THE EXTRANEITY OF THE INSIDE AND THE INTIMACY OF THE OUTSIDE

Massimo Filippi and Emilio Maggio[1]

1. The most effective categories to describe the world in which the discipline and the rhetoric of *Anthropos* is enforced — he who watches from above and, at the same time, directs his gaze to the heights — are living and nonliving. In fact, the characteristic polarization of the discourse around the dichotomy inclusive/exclusive looks like a specific trait of *Homo sapiens*. He continues to grant himself the right to determine the future of the world — of his world —, and that of the entire planet — meaning all the worlds that are simultaneously on the inside and on the outside of the human one. This is why, aiming at the definition of the concept of life, Western thought has properly decided for the inside instead of the outside. The inside recalls the us and announces the community as well as it presupposes the 'I', thus imposing a transitive logic of reality that materializes a subject who acts, alongside objects that have to suffer. This dichotomy has produced a truly theological-political system: life, meaning that which lives, was already qualified by Aristotle's *On the Soul* as nutritive life, so that

> what has been separated and divided [...] is precisely what — in a sort of *divide et impera* — allows the construction of the unity of life as the hierarchical articulation of a series of functional faculties and oppositions.
>
> Agamben 2004: 14

Western reflection as a whole rests upon this insight: the excretory appropriation of the nutritive life and its incorporating decomposition inside categorial cages are aimed at preserving the incorruptibility of human bodies as much as they are a result of the *dispositif* — one of religion, culture, politics, economics, etc. — that reproduces the inside/outside

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[1] English translation by Irene Sottile and Francesco Di Maio. Whenever a quoted text was not available in English, the translation has to be considered theirs. For further information, see References (translator's note).

perspective, making it effective. That's the performativity which allows for the human to be established as the insurmountable limit between that which has to be (alive) and that which is not (alive). This pursues the *hypersticious* idea that states that animals, non-whites, women, homosexuals, migrants, trans people, clandestines, amongst others, are perceived as remains, unable to live life to the fullest, as they are non-conformed to that which would qualify them as worthy of life — they are not, thus they simply exist. This is, at least, paradoxical: it should be that the same idea of ex/sistence, as something that lies in between the outside and the inside, to free the living human from the chains of being and from its alienating ontological qualifications. The mystery of the separation of Man is always a byproduct of a division, of a rupture between the inside and the outside. And it is more urgent to

> ask in what way — within man — has man been separated from non-man, and the animal from the human, than it is to take positions on the great issues, on so-called human rights and values.
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> <div align="right">Agamben 2004: 16</div>

2. Giorgio Agamben has underlined, more than others, that inside and outside can openly merge in synonymity. The strict dichotomy, that the inside and the outside re/produce, leads to the absurd position that the Law is the one to subsume the inside and the outside through a mechanism of symbolic *impasse* that involves humanity in almost its entirety. Agamben reads Franz Kafka's *The Trial* through Jacques Derrida's reading *Before the Law* (1992). Facing the always opened doors of the Tribunal, one cannot move: how should I behave? Should I go inside the court in fear of being judged, or should I stay outside in fear of being banned?

> Kafka's legend presents the pure form in which law affirms itself with the greatest force precisely at the point in which it no longer prescribes anything — which is to say, as pure ban. The man from the country is delivered over to the potentiality of law because law demands nothing of him and commands nothing other than its own openness. According to the schema of the sovereign exception, law applies to him in no longer applying, and holds him in its ban in abandoning him outside itself. The open door destined only for him includes him in excluding him and excludes him in including him. And this is precisely the summit and the root of every law
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> <div align="right">Agamben 2017: 44</div>

In other words — and more so in the occurrence of permanent states of emergency, more frequent than ever in the contemporaneity, the time of the configuration of the oxymoronic condition that can be defined as a stable crisis —, one is both inside the community and outside of civilization, playing a semantic game that overthrows the meaning of the words: outside is to be excluded inside private spaces that make public spaces unavailable. And the other way around: inside is to be included outside in a public space that makes private spaces unavailable. As Agamben said: the Law *enforces* but does not *signify* (Agamben 2017: 44).

3. If poststructuralism has downsized the figure of the human Subject and can take credit for the deconstruction of the assiologies that favour the oppressive chorus 'I think… I am', posthumanism has unmasked the anthropocentric drive towards the separation of every other alterity beyond the category of Man. This way, posthumanism represents the paradigm of a crisis (yet another one!) of identity processes which never stopped to dichotomize reality, splitting culture from nature, the world from the planet, the animal from the man, the man from the machine, the dis/organic inside from the organized outside, the entrails from the excrements… Inside and outside form a machinery that invisibly governs every binary opposition, such as the human/animal one that lays underneath anthropocentrism (which retroactively supports the dichotomy back) as a machine that includes excluding (evacuation) and, at the same time, excludes including (feeding).

Humanism is still today a way to come closer, or to get away from, every-thing that is thought/perceived as out/law[2]. The inside is significant only as far as it continues to interest the inner as a characteristic of the sublime of the human soul (or psyche, or feeling, or conscience…). Likewise, the outside inherits dignity solely if proportioned to the *corpus Domini*, which supports an idea of organization of the world that cannot exempt the human-as-measure-of-everything, an arrangement that

> functions by transposing a specific mode of being human into a generalized standard, which acquires transcendent values as *the* human: from male to masculine and onto human as the universalized format of humanity. This standard is posited as categorically and qualitatively distinct from the sexualized, racialized, naturalized others and also in

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[2] Both in the sense of *bandit* and that of *out of the law* (translator's note).

opposition to the technological artefact. The human is a historical construct that became a social convention about 'human nature'.

<div align="right">Braidotti 2013: 26</div>

Because of this, posthuman *theorypraxis* shifted its focus onto the politics of hybrid bodies — bodies that become more disorganic as they are dis/organized by those same computational, genetic, cyber technologies that taint and corrupt the so-called integrity/impermeability of the (human) species. The unceasing thrust towards externalization of the human property, that which is proper to Man (internal or inside), has reached the threshold of upheaval of the 'balance between internal and external on which it was based until now' (Caronia 2020: 181).

Thus, technological breakthroughs truly represent an attack towards anthropocentric politics, as they jeopardize the performative link inside-outside. Digital technology is, in short, menacing the 'fragile interiority of Western man' (Caronia 2020: 184). In fact, it is the logic of algorithms that makes a scatter of the human body, lost as it is in integrated electronic systems, in silicon chips, in digital platforms that produce fascinating as well as creepy wireless effects. Precisely because of those the psychic and physical reality, *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, come together in an extremely blurred space of indistinction.

> Our interiority is being transformed at a very fast pace, in the most radical way possible: it loses its uniqueness, it becomes comparable to that of the machine. Because television and computers, by opening their shells, have also opened ours, burning our old circuits and making new ones grow. And we opened theirs, believing we would find cathode ray tubes and printed circuits, and discovering instead with surprise that there was a whole world, that we too were there, tiny little ones, with laws of operation, relationships, senses, a new body.

<div align="right">Caronia 2020: 184</div>

The poetics of the new flesh is becoming the reality in which we are relentlessly involved as a new *zōē*. The body does not represent anymore the border between the psychic/physical I, one to protect and preserve, and the Other, at the very best one to contemplate, and at the very worst one to exploit. The body is now a *dispositif* that can change and adapt to genetic engineering and artificial intelligence technologies.

And so, a new organism. A new organism that, following Antonin Artaud, is a signifying surface. The new flesh is a rebellious body, bare naked and crucified, that same body foretold by the 90s performative arts amongst others: Stelarc and ORLAN's blood and fluids that hand over the inside/entire[3] humanity to the externality (extern or outside) of death, putrefaction, and sickness. Deep into Irma's jaws, those in-organic jaws that pulse in Sigmund Freud's un-ground dream, in which is fulfilled, according to Jacques Lacan, the 'horrendous discovery' of 'the flesh one never sees', of 'the flesh in as much as it is suffering, is formless' (Lacan 1998: 154), of the outside which is always already inside and of the inside which is always already outside.

The new flesh absorbs technology — it literally swallows it up just like the VHS in the most famous scene from *Videodrome*, a 1983 film directed by David Cronenberg, — as well as it is itself absorbed/devoured by technology. The new flesh is a metaphorical blob of inside and outside: 'the brain and mind are the places where control techniques are tested' (Miglietti 1997: 20). Neuropharmacology and nanotechnologies of the mind are able to reshape human's logistics perception, taking the burning dichotomy inside/outside to its acme and, at the same time, to its implosion. It is not surprising that, since the dawn of time, *pharmakon* has included the sense of both remedy (outside that flows inside) and poison (inside that succumbs to the outside).

4. Metamorphism is intrinsic to human nature and the inside/outside *dispositif* works to lessen the dread of death. Since its beginnings, in the process of identifying himself with other animals, the human has undertaken a path in which his own sur/vival[4] qualifies his own history. The ancestral human who admired the animal out there, as it had extraordinary abilities to stand together and to face the open[5]. And then, the outside of animality, swallowed whole and expelled, has slowly but surely turned into the inside of humanity, throughout myths and rituals. As Arnold Gehlen argues, the biological paradoxicality of the human consists of his bizarre and yet stubborn ability to modify his ambiental surroundings, instead of simply adapting to

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[3] The Italian *inter(n)a* is a portmanteau, colliding both the meaning of *interna* (en. 'internal') and *intera* (en. 'entire') (translator's note).

[4] The hyphenation underlines the prefix *sur-*, from the latin *supra*, lett. 'upon', emphasizes that 'surviving' means always to live at the expenses of someone or something else (translator's note).

[5] It.: *far fronte e star di fronte*; the Italian hendiadys means both standing before something and building up a united front before it (translator's note).

them. Then, once the only God of monotheistic religions is conceived, 'the internal and external conditions of existence change accordingly' and the faith in one's own image, after one's own likeness, marks a major breakthrough (Gehlen 1986: 24).

The pack[6] 'whose fiercest wish is *to be more*' and that characterizes the human 'primitive' communities, imitates the social organization of wolves' packs (Canetti 1984: 93). And the pack, according to Elias Canetti, can be inside or outside. The outside one works on the surroundings (outside) with hunting and war; the inside one benefits from rituals that aim at the maintenance of the communitarian integrity (inside). In both cases, the human that changes [it. *muta*] by means of the pack [it. *la muta*][7] into civilisation, as it makes ludicrous the dimensions of a school of fish, of a buffalo herd, of a flock of birds, of a swarm of insects, it expels death by including it as sacrifice of those same animals he meant to imitate.

5. The gesture of grasping and incorporating — that is bringing in the outside and out the inside — regulates our relationship to the world. An archifossil of a gesture, the snachting[8] relates the inside to the outside, organizing the political body of power. According to Canetti, the hand that grabs the food to bring it to the mouth expresses both the proximity with the animal and the heterotrophic (non)relationship with the environment. But it was already since the Paleolithic that the prey was not only food but also a victim. In short: flesh becoming meat, part of a whole from which the human being has placed himself outside as he was inventing his own inside.

The distinction between inside and outside that pervades the ethics of horror, associated with the (self-)necrophagic and (self-)cannibalistic practices of the earliest human communities, takes on its ceremonial meaning over time, in which the mutual esteem of those who eat together 'also means that they will not eat each other' (Canetti 1984: 220). In this long-running process, however, one does not stop incorporating the excluded other. The ethics of horror is replaced by the ethics of the obscene, which operates through mechanisms of animalization that put the other so far *out* of scene that he becomes an invisible part of the (hetero-

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[6] It.: *muta*; the Italian signifier both entails the meaning of 'the pack' and that of 'molt' (translator's note).

[7] See n. 6 (translator's note).

[8] The Italian *mano/mettere*, lett. 'mess with', raises a sematic consideration about the fundamentality of the hand in the process of *hand*ling something. It is used to both say that we handle something, but also mess with it (translator's note).

)necrophagic and (hetero-)cannibalistic practices of the inside. With a similar gesture, synchronous in its diachronicity, animals are animalized and the domination of man over man is realized through uninterrupted processes of animalization.

6. The human experience is marked by the internal/external dichotomy that never ceases to oppose the soul to the body, even more so today, when, in the name of security — any form of security — we witness the asphyxiating dematerialization of our animal embodiment. Michel Foucault imagined a place where the Subject could finally dissolve, not disappear, in an existential plot capable of cancelling the distance between internal consciousness and external experience:

> a thought that, in relation to the interiority of our philosophical reflection and the positivity of our knowledge, constitutes what in a word we might call 'the thought from the outside'.
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> Foucault 1987: 16

And it is Artaud, according to the French philosopher, who constitutes one of the possible thresholds through which to access this thought, the external treasure locked in the casket of human interiority. It is with Artaud, in fact, that 'all of discursive language is constrained to come undone in the violence of the body and the cry', it is with him that 'thought, forsaking the wordy interiority of consciousness, becomes a material energy, the suffering of the flesh, the persecution and rending of the subject itself', 'the discourse of the limit, of ruptured subjectivity, transgression' (Foucault 1987: 18).

Could it be then that, by disorienting public and artist, the dimension of performativity is what allows for a deterritorialization of public and private spaces, interweaving in an indissoluble knot — once again, but in a completely different sense — the interior and the exterior, the inside and the outside?

7. As much as reality has been augmented by the new technical *dispositives* — or perhaps precisely because of this — it is increasingly difficult to discern the true from the false, the psychic reality from the material one, nature from culture... If the interpretation of the world still relies on the traditional theological-political categories regulated by and yet regulating the inside/outside dynamic, the human being is more and more scattered in interstitial, liminal,

metastable spaces where, in the indistinction between inside and outside, new ontologies and new existences are produced: 'to have one's brain out of the head and to feel the nerves on the edge of one's skin' (Caronia 1985: 38)[9].

Thus, more than by the human/machine hybridization — which remains relegated to the apocalyptic/integrated imaginary of science fiction —, the cyborg is regulated by the continuous passing, as along a Möbius strip, of the inside into the outside and vice versa, and then again and again, always starting all over again. The subject-cyborg never stops regenerating itself, fragmenting into multiple ontological rivulets and disappearing into the plurality of worlds. From this perspective, Debordian psychogeography is not a dream, nor a drift of imagination. If analyzed with more historical recklessness and less political orthodoxy, it turns out to be rather a concrete possibility for other subjectivations[10].

If the old world is already dead, since it is no longer possible to distinguish what is inside it from what is outside — this is what death does, every death, all deaths —, the world identical to itself that proper of the capitalist mean of re/production continues to weigh, both inside and outside, on our consciences (inside) and on our existences (outside). For this reason, as opposed to the deadly logic of mere sur/vival [it. *sopra/vivenza*], the anthropological mutation to come will have to commit itself politically to *outkill* — and not, as it is now, to increase — the wisdom of the human species. To accept the extraneity of the inside and the intimacy of the outside to which animal thought leads us or, if you prefer, untangling the (Borromean?) knot, the animality of thought, the thought of animality, and the thinking animal.

8. In *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, 1956 film directed by Don Siegel, the danger, brought by an evil alien race capable of replacing humans by reproducing their physiognomy in perfect copies, is represented as a threat brought from outside to inside the body of the nation. Apart from the sociological dimension of this work, one that places it in the paranoid vein of that reactionary American science fiction emerged from the post-war period, in which the enemy was identified with communism, focusing instead on the importance of the beholder's experience, we can extrapolate some characteristics that highlight the role played by the

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[9] It.: *avere i nervi a fior di pelle* means to be on edge. A literal translation is here suggested to underline that such an inward element of the body, namely the nerves, surfaces on the skin, making it more sensible to the outside (translator's note).

[10] It.: *soggettivazioni altre*: the Italian syntax allows for a particular rection that implies that those *other* subjectivations are radically different and new (translator's note).

internal/external machine on institutional and representative *dispositives*, on the bases and superstructures through which the exercise of power and the production of consensus are articulated. If this machine is, in fact, central to the production of the categories that dichotomize the world, discriminating the entire non-human (non)living, internal and external are also essential to establish what the human can or cannot see.

Cinema, as it is well known, is structured by the dialectic (on)camera/off camera[11]. In this sense, Hollywood is exemplary, since its enterprise of reconstructing the world leaves nothing to chance: the staging of reality must be subject to precise narrative and formal rules, such as the logical consequentiality, the absolute transparency of images, the objectivity of the camera, the diffused light without contrasts, the depth of field that subsumes all the shot plans in a single shot... All this is fundamental for the construction of the cinematographic image as a set of thresholds that arranges what we can see (inside/there) or cannot see (outside/gone). The cinematographic shot therefore becomes the only conceivable moving image, while the inconceivable is confined to the off camera or, so to say, all that which, although inside, is not considered worthy of vision, that which must remain off-screen, which is to say the obscene.

The power relationships between the cinematic (on) camera and off camera can be called into question to represent the (non)relation between public and private space. The private and privatized space of profit (the inside) seems to have definitively conquered the public space (the outside) of free and eventemential relations. In the name of security, public spaces, which should guide the life of the city, have been reduced to abnormal commercial enclaves. The capillary control of squares and streets, which innervate the emotional and affective map of the city, is delegated by institutions to commercial establishments which, with their labels[12], transform the labelling of sociality into un/controlled[13] and ex/orbitant compulsive consumption. Thus, the inside of private spaces — intended as a personal data guarantor and as a social performance enterprise — has to be displayed outside, in the public space. It is as if we were to carry our house along with us, showing off the furniture and, if necessary, putting it up for sale in a process of economization of the *bios* that reminds us, even etymologically,

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[11] The Italian *dentro campo/fuori campo*, lett. on-field/off-field, underlines how the shot decides on what is inside the shot and what is left out, cutting the pro-filmic elements. In this sense, this semantic comes back in the whole paragraph (translator's note).

[12] It.: *marche¸* carrying both the meaning of brands and that of marking (translator's note).

[13] The Italian *in/controllato* recalls both the sense of out of control and that of being inside control itself (translator's note).

of that very home management. This reminder is so much relevant that, on the other side of the strip, squares and streets are called to a reproduction of the structural architecture, an aesthetical and emotional one of interior design of the private residence.

If public space has to do with the ecology of feelings that, sending Guy Debord adrift, we could define it as the result of the relationship between the natural/cultural dimension of space and the political dimension of human making, and if the norms of coexistence delegated by the state to private practice re-territorialize the urban landscape into a mere logistical hub of commercial exchange, then the only way to deterritorialize the dichotomy private space/public space (another way of saying, it should be clear by now, interior/exterior or inside/outside) might be the constitution of unprecedented forms of public property — of inappropriate and expropriating property. And so, following Deleuze's footsteps, the city could become a place of circulation of affects and a space in which concepts and percepts can operate, a bit like the cinema of the Image-Time, another cinema, a cinema of the other, that never ceases to interweave inside and outside, that never stops trying to outline a climatology of the metastability of animal (desire).

9. Isn't this improper desiring metastability what innervates, invisible as it is always in sight, what has been considered the proper of the human? What is language if not the inside that we speak and the outside that speaks (to) us? What is the tool if not the mutual touching (from grazing to striking) of the inside with the outside, and vice versa? And what about politics? What about morality? What about reproduction? And, to paraphrase Derrida when he speaks of that (non)living thing to which we have given the name of Animal: death, laughter and weeping, mourning, boredom, lying, forgiveness, singing, playing, hospitality, gift and offering, modesty and the mirror?

And, moving on to other scales: what are hypobjects, such as DNA and cells, or hyperobjects, such as global warming and the pandemic, if not inextricable mixtures of inside and outside? What about the natural history of evolution? What about quanta and the Big Bang? And again: where does the living go when it sleeps and when it dreams, in lethargy and ecstasy, in boredom and orgasm, if not into a somnambulistic space where the inside and the outside, the inner and the outer, never stop exchanging places? And then, just before falling asleep or just after waking up, in the drowsiness of clear and distinct consciousness, shielding oneself behind a modest reel (using it as a screen?), companion, no doubt, of the shape-shifter Odradek — the

cares of a Family Man (and of Mother Nature!) — the grandson weaves for his grandfather the plot of the shortest, the most ancestral and the most powerful speculative fabula, one that, even though it implies the spatial distinction inside/outside, replaces it with the duration of a suspended time — two words only and a scroll bar that slides like a Möbius strip: Fort/Da.

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