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Introduction: Concepts of the Human from the Global South

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ABSTRACT: This introduction frames the papers in this symposium on concepts of the human from the Global South. While doing so, it offers some thoughts on the ends and significance of theorizing the human, both politically and epistemologically. The papers are introduced by means of two concepts: Man-normality, which names the colonial imposition of Euro-American white norms on other humans, and pluri-humanity (akin to pluri-universality), which names a condition and a common plural ground for liberatory politics. Building on anti-colonial and decolonial philosophers from the Global South, these articles interrogate the philosophical and methodological problems of Eurocentric humanism and offer an alternative praxis of being human. This requires questioning the Euromodern concept of the human that, in view of its latent presence in literary, cultural, and philosophical productions, can be described as an epistemic racism that saturates global cultural and academic production.

KEYWORDS: Anthropocene, coloniality, decolonization, Euronormality, Global South, humanism, Man-normality

The human, as a conceptual category, has undergone a significant, invigorating reemergence after the fatigue of "the subject" as an analytical category in the Euro-American context.[1] Emily Apter rightly stresses this restoration, which she attributes to the rise of discourses on transhumanism and posthumanism, as well as to the proliferation of new biotechnologies that are aimed at enhancing or altering human knowledge and agency and that thereby invite urgent ethical questions about life itself (2001, 71). The imperative is to examine the human as a conceptual category, particularly by exposing its complicity with race and by questioning the influence that the European philological,

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philosophical, and anthropological paradigm has on thinking about it (Ibid., 72; Maldonado-Torres 2008). Apter concurs with Thomas Keenan's claim that the human, despite the criticisms and doubts that have been cast on the human, and despite the critiques that have been made regarding Eurocentric humanism and humanitarian practices, is an "unbordered" figure that serves as the basis for claims to rights (quoted in 2001, 71; see also Davis 2025; Singh in this issue). Talal Asad famously questioned both the changing meanings of the concept of the human in discourses on human rights and the entanglement of these discourses with the violence of imperial and colonial projects (2015, 2020; see also Çubukçu 2017). Nonetheless, Apter argues, the concept of the human offers alternatives to "the subject," a category that played a significant role in different philosophical formulations in Europe (2001, 71–2).

The fact that the subject—the bearer of Eurocentric rationality—was elaborated as a category within Euro-American discourses meant that the colonial relations that accompanied these discourses were ignored in hegemonic scholarship; it also meant that the humanity of people outside Euro-America was permanently questioned and that the subjectivity of these people was denied (Costa, in this issue; Maldonado-Torres 2007, 245; Quijano 2007, 173). Here, one should note that the critical discourses about the death of Man or "anti-humanism" (stemming from poststructuralism), which emerged after the establishment of the creed of scientism, are local discourses of Europe; at any rate, the anti-human tendencies evident in such discourses were interpreted by many anti-colonial philosophers and thinkers as aberrations that needed to be avoided.[2] Furthermore, it is noteworthy that recent discourses of posthumanism and transhumanism are now proliferating precisely in the highly advanced capitalist countries of the North and mainly in academic circles. Even the critical discourses on Euro-American humanisms and posthumanism involve us in thinking only from within European intellectual trajectories, which are taken to prefigure and overdetermine other histories and praxes of being human. This is part of a larger problem that inflicts the humanities and social sciences. Such thinking subalternizes and almost erases the multiple possibilities of thinking and enacting the human that exist within different intellectual traditions and praxes of being human in the Global South—and these traditions and praxes are not necessarily anthropocentric. The point is not to romanticize a particular praxis of being human but to show the plurality of praxes and to offer an invitation to different enactments of being human that are better suited for living in our times.

Despite criticisms stating that the concept of the human is structured by the axes of class, caste, race, gender, and religion, Benjamin P. Davis, building

on the work of Stuart Hall, has recently stressed the potential of the human as a "strategic point of departure for necessary political work today: the work of building a world where human rights are truly universal and defended by our very forms of life" (2025, 5). Two of Davis's larger theoretical statements are worth mentioning here: the misuse of a concept (like the human) is not a solid reason for abandoning it, for no concept is uncontaminated within the political; and the concept of the human is dependent on the larger project (or wider praxis or movement) within which it operates—whether to liberate or to dehumanize other parts of humanity.

A question, however, remains: Which concept of the human will be pursued and embodied? The "human" is articulated and embodied in different languages and traditions and, given the plurality of human cosmologies and philosophies, is itself a plural concept. It points to plural humanity as a condition of equality in value, and this equality in value does not deny the intrinsic value of other creatures. When a Black person, a Dalit, a Palestinian, or other colonized persons invoke humanity or the human, they invoke their concept of being human, not the Euromodern or other colonial one—so we must think from their perspectives, against the worlds that oppress and dehumanize them. The human and humanity are banners under which struggles for dignity, justice, human life, and respect are fought. In 1927, when the Indian thinker Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar delivered his speech "We Too Are Human" in the protest he led for the right of access to water from the Chavadar lake in Mahad, he was affirming radical equality, demanding justice, and asking for Hindu society to transform itself radically by abandoning the caste system (before the call to conversion). "We are not going to the Chavadar lake merely to drink its water. We are going to the lake to assert that *we too are human beings like others*. It must be clear that this meeting has been called *to set up the norm of equality*" (Ambedkar 2013, 24, emphasis added). The central question is poignantly put by Léa Tosold (in this issue): How can we move beyond the demand for inclusion in a category of "the human" that is grounded in white, Eurocentric, Casteist and other hegemonic dehumanizing assumptions and, following Fanon, "put into question the very notion of the human with which we operate"?

The denial of people's humanity, as Lewis R. Gordon points out, forces them to ask: Are we human? This leads to political, epistemological, and methodological questions: What is a human being? What is it to be human? These questions are relevant to the study not only of race but also of caste, class, gender, Indigeneity, and so on (Gordon 2022, 84). Moreover, Nelson Maldonado-Torres rightly argues that theorizing the human invites questions about the purposes and significations of such an enterprise: "Why theorize the hu-

man? Conceptions of the human undergird social, political, economic, epistemological, and institutional arrangements or frameworks. Theorizing the human has thus both sociopolitical and epistemological relevance. Liberalism, conservatism, and communism, on the one hand, and positivism, historical materialism, and postmodernism, on the other, just to name some of the most influential ideologies or perspectives in the last two centuries, presuppose a certain idea about what human beings are and what is possible or desirable for them to accomplish" (2008, 104). The focus of the papers in this symposium is threefold: building on anticolonial and decolonial philosophers from the Global South to think against the coloniality of Eurocentric humanism; interrogating the latter's philosophical and methodological problems; and offering an alternative praxis of being human. This requires questioning the Euromodern concept of the human that, in view of its latent presence in literary, cultural, and philosophical productions, can be described as an epistemic racism that saturates global cultural production.

If any cultural production is a site of writing humans and their forms of life, then one should interrogate the concept of the human that takes the central stage in the global production of knowledge, be it literary, cultural, or philosophical. A latent Eurocentrism secretes the humanist concept of the European self that underpins much of global knowledge production. David Lodge, the British literary critic and writer, once conceded that "the Western humanist concept of the autonomous individual self is not universal, eternally given, and valid for all time and all places, but is a product of history and culture" (2002, 91). Though the constitution of this model of the self initiated the much-debated discourse of the Anthropocene, Lodge is reluctant to dislodge this concept, because "[a] great deal of what we value in civilized life depends upon it" (2002, 91). This "we," of course, is very local—articulated from the story of Euromodern Man. If the self is constantly changing, then any attempt to write the self is a kind of fixation. This, Lodge affirms, is an unavoidable exercise, but does this mean that there is no guiding model of the self that informs all these modifications and changes?

All religions and philosophies have a model of being human as an ideal of good character (or a character that fits that paradigm), and without the possibility of changing human nature, all religious or secular education remains futile. This assertion was made long ago by the Muslim scholar Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1055[6?]–1111) against those who argue that human character cannot be changed. One cannot change one's height, but one can change one's character (al-Ghazali 1995, 24–25). This possibility, al-Ghazali argues, is shared even with animals, for the characters of animals, like those of falcons and dogs, can

change. This emphasis on educating the self to be better is shared by Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of the human as well as by Confucian philosophy, with its emphasis on the human as "a self-completing animal" (Xiang, in this issue; see also Ghosh, in this issue). Al-Raghib al-Isfahani (?–1108), who arguably had a great influence on al-Ghazali, even affirmed that cultivating the self could be achieved though learning from everything in existence, including animals: "Just as it is proper for the human to know the benefits of animals in themselves and to make use of them in food, clothing, and medicine, so too it is proper to know their dispositions and behaviors, so that one may benefit from them by adopting what is commendable and avoiding what is reprehensible in them. Thus spoke well the one who said: 'I learned from everything the best that is in it, even from the dog, loyalty in guarding its family; and from the crow, its early rising to attend to its needs'" (1983, 52). This implies that ethics, knowledge, and truth emanate from the ways animals act and relate, and it thus undermines the self-sufficiency and the self-contained position of the human in terms of knowledge.

The model of being human that is held as an ideal is consequential not only for how social reality is conceived but also for the ways humans act in the world. As Karl Jaspers asserted, "To absolutize [scientific] knowledge that is always particular into a whole knowledge of man leads to the utter neglect of the human image of man. And a neglect of the image of man leads to a neglect of man himself. *For the image of man that we hold to be true is itself a factor in our life. It influences our behaviour toward ourselves and others, our vital attitude, and our choice of tasks*" (Jaspers 1949, 62; emphasis added). It also shapes our behavior toward nonhumans and nature. If this is true—and I believe it is—then the first task of a philosopher or a critic is to inquire into the human that is held as the true image in a discourse. Sérgio Costa interrogates the latent conceptions of the human within sociology as a discipline. These conceptions are structured by three binary oppositions: humans and nature; modern (Western) humans and nonmodern humans; and social scientists and lay people. He argues that the implications of these conceptions are far-reaching. In addition to reinforcing capitalism and eroding human connections, and thus producing social inequalities at local and global scales, these conceptions foster instrumentalist relationships with nature and thereby contribute to an environmental crisis. In connection with his critique, Costa cogently advocates a convivial conception of the human. He thus calls for a shift to conviviality studies as a field of inquiry while interrogating the premises of sociology as a discipline; both of these theoretical moves reject the key binaries structuring sociological research. Such a convivial conception aligns with Indigenous praxes and

philosophies that challenge anthropocentric assumptions and practices; these praxes and philosophies emphasize the convivial interconnectedness of all life and link human survival to other beings.

Inquiry into latent conceptions of the human assumes that social sciences are not reduced to natural sciences and that humans' concepts and practices are crucial in shaping social and political reality. The study of social reality means the study of the human. One can here observe what the Syrian philosopher Muhammad Badi' al-Kasm points to, which I call the normative gesture of the ontological in defining the human. When one says that the human is a rational animal, one knows that one cannot be rational all the time. This definition informs not only what the human is but also what the human ought to be. This is the case with all definitions that take the form of "the human is ___ animal." He further argues that as one can define the human by her rationality, one can do the same with the animality. If we take this into account, we encounter a question: What does this normative gesture of the ontological pose for social and human sciences that attempt to determine the meaning of the human? This is a question that must be addressed. Before doing so, however, I would like to briefly note that being humane and merciful is only a competence, and thus being human is a performance.

Social sciences cannot be delinked from anthropological philosophy. By juxtaposing two images of the self—the Confucian view of the human as intrinsically social and the liberal conception that treats the social as antithetical to individuality and as achievable only through external imposition—Shuchen Xiang interrogates the global expansion of the latter image of the self within academic (philosophical) discourses and beyond. She demonstrates, for instance, that one consequence of this form of "unsocial sociality" is the externalization of morality, whereby ethical responsibility cultivated through relational cultural practices is replaced by abstract rules and external institutions and legal frameworks. Xiang argues that these two images of human nature emanate from two metaphysical perspectives. The liberal view (Freudian, Kantian, Hobbesian) considers the self to be inherently atomistic rather than intrinsically other-regarding, and it requires external structures (such as the patriarch, moral law, or Leviathan) to enforce sociality. Conversely, the Confucian view considers the self to be social by nature. It emphasizes this view by describing human nature and social nature as overlapping, inseparable circles: "the Confucian view assumes the defining attribute of the human to be her sociality: our ability to overlap harmoniously with one another is the core of what we are as humans" (Xiang, in this issue). Education, mediated by culture, aims to cultivate a self that is socially minded and communally oriented.

Participation in culture binds the self to a community across time, enabling authentic human existence. This Confucian view, which asserts that relationality and social roles are central to the shaping of the self, opposes the liberal idea that society and culture are external impositions. In contrast to the liberal individualistic view of innate antagonism that requires external moral law to enforce peaceful sociability, Confucianism holds that morality, culture, and the social other are internal to and inseparable from the human person. And if the human being is interdependent and understood as a self-completing animal whose fulfillment is never fully attainable, then ethical life becomes a process of continuous self-cultivation. Education, in this sense, is not merely instrumental but constitutive of the human. It enables individuals to actualize self-completion through sustained relational and ethical learning. The human is not a noun; the human is a verb.

With the Europeanization of the world, Euro-liberal subjectivity has become the dominant model of being human. It is against this model that many if not most or all local cultures and modes of being human are measured and devalued in this epoch. Despite the possibility of change, it remains the case that the model of being human is instituted by Europe's episteme; its model of the self is privileged over others. Sylvia Wnyter has remarkably unsettled this Euromonohumanism. She traces how Man 1 (*homo politicus*), who emerged in the Renaissance as a secularized version of the theocentric conception of Europe and was shaped by the encounter with the peoples of the Americas, later gave space to liberal Man 2 (*homo economicus*). The latter was shaped by racial scientific theories and Darwinian hierarchies that naturalized racial/colonial differences (Wynter 2003). This shift from the theocentric to the biocentric conception of the human describes the secularization of the theocentric conception in European history. But one should not think of this apparent distinction (between theocentric and secular/biocentric) as a rupture, for it involves both continuities and discontinuities.

In an anti-Black world, whiteness becomes the normative standard and the primary scale through which humanity is measured and valued. Human value is thus articulated and measured not only along what W. E. B. Du Bois famously termed the "color line," but also according to normative modes of being associated with the white subject, which emerge as a form of "colonial normative life" (Gordon 2018, 33; Gordon 2021). The colonial construction and overrepresentation of the ethno-class of white Man, which is identified as *the* human as such, perpetuate the Euromodern secular translation of Man across time and space. In an anti-Muslim world, liberalism and Euromodern secularism become the colonial norms by which Muslims are compared, judged, and

valued. As Nelson Maldonado-Torres argues, religion, as a category entangled with the racial classification of humans, came to sit alongside the category of "race" in the constitution of coloniality/modernity. Walter Mignolo (2009) argues that the spatialized colonial difference of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was thereafter secularized through a temporal difference: Euromodernity/Euro-secularity was made the colonial paradigm of value allocation and non-European modes of being were positioned as lacking such modernity/secularity due to religion. However, these two colonial differences survived and interlaced in relation to Islam and Muslims. In terms of spatial colonial difference, Islam remains a distant radical other of Europe, an externalized religion, while in terms of temporal colonial difference, Islam is stigmatized as premodern and nonrational. The spatial colonial difference survived through the spatialization of Islam, which defined Islam as a religion that is supposed to be confined to "its natural space." It is this double helix of colonial logic that justifies the mechanism whereby Muslims in Europe are addressed as an aberration or difficulty that needs to be dealt with.

The story of secular monohumanism is the story of the apotheosis of Man, whose normative order of knowledge-power overrepresented it and equated it with the human as such. European Man has been taken as the normative category of the human, thereby devaluing and subalternizing other ways of being human (Wynter 2003). Against such a model of being human or the ethnoclass of Man, other humans are condemned. In this context, what is ontological is always already normative. Wynter's problem with the European ethnoclass of Man (both Man 1 and Man 2) is not only its overrepresentation and its monopoly of what it means to be human, but also the simultaneous stigmatization and devaluation of other humans that are marked as nonhuman. How does this take place? Within the centripetal humanism of Europe, value distribution and role allocation for the human population and their lives and labor are distributed from within the story of Euro-modern Man. In other words, this distribution is based on what is considered *good* for the European Man, and especially Europe's dominant bourgeois class. This is a constituting narrative that shapes and is shaped by colonial and imperial logic and procedures. Even within Europe, one might say that the transition from Man 1 to Man 2 is not particularly neat, and one might argue that European theological and secular senses of the self still coexist. However, this difference still operates within the same story of Man and produces its others, both internally and externally. The real effect of this coloniality of being is epistemicide, which serves as a pretext for genocide. This would matter less if the ethnoclass Man told only its own story without questioning and denying the humanity of others. And it would

matter less if the claim for the universality of Man's conception was not constituted within this story of us, rooted in a practical history that serves local values and needs, and backed by imperial and colonial armies. It would matter less if the European conception of the self had not been made both descriptive and normative, if it had not been made a standard through which other human beings are valued or devalued. If the organizing principle of colonialism is to devalue the colonized praxes of being human—to disfigure them, to make them disposable, and thus to kill them—then the first act of decolonization is to abandon this Eurocolonial notion of the human.

Mahmoud Al-Zayed argues that Eurosecularity is crucial in making this coloniality of Being operational. Al-Zayed reads the Algerian Muslim philosopher Malek Bennabi alongside Frantz Fanon, names the colonial histories that underpinned their theories of colonialism, and traces the underlying logics of racial classification and Euromodern monohumanism. This monohumanism, which rests on an assimilative colonial logic that apotheosizes European humanity as the norm of the human, is sustained in the Algerian context by anti-Muslim sentiments and discourses in both religious and secular registers. Al-Zayed interrogates secular epistemic supremacy in Euro-modernity and reformulates Maldonado-Torres's coloniality of Being as a secularity/coloniality of Being. Secularity allows the secular liberal self to present itself as a self-sufficient being whose superior value is self-referential. The question is: Who bestows and legitimizes this superiority? From where does this superiority derive? Here is the trick: Unlike other modes of being human, whose sense of value and being come from either metaphysical or relational, social origins outside of the human, the Euro-secular liberal self's superiority is self-bestowed, and the condition of the world (through colonialism/modernity) must remain protective of this superiority. It is a kind of narcissistic belief that just being secular and/or "white is enough . . . [that being white] is the most powerful thing in the world, and everything else is inferior" (Fromm 2023 [1963], 29). This results in a coloniality of norms predicated on the "completeness of Western normative life," such "that the domain of normative possibilities is already encompassed by Western epistemic practices" (Gordon 2021, 49).

One far-reaching aspect of this hypostatization of Man is the translation of Man and his others into local modern hierarchies, which are transposed onto the social and political reality of the Global South. As a result, European histories, epistemologies, and ideals are assumed to prefigure and allowed to overdetermine the history of the postcolony. This is facilitated by the Europeanized elite who supposedly have epistemic and moral superiority—a superiority that is derivative of the self-proclaimed supremacy of European rationality—and it

results in two curious phenomena: the distortion of reality through the uncritical, top-down imposition of Euro-American categories on the social reality of the postcolony, which takes place through the assumption that the lived social experience of Europeans is the paradigmatic ground of theory; and the eclipse of the lived social experience of the un-Europeanized in the postcolony, who—largely because their lives are dominated by religion—are not seen as worthy sources of theory and who are thereby placed lower on the hierarchy of knowledge and being. In other words, an insidious transposition takes place, whereby human experience in the colony is deflated while European experience is inflated to the level of "normalcy" (Kaviraj 2009, 189): "An implicit European reference works from the heart of the conceptual apparatus of modern social sciences, turning it 'naturally' towards Euronormality, much as the magnetic properties of a compass needle always make it point north. European history is the natural north of modern social science" (Kaviraj 2009, 189). This pervasive normalizing and naturalizing of European experience and its theoretical categories have led to constant comparisons. In these comparisons, the European object is always already the norm through which the other object is interpellated. This also has led to the curious assumption that Europe's episteme is the "unconscious" of all humanity and, by extension, that any existence that is delinked from this episteme needs to assess its adequacy in the world.

These are the results of the unmaking and remaking of colonized (and postcolonial) societies by the onslaught of modernity/coloniality. Such changes have taken place not only through capitalism and colonialism but also through their heir, the nation-states that "destroy and rebuild modern and political options in characteristic ways"; by creating conditions in which only modern subjectivity can be possible, nation-states destroy old forms of being and replace them with modern ones, fit to the modern projects of the state (Asad 1992, 336–37). This is a complex project, but central to its success is the inculcation in the Global South of distinctively modern desires (like progress, secularism, etc.), which takes place through the inscription of European modern categories into the administrative, legal, and educational discourses and practices of these non-European regions (Asad 1992, 340). People are compelled to leave old practices and enact new, modern ones, leading to what Wael Hallaq calls "a structural genocide" (2018; see also Asad 1992, 340). This process entails not only the constant redefining and then devaluing or even ridiculing of old categories, practices, and histories, but also the distortion of these categories, practices, and histories to new, modern ones. In this process, traditional practices of conviviality and tolerance drawn from religion are replaced with the modern doctrine of secularism, which is said to be a modern guarantee of

tolerance; such a process then distorts all past conflicts and wars, for these are said to be premodern and to be direct outcomes of religious fanaticism.[3] Thus, Euromodern Man becomes the normative mode of being and constitutes the architectonics of Euromodernity/coloniality and the Euromodern state.

Man-normality is the underside of Euronormality. Coloniality/modernity (alongside capitalism) has significantly reshaped and redefined dominant conceptions and praxes of being human. It has promoted, and very often enforced, particular models of being human that are aligned with its historical and political projects while marginalizing and/or devaluing those of others. Man-normality names the emergence of modern European Man as both an ontological and a normative figure. It also names the broader ontological and epistemic reorientation of human self-understanding—along with the human sciences—toward Euro-American Man and his particular "universals." In this sense, Man-normality names the coloniality of Euro-American norms—that is, the tendency to normalize the concepts, histories, and trajectories of European Man and his particular anthropological philosophy and practice of being human and to expect other parts of humanity to follow or enact similar historical paths and modes of being.

Within such conditions, political decolonization has produced varied responses to Eurosecular humanism and colonial modernity. Haggag Ali engages the influential Cairo-based periodical *Arrissalah* as an archival and discursive site through which one can trace early postcolonial debates on humanism under colonial Euromodern conditions. Ali discusses three Egyptian intellectuals: Abbas Mahmoud al-Aqqad (1889–1964), Abdul Monem Khallaf (1904–1989), and Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), who represent three interrelated responses to the Western conception of the human, particularly within the narrative of progress and scientific advancement. Ali contextualizes them within processes of political and cultural decolonization, but he also notes how they succumb to the seduction of modernity. On the one hand, they are fascinated and seduced by the rapid progress in science and technology; on the other, they are reluctant to assimilate fully into the colonial worldview, through which the lives of non-European humans are devalued and annihilated. Ali's analysis reveals that these intellectuals shared, and to some extent internalized, modern epistemic and normative categories that made this dilemma possible, but that they were not dismissive of the idea of humanism altogether. Al-Aqqad articulated a postcolonial critique predicated on the relevance of "Eastern" tradition and a rejection of Western colonialism and modern colonial and nationalist ideologies, including Nazism and Zionism. By contrast, Khallaf's engagement with Islamic tradition, by which he sought to offer an Islamized narrative of

progress, took an apologetic form that remained shaped by the epistemic legacies of Eurocolonial culture. Sayyid Qutb occupied an in-between position. He combined a renewed reading of Islamic tradition with a refusal of colonial culture, except for its scientific and technological achievements and select cultural productions. The interventions of both Khallaf and Qutb, Ali concludes, reflect the ambivalent figuration of the colonizer—as both model and enemy—within Arabic intellectual history. It is worth mentioning how Al-Aqqad made mercy the defining quality of the divinely created human: "human beings were endowed with mercy, as willed by their Creator who instilled mercy in their innate disposition to preserve the human species and life on Earth. Mercy, in this metaphysical sense, could thus underline mental and psychological abilities common to social animals, manifesting itself in the relation between parents and children, and even between animals and humans" (Ali, in this issue). It is interesting to note that Ali locates the emergence of these debates on cultural and political decolonization in the 1930s, with their consolidation extending through the 1940s and 1950s. This situates *Arrissalah* within a broader genealogy of Arab engagements with modern humanism and colonial modernity.

In a letter to Karl Jasper, Hannah Arendt wrote: "This occidental philosophy has never had a pure concept of the political [*einen reinen Begriff des Politischen*] and could never have one since, by necessity, philosophy has spoken of Man in the singular, and has simply neglected the fact of plurality" (quoted in Arndt 2019, 47). Is this only a political problem or also an epistemological one? In his discussion of the organic link between anthropology and the political, Carl Schmitt points out that the latent concepts of the human that are presupposed by political theories oscillate between defining the human as a wolf or a sheep, as "by nature evil or by nature good" (2010, 58), and he concludes that all political theories have presupposed the human to be evil and dangerous (2010, 61). Similarly, most critical theories of the Anthropocene presuppose the human to be of an instrumentalist, secular liberal self. While one can agree that the presupposed concepts of the human are consequential, these concepts, as Schmitt discusses them, are reductive. What if social or political theories presuppose pluri-humanity, the plurality of concepts and practices of being human that have multiple possibilities (that can be considered good or evil)? If we acknowledge that there are different conceptions of the human, then what implications does that have for not only politics but epistemology? One can elaborate a response to these questions by examining the problematic produced by the critical discourses on the Anthropocene. A large number of critical discourses on the Anthropocene secrete (even if critically) the Euro-secular/liberal Anthropocentric (and androcentric) concept of the human,

yet all human beings do not share this concept or act in the world according to it. If this concept is not shared by other philosophies and epistemologies, then what kind of discourse emerges to address the ecological crisis on planetary scale? What political and epistemological consequences result when this kind of critical discourse on the Anthropocene is addressed to those who do not share this same concept and its assumptions? The result is a profound dissonance, one in which this discourse loses its relevance because there is no shared horizon at the level of understanding. Consequently, no action can be expected. In a sense, this problem renders such discourse futile, especially if such discourse does not address the existence of concepts of the human that are other than those it critiques, and especially if there is no demand to collectively transform the praxis of being human into convivial praxis that lives in harmony with other creatures.

A necessary step is to question the latent Eurocentric humanism in the Anthropocene. Preeti Singh does precisely and profoundly this by bringing Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Sylvia Wynter into conversation in order to refashion humanism, albeit from the viewpoint of embodied politics emerging from Indigenous sites that are marginalized and/or erased by capitalist extractivism and by the modernizing projects of the nation-state, which imbibe the hegemonic structure of modern humanism. Singh does this through engagement with two voices: one of these voices, namely that of the Adivasi activist Soni Sori, is emic; the other, that of Mahasweta Devi, is etic. Probing the racial and colonial underpinnings of humanism in the Anthropocene, Singh aligns herself with the project of salvaging the liberatory and democratic potentials of humanism, albeit from entirely different grounds and sites of struggle, namely those of the Adivasi people of India. Singh proposes an "upside-down humanism" that not only delinks from the Eurocentric assumptions of humanism but also challenges their replications in the humanist discourse of the nation-states that reinforce these exclusions in the name of development and modernization. What emerges is a different conception of humanism rooted in Adivasi struggle, one that is liberatory and ecologically sensitive.

Anuradha Ghosh proposes, by drawing on the ethical-aesthetic vision of Rabindranath Tagore, that planetary humanism conceptualizes the praxis of being human in terms of creative unity and harmony with nature and the cosmic order. Tagore is critical of conventional, European notions of nationalism, development, and progress. Such notions have historically regarded nature and its resources in purely utilitarian and commercial terms, leading to a form of political cannibalism that preys on the weak and the vulnerable for its own sustenance. Utilizing scientific knowledge and asserting a form of technological

colonialism rooted in the industrial revolution, this approach has culminated in our present moment, in which climate change presses on our consciousness as a threat to the planet's very survival. Moreover, political power structures foment conflicts of various kinds, employing all available means with minimal regard for their consequences. This pervasive dehumanization is a secondary effect of the violence that is innate to contemporary nation-states and of the myopic nationalism that confines itself to specific anthropological structures and needs and that asserts its dominance by displacing anything that obstructs achievement of its ends. At a time when civilizational values that cherish the beauty of creation are repudiated, when rampant frenzy incites numerous genocides and wars that annihilate others and foster fanatical xenophobia, and when dialogue between humans, as well as between their nations and cultures, has collapsed, Ghosh proposes turning to the poetic wisdom of Tagore's thought. His work offers a proto-vision with the power to nurture and heal the human spirit by establishing a continuum among humans, nature, and the elements that sustain life. Tagore's poetics are plural, nonanthropocentric, and centered in polygenesis. Through a reading of his plays and his lectures published as essays between 1890 and 1932, Ghosh demonstrates a conscious shift in Tagore's philosophy: from an anthropological focus to a cosmological communion that fosters a creative unity. This shift redefines the concept of human freedom in a manner that liberates it from colonial and nationalist systems of knowledge production, habits of thought, and structures, all of which have eroded the sense of wonder through which one might authentically be in the world.

Deivison Faustino and Miriam Debieux Rosa examine the social and political genesis of human suffering within colonial forms of sociability. Both authors point to Fanon's insight that the emergence of Euromodernity's discourse of the human as a universal subject is inseparable from colonial violence and the process of dehumanization through which colonized peoples were reduced to the status of self-moving objects. Interestingly, Faustino and Rosa note that Fanon's call to take sociogeny into account in psychological analysis had already been opened by Freud himself. They affirm that the dehumanization caused by capitalism has intensified and has taken a different shape in the colonial world. The colonial experience produces a specific mode of *Unbehagen*: a colonial malaise. Faustino and Rosa argue that the spatiotemporal articulations of this malaise suggest that psychic suffering under contemporary anti-Black racism is structured by a doubled malaise. Alongside the malaise arising from the unease individuals experience when an external structure demands obedience in order to ensure social belonging and security, there persists a second,

more radical malaise: the refusal to recognize racialized subjects' belonging itself, which is to say the refusal to recognize their right to participate in and enjoy sociality.

Colonialism, racism, and capitalism operate in manners that are similar, and sometimes mutually constitutive, as they produce processes of dehumanization. This point has been powerfully articulated by Delal Aydin through a close reading of Karl Marx's early writings, particularly the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, which lay bare the multiple levels at which capitalist social relations alienate and devalue human life. Aydin returns to Marx to rethink the question of human worth within a commodifying capitalist order that reduces human beings to replaceable, disposable entities. The forms of alienation generated by capitalism, Aydin argues, bear affinities with processes of racialization and subalternization, insofar as all produce devalued, disfigured, and socially expendable bodies. What makes Marx especially relevant in this context is his insight that such conditions, often presented as naturalized and inevitable, are in fact historically constructed and thus can be transformed.

Léa Tosold's foray into the thought of Afro-Brazilian poet-activist and historian Maria Beatriz Nascimento, and particularly into Nascimento's account of the *quilombo*,[4] is a journey of inquiry into a land-centered notion of the human sans the "the logics of possession, property, and border-making" (Tosold, in this issue). Nascimento's work is focused on finding ways to think the collective life of Black people amidst the persistent forms of oppression meted out to them. She contends that access to the forms of knowledge that enable existence to persist under conditions of ongoing symbolic and material oppression is made possible only through a contextual and collective mediation that is nonetheless embodied at the level of the individual subject. Tosold argues that Nascimento unsettles the binary between individual and collective by articulating the possibility of self-realization through active engagement in the collective and intergenerational struggle. Nascimento also unsettles self-contained individualism by conceptualizing humans as relational—as constituted within and through collective resistance movements. Nascimento's concept of territoriality, one should point out, is not only land-centric but also oceanic: "Territory is where life is able to thrive in its proper and unforeseen ways" (Tosold, in this issue).

In Lieu of a Conclusion

Words carry within them worlds, lifeworlds, and realities, and beneath their surface meaning lie multiple semantic landscapes that, in turn, indicate histories, cultures, experiences, and traditions embedded in a collective uncon-

scious and in forms of memory that remain in social embodiments in various ways. For instance, the etymological root of the Arabic *Insan* or *Insi* is *Uns*, whose landscape of meaning includes sociability, intimacy, familiarity, and friendliness; all these meanings imparted into the words *Insan* or *Insi* signify social relationality. The Arabic words *Adami, Bashar*, *Insan,* and *Insi* can all be translated into English as "human," but the nuances of these words are lost in translation. Similarly, one can speak of word-concepts like *Ubuntu* and *Utu*, along with other concepts and practices of the human that map the social experience of pluri-humanity. When one acknowledges that there is a plurality of concepts and praxes of being human, it follows that some praxes are worth enacting and some praxes are worth avoiding. In this context, one could also ask: What are the epistemes and political and economic projects by and through which the desired concept of the human is cultivated, reinforced, or imposed, while other concepts and praxes of being human are excluded and prevented from *being*, not to mention from flourishing? There is no praxis of being human that is self-contained. Each praxis needs to learn from other praxes—not only those of humans, but also those of animals. Pluri-humanity is a common condition in which humans must find ways to convivially and harmoniously live together and with other living creatures. It is a landscape in which one learns from each human or animal group the best manners of living in our world. The enormity of the ecological crisis invites us to learn about other ways of dealing with nature from the Indigenous people and religious traditions that are eroded by the onslaught of modernity and coloniality. Our war-oriented, capitalist/colonial world makes evident that it is necessary to learn to enact different modes of being human and to thereby ensure a peaceful and just future. The genocidal wars against the Palestinian people have taught us that animal-loving soldiers can rescue animals while killing humans in Gaza—that scientists can be busy being ecologically sensitive but remain insensitive to the mass killing of Gazans. The world that allows Gaza to be almost wiped out with impunity is a destructive world in which any human group could be rendered as an inconvenience and condemned to the hellish zone of nonbeing.

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NOTES

1. This also occurred after the disappearance of personalism as a philosophical movement, mainly in the French context but also in the American one. The most prominent contributor to this movement in the Arabic context was the Moroccan philosopher Mohammed Aziz Lahbabi.
2. The critical literature on Eurocentric humanism is vast, but the idea of rethinking the human and humanism has been a predominant feature of several anti-colonial/decolonial philosophers (Davis 2025; Gordon, 1995; Hiddleston, 2010; Lee, 2015; Mignolo, 2015; Wynter, 2003). In recent decades, decolonial scholarship has built up an epistemological and a political project to counter the imperialism of global capitalism and of what Aníbal Quijano (2000) termed "coloniality of power," a pattern of domination that has penetrated all domains of life, including the constitution of the human subject (Dussel 2000; Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2011; Maldonado-Torres 2007). This has been further delineated in emergent scholarship that interrogates the genealogies of the human subject, tracing the trajectory of the human's constitution beyond the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in order to offer a different conception of the human (Drexler-Dreis and Justaert 2020; An Yountae and Craig 2021; Jackson 2020). Another strand of scholarship builds on the philosophies of anti-colonial thinkers who have provided groundbreaking readings of Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon (Wynter 1984, 2003b; Bogues 2006; Maldonado-Torres 2008; Parker 2018). Moreover, recent studies take the Islamic tradition as a resource for rethinking the human in our contemporary times (Jafroudi 2016; Hallaq 2019; Faruque 2021).
3. For a critical account of how modern secularism displaced and replaced earlier, practice-based religious traditions of tolerance, see Nandy (1997).
4. Quilombo is a term that refers to maroon communities that historically inhabited the territory now named Brazil.

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