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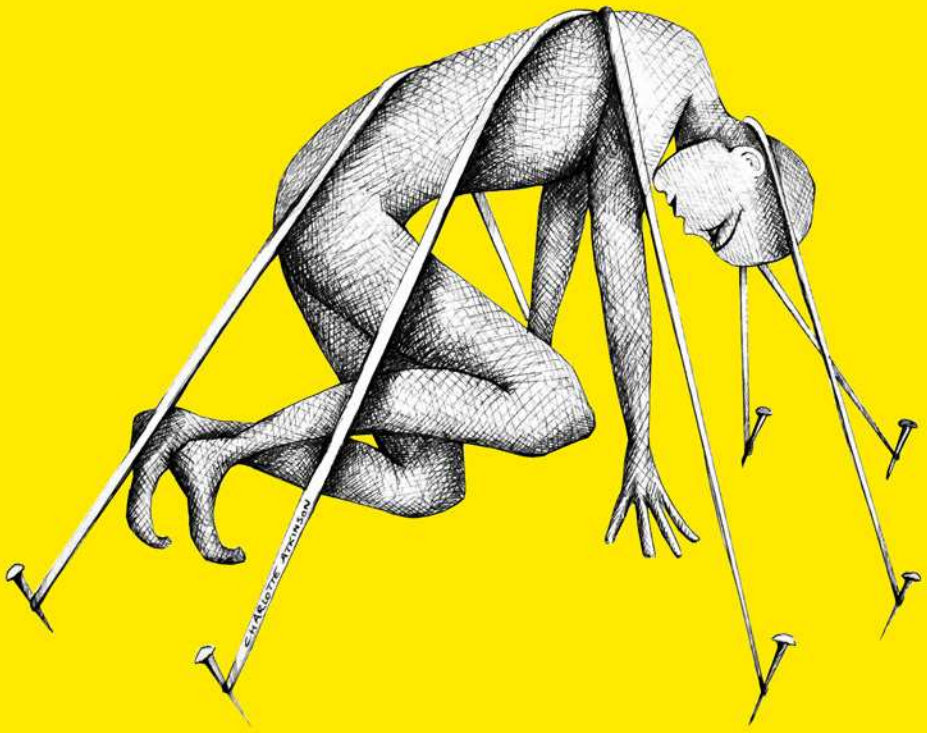
HUMANITY UNDER DURESS



Edited by

ROWLAND ATKINSON
DAN GOODLEY

Humanity Under Duress

Edited by
Rowland Atkinson & Dan Goodley
University of Sheffield

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Introduction

This collection gathers a series of short-form interventions - a gathering, no less, of perspectives and assessments drawn from economists, philosophers, educationalists, sociologists, criminologists and critical psychologists. These contributions improvise on an apparently simple brief – to offer a plain language perspective on the question of what it means to be human today that identifies the pressures and factors redefining and reshaping that experience. Each seeks to address the question of what the essence or nature of humanity might be, in as far as this might be ascertained. The contributions to be found here consider how our identities, capacities and social conditions are being re-shaped, deformed or re-made by numerous forces that that are changing that condition.

Inhumanity is never hard to find in the world around us. As we write, bombs are raining down on civilians in Syria as America leaves the region. Thousands of desperate migrants fleeing climate-change and disorder are repelled verbally or physically by nation states in the global north. Reports from the tech world highlight the expanding harms generated by a networked society - operatives paid minimum wages by Facebook to examine images of abuse and extreme political material - and damaged by their exposure, many have been building private collections of extreme pornography. In the damaged everyday worlds of many nations, time-bombs set by austerity politics are now periodically shattering the already insecure conditions of many of the most marginalised communities. Yet, while many struggle, the hubris and gross materialism of the most affluent is increasingly visible, signifying an apparent indifference in the face of intense human need around the globe. Such examples can be added to a million more, highlighting the capacity for individuals or complex social and political systems to mechanically produce forms of inhumanity.

The question of what it means to be human is also being overtaken by a perhaps even greater concern; the very continuity of that condition as humanity itself reaches the limits of its supporting ecosystem. The climate question and its entwinement with economic systems that have defined the trajectory of many lives has brought into ever sharper relief the limits and our potential endpoint. Despite these concerns, material inequalities, between north and south, super-wealthy and super-poor, are increasing. Yet the growing distance between the rich and the rest is only one of several worrisome clashes between cultures and identities. Ethnicity, disability, class and gender highlight areas of cleavage shaping conflict and contests. Across and within these divisions, violence, abuse and the distanciation of these phenomena by the media systems we use are evident features of life today. In the face of this, how can we hold on to, calibrate and understand what it means to be human today?

The idea of the human, and humanity more broadly, is perhaps under strain from at least two key sources. First, the stretching of these concepts. Second, the possibility that

the human is under pressure from deepening and destabilising forces. On the first point we would suggest that the question of being human at a time of massive change and inequality generates challenges for interdisciplinary social science as it engages with engineering, medicine, philosophy, the arts and other perspectives. More and more we realise the need for an unbounded engagement with the idea of the human, the sense that disciplines must in fact flow one into another as we seek more appropriate and effective tools with which we might evaluate the harms, burdens and potential gains that variably come from today's political, economic, social and technological worlds.

For the academy the idea of the human, and with it notions of the humane, remain deeply pertinent to the role of universities and to social thinkers keen to chart the means and structures by which we are made more than or less than this designation might mean to us. The ways in which capitalism and the money economy appear to subvert and reduce our essence to one of a money calculus that takes all in its path has become a major leitmotiv of such analyses, the sense that mutual support, kindness and an ethos for living is being scraped away ever more deeply. Yet there is also reason for guarded optimism, as can be seen in searches for the kind of compassionate, engaged and mutually supportive constituents of life in a world ever more anxious about grand narratives attached to religious or national doctrines. There is nothing more human than reaching out to others for connection, mutuality and interdependence even as populism and doctrinal fundamentalisms appear to undermine such possibilities.

Who 'we' are in a world apparently without biological and technical limits, rules, ethics and codes remains contentious. The reality is, of course, that many limits remain in place, particularly so for large sections of a global humanity submerged under forms of labour exploitation, near or total slavery, the sway of ideology, the loss of dignity and the absence of fulfilment of fundamental human needs focused on shelter, education, nourishment and self-worth. Much of what passes for a concern with what is human, of being more than human or superhuman, is in fact almost unrelated to the concerns of a humanism focused on how we might be better connected, empathic and more fully with each other. The massive economic wins of the few drive projects to reach the stars, to escape the coil of mortality and to evade the coming ecological changes now in evidence around us all. Such projects are inevitably the designs of a more self-centred upper social world that inevitably seeks to avoid the kinds of damage and absence generated by the same economic systems that has yielded them as winners.

How then can we grapple and reconcile the systemic production of violence, harm and inequality with the acts of individuals? How can we help those around most effectively? The central character of Kobayashi's epic, The Human Condition, Kaji, finds himself an administrator of a Japanese labour camp in occupied China. His unthinkable approach is to help maximise the work of its labourers by offering a more tolerant and less aggressive regime. These sincere efforts are undermined by the unwaveringly harsh military chains of command above him, but also by the indignant prisoner-workers who see only a subtle

manipulation by the agent of an oppressive force. The broader story works on many levels to illustrate the profound difficulty of remaining truly human, and how we are inevitably bound up with much larger processes and systems that will tend to keep on creating violence, exploitation and harm to many. In order to understand this kind of complexity and the situated nature of violence and inhumanity it is important that critical academic endeavour seeks to chart, explain and help resolve such incredibly knotty problems.

The second key source of strain lies in the possibility that the human is under pressure from deepening, destabilising forces. What does it mean to be human at a time of increasingly rapid social, economic, technological and political change? Our contemporary lives are destabilised and re-made by new senses of human identity and experience. Life-extending technologies, body modifying techniques, smart drugs and body prostheses are quickly challenging any sense of a unified human core while playing out in a materially unequal world in which such enhancements and improvements are available to only a small fraction of the global population. The incredible abundance that has flowed to the masters of the global economy enable historically unprecedented and sweeping power that takes in the political, economic, urban and technical systems that may enable the hoarding of new opportunities. Here again, academic work must ally itself with those oppressed and damaged by these changes.

The sense of humanity as some unified or shared experience appears to be rent asunder. The social contract strains under rising inequality, the colonialism of global finance enables dispossession and social cohesion is breaking-down in many nations in which the ghosts of Nazism are not only remembered again, but actively resurrected by new political movements manipulating sentiment in this same troublesome, rapidly changing and anxiety-inducing world.

Such challenges belie the fact that for many people hardship is a simple aspect of everyday life. In the face of such hardships many make strenuous efforts to locate a common ethos anchored in eschewing materialism, and instead, creating a sense of place, re-finding forms of social mutuality or spiritualities anchored in everyday experience and well-being. But what does it say of 'us' when any such progress is undermined so effectively by forms of hyper-consumption, self-promoting narcissism and by economic systems which bring violent dispossession, climate disaster and political instability to so many? Such connections and questions exercise many of the contributions in this volume.

Finally, we might reflect that any historical analysis of the human, the humane and the humanist reveals questions about whether we would want to, or indeed can, sustain the category of the human. Why keep returning to our shared humanness, our common humanity or some form of transcendental humanism when diversity and hybridity are so deeply characteristic of its changing nature? How do we maintain a sense of unity when the poor, the queer, the female, the disabled and people of colour continue to be excluded from what many understand as some kind of valued humanness? Coupled with a growing sense of our virtual, digital, algorithmic, robotic, future, online and extended humanness, we may

wonder whether or not there is something rather old-fashioned (at best) or exclusionary (at worst) in our cherishing of the human category. In any case it must be remembered that the category of the human remains contested and open to more malleable re-workings in the face of many changes and tensions.

Our writings and musings are, of course, emerge from an interdisciplinary international community where the human is being pushed into new thematic areas associated with the posthuman, post-social, post-welfare and post-anthropocene. These themes reflect the current state of the human category and do so in times characterised as being changing, episodic and fluctuating. Populism, post-truth, deep fakes and nationalism conjure up dangerous sentimental notions of human autonomy that may have the impact of splitting communities. The term 'posthumanities' is but one of a number of terms that seek to house, or at least allow us to better locate, a host of critical responses. These advances allow us to re-imagine the human condition in terms of extension, assemblage and interconnection, they also demand us to think about whether or not we want to keep hold of a discrete conceptualisation of the human historically held to be so important to our politics. Might we, then, become re-enchanted with the human through an engagement with more contemporary theorisations associated with the posthuman? Can we hold onto ideas of self-worth, respect, affection and attachment to the beauty of the human(e) as well as celebrating our more flighty, hyperactive and transient qualities found in, say, our digital or new, more robotic encounters? Might we find emancipation, equality and opportunity at the intersections of our human-animal-social-digital-biogenic-robotic-human entanglements?

This volume

We made the decision to offer the proceedings of the meeting as an open-access electronic book. The collective was unanimous in choosing this way of reaching out to other researchers and readers interested in these issues. We know that the corporatisation of intellectual knowledge is not just a British problem. While processes of intellectual audit and knowledge commodification potentially threaten intellectual thought and critical engagement with many issues, we are too often in danger of missing out on the discursive and provocative qualities of writing, thinking and debating together – often lost in the pressure to commit thoughts to formal peer review when a more playful and discursive presentation may well be in order but which may not be valorised by the structures of academic life as they are coming to be defined.

As a small offering, the online open access collection presented here gives insight into some of the key questions that we as a collective of researchers came together to consider during a two day symposium convened by iHuman and the Inclusive Societies group, both based in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Sheffield. The brief to our invited scholars was clear - write 1,500 words (no more), share this with us two weeks

before the event and prepare a 10 minute synopsis of the paper in readiness for debate and discussion. Some prompts were provided:

- What does it mean to be human in a post-welfare, post-social, austerity society?
- What does it mean to flourish as a human and who gets to flourish and who does not?
- What are the social, political and economic implications and feedback effects of compressed and damaged flourishing among particular social strata and geographies?
- What kinds of non-human connections are necessary in the time of the Anthropocene?
- Can we celebrate the human category and also embrace non-humans such as animals and tech?
- Are we living in a time of the posthuman and, if so, what does this mean in practice, politics and theory?
- Are new vocabularies of winning, losing-out, difference or class required to understand the complex forms of social and (non)human problems as we move forward?

The symposium involved presentations and respondents offering critique in order that a revised set of chapters could be gathered, benefitting from reception in an interdisciplinary context. Contributors were offered the chance to review their papers but to keep their writings around 1,500 words.

So, here you have it: a collection of papers that take seriously some of these tricky, thorny but ultimately timely questions. We welcome responses and debate. If you Tweet please comment #Humunderduress and we will continue the conversation.

The contributions

Rowland Atkinson attends to the political economy of inhumanity found in common encounters of humans and digital life. His idea of the 'murder box' explores gaming, leisure and pornography in which the digital human's desires are played out in deeply disturbing ways. Atkinson asks us to think again about the assemblages of human-digital worlds and to consider the possibilities for dehumanisation that are constituted in the name of pleasure and play. Too often the posthuman condition - embodied in the very idea of the digital human - is bandied about as a benign, inevitable and productive phenomenon. Atkinson encourages us to consider the possibilities for constituting the inhumane through our

pleasure-seeking activities.

Taking a cross-cultural frame of reference, Jamie Coates offers an analysis of humanness via a discussion of the 'person'. Here he engages Chinese and Japanese linguistic formulations of personhood as a means of unpacking how different cultures approach the idea of the (human) individual. As an enlightenment concept, the category of the human offered perhaps less a clear idea that captured all experience, but the new capacity at least to distinguish between those to be included in this category and those or were not or were less than human. What can we do or think differently when we consider the idea of bodies as persons, rather than folding them into the category of the human? As Coates shows, many non-human actors become part of a much broader pantheon and this may have value and resonance at a time of environmental and social change. Can we or should we embrace the person if we wish to move beyond some concept of the human?

Nadena Doherty and Reza Gholami offer a critical race perspective on questions of the human. Their contribution maps out the continuation of a racist white supremacy landscape across our institutions of society. Any engagement with the human must, they argue, recognise from the outset that racism is endemic and undercuts any discussions of inclusion, extension and community. They push us to question the whiteness of theorisation - especially that written in the critical posthumanities - and to counter this with a sensitisation to the politics of race. Such a politics enters the core of our ideas about what might constitute human/posthuman life and therefore requires our immediate attention.

Nick Gane discusses how varying economic logics and perspectives have been developed by a range of thinkers. These have become enormously influential ways of framing economic activity that is itself often antagonistic to human capacity – generating forms of market orientation that create divisions and inequalities that have yielded intense exclusion and damaged capacities among many. Gane traces these disparate concepts, including a brief history of neoliberal thinking and influencers that brings us to the current focus on algorithms and 'nudging' designed to create compliance and monitoring as much as improved social outcomes. The answer, Gane contends, is to move away from nudging better consumers, and in so doing, reject the triumph of markets and regain a sense of the human.

Dan Goodley focuses on race and disability as entry points into a discussion of how we might begin to move from the exclusive and excluding conceptions of humanity generated in the male/Western tradition. Like Gane, Goodley identifies a strongly economic, rational and male core to conception of humanity that needs to be teased apart to achieve a more effective and inclusive impression of humanness. Yet the move to a posthumanism also generates potential problems, and the sense that in throwing out or reworking ideas of the human through technophile understandings may 'flatten' our understanding of what it means to be human. Locating a series of ways forward, one focal point becomes how educational systems impose ways of understanding as 'less than human' on black and disabled children.

Alexandra Hall offers an insight into the world of body modification via ethnographic work among women adopting new methods of beautification– injectable, pill-form and other techniques that have rapidly risen alongside modes of internet distribution that circumvent traditional methods of control and regulation. On this circuit Hall locates these consumption practices as part of a regressive capitalism that now invades, and potentially damages, the bodies and minds of those who become subscribed to ideas that their bodies and faces are primary indexes of their sexual and social value. Here there is fun and mutual admiration but also an emerging set of risks that are propelled by the desire to be, in some sense, more than, and better than...

Karin Lesnik-Oberstein considers the varying conceptions of the child, a body or figure that can be variously cast as occupying a range of complex positions – such as being in some sense pre-human/adult, or being in some sense more than disabled. She highlights how thinking about children has tended to identify them as a kind of commonsense category of being when, in reality, they occupy intensely complex and ambivalent positions. Here the sciences of mind keep looking ever-deeper for clearer and more incisive impressions of the workings of the brain, while also recognising the non-unity and complexity of personal psychological development and experience.

Paul Martin brings a Science and Technology perspective to a discussion of the condition of the posthuman. He argues that we need to engage more readily - conceptually and empirically - with the more pernicious elements of bio-capitalism. These might include the routinisation of genetic engineering of life, a revitalisation of evolutionary knowledge that downplays the uniqueness of humans and the increased surveillance of populations through their biometrics. He argues that posthuman thinking creates a strange irony: that critiquing humanism and opening new decentred understandings of the human risks laying the ground for an uncritical acceptance of the promise of bio-capitalism. Martin is clear that any move to the posthuman must be mindful of the complex practices and ramifications of contemporary modes of capitalist reproduction.

Rod Michalko asks us to consider the match or mismatch between theoretical communities and the experience of humanity that those communities purport to understand. His contribution focuses on disability studies literature and research but his discussion has much wider reach. Michalko offers a number of provocations about the utility of theory and its relative lack of engagement with a host of phenomenological experiences associated with the human condition. He wonders to what extent theorisation has actually become dehumanising due to its dislocation from the everyday experiences of living in the world. His contribution offers us an opportunity to attend to the uncertainties and failings of scholarship.

Rebecca Maskos pitches posthuman thinking and strategic humanism against one another as a useful oppositional strategy. As a disabled activist and scholar she worries about the potential erasure of disabled people that can occur in some posthuman scholarship that, understandably, seeks to make forms of inter-species alliances. While

sensitive to animal rights and human-animal assemblages (leitmotifs of contemporary posthuman scholarship) she is also keen to engage with a strategic form of humanism that upholds the humanity of disabled people. Maskos reminds us that the fight for recognition in the humanist mirror remains a major political and ontological ambition of groups of human beings who have historically been dehumanised.

Javier Monforte merges materialist and narrative social sciences in his brief dalliance with the dystopia of Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale. His argument is a methodological but also a theoretical one; that in order for us to make sense of the stories of humans under duress we need to attend equally to the material conditions that accompany and sit alongside our stories. Too often the 'materialist turn' has shifted scholars' interests to some kind of bare materialism that lacks an engagement with the stories we tell about our lives. Monforte makes a strong case for a two-pronged analysis: let us acknowledge our narratives as humans just as we acknowledge the significance of non-human others to our very existence.

Abdou Maliq Simone turns to the question of cities and urban life, making a broad and nuanced case for the consideration of the extending, planetary nature of our urban condition. Within that spatial framing Simone discusses the degree to much hybrid, multiple, damaged and ordinary lives are played-out in ways that are both circumscribed by, but which also rise above, the urban contexts in which they are often located or delimited. Among other questions, he considers what aspects of human social life in urban contexts are somehow 'disobedient' to the logic of its circumstances, how does it challenge, reframe and rework the material of that urban life.

Tanya Titchkosky takes us to the gym. She recalls a moment in her local gym where a group of fellow humans are reacted to in terms of well-rehearsed and well-known ideas that already exist about particular kinds of humans. As a disability studies scholar she is interested in asking how the presence of disability actually creates a movement of opportunity and reflection - a politics of wonder, as she terms it. Titchkosky reminds us that certain human categories are immediately known and they are known as humans in need of fixing. We must be wary of this tendency of some human beings to see failure in, and seek cure for, other human beings.

Iain Wilkinson offers an analysis of the twenty first century social condition, couched in the terms of traditional sociological theory. He argues that we are now living under social and economic conditions that further exaggerate and generate human suffering. As the charting of various social determinants of ill-health and their inequalities has proceeded we now realise, he suggests, that incredible amounts of evidence of social and health-related problems are in evidence. In short, we are increasingly aware of the kinds of structural violence, of class conditions and experiences, that lie at the heart of this contemporary social condition. How can we locate, within social thinking, some kind of moral guidance on how to live and or what to do to make this better, how to make human suffering reduce in its intensity?

Katherine-Runswick-Cole, Yvonne Wechuli and Antonios Ktenidis offer us a welcome reflection on the feel of the contributions to the Humanity under Duress symposium. We thank them for giving us critical feedback on the papers we have presented. They raise questions about the kinds of human beings that we might implicitly have in mind when we are enacting scholarship; about the tension of theorisation devoid of a concern with potential applications of that theory-work; about the tensions between particular 'studies of …' (in this case, disability and animal studies). Their writing pushes us to revisit our assumptions when we think together and to consider the alliances and communities we have in mind.

01.
The Murder Box: A trope for inHumanity

Rowland Atkinson, University of Sheffield

Introduction

To paraphrase Dickens, we live in a season of darkness as well as light. Yet the balance appears to be moving toward increasingly bleak prospects for our own humanity. We must remember that the idea of humanity is the idea of 'us' as a collectivity, but it is also a common sense of kind feelings. Kindness is not something the social sciences have tended to consider, with some notable exceptions (Phillips and Taylor, 2009). The work of critical social science has tended to be focused on locating social problems and 'issues' generated by conflict or unease, the sense that something is wrong or unjust. Despite this, the concept of the pro-social and ideas about what would make a better society occupy a significant amount of thinking, political life and, increasingly, attempts to locate more meaningfully human goals. A better world for human beings is often now understood as a complex set of social interdependencies and in relation to a wider environment that also includes non-human animals, plants and inanimate objects. The compulsion to know, include and assist this wider world is undergirded by the increasing awareness that to deny such inter-relatedness will accelerate the threat to humans. Despite this, the view that we are ever-more peaceable and enlightened seems naïve at best, and there is cause for significant concern, as this sketch suggests.

The move into a new epoch defined by informational capitalism brought with it new gifts – trans-national networks, learning, economic expansion and a liberating erosion of solid forms of traditional identity. But these changes have also been accompanied by an increasingly libidinal and desirous mode of social and economic life. In this life the back-regions of psyches and social behaviours that were commonly denied or suppressed are increasingly foregrounded, celebrated, shared or normalised – particularly in relation forms of sexual and violent conduct. Similarly, political life and adjunct social media spaces are characterised by intensifying emotion and anger that appears to de-civilize even the core institutional functions of societies. Whether these changes are good or bad remains fraught moral philosophical territory. But we can nevertheless begin to index and chart important changes linked to new modes of harm and an erosion of something we might call our humanity. Whether we care about such changes is another question that I will not tackle in this short contribution.

In 1938 Robert K Merton echoed Freud's contemporaneous work when he suggested that the social order could be understood as a kind of mechanism for impulse management.

Freud, at the end of his career and depressed by the multiplying inhumanity of the 1930s, argued that civilisation was an important kind of trade-off – we must remain dissatisfied and restrained beings in order to accept the benefit of civility and respect for other humans. Today we see rapid changes that bring with them the potential for massive re-aggregations and the refashioning of social life in ways that the social sciences are barely keeping-up with. Networks and media technologies are generating new and amplified social harms.

Consider the example of misogyny online. Masculinity takes on a tangible form in networked aggregations - attacks on women through degrading comments, video and tweet postings as well as revenge porn (conveniently indexed on image-sharing websites). This is more or less a Wild West of public life, unchecked by corporate suppliers of the infrastructures through which such views are expressed. Even attempts at moderating these forums appear doomed to become overwhelming forms of 'shit-work' for low-paid monitors or, where effective, simply lead to migrations to new forums and spaces in which regressive, inhumane and prejudicial content can be shared (4Chan, 8Chan, Gab, the Dark Web, and so on). Spaces of shared community and values, for all their problems of appearing intrusive or stifling, are breaking down into micro-spaces that are bespoke to the impulses and desires of the individual, creating new communities in which forms of geographically dispersed perversity or violent intent can become unified in such forums.

What we know about hate crime's ability to thrive where peer support, tacit or otherwise, exists comes back to haunt us a million-fold. Yet these are the same forces enabling victims and those with deviant identities and tastes to come together to find mutual support and toleration. We appear to inhabit an increasingly bifurcated world – of new-found tolerance, support and progress, on the one hand, and of misogyny, prejudice and hate, on the other. Worse still perhaps, there appears less and less middle-ground. Whether this gift of information tech is enough to redress, combat or overcome its simultaneous production of harms seems questionable.

What we do know is that the age we live in has been granted its infrastructure of communication (Facebook, for example) by corporate actors and providers of information and networks, but also by providers of political and commodity advertising skewed by complex psychometric profiling and by the buyers of the services of these platforms. These effects mean not only the near impossibility of fair elections, to take one clear example, but also a lack of regulation because providers appear uninterested in questions of harm where these interfere with their profit lines. The economic model of a gift is undergirded by the almost total imbrication of the human subject in systems of monitoring, surveillance, data capture and ensnaring by messaging from firms and political organisations. We are liberated into a new mode of captivity whose limits and boundaries are elusive despite our awareness that we are ensnared in these systems. But this is only the beginning.

The Political Economy Of Inhumanity

How can we begin to understand the nature of these technological, social and political systems and the entanglement of distracted, libidinal subjects within them? One of the things we are offered in some of these new forums is the mediated capacity to kill, abuse, degrade, maim and humiliate. We can see this in three key areas – video gaming, pornography and leisure. These are all now fundamental elements of contemporary corporate and social life today. My purpose in this contribution is to outline the mechanism that binds the dehumanising social motors in each of these domains. Superficially this could be understood in terms of rapid Tweeting, online abuse without a sense of common humanity or identity, or it might come in the form of an emotionally accelerated politics. But this is only the tip of a much larger iceberg.

One useful assessment of our emerging condition is Han's Psychopolitics (2017). For Han the possibility of social progress is cut-off or debilitated by the power of information technology to appear to have given us what we want – protest and anger are undermined or redirected by forms of work and leisure that are sufficiently satisfying to delay or deter traditional resentments. In this sense, many now find it hard to be against something that gives us plenty of what we want. Soft drugs, 'likes', fails, hardcore pornography, sites of expressivity come to erode common bonds – a retreat into what Mark Fisher (2009) described as a kind of 'depressive hedonia' – twitching bodies attached to screens that offer periodic delights while we nevertheless remain trapped in attachments and pursuits that are ultimately alienating and, in some cases, dehumanising.

The 'murder box' of the title refers to the way that exceptional spaces can be located in which everyday forms of regulation and restraints on social conduct are stripped away (Atkinson and Rodgers, 2015). What format do such boxes take? Perhaps one of the clearest examples can be seen in many screen-human interfaces which generate the possibility for interactions that erode the humanity of those we encounter, particularly in relation to pornography and gaming. Such murder boxes fit within psychopolitical themes - release, excitement and enjoyment. Thus these forms of space and engagement operate around a kind of schadenfreude, an apparently growing delight in the suffering of others operating at a global pan-(in)human scale.

The hook of the murder box is its capacity to enable us to do whatever we want to the others we meet – in many games and in much pornography. But the logic of creating enclosed spaces in which deniable and aggressive conduct can be enacted is not restricted only to virtual spaces. Outside their screen variants we can also locate invited forms of degradation in the leisure zones supported by sex tourism. This is now a massive global market of largely male free-roamers set free from local normative constraints. There is a general sense of the deep allure and possibility of engaging desire in these 'boxes', celebrating it even where it may be overtly damaging to others and thus requiring the designation of virtual and real bodies encountered as being somehow less than human.

This release of an often toxic, geek and overtly misogynistic masculinity is increasingly in evidence.

A more enduring and visible culture has now emerged on the back of these often tech-mediated developments that revolves around forms of libidinal or carnival space in which all is permitted. This culture invokes - demands even - a reversal of the shame previously generated by masculine sexual and misogynistic social norms – it is indignant and visible in movements associated with the alt-right, 'incel' and anonymous forms of interaction facilitated by many web forums. The underlying rationale is a kind of self-righteous anger that builds to enable the outraged denial of harm and to ensure access to primordial, asocial rights that would be denied by efforts aimed at regulating many masculine and sexual behaviours. The murder box is aligned with, and helps to build this kind of culture, a nerd-alpha masculinity believing in omniscience, kills and trophy females, willing or otherwise.

What is inside the box?

These formations have been given new momentum by aggregations of media infrastructures and technologies, new understandings of the capacity of cameras, simulations and the desire to attain pleasure and satisfaction regardless of its consequences. The apparent excesses of games like Grand Theft Auto have become everyday social reference points, played by young children and adults and recognized as part of a multi-billion dollar global industry whose boundaries cannot, or will not, be regulated - certainly not by parents who either appear to be complicit in the early availability of technology among children, or who see their own childhoods extended by new social norms of personal fulfilment. Pornography has become banal, and sexual desire itself is provoked and sated by brief interactions with web media on mobile devices akin to the orgasmatrons of Woody Allen's film Sleeper. No form of frustration can be entertained and the theme of constant climax is ever-present in a culture in which social actors easily scroll through music tracks to find the best bits, engage in unending orgiastic killing in videogames or witness pornographic phantasmagorias of unending release. Whatever you want, you can have it, whenever you want it.

Conclusion

Any sweeping assessment of the human condition risks the charge of simplification. Yet the proposal that violence is declining is giving way to an increasing concern with its more complex, subtle forms and its multiple forms, intensities and related forms of harm. These kinds of dehumanising modes of expression are exacerbated by what we might think

of perhaps as our social 'immaturity' in relation to new technologies whose impacts and effects are not yet fully understood but whose harms are increasingly being registered. Gaming, pornography and leisure are key examples, mediated by information systems and corporate actors whose interests are in enhancing these desires as the means for their own economic expansion. One possible reading of where all of this goes is into a joy-filled world of peak experiences by dominant and dominating groups, whose gratification is predicated upon spaces of misery and inhumanity for many women, virtual renderings of victims, children and other vulnerable groups.

The capacity for networks to galvanise new identities based around what would have been rare localised forms of anti-social beliefs gives rise to new aggregations and the accretion of images and experiences of atrocity. Its effects are witnessed in online abuse, the archipelago of sex workers in video rooms, filmed rapes and fights as well as co-ordinated forms of loosely organised terror by unconnected social actors brought together by common interests and senses of grievance (such as attacks on minority groups by far-Right activists). The emergence of new forums assisting in the circulation of regressive value systems (such as Gab) supplement the existence of the Dark Web as spaces that may enhance dehumanising scripts and ways of being. The consequences of these competing commons outside the purview and potential regulation of the major information corporations appear bleak.

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02.
Persons in Translation: An old concept-metaphor in cross-cultural comparison

Jamie Coates, University of Sheffield

What if we focused on what it means to be a person rather than what it means to be human?

In Mandarin, Cantonese and Japanese (three languages that have strong historic ties), the boundaries between the terms 'human' and 'person' arise in different ways. Although they are often made interchangeable when translated into English, their translated form in East Asian languages gestures towards other epistemologies and ontologies. This slippage in translation has led me to ask what the affordances of the term person might be. In many East Asian languages, the word person is a prolific modifier for all sorts of terminology that use the term in more explicit ways than their equivalents in the English. In Chinese you are not Australian or British but rather aodaliyaren or yingguoren, an Australian or British person (ren). Similarly, a robot is not an exclusively different entity, but rather a jiqiren, a 'machine person'

As Tobias Rees notes in After Ethnos (2018), anthropologists are increasingly turning to topics that branch away from 'the human', and focusing on phenomena such as mushrooms (Tsing 2015), insects (Raffles 2010) and cheese (Paxson 2012). Through this shift in focus, Rees argues, the question of 'the possibility "of" the human/ after "the human" emerges' (2018: 40). The focus of much of this work has been on forms of life beyond the classic remit of the humanities and social sciences. Yet, I would suggest that persons and/or personhood are equally compelling challenges to the human. Ethnographic data suggests that the concept of person, denoted in a single term, is an incredibly common cross-cultural phenomena (Antweiler, 2016) whereas the term 'human', is historically and culturally a more recent invention.

The understanding that the term and concept of 'human' as a modern invention is relatively well established, having inspired approaches such as anti-humanism (Smith 1985), posthumanism (Haraway, 1991), and Foucault's efforts to move past 'the subject' (2013). Although contested, the term 'human' originally connoted beings 'of the earth' with some suggested connection to the modern English humus (soil). One of the earliest instances of a definitive use of 'the human', where humanity is conceptualised as an abstract framework for understanding people, appeared in 1755 when Denis Diderot defined it as 'the unique term from which one has to begin and to which one has to return' (Rees 2018: 36). Yet, from these inquisitive and reflexive origins, the human soon became a species classification,

and a particular kind of idealised modern subjectivity. Sylvia Wynter (2007) notes that 'the human' as a noun is a biocentric and Eurocentric manifestation of the colonial era (see also, McKittrick 2014). Despite its potential for inclusion, argues Wynter, this biocentric approach to humanity relied on fixed notions of shared substance. Prior to the discovery of DNA, these substances were identified through morphological traits (such as skin colour), and social organization. Wynter takes inspiration from Judith Butler's critique of gender and substance (1996), showing how an emphasis on substance creates taxonomic exclusions (you are either male or female, human or not-human), which in turn inspired racist, orientalist and colonialist regimes of power.

Wynter's observation intersects with the history of the term 'human' in East Asia in interesting ways. The concept of 'human' as a racialised biological term first entered Japanese vernacular in the late nineteenth century after the popularisation of Tokyo's anthropological society in 1882 (Dikötter, 1997). The word chosen to represent this new scientific approach (jinrui) was later exported to other countries, such as China, Korea and Vietnam, which imported much of their scientific language from Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, there was a curious etymological and epistemological slippage in choosing this term. First used in Zhuangzi's classical Chinese Daoist philosophical text, Knowledge Wandered North, the term jinrui (or renlei in Mandarin) was more akin to 'personkind' historically speaking. It combines the character for person (ren) with the character for 'likeness or kind' (lei). Furthermore, the passage where the term originally appeared is not a commentary on what it means to be human so much as it is a discussion of the transient nature of personhood and the universe.

《庄子•知北游》人身的天地之间，若白驹之过隙，忽然而已… 已化而生,又化而死,生物哀之,人类悲之。

A person's place between heaven and earth is like a sudden glimpse of a white colt through a gap in the wall - brief and that is all… Already transformed we are born, and through another transformation we die. It is the pathos of all living things, grieved by personkind. (Author's translation)

This text would later become influential in Daoism and Zen Buddhism, filtering into the Japanese lexicon and eventually transforming into the modern 'human'. Both the original and the Zen Buddhist usage of renlei/jinrui referred to a pluralistic cosmology where fairies, celestial beings and bodhisattvas were also of 'personkind'. I take inspiration from the disjuncture between the historical and current meaning of 'person/human' in Northeast Asia, seeing it as reflecting the possibility of turning away from 'the human' to rediscover the possibility of persons as/and/instead of humanity. I also see it as a gesture towards the wider cross-cultural potential of 'persons' and 'personhood' as an interdisciplinary field of research.

Cross-cultural comparison often comes across ways of living that include a wider range

of 'beings' and 'persons' than might be commonly thought of as human. Anthropology and its cognate disciplines have long been curious about how 'people make up people' in discourse and practice (Hacking 1986). Historically this was summarised as the individual, self, and person to represent the biological, psychological, and sociological respectively (Harris 1989). Efforts to move away from this purified, Cartesian, and Eurocentric taxonomy in the late 1980s yielded new terms, from Strathern's anti-individualist ' dividual' (Strathern 1988) to Maurice Bloch's jovial and radically inclusive use of 'the blob' (2011). Viveo de Castro's (2014) work on Amazonian ontologies, for example, presents what he calls a 'perspectivist' cosmology where all beings are persons, depending on their perspective:, where prey-relations define personhood, to a Jaguar (who is a considered a person) humans are pigs, and to pigs humans are Jaguar. Working from the Chinese context, Yan Yunxiang (2017) draws inspiration from the Chinese 'doing personhood' (zuoren) to argue along similar lines to Wynter that it is the performance or practice of being human that matters the most.

To think beyond 'the human', as Donna Haraway (1991; 2013) has noted in her work on primates and cyborgs, affords new ways to think about our shared present and future. Yet, we must also be wary of traps hidden within thinking beyond humanity. For example, bioethicists such as Singer (2004) and Tooley (1976) have argued for a move away from species-centric humanism by focusing on persons. However, my suggestion radically differs from their approach. Both Singer and Tooley start their conceptual arguments by defining 'persons' as beings 'capable of desiring to continue as a subject of experience' (Tooley 1976: 49). The reliance on abstract definitions within this tradition, in which desire, ability, subjectivity and experience are all treated as context-free phenomena, betray a kind of conceptual inflexibility that could have disastrous consequences. In particular, such a definition's reliance on cognitive ability is unable to include the status of those with differing cognitive abilities in an ethically justifiable way (Kittay and Carlson 2010).

Instead of definitions of 'the person', I suggest we see 'persons' as a concept-metaphor that has 'no adequate referent' but rather serves as one of the 'domain terms that orient us towards areas of shared exchange' (Moore 2004:73). A focus on the person, allows us another perspective from which to think the cultural and historical diversity of humanity as it is practiced and performed. Thinking cross-culturally has led me to see persons as encounters - comparisons and ambiguities that emerge at the interstices of the taken-for-granted. And so, taking inspiration from East Asian uses of person filtered through the practice of translation and anthropology, I argue that a shift to persons could be a methodology for thinking of the human/after 'the human'.

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03.
Racialised Humanity

Nadena Doharty (University of Sheffield) and Reza Gholami (University of Birmingham)

In this piece, we draw on Jayakumar, Howard, Allen & Han (2009) for understanding how environments can become hostile for persons racialised as non-white - that is, climates steeped in racial inequality and racism at interpersonal and institutional levels. We do not accept the parochial definition in popular discourse of racism as enacted by a fringe few, far Right-wing individuals. Instead, we concur with Essed (1991:36) who challenges this fallacy of a fringe few alongside an ostensibly non-racist 'normal' society by arguing that:

> *[This assertion] places the individual outside of the institutional, thereby severing rules, regulations, and procedures from the people who make and enact them, as if it concerned qualitatively different racism rather than different positions and relations through which racism operates. . . Individual racism can only occur as an expression or activation of group power.*

Therefore, our environments are charged with a hostile racial climate where schools, workplaces and public discourses are rooted in white supremacist, Eurocentric hierarchies that frame people of colour through deficit narratives. Consequently, a systematic evaluation of macro and micro forms of racism allows critical race scholars to analyse how the racial climates of institutions and discourses are shaped. Pierce (1975a, 1975b, 1995), an African-American psychiatrist in the US, coined the term 'racial micro-aggressions' and through studies with Black communities, his work shed light on the ways in which racially hostile climates contribute to race-related stress - a type of Mundane Extreme Environmental Stress (MEES). As Smith et al.(2011: 67) further explain:

Race-related and societal stress is mundane (M) because it is ubiquitous and oftentimes taken for granted; it is extreme (E) because it has an excessive influence on the physiological, psychological, emotional, and cognitive reactions; environmental (E) because it is part of the historical and institutionalised ideology that influences the policy practices, behaviors, and the culture, and custom of the dominant environment; and it produces stress (S) because the combination of these elements are certainly distressful and consume valuable time and energy that could be used for more creative, educative, professional, and humanitarian goals . . . Therefore, racism and racial micro-aggressions operate as psycho- pollutants in the social environment and add to the overall race-related stress for Black men, Black women, and other racially marginalized groups.

In race critical literature, there is increased attention to micro/subtle forms of racism

and how these affect groups of students in particular; however, less is known about the particular coping mechanisms that may help minimise racial battle fatigue. Racial micro-aggressions are another form of racism that police black and brown bodies – placing racialised humans under duress - and therefore, it is also important to look at how racialised humans might find strategies to cope and reduce race-related stress under such conditions. "Coping is the mechanism by which individuals understand, reframe, or react to events. How an individual copes with racialized events can regulate whether the person is stressed by the experience" (Franklin, 2018, p.4). Consequently, there is increased literature on racism that looks at how individuals gain control over a situation in order to cope with racism (Brondolo, Gallo, and Myers 2009).

However, less is known about how groups affected by racism participate in racist acts not as self-hatred, but as a humanising mechanism for gaining control of a racist situation and reaffirming their own humanity as 'not' that version of Blackness/Brownness being ridiculed or de-humanised. In education, this has taken the form of Black students participating in racist humour (see Doharty 2017). As Yosso et al (2009: 671-672) argue

Racist humour seemed to offer white students a quick and easy method for gaining acceptance, status, and social capital in primarily white networks. When Latinas/os approved of the joke(s), through silence or other verbal/nonverbal cues, Whites granted them peripheral, temporary, or token acceptance. Latina/o students' open disapproval led to their "voluntary" exit or dismissal from the group.

It is in this paper that we explore participation in white supremacy as a coping mechanism for reducing racial battle fatigue.

Racist humour in school settings is under-theorised and underdeveloped in British school-based research literature (Connolly 1998; Crozier and Dimmock 1999; Nayak & Kehily 2001; Nayak 1999; Thomas 2012; Doharty 2017). The literature centres on racist humour directed towards students from a minority ethnic background based on racist stereotypes or, to substantiate, construct and police (White) masculinities. In studying humour, particularly in sites purporting to be colour-blind and supporting equal opportunities, it must be taken seriously because 'humour is far from trivial . . . [A] sociological analysis of humour can tell us much about how existing social relations are reaffirmed and normative social boundaries maintained' (Lockyer & Pickering 2008: 808-809). Indeed, for racist humour to be successful, it must be understood and this is achieved because society is structured in racially hierarchical ways – a product of White supremacy. Therefore, racist humour 'plays a pernicious role in reinforcing systems of domination and inequality' (Sue and Golash-Boza 2013: 1595). In Doharty's study (2017), Black students would participate in joke-telling that ridiculed Africans and one suggested it would be 'fun' to whip another Black student in a mock life-on-a-plantation performance. Doharty suggests such behaviours are a temporary reprieve from a hostile space that permits the use and abuse of Black bodies, and allows Black students to occupy a powerful position normally not afforded to them.

However, participation in this sense is not solely reliant on the intermingling of whites

and non-whites; it can also happen through institutional practices and become entrenched in intra-communal dynamics. As such, dominant hierarchies of race, ethnicity and religion can come to operate in and dominate relations and interactions between members of the same racial/ethnic/religious minority group. In their research on the UK Iranian diaspora, Gholami and Sreberny (2018) demonstrate how the dominant UK discourse of 'integration', coupled with neo-conservative policy logics, has exacerbated racist and Islamophobic tendencies within the Iranian diaspora. The upshot is the exclusion and marginalization, as well as the crude and subtle abuse, of practising Iranian Muslims by secular, middle-class Iranians. For the latter, a key motivation is to be accepted, liked and respected as equals by white people in Western societies. To this end, they often behave in ways which they think will appease their 'hosts'. One such form of behaviour is to embrace wholesale the current neoliberalist impetus of educational approaches and use them to instil corresponding values in young British-Iranians, typically including a suspicion of Islam/Muslims and a desire to distance themselves from their Islamic heritage. In general, however, middle-class Iranians tend to find that despite their 'best efforts', they continue to be represented and treated as 'problematic Muslim others', which only adds to their frustration.

Race is an important element in these dynamics, and it intersects with religion (specifically Islam) in complex ways. For example, a study by Moosavi (2015) found that when converting to Islam, white people can be perceived by other whites as having 'become brown'. Consequently, 'upon converting to Islam, white converts can lose access to whiteness and therefore to white privilege too' (Moosavi 2015: 1919). This idea can help to explain the curious relationship that many Iranians have with Islam and whiteness. On the one hand, many diasporic Iranians, especially those in privileged/elite positions, are openly Islamophobic (see also Gholami 2015). Thus, they not only declare their antagonism towards Islam but also distance themselves from the religion and its practitioners, including in some cases, close friends and family members (Gholami and Sreberny 2018).

On the other hand, they use this and other methods to actively draw closer to whiteness. This takes two forms. Firstly, as indicated above, Iranians are often open to full cultural assimilation and will readily adopt Western cultural forms, seek to marry Western/white spouses, and so forth. Secondly, some Iranians will ascribe white racial status to themselves. Recent census data from the US and the UK show that a considerable number of Iranians identify as ethnically white, thus trying to disentangle what they believe to be their 'light enough' skin colour from the socio-political complexities that make up racialized, and in this case 'religified', identities. What is interesting, however, is that in light of continued racist abuse as well as Donald Trump's antagonistic policies towards Iran and Iranians, there are indications of a change in attitude among some US Iranians, who are now seeking solidarity with other racial/ethnic minorities (Gholami and Sreberny 2018).

What is clear from both examples is that participation by non-white people in white supremacy is complex and significant: racialised humans are humans under duress because their very existence is always problematised and they are not fully afforded acceptance in

Eurocentric dominant societies. In turn, this exerts huge influence on their individual and social lives, and paradoxically, as in the cases presented here, self-negation becomes a way to try to achieve self-affirmation. But no matter how they may try to 'assimilate' – through participation in racist humour (Doharty 2017) or hold Islamophobic beliefs and try to adopt Western cultural forms (Gholami and Sreberny 2018), racialised humans face the not-quite-white stumbling block. The huge amounts of energy (physical, emotional and social) required to live life in this way, and the hard-hitting bouts of 'battle fatigue' that may result from it, cannot be overstated.

To worsen matters, racialized and minoritized humans also face greater physical dangers in the 'global risk society'. For example, it is well documented that racial and ethnic minorities are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change (see Levin and Davies 2018); while genocide and ethnic cleansing – such as that of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims – show no sign of diminishing. Therefore, any discussion or policy debate about the future of humanity must give serious attention to issues of race and racism. In this context, it is important that critical race scholars continue to analyse the shifting nature of whiteness and illuminate the ways in which racism intersects with a person's religious, citizenship, sexuality, gender and class identities to produce complex life-worlds and socio-political dynamics.

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04.
The Economic Capture of the Human

Nicholas Gane, University of Warwick

One way to think about 'humanity under duress' is to examine the ways in which 'the human' has been captured by economic principles from the early-20th Century onwards, and, beyond this, to address the acceleration of this process following the global financial crisis of 2008. As a starting point, we can consider the following ideas and positions:

1). Human action. This was the central idea of the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973). Mises attacked Max Weber's theory of social action and argued instead that a concept of human action should be put in its place; one that treats all human actions as basically instrumental and value-oriented because ultimately they follow an economic principle. All actions, for Mises, are 'economising' and this is what makes them human. From here, Mises develops a new model of homo economicus that is based on a theory of catallatics: a theory that normalises the free market system by tracing economic value to the economic choices of individuals, and reducing all spheres of human life to a form of monetary calculation.

2). Human capital. This concept, which was pioneered by the Nobel Prize winning economist Gary Becker (1930-2014), understands humans not in terms of their capacity for self-conscious, collective, and creative labour (the early Marx), but as stocks of capital in themselves. The implication of this work is that human worth can be understood in economic terms, or more precisely in terms of the logic and properties of capital. As a form of capital our 'stock' can rise or fall according to the decisions we make (which often are deeply flawed, see below), so the governmental task becomes one of increasing our rate of return. In the Third Way, for example, Giddens (1998) adopts this approach in his argument for 'positive welfare' in The Third Way, in which he encourages the poor to take more risks by becoming entrepreneurs of themselves. This idea of the entrepreneurial subject is explored in detail by Foucault in his biopolitics lectures, and more recently by Wendy Brown (2017) and Michel Feher (2018) who address the emergence of financialised subjects that become subjects and objects of investment and speculation.

3). The market over the human. Friedrich Hayek (1899-1992), perhaps the most prominent of all neoliberal economists, disagreed with Mises on the question of human rationality. For Hayek, while individuals possess lay, contextual understandings of their immediate environments, they cannot know the world in its full complexity so need to look outside themselves for guidance. Such guidance is not to come from collective bodies of human agency such as state or government, but take an impersonal, inhuman and thus impartial form: the price mechanism, or simply put, 'the market'. 'The market', for Hayek,

co-ordinates all human wants, needs, and decisions, and ensures the most efficient allocation of goods and services through 'free' competition over price. It is said to be a meta-informational or cybernetic form that is independent of any class-based interest or government agency, and because of this it is seen to know best. For Foucault, this is the neoliberal moment when the market becomes the site for the production of truth; something that has become a matter of routine in the contemporary political world as governments look to financial markets for approval of policy decisions that they (may) take.

4). The need to nudge. A different answer to the fallibility of human subjects is provided by the behavioural theory of recent Nobel Prize-winning 'nudge economics' of Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein (2008). This form of economics sets the 'free' market and 'freedom of choice' as a political default, but, at the same time, asserts that humans do not always act rationally or in the interests of their own well-being and so need the assistance of 'choice architects' to point them in the right direction. Thaler and Sunstein's answer is not to follow Hayek in looking to the market or placing trust in the ability of humans to pursue a rational course of cost-benefit analysis, but to 'nudge' them into becoming better market participants. While nudge theory characterises itself as a form of 'libertarian paternalism', in many ways it is neoliberal to the core: it treats human freedom as the same thing as consumer freedom; it passes power from state agencies to technocratic or commercial bodies that are designed to nudge individuals towards some choices rather than others; it pushes responsibility downwards to individuals who are empowered by nudge architects to make the 'right' choices; and the purpose of 'nudge' interventions is not simply to benefit the individuals involved but, in many cases, save the state money and potentially replace some of the functions of the social state (hence its deployment in the UK alongside a government programme of austerity).

In the face of these economic ideas that have grown in prominence and power in recent years, what should we do? The most pressing task is to reclaim the human as something that far exceeds the 'economic'. In 1785, Kant (2005) wrote in The Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals that the human should be conceived in terms of dignity (worth in itself) rather than price (raw economic value). In a world in which price, or more broadly economic value, has become the measure of seemingly everything, this statement is more important than ever. To address the capture of the human by the economic, we might respond to the above positions in the following ways:

1). Human action: clearly human beings have the capacity to think and act economically, but this does not mean that their existence is, or should be, defined by these capacities. One answer from the history of sociological thought is that humans should be thought of as social, not economic beings, in the first instance, and because of this, the economic (and related notions such as 'market', 'exchange' and 'competition') then should be understood in terms of its underlying sociality – be this intersubjective and/or institutional in form. In this view, sociality is not reducible tout court to the pursuit of economic gain, for while routinely humans are market actors, they are also so much more: at the very least they can attach other forms of (non-economic) value and meaning to the world; they can empathise

and act altruistically; and can they relate to each other and bond on grounds that are not instrumental and motivated simply by monetary gain.

2). Humans are not simply stocks of capital that are worthy (in some cases) of investment, either by the state or the market (if indeed there is still a separation between the two). The intention of divorcing capital from labour is to prioritise the economic over a key aspect of what makes human beings social: the ability to forge collective bonds through work, and to defend the interests of labour, class, and in many cases life itself, against the impersonal and often inhuman forces of 'big' capital. This is an intentional strategy, for in recasting the human in terms of capital, there is no attention to structural forms of power that produce acute social and economic inequalities of different types. The answer instead is not to conceive the human in terms of capital in the first place, as to do so is already to set the rules of a game in which the interests of capital will always win.

3). Hayek's elevation of the market and accompanying price mechanism over all things social and human needs a robust rebuttal. Markets are themselves social institutions that in many cases amplify rather than rectify the irrationality of the beliefs and actions of individuals. As social institutions, they are sites of power and privilege and are not meritocratic but tend to reproduce and accentuate existing forms of inequality (forms that most neoliberal thinkers welcome). Moreover, markets should not be viewed as sites of human truth or valuation, and should not displace the democratic and deliberative powers of governments. For, in line with Popper, if humans are in many ways fallible, then this is why we need government, not the displacement its powers. For in practice, ceding power to markets means only one thing: an attack on the human in the name of economic priorities, including human rights, and associated principles of morality and justice.

4). Finally, the answer to the current situation is not to 'nudge' people into becoming better consumers. Nudge economics, like many of the positions stated above does not tackle structural issues of power or inequality but instead identifies the problem as lying within the behavioural or psychological characteristics of individuals. The answer provided by nudge economics is to pass powers from traditional (welfare) state bodies to 'experts' in order to produce improved economic subjects, thereby leaving structural processes and dynamics of marginalisation intact. These processes and dynamics should be the starting point of our concerns. We might also ask whether freedom of choice is necessarily a good thing, or if the state (independent from commercial interests) should play a more active a role in limiting consumer choice for the well-being of all.

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05.
Desiring New Humanisms

Dan Goodley, iHuman, University of Sheffield

This brief paper articulates a desire for new humanisms in a contemporary cultural, economic, political and global context that has been described as posthuman. Whilst sympathetic to the potentiality of posthuman thought, I grapple with the imperative to embrace new humanisms that historicise and recognise global inequalities that concurrently exist in relation to a myriad of human categories including class, age, geopolitical location, gender, sexuality, race and disability. I am especially interested in the latter two categories and draw on ideas from postcolonial, posthuman, feminist and critical disability studies.

'The story of humanism', Scott (2000: 119) writes, 'is often told as a kind of European coming-of-age story'. 'Humanity' Braidotti (2013: 24) notes, 'is very much a male of the species: it is a he'. Moreover, 'he is white, European, handsome and able-bodied'; ,'an ideal of bodily perfection' (13), 'implicitly assumed to be masculine, white, urbanized, speaking a standard language, heterosexually inscribed in a reproductive unit and a full citizen of a recognised polity' (65); 'a rational animal endowed with language' (141). While all citizens are (potentially) considered to be human some or deemed 'more mortal than others' (15) and, conversely, some are more disposable than others. This humanism has a Eurocentric core and Imperialist tendencies, meaning that many of those outside of Europe (including many in the colonies) became known as less than human or inhuman. The very category of humanity - and the phenomenological experience of humanness - has been monopolised by a political ideology of Western / neo-Colonial humanism. And this category, for Fanon (1993), invites recognition for some and negates others.

Some have suggested that within the humanist condition it is as if, paradoxically, there are no humans involved (Wynter, 1992). The humanist human is an autonomous, fully evolved, eugenic or able, biocentric and *homo oeconomicus* human being in 'the ethno-class terms of Darwinian *Man over-presented as the human*' (Wynter, 2006: 128, italics added). This human category has been created by 'the West's institutionalization of itself in terms of its then epochally new self-conception or sociogenic code as Absolute Being' (146). At the heart of this humanism is desire for the rational, sovereign self (read: white, able-bodied, settler, straight, entrepreneurial, colonial man) and a negation of those who are represented as its antithesis (Goodley, 2014). This latter category, which Fanon described as *the damned*, is: defined at the global level by refugee/economic migrants stranded outside the gates of the rich countries … with this category in the United States coming to comprise the criminalized majority Black and dark-skinned Latino inner-city males now made to man the rapidly expanding prison-industrial complex, together with their female peers —the kicked-about Welfare Moms —

with both being part of the ever-expanding global, transracial category of the homeless/ the jobless, the semi-jobless, the criminalized drug-offending prison population (Wynter, 2003: 260).

Normative humanness exists alongside non-normative forms of humanness. Moreover, normative humans seek to corral other kinds of human life in order to gather, control and possess in ways that further strengthen the normative centre of their humanist ethics. The stark contiguities between rich/impoverished, white/black and abled/disabled indicate that European colonial humanism is inherently an exclusionary force. Blackness and disability constitute an 'unbearable wrongness of being' (Wynter, 2006:114) - the direct opposite of contemporary interests of Western, White, Bourgeois Man.

The rise of posthuman theorising has, one could argue, sidelined humanism as an old-fashioned relic of modernity. The rush to embrace all things posthuman has resulted in a commonly-shared affect of distrust towards any intellectual or political project that appears to play with dangerous tropes of humanism. Trump's election and the rise of Brexit, for examples, have been viewed as peculiar kinds of Anglo-American, neoliberal-ableist, self-imposed, self-sufficient isolationalism with undercurrents of racist humanism (see Breger Bush, 2016; Harnish, 2017; Titchkosky and Goodley, 2018, Goodley, 2018). The rise of the Far and Alt Right in Europe and America are sobering reminders of exclusionary humanism. That said, I remain intrigued by the possibilities of what Gilroy (2018) terms a 're-enchantment with the human'. I worry that posthuman thinking is being fervently adopted without recognizing the importance of questions of race, class, sexuality, gender and disability that still persist today. Posthuman technophilia and the new materialist orthodoxy threaten, I feel, to flatten human life. We live in deeply dehumanising times. And these very human questions require our attention, our care and our engagement. While accepting the promise and potential of the posthuman condition (see for example, Goodley, 2014; Goodley, Lawthom and Runswick-Cole, 2014), I also reach out through postcolonial and critical disability studies for new kinds of humanism.

For Rodriguez (2018: 832) the search for new humanisms is entangled in a wider rebellion against the law-like ways that the desires, interests, and world-making ambitions of the 'capitalist neoliberal and corporate financial bourgeoisie ruling class' are '*represented homologously* as those of our species as a whole' (my italics). Can we, like Wynter, combine the 'agonistic humanism of Fanon's anticolonialism' with the 'embattled antihumanism of Foucault's archaeological critique'? (Scott, 2000: 121). How might 'we become more comprehensively estranged from the Anthropos in the Anthropocene in order to salvage a different, and perhaps re-enchanted, human?' (Gilroy, 2018:12). Could we secure 'the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves'? (Wynter, 2003: 260). The answer offered is a productive one: 'a cautious, posthumanist humanism capable of grasping the relationship between human and non-human is beginning to take shape' (Gilroy, 2018: 16). And this politicisation struggles 'to endow a sense of reciprocal humanity in Europe's proliferating encounters with vulnerable

otherness' (Gilroy, 2018: 19). How might we contribute to 'the ongoing work of salvaging imperilled humanity from the mounting wreckage'? (Gilroy, 2018:20) And, specifically, what social models of excluded human kinds can be developed that build on their 'special relation to the dark shadows' of normative humanism?

I propose six new humanist projects that hopefully resonate with those of us engaging with Humanity under Duress. I have in mind the intersections of blackness and disability but I feel that these projects also have wider relevance and resonance.

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One. Subject the normative, the hegemonic and the taken-for-granted to sustained analysis and critique.

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Two. Endlessly acknowledge and address the ways in which educational systems impose a collective ontological sense of 'wrongness of being' (Wynter, 2006) upon disabled, black and other non-normative children and young people.

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Three. Promote the sociogeny of disability and education. Sociogeny is a concept developed by Fanon (1993) - and developed by Wynter (2003) - that refers to the study of the development of a social phenomenon. In counter-distinction to phylogeny (the study of evolution of the species) and ontogeny (the biological development of an individual organism) - sociogeny unpacks the social, historical and cultural constitution of race and humanness (see overview by Gagne, 2007). Do not assume that education or disability are pre-social, apolitical, objective, independent, universal phenomena.

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Four. Contest the epistemic privilege of global North disability studies through embracing a decolonising attitude and approach.

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Five. Disavow the category of the humanist human. I would suggest reading the DisHuman Manifesto (developed by Goodley et al. 2018a, b) which:

- Unpacks and troubles dominant notions of what it means to be human;
- Celebrates the disruptive potential of disability to trouble these dominant notions;
- Acknowledges that being recognised as a regular normal human being is desirable, especially for those people who are denied access to the category of the human;
- Recognises disability's intersectional relationship with other identities that have been considered less than human (associated with class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age);
- Aims to develop theory, research, art and activism that push the boundaries of what it means to be human and disabled;
- Keeps in mind the pernicious and stifling impacts of ableism, which I define as a discriminatory processes that idealises a narrow version of humanness and reject more diverse forms of humanity;

- Seeks to promote transdisciplinary forms of empirical and theoretical enquiry that break disciplinary orthodoxies, dominances and boundaries;
- Foregrounds dis/ability as the complex for interrogating oppression and furthering a posthuman politics of affirmation. https://dishuman.com/dishuman-manifesto/

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Six. Beware of domesticating critical and politicised studies of disability and education. Wynter (2006) provides a damning critique of self-styled radical Black Studies academics. She argues that as soon as these activists found themselves working in the academia their original transgressive activist intentions were 'defused', their 'energies rechannelled' and their contributions 're-verified the very thesis of liberal universalism' that they originally sought to contest in white society (Wynter, 2006: 109). This, she warns, heralds the domestication of 'studies of ____', the mainstreaming of '_____ studies' and the 'cognitive and psycho-affective closure' (Wynter, 2006: 110) that accompanies the move in subject positions from 'activist to academic'. How might we - as part of our collective today, tomorrow and thereafter - remain wild and undomesticated? Humans, together, very much involved.

Note: This paper draws upon a more developed article written with colleagues: Goodley, D., Lawthom, R., Runswick-Cole, K., and Liddiard,K. (In press). The Desire for New Humanism. Journal of Disability Studies in Education.

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06.
The dark side of human enhancement: crime and harm in the lifestyle drug trade

Alexandra Hall, Northumbria University

In the search for continuous enhancement, the late-capitalist subject increasingly turns to an ever-expanding range of image and performance enhancing drugs and non-surgical cosmetic procedures. From slimming pills, anabolic steroids and sexual enhancers to facial injectables, smart drugs and synthetic hormones, the use of these lifestyle drugs has arguably reached the point of normalisation. Purported benefits include boosted sexual performance, accelerated weight loss and muscle growth, reduced signs of ageing, and increased physical and mental capacities. In Europe, both licit and illicit markets in lifestyle drugs are booming (Di Nicola et al, 2015; Hall et al, 2017; Koenraadt & Van de Ven, 2017).

Since 2013 my research has analysed the complex dynamics of the trade, highlighting the crucial roles played by factors such as the privatisation and commodification of healthcare, the widespread medicalisation of non-medical issues, the appeal of performance and image enhancement, and the development of online pharmaceutical prosumption (Hall and Antonopoulos, 2016). I have moved on to examining the popular market in cosmetic 'injectables' (e.g. Botulinum toxin and dermal filler injections). This research develops previous work on pharmaceutical markets to relate it to the theme of human duress (Hall, 2019). Here I offer a synopsis of this preliminary work on the harms associated with the market in lifestyle drugs.

Some of the obvious harms are physical. The mainstream media regularly carry stories of "botched" non-invasive surgical procedures or counterfeit drug consumption. Examples include dermal filler causing blindness, allergic reactions to lip filler leaving users with permanent lumpiness and swelling of the mouth, and deaths related to steroid use among the extreme bodybuilding community (Cook and Dwyer, 2016; Morris, 2018). However, if we understand some forms of bodily enhancement as structured by the capitalist demand to market one's self to others, we might also consider how daily absorption in the market in lifestyle drugs can lead to psychological harm. Facilitated by the subject's increasing fetishistic relation to technology, emotional and aesthetic labour can lead to a withdrawal into the self (Crary, 2013; Roberts and Cremin, 2017; see also Dean, 2009). This is clearly evident in the number of hours some individuals now spend each day in virtual spaces constructing the correct image of the self in readiness for posting on social media (Marwick, 2016). A growing obsession with self-image and the desire to modify bodies and faces is a fetish that is some individuals in on themselves in an endless loop of comparisons, affecting their sense of self and, ultimately, their mental health (Fisher, 2009).

The imagined ideal subject promoted by mass media and social media is always producing and always consuming, enjoying leisure time and working late for the privilege of buying commodities to constantly reconstruct its self-image. Social media is awash with images of body transformations. Many interviewees talked of lifestyle drugs as a way of filtering and photo-shopping their bodies and faces "in real life". Complex classed, gendered and racialized dynamics are at work in the market, but they all rest on the common subjective feeling of lack and inferiority that capitalism intensifies and exploits; whether darkening or lightening the skin or cosmetically enhancing breasts or the penis, some sort of ideal body-image is marketed as life's telos. Whether searching for Insta-fame or attention in a bar, this socio-symbolic competition and its ideals are now inscribed in the mind and on the body. In psychoanalytic terms, the sense of 'being alive' we feel when perpetually enhancing the self subsequently becomes the endogenous object of our desire (Dean, 2008), diminishing our ability to relate to the external, objective world. This can be seen in the breakdown occurring between discrete life-course stages (Hall et al, 2008; Hayward, 2012; Smith, 2014). This new culture is manifested in the increasing use of cosmetic injectables by young adults who are intent on taking preventative anti-ageing measures as early as possible. It seems that those who have not yet reached the final stage of adolescence are already committed to its long extension. Indeed, the enhancement industry targets ever younger populations with the aim of creating lifetime consumers (Berkowitz, 2017).

The late-capitalist subject is invested in the promise of tomorrow – of constant improvement, relief, growth, betterment – and therefore to the fundamental logic of accumulation, transformation and progress at the core of the capitalist economy. With slimming pills, anabolic steroids, growth hormones, or facial injectables, subjects can see their body or face physically transformed every day. Lifestyle drugs promise to enhance the subject's body and mind in its continuous search for satisfaction, but the result is always incomplete in comparison to the fantasised image. This process reproduces theneed to continuously search for newer and better products that promise faster and longer-lasting effects. My research with consumers of facial injectables highlights this continuous sense of dissatisfaction (McGowan, 2016), where a 'natural' progression from Botox to dermal filler often takes place. Initially, the consumer tries Botox, which takes effect over a 5-10 day period and has a shelf life of 3-4 months. However, many move onto more expensive dermal fillers that immediately effect enduring changes to the structure of the face. This sense of immediacy and longevity is becoming increasingly important in the market for a number of lifestyle drugs. It fuels the desire for perpetual acceleration in our technologically-mediated culture (Virilio, 1998) and stimulates consumer-capitalist drives and anxieties (McGowan, 2017; see also Kornbluh, 2014).

Alongside the more obvious physical and psychological harm, there is evidence to suggest that the constant need to keep up appearances is leading to more indebtedness (Horsley, 2015). Many consumers I have spoken to spend increasingly large amounts of money on lifestyle drugs as part of their everyday beauty regimes. Working-class women have spoken

of Botox – once a luxury item only available to elites – "as important as getting my hair or nails done". Such cosmetic practices are no longer exclusively the preserve of the elite. From sportspeople, door-staff and models whose professional lives depend on their bodily capital (Antonopoulos & Hall, 2016), through to men and women looking to boost their private sex lives, to students and academics looking to enhance their cognitive abilities during the exam and marking period (Bennett & Holloway, 2017), subjects are caught up in the increasing pressure to compete and perform conspicuously well. What was once considered a luxury market has now become an everyday trade in mundane household essentials (Cook & Dwyer, 2016). Current empirical research has identified individuals who routinely use lifestyle drugs prior to a wedding, a night out, or a holiday.

Unequal access to legitimate products and procedures leaves certain sections of the population at increased risk of harm. With so much emotional energy invested in self-enhancement, consumers with little disposable income save time and money by choosing cheaper, riskier alternatives. Lax regulation of the market for non-surgical cosmetic procedures has opened opportunities for unskilled people to administer the drugs in various settings. Ongoing research in a suburb in a Northern UK city is beginning to unearth a largely unregulated local and online retail market in lifestyle drugs. Risky patterns of consumption associated with cheaper, often substandard and unregulated products and procedures are becoming normalised in nail salons and sun bed shops, or at 'Botox parties' in the privacy of the home. One of the emerging findings highlights consumers' reluctance to check the expertise of those administering facial injectables. A newer trend in prosumption is also developing, where consumers order products such as Botox online and self-inject (Brennan et al, 2018). This echoes similar practices found in previous research on steroid markets in post-industrial spaces, where risky polydrug use and drug injecting practices are common (Antonopoulos & Hall, 2016; see also Morris, 2018).

The harms associated with the market in lifestyle drugs do not begin and end with the consumer. If we are to map out the 'social life' of (illicit) lifestyle drugs, harm can be found in each stage of the global supply chain. The market in lifestyle drugs, like the pharmaceutical industry more generally, is highly politicised and bound up with the speculative economic practices at the heart of neoliberalism's global economy (Rajan, 2017). In the current era, unregulated wholesale systems, misguided trade barriers, variations in intellectual property laws, and the differential characteristics of producer and consumer economies highlight the embeddedness of licit and illicit processes of pharmaceutical production, transit and distribution in a global capitalist system that can constantly transgress legal and ethical boundaries with relative impunity (Braithwaite, 1984).

The pharmaceutical industry produces environmental harms experienced across the world. From production hubs in China and India through distribution in special economic zones, hyper-exploitative working conditions are common (Hall & Antonopoulos, 2016). Racialized and gendered class relations are at the heart of the global pharmaceutical industry, where profit maximisation overwhelms the need for decent health and safety standards, a

minimum wage and maximum working hours. Such economic externalities can be notably exploitative. We, in the global North, are also alienated from the harms experienced by consumers and patients in parts of the global South, who often rely on counterfeit and substandard medicines for life-threatening illnesses (Nordstrom, 2007).

Interesting work exists that highlights the positive and pleasurable impact such drug use can have (Hamilton and Aldridge, 2019; Mulrooney et al, 2019). However, a complex range of illegal processes operating in various nodes and arteries underneath the regulatory frameworks are still extremely murky. We have only very partial knowledge of the harmful products and practices that can enter the supply chain and end up with consumers who are willing to take risks.

If we focus on issues of unequal access and illicit sources along the supply chain, there are clear winners and losers. Further work is needed that moves beyond both the normative assumptions either about choice and agency on one hand or harm or about the need for regulation on the other (see Johnston Hurst, 2015; Widdows, 2018). This is a complex and often contradictory phenomenon to attempt to research and theorise, one that challenges many of the methodological and disciplinary silos researchers often find themselves working in. Further cross-disciplinary research can advance our understanding of the market in lifestyle drugs and work towards safeguarding the public against harm.

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07.
The Child, Dis/ability and the Human

Karín Lesnik-Oberstein, University of Reading

The child has always had a complex relationship with both the human and Dis/ability: at one and the same time the child has been defined as the least human (or not human at all), the pre-human, the post-human and the most human and as the least Dis/abled, the pre-able, the post-able and the most Dis/abled. The child also sits in a strange place in terms of academic thinking as people – including academics – tend to assume childhood as being the most common-sensical of identities: everyone knows what a child is and shares these views freely, with conviction and often with humour and/ or pathos and this is true too of the Dis/abled child, constantly and consistently invoked in funding and charity appeals and in political speeches and policies as both the most vulnerable and the least vulnerable in being seen to be always, after all still, a child. It is only when even the lowest bar of the requirement for being defined as a child is not reached that the definition establishes what is least human or not human at all and this then might be, for instance, the criminal, the insane, the animal, the ultimately Dis/abled, the foreigner or the refugee. The child and Dis/ability, then, are a measure of the 'human' as these other 'others' are too.

Thinking at all about the child, also in relation to the human and Dis/ability, therefore challenges everyone's common-sensical and above all emotional investments in what the child is for them known to be, for sure. I want to propose here that the (Dis/abled) child has been both least and most affected by the issues that this symposium is focusing on: one the one hand, every report available reflects how austerity's cuts in health care, social care, housing, Disability funding and education (including specific educational Disability funding sources) affect the Dis/abled child even more than the already affected adults because the child sits within the frames of the adult twice-over; within the family within society (whatever 'family' or the 'social' are defined to be). In this sense the Dis/abled child has been most affected, but at the same time least affected in other senses in that this situation is not new or different: this has always been the case for the Dis/abled child and the Dis/abled child has further not been changed in the ways it is defined in relation to the human.

Because of the Dis/abled child being situated as a measure of the human (not, most and least) it is also invoked constantly in the resistances and protests against austerity and the implications of austerity, but my greatest worry in the midst of all of this is that because the Dis/abled child is also already 'known' to everyone – a site of truth – these protests and resistances in fact all too often – wittingly or unwittingly - operate on exactly the same principles as austerity and casino (or audit) capitalism themselves. Key to this, for instance, are issues like mental health, defined by almost everyone – for or against austerity and

neo-liberalism – in terms of a commonly agreed cognitivism, of which Julian Henriques et al in their ground-breaking and radical 1984 (and 1998 new edition) volume Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity wrote that:

> *Discourses rooted in the notion of a unitary, rational subject still predominate in the social sciences in spite of critiques which have shown such a concept to be untenable. [... It] survives not so much in explicit defences of the model as in the implicit assumptions of various dualisms: social and cognitive, content and process, the intentionality of agents and determination by structures, the subject as constituted or constitutive. [...] we utilized poststructuralist theories and psychoanalysis to show up the limitations that cognitivism imposes for those, who, like us, wanted to break with the tendency of psychology's research to reproduce and naturalize the particular rationalist notion of the subject. [...] The resilience of these paradigms in psychology, as much as in the common sense understandings of human behaviour, supports our belief that the book serves its original purpose of helping to authorize the breaking of the mould. (Henriques et al, 1988: ix-x)*

Henriques et al were here explicitly challenging the notion of what constitutes the 'human' at times of which they write in the 1998 revised edition that '[w]hen Changing the Subject was first published [in 1984], the New Right had come to power in Britain, and an ideology which has come to be described as neo-liberalism, supported by powerful institutions like the World Bank, was about to change the political landscape across the globe.' (Henriques et al, 1988: x) Here we are still and again, I would say, and yet Henriques et al's proposition that in their view 'psychology can only renew itself by engaging with a multiple, relational subject not bounded by reason: such an engagement should profoundly disturb psychology's assumptions and its self-understanding'(Henriques et al, 1988: xviii) has not only remained the province and interest of very little and increasingly marginalised academic research and teaching or political activism but is ever-more firmly in place as the general underpinning assumption of almost all articulations, wherever they place themselves: a rationalist, cognitivist, subject and its attendant self-evident object produce and are inherent to the widely-used claims of, for instance, 'voice', 'agency', 'identities', 'empathy', 'transparency', 'neuroscience', 'the brain', 'audit', 'fake news' (and its attendant 'true news').

Many of these claims operate often too in Dis/ability studies, gender and sexuality studies and feminism, precisely fields where one might have expected a resistance to an obedience to and compliance with the terms of neo-liberal, casino/ audit capitalism, but which instead are all too often are part of the swelling chorus of demands for more 'voice', more 'agency', more 'empathy', more transparency, more neuroscientific studies and knowledge of 'the brain', and even more and better 'audit' and more 'true news' and less 'fake news'. All these naturalised claims on the one hand profess outrage at the 'proven' unscientific nature of any anti-cognitivist critiques, such as the psychoanalysis or post-structuralism invoked by

Henriques et al, already knowing what a self-evidently 'clear' science brings to the table, even if it is not always seen to have done so quite enough (yet). On the other hand, as an inevitable counter-point, a deep suspicion of any such self-evident science relies paradoxically on exactly the same naturalised claims, just to the opposite effect. And it is in this that we can recognise Henriques et al's 'various dualisms' in action as the only acceptable and accepted options, whether 'for' or 'against'.

What, then, to do? Key here to Henriques et al's kind of arguments are not that we should dispense with the 'various dualisms' in order to instate in-turn after all a superior set of terms or claims as this would constitute only yet another repetition of those dualisms themselves anyway: only more more [sic]. Instead, they propose different ways of thinking about the subject – not in terms of its 'content', but in terms of its framing: how any subject (and object) is always seen and defined as such in the perspective of another. This is the key argument drawn also from psychoanalysis, albeit a psychoanalysis itself read within such terms (rather than the 'psychologised' version of psychoanalysis of popular culture but also much academic research), that any 'subject' is necessarily and always divided against itself – any 'I' has articulate even its own 'I' from elsewhere. Such ways of thinking do not lead to grand narratives and standardised methods, approaches or procedures but to a disruption of the naturalisation of claims. As Carolyn Steedman, Cathy Urwin and Valerie Walkerdine explain in their 1985 volume Language, Gender and Childhood in relation to their writing on both childhood and gender:

> *[our] approach requires a form of analysis which does not simply point to the existence of either alternative forms of language or lacunae of silence as expressions of social inequality. Rather, it demands that we understand the possibilities for change by examining how forms of speaking and forms of truth have been produced, and how these regulate and circumscribe what can be said about what, when and where. In this process, we are also forced to re-analyse what constitutes subversion and resistance, and how the subjective and the political intersect. (Steedman et al, 1985: 2)*

This perspective allows us to ask, for instance, when a child is seen to speak, how and why is it seen to be speaking its own voice? This issue is fundamental to difficulties surrounding both the study and the care of the child in any context, including in legal, educational or social welfare situations, where the dualism at play is either the view that the child is the perfect speaker of pure authenticity or that it is purely imitative, speaking only the words that others have supplied to it.

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08.
Uncertainty under Duress: The Distracting Certainty of Theory

Rod Michalko, University of Toronto

It's becoming increasingly difficult for me to distinguish among, what I take to be, a proliferation of ways or forms of social inquiry. I use the term 'social inquiry' very loosely as a way of indicating in some broad way the urge and the practice to understand and, in some instances, change the social world in which we find ourselves. I do not intend this use of social inquiry as a definition, but rather as an orientation to the wonder that comes when we are not certain. And yet, I am aware that certitude marks not only the end of much inquiry, but also, in many instances, its beginning. The wonder of theoria of which Plato and other philosophers have spoken has gradually been replaced, at least in the West, by the promise of certitude of theory understood as explanation. With these two broadly stipulated versions of social inquiry as a starting point, I want to explore the difficulty and subsequent unease that has been haunting me.

From The Beginning

There was a time that a good measure of certitude not only oriented me to my world, but governed it as well: this time was childhood. It wasn't that I was certain of everything, but, of one thing I was – what I saw was what everyone else did. The world in my eyes was the one in everyone's eyes. Of this, I was certain. Nothing unsettled this certitude, de-centred it, or even disturbed it. Nothing could. My world was more certain than certitude itself.

As it turned out, though, something did unsettle my world. Actually, unsettled doesn't begin to capture what happened to my world. Its foundations shook so violently that it fell in upon me and I was equally shaken by what had collapsed my world. What caused this catastrophic collapse was my world itself - the certitude of sight turned out to be no more certain than a dream. The world that rested so securely, so certainly in my eyes, fell in upon itself.

My childhood marked the beginning of this collapse. At about the age of 10 or 11, I began to experience a dark speck, a very small one, in my field of vision. Wherever I looked, it was there. Closing my eyes didn't remove it, nor did rubbing them and, I did plenty of both. Not only did the speck not go away, it grew bigger. Bigger was a radical enough change but, what was more radical still was that the speck turned into colours; hundreds, maybe thousands of bright colours. All colours – blue, red, yellow, orange, purple – all colours. More astonishing still, the colours began to move, shimmer, really. This shockwave continued to rattle my world for many years – from my

teens, into adulthood, finally culminating in a field of vision made up solely of what looks like, to me, billions, maybe zillions of bright, shimmering coloured lights. What is certain now is that the world in my eyes is not the world in the eyes of others.

The struggle to sustain a world outside of my eyes became more and more difficult. I had to remind myself and, I still do, that bright, shimmering coloured lights are my world, and mine only -- no one else sees it. The only glimpse others have of it is through my descriptions. Other than that, my world is just that – my world.

In and of themselves, bright and shimmering coloured lights are not a problem. There are many situations in which bright coloured lights are appropriate and even enhance aesthetics. Lights of all kinds, including bright shimmering ones, are often used to decorate, to accentuate, to glorify and to make all sorts of things and situations more attractive, compelling, and even mesmerizing. Change the context, though, and bright shimmering coloured lights become unsettling. There are, of course, many responses to unsettling situations and, as a way to return to the increasing difficulty I am having with social inquiry, I want to engage one of these responses.

Responding to the Beginning

One response to my bright coloured lights, a response I have embraced over the last number of years, is disability studies. Now, this field of inquiry isn't as clearly demarcated as its name may suggest. Beginning with the UK social model of disability and the USA cultural model and moving to what has become known as Critical Disability Studies, this field of inquiry has continually undergone shifts and changes. These versions have co-mingled at times and, at other times, blended into one another and, at still other times, opposed one another. Whatever the similarities and differences among these versions of disability studies, each of them might be understood as responding to the disabled human and thus to humanity under duress. Their tenuous but unified commitment is marked by a dedication to returning the human to disability and returning disability to humanity.

Although not in some clear way, the commitment of disability studies bears an uncanny resemblance to my engagement with my life in a world of zillions of bright, shimmering, coloured lights. The difficulty I am having, though, is translating my bright coloured lights into the disability imaginary which grounds disability studies. It suggests that disability is a legitimate and valuable life and that the source of any oppression is due to the ableist response of society and its social institutions. This is undoubtedly the case. But, how are we to wrestle with the disappearing sense of the human that often comes along with disability?

When my bright coloured lights appeared, something else disappeared, namely, an un-obstructed sight. With it, a sense of the human also began to disintegrate. There is a dominant sense of the embodiment of the human; it posits a functioning human body, one that, among other things, possesses five working senses, an apparatus through which the external world is

perceived, an apparatus that brings the inside in touch with the outside. Disappearing eyesight, then, in part disappears the human.

It is relatively easy to dismiss such a disappearance; after all, we can merely dismiss it. Disability studies often does. We might say that disappearing eyesight does not mean or include a disappearing sense of the human and that's that, the matter is closed. And yet, as certainly closed as this matter appears to be, there remains the remnants of what was dismissed in an uncertain attempt to close the matter.

As bright and as shimmering as my coloured lights are, there remains a strong sense that something has disappeared. It is not difficult to identify it -- my sight, no one else's, only mine. What else? I no longer see and what I do see, no one else does, no other human. What has disappeared along with sight, then, is one connection I had with everyone else and, thus, one of the connections with humanity.

Enter the struggle and enter the fold – the human and humanity under duress. Enter, too, the distraction of bright lights, lights that distract us from the focus of our struggle, namely, the duress humanity is facing. It is easy to fall under the mesmerizing spell of bright lights; it is easy to experience them as an obstruction to the world; it is easy to imagine that these lights affect the world only as an obstruction. And, it is easy to focus our struggle on minimizing the obstructive nature of bright lights.

Suppose

Now, suppose we treat bright lights not only as an obstruction, but as an occasion to imagine a world, humanity and all, that generates the need for these bright lights in the first place. Suppose, too, that rather than taking the easy path of minimizing the obstructive feature of these bright lights, we engage with the unease or dis/ease that comes from resisting bright lights as "just the way things are" and "that's just how it goes." Suppose that we commit ourselves to not being distracted by bright lights such as mine or by other bright shiny things such as bureaucratic responses to humanity, the exactitude and lightness of theory, the ease of explanation and, of course, the brightness and clarity of certainty itself. Suppose we treat these bright lights and shiny things as obstructions to humanity and that we treat them as the occasion to reveal the version of humanity they conceal and from which they distract us. Finally, suppose we can imagine these shiny things not only as distractions but as part of humanity itself. What then? How shall we theorize and how shall we live with the uncertainty of the brightness that so easily distracts us from the unease of humanity?

09.
Posthuman Risks? Some Thoughts on Posthuman Disability Studies and 'Strategic Humanism'

Rebecca Maskos, University of Applied Sciences, Bremen, Germany

A growing number of Critical Disability Studies researchers call for new ontologies and ethics of interdependence and relationality (Goodley et al. 2014; Kafer, 2013; Campbell, 2009; Davis, 2002). Drawing on works of New Materialist and feminist researchers (Braidotti, 2013), 'assemblages' of human and non-human actors should be acknowledged and valued (Goodley et al. 2014, 352). In criticizing the roots of humanist thought that centres the male, white, and non-disabled subject, they argue that the category of "the human" is problematic in and of itself, leaky and outdated – especially when considering human and animal relationships and the increasing embodiment of technologies (Goodley et al. 2014, 343ff). Disabled people, being interconnected to animals (such as guide dogs), technology (wheelchairs and other augmenting objects) and ecology, are seen in many ways as pioneers of a relational ethic that redistributes agency and rights.

While I very much appreciate the dismissal of powerful subject constructions of autonomy that are charged with notions of the male, rational and able 'homo oeconomicus', and while I welcome the call for a new relational ethics, I would like to point out some the risks of questioning the human category as such and of redistributing agency and rights. In my contribution, I argue that we should be aware of the power relationships in which a redistribution of agency would be embedded and take into account the background of the current political climate. Also, I would like to show possible overlaps between posthuman ideas and bioethical thinking such as Peter Singer's (1995, 2015) and highlight the danger of his logic. I'm doing so not only as a disabled person myself, who would be considered as "severely disabled" by ethicists such as Singer, but also as a person concerned about human rights and interested in societal change.

Humanity has always been under duress. Besides the consistent duress of mere physical existence, the nature of constraints varies historically. What was once a form of duress, is no longer, as the advances in medicine and in housing show. Meanwhile, human advances in the control of nature backfire on a large scale (today in form of a worldwide climate crises), as Adorno and Horkheimer analysed and predicted over seventy years ago in their first German version of "Dialectic of Enlightment" (for an English version see Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). We live in contradictory times: while a global economy produces so much wealth that it could provide humanity as a whole with housing and food, a majority still lives in poverty or dies

of treatable diseases. While there have never been times on earth with fewer wars or more treaties on international cooperation and human rights, thousands still die in armed conflicts and flee from violence and poverty.

The status of disabled people also remains contradictory. For instance, even though the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was passed by the UN in 2006, and although new technologies have improved our lives dramatically, we are facing neoliberal economics, austerity politics, and ableist bioethical reasoning granting disabled bodies less value than non-disabled ones. At a time when all lives are increasingly judged by the standards of capitalist utility, disabled lives are even more threatened.

Even if humanism was once used as an ideology of justification for white male dominance, it has nevertheless been taken up for emancipatory projects, such as human rights, which current posthumanist thinkers do acknowledge (Braidotti, 2013, 16ff). Humanism's values were affirmed by pointing to the reason and agency of, for instance, of women and people of colour. The fact that the lives of people with disabilities are essentially protected by rights today and that we are widely recognised as capable subjects is due to humanist interventions. Thus, a departure from humanism and the human category, in my view should not be carried out without due consideration.

Moreover, especially in times of 'humanity under duress' we should consider carefully what a redistribution of agency and rights would mean for disabled people, especially taking into account hegemonic power relationships. A call for the redistribution and transfer of human power and agency to animals, technology, objects and the environment can imply taking away power and agency from disabled people. Constantly having to fight to maintain power and agency, we may have to come to terms with some limits or restrictions, especially in the context of government policies of austerity. Granting agency or even "rights" to assistive devices such as wheelchairs, prosthetics or hearing aids could backfire when encountering policies of social cuts that seek to reduce the availability of resources. In addition, while artificial intelligence technologies may extend the autonomy of disabled people, under certain circumstances may also limit their autonomy. Here, an argument that attributes additional agency to technology would be potentially dangerous for disabled people.

I think we have to take the meaning of agency and rights seriously: it means power and the ability to act. The disability rights movement has always demanded and defended power and the ability to act for disabled people. But this is precisely what politicians and bioethical philosophers keep trying to counteract. For decades, ethicists like Peter Singer (1994, 2016) have worked towards dismantling the human category – in order to advocate animal rights, but also in order to question disabled people's right to live (especially prominent in his 1994 book "Rethinking Life and Death" and in his collaborative book with Helga Kuhse in 1988 "Should the Baby Live? The Problem of Handicapped Infants").

Peter Singer opposes disabled people's unquestioned right to live. As a utilitarian, he argues for the "maximizing" of universal happiness, as he calls it, by the 'prevention of suffering'. In good old-fashioned ableist manner, he equates a large part of disabled life

with suffering. The roots of Singer's logic lie in his commitment to animal rights and in the deconstruction of a fixed boundary between animals and humans. Singer doesn't differentiate between animals and humans, but between persons and non-persons. A person to him is an individual aware of her- or himself and who can make plans (1994, 180ff): something that doesn't apply to people with severe cognitive disabilities, to people in a coma, or all newborns - none of these individuals, according to Singer, count as persons. If a baby is born with a disability, to Singer it is 'better for everyone' if the baby dies. But according ot him, many animals have self-awareness and thus should be protected to a much greater extent than some human beings. Prioritising the protection of humans over animals would count as 'speciecism' to Singer, as he writes in his book Animal Liberation (note that I quote the revised 2015 edition):

> *To avoid speciecism we must allow that beings who are similar in all relevant respects have a similar right to life – and mere membership in our own biological species cannot be a morally relevant criterion for this right. (...) We may legitimately hold that there are some features of certain beings that make their lives more valuable than those of other beings; but there will surely be some non-human animals whose lives, by any standards, are more valuable than the lives of some humans. A chimpanzee, dog, or pig, for instance, will have a higher degree of self-awareness and a greater capacity for meaningful relations with others than a severely retarded infant or someone in a state of advanced senility. So if we base the right to live on these characteristics, we must grant animals a right to life as good as, or better than, such retarded or senile humans (Singer, 2015: 52f).*

To Singer, in order to be considered human it is not enough to be granted the protection of a 'moral status' - this should only apply to 'persons'. Acknowledging this would give society a new ethical foundation on how to treat (disabled) humans:

> *(...) we now have a new vision of who we are, (...), the limited nature of the differences between us and other species, and the more or less accidental manner in which the boundary between 'us' and 'them' has been formed. Adopting this new vision will change forever the way in which we make ethical decisions about beings who are alive and belong to our species, but lack the capacities that some members of other species possess (Singer, 1994, 182f).*

I think that Singer's devaluation of disabled life is not simply an ableist by-product of his theory, or a lack of the recognition of justice, as critical animal and disability researchers suggest (Taylor, 2017: 57-81). Rather, it is an essential and necessary part of his logic. Yes, in the end, it is about societal practices: we will always have to answer the question of how to treat individuals who are not able to act or speak for themselves – be they animals, young

children or unconscious adults. What matters most is the social and political background against which this question is posed. In a society that primarily focuses on the utility and productivity of people, that discusses the costs and benefits of human life and that is prone to Right-wing leadership of all kinds, the answer might be a very ableist one.

To counter this threat, I would suggest strategically sticking to the boundaries of the human category, even though they are blurry. Although humans are the only 'animals' that can decide to refrain from eating animals – no other animal can actually make that decision about its diet – a clear boundary between animals and humans is hard to sustain. Thus, I would argue for holding to a strategic humanism until a profound societal change is achieved, echoing ideas similar to those developed in debates on 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak, 1990). I would argue that only in a society that no longer produces for economic profit but for everyone's needs could we let go of the idea of human uniqueness – only then could the pressure on disabled people to prove their humanity disappear. However, especially at times when humanity is under duress, we as a community of disability studies researchers should be careful about dismantling the category of the human and aware of how our messages are being taken up by policy makers.

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10.
Narrative imagination after posthumanism

Javier Monforte, Universitat de València, València, Spain

This brief chapter is an initial attempt to re-imagine imagination considering posthumanist principles that indicate the entanglement between narrative and matter. The arguments are intertwined with a small story that is used to facilitate engagement and attract and hold theoretical imagination. Ultimately, the text is an invitation to wonder about the implications and practicalities of a more-than-human understanding of narrative imagination.

Imagination has been fundamentally situated within humanist theories of the subject, and thus considered a mental faculty integral to the human condition. It is commonly assumed that imagination emanates from a conscious subject, that it is formed via human intentionality. Alternatively, social constructivist theories suggest that imagination lies in the individual's ability to decode and construct meanings within discursive formations and cultural practices. As such, imagination is deemed not as a simple faculty of the individual mind but also as a social faculty.

A significant trend of thought within social constructivism proposes that narrative is central to imagination, and that narrative imagination constitutes a form and practice of human agency (Andrews, 2014; Brockmeier, 2009; Frank, 2010). Here, imagination is believed to depend on the narrative resources available in society, as well as the ability of human actors to make use of these resources.

There are compelling reasons to turn to narrative as a form of researching (the lack of) imagination (Smith, 2010). However, the narrative approach tends to privilege (human) meaning-making over other aspects of existence. Even if our concerns are based on the dignity and perfectibility of the human, this anthropocentric and logocentric approach is problematic, as it dematerialises imagination and reduces it to linguistic and social constructions, thus neglecting all other non-human forces at play (Feely, 2019; Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, 2010).

Against this backdrop, the present paper articulates a postanthropocentric and materially sensitive view of narrative imagination by engaging with two intertwined posthumanist interventions: collapsing the traditional narrative/matter divide; and questioning the role of matter as a mere backdrop to human agency and action. To facilitate readership and arouse the reader's theoretical imagination, I interlace my arguments with a 'small' story that I extracted from a 'big', well-developed story (Griffin and Phoenix, 2016).

The big story is The Handmaid's Tale (1986), a dystopian novel written by Margaret Atwood. The protagonist and narrator of the story is a woman called 'Offred' (a slave name),

who is separated from all that she loves and taken as a servant. Offred misses her former husband, Luke and in this 'small story' she is lying in a small bed and wishing Luke were there,with her. Recalling this feeling, she says:

I wanted to feel Luke lying beside me, but there wasn't room.

Underlying this sentence are two key theoretical points. First, Offred's imagination generates and is generated through feelings, not only rational thoughts developed in the realm of the mind. Imagination is embodied and felt in the flesh; it is experienced in and through the body (an exciting framework to extend thinking about this issue is the affective turn; see e.g. Goodley et al., 2017).

Second, and most significantly for this paper, the size of the bed constrains Offred's narrative imagination. Offred wants to imagine herself differently situated, but she is not capable. This does not depend entirely on her intentions and willingness to imagine Luke, neither on her linguistic repertoire. Here, the problem is not (only) words and the capacity to strategically and artfully use them, but (also) materiality.

There is a categorical solution to enlarge Offred's narrative imagination. That is, to enlarge the bed, to provide her with a bigger bed. If so, she would be able to imagine Luke lying beside her. The possibility of imagining that possible world is not banal. Without it, Offred is restricted to the here and now, which for her is a very limited and painful place to be.

From the above, we can infer that it is not only matter shapes our actual capacities (i.e. what we can do; which story we can tell; which future we can imagine), but also shapes our virtual capacities (i.e. what else we could do; which different story we could tell; which alternative situations we could imagine). Matter constrains and enhances narrative imagination, that is, the emplotment of possible worlds. In short, matter is a narrative resource.

At the same time, narrative is a material resource. Stories are embedded in the material world; they take the form of mundane objects (e.g. a bed), bodies and buildings. These material entities can be considered as materialised stories. As Law (2000: 2) argues, 'there is no important difference between stories and materials' (original emphasis). Indeed, narrative and matter are always already co-constituted. They shape and interfere with each other. To quote Fullagar (2017: 253): 'materiality matters not as an add-on to language, not as a matter of language, but because the material can never be separate from language'. Within this perspective, material and semiotic entities possess the same ontological status; they work together at the same level.

In sum, from the arguments above, I advocate a relational materialist understanding of narrative imagination, which avoids essentialism and the dangers of anthropocentrism. Put differently, I have proposed a conception of narrative imagination that is responsive to the posthuman condition. This is a condition that acknowledges our unavoidable interconnectedness with non-humans, including inanimate objects. Importantly,

acknowledging the non-human does not mean we stop caring about people. Quite the contrary. For instance, if we care about Offred we have to care about the bed as well, because the bed shapes Offred's capacities to imagine and thus affects her visceral suffering.

When addressing imagination, we should not focus exclusively on humans and their symbolic meanings, because imagination is context-dependent, relational and more-than-human. It emerges as the product of material and semiotic entanglements. It is neither a human quality (only) nor a narrative practice (only). Rather, it happens in networks or assemblages in which elements of different orders of existence affect each other and generate emotion through their relations. In order to be able to imagine well and for imagination to have beneficial consequences for us, we need enabling assemblages. No doubt, the laconic sketch provided here is not sufficient to affirm advancement of knowledge of imagination. Further work has to be done to develop mature, sophisticated and comprehensive understandings, as well as to render the ideas accessible, so that people from different contexts can effectively connect with them.

Furthermore, a more exhaustive and explicit engagement with the theories and concepts inspiring this paper would be needed to achieve academic rigour. Despite these limitations, the paper delivers a key message that might be influential for a broad audience: imagination is not simply an individual's issue, but rather an issue of the 'connective tissue' between people, things, stories, feelings, and so on. In the face of the current 'crisis of connection' (Drichel, 2019), posthumanist thinking can be helpful to counter the humanist fantasy of a rational imagination and to accept interdependence as the human condition.

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11.
(Non)urban Humans

Abdou-Maliq Simone, University of Sheffield

One of the most productive strands in contemporary urban research has been the focus on extended urbanization. Here, urbanization not only becomes more extensive as an ongoing, increasingly dominant process of spatial production and realignment, with a coherent set of constitutive dynamics, but also extends itself into a wider multiplicity of situations and histories (Brenner 2014). It offers a particular working-out of dilemmas, tipping points, and conjunctures faced by settlements, and this working-out entails various equations of subsumption, adaptation, erasure, remaking, conciliation and improvisation. Urbanization is then something that not only spreads out as a function of its own internal operations, but is something contributed to through an intensely differentiated process of encounter, enabling it to change gears and operate through a wider range of appearances and instantiations (McGee and Greenberg 2002, Monte-Mór 2014, Keil 2018, Schmid 2018)

If urbanization is being composed through the interplay of a wider range of processes and sites, to what extent is it still possible to talk about the 'human' as that self-reflecting subject that inhabits the urban? Is there not a more extensive repertoire of bodies and subjects that are the consequences of such extensivity? And what do these bodies look like, and how do they operate? What might be a form of the human that stands aside, both articulated with and detached from the ways in which the urban proceeds to encompass seemingly everything?

By foregrounding the possibilities of an urban yet to arrive and, at the same time already reaching its limits in terms of geological, atmospheric and human life implications, we posit the notion of (non) urban humans. In other words, what might be the space of inhabitation and becoming that exists within the urban that is not fully apprehendable by it? What exists within disparate yet conjoined processes of urbanization that is disobedient to its own logics, and that perhaps signals its inevitable incompletion, and thus deficit of sovereignty?

I suggest that this (non) urban human concerns ways of human life extending itself through and with the earth, in diverse configurations of sense and embodiment. Instead of the human reflecting an individuated consolidation of capacity, will and self-reflection, the (non) urban is a dispersal of those features through the body extending itself to other figurations of life, as if lending a hand, opening itself up to the metabolisms and sensibilities of multiple entities and form of liveliness. This is what Fanon (1963) would call the more-than-conscious bodies in relation. Such extensionality might draw from the re-engagement with the refrains of so-called 'natural worlds'— deserts, seas, and forests—and from histories of blackness, where the endurance of black life was anchored within intricate ecologies of nuturance, tending, and interweaving.

The notion of the (non) urban human is used here as a heuristic device, rather than a definitive category. It points to possibilities of interruption, temporal glitches (Berlant 2016), and provisional detachments in the processual generation of urban space, in urbanization's seemingly self-generated expansiveness and ability to encompass and enfold everything that exists. While urban areas across the world have incorporated multiple ontologies of inhabitation (Escobar 2016, Alexaides and Peluso 2015, Graham and Penny 2014), the normative figuration of the human as an individuated, self-conscious entity has largely been generalized in terms of the mechanics of territorial governance. But as new forms of territory emerge, what kinds of sensoria and ways of paying attention will come to the fore or be deployed to keep open the possibilities of an urban life that is less destructive, less unequal and thus potentially sustainable past the climatic impasses currently at work?

Whatever viable figure of the human might emerge in the long run will ensue in the intersection of three forms of contemporary non-presence, but a non-presence that may be more than what it appears. In other words, these are the dimensions of urban life that concern that which is to end (an end which could itself be invented), that which is left out, and that which is yet to arrive. Yet, instead of pointing to temporalities and spaces set apart, that which is left out points to a future that is already here, and that which is over or excluded perhaps has not yet arrived (Nancy 2008, Povinelli 2016).

Let's take a look more closely at these intertwined presences and absences.

First, the (non) urban human refers to **persons kept out of the locus of free will and enactment that the urban implicitly promises**, such as the capability to chart out a life trajectory as a self-reflexive individual endowed with a basic set of protections and rights.

Second, the (non) urban human refers to **a form of life yet to come** or, alternately and simultaneously, a form of human enactment that does not yet possess a mode of visibility or a vernacular to be sufficiently recognizable. Here, the (non) urban human is not that which exists in a stabilized space external to the urban, such as the rural or peripheral, since the designations of such an outside have been substantially de-stabilized by the extensiveness of urbanization processes. The (non) urban is thus that which exists outside the available frames of recognition, as shadow, absence, immanence, or spirit - or even as undergirding, as the tain of the image, the support or background required to make the visible something that can be seen.

Third, the (non) urban human is a means of **mediating** three dimensions of the urban: 1) The urban is the concrete manifestation of **the human capacity of continuous self-invention**. Urbanization—as the continuous rearrangement and intersection of things—exemplifies the human as something without any fundamental nature, as something open-ended, as process rather than entity, and where the 'end' of the human is itself indicative of such open-endedness, i.e. the capacity of the human to decide for itself the terms of its own finitude and of the fundamental distinction between life and nonlife (Povinelli 2017);

2) the urban as **the limit of that very capacity of continuous becoming**. For, the implications of urbanization posit the real possibilities of human extinction and; 3) the urban

as a concrete **platform for the *unhuman***—for a form of inhabitation that does not rely upon the constitution of particular subjects—but rather combinations of force, technicity, flesh, and liveliness (Colebrook 2014). As such, the urban expresses the ways in which the human has always already been unhuman (Colebrook 2015, Weinstein and Colebrook 2018).

All three facets—self-invention, the limits of invention, and the unhuman- sit uneasily with each other. They can be conceptually applied to all of those who are left out of the human fruition that the urban promises, as well as the limitations of how we imagine what is yet to come. To what extent is the human to come the product of an invention in the present? How could this invention circumvent the limits of human finitude signalled by the rampant destruction of the earth while so many humans, not really considered as such, are left out the process of invention, or whose inventions nor finitude really counts? How would that inclusion take place in a form that is not simply the reiteration of the primacy of the self-reflecting subject, of a 'we' formed through linguistic solidarity?

That which is to come, that which is to be invented either as new beginning or end, that which constrains any invention, and that which can be considered left out, removed from full participation in human life—all intersect in ways that upend clear distinctions between the inside and out, the urban and non-urban. Yet if these divides persist in both concept and everyday experience, how then to situate a way of being human that is something else besides an all-encompassing urbanization—something that co-exists with it in an intimate proximity but yet is not of it, neither as contradiction nor alternative: something that remains 'out there', of uncertain distance and form? As urbanization becomes more extensive and extended, it would also seem to be moving in the direction of an 'out there', taking on the risk of the interruptions and glitches to which Berlant refers

'Out there'

One way of thinking about the 'out there' mentioned earlier is the temporalities of blackness, which are potentially important because they signal the obdurate inclusive exclusions that are at the heart of modernity, the persistent need to banish and oppress no matter the particularities of the individual human histories involved. But they also signal a way of existing that stands outside of measured time, that holds open the abolition of gradated measures of human worth, of calculating who counts and who doesn't (Wynter 2003).

Hortense Spillers (2003) has talked about the complicated strategic choices facing black people in the Americas in terms of ensuring their endurance. Blacks could insist upon their humanity in contexts in which this humanity was structurally foreclosed, where the insistence would be construed as evidence of disobedience or the very absence of humanity, but which, nevertheless, in this assertion of will despite the odds and consequences could be construed by a black self, with no official recognition, as evidence of being human.

In contrast, indifference to the value of a self-formed human subject could be

manifested in the capacity of the black body to extend itself into the very surrounds, terrain, and materiality of their limited world of operations. An extraordinary attunement to the operations of the earth and its varying atmospheres and ways of being signalled a detachment from the need to be human. Here, the processes of social reproduction were experienced in concert with the rhythms of other forms of liveliness (King 2017). What can such extensionality as a black practice indicate to us today in a world of extended urbanization? How can disobedience and extending into the world be simultaneously coupled as a critical urban practice in light of the possible end of urbanity itself?

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12.
The fix is in – but let's skip it

Tanya Titchkosky, University of Toronto

In the following narrative, I want to capture a sense of the complex pressures and pleasures that arise in scenes oriented to remediation. Reflecting on this narrative, I hope to reveal a bit of what it means to perceive people as in need of remediation and how the fix is in. I am using this common English idiom to express how a fixed, or pre-determined, set of meanings are made present in interaction. The perception of human difference is already enabled and affixed to unquestioned (fixed) categories, in this case, disability and intellectual impairment. In this sense, using the phrase the fix is in is a way to work at the intersections of perception, knowledge, and remediation as they appear in everyday life.

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I was done. Treadmill, elliptical, weights - albeit a little lighter today as I was protecting my sore shoulder. My last stop was stretching in the small room, next to the gravity machines. Usually crowded, there was only one other person in the room, an older woman lying on a mat. Plenty of room to stretch in my rather robust way – happy and eyes closed, I began stretching.

Shuffling sounds near the doorway; I look up to see a group coming into the room. Young adults or teenagers, maybe five or six moving together, sort of lanky, they shuffle in and mill about at the far end of the small room. They don't seem to be a class… but, maybe; they also don't seem to say much to one another... One woman, older than the others, says, "Sumner, no need to be pacing; come over here to the mat. You can sit or stretch."

That seemed to act like a permission slip for the older woman on the mat to question the group. She turns on the mat, faces them, and says, "What is this, some sort of class or something?"

"No, not a class," says the middle-aged woman. The others don't even acknowledge the questioner.

"What then?" says the woman on the mat.

"Well, we just come here… to use the gym," says the other woman.

The questioning tone from the woman on the mat is now replaced by a declaration: "Well, they don't do anything."

Woosh – like the air, I too wish to leave the room.

A group of people said to be "doing nothing" - to their faces. It seems that the group is an affront to her sense of who ought to lie on mat, or pace, or who ought to sit, or stretch,

or hang-out.

I stop my stretching, pick up my mat, and return it to the stack. The woman in the group says softly, "There are different ways to do things at the gym." She is not merely stating the obvious; her words come across as a justification for this groups' presence.

I feel my anger begin its boil.

In just a few words, a group has been told that they do not belong but not because they are doing something abusive or wrong. Many people pace, sit, stretch, and stand while at the gym. I don't remember seeing the woman on the mat move, except to turn her look toward the group to say, "But they are not doing anything." What sense lies in her saying this? The group is doing things done in a gym but not in a way that the woman on the mat considers to be doing things in a gym. Their presence seems to be her question.

Moving from the stack of mats and toward the way out, I stop near the women lying on the mat, look down and say: "How do you know what they are doing?"

"I have seen them before," she retorts.

"They are doing lots here," I say, my arms flailing suggesting the space of their doings. In agitation, I bark, "They are often here."

She, who has seen them before; I, who recalls their presence; we thus establish ourselves as regular gym members with valid opinions on them: both of us are seeking solutions; both of us have things we are grappling with but not the same things.

"I was just asking a question," says the woman still lying on her mat.

"No, you weren't just asking a question," I respond. "You were making a statement. You were making people feel unwelcome." I turn toward the group and say, "I am glad you are here."

Muffled replies, shuffling, pacing. It's all very awkward.

Exiting, I throw a few more words at the woman lying on her mat, "I feel really sorry for you and your attitude. This is a community center. They can do what they want."

Days later back at the gym, I still find myself mulling over her insolence. I stop at the water fountain, turn around and there she is, standing right behind me, much shorter than I had imagined.

She says, "I got them doing things. They thanked me." Then she says, "See! I brought them this" and thrusts a skipping rope toward me.

"What?" I say. I'm startled. I stare at the skipping rope, then look at her as a strange sensation rises, "I thought you didn't want them here."

She responds, "I used to be a gym teacher. Their worker thanked me. I got them doing things and I brought them a skipping rope. If they are here…" and she begins to look around.

"Oh," I hesitate. "Well, ok. Umm, sorry – I guess, I misread you completely. I'm…" she has moved off.

Maybe I read everything wrong. Still, I feel flabbergasted - skip rope! Says, who?

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The woman on the mat seems to fixate on the group as insufficient, as outsiders. Between the utterance "Well, they don't do anything" and the other woman's rejoinder "There are different ways to be at the gym," my fix is in on the entire scene – a woman is telling a group of young people that they don't belong. I try to fix her. Our next encounter by the water fountain, however, suggests that maybe something else is going on since bringing people a skipping rope hardly seems an exclusionary practice. Still, what emboldens one gym member to suggest to others to skip?

The gift of the skipping rope unsettles my clear sense of what is going on but, likely, any reflection on this story would blur the supposedly clear lines between protagonist and antagonist. As Thomas King (2003: 2) reminds us "The truth about stories is that that is all we are." In this story, the "we" that we are appears against a backdrop of a well-defined "they" – a group, moving together, and moving differently from a class - shuffling, pacing, standing. The group is seen as different by everyone in the story who speaks about them; they, however, do not speak.

To consider what has been made "see-able through being made say-able," suggests a need to re-read this story through terms more nuanced than right or wrong (Titchkosky, 2011: 73). Sarah Ahmed (2006:12, 27) is helpful here:

If we think of [read] space through orientation…then our work will in turn acquire a new direction, which opens up how spatial perceptions come to matter and be directed as matter… Perception is a way of facing something… which means I have already taken an orientation toward it.

In the gym with its routine forms of spatial perception, I notice the group entering the room as those who do not fit neatly within my perceptual lines of engagement; thus, "They don't seem like a class… but, maybe." The gym allows some lines of perception to be understood as normal and expected. Sumner, who is invited to stop pacing seems anxious or uncomfortable to me, yet regardless of his experience, we are directed to read him as not following an expected line since he is told to do otherwise, "sit or stretch." This utterance orients the spatial perception that comes to matter, namely, an invitation to read Sumner's pacing as an out-of-place activity.

Sumner and the group are perceived as the unexpected; the woman on the mat not only recognizes this but aims to fix it. She has "seen them before," and perceives them as not doing anything. By the story's end, it is not clear whether this statement is meant to dismiss, degrade, or do something else; what is clear, is that she wants something more from the group. Just as we cannot know Sumner's intention, we cannot know hers; but we do know that she is not at one with the group – they are a they and she is not accepting of their actions. Remarked upon by her, the fix is in - the group is noticed and thus known as unexpected, and treated as such.

And, once this interpretation of the group is established, the various voices in the story all pursue their own fix: "They don't do anything," "There are different ways…" "They can do what they want." Through the utterance, "I got them to do something," the woman suggests

that she is moving them toward what she expects. Her retired-gym teacher sense of what people should do at the gym is imposed and she moves toward them in order to get them to move closer to her expectations. I try to move her away from them and toward her imposition upon them – or so my imposition on her seems to me. I said, "They can do what they want." My expectations move me away from both her and the group and by saying "I'm glad you're here," I serve my exiting words. One orientation suggests let them be, another suggests be more of what I expect, both orientations stave off the influence of the unexpected.

The everyday asserts its expectations through the space, through the way perception is already organized and already directs how people come to matter. I aim to correctthe woman by reasserting an abstract version of inclusion that means simply do what you want; the woman aimed to affixthe group in a strict version of inclusion that meant do what is expected in a gym. Either way the compulsion to fix is the duress under which versions of the human unfold in this story and in its telling. The fix is in -- participants enter with a fixed version of the human. We can move past what we have already thought about all the people involved, even pass over how we made sense of people, especially the group of youth, and thus take pleasure in asserting an orientation which already fits the scene it seeks to fix.

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Through this exploration of remediation as it intersects the noticing of people, I have sought to actualize a politics of wonder toward human expectations (Titchkosky, 2011). Such a politics seeks to unpack the sense behind what is already said and already done, in order to wonder about our current dominant forms of engagement. A politics of wonder nurtures awareness of the forms of perception generating duress in everyday life and might generate other ways of how we matter to one another.

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13.
The Sociological Problem of Suffering: Ever More Exacerbated and Confounding

Iain Wilkinson, University of Kent

For most of my sociological career I have been involved in an attempt to understand how 'the problem of suffering' is configured and experienced under conditions of modernity, and how, moreover, it operates as an innovative force within processes of social change. I argue that the main 'founder fathers' of sociology - Marx, Weber and Durkheim – are all preoccupied with this matter, and in the contexts of their theoretical projects, offer perspectives on particular components of human suffering and their wider political and cultural significance.

Marx holds an ambiguous standpoint on the problem of human suffering. Scholars readily identify him as committed to the attempt to document the ways in which capitalism renders people as docile bodies for exploitation, and thereby subjects them to experiences of 'physical deterioration', 'intellectual degeneration' and 'moral degradation'. Yet, Marx does not appear to have arrived at a settled account of how individuals are prone to respond to this; or rather, when reflecting on this matter it seems that he is in two minds over what takes place. On the one hand, in the famous passage where Marx identifies the 'opium' of religion as 'an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering', he places an emphasis on the potential for human affliction to inspire people to take flight from 'the truth of the here and now' in favour of the 'illusory happiness' of life in the hereafter.

On the other hand, there are passages where he identifies the experience of suffering as a 'sensuous knowledge' that works to make individuals more consciously alert to the material conditions of their existence, and which holds the potential to inspire them to join together as a class committed to abolish capitalism. In this regard, Marx appears to be arguing that the problem of suffering operates both to disable and enable 'class consciousness', but he does not offer us any guidance when it comes to understanding how destructive and painful experiences that work to enforce and consolidate human alienation might be transfigured so that they operate to release our 'essential powers' and human potential.

Weber is largely preoccupied with explaining how experiences of suffering are set to be encountered and understood as involving us in a painful deficit of moral meaning. He assumes that human reason is never adequate to match and vanquish 'the irrational force' of suffering. Weber holds that the problem of suffering consists in the fact that it always retains a capacity to appear senseless and morally outrageous. Moreover, his overwhelmingly pessimistic assessment of our cultural fate, and of the presiding forms

of social psychology shaped under the influence of modern rationality, leads him to conclude that the existential scale and volume of human suffering is set to grow along with conditions of modernity. On his account, the problem of suffering operates to inspire an insatiable quest for ever more intellectually coherent and practically relevant rationalisations of reality, which have the unintended consequence of making us yet more tormented by the apparent 'senselessness' of human affliction.

Weber holds that 'the more highly rationalized an order, the greater the tension, the greater the exposure of major elements of a population to experiences that are frustrating in the very specific sense, not merely that things happen that contravene their interests, but that things happen that are 'meaningless' in the sense that they ought not to happen' (Parsons 1966: xlvii). Accordingly, it might be argued that the normative expectations created by modern medicine for our health, and by technological advancements that ensure greater levels of public safety, have some unanticipated and deeply troubling side effects. On occasions when medicine cannot protect or save us, or where safety systems fail and 'disaster strikes', we are left feeling more painfully exposed than ever before to 'the irrational force of life' and more existentially traumatised by the fact that we have no means to escape our fate. Weber appears to conclude that we are set to inhabit a cultural reality where it is made increasingly difficult for us endure the inherent antinomies of human existence, and especially when it comes to the task of bestowing this with sufficient moral meaning.

Durkheim also shares in the view that under social conditions of modernity, the problem of suffering is set to become a more morally perplexing and intellectually frustrating component of human experience. At one point in The Division of Labour in Society, he asks 'Is it true that the happiness of the individual increases as man advances?', and answers his question by declaring that 'Nothing is more doubtful'. Durkheim contends while 'there is a host of pleasures open to us today that more simple natures knew nothing about….on the other hand, we are exposed to a host of sufferings spared them, and it is not at all certain that the balance is to our advantage….If we are open to more pleasures, we are also open to more pain' (Durkheim [1893] 1964: 241-2). With a focus brought to experiences of egoism and anomie, Durkheim is particularly concerned by the emotional and psychological consequences of social conditions that result in us having no choice but to choose who we are, how to live and what to be.

On this account, the problem of suffering is greatly intensified through processes of individualisation that leave us more anxiously preoccupied with questions of moral meaning and feeling painfully bereft of belonging. Yet, at the same time, at least when compared to Marx and Weber, Durkheim is alert to the potential for the social forces that produce egoism and anomie to also involve us in moral sentiments whereby we are inclined to be more sympathetically oriented towards the suffering of others. He identifies what we feel for our ourselves and for others as belonging to the 'the same moral state' (Durkheim [1897] 1952: 360). In this regard, in his later work he is increasingly preoccupied by a paradox

for which there is no adequate social, cultural or political solution. Durkheim portrays our social psychology as inherently inconsistent and contradictory. Arguably, moreover, while exposing the polarities of the moral conflicts we inhabit, his analysis works more to set problems for sociological investigation than to advance practicable solutions.

I argue that in the twenty first century we are living under social, cultural and economic conditions that are intensifying the problem of suffering. I further hold that the analyses of the above-mentioned classical theorists remain useful as guides for those working to understand how this is set to take place. Over the last fifty years or so, considerable advancements have been made in the documentation of the social determinants of health inequalities, and unprecedented amounts of evidence are now accumulated to accompany theoretical insights with empirical analysis. In this regard, the deteriorating physical health conditions of lower income households serve to underline the ongoing importance of studies that profile the structural violence of class conditions and experiences. Moreover, I suggest that some of the dimensions of the problem of suffering explored by Durkheim and Weber are particularly useful for locating the worsening crisis in our mental health within a sociological frame - although these are more fitted to alert us to the social and cultural contradictions of our existence than to provide us with moral guidance on how to live and or what to do to make this better.

Moving beyond the classics, I am also inclined to argue that in seeking to better understand how modern people are disposed to experience and respond to the problem of suffering, we are also set to engage with the fact that a great deal of contemporary sociology is now embroiled in conjecture. On many accounts, new communication and information technologies are operating to radically transform our visual culture and experience in ways that were unknown to previous generations. Social media are reconfiguring our networks, associations and attachments in ways that are without precedent, and which hold many uncertain consequences. In these conditions it is widely held that people are undergoing new experiences of self-formation and that our social subjectivities, value commitments and affective ties are being reconstituted in ways that confound traditions of sociological conception and evaluation.

More than ever before, and with greater volume and intensity, it seems that 'all that is solid melts into air' and many judgements and opinions are made to appear outmoded before they are adequately formed. In these respects, there are many elements in our experience and response to human suffering where we are challenged to make sense of domains of agency and affect that are changing our moral experience of self and society in ways that are not readily comparable to anything encountered in our past, and which remain barely understood now. Human suffering is being made more publicly visible; and especially that of distant 'strangers'. Arguably we are witness to new possibilities for the founding and extension of 'empathic civilization'; yet at the same time, what is often made more immediately present to us is the apparent dearth of social sympathy and the scale of 'compassion fatigue'.

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14.
The challenges of thinking with and through disability in interdisciplinary research

Katherine Runswick-Cole (University of Sheffield), Yvonne Wechuli (The Universities of Cologne and Sheffield) and and Antonios Ktenidis (University of Sheffield)

In recent times, interdisciplinary research has become the poster child for academic study. As a precondition for "real" interdisciplinary collaboration, each collaborator must identify with one or more, disciplinary positions and ensure that this/these identification(s) remain visible in the collaborative process. To this end, the Humanity under Duress Symposium created a space for a small number of researchers to gather together in a cosy setting, to focus on the question: what does it mean to be human at a time of increasingly rapid social, economic, technological and political change? The organizers of the event took measures to facilitate discussion: papers were circulated beforehand and presentations were limited to brief provocations followed by a response from one other researcher before moving to an open discussion.

Disability Studies scholars have long been disappointed by interdisciplinary engagements. On the one hand, as Goodley (2013) writes, there is no doubt that disability studies have struggled for recognition from other transformative arenas such as feminism, critical race, Marxist and queer theory. On the other hand, when disability is included in interdisciplinary debates, it is invoked in ways that we, as Critical Disability Studies academics, find deeply problematic. For example, when the lives of people with learning disabilities are referenced in interdisciplinary discussions of the human, too often this happens in ways that question, or even deny, the status of disabled people as human beings (See: Singer, 1996; McMahan, 1996). Writing from her perspective as a philosopher and a mother of a daughter with 'a severe cognitive impairment', Kittay (2009) suggests that by questioning the humanity of people with cognitive impairments, debating what it means to be human is a form of epistemic violence.

Given this history, it felt refreshing to attend a symposium focused on questions of the human that were informed by a broad range of theories from different sociological contexts. Presentations at the Symposium drew on a range of theoretical resources: from bio-politics to critical disability studies; from cultural studies of childhood to critical race theory; from anthropology to economics. Analytical frames were focused on a wide range of topics including: drug use, on-line gaming, welfare benefits, and death.

As the Symposium progressed, however, each of us began to reflect. Katherine began to question what happens when learning disability, or cognitive impairment, is de-centred in radical theorising about questions of the human in sociological studies. Yvonne ruminated

over the responsibility the researcher holds regarding her thoughts. Can research on and theorization of the question of what it means to be human be conceived as l'art pour l'art? Is it legitimate to enter a thought experiment without considering where it could lead – just to see where it goes? John Rawls' (1971) theory of justice and his thought experiment -the famous 'veil of ignorance'-came to Antonios' mind, where disability, once more, was left out.

There was a fascinating array of sociological thought and disciplinary expertise in the room engaging with questions of the human. Writing from anthropology, Jamie Coates helpfully drew attention to 'the human' as a relatively recent term which didn't appear until 1755 when Denis Diderot defined it as 'the unique term from which one has to begin and to which one has to return' (Rees 2018: 36 cited in Coates, 2019: 1). He cites Wynter (2007) in order to challenge the human as a biocentric and Eurocentric preoccupation of the (post) colonial era (Coates, 2019). Coates used a cross-cultural account, drawing on Japanese language and culture, to suggest that the language of 'personhood' has wider cross-cultural potential than the 'human'.

Coates proposed that the language of 'the person' might simultaneously allow for the biological, psychological and the sociological and open the way to a shift from a focus on the individual to the "dividual' (Strathern, 1988 cited in Coates, 2019: 3). However, this shift towards personhood, also drew Coates to the work of Peter Singer. In Singer's advocacy for a move away from specie-centric humanism to 'personism', he has concluded that the moral worth of some people with learning disabilities is less than that of some higher order apes (Singer, 1996).

A failure to pay attention to the implications of such theorizing for the lives of people with learning disabilities allows Tooley (1976 cited in Coates, 2019: 2) to conceive of 'persons' as 'a being capable of desiring to continue as a subject of experience' without being confronted with the implicit ableism within the statement. This form of theorizing has the potential to relegate people with learning disabilities to the category of 'human nonperson' (Kittay, 2009).

Sociological theory regularly attends to the raced, sexed, gendered, classed and colonial aspects of socio-cultural life, and yet disability is still excluded from such theorizing, as Dan Goodley reminded us (2019). Functionalist perspectives of disability (see Parson's (1951) 'sick role', for instance) are still pervasive in sociological thought, despite disability activists' and theorists' push for the 'sociologisation' of disability (see e.g. social model, Oliver, 1990).

As an economist, Nick Gane argued in his presentation that: 'clearly human beings have the capacity to think and act economically'. He carefully mediated this claim with the view that 'this does not mean that their existence is or should be defined by these capacities' (Gane, 2019) but having a capacity to 'think and act economically', as a foundational tenet of what it means to be human, inevitably pushes many people with learning disabilities to the margins.

In his fascinating and challenging presentation, Atkinson (2019) invoked the 'murder

box' to think about the human and the fulfilment of desire. He described the 'murder box' as 'the way that particularly screen-human interfaces generate the possibility for interactions that denude the humanity of those we encounter' (Atkinson, 2019:2). Atkinson describes online games, pornography and sex tourism as spaces for desires to be satisfied even when this satisfaction may be harmful to others. The fulfilment of these desires 'requires some suppression of common experience and identity as humans' (Atkinson, 2109: 2). And yet, while Atkinson's account of the murder box might allow us to believe that murder boxes only exist in online or faraway places, paying attention to the lived experiences of people with learning disabilities demands a recognition of the existence of 'the murder box' in our local communities. The scandals surrounding the abuse of people with learning disabilities at Winterbourne View (Kenyon and Chapman, 2011) and, more recently, Whorlton Hall (Davies & Plomin, 2019), reveal murder boxes in our midst. Unspeakable acts of violence are carried out in 'care homes' for disabled people, hidden and out of view, to fulfil an individual's desire to humiliate and harm people who have been relegated to the category of 'human nonperson'. The violence of disablism (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2011) and the politics of resentment against disabled people (Hughes, 2015) grow stronger every day, with more 'scandals' being revealed. And this, in a wider political context in which there is little political will to address cultural and systemic causes of the creation and tolerance of such murder boxes (NHS England, 2014; 2017). Crucially, Lesnik-Oberstein (2019) persistently reminded attendees at the Symposium to consider whether humanity has always been under duress. While she urged participants to remember post-holocaust history in their considerations, it is also worth remembering that disabled people were among the first to be systematically murdered by the Nazi state.

How do historical legacies change the responsibility of the researcher? After Auschwitz and after Hadamar/T4, can we really just "try and see" what happens when we collapse the human category? The ivory tower of knowledge production is not detached from current political power balances. Those currents include media smear campaigns (Runswick-Cole & Goodley 2015); 'hate crime' violence enacted to keep people with disabilities in their inferior social position (Balderston 2013); and punitive welfare reform that pushes people with disabilities towards suicide (Mills 2018). Postmodern tendencies to accept ambivalence and contingency make a revalidation of disabled subjectivity thinkable. However, Hughes (2002) reminds us that contingency is probably not a strong drive for cultural change towards inclusion.

Finally, we want to be clear that we are not arguing that the lived experiences of disabled people be taken up as some sort of 'canary down the mine' of sociological thinking. We are not suggesting that we must theorize with and through disability first in order to think through the wider implications for 'non-disabled' others. This approach positions disabled people as exotic others with the risk of pushing them further to the margins of humanity. Rather, we are urging would-be social theorists always to think intersectionally – to think with and through class, race, sex, gender, poverty, (post)colonialism and disability.

Braidotti (2003) reveals the idea of the human as fiction that has always excluded 'his many Others' If we want to 'crip' the human ideal and seek out productive alternatives, all those 'non-normative' bodies and minds are to be understood as an opportunity to rethink values (Goodley et al. 2014).

Thinking intersectionally with disability is the challenge to, and opportunity for, everyone engaged in thinking about what it means to be human.

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