept, *humanités*? Is there no limit to the digital studies implied by the *humanités*, which themselves include the Arts and Humanities and the Social Sciences? Can everything be included in the new modes of digital knowledge? One should focus on words and their philological history to orientate oneself more clearly with respect to these questions, if not their answers.

### 3. The word ‘*humanités*’ and its forgotten meanings

The outdated French word ‘*humanités*’ was almost forgotten until its recent association with computing. At least one part of the word’s meaning has been attested to since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and defined as such in 1831 by the *Société des grammairiens*: “one names *Humanités* what is usually taught at the colleges until philosophy exclusively” (89). Looking backwards at the long history of this word is impressive with regards its diverse meanings. The ancient French dictionary (9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century) indicates the following meanings: “profane goods”, “active feeling of benevolence, or alms” (Godefroy IX 774). However the basic senses at the time referred to “life”, the “body”, and even “sexual parts” or “shameful parts” (Godefroy IV 526). To know somebody *humainement* means “carnally” (*charnellement*) (Godefroy IX 774; IV 526). In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the womb of a woman was also referred to as *le moule d’humanité*, “the mold of humanity” (Huguet “Humanité”).

As astonishing as it is, while many scholars emphasize the corporeal elements related to the use of the word ‘*digital/e*’ in its relation to the word ‘*humanités*’, they all ignore that such potential traces belong even more so to the history of the word ‘*humanité*’ itself. Whereas Cormerais and Gilbert relate *digital* to “carnality” (*charnalité* “Introduction” 15), the association between *humanité* and carnality is at least as profound. How can cultural memory – in this case Western – forget meanings, or stop using words to describe certain things, according to the Foucauldian relationship between words and things? In fact, the corporeal and carnal traces in ‘*humanités*’ can rarely still be found in our present cultural expressions. From the pen

of a psychiatrist, Marie-Rose Moro, who in 2008 wrote an article about female bodies referencing the corporeal aspects of ‘*humanités*’ in the title.

When was the corporeal element of ‘*humanité*’ forgotten by mainstream Western cultural memory, to remain only as a tiny and seldom remembered *souvenir*? A Foucauldian analysis of the double epistemological Western turn proves to be valid in answering this question (Foucault 42-47)<sup>4</sup>: in the Classical Age, in the preliminary edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie* in 1687, one finds the simultaneous emergence of the scholarly meaning of *humanités* (Classical training), and the disappearance of its carnal meaning, a situation that remains in the editions that came thereafter. In the first middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, language took its revenge and the corporeal or carnal meaning of *humanité* found refuge in the *Complement to the Academy Dictionary* published by Louis Barré in 1842: “Humanité: Expr. prov., *Reposer son humanité*, *Se mettre à son aise*. // *Avoir humanité*, se disait autrefois pour, Être en vie. // *Humanité*, s’est dit Des parties sexuelles” (586).

Barré, in his definition, explicitly explains that the corporeal and sexual meanings in ‘*humanité*’ were employed in previous eras (*autrefois*, *s’est dit*); he nevertheless indicates them in his “complementary” definition. His complementary dictionary is a delicate exercise in scholarly communication: the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie* in 1835 provoked polemics and Barré had to justify why he created a complementary dictionary without hurting the French Academy authorities too greatly (Marosavri 95). It is particularly interesting to notice that the corporeal and carnal traces of ‘*humanité*’ subsist in the 19<sup>th</sup> scholarly memory in this complementary dictionary written by a professor of philosophy (Barré), whereas the philological domain takes power over the word ‘*humanité*’ in the official editions of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie*. Deep shifts in the linguistic tectonic plates are at stake here.

When one considers the near disappearance of the corporeal and carnal elements of ‘*humanité*’, combined with the focus on the corporeal elements of ‘*digital/e*’ in French, and the stubborn presence of *humanités digitales* behind all linguistic critics, one may perceive new possibilities of understanding the recurrent difficulty we have in linking *materiality* to the digital culture (Author “Title 3”). In his provocative 2009 interview about the future of books, Umberto Eco considers the

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<sup>4</sup> For a presentation of the Foucauldian Western *episteme* pattern, see Author *Title 5* 99–101.



Internet as radically different from writing because “the writing is the continuation of the hand and is in this sense is almost biologic. [...] Internet is not biologic” (22), whereas in that same year Robert Darnton pointed to the illuminating German word ‘*Fingerspitzengefühl*’ (Author Title 1 53). Darnton uses it to explain the new relationship emerging between our bodies and digital matter:

our way through the world by means of a sensory disposition that the Germans call *Fingerspitzengefühl*. If you were trained to guide a pen with your finger index, look at the way young people use their thumbs on phones, and you will see how technology penetrates a new generation, body and soul. (XII)

Darnton’s linguistic intuition was more than true: at the end of 2014, biological research has shed light on “use-dependent cortical processing from fingertips in touchscreen phone users” (Gindrat et al.). The “corporeal gap” between these great thinkers in their evaluation of the digital world can now be better understood in the context of the different traces present in ‘*humanité*’. In French, as long as we continue to focus on ‘*digital/e*’ and its relation to the human body and to forget the carnal dimensions of ‘*humanité(s)*’, we will continue to be unable to join the digital domain to our sense of materiality. Bridging this gap and considering ‘*humanité*’ as relevant to bodies and life becomes more urgent since this bridge could lead to a better grasp of the specific role of Humanities in global knowledge, section 4 focuses on this notion. Furthermore, this bridge is of necessity since digital humanities has a certain chance of losing its ‘digital’ qualification in the next few years or generations.

DH is not a field as such but a necessary label for the present generations: we need it to be more conscious of the immense epistemological turn we are facing. However, if we consider what has happened to the expression ‘digital computer’, we can argue that at a certain point in time within the next few years or decades the word ‘digital’ might no longer be joined to the word ‘Humanities’. The first written trace we have of the junction between the English words ‘digital’ and ‘computer’ as opposed to an analogue computer, goes back to a 1942 scientific report by George Robert Stibitz (William 310, Dennhardt). Similarly, scholars use the phrase ‘digital humanities’ to speak about what are not considered the usual humanities. In 1950, Turing was still using the complete phrase ‘digital computer’ in his seminal article “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”: “The reader must accept it as a fact that

digital computers can be constructed, and indeed have been constructed, according to the principles we have described, and that they can in fact mimic the actions of a human computer very closely” (5).

When did we stop speaking about ‘digital computers’ and start simply saying ‘computers’? Such questions of linguistics generally remain without clear answers. In future, surely similar questions will be asked with regards to the digital humanities. If in many years or decades to come we speak again about ‘humanities’, will humanities be considered evidently digital. If this is to be, it will demonstrate that the important word in the phrase ‘*humanités digitales*’ is the former, and that humanities was not condemned to be absorbed into an open-ended digital studies domain.

#### 4. The face-off between the hard sciences and the (digitized) humanities

##### *4.1 Observing the knowledge discourse*

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1919, the *British Journal of Medicine* published a lecture given by William Osler, often called the father of modern medicine, in front of Oxford Classical scholars: “The old humanities and the new science”. In a way typical of the modern period, Osler recognized an “unhappy divorce” between humanities and sciences:

We make boys and young men spend ten or more years on the study of Greek and Latin, at the end of which time the beauties of the languages are still hidden because of the pernicious method in which they are taught. [...] The so-called Humanists have not enough science, and Science sadly lacks the Humanities. This unhappy divorce, which should never have taken place, has been officially recognized. (4)

Full of good will, and fascinated by the Humanities, Osler presented a persuasive metaphor: scientists are like brave working ants and as faithful nurses, they take care of the ant larvae that are the Humanists. Ant nurses are awarded with the honey produced by the larvae: similarly, Humanists provide nourishment to intellectual life (3). Secreting a nice, sweet substance, the Humanities are the “hormones” of intellectual life (3). Trying to overcome the “unhappy divorce”, he reminds us that “in biology Aristotle speaks for the first time the language of modern science, and indeed he seems to have been first and foremost a biologist, and his

natural history studies influenced profoundly his sociology, his psychology, and his philosophy in general” (4).

There is no doubt that Osler was genuinely attached to the Humanities and attempting to honor them, but the point of view that he presents confirmed the divorce between fields: “the new science” – perceived as brave working ants, and the Humanities – whatever old or new – perceived as producing something nourishing but as larvae. We know the evolution that occurred in the following decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the pre-digital age saw several fields of the Humanities almost starved to institutional death. Bernard Stiegler rightly reminds us that the digital turn arrived within the context of a deep crisis for all the academic educational systems (215).

During this “unhappy divorce”, the Humanities have progressed along certain paths away from the hard sciences. Humanist scholars have convinced themselves of this divorce, so much so that we can sometimes read resulting simplifications: Lorna Hughes, Panos Constantinopoulos and Costis Dallas in 2016 quote a 2000 paper by John Unsworth. They transmit Unsworth’s information as if he was presenting “scholarly primitives” as the “common elements of humanistic inquiry” (5725): “Definitions of digital humanities are as prolific as the field itself [...], but frequently cited as an initial conceptual framework are the ‘scholarly primitives’. This was used in the contest of the digital humanities by Unsworth (2000) to denote basic functions that have been common to scholarship across the disciplines: discovering, annotating, comparing, referring, sampling, illustrating and representing” (Hughes et al. 5706). By reading this list, it would seem that hard scientists are definitely using the same term “scholarly primitives”. Unsworth is indeed referring to axioms used in mathematics as well as in philosophy, to elements coming from Aristotle. As he wrote in 2000:

“According to Aristotle, scientific knowledge (*episteme*) must be expressed in statements that follow deductively from a finite list of self-evident statements (axioms) and only employ terms defined from a finite list of self-understood terms (primitives). [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy] [...] These ‘self-understood’ functions form the basis for higher-level scholarly projects, arguments, statements, interpretations—in terms of our original, mathematical/philosophical analogy, axioms. My list of scholarly primitives is not meant to be exhaustive, I won’t give each of them equal attention today,

and I would welcome suggested additions and debate over alterations or deletions, but here's a starting point". ("Scholarly Primitives")

The unhappy divorce between the Humanities and the hard sciences has so invaded our cultural minds that we can easily forget what there is in common, at least from an epistemological history point of view. We might have forgotten that Aristotle's axioms concerned all the episteme, and that he was a biologist as much as a philosopher. The growing definition of the fields that we observe in digital culture is a real opportunity to recombine pieces of knowledge that modern times have divided. Thanks to the French return of *humanités*, it forces us to remember that language analysis and philology rely on a corporeal heritage, as put forth by Lakoff and Johnson (*Philosophy in the Flesh*). *Corpus* and *corpora* are related, that's the gift of the body, or carnal, *humanité*.

How then could one distinguish between differences and complementarities, between what is or not Humanities or its enlarged, French version '*les humanités*'? In these digital times this become an urgent question because new curricula are already being developed, as the section 4.2 underlines: *things* (the signified) are present mainly before *words* (the signifiers) in digital culture, according to the Foucauldian binome word/thing. To discern limits and specificities of *les humanités*, one should return to the period anterior to Osler's diagnostic of unhappy divorce. One should return to Louis Barré's iconoclastic *Complément au Dictionnaire de l'Académie* (1842).

Barré explains the "Humanists" – those who consider that Classical languages should build the basis of teaching – as a label existing in Germany and opposed to the *Realists* (586). In France, he recognizes a similar opposition between *les classiques et les industriels*, the "Classics" and the "industrials" (586). It is absolutely necessary to realize that the tension between the Humanists and others in this context is based on their point of view on the *realia*. We can verify that such a tension/opposition is still at stake by keeping in mind Stiegler's aspiration to see digital studies producing "new institutional programs as well as industrial" (218, quoted in part 1). If almost all knowledge approaches seek to understand the human being, its body and its environment, *les humanités* analyses the *realia* with a particular point of view.

*Les humanités* – beyond the English Humanities – are definitively attached to asymmetry, details, complexity and plurality or even to divergent plurality. Digital humanities is the act of studying and practicing "ontologies", always within the plural

and with a strong consciousness of the potential “ontology” trap. Even taking into account this plural aspect, the Humanist attachment to asymmetry requires attention and resistance (Author Title 1 48-52). However, the singular form of “ontology” – a successful word even in the hard sciences – seems to be the rule in biomedical investigations (*Ontology for Biomedical Investigations*). From a “realist” and/or “industrial” perspective, the challenge is to reduce the perturbing diversity of the *realia* in order to take care of disturbed or disrupted human bodies and organisms. Whereas the binary system (0/1) is the basic language that stands at the roots of the computing sciences – an electronic system that is either open or closed – *les humanités* will always be looking for a third term and for asymmetry. *Les humanités* are interested in disturbing *realia*, such as closed but non-functioning electronic systems. It is a “culture of interpretation” according to the French thinker Yves Citton (21).

While attempting to outline the Humanities posture, the *real* world progresses to another step: new master curricula are being developed, claiming to train students far beyond the usual delimitation of the academic fields. Even so, it remains seemingly possible to discern an attempted outline to *les humanités*. Consider two different examples of interdisciplinary master’s degree, one born from a Humanities background at the University of Rouen (FR) and the other stemming from a Computing background at the EPFL, the *Federal Polytechnic School of Lausanne* (CH).

#### 4.2 Observing the emergence of new curricula at the frontiers of fields

The University of Rouen has just announced a new master’s degree program in digital humanities or humanities and the digital world, *master en humanités numériques ou humanités et monde numérique* (Massin). It is preceded by a *Licence Humanités*, a bachelor’s degree in Humanities, in which the French word *humanités* signals an humanist interdisciplinary perspective: it includes History, Letters and Political Sciences (*Licence Humanités*). It corresponds to the wishes for a general bachelor degree formulated by Yves Citton in his book *L’avenir des Humanités* (2044). The master’s degree in DH is thought of as either the next step after the bachelor’s in *Humanités*, or for computing students wishing to be trained in the interface with the humanities (Massin, “Un nouveau master”). This new master’s degree integrates computing scientist and humanist paths. All the following different

undergraduate degrees allow one to be enrolled in this postgraduate course: bachelor's in Humanities, Letters, History, Philosophy, Law, Computing, Computing-communication (*Master Humanités numériques*).

It is interesting to highlight that the master title do not necessarily link the humanities to digital, since the second way of phrasing is “Humanities and digital world”: the Humanities seem to resist their own perspectives, a point in concordance with the observations in sections 3 and 4.1. It should also be underlined that a computing undergraduate degree does not seem to be missing the basic humanist elements to enter in such a postgraduate. It is not an insignificant choice. Indeed, in the EPFL *Master of science in digital humanities*, bachelors in Humanities are not accepted as pre-requisite:

Candidates must have Bachelor Degree in Computer Science or in Communication Systems from a recognized university, with excellent academic records. A Bachelor Degree in Mathematics, Physics, Electrical Engineering, Micro Engineering or related field may also be accepted. You must have solid basis of programming, algebra, statistics, signal processing. A strong interest in the digital humanities is expected. (*Master of Science in DH*)

Such a discrepancy should be quickly noticed by Humanist scholars: are we really considering that everybody can jump over our bachelor in Humanities, whereas a master of Science labeled “DH” is not accessible without an undergraduate in the hard sciences? It is clearly worth considering closely and urgently since this influences the definitions and perceptions we have of the Humanities. If a whole three years of Humanities undergraduate study are considered equivalent to less than a semester of complementary of studies, it signals that these undergraduate degrees should probably be revised. An intense, collective discussion on this point is needed.

This intriguing EPFL master's degree in science and digital humanities, opening in autumn 2017, requires further examination. It has an innovative profile that opens new gates to future academic training, if one infers according to the current website. It has an innovative profile that opens new gates to future academic trainings, as far as it is possible to read it on the website. *Les humanités* are clearly not disappearing at all; they have not dissolved in a digital studies ‘soup’. To the contrary, many of the greatest names in DH are proposing courses gathered in a “Humanities block” (David Boullier, Sarah Kenderdine, Franco Moretti and Martin Rohrmeier), whereas the

“Computing block” presents courses given by computing colleagues (Daniel Gatica-Perez, Frédéric Kaplan, Sabine Süsstrunk, Robert West; *Master of science in DH*).

What kind of knowledge will come out of this new postgraduate program? It is really hard to say at this step, but such an innovation should be encouraged, monitored and analyzed especially if one considers it to be the “fabric of the future knowledge”. *Les humanités* clearly manages to maintain an autonomous role, as in the *Master en humanités numériques* at the Rouen University. Such master’s degrees, born on French-speaking grounds, reveal that the French-speaking sphere is reworking and transforming the English label ‘digital humanities’. *Les humanités sont de retour, les humanités* are back, but reshaped by digital culture. Rediscovering their corporeal vocabulary heritage, they will soon be ready to fully plan their role in digitized studies on this strange global phenomenon, the human.

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