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Introduction

Human No More

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Over the last decade the growing possibilities of living in online worlds have continued to undermine and throw into question traditional anthropological conceptions of place-based ethnography. Such conceptions were already facing criticism for artificially bounding, limiting, and reifying "culture" in a world in which transnational cultural flows are commonplace. Online worlds add yet another dimension to this critique, providing examples of social forms that stretch and often break the definitions and boundaries of "communities" and "groups" and blurring our taken-for-granted distinctions between the human, bestial, and mechanical, thereby forcing us to rethink our notions of what might constitute the "subjects" that we study.

However, in this volume we also use the insight that the challenges of ethnography in online worlds presents to broaden our critique of ethnography. We do this by asking how the occluded worlds of digital culture, and also those of hidden and marginalized persons, can be better integrated into anthropological thinking and how the ethnography of both the "unhuman"

and the "digital" leads to exciting possibilities for reconfiguring the notion of what is human. But why would an academic discipline that is founded on the notion of the "human" (*anthropos*) saw off the very branch of the "tree of knowledge" on which it rests? How can anthropology properly acknowledge the cultural and historical contingency of the category "human" unless this entails the end of anthropology itself?

Through the chapters that follow, we demonstrate that such questioning is not the end of anthropology but, to the contrary, a fruitful endeavor leading to the discovery of new ends and purposes for our enduring commitment to engage and interpret other lifeways. A critical examination of the "human" sheds light on how the anthropocentric presumptions of much anthropology ignore not just the "unhuman" but also the "animal" and the "not-quite-human" (transgendered, disabled, or psychologically impaired persons), inevitably leading to a challenge, and perhaps an outright rejection, of the whole category of the human, at least as a core concept for anthropological theory.

Anthropology is only one academic discipline currently engaged with the posthuman (Wolfe 2010), but arguably anthropology has the most to contribute to such debates through ethnographic engagement with cultural worlds in which Western Enlightenment definitions and exclusions (Latour 1993) are not so prominent. In this regard, the essays here demonstrate that new forms of ethnographic engagement with "unhuman" populations (as in the chapters by Heckenberger, Whitehead, and Wisniewski) can inform and be informed by studies of online phenomena that also challenge and subvert traditional notions of the human.

The chapters here illustrate emergent cultural contexts in which embodied, "rational" individuals are but one of the forms of agency present in virtual and socially occluded worlds. As Matt Bernius demonstrates, software programs create chatbots, spambots, searchbots, and even ballot-stuffing bots, some of which are fully equipped to interact with "real humans" socially, sexually, and financially. Such bots appear alongside and engage with simulacra of our offline selves.

Anthropologists such as Donna Haraway (1991) were pioneers in drawing out the possibilities and implications of the posthuman, but the challenges and questions that arise from such insights and observations are often ignored in mainstream anthropology, safely put aside while getting on with the "real" work of doing real ethnography "in the field." Perhaps it is only now, amid a mass engagement and subjective incorporation of the reality of the online into everyday life and imperial ambitions of pharmaceutical and bioengineering corporations to control Life itself, that such early critiques and insights become central to the prospects of anthropology in the twenty-first century. And as the Internet and other new media forms increasingly integrate with even the most mundane aspects of everyday life in even the most remote regions of the world, and the "virtual" blurs with and ultimately becomes the

"real," issues raised by an anthropology of the virtual necessarily become the issues for anthropology at large.

HUMAN NO MORE?

The theme of these chapters—human no more?—resonates as a question throughout. Although Whitehead answers firmly in the affirmative and eagerly embraces the posthuman as a potential liberation from the late capitalist disciplines of the corporeal and the mental, others more cautiously question whether we are in fact posthuman at all and whether we should radically rethink anthropology. This is partly the reaction of Anne Allison (whose afterword was originally a response to the American Anthropological Association (AAA) panel at which these chapters were first presented), but her highly constructive and open-ended engagement with the question of "humanity" contrasts with other commentators (Boellstorff 2008) who find the prospect of the posthuman threatening, both subjectively and with regard to the preservation of the iconic founding figures of the discipline. Just as the idea of the "postmodern" provoked surprisingly conservative reactions among otherwise innovative thinkers such as Johannes Fabian, Marshall Sahlins, and Eric Wolf (Whitehead 2004), it is important to distinguish the critique of anthropology's intellectual frameworks, which the asking of questions about the "human" permits, from the assumption that "posthumanism" is a disguised political gambit aimed at taking over the profession.

Attempting to avoid such pitfalls, and in a similar vein to Allison, Tufekci notes that the first symbols ever created allowed for a form of "disembodiment" by separating the thought from the human, arguing that "the essence of humanity is that we have always been both symbolic and embodied." "We were always human," she suggests. "Or maybe, said alternatively, we were always posthuman." Tufekci and others in this volume discover that even in these virtual worlds that create always expanding possibilities for disembodied sociality, embodiment remains crucial. It is the body that "centers and unites us," even as we play with different social roles and personas. "Typing on a keyboard," Tufekci suggests, does not "create an ontological split within the body." But, as Tufekci rightly points out, this still begs the question of what we are to make of emerging technologies that now promise to immerse us in fully realistic simulated worlds—skin suits, goggles, and other devices that will bring digital inputs seamlessly into our increasingly augmented intelligence—or those futuristic Kurzwellian visions of nanobots swarming through our bodies, giving us access to all the information on the web from inside our own skin while repairing and rebuilding our cells and transporting us into virtual worlds whenever we desire (Kurzwell 2005). Moreover, this also

begs questions about the role of symbolizing and embodiment for animals and those "not-quite-humans."

Nonetheless, the bodily disciplines imposed by subjective engagements through such technological devices do represent a historical and cultural rupture and disjuncture. Thus, it is not our potential forms of disembodiment that make us posthuman but rather the way in which this historical movement away from prior cultural forms of embodiment are understood. As a result, Tufekci necessarily oscillates between the formulation "we were always human" and the formulation "we were always posthuman," precisely because the notion of the "human" is always a contingent category and different regimes of "humanity" have been deployed throughout history to produce the exclusions and inclusions so necessary for the construction of power through difference. The whole realm of ecstatic experience through ritual and shamanism, for example, is a perfect example of the persistent presence of an instability in the human/non-human boundary and in ideas about embodiment. Consequently, the ethnographic literature on shamanism, particularly from Amazonia (see Whitehead, this volume), has been inspirational and reinvigorating for this kind of discussion, especially for some of our authors (see also Alemán, Hoesterey, Wisniewski). Bringing not just cross-cultural but historical sensibilities to our analyses thus allows us to see both the contingency of current posthuman forms and also how there have been perhaps many "posthumanisms."

In the final sentence of *Les Mots et les Choses* Michel Foucault suggested that "[a]s the archaeology of our thought easily shows—the Human is an invention of a recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end . . . If those arrangements were to disappear, as the ground of Classical thought did at the end of the 18th century, then one might predict that Human would be washed away, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea" (Foucault 1966, 386; translated by Whitehead). It is regarding this perception of the emergence of new (if not unique) cultural and ontological worlds that all the contributors are in agreement. Some may be uneasy with the term, its implications, its sometimes utopian rhetoric, and its lack of singularity in theoretical formulations, but we all agree that it is a term that, as Lévi-Strauss (1966) said of animals, is "good to think with." As Jennifer Cool notes, "engaging the figure of the posthuman proves valuable to understanding questions of virtuality, materiality, and embodiment that attend the reconfigured relations of space, time, and being in the cultural worlds of computer-mediated sociality."

EXPLORING POSTHUMAN LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES

As a longtime researcher in virtual worlds, Cool leads these selections with a study of Cyborganic, a community of web geeks based in San Francisco that

since the first days of the web in the early 1990s have been pioneers of the different possibilities for sociality online, creating the precursors to blogs, status updates, and other forms of digital communication that now seem commonplace. Most interestingly, the community has continuously interacted through both online and offline means, allowing Cool to examine the "complex symbiosis" of online and offline modes of sociality.

Matthew Bernius provides an example that is especially "good to think" in this regard by examining how the "human" is manufactured in the creation of artificial intelligence (AI). As he demonstrates, AI-bots are becoming increasingly common in chatrooms, creating a social space in which not all "subjects" (or apparent subjects) are human. In a second example, Bernius looks at the Virtual Peers project at Northwestern University, where animated AI characters on screen are paired with digital objects throughout the physical environment, so that "the virtual peer is a complex system that extends itself into much of the environment in which she and her human interlocutors interact." As tracking systems, two-dimensional barcodes, sensors, and other digital objects become increasingly part of our everyday lived spaces of sociality, such an example becomes especially important to examine.

Jenny Ryan moves us into the realm of the truly "posthuman," exploring how the dead live on through their digital traces and in virtual spaces where grievers gather to share and post their memories. Perhaps most interesting in this regard is the way in which most posters address their comments directly to the deceased. Here Ryan makes the point that "embodiment" may need to be reconfigured as the highly immersive nature of online interaction can create the sense that the deceased is really "there," even after death. Perhaps nothing could say this more forcefully than the protest movement against Facebook's policy of removing personal information from profiles after somebody dies, aptly named "Facebook Memorialization Is Misguided: Dead Friends are Still People."

For decades now scholars have speculated about and documented the possibilities of identity play online in virtual worlds (see, e.g., Rheingold 1993; Turkle 1995), a notion captured in the public imagination by the now classic *New Yorker* cartoon "On the Internet, nobody knows you are a dog." But more recent forms of online sociality, such as Facebook, allow for what Zeynep Tufekci calls "grassroots surveillance," in which ubiquitous peer surveillance of the most mundane activities monitored through status updates, photos, and videos make identity play much harder. In a play on the *New Yorker* title at a panel discussion Tufekci noted, "On the Internet, everybody knows you are a dog."

As Wesch notes in his contribution to this volume, each digital platform, virtual space, or tool creates its own structure for participation, which can in turn be played with and at times remade by the participants themselves. Facebook and other platforms require persistent and mostly verifiable

identities, whereas others allow for more identity play, pseudonymity, or ano-nymity. Some connect people around the world; others emphasize local con-nections. Some are text-only, others audio-only; some use video and some mix all three. Some are synchronous whereas others are asynchronous. Some are open, others closed. Some are archived, providing a running history of social interactions; others are not. Every feature shapes the possibilities for sociality. In the end, the most pertinent and active structuring principle of online sociality is not a simple list of features and characteristics but instead an open-ended range of possibilities limited only by human imagination, allowing new forms of sociality to emerge.

Wesch examines one of these new forms in the phenomenon of Anony-mous, an "ongoing collective happening" that challenges our traditional notion of identity and group as all interlocutors on the site remain anonymous, com-municating through text, links, and imagery. Their peculiar form of sociality, along with the values they express, presents a scathing critique of our cul-tural obsession with individualism and identity and the cult of celebrity that emerges from this obsession. Moreover, following the furor around Wikileaks and the support Anonymous gave to the figure of Julian Assange, as well as ongoing AnonOps against various governments and their agencies, there is an important way in which Anonymous's challenges to individualism and iden-tity represent a potentially new form of political engagement and resistance.

Traditional notions of human identity become increasingly irrelevant to life as it is lived even as they begin to seem the most pertinent to the pro-cedures of power and governance. As Wesch forcefully illustrates, we must recognize the ways in which "identity" is used as a way of rendering people legible to those who exercise power; and this remains a powerful structural element in current academic practice, no less than in the panopticon of the security state. In this way, questions of identity emerge as less important for scientific fact than for the way in which such notions validate the truth of the cultural quest for ever-expanding discovery and knowledge of others.

RETHINKING FIELDWORK IN THE AGE OF THE POSTHUMAN

This discursive panorama—in which we may really have become human no more—raises important questions about the emergence of a "posthuman" anthropology—an anthropology in which the human subject, a historically contingent conception, is no longer the sole focus of attention. In such a con-text traditional Malinowskian formulas of "participant observation" need to be critically assessed because it is the manner of our participation in online and offline worlds, rather than the limits and qualities of our observations, that urgently needs to be thought through more carefully (Whitehead, in press).

Radhika Gajjala has been rethinking "participant observation" during her two decades of research on South Asian diasporas, developing an especially acute sense of how different media "mediate" the communities we study. In this volume, she teams up with her colleague Sue Ellen McComas to explore how Indian diasporas have been mediated across generations, from pre-digital mediated narratives to a study of how members of a diaspora interact as avatars among the scripted objects of Second Life. There she has the opportunity to re-encounter those recurring critical questions that she has raised in earlier work: How do ethnographic practices and the ethnographer evolve in the online context? How are they revolutionized? What constitutes the field?

For Gray Graffam, the "field" is the World of Warcraft, a virtual reality and massive social space that to date has more than 10 million players. In adapting ethnography to suit this field, Graffam found that interviews with players outside the game lacked the proper context that provides the performative cues for people to "be themselves" and answer his questions effectively. Fieldwork experiences like this remind us that observation of any kind (online and offline) is by definition utterly dependent on the forms of participation that the ethnographer may choose or have available.

Such issues affect ethnography even as it is most traditionally conceived, especially as there is a growing worldwide cultural investment in online life, even among the most remote and marginal populations. In this volume, Stephanie Alemán reports on her experiences in a remote Guyanese village where the Waiwai first encounter the Internet and start to present themselves online. In one telling example, a young Waiwai man presents himself on Facebook "in a Taekwondo uniform and pose, and another, in a gangsta pose with a knit hat, with dark glasses and headphones and making hand signs." Meanwhile, as the anthropologist, Alemán has collected images of him in more traditional "native activities": adorned in full black body paint, shooting a bow and arrow, and dancing in the communal house. Alemán begins to see a clear dilemma for many anthropologists today: how do we represent those who can and will represent themselves? How do we address "their multiple and complex entailments with the regional and global networks to which they not only now have access but actively seek to engage"?

Such anxieties are explored in James Hoesterey's encounter with a TV reality show about the Mek of Irian Jaya that shamelessly re-creates colonial subjectivities by feeding a prurient interest in the savage violence and sexuality of others, while simultaneously portraying the protagonists, Mark and Olly, as kind, enlightened, likable, and sensitive explorers. At the American Anthropological Meetings in 2009, when Hoesterey first presented the story of how the "first contact" with these "primitives" was elaborately constructed for television, the anthropologists in the audience responded with gales of laughter. Such laughter was perhaps related to the fact that although we anthropologists like to draw strong lines between what we do and what Mark

and Olly do, the differences between us are not so great. As Hoesterey demonstrates, the anthropological critique of pop ethnography reveals deep disciplinary anxieties about our expertise and role in the representation of others.

In this context of increasing anthropological anxiety, there is a growing need for the ethnographer to explicitly theorize participation no less adequately than we have painstakingly theorized observation and representation. As Wisniewski notes in this volume about his study of the invisible caboclos of Brazil in which he teamed up with two hippie "vagabond ethnographers," "theorizing participation will give us a clearer understanding of how ethnographic knowledge is produced, revealing it as a shared product, an intersubjective product, not just of and about humans but of and about human interaction with all categories in a way that does not privilege or overvalue the role of the anthropologist in its production."

The need to theorize participation extends beyond the emerging contexts of online life to all spaces of virtuality where traditional notions of the human limit us or fail altogether. As Michael Heckenberger points out in this volume, not all "virtual realities" are digital or online, so the import of engaging digital subjectivities for wider theory lies precisely in how it may offer the possibility of eluding the Foucaldian/Marcusian nexus of knowledge-power-media. In São Paulo, public discourses about public health and security create the unhuman *nóias*, a drug addict who has taken center stage as the persona of the irrational and subnormal in public discourse. Also referred to as zombies, inhabiting a space between life and death, such unhumans invoke different forms and moments of marginalization and oppression than those of the South Asian digital online residents, but nonetheless they experience displacement and disorientation similar to that produced in social encounters within a geographical diaspora. Like the zombies of the cityscapes, the diasporic are also engaged in an attempt to reframe their cultural identities to stave off the threat of cultural—if not physical—genocide through the effects of a rampant globalization.

Thinking about how such potential marginalization of the already marginal plays out is important for ethnographers to keep in mind because, as with globalization, what we are witnessing may be a reordering of differences and inequalities rather than their dissolution. At the same time the potential for digital media to create new spaces and opportunities for empowerment and resistance are apparent from Asia to Amazonia to America.

BEYOND HUMAN NO MORE

Issues of constituting an ethnographic locus and representing the "humanity" of marginal groups, such as prostitutes, criminals, and even "insurgents" or "guerillas," present all ethnographic approaches with theoretical and ethi-

cal challenges. This is because the "human subject" is not a given in online or offline contexts. Anthropologists currently researching issues in disability studies and science and technology studies, as well as animal rights and biological anthropology, thus all have important contributions to make to this emergent discussion of the fact that we may have become "human no more." Culture, language, ritual, symbol, and their performative embodiment are thus no longer adequate criteria for defining a notional "human subject."

In fact, such categories have revealed a vast field of social and cultural continuities among the human, animal, and technological.

Current notions of biopower, the deployment of artificial intelligence and robotic systems in warfare and law enforcement, and the cultural logic of cinematic and televisual representations are all indications of the urgency with which anthropology should engage its new subjects.

Regardless of where one stands on the question of the posthuman, it is clear that a jailbreak from late modernity does not go unchallenged. Stalwart symbols and institutions, such as hungry profiteers and militarized governance, seek to delimit the "human terrain" in both online and offline contexts, creating yet one more piece of the complex contexts and new spaces of cultural and social significance that have proliferated in the last decade. Here the "native populations"—the freaks, geeks, weirdos, techies, and net-addicts— like the savages at the margins of an earlier colonial order, defy simple inclusion into the frameworks of the state and its ethnographies.

Living with the Mek, or the caboclos or the Waiwai, no less than the character-subjects of Anonymous or the online worlds of Second Life or My(Death)Space, must now take account of the endless interplay between offline and online subjectivity, while also expanding our notions and understandings of the vast potential of human diversity and social interaction.

The stakes are high. Quoting Judith Butler, Heckenberger nicely observes how our cultural frames for thinking the human set limits on certain lives that are not considered lives at all: "[V]iolence against those who are already not quite living, living in a state of suspension between life and death, leaves a mark that is no mark." These are the "killable bodies" discussed by Giorgio Agamben (1995) in his characterization of contemporary power and governance. As Wisniewski notes in this volume, it is time to expand and refine our approach so that we are equipped to grapple with the relationship between humans and technology, while also recognizing that humans are part of much larger systems that include relationships with animals, insects, microorganisms, spirits, and people who are not always considered human by others. And as humans become more digitally connected, we must also recognize that the sociality that emerges from such connections might not always be immediately analogous to traditional social formations and may involve unhuman actors and agencies (which may or may not be conceptualized or treated as human). This signals an end to anthropology of a certain kind and

the necessity for inventing new ends and new methodologies for anthropological research that will better interpret such changing and emergent cultural worlds.

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