

Immanent Human(ism)s: Engagements with James A. Boon

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ABSTRACT

The “human” is often set apart from the rest of nature on account of the presence of logos, the capacity to reason and construct a deductive argument, and the capacity to imagine, to transpose one’s self to a realm which is numinous and inaccessible to anyone other than the self. Humanity translates that relationship by saturating tactility with meaning: art, literature, structures, war. Anthropology, in its turn, has been imagined as the discipline that would be capable and willing to make legible to the world the translation of this intimate relationship between the numinous and the tactile, to facilitate the efforts of the human to be understood by the world around her, to straddle immanence and the hereafter. If, however, the human becomes decentered from the core of anthropology in a gesture that privileges the non-human in its many genres (the non-human animal, technology, nature in general), what remains as the ethical dispensation of the discipline? If the immanent frame of humanity is threatened only by the human, what becomes of anthropology’s engagement? What sorts of futures, what kinds of publics are made possible or become foreclosed? [Keywords: Anthropology, democracy, the human, neo-humanism, epistemology, spaces of exception, medicine, politics]

For Jim Boon

“words without experience are meaningless”

—Vladimir Nabokov (1989:178)

I am asking for the iteration of anthropology as a democratic praxis. Intentionally I slide here from and between anthropology and democracy, because I see the two projects as spliced and fused; I see their subjects and their objects as the same and I am asking for democracy’s epistemology and anthropology’s democratic politics. I am asking for the performance of the symptomatic relationship of anthropology and democracy. I am asking for a renewed commitment to the human by both anthropology and democracy. I do this with Jim Boon’s writing in mind—an exercise in integrating and reworking, utilizing direct quotes (usually lengthy) and quotes in the musical sense, utterances that remind us of something (an idea, the motif of an idea, a fleeting thought) that might (or might not) be readily placeable or traceable to a single thinker but which gets reworked, rethought, elasticized, or constricted under interrogation, after it has been broken down into its constituent parts so that it can show how it works as it goes on reminding us of something. There is only one dread here: that this writing experiment might still not allow me into the “notably rare breed [of] *playful* Marxist[s]” that Boon identified (1982:258).

With Boon in hand, I return to Boas and the early Boasians: Elsie Clews Parsons, Paul Radin, Zora Neal Hurston, and Clyde Kluckhohn, not *necessarily* as examples of anthropological practice (although certainly as examples of ethnographic engagement), but as models of anthropology’s engagement with the world—as I argue for being-in-the-world as anthropologists.

I started writing this paper at the height of (what has come to be termed) “the Greek Crisis” in 2012. I rewrote it during the heated negotiations for the Greek bailout between the Greek government and “the Troika,” i.e., the European Commission (on behalf of the Eurogroup), the Central European Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the summer of 2015. This was before these negotiations failed, and before the Greek July 2015 Referendum—which shook the financial world at the time—was announced. The political time imposed by the constellation of staunch anti-democratic moralism (and a-moralism), of predatory capitalism, and the collective punishment imposed by the “new Europe,” was an eternity. As I complete this writing, though, we are in the 25th day of the Trump presidency—a presidency that has, thus far, shown utter disregard both for

democracy and the human being in the form and number of developing scandals and Executive Orders signed.

So, what I say here is tentative (but not hesitant) precisely because tectonic changes are taking place that re-center the question of the human as a problem for political and social action, and the joints that stitch this unfolding history together are still very unclear. I am, then, asking you to consider the following utterances, each one of them an ethnographic moment spanning time and space—from Malcolm X in 1963 to Attica in 1971, to in-house police jargon in the US, to the Greek torture islands of the post-war, to the *indignados*, to a patient in an Intensive Care Unit. They do not constitute a cogent ethnographic encounter, neither do they constitute “case studies” to be confused with (or stand in for) Edmund Leach’s (1961:2) “butterfly collection.” Their objective is not “comparative generalization” (1961:2), but quite the opposite—they perform an invocation of specific places, specific times, by specific subjects, screaming against what Athena Athanasiou has called “the new humanities and inhumanities” (2003:143), pleading, asking, demanding to be counted in with the already-human, with the humanity, not to be excised, not to be cancelled, not to be relegated to the non-human void that obliterates with impunity. They are the experience that gives meaning to the words.

1. “We are human beings, and our fight is to see that every Black man, woman, and child in this country is respected and recognized as a human being.”
2. “...they no longer consider or respect us as human beings, but rather as domesticated animals selected to do their bidding in slave labor and furnished as a personal whipping dog for their sadistic, psychopathic hate...”
3. “NHI (No Humans Involved)”
4. “you don’t have to torture us any more—we are already human”
5. “we are cockroaches—sprayed and persistent”
6. “Doctor! Careful. I am the human, that is the machine.”

These quotes force us to consider the distance between the negation of the condition of humanity as experienced by actors themselves and the stochastic engagements with the potentialities of a transcendent human, a decidedly and resolutely Kantian one that extends beyond the limits of all experience and knowledge. They also underline the

profound necessity that James Boon described as residing (dwelling, he might have said) at the heart of the anthropological engagement—that anthropologists require “methods of comparison and theories of description in equal measure” (1982:8)—no comparison without experience and neither of the two without their attendant theories. And these quotes give rise to two sets of questions—the first one being a deontological one, as Athanasiou (2015) formulated it: “who activates democracy?” I expand this to include both democracy and anthropology, turning it around to its dialectical position: who activates anthropology and what do they both (democracy and anthropology) activate? The subject and the object of these questions and of their answers is the same: *Ánthropos*, Human, the human being. Is democracy, then, and is anthropology obligated to re-locate the human at and as the center of their praxis, acknowledging these voices that cry to be recognized as human? What do anthropology and democracy look like when being a human is uttered as a question that interpellates the foundations of democratic praxis and of anthropological theory making their subject material, giving it form and shape (as an agent and as subject of equality, equity, and democracy) does anthropology have to respond? Does anthropology have an obligation towards its constitutive category, the human? And what is anthropology’s response to João Biehl’s (2005) recognition of the ex-human?

The second set of questions concerns the epistemology of our discipline: what could have strung together the subjectivities that uttered these quotes and what can we know about that? What sorts of epistemologies become available and accessible, when anthropology actually dislocates its object and subject of study—when other animals, other forms of life, formations of the unliving claim its epistemological centrality? Should “anthropology dissolve its subject in the act of reaching it” as Boon has asked (1982:6)? As “a field whose very foundations rest on the existence of an Other—different ways of being human—[should anthropology] be the locus of the preservation of difference” as Paul Rabinow has asked (1983:52)? As anthropology looks back at science with a longing, nostalgic gaze, as the discipline is increasingly engaged with new iterations of a decentered humanity in its concerns over the subjectivity of animals, technologies, and the posthuman, is it (should it be) possible to secure the human being as its central object? Not the human being as a transcendental, moral, or even ethical category. But the human in its immanence when faced with a technology that is imbued with agency—the

beating club, the chemical weapon—with the naked and raw power that seeks to obliterate it, or, even worse perhaps, to engineer it differently but also with that which is invisible: the economy, the markets, that seek to create a human being that will be compliant differently, willingly, submissively. One that will think of itself as a free agent when, in actuality, as we have seen repeatedly, will be always already an indebted being. A human being, then, that is an *ánthropos*, as Boon again has told us, dwells in the cross-cultural domain of symbol and meaning-making, *faber symbolarum symbolarum* (1982:26).

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“**We are human beings**” famously uttered Malcolm X in 1965, when the humanity of African Americans was still being debated in the public sphere, SOMETHING THAT WAS still relevant six years later when uttered by L.D. Barkley during the 1971 rebellion at Attica—Barkley pointing OUT the distinction between prisoners as human beings and the prison system that considered them animals.

[Parergon 1].

This is an animality not different, either in its expression or its reception, from the one that João Biehl (2005) picked up in the place of abandonment that is Vita where the juxtaposition of human/animal is not on the level of the animalism of the human (what Hans Blumenberg located in the distance placed by one type of animal—the human—and all the rest of the animals [2006]) but one that is articulated by the residents of Vita themselves as the reality that organizes the relationship between the hospital and the patients from within the narratives of the caretakers: “Hospitals think that our patients are animals” says Oscar, a former drug user trained as one of the coordinators of the Vita infirmary (2005:39).

It is an annunciation of humanity in opposition to animality still needed in the face of the infamous “NHI (No Humans Involved),” the acronym used by police to refer to cases where African Americans and undocumented immigrants are involved (Rodriguez and De Cesare 1995).¹ It is an annunciation and an acronym that points to “intracacies in the history of receptions and misreadings” in the meaning of meaning—the meaning of the human being (as Boon noted in a different context, [1995:46])

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“You don’t have to torture us any more—we are already human” cried out the Leftists being tortured in the concentration camps that were established in Greece from 1947–1958. The camps, ordered to run as rehabilitation and reeducation centers for the production of nationally-minded citizens engaged in unspeakable, dehumanizing tortures. The torturers and their ideological suppliers had already produced the syllogism that only the nationally minded were not simply worthy citizens but *anthropoi*, human beings. By that syllogism, then, the Leftists were not human beings and they needed to be properly re-socialized into becoming so. The injunction of the torturers was clearly uttered in the course of the torture: “you will become human or you will die here.” To which the Leftists responded: “we are already human, you don’t need to torture us any more” (Panourgíá 2009).

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“We are cockroaches—sprayed and persistent.” June 2011 was hot—the Arab Spring, the *indignados* that rocked Europe, and the midway memorandum imposed by the Troika that was being debated in the Greek parliament as Greek citizens occupied Syntagma Square in Athens. That was a peaceful Occupy movement—public debates, snapping of fingers instead of clapping or booing, an existential communitas that coalesced precisely in order to mark the potentiality of humanity, to re-inject into the public sphere the possibility of recuperating the human measure of things, in the face of the yet unfathomable but very well-anticipated dehumanization that the crisis and the Troika were bringing. On the day of the memorandum vote, the police attacked with dogs, clubs, and chemical weapons—tear and smoke gas were thrown at the occupiers of the square. People scuttled about, trying to find shelter in the infirmary tents and in the metro (they were not safe there as the police gassed the entrances and exits trapping people underground depriving them of oxygen). Occupiers were prepared with gas masks, goggles, and liquid Maalox, but nothing could have prepared them for the levels of toxicity or the diligence of the police who sprayed them as if they were spraying vermin. The next day a young graduate student, Nelli Kambouri (2011), posted the following in the scholarly blog *Nomadic Universality*:

Since yesterday, June 28, we live like cockroaches in Syntagma square. We are sprayed continuously with chemicals by the Greek police regardless of what we do or what we say, but we persist. We leave Syntagma square for a while to catch our breath and keep on coming back. We rest a bit and return to the square...To be just standing close to Syntagma square seems dangerous and certainly suspicious. The arrests are being enacted to disperse the crowds, but we keep on moving closer to the square instead of leaving... As we are becoming cockroaches we begin, without really realizing it, to adopt tactics of stasis, of perseverance and endurance that were previously unknown to us. Chemicals keep on flying, sound bombs keep on exploding all around us making terrible noise and the crowds respond by not leaving, by remaining at Syntagma square. Becoming cockroaches and growing more and more resistant to the chemicals, our bodies begin to mutate. In gas masks, painting maalox on our faces, wearing sun glasses and ski masks, we persist. The figures in gas masks and maalox recognize each other even when they meet further away from Syntagma Square.

The classic urban tactics of demonstration (marching in a linear fashion, protesting in front of the Parliament, dispersing after the end of the demonstration) or confrontation (like throwing marbles, stones, and Molotov cocktails against the police and destroying symbolic targets like banks, multinational commercial chains etc.) seem, and are, secondary in the face of our tactics. Cockroaches do not attack, they do not make much noise, nor do they destroy something. But, we cockroaches are far more persistent and productive than other animals that are slowly disappearing. (Kambouri and Hatzopoulos 2011)

Of course, the Greek indignados, the *aganaktismenoi* of Syntagma Square, are not the only subjectivities to have been exempted from humanity and been precariously classified along with vermin. Shoah took place on precisely such an animality, on the foreclosed identification of the Jews with the human being, just as has been the continuous occupation of Gaza by Israel. But so have other exceptions, prior to that, with different iterations of the contact of the human being with its asymptotic definition—Puerto Ricans and Latinos in general with cockroaches (the song and the character of La Cucaracha being but only one such early example).² Hugh

Raffles (2011) has also shown us the richness of the archive of human/insect crossroads, by further problematizing the metaphorization of Jews as vermin and animals when he pointed out that the metaphorization was only a performative gesture that contained the neutralization of the metaphorical act (the “as if” of the metaphor) only to underline the performative positive identification of the Jews with animals (not “as if” they are dogs, lice, cockroaches, etc. but “they are” dogs, lice, cockroaches, etc.).

Although the Nazis imposed the borders with unprecedented ferocity, they did not initiate the expulsion of the Jews from the kingdom of humanity. Just as the practices of modern German anti-Semitism were directly connected to colonial technologies developed in Africa and Asia, the ontologies proposed by Judeophobia, a religio-cultural racism that reaches back beyond medieval Europe, were deeply tied to the logics and practices of an emergent imperial politics of race and difference. In early modern France, for example, “since coition with a Jewess is precisely the same as if a man should copulate with a dog,” Christians who had heterosexual sex with Jews could be prosecuted for the capital crime of sodomy (the *peccatum gravissimum* that encompassed both homosexual sex and intercourse with animals) and burned alive with their partners “such persons in the eye of the law and our holy faith differ[ing] in no wise from beasts” (who were also subject to judicial execution). More destructive—and more insinuating—was the association of the Jew with the shadowy figure of the parasite, a figure that infests the individual body, the population, and, of course, the body politic, that does so in both obvious and unexpected ways, and that invites innovative interventions and controls. (Raffles 2007:526)

[Parergon 2]

Even though the Bible prohibits explicitly the mating of humans with animals and orders the destruction of both in such an eventuality “And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood [shall be] upon them” (Leviticus 20:15), it stops short of equating the bestial human with the beast itself.

“The threat of insects,” Elias Canetti wrote in 1960:

lies in the fact that they appear in crowds and very suddenly. They have often stood as symbols for crowds. It is very probable that it was they who first brought man to think in terms of great crowds; perhaps his earliest “thousands” and “millions” were insects. (1981[1960]:363)

The affective encounter of “man” (the human being) with the multitude of insects produces the urgency for their extermination and the resultant synesthesia that ties together the emotional space of extermination with its attendant sound, smell, and sight. A space that, Canetti points out, undoubtedly thinking about the Nazi extermination showers and ovens, exists on the premise of contempt. He writes that:

in addition to the desire to get rid of a pest and to be sure it is really disposed of, our behavior to a gnat or a flea betrays the contempt we feel for a being which is utterly defenseless, which exists in a completely different order of size and power from us, with which we have nothing in common, into which we never transform ourselves and which we never fear except when it suddenly appears in crowds. The destruction of these tiny creatures is the only act of violence, which remains unpunished even within us. Their blood does not stain our hands, for it does not remind us of our own. We never look into their glazing eyes. (1981:205)

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Roberto Esposito (2009) sees in the Nietzschean animalism “the destiny of the ‘after-man’” (as he chooses to translate Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, a man—presumably he means a “human”) who redefines “the meaning of his own species no longer in humanistic or anthropological terms, but in anthropocentric or biotechnological terms” (2008:109). In this configuration of the animality of the human, Esposito sees Nietzsche anticipating a “biopolitics that precipitates into death and where the horizon of a new politics of life...begins” (2008:109). Hence, a way of configuring the human being as becoming “the subject and object of a biopolitics potentially different from what we know” because its relationality transverses human life to

include that which is outside of it, that which is “either its other or its after.” A neo-human, post-human relational being, then, the result of a biopolitics that seeks to annihilate humanity in favor of (an ultimately Nazified) Nietzschean ethics of being.

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“Doctor! Careful! I am the human; that is the machine” uttered one of my interlocutors, a patient in the ICU in a major hospital in Athens where I have been conducting fieldwork. He had been in the ICU for four days and was showing mild signs of recovery. The patient thought that his doctor appeared excessively worried about the proper functioning of one of the monitors to the neglect of the patient himself, so he turned to me to ask what the doctor was doing. I answered that he did not want to lose use of the monitor, when the patient turned to the doctor and pulled him back to the reality of the present: “I am the human,” he said. “That’s the machine.”

Human beings and machines: cyborgs, transhumanity, transengines, bionics, existent or imagined seek to push the limits of the understandings of the human being. If it is impossible to separate the human from its ideology, can we argue for the human as a being separate from the forms of mechanical reproduction that offer life support? What are the sorts and orders of meanings assigned to actual lives, which are suspended under the threat of expiration through the intervention of mechanical equipment which mimics life as it replicates its basic medical functions? Early metaphorizations of humans as machines engendered the glamorous “cyborg” of science fiction and of “hyperbolic and apocalyptic post-humanism” (in *Metropolis*, as androids and electric sheep, or as *The Terminator*). No glamour, though, have I found in narratives of patients who have been spliced onto machines. Quite the opposite: I have encountered a remainder discourse of loss and lack.

I keep the distinction between post-humanity (as an ideology that seeks to transcend and upend the politically dangerous privileging of the human being vis-à-vis the rest of nature that has been part of 19th century humanism) and the post-human (as a creature that transcends the limits of the biological human body as we currently know it). The post-human concerns me; the challenges that it posits as a lived experience. An experience informed by the impossibility of the cyborg as a post-human creature, refracted through the responses of patients who are faced with it as the singular possibility of their continued existence. What remains

from the encounter between a human and a machine when the machine is called in to preserve a damaged life? With Linda Hogle (2006, 2007, 2009) I take into account different cases of “spliced existence,” of human bodies that are being sustained by mechanical means, whether these means are aiding mobility (wheelchairs, exoskeletons, parawalkers, and orthotics managers) or life itself (as in supplemented breathing, parenteral feeding, and the various stomas—trachea, ureter, ileum, colon).

What about that being, then, the human, “never neutral, never safe” (as Boon might have said, as he did about Lévi-Strauss’s intellectual ardor in [1990:113]) under interrogation and threat not by any transcendental order, such as a “god” or “technology” or “history” or “ideology” but by something much more immanent, real, and present, namely the human being? The *ánthropos* whom Paul Rabinow (2003:14) sees as being given forms that we have not been able to make sense of yet. If Foucault’s “man” (who is the object of Rabinow’s concern) emerges at the intersection of life, labor, and language as an unstable unity that constitutes a potential sovereign-subject (2013:13); and since we know by now (contra Rabinow, I would say) that the potentiality of the extinction of *ánthropos* is being daily effectuated (through the violent convergence of life/language/and labor), is being constantly witnessed (in hate and excitable speech), is systematically performed (in a biopolitics that makes live and makes die in a biopower that decides on the distinction between life worthy and unworthy to live; on a politics of labor that re-iterates the NHI—No Humans Involved—on the backs of migrants, the precariat, and the underemployed; on a technological horizon that is intimately attached and beholden to capital rather than to the human that produces it), what is the responsibility of anthropology towards the human being, the *ánthropos* that gives the discipline its daily bread?

Here I am interrogating the models and orders of meanings assigned to and/or accrued by actual lives that are suspended, under the threat of expiration by the intervention of mechanical equipment that mimics life through the replication of its basic functions. How do actors (patients, families, physicians, other medical personnel), who participate in this tightly choreographed motion created by the intervention of mechanical equipment, negotiate the space of communication? What do nods, silences, and uncontrolled speech actually say and what do they tell us? How can we, as researchers and practitioners, make sense of what remains unspoken or even what is spoken on a level other than that of consciousness?

What are the different categories of patients we encounter and how do differences (socio-economic, educational, cultural, ethnic, or differences in gender and sex) engender alternate narrativizations of the encounter that occurs directly between humans and machines, on one hand, and among humans mediated by machines, on the other?

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The metaphor of the human as machine is not new. Julien Offray de La Mettrie drew it in his 1747 *L' Homme Machine*, a metaphORIZATION that sought to disjoin the body of the human being, in all its materiality and animality, from the transcendental endowments that religion, piety, and the Church had endowed upon it. In an emancipatory gesture committed to the project of autonomy of the human being as a subject of itself, La Mettrie severed the connections between the mechanistic operation of the human body (as the location of the human) and its metaphysical projections. Despite the demystification, disenchantment, and debunking of the primacy of the human body against other forms of nature found in such early metaphORIZATIONS of humans as machines, and the frightening glamour that the “cyborg” has attained in science fiction, and within “hyperbolic and apocalyptic post-humanism” (Seltin 2009:45), when engaged in Boon’s “thick comparison” (2007:323) of the reality on the ground, thick complications materialize. The technologically enhanced human body, in its valence as a cyborg, has been deployed as a possibility of existence that could transcend both human politics and the limits of the human body. Whether or not as a transcendental potentiality for a different politics—a view developed initially by Donna Haraway (1991) and later expanded and gently challenged by Rosi Braidotti (1994)—the cyborg has been presented as resistance to totalizing masculinist late-capitalist politics, and in this sense (stripped of any potential corporeality) it constitutes a seductive possibility.

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Is that potentiality, however, adequate, politically or ethically, to call for a “cyborg anthropology” (as articulated in 1995 by Downey, Dumit, and Williams) where machines and the technologies that produce them are afforded subjectivities and agencies, and whose stated interest is in engaging in a “critique of the adequacy of ‘ánthropos’ as the subject and object of anthropology” where ánthropos is defined as “the skin-bound individual, autonomous bearer of identity and agency, theoretically without gender,

race, class, religion, or time” (1995:265), and to propose a “serious challenge to the human-centered foundations of anthropological discourse” (1995:265)? Even if no one is actually discussing “cyborg anthropology” any longer, the non-human engagements of anthropology remain on the table. The research of Robert Nelson (2000) which focuses on the case of a technology-dependent human infant, further complicates the possibility of a “cyborg anthropology” especially as Nelson claims this infant as a cyborg only to undermine this claim in the course of the development of his own argument. The fieldwork that I have conducted thus far shows that actors (people-on-the-ground, as it were, in the ICU) articulate a clear distinction between their own subjectivities and the anthropomorphism that sustains the theories of a subjectivity of the machine.

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Michel de Certeau (1984) has described the veil of calmness and serenity that families assume that it ought to surround the comatose, over-comatose, or dying person, and he has explained how this assumption is pregnant with the possibility of relegating the ill to a realm that is ethically, existentially, and ideologically separate from that of the rest of us. One of the recurrent aporias within the ICU, expressed by all medical staff, is the possibility of producing a puncture in this dystopia, of keeping the integrity of the human distinct from the mediation of the technology that manages to sustain and re-produce human life. Writing allegorically on the death of the body politic in 1762, Jean-Jacques Rousseau makes an analogy to the human body that can be taken not only as an early description of brain death but also as an early understanding of death as a series of events rather than a singular and identifiable moment: “the brain can fall into paralysis and yet the individual may still live. A man may remain an imbecile and live. But once the heart has ceased its functions, the animal is dead” (1762:194). Every day in the ICU physicians negotiate the thin space that is left between consciousness (medically described as the presence of electrical activity, the cessation of which indicates the end of consciousness) and brain death in their efforts to preserve their patients’ “humanness” and to translate to patients’ intimates the difference between consciousness and brain function, brain function and brain death, brain death and cardiac death—and the meaning of futility of treatment.

Despite the existence of objective measuring protocols for brain functions and responsiveness (such as the Confusion Assessment Method

(CAM) or the Richmond Agitation Sedation System (RASS), which measure the level of responsiveness and, therefore, consciousness of a patient as evaluated by the medical personnel) the residents, attending physicians, and nurses expand these objective protocols with their own subjective and individual assessments in order to decide whether the patient is responsive, conscious, and with cognitive brain functioning. Nelson notes that the nurses at the Children's Hospital where he worked cited a five-month-old-technology-dependent-patient's reflex tears as crying (and, hence, as proof of unhappiness) in their effort to convince the baby's mother to give up her custody so that he could be placed in a foster home, where he would be kept on a ventilator for the rest of his life against his mother's will.

At the "CVMG" ICU (in New York, where I have been carrying out part of my research) the nurses were rattled by a similar event that involved a 50-year-old male patient with multiple organ failure who had been unresponsive for more than 78 hours. Although the patient had been staring into the void, his eyes would tear up from time to time. The attendees were not convinced that this meant that he was conscious but ("since nothing is 100 percent certain in medicine," as they keep repeating) neither did they try to disabuse the nurses of this notion. In the case of another patient who exhibited heightened brain function and intermittent consciousness, the attending instructed the residents to withdraw the administration of ketamine (a powerful analgesic that can cause anesthesia and hallucinations) because "it robs him of his humanness." The human, *ánthropos*, as the object of medicine and as it becomes produced and reproduced within the context of preservation and reproduction of life.

Although the post-, the neo-, the techno-human and their respective counter-humanities are being presented as emancipatory potentialities, in their hyperbole the texts that construct them are often, as Seltin notes,

deeply hubristic; death, disease, abnormality, and even embodiment are seen as barriers that can be overcome through technological innovation and intervention. In the most extreme accounts, bodies are abandoned and 'the human' gives way to transcendental omnipotent and omniscient super-beings, until "ultimately, the entire universe... [is] saturated with our intelligence." (Kurzweil 2006:29 as quoted in Seltin 2009:44)

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Edward Said (2004), in his posthumous *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, drew a stark distinction between Heidegger's humanism as the logos (I mean this here in its mathematical sense as the end sum, and not necessarily as its philosophical dimensions of reason and logic) of the metaphysical relationship of humanism to a prior Being, and what he, Said, meant by humanism, a meaning imbued by the experience not only of the Holocaust but also of exile, extraterritoriality, and homelessness (2004:11). Keeping in mind the abuses that humanism suffered in its iterations as Eurocentrism (2004:11), Said called for a different kind of humanism. A "humanism as a usable praxis of intellectuals and academics who want to know what they are doing, what they are committed to as scholars, and who want also to connect these principles to the world in which they live as citizens" (2004:6). Said saw humanism as the "process of unending disclosure...self-criticism, and liberation...as critique that is democratic, secular, and open...and that its purpose is to make things available to critical scrutiny as the product of human labor" (2004:21–22), a humanism that, with a nod to Isaac Deutscher's (1968:77) "non-Jewish Jew," would engage the "non-humanist humanist."

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I argue, then, for a new iteration of humanism, an immanent humanism, a democratic and anthropological humanism that will further trouble and upset the field, that will unsettle the archive, a humanism centered on humanity, one that neither falls back to the anthropocentrism of the Enlightenment nor reimagines the human as the aleatory experience of itself, a human that places the *méconnaissance* of itself, the misrecognition of the subject by the subject at the center of a new political project of a promised autonomy. I argue for a humanism that listens to how humans define themselves, a humanism that is an *anthropism*, so that it skirts the exclusionary mechanisms of the past and re-proposes the *ánthropos* of the now (see also Panourgíá 2017). No transcendence, no metaphysics. Just the immanence of being and acting. And I propose *communitas* as the center for this anthropism. A *communitas* that will lie not only in Esposito's (2009) formulation as "the totality of persons united not by a 'property' but precisely by an obligation and a debt; not by an 'addition'

but by a ‘subtraction.’ This is lack, or a limit that is configured as an onus,” but primarily in what Victor Turner (1969) and Edith Turner (2012) have termed “spontaneous or existential *communitas*.” This is a *communitas* of counter culture, which despite its elusive nature (2012:21) and precisely because of “its shyness and untouchability by commercialization or institutionalization” (2012:xiii) is a *communitas* of deep resistances to totalizing discourses, regimes of thought, and technologies of exclusion that privilege multitudes and publics over the atomized *ánthropoi*, the human beings that are, indeed, the object of study of anthropology.

[Parergon 3]

Victor Turner first introduced to anthropology the concept of communitas, which he borrowed from Martin Buber’s formulation and delineation of “community.” By looking at Buber’s spatio-temporal description of community (“Community is where community happens” [Buber 1961:51 as quoted in Turner 1969:127], Turner ascribed to communitas “an aspect of potentiality” (1969:127). With this gesture, Turner liberated communitas from Henry Lewis Morgan’s (and Rousseau’s and Marx’s, as he points out) error of reading into it not a potentiality for true equality but “a confusion of communitas with archaic or primitive society...where the distinction between structure and communitas exists and obtains symbolic expression in the cultural attributes of liminality, marginality, and inferiority” (1969:130).

It might appear utterly discordant to have put Boon in these strained dialogues—Rabinow, Said, and Haraway might appear to belong to other genealogies, other politics, other concerns. But Boon himself has shown us such possibilities, ones that transverse concepts with oblique politics, thought with affect, words with experience, as he crossed Geertz’s humanistic interpretivism with Levi-Strauss’s anti-humanist symbolism. And that is both a precarious and an unpayable debt.

[Parergon 4]

I borrow the term symbolism from Philip Wexler (1991), and not from Nancy Frazer (2013). Wexler locates symbolism in Lacanian psychoanalysis as a “homogenizing reification of diverse signifying practices into a monolithic and all-pervasive ‘symbolic order’...a normative ‘symbolic order’ whose power to shape identities dwarfs to the point of extinction that

of mere historical institutions and practices.” Frazer sees symbolicism as “the disclosure of the self-defeating Lacanian feminism” (2013:10).

At this moment in history I need to add some specificity to what this “human” entails, and I want to stay for this moment, and just for a moment, to two affective locations that this human occupies and owns, which not only constitute the human as human but also reside at the heart of what makes this human being a political being—memory and fear. A friend who returned from Berlin the day of the Greek Referendum (July 5, 2015), when the entire world was debating the London Agreement of 1953, reported with the deepest sense of surprise that he had been talking with people in Germany (that is, German people in Germany) who had no idea about the London Agreement. This fact is something that brings into sharp relief two components that constitute memory: one is amnesia—is this a case of elective or enforced amnesia? Is it possible that German children are not taught that post-war Germany was made possible through the debt forgiveness that Germany incurred during the murderous war that she initiated (a case of enforced educative amnesia)? Or have they learned it and have willfully forgotten it? But there is something even more interesting here: what lies at the heart of that agreement is not only forgiveness (granted by the aggrieved nations to Germany) but also an active commitment to not reprise against her. This is not a new invention, “no reprise,” *μή μνησικακεῖν*, *to not engage in reprisals; it is an ancient gesture, it is the oath that allowed Athens to suture her line of democracy after the Tyranny of the Thirty had been overthrown by outlawing reprisals against the Thirty Tyrants (their families, their enablers, and their followers), so that the polity could start anew with a regained democracy. Μή μνησικακεῖν is not a call to forget, neither a call to forgive, only a call not to engage in reprisals. Whether the German case is one of enforced or elective amnesia what we also see being performed here is the practice of a disavowal of a politics of recognition and gratitude with the German insistence on reprisals on Greek society through the harsh measures that guide the Memoranda. And this elision of recognition and gratitude is precisely what generates the second such affective location: fear. It is the fear that democracy holds of the return of oppression that drives the act of “no reprise.”*

But this fear is not disembodied; it rests on the memory of the past to create a present that wants to safeguard the future. And here the specific, individual, personal memories and fears of singular and monadic citizens need to be taken into consideration and accounted for. Because democracy cannot bypass (let alone elide) the monadic person, the monadic citizen, in favor of the multitude; cannot dismiss the specificity of desires, fears, anticipations of the citizens in the name of a disembodied whole. This is the cruel challenge of democracy: to walk on the tightrope that connects *this* citizen with the demos that she constitutes as a participatory agent. The citizen to the demos that she authors. Which happens to be precisely the challenge of and for anthropology—the subject to the discipline that she engenders. ■

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Endnotes:

¹Also see *RadicalDifference*, a blog by a collective of librarians, at <http://radicalreference.info/about>.

²Another case of the inversion of positions of the human with the cockroach is the long poem by Pedro Pietri, one of the co-founders of the Nuyorican Poets Café in New York and member of the Young Lords Party. *Suicide Note From a Cockroach in a Low Income Housing Project* is available online at www.esperimentiweb.altervista.org/. Pedro Pietri can be heard reading excerpts from it here: <http://www.pacificradioarchives.org/recording/bc070907>. I wish to thank Adriana Garriga-Lopez for drawing my attention to the poem.

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Foreign Language Translations:

Immanent Human(ism)s: Engagements with James A. Boon

[**Keywords:** anthropology, democracy, the human, neo-humanism, epistemology, spaces of exception, medicine, politics]

Εγκόσμιος ανθρωπισμός. Μία συνομιλία με το έργο του James A. Boon

[**Κύριοι όροι:** Ανθρωπισμός, ουμανισμός, ανθρώπινο όν, αποικιοκρατία, ανθρωπολογία]

内在人文（主义）：与詹姆斯布恩之交锋

[**关键词:** 人类学，民主，人，新人文主义，认识论，例外的空间，医学，政治]

Надвигающиеся гуман(изм)ы: Встречи с Джеймсом А. Буном

[**Ключевые слова:** антропология, демократия, человек, неогуманизм, эпистемалогия, места исключения, медицина, политика]

Human(ism)os: Relacionamentos com James A. Boon

[**Palavras-chave:** antropologia, democracia, o humano, neo-humanismo, epistemologia, espaços de exceção, medicina, política]

الانسانية الملازمة: التعاقدات مع جيمس إي. بون

كلمات البحث: الأنثروبولوجيا، الديمقراطية، الانسان، الانسانية الجديدة، علم المعرفة، فضاءات الاستثناء، الطب، السياسة

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