

**\*Draft: Please circulate & send comments to [angela.last@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:angela.last@glasgow.ac.uk)\***

## **One in Other<sup>1</sup>**

I am a human being.

How did I get to become a human being?

From the viewpoint of the processes in the universe

And their statistically overwhelming probabilities

My coming into being is infinitely improbable.<sup>2</sup>

Yet I am here and... thinking

I am thinking, because I am processing matter.

Matter becomes thought every day

In the sense that we breathe and eat.

The energy liberated by chemical transformations

Becomes an instrument of thought.

Eating is like absorbing springs

Whose subsequent release, operated by us

Constitutes our action.<sup>3</sup>

That I am matter,

Is important

But also not.

It is not important

If I have a body

Like everybody else.

But I don't.

My body is materialised and extended

In different ways.

Right now,

I am an ecological disaster<sup>4</sup>.

As a human being,  
I have a body  
That is capable of action.  
Whenever and wherever I act,  
I start processes.  
This action is unpredictable<sup>5</sup>.  
By acting into nature<sup>6</sup>,  
I become an elemental force  
But deny it at the same time.  
Perhaps, I need to be *more* like 'matter'.  
To be like 'matter' :  
Thoughtless, Or,  
Emptied of illusions.  
In both cases,  
The thought is thought to be the first step  
To make 'matter' matter.  
If I can bear to think  
Neither of the past nor the future  
I am reduced to a state of matter<sup>7</sup>  
Where I don't.

As a human being,  
When I act into nature,  
My action is not only unpredictable,  
But it can be read.  
When I act into nature,  
I act into an Other  
But also into my self.  
A focus on my body  
Or the denial of it  
Ejects me from the world.<sup>8</sup>  
It helps to think of an Other,  
- not to deny the matter of my self,  
but to not be just 'I'.  
I need to be one in Other  
To live.  
To love the world  
Means I want the Other to be<sup>9</sup>.

To be human is not an absolute state  
But an openness towards.<sup>10</sup>

I become human  
In my encounter with the world  
And with others.

As a human being  
I am vulnerable to the world  
I can deepen this vulnerability  
By making myself more open.

When I open myself to the world  
I see that matter is not a machine  
For manufacturing the good.<sup>11</sup>

Matter may have a trajectory  
But it is not according to human desires.<sup>12</sup>

This is what I need to be opening towards.

To love the order of the world

Means to become conscious of the world

Material and immaterial

It means creative attention

To microcosm and macrocosm.

Attention to material processes

Is accessible to anyone

Via the body

Which unites world and consciousness.<sup>13</sup>

Sensory deception

Or sensory deprivation

Should not prevent

An engagement with the world.

Through my sense of space

And my breath<sup>14</sup>

I can still realise

The endurance of the world

And the finitude of others.

This realisation leaves me with the choice

Between community

Or becoming

Mere matter.<sup>15</sup>

It is no surprise  
That, often, bodies are not supported  
But hindered in this access to the world.  
We must pay attention  
To what does not exist  
And to what is prevented  
From coming into existence.  
Again, a matter of reading.  
How do I want to read,  
How do I want to be read?  
Arendt's 'Heisenberg man'  
The *man* who will be less likely  
Ever to meet anything but *himself*  
And *man*-made things  
The more ardently *he* wishes to eliminate  
All anthropocentric considerations  
From *his* encounter  
With the non-human world around *him*.<sup>16</sup>  
Weil's inventive factory workers  
And their production of  
Ready made pasts and futures.<sup>17</sup>  
Disposable people  
Disposable planet

Disposable future

I am disposing of my self

Matter is unable to mourn.<sup>18</sup>

Self-preservation,

Inner emigration,

The flight from the world:

We understand

We empathise

We are complicit.

What to do

When relations break down?



As human beings

We cannot think our present condition.<sup>19</sup>

The Age of the Human:

We are the world

We are masters

We are death

We are gone

The Age of the Human:

I know my what

But I am losing the who.

The Age of the Human:

The terror of ourselves.

Oh the humanity!

In appearance,

Nearly everything nowadays

Is carried out methodically.<sup>20</sup>

But what exactly is it

That are we doing methodically?

In the end,

The only wisdom may consist of knowing

That there is a world.<sup>21</sup>

And that we are.

The Age of the Human:

Disaster happens automatically,

Terror becomes domesticated.<sup>22</sup>

Extinction is inevitable.

To prevent disaster,

So it is said,

One has to look for the unforeseeable.<sup>23</sup>

That shall be our method.

As a human being,  
I have a body  
That enables me  
To sense and to make sense.  
However, I had to learn  
That my senses  
Are not fitted for the universe,  
That my everyday experience,  
Far from being able to constitute  
The model for the reception of truth  
And the acquisition of knowledge,  
Is a constant source  
Of error and delusion.<sup>24</sup>  
I do not feel...  
I'm not conditioned to feel<sup>25</sup>  
The perpetual exchange of matter  
By which I bathe in the world.<sup>26</sup>  
Sensory rupture,  
And the immense task  
Of making a conscious effort  
Of shuttling back and forth  
Between scales.

By zooming out

My own representation to others

Might become clearer

New connections may be made

To different kinds of differently...

- Or similarly? - materialised beings.

By zooming in

I might realise

That the path to opening myself

Must start from the 'I',

However this 'I' is co-authored,

And where this 'I' is located.

To take one step like this

May be enough

To make the universe appear.<sup>27</sup>

As a human being,  
I am embedded in histories of violence.  
By being born,  
I am destined to suffer violence<sup>28</sup>  
And to commit violence.  
There is no opting out.  
Generally,  
There are two choices:  
To reveal or to camouflage violence.<sup>29</sup>  
Camouflage operates at multiple scales  
Often, it blends too well into the environment.  
It confuses us.  
Is violence our *natural* condition?  
Our *human* condition?  
How will we know the difference  
Between the violence we promote  
And the violence we oppose?<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps, we can know through

Reading:

All oppressive societies give birth

To a false conception of the relationship

Between 'man' and nature.<sup>31</sup>

To dominate or to be dominated?

Either narrative of domination

Serves no-one but a few.

The Age of the Human -

Inter-human failure

As planetary might?

The search for new relations.

What do new ontologies say about us?

Whom do they serve?

How are they being adapted

To serve other inter-est-s?

Can we create ontologies

That do not translate into products?

Do we always understand the relevant relations?

Through reading  
We also bring relations into existence.  
We begin to write.  
We need to be attentive to this,  
To our writing:  
Violence is also  
And maybe above all  
A linguistic project.<sup>32</sup>  
Words are.  
Hence the regulation of the sphere of appearance  
Is one way to establish  
What will count as reality,  
And what will not.<sup>33</sup>  
When we change the language  
Does the violence go away?  
Does the contradiction go away?  
Maybe, when language gets you killed  
It is working.<sup>34</sup>  
Although, as we know,  
People are bombing for feminism.<sup>35</sup>  
Never a single story,  
There are only ways of seeing.<sup>36</sup>

Writing:

A need to communicate

That one has a need to communicate.<sup>37</sup>

In a system that promotes isolation

Transmission can travel.

This is how space begins.<sup>38</sup>



We can also write with our bodies:

To perform the future

As matter.

To be like matter

Is also to be unaffected by power

Perhaps a state that is unattainable

For a human being.

Although to be powerless

Can sometimes work in our favour.

To have nothing to lose

Presents another kind of power.

To be vulnerable but not a victim<sup>39</sup>:

I am a wound,

But I do not need to be helped.

I am the wound in the fabric.

I am the wound in *you*.

We need to hold open a wound

As a space for intervention,<sup>40</sup>

For confounding.

A mobile Otherness<sup>41</sup>

In the space of the predictable.

To make an intervention,

I need to transform my self.

But also,

The specifics of *my* matter

May be important.

As a human being

I am often handled as an abstract category.

Abstract conceptions of humanity,

Or claims about the rights of abstract human beings

Have often failed to recognise

Actual human beings.<sup>42</sup>

Not all human beings are created equal.

Similarly,

Abstract conceptions of nature

Or claims about the rights of abstract nature

Have failed to recognise

What nature might actually be.

Not all natures are created equal.

As a human being

My nature is subject to change.<sup>43</sup>

My humanity

On loan from others.<sup>44</sup>

To think of humans as matter,  
Already in space and time,  
Represents a refusal to think away  
Spatial and temporal characteristics  
And to arrive at the bare concept  
Of an individual entity.<sup>45</sup>

The material body -  
An individual without features.

An idealised scene -  
Matter as reassurance<sup>46</sup>

In a place of apprehension.

Do generic material processes

Characterise the Age of the Human?

The Age of the Human:

Who is this human?

Or rather:

Through which humans is this age enabled?

Was it enabled *through* humans?<sup>47</sup>

How specific does the 'human' have to be?

How generic can the nonhuman be?

What is (in)appropriate(d)?<sup>48</sup>

What do we want (the) human(s) to do?

What do we want their bodies to do?

Can we accept impure positions?

The body: enemy *of* plurality

Generic and insatiable<sup>49</sup>

The body: enemy *through* plurality

Object of control

The body:

Having in common a condition

That cannot be thought without difference.<sup>50</sup>

The body:

Of and between worlds.

As a human being  
My body is a constant threat  
To myself and to others  
Being of the same matter  
As everything else  
It fails  
It provokes  
It transforms  
It dies.  
It fails to represent.  
No matter what worlds we make it inhabit,  
We find it hard to get acclimatised. <sup>51</sup>

Frustration:

While my body is geophysically active

I feel too passive.

The earth writes,

My body writes,

What do I write?

Never more active

When seemingly doing nothing,<sup>52</sup>

I am an ecological disaster

A social disaster

A cultural disaster

No longer separated from nature,

I am struggling to stay human

To stay nonhuman,

Inhuman.

The dissolution of boundaries in our heads

That should have been a revolution

Becomes another replication.

We continue writing

Regardless.

And is not that we should stop.

Or that we *can* stop.

We have already started

To write far beyond ourselves.

And to write for others.

The earth writes.

My body writes.

Other bodies write.

I am writing

I am written

I am written for others.

When I write (am written)

Do I know *what* I write?

How I write?

Can I *change* how I write (am written)?

More importantly perhaps

And this is my final question

For now

Can I change how I write (am written)

With Others?

---

<sup>1</sup> Chloé, *One in Other*, Paris (Kill The DJ Records) 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, London (Penguin) 1954. 'What is Freedom?' p. 168

<sup>3</sup> Simone Weil, *The Notebooks of Simone Weil*, London (Routledge), 1956. p. 165

<sup>4</sup> 'I am the fucking ecological disaster, I think without the slightest sense of ridiculousness or immodesty, chewing the soft flesh inside my lip until I reach its warm metallic base.'

Lee Mackinnon, *Flood*, 'The Speculative Ceiling', 2014.

<http://speculativeceiling.wordpress.com/2014/04/06/flood-2/>

<sup>5</sup> 'action almost never achieves its purpose'

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago (University of Chicago Press) 1958. p. 184



- 
- <sup>6</sup> ‘To act into nature, to carry human unpredictability into a realm where we are confronted with elemental forces which we shall perhaps never be able to control reliably...’  
Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, London (Penguin) 1954. ‘The Concept of History’, p. 62.
- <sup>7</sup> See Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, London (Routledge) 1947 [2002]. p. 82
- <sup>8</sup> see Linda M. G. Zerilli ‘The Arendtian Body’ in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, Bonnie Honig (ed) University Park, Pa. (Pennsylvania University Press) 1995. p. 180
- <sup>9</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, London (Secker and Warburg) 1978.
- <sup>10</sup> Vasti Roodt, *Amor fati, Amor mundi: Nietzsche and Arendt on Overcoming Modernity*, Stellenbosch University, 2005. p. 119
- <sup>11</sup> see Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty*, London (Routledge) 1955 [2006]. p. 164
- <sup>12</sup> ‘There is not question, of course, of imagining any sort of wills at work behind the phenomena of nature because these would not be analogous to human wills...’  
Simone Weil, *On Science, Necessity, and the Love of God*. Richard Rees (ed/transl). Oxford (Oxford University Press) 1968. p. 6
- <sup>13</sup> Alexander Irwin on Simone Weil in *Saints of the Impossible*, Minneapolis (University of Minnesota Press) 2002. p. 145
- <sup>14</sup> Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, London (Routledge) 1947 [2002]. p.
- <sup>15</sup> Alexander Irwin on Simone Weil in *Saints of the Impossible*, Minneapolis (University of Minnesota Press) 2002. p. 145
- <sup>16</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, London (Penguin) 1954. p. 272
- <sup>17</sup> See Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, London (Routledge) 1947 [2002]. p. 82
- <sup>18</sup> Vasti Roodt, *Amor fati, Amor mundi: Nietzsche and Arendt on Overcoming Modernity*, Stellenbosch University, 2005. p. 182
- <sup>19</sup> see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, Boston, Mass (Beacon) 1995.
- <sup>20</sup> Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty*, London (Routledge) 1955 [2006]. p. 113
- <sup>21</sup> Simone Weil, *Formative Writings 1929-1941*, London (Routledge) 1987. p. 85
- <sup>22</sup> See Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, London (Penguin) 1954. ‘What is Freedom?’ p. 168-169. & Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, London (Penguin) 1963. p. 276.
- <sup>23</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, London (Penguin) 1954. ‘What is Freedom?’ p. 170 & Svetlana Boym on Hannah Arendt in ‘Another Freedom: The Alternative History of an Idea’, Chicago (University of Chicago Press), 2011. p. 253
- <sup>24</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, London (Penguin) 1954. p. 54-55,
- <sup>25</sup> ‘Sensory experience does not underlay culture; it is a product of it.’  
Keith Mitnick, *Artificial Light*, New York (Princeton Architectural Press) 2008.
- <sup>26</sup> Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, London (Routledge) 1947 [2002]. p.142
- <sup>27</sup> Simone Weil, *Formative Writings 1929-1941*, London (Routledge) 1987. p. 85
- <sup>28</sup> Simone Weil, *The Iliad, or the poem of force*. *The Simone Weil Reader*, George A Panichas (ed), Wakefield, Rhode Island & London (Moyer Bell) 1977. p. 163
- <sup>29</sup> see Suzanne Césaire ‘The Great Camouflage: Writings of Dissent’, Middletown, CT (Wesleyan University Press) 2012.

- 
- <sup>30</sup> 'How will we know the difference between the power we promote and the power we oppose'  
Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, London (Routledge) 1993. p. 185
- <sup>31</sup> Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty*, London (Routledge) 1955 [2006]. p. 29
- <sup>32</sup> Costica Bradatan, *Herta Müller's Language of Resistance*, *Boston Review*, 18 March 2014
- <sup>33</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, London (Verso) 2004. p. xx
- <sup>34</sup> Costica Bradatan, *Herta Müller's Language of Resistance*, *Boston Review*, 18 March 2014.
- <sup>35</sup> 'Can we bomb our way to a feminist paradise?'  
Arundhati Roy, *Not again*, *The Guardian*, 30 September 2002.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/30/usa.iraq>
- <sup>36</sup> Arundhati Roy, *Not again*, *The Guardian*, 30 September 2002.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/30/usa.iraq>
- <sup>37</sup> Georges Perec, 'The Gnocchi of Autumn or An Answer to a Few Questions Concerning Myself', *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, London (Penguin) 2008. P. 122
- <sup>38</sup> Georges Perec, 'The Page', *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, London (Penguin) 2008. P. 13
- <sup>39</sup> see Anat Pick on Simone Weil in *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film*, New York & Chichester (Columbia University Press).
- <sup>40</sup> See Alexander Irwin on Simone Weil, *Saints of the Impossible*, Minneapolis (University of Minnesota Press) 2002. P. 220
- <sup>41</sup> See Alexander Irwin on Simone Weil in *Saints of the Impossible*, Minneapolis (University of Minnesota Press) 2002. p.
- <sup>42</sup> see Kathryn T. Gines, 'Hannah Arendt, Liberalism, and Racism: Controversies Concerning Violence, Segregation, and Education', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 2009. Vol. XLVII, pp. 53-76
- <sup>43</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, San Diego & New York (A Harvest Book/Harcourt), 1958. p. 456
- <sup>44</sup> Tony Davies on Lévinas, *Humanism*, London (Routledge) 2008.
- <sup>45</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, New York (Prometheus) 1920.
- <sup>46</sup> 'An idealised scene. Space as reassurance.'  
Georges Perec, 'The Page', *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, London (Penguin) 2008. P. 15
- <sup>47</sup> '...being is always tied into being toward the geologic, conceptually, ontologically, and materially.' (...) 'We cannot, as it were, go against the Earth, go against climate; humans can only follow after the flows of energy, be in concert with Earth processes and inhuman forces.'  
Kathryn Yusoff, 'Geologic life: prehistory, climate, futures in the Anthropocene', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2013. Vol 31, pp. 779 – 795
- <sup>48</sup> Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'Not You/Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference' in *Dangerous Liaisons : Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti & Ella Shohat (eds), Minneapolis (University of Minnesota Press) 1997. pp. 415-419.

---

<sup>49</sup> see Linda M. G. Zerilli 'The Arendtian Body' in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, Bonnie Honig (ed) University Park, Pa. (Pennsylvania University Press) 1995. p. 171

<sup>50</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, London (Verso) 2006. p. 27

<sup>51</sup> Georges Perec, *The Countryside, Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, London (Penguin) 2008. P. 72

<sup>52</sup> Hannah Arendt quoting Cato 'Never is he more active than when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself.'

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago (University of Chicago Press) 1958. P. 324

### Acknowledgements

Thank you to Lee Mackinnon for invaluable comments.