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"And therefore we Must Seek Dialogue in this Networked World": A Meeting of Postcolonialism and Posthumanism in *Coloniality, Ontology, and the Question of the Posthuman* (ed. Mark Jackson). A Review

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Abstract: *Coloniality, Ontology, and the Question of the Posthuman* (2018) is a part of the *Routledge Research in New Postcolonialisms* series. The essays in this volume, edited and introduced by Mark Jackson, all answer the question of whether and how postcolonialism and posthumanism meet and inform one another in their response to contemporary debates around the Anthropocene, refugee crisis, environmental collapse or indigenous worldviews.

Key words: posthumanism, postcolonialism, subjectivity, agency.

"I dlatego musimy szukać dialogu w tym sieciowym świecie": spotkanie poskolonializmu z posthumanizmem w *Coloniality, Ontology, and the Question of the Posthuman* (ed. Mark Jackson). Recenzja

Abstrakt: Opublikowany w 2018 roku tom pt. *Coloniality, Ontology, and the Question of the Posthuman* stanowi część nowej serii wydawniczej *Routledge Research in New Postcolonialism*. Zamieszczone w nim eseje, zebrane i zredagowane przez Marka Jacksona, odpowiadają na pytanie, czy i w jaki sposób postkolonializm i posthumanizm spotykają się i uzupełniają w swoich odpowiedziach na debaty wokół Antropocenu, kwestii uchodźców, kryzysu przyrody czy światopoglądów autochtonicznych.

Słowa kluczowe: postumanizm, postkolonializm, ontologia, podmiotowość, sprawczość.

The opening sentence of Angela Last's chapter entitled "Anti-colonial ontologies" could serve as a motto for the entire volume: "How do you engage with the question of ontology in postcolonial theory?" Her answer

is included in the chapter's subtitle: "A dialogue." In fact, the multiple perspectives taken up in this volume, by engaging both posthumanism and postcolonialism, contribute to the vigorous discussion on what it means to be human, and how inclusion or exclusion from this entitlement affects one's social, material, or legal status. The debate seems ever more urgent at a time when the environmental collapse calls into question the perception of a biological individual who presides over the static, insentient and 'uncultured' environment and affects everyday the lives of humans and 'more-than-human' assemblages.

In his Introduction to the volume, Mark Jackson lays out the tenets of a dialogue between posthumanism and postcolonialism – how the two approaches may inform and invigorate one another when they meet, however uncomfortable this encounter may seem. Postcolonial studies, he explains, emerged out of the 'cultural turn' when – with a heightened attention to text, language, culture and difference – worlds and traditions, along with their politics and ethics, multiplied. The inhabitants of these worlds were frequently excluded from the right to humanity which began to be defined by the narrow Eurocentric Enlightenment model. Posthumanisms and new materialisms, which developed during the subsequent 'ontological turn' at the time of increased awareness of the ecological collapse, the Anthropocene, technological incursions into everyday life, and globalization extended these worlds to include agencies of 'more-than-human' assemblages. Postcolonial scholars may insist that, in the face of pressing issues affecting human life today, extending critical energies towards the non-human will dilute our efficiency when dealing with current crises – human rights violations, refugee crises etc. The posthumanist, in turn, is a thinker trained mostly in Euro-American academia, which is a comfort zone reluctantly left behind in the encounter with other epistemologies.

And yet, both share the preoccupation with who or what counts as human. While postcolonialism is interested in the politics, identities and representations of non-European human exclusion, a posthumanist notices the porosity of the human animal and asks about her boundaries, whether in the encounter with the technical or biotic non-humans. The prefix 'post' in both designations, likewise, is not a temporal reference but can be perceived as a thought exercise: we have, perhaps, always already been postcolonial and, to paraphrase Bruno Latour, never been human. Combining the creative potential of both responds to and, in a way, mirrors, the contemporary condition – the fact that the residues of colonialism: war, racism, extremism, forced migration etc. are today closely intertwined with ecological crises. Only by working together can they decolonize dangerous hierarchies, both social and environmental that lead to violence.

In his chapter "For new ecologies of thought", Mark Jackson traces the differences between postcolonialism and posthumanism in their responses to the post-Kantian distinction between nature and culture.

Kant's definition of the human is limited to those who are self-reflective or linguistic and thus separated from the world, that is nature, which is non-linguistic. This fit well in the wider conceptual tradition of Enlightenment humanism that aspired to separate humans from nature or the supernatural and to show human uniqueness. This, in turn, relegated non-European epistemologies to the nature part of the divide as they evolved modalities that were different from, and even challenged, Eurocentric humanism in such terms as, for example, what counts as living or non-living, making no distinction between nature and culture or thought and matter, dream and reality, etc. These epistemologies are being recovered today by scholars in anthropology, religious studies, politics and indigenous studies. Some names that recur throughout the volume include such authors (many of whom are indigenous) as, among others: Eduardo Kohn, E.R. AtleoUmeek, Barbara Glowczewski, Elisabeth Povinelli, Philippe Descola, Eduardo Vivieros de Castro, Marisol de la Cadena, and Dipesh Chakrabarty. In Euro-American thought, starting in the late twentieth century, there came to the fore relational ontologies theorized by, most notably, Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, Isabelle Stengers, and Michel Serresand, earlier, by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. What needs to be remembered, however, is that such relational, processual ontologies had proliferated across the globe long before they became conceptualized by these thinkers. Jackson advocates thus pluralizing stories and narratives and, thereby, new possibilities for worlding.

The subsequent chapters take up this challenge starting with Angela Last who continues the debate on the (in)compatibility of postcolonial and posthuman debates especially around the nature/culture boundary adopting the STS lens. She admits that the exchange is not straightforward or unfraught as, on the one hand, postcolonial theory has reached a hiatus in its uncritical adoption of the Western division between nature and culture and rejection of the former, while posthumanist materialist thought has been deeply colonial in its inability to recognize the appropriation of indigenous ontologies. And yet, Last maintains, attention to equality and difference does not necessarily have to clash with attention towards the material. In fact, focusing on the latter (matter, nature) may help illuminate postcolonial concerns such as race, class or sovereignty. Numerous authors and thinkers from former colonies have already been writing about such connections and yet, in the narrow Western-based postcolonial discourse, their voices have mostly gone unheard. The argument is organized around the juxtaposition of the notions of universality and cosmopolitics. While any notion of universalism involves exclusion, the 'one cosmos' of cosmopolitics does not exist anymore; there is nothing anymore, if there ever was, that unites all of humanity. This lack at the core of cosmopolitics can be re-introduced as a provocation to question the hierarchy of the universal. Cosmos was already a key theme during decolonial struggles –

there emerged 'cosmological universalism' that acknowledged the role of the material or natural in the construction of difference which can, in turn, be employed creatively to oppose universalizing, exclusionary tendencies. Last refers especially to the activity of the negritude movement that reclaimed nature, including the internal nature, and highlighted connection as the key tool for undoing hierarchies and building new solidarities.

In her paper "Terra plena. Revisiting contemporary agrarian struggles in Central America through a 'full earth' perspective" Naomi Millner draws attention to the way humans, who constitute but a minor part of life on earth, are capable of making epistemic reductions of the complex relations and processes to create authoritative environmental knowledge that then informs environmental governance in which local, indigenous knowledge, based on thousands of years of observation and practice in a specific locality, is barely present. Millner makes a case for the agricultural struggle in Central America and especially the emergence of permaculture in El Salvador at the time of the civil war and the Green Revolution. The practice of permaculture stands in opposition to cultural imperialism as it engages with local and ancestral agricultural practices. The indigenous voices are thus not rendered historical, but their knowledge can be incorporated successfully today to provide healthy future yields. What is important is that these knowledges and practices are locally situated, thus permaculture allows for avoiding universalizing and essentializing. Tradition in this sense is understood in terms of capacities and agencies, rather than essential truths. The emergent hybrid designs of food production are both environmentally sustainable and just.

Millner argues that while all non-Euro-American forms of knowledge are relegated to myth, the land, which in these cosmologies is viewed as rich in life and agency, becomes marked as *terra nullius*, enclosed, claimed for profit in the name of it being wild and thus in need of civilization. To counteract the idea of *terra nullius*, Millner proposes the term '*terra plena*' which sees earth as "teeming with communities of species life and knowledge-practices for knowing them" (103) She explains an important difference in the way terra plena may be articulated. On the one hand it can be viewed as multiple ontologies – diverse, coherent yet separated worlds (pluriverses); on the other as relational ontologies – assemblages of humans and non-humans. Recent anthropological studies bring these two concepts together whereby coherent systems meet in assemblages by means of translating their respective semiotic codes. It is in the gaps of translation between these 'worldings' that the decolonial process can happen as they make room for difference in the emerging pluriverse that disrupts ongoing political formations.

For Zoe Todd, likewise, the way to decolonize lies in tending to ethical relationality of assemblages, both human and non-human. In her "Refracting colonialism in Canada: Fish tales, text, and insistent public grief" she

observes that little progress has been made in terms of the relations between the Indigenous people in Canada and the State government; colonial power relations prevail to this day. By drawing from her own experience as an Indigenous woman scholar, she describes a fascinating public reading project of the TRC Report, #ReadTheTRCReport, dealing with the atrocities of the residential school program established in 1870 in order to assimilate Indigenous people culturally. Over 150,000 children attended the 130 schools experiencing cultural annihilation, starvation, violence and abuse, which frequently resulted in early death. Todd combines the public expression of grief over the residential schools with her PhD research on human-fish relations exploring the way fish have been bearing witness to British and French colonial violence in Canada. #ReadTheTRCReport has turned into a 'living document' as 140 people in Canada, and some from abroad, volunteered to film themselves reading it and uploaded their videos onto YouTube. The videos were tweeted worldwide and captured the attention of the mass media. The private reading experience thus turned into a communal public grieving.

Todd argues moreover that, unlike the Canadian state which focuses on humans and human grief, Indigenous legal orders have broader reach and acknowledge non-human persons as sentient beings, with whom human histories, stories, kinship, language and cosmologies are interwoven. She links her experience at the Paulatuuq hamlet working on her doctoral thesis on human-fish relations with the TRC report, arguing that the fish also witnessed the lack of local children who had been taken to residential schools. The affective stories of colonial grief in Canada, both human and non-human, disrupt the State's official understanding of what a reconciliation looks like by suggesting alternative Indigenous philosophies and legal orders.

There are two chapters concerned with urban space, Lisa Tilley's "'Well, City Boy Rangoon, it's time to stitch up the evening': Material, meaning and Man in the (post)colonial city" and Delacey Tedesco's "Geographies of settler-colonial cities". The first one looks at the city through the eyes of the poet Maung Chaw New who portrays humans as belonging either with the figure of Man as the 'investor, the overconsumer, the colonial over-bearer' or the underrepresented majority of the colonized figure of the Other-than-Man. After Sylvia Wynter, Tilley argues that the human has been overrepresented in the figure of Man and inequalities have been exercised on the material level. She also combines Fanon's sociogenic thought, elaborated by Wynter, with posthuman material approaches starting with Karen Barad's 'intra-active becoming' of the world wherein subject and object fold into a combined agent. Tilley shows how the division of city space across the lines of various kinds of entitlement (the mall, the office block) is subverted by the marginalized residents who, though excluded from participation, add other meanings to material spaces in the city, at the same

time upsetting the normalized trope of Man and opening the definition of Man into planetary humanism. Delacey Tedesco, in turn, explores another boundary, one created by settler colonialism in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, which is a predominantly white settler community on the unceded land of the Syilx First Nation. She wonders if aporetic analyses can be used effectively in disassembling the operative boundary constructions of settler colonialism.

In "Ethno-linguistic cartographies as colonial embodiment in postcolonial Sri Lanka", Chitra Jayathilake reads the Sri Lankan playwright, Ernest Thalayasingam MacIntyre's, play *Rasayanangam's Last Rites* through the lens of ethno-linguistic cartographies as producing biopolitical effects – excluding certain groups in Sri Lanka from full political participation and designating them as human waste. The author focuses on the way the Tamil society has been persecuted during the Black July riots and the civil war in Sri Lanka between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese Buddhist majority that followed and how this has been linguistically motivated. MacIntyre presents the language dilemma in the figure of the three main English-speaking characters, including a Tamil man named Rasa. The distinguishing feature identifying Tamil speakers is their anatomical inability to pronounce certain sounds, which Rasa willfully chooses to use to reveal his ethnic identity even though it leads to his death and de-materialization of his body through immolation. In this paper, postcolonial dilemmas, especially the ongoing aftermath of colonization, are mixed with the posthuman focus on the material body and Foucault's and Agamben's take on biopolitics.

"Immanent comparisons and posthuman perception in the filmic sensorium of Apichatpong Weerasethakul" by Carlo Bonura finds a different kind of crossing between the human and non-human world in three films released between 2006 and 2010 by the Thaifilm director, Apichatpong Weerasethakul. Unlike the majority of post human takes on the agency and vibrancy of matter (most famously discussed in *Vibrant Matter* by Jane Bennett) which opt for the secular, Bonura finds the most fascinating Apihaptong's recourse to the spiritual, mysterious, or even enchanting environment. However, it is not enchanting in the sense explained by Walter Mignolo in the context of colonization which carries with it the violence of colonial power, but the possibility of the coexistence and interconnectivity of the human and non-human as two simultaneous legitimate 'loci of enunciation' of knowledge and ontology. Bonura argues that the constructedness of nature and the non-human is part of the knowledge practices of colonial anthropologists. To disrupt it, Weerasethakul's films enact Mignolo's 'border thinking': filmic realism is undermined and Bonura applies Henri Bergson's theory of perception and Gilles Deleuze's discussion of montage to explain the way Weerasethakul creates the whole from assemblages of parts and from the gaps between them. The end result is a decolonized perception of the non-human.

In the densely philosophical and theoretical chapter that rounds up the volume, entitled "Political ontology and international relations: Politics, self-estrangement, and void universalism in a pluriverse", Hans-Martin Jaeger recaps the major themes and discussions taken up by the other authors in his attempt to diagnose the ineptness at the heart of International Relations at handling ontological difference, especially in the context of such burning contemporary issues as ecological crises, migration or terrorism. The challenge is how to get beyond a state-centric and, often, colonial perspective and embrace equality without multiplying identity politics. Jaeger traces such attempts from theories of cosmopolitan democracy, Ulrich Beck's risk society or Hardt and Negri's empire – theories of global social whole, through the more recent proposal by Rosenberg of 'societal multiplicity' in the world of 'uneven and combined development'. He then juxtaposes recent discussions of ontology and multiplicity (eg. ANT, ethnographic studies of indigeneity, etc.) with 'the ontological turn' (multiplication of worlds, not just epistemologies) and 'political ontology' (performances of worlds as stories). This elucidates the plural character of ontologies mostly missing in debates on ontology in IR. Ontological multiplicity takes the form of what Viveiros de Castro has named 'multinaturalism' rather than multiculturalism or multi-societalism, stretching the debate to include more-than-human multiplicities, and by inverting the nature-culture dualism (one culture, many natures). Since all of Western politics is founded on the nature/culture, modern/non-modern distinction which has excluded nature and the non-modern from political participation and, thus, dehumanized them, the role of political ontology is to restore more-than-human life and, thus, also non-modern ontologies, to politics based on equality but allowing alterity, not denying inequalities but also not essentializing radical differences. To this end Jaeger reaches for Ranciere's conception of political practices necessarily involving dissensus and disagreement and the staging of equality that exposes wrong. Only when subjectivization can happen, might we take seriously the personhood of, for instance, indigenous people, non-human animals, and other 'earth beings'. However, to most efficiently realize the creative-transformational potential of Ranciere's disagreement, what is needed is Western European self-estrangement, that is realization that, in Bruno Latour's words, we too 'have never been modern', or as modern as we would like to believe, as our political affairs have been infused with the non-human in the shape of the supernatural and the sacred. The similarity between Western modernity and non-modern societies is further blurred by Prozorov in his notion of 'void universalism' which takes as a point of departure the idea that 'the World as such is effectively a nothing'. The void or lack or nothing allows for the creation of a positive world of equality. By such opening to a decolonial, post-anthropocentric pluriversal vision, Jaeger believes IR would be better equipped to understand world politics.

To sum up, the volume is timely and very much needed. Contributors to this volume traverse various geographical locations – from Canada through the Caribbean, Central America, to South and South East Asia – and discuss such wide-ranging issues as agrarian ecology, urban planning, poetry and film, fish and non-human rights or Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada. Despite this variety of spaces and locations, there are themes that bind all these chapters: personhood, focus on relationality and interconnectivity, language and communication, and the dissolution of the nature-culture boundary, all of which need careful attention. What is more, the contributors practice what they preach – decolonization of thought is not only advocated in the subsequent chapters but also enacted by giving voice to indigenous scholars, thinkers and critics. Together, the various essays show that joint engagement with postcolonialism and posthumanism is not only possible, but also necessary, echoing Ulrich Beck's statement quoted in the title of this review about such dialogue being a necessary condition for a truly cosmopolitan world.

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