Editorial

From Postmodernism to Posthumanism: Theorizing Ethos in an Age of Pandemic

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Abstract: This essay expands on the previous discussion, "Positioning Ethos" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018), which outlined a theory of ethos for the 21st century. There, my coauthor and I observed the dialectic between ethics and ethotics, grounding subjectivity within a sociology of rhetoric: Contemporary ethos, thus, explores the physical embodiment (with its "markers of identity"), positionality, and "cultural dress" of speakers. There as here, we looked to Heidegger for an expanded definition, one reaching beyond a speaker's self-image to bring all aspects of our lifeworld—cultural, technological, biological, planetary—into a dynamic unity. And, there as here, we observed the dialectic between speaker and audience: Within this transactional model, ethos marks the "space between" speaker and audience—a socially- and linguistically-constructed meeting ground (or, perhaps better, playground) where meanings can be negotiated. Crucial to this transactional model is the *skeptron*, as described by Bourdieu: To possess the *skeptron* is to claim the cultural authority, expertise, trust, and means to speak and to be heard—indeed, *to be seen*—in one's speaking. To our previous essay's ethics and ethotics, this present essay adds the dialectic arising between *bios* and *technê*. We "dwell" in memory, in language, in history, in culture: All speakers in all cultural moments can claim as much. But, writing in an age of postmodernism, we acknowledge the heightened roles of technology, "expert systems," and urbanization in our lifeworld today. What we had described as the cultural "habitus" of ethos is here supplemented by an ethos of scientific technoculture; similarly, what we had described as the existentialist "embodied self" is here supplemented by the postmodern—indeed, posthuman—ethos of the cyborg, a biotechnic "assemblage" part cybernetic machine and part living organism, simultaneously personal and collective in identity. This posthuman con/fusion of *bios* and *technê* is not a transcendence of (human) nature; rather, it acknowledges our immersion within an interspecies biology while expanding our habitus from the *polis* to the planet. It's *these* aspects of our lifeworld—insterspecies biology, bodily health as self-identity, postmodern technology, and urban lifestyle—that COVID-19 pressures and threatens today. In the current struggle between science-based medicine and conservative politics, the *skeptron* assumes life-and-death importance: Who speaks on behalf of medical science, the coronavirus victim, and community health?

Keywords: actant; cyborg; COVID-19; deep ecology; ethos; habitus; pandemic; posthumanism; postmodernism; *skeptron*; technoculture; Braidotti; Bourdieu; Haraway; Heidegger; Latour

1. Introduction

> I live at the tail end of bio-power, that is to say amidst the relentless necro-political consumption of all that lives. I am committed to starting from this, not from a nostalgic re-invention of an all-inclusive transcendental model, a romanticized margin or some holistic ideal. I want to think from here and now, . . . from missing seeds and dying species. But also, simultaneously and without contradiction, from the staggering, unexpected and relentlessly generative ways in which life, as *bios* and as *zoe*, keeps on fighting back.
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> —Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Braidotti 2013, pp. 194–95)

> But should we in turn wish to "look into the future" and form an image of what it will be, there is one childish error we must avoid: *to base the man of the future on what we are now*, simply granting him a greater quantity of mechanical means and appliances.
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> —Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* (Lefebvre 2014, p. 246; emphasis added)

> It is not absurd to suppose that the extermination of man begins with the extermination of man's germs. One has only to consider the human being himself, complete with his emotions, his passions, his laughter, his sex and his secretions, to conclude that man is nothing but a dirty little germ—an irrational virus marring a universe of transparency.
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> —Jean Baudrillard, "Prophylaxis and Virulence" (Baudrillard 2000, p. 34)

In "Positioning Ethos in/for the Twenty-First Century"—intended to introduce the *Humanities* special issue, *Histories of Ethos*—my co-author and I surveyed the "current state of theory" on ethos while seeking "to predict, and promote, discursive practices that will carry ethos into a hopeful future" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, "Positioning," p. 1). As we noted back then, *we live in an age of ethos*, wherein "issues of 'trust,' expertise, and 'charismatic authority' have largely supplanted Enlightenment logos or 'good reasons' as the ground of popular discourse" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, "Positioning," p. 3).[1] A mere two years have passed, but much has changed socially, politically, economically, ecologically—and not just in the United States but globally, though the U.S. has become the world's "leader" in COVID-19 infection-rates and death-rates, with little respite in sight. The "hopeful future" that we had called for has erupted into a full-blown crisis of ethos: that is, a crisis of (political) "trust" *vs.* (scientific) "expertise" in combatting pandemic. A deepening partisan divide, the intensifying "culture wars" (enflamed by nationalist "identity politics"), the obfuscation of "fake news," a U.S. president's discounting of science in policymaking and, most crucial at this time, an administration's *refusal to let its scientists speak* has put the American people into a state of panic, paralysis, and confusion.

We offer this present essay as a bookend-epilogue to "Positioning Ethos," focusing on themes that our prior essay had merely hinted at. Increasingly urbanized, the postmodern lifeworld is marked by speed in travel/communication within "built space" (that is, as reassembled architectural, cultural, and technological "dwelling places"). We take habitus, thus, to include the totality of the lifeworld. Here as before, we assert the moral agency of "the speaking subject," which we defined existentially as an embodied consciousness clothed in culture and "made visible" in language (specifically, within the structures of narrative). At the same time, we acknowledge arguments for a "decentered" and "dispersed" ethos, since "the speaking subject" cannot be separated from the structures of biological-terrestrial life and increasingly urbanized technoculture.

Our task in this epilogue to extend our habitus beyond the borders described in "Positioning Ethos," highlighting components of the lifeworld that Enlightenment humanism has placed *outside of ethos*: specifically, the realms of zoological nature and machine technology. The cogency of arguments for the humanimal and the cyborg lead us to invite these posthuman *ethoi* into an expanded conversation over the futures of ethos in/for the 21st century.

The human habitus cannot be reduced to psychology, sociology, and language (narrative specifically). To the extent that ethos defines our "dwelling places" (as reflected in the Latin *habitus*), we need to acknowledge the "where" and the "how" and the "with whom" of our dwelling. We remain committed to the Foucauldian "care of self," but carry that commitment into the realms of biology, ecology, and technoculture. It's not the surge in "identity politics" across conservative swaths of the United States and Europe that occasions this piece; rather, it's the surge of the novel coronavirus and the crisis that it places on our identities—not just as individuals, but as a species. More emphatically than ever, we bind ethos to an "ethic of care" attentive to the needs of both self and other, conjoined.

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[1] Though I'll occasionally write in first-person singular, this essay continues my intellectual collaboration with Craig A. Meyer. I write on his behalf: hence the "we" of this essay.

A thesis of this essay is that ethos continues to evolve, emerging from postmodernism into something else: For the nonce, we'll call that something else posthumanism. Such a claim does not invalidate the existential premises of our previous essay; it does suggest that the dominant practices today in the "care of self" ought to be read in the context of emerging cultural-historical forces, particularly in technoscience. The lifeworld as described in our previous essay looked to the Heideggerian *Geviert*, the "fourfold" of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities. In a posthumanist lifeworld, the "fourfold" expands in its (ecological) meanings and (technological) application.

Zoos and *bios* conjoined: Such is the posthuman ethos, which invokes the biological/ecological community of "companion species" that compose our lifeworld, *without which we cannot exist*. The COVID-19 viral presence, though invasive in our world, changes our self-perception: no longer a single macro-organism, we are in fact an "assemblage" of microorganisms, upon which life depends absolutely. We are at war with a powerful string of genetic *information*—a piece of biological coding that our own human species has never met—hence the "novel" in the name, novel coronavirus. Its sudden emergence and onslaught compels us to look more closely at segments of the lifeworld that our previous discussion had largely ignored. Whereas our previous discussion acknowledged the ethotic realms of the social, existential, and linguistic, this present essay looks to biological nature and to posthumanist technoculture—realms that, increasingly, condition our lifeworld.

Over the space of months, our lifeworld and lifestyles have been radically disrupted, perhaps to the point of redefining them (*and us* along with them), inuring us to something we'll eventually learn to call "the new normal." Under such circumstances, it would be naïve to think that ethos, both in theory and in praxis, remains unaffected. Even as the U.S. government founders, we observe the daily news cycle and its coverage of the war between science—medical technology specifically—and "avenging nature." COVID-19 occasions this revisiting of our prior essay. Contemporary philosophy (particularly the philosophy of science) and posthumanist ecology have already anticipated the effects of pandemic upon our lifeworld and, hence, upon our deployments of ethos. Following a brief summary of our initial argument, I outline the ecological and technological implications of ethos "in an age of pandemic." For our sudden confrontation with COVID-19 compels us to rethink our very humanness in terms of posthumanist technoculture. Having "co-evolved with technology and other life forms" (Nayar 2014, *Posthumanism*, p. 72), the human body is coming to be seen, not as structure, but as process.[2] And whereas ethos is culturally situated or "positioned" in postmodernism, the posthumanist ethos is "decentered"—alternatively augmented through biotechnology and dispersed within an interspecies biology. Before turning to the viral impact upon our habitus,[3] we must survey these fields. (Even in the midst of plague, scholarship proceeds.) And I must beg the reader's indulgence, given the circuitous paths of the analysis following. I trust that, in the end, the essay's twists and turns will converge.

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[2]　As Pramod K. Nayar notes, the posthuman "is discussed as a process of becoming through new connections and mergers between species, bodies, functions and technologies" (Nayar 2014, *Posthumanism*, pp. 30–31). Along with our interspecies co-evolution, posthumanist theory sees the human as "symbiotic with" other species. As Nayar writes, "We are companion species with numerous other species, most of which we are unaware of. Posthumanism argues a case for companion species, for multispecies citizenship" (Nayar 2014, *Posthumanism*, p. 126).

[3]　As Pierre Bourdieu deploys the term, habitus describes "a socialized subjectivity" and "the social embodied" (Maton 2014, "Habitus," pp. 52–53):

> [I]t is, in other words, internalized structure, the objective made subjective. It is also how the personal comes to play a role in the social—the dispositions of the habitus underlie our actions that in turn contribute to social structures. Habitus thereby brings together both objective social structure and subjective personal experiences, expressing, as Bourdieu put it, "the dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality." (Maton 2014, "Habitus," pp. 52–53)

> Considerations of biology and ecology must surely complicate this dialectic. As Rosi Braidotti writes, "Becoming-posthuman consequently is a process of redefining one's sense of attachment and connection to a shared world, a territorial space: urban, social, psychic, ecological, planetary as it may be" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 193).

2. From ἦθος to ἤθεα: Character and/as "Dwelling"

> We begin with a working definition provided by Jim W. Corder (1929–1998). Ethos, Corder writes, is "character as it emerges in language" (Corder 1978, "Varieties," p. 2). By "character," we assume both personhood and persona—that is, the self's expressive self-identity as well as its social presentation or mask. There is a double movement, both inward and outward, in this term, which introjects how one "sees" oneself, as well as projects how one "is seen" by others. One hopes for sincerity, authenticity, and self-consistency in this doubled, inside/ outside "showing-forth" of character. When inside and outside match, one can speak of ethos as self-revelation: "What you see is what you get." But there can be a slippage or disjunction between the person and persona—again, between the inner and the outer versions of self. In that case, one can speak of ethos as performance. To this inside/outside dialectic, let us add considerations of culture. Character "emerges," but does so within a distinctive "cultural dress," one that presents itself—in effect, "clothes itself"—within markers of identity/difference (ethnicity, gender, social status, regional accent, etc.). Michel Foucault (1926–1984) gives the Athenian ethos as illustration: "Ethos was the deportment and the way to behave. It was the subject's mode of being and *a certain manner of acting visible to others*. One's ethos was seen by his dress, by his bearing, by his gait, by the poise with which he reacts to events, etc." (Foucault 1988, "Ethic of Care," p. 6; emphasis added). Ethos, in this sense, displays cultural "markers," such that the speaker's task is "to open a space" through language that allows the self to be heard and, saliently, *to be seen*.
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> —James S. Baumlin and Craig A. Meyer,
> "Positioning Ethos"(Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 6)

We have not changed our minds. As described in the epigraph above, the binary between an existentialist ethos-as-revealed and a social-constructionist ethos-as performed still holds. Along with a speaker's projected self-image and "cultural dress," ethos identifies the ritualized *modes of address* "that confer authority upon those who would 'speak on behalf' of some group—some institution, organization, party, or class interest" (Baumlin and Meyer, "Positioning," p. 7).[4] Ours remains a transactional model, treating ethos as a dialectic engaging speakers and audiences conjointly.[5] And we embrace the expansion of classical-Aristotelian ethos as outlined by Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) in his "Letter on Humanism" (1949)—the subject to which we now turn.

Within the Aristotelian ἦθος or ethos-as-character, Heidegger uncovers the more primal, Heraclitean ἤθεα or ethos-as-dwelling place:

> The saying of Heraclitus (Fragment 119) goes: ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων. This is usually translated, "A man's character is his daimon." This translation thinks in a modern way, not a Greek one. ἦθος means abode, dwelling place. The word names the open region in which

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[4] For "groups need representation," notes Karl Maton, "since they cannot speak *as a group*. They therefore invest their moral authority in … individuals who, *thus consecrated*, are the voice 'of the people'—a claim to which they give tacit assent" (Maton 2014, "Habitus," p. 56; emphasis added).

[5] Ethos, as Karen Burke LeFevre writes, "appears in that socially created space, in the 'between,' the point of intersection between speaker or writer and listener or reader" (LeFevre 1987, *Invention*, p. 46). Susan C. Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds elaborate:

> [T]he rhetorical practice of *êthos* marks the position of the self, to the admittedly limited extent that it can be articulated by the author, making no claim that this speaking self is completely known or stable. Appearing "in that socially constructed space, in the "between," the point of intersection between speaker or writer and listener or reader" [LeFevre 1987, *Invention*, pp. 45–46], *êthos* is the admission of a standpoint, with the understanding that other standpoints exist and that they change over time. (Jarratt and Reynolds 1994, "Splitting Image," p. 53)

the human being dwells. The open region of his abode allows what pertains to the essence of the human being ... to appear. (Heidegger 1998, "Letter," p. 269)

Heidegger's translation is "modern," presumably, in that invokes human being "as an embodied existence in-the-world, and not as an abstraction belonging to metaphysics" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, "Positioning," p. 13). As *Dasein* or Being-in-the-world (Heideggerian terms for our humanness), we are called to bear witness to the Truth of Being and to dwell within that space wherein our humanness finds itself "thrown." Into this unified lifeworld—the Heideggerian *Geviert* or "fourfold" of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities—"we are called by conscience to serve the world as witness, companion, and caretaker" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, "Positioning," p. 13). As we go on to note,

> The Heideggerian model appeals to us for many reasons, not least of which is the ethical claims that it makes upon the speaker. One speaks not simply to declare one's "dwelling place," nor simply to share that dwelling, but also *to care* for it. Situated within a self/other dialectic, the act of self-expression becomes an invitation *to dwell with* others, "to open a space," by means of language, where self and other "can dwell and feel at home" (Hyde 2004, "Introduction," p. xxi). It is an invitation to hospitality.
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> As an expansion upon Aristotelian *eunoia*, it's the Heideggerian attitude of caring that leads us into a new "New Rhetoric," one suited to the pluralist, post-Enlightenment, multiculturalist discourse of our age.[6] (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, "Positioning," p. 14)

Concomitantly, we note Heidegger's failure to acknowledge cultural difference and the "positionality" or situatedness inherent in rhetoric. Though his discussion continues to serve ethos theory, it does so through misprision: that is, through a critical misreading (unconscious in many cases) and misapplication of his work. For Heidegger, the ethos-as-dwelling is *Being*, as opposed to the "beings" that constitute nations, ethnicities, classes, and cultures. This theme repeats itself in our later discussions of ethos in ecology and technoscience: We begin with Heidegger but must reach beyond him to articulate models of ethos adequate to the 21st century.

3. From ἤθεα to Γαῖα: Planetary Ethos and/as "Dwelling-Together"

> In this introduction to *Histories of Ethos*, we have made a series of claims that individual essays will put to the test. Some will explore the "cultural dress," some the "modes of address," by means of which individuals situate themselves within communities in place and time. Competing versions of ethos, both in theory and in praxis, will be applied. The role of narrative in identity-formation—both individually and culturally—will be a recurring motif. And, while individual essays might explore only a portion of the spacious field of ethos within any culture at any time, we assume that any claim regarding ethos can be

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6   A quick primer may be in order. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle outlines three *pisteis* or modes of "artistic proof" (1.2.2.), these being logos (an offering of "good reasons"), pathos (an appeal to an audience's emotions), and ethos (an appeal for an audience's trust). Ethos itself consists of three components, as Aristotle observes: these are "practical wisdom [*phronesis*] and virtue [*arete*] and goodwill [*eunoia*]; for speakers make mistakes in what they say or advise through [failure to exhibit] either all or one of these .... Therefore, a person seeming to have all these qualities is necessarily persuasive to the hearers" (Aristotle 1991, *Rhetoric* 2.5.7; 1378a). Following the transactional model outlined in "Positioning Ethos," we note the intersection of these terms:

   In fact, *phronesis* refers to the logos-aspect of ethos, *eunoia* to the pathos-aspect, and arete to ethos or "moral character" per se. We can add that logos—"rational appeal" or the use of "good reasons"—originates with/in the rhetor, though audiences are left to judge its claims and to respond accordingly. And whereas pathos—an appeal to the audience's *pathe* or emotions—is raised by means of a rhetor's appeals, it's with/in the audience that hope or fear or outrage or desire is raised. In this sense, the Aristotelian logos "belongs to" the rhetor and is judged by the audience, while pathos "belongs to" the audience and is elicited by the rhetor. In contrast, ethos "lies between" the speaker and audience: belonging to neither wholly, the rhetor's ethos is built out of a speaker-audience interaction. (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, "Positioning," p. 10)

turned, dialectically, into its "enabling other." No premise or claim has been banished or disallowed from this collection. Hence, we affirm that ethos can be revealed *or* constructed; that it can pre-exist a speaker's discourse *or* be produced within (or by means of) discourse; that it can ally itself with, *or* it can subvert, logos or pathos. If it can heal and liberate, surely it can be used to harm. Self necessarily posits an other; identity implies difference. Narratives can be "fixed" within a culture's folk pathways and traditions; but these can also be revisited, reinterpreted, reshaped, retold. Ethos can be carried into new regions. With smart technologies, ethos enters the realm of the artificially-intelligent nonhuman—the cyborg. Even the "deep ecology" movement posits a "planetary ethos."

—James S. Baumlin and Craig A. Meyer,
"Positioning Ethos"(Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 21)

I take the passage above from the conclusion of our previous essay, to show that its endpoint marks the current essay's starting point. As with our prior discussion of ethos-as-haunt, we begin with Heidegger, whose description of technology has deep implications for ecology. His essay, "The Question Concerning Technology" (1954), "defined the field for many years" (Kaplan 2009, *Readings*, p. 2), though the "field" Kaplan cites—the philosophy of science—continues to evolve in ways only partially anticipated by Heidegger.

True to his phenomenology, Heidegger treats technology as a mode of *poiesis*, a means of revealing the Truth of Being.[7] He writes, "We ask the question concerning technology when we ask what it is. Everyone knows the two statements that answer our question. One says: Technology is a means to an end. The other says: Technology is a human activity. The two definitions of technology belong together" (Heidegger 2009, "Question," p. 9). Heidegger elaborates:

> We are questioning concerning technology, and we have arrived now at *alētheia*, at revealing. What has the essence of technology to do with revealing? The answer: everything. For every bringing-forth is grounded in revealing . . . . Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, that is, of truth. (Heidegger 2009, "Question," p. 12)

But this "realm of revealing" is active upon and transformative of material nature:

> The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth. That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew. Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing. But the revealing never simply comes to an end. (Heidegger 2009, "Question," p. 14)

With this last assertion, Heidegger works toward one of the more problematic of his terms, that of nature as *Bestand* or "standing-reserve." For nature—the "stuff" that technology works upon in "unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching"—is a generalized energy held "in reserve," though meant for unleashing and use: "Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve" (Heidegger 2009, "Question," p. 14).

Written in the postwar years after Hiroshima, Heidegger's essay informed the dialectic between ecology and technology that continues to this day. Indeed, the terms invoke each other (much as,

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[7]   As we shall see, this revealing (or "bringing into presence") is the aim and central activity of Heideggerian phenomenology: It is an *alētheia* or "unconcealment" of Being within the space of language.

in the human realm, "the individual" invokes "the social," and *vice versa*). The material products of technology-as-making (*poiesis*) are shaped from the "stuff" of biological and chemical nature; in return, technology works on that same "stuff," releasing the energy that had been held in "standing-reserve." And what of humanity? As a biological species belonging to nature, are we not subject to this same "setting-upon"? "Even humans," David M. Kaplan notes, "the supposed masters of technology, are challenged and ordered into standing-reserve as 'human resources'" (Kaplan 2009, *Readings*, p. 2).[8] Taking our cue from Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), we resist Heidegger's "technological rationality" as a mode of political control capable of "colonizing everyday life, robbing individuals of freedom and individuality by imposing technological imperatives, rules, and structures upon their thought and behavior" (Marcuse 1991, "Introduction," Kindle location 93).[9] But we're not through with Heidegger; rather, we turn to his earlier lecture, "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1951). Though lesser known than his "Question Concerning Technology," the two ought to be read dialogically, in that the former claims to conserve what the latter would consume.

"We do not dwell because we have built," Heidegger declares, "but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are *dwellers*" (Heidegger 1978, "Building," p. 326; emphasis in original). "But in what," he goes on to ask, "does the essence of dwelling consist?" (p. 326). As is so often the case, Heidegger develops his answer etymologically: "The old Saxon *wuon* . . . mean[s] to remain, to stay in a place. But the Gothic *wunian* says more distinctly how this remaining is experienced. *Wunian* means to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace. The word for peace, *Friede*, means the free, das *Frye*; and *fry* means preserved from harm and . . . safeguarded" (Heidegger 1978, "Building," pp. 326–27). Heidegger continues:

> To free actually means to spare . . . . [Sparing] takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own essence, when we return it specifically to its essential being, when we "free" it in the proper sense of the word into a preserve of peace. To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence. *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing*. (Heidegger 1978, "Building," pp. 326–27; emphasis in original)

Over-against Heideggerian *Bestand* is this stress upon *schonen* or "sparing," with its implicit commitment to ecology. "The basic character of dwelling," says Heidegger, "is to spare, to preserve. Mortals dwell in the way they preserve the fourfold in its essential being, its presencing . . . . Mortals dwell in that they save the earth . . . . To save the earth is more than to exploit it or even wear it out. Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it" (Heidegger 1978, "Building," p. 328).

Will the real Heidegger please stand up? More than rhetorical, such a question is rendered moot, since we'll be reading his essay on technology *through* his lecture on ecology. As the latter notes, "we build . . . because we dwell, that is, because we are *dwellers*." Here, surely, his "Letter on Humanism" (1949) comes to mind, wherein ethos detours through ἤθεα or "dwelling place" (Heidegger 1998, "Letter," p. 269): *Such is the human ethos*, as given by Heidegger. And if the technologies of "building" (for which nature subsists as a "standing-reserve") are subordinated to our essential needs in "dwelling," then our humane task—the very task that grants us ethos, defining us as "dwellers"—is "to save the earth," taking it "under our care" (Heidegger 1978, "Building," pp. 328–29). In so doing, Heidegger adds, we "look after the fourfold in its essence" (p. 329). Compared to postmodernist technoculture, the Heideggerian *Geviert* or "fourfold" of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities invokes a seemingly archaic

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8   As Kaplan notes, "Heidegger calls this way of revealing the world 'enframing' (*Gestell*) . . . a way of ordering people to see the world (and each other) as a mere stockpile of resources to be manipulated. Enframing happens both in us and in the world; it is the revelation of being (human beings and nature) as standing-reserve" (Kaplan 2009, *Readings*, p. 2).

9   See (Marcuse 1991, *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 147–73).

cosmology. Its significance, for our purposes, rests in its assertion of unity as a *dwelling-together*.[10] Post-Heideggerian in what follows, we find our habitus in a dwelling-together and a belonging-together that grants ethos to all that dwells on earth and in sky—and even, in some sense, to the planet itself.[11]

With this speculation upon a "planetary ethos" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, "Positioning," p. 22), we have reached the endpoint of our prior essay. Clearly, the "deep ecology" movement is foreshadowed by Heidegger's ethics of "caring for" and "sparing" the planet.[12] With his "Gaia hypothesis," James Lovelock goes further in proposing that the "whole earth," in all its living and nonliving components, functions as if constituting a single, unified, self-regulating organism (Lovelock 2000, *Gaia*, pp. x–xii).[13] First published in 1979, his *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* sought to measure the impact of human technology upon "planetary homeostasis":

> [W]e have assumed that the Gaian world evolves through Darwinian natural selection, its goal being the maintenance of conditions favourable for life in all circumstances, including variations in output from the sun and from the planet's own interior. We have in addition made the assumption that from its origin the human species has been as much a part of Gaia as have all other species and that, like them, it has acted unconsciously in the process of planetary homoeostasis. However, in the past few hundred years our species, together with its dependent crops and livestock, has grown in numbers to occupy a substantial proportion of the total biomass. At the same time the proportion of energy, information, and raw materials which we use has grown at an even faster rate through the magnifying effect of technology. It therefore seems important in the context of Gaia to ask: "What has been the effect of all or any of these recent developments? Is technological man still a part of Gaia or are we in some or in many ways alienated from her?" (Lovelock 2000, *Gaia*, pp. 119–20)

While seeming to recapitulate the Heideggerian *Bestand*—that "standing-reserve" within nature, which falls to human management and use—Lovelock's Gaia introduces a principle of planetary "health" into ecology:

> The larger the proportion of the Earth's biomass occupied by mankind and the animals and crops required to nourish us, the more involved we become in the transfer of solar and other energy throughout the entire system. As the transfer of power to our species proceeds, our responsibility for maintaining planetary homoeostasis grows with it, whether we are conscious of the fact or not. Each time we significantly alter part of some natural process of regulation or introduce some new source of energy or information, we are increasing the probability that one of these changes will weaken the stability of the entire system, by cutting down the variety of response. (Lovelock 2000, *Gaia*, p. 123)

By analogy with biological life, planetary ecology can be studied as a delicately balanced (and, with global warming, increasingly threatened) homeostasis (Lovelock 2006).

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10   Note the expansiveness of these paired terms, where "earth" represents the planet and its geology, while 'sky' represents the material universe above; similarly, "divinities" invokes all that belongs to deathless spirit, while "mortals" invokes all of biological life, human and otherwise, whose destiny is death.

11   For posthumanist philosophy, the "presencing" that Heidegger describes becomes a "co-presence, that is to say the simultaneity of being in the world together," which defines the ethics of "interaction with both human and non-human others" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 163).

12   As Arne Naess describes it, "deep ecology" rejects "shallow environmentalism" for being "simply an extension of the anthropocentric Western paradigm" of land use (Naess 1973, "Shallow," p. 96), wherein "the reasons for preserving wilderness or biodiversity are inevitably couched in terms of human welfare" (Keller 1997, "Gleaning," p. 140). David Keller elaborates: "Shallow environmentalism falls short of valuing nonhumans apart from their use-value. Deep Ecology, in contrast, asserts that all organisms have intrinsic value. In this way Deep Ecology is fundamentally nonanthropocentric" (Keller 1997, "Gleaning," p. 140).

13   The "as if" in the sentence above marks the divide between popular *vs.* scientistic responses to Lovelock: for scientists like Stephen Jay Gould, Gaia is "a metaphor, not a mechanism" (Gould 1991, *Bully*, p. 339)—and certainly not a super-organism with its own homeostatic-metabolic processes, as proponents of hylozoism (or material vitalism) would claim. We're content to name the planet our habitus, though we respect the cultural traditions that name our planet, animistically, "Mother Earth."

We make this point here, since it marks an intellectual starting point of posthumanist thought. As Rosi Braidotti notes, the "geo-centred perspectives" of posthumanism reject human "species supremacy" while "inflict[ing] a blow to any lingering notion of human nature, *anthropos* and *bios*, as categorically distinct from the life of animals and non-humans, or *zoe*. What comes to the fore instead is a nature–culture continuum in the very embodied structure of the extended self" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 65)—"extended," that is, by virtue of its species-interdependency and shared fate. And this "change of location of humans from mere biological to geological agents calls for recompositions of both subjectivity and community" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 83). Though hers is a radical redefinition of "the category of the human," Braidotti deserves a fair hearing.

As our prior essay engaged "the individual" and "the social" in a dialectic, so this current essay expands ethos into realms of biology and technology—terms that, once again, engage one another dialectically. We turn to postmodern technoscience first, given its impact on our urbanized, postmodern habitus.

4. Urban Ethos and/as Postmodern Technoculture

> Genetically recombined plants, animals and vegetables proliferate alongside computer and other viruses, while unmanned flying and ground armed vehicles confront us with new ways of dying. Humanity is re-created as a negative category, held together by shared vulnerability and the spectre of extinction, but also struck down by new and old epidemics, in endless "new" wars, detention camps and refugee exodus. The appeals for new forms of cosmopolitan relations or a global ethos are often answered by the homicidal acts of the likes of Pekka Eric Auvinen or Anders Behring Breivik.
> 　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　—Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Braidotti 2013, p. 187)

> During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned. Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man—the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our senses and our nerves by the various media.
> 　　　—Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (McLuhan 2003, pp. 3–4)

Prophet of postmodernity, Marshall McLuhan (1911–1980) was among the first to proclaim the human-machine interface, the fact that "all technologies are extensions of our physical and nervous systems to increase power and speed" (McLuhan 2003, *Understanding*, 98). And, in this new age—which is already upon us, though its implications and applications continue to emerge—our human-social relations change, as well: For "electricity ... decentralizes. It is like the difference between a railway system and an electric grid system: the one requires railheads and big urban centers. Electric power, equally available in the farmhouse and the Executive Suite, permits any place to be a center" (McLuhan 2003, *Understanding*, p. 39). Hence, the "center-margin structure" of 20th century geopolitical mapping is "experiencing an instantaneous reassembling of all its mechanized bits into an organic whole. This is the new world of the global village" (McLuhan 2003, *Understanding*, p. 101). Of course, the "global village" resides within a "global economy," whose "techno-scientific structure" is built out of "different and previously differentiated branches of technology, notably the four horsemen of the posthuman apocalypse: nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive science" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 59).

In saying that our lifeworld remains in transit from "modern" to "late modern" or "postmodern" and beyond, we're compelled to police our terms. In hazarding a response, we look to four markers of modernity, each implicated in technology. The modern habitus is *urbanized*, with housing, businesses, entertainments, workplaces, schools, government offices, and other services concentrated into major

city centers encircled by suburbs and exurbs; it is *industrialized*, connected to (and participating in) a regional, national, global production-economy; it is integrated into *networks of transportation* carrying goods (and people) quickly and efficiently across expanses of land, sea, and air; and it is integrated into *networks of communication* carrying information accurately and instantaneously across the globe. And all rests in an abundant, accessible *supply of energy*. Out of these markers—urbanization, industrialization, transportation, and communication, with energy as an underlying resource (very specifically a "standing-reserve")—we have built our lifeworlds.[14]

In transiting from modern to "late modern" or "postmodern" technoculture, *it's the city* (as well as its inhabitant) that has evolved, changing demographically as well as economically.[15] The urban habitus opens up lifestyle choices profoundly impactful upon self-image and identity.[16] At its most optimistic, postmodernism offers "a new strength wrought by prosthetics or genetic avant gardism, a new reach of human movement produced by both long distance and cyber-transport, a new pleasure brought by infinitely proliferating entertainment technology, and a new social life offered by more efficient management of resources and time" (Mansfield 2000, *Subjectivity*, Kindle locations 2689–2692).[17] "Because of the 'openness' of social life today, the pluralization of contexts of action and the diversity of 'authorities' . . . [l]ifestyle choice is increasingly important in the constitution of self-identity" (Giddens 1991, *Modernity*, p. 5). Anthony Giddens elaborates:

> Each of us not only "has," but *lives* a biography reflexively organized in terms of flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life . . . . "How shall I live?" has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat—and many other things—as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity. (Giddens 1991, *Modernity*, p. 14)

Being "post-traditional" (Giddens 1991, *Modernity*, p. 14), the contemporary urban ethos need no longer rest in cultural identifications and social-ritual practices; in some cases, these can themselves be seen as aspects of lifestyle and its choices.

The postmodern habitus, for good or ill, is the city. But we should add a further warning over vocabulary: since the late 20th century, we can no longer speak of "urban" and "rural" as clearly defined, stable categories. Paul James points to the problem. While cities globally "have come to

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[14]　This and several paragraphs following draw materials from three essays: "On the Confluence of Technology, Regional Economy, and Culture" (Baumlin 2019a), "In Transit to Postmodernity" (Baumlin 2019b), and "The Ozarks: Sharing the Ecological Message" (Baumlin and Edgar 2018). What I had applied regionally to the Ozarks (where I live and teach) is in this present essay applied nationally and, indeed, globally.

[15]　"It is silly," writes Jane Jacobs, "to try to deny the fact that we Americans are a city people, living in a city economy" (Jacobs 1961, *Death*, p. 200). Though published in 1961, Jacobs's *Death and Life of Great American Cities* remains an influential textbook in urban planning.

[16]　"Lifestyle," writes Anthony Giddens, "is not a term which has much applicability to traditional cultures, because it implies choice within plurality of possible options, and is 'adopted' rather than 'handed down'" (Giddens 1991, *Modernity*, p. 81). He continues:

> Lifestyles are routinized practices, the routines incorporated into habits of dress, eating, modes of acting and favored *milieux* for encountering others; but the routines followed are reflexively open to change in the light of the mobile nature of self-identity. Each of the small decisions a person makes every day . . . are decisions not only about how to act but who to be. The more post-traditional the settings in which an individual moves, the more lifestyle concerns the very core of self-identity, its making and remaking. (Giddens 1991, *Modernity*, p. 81)

[17]　We should note that, in its affluence, the urban habitus (as described herein) belongs to the Global North primarily; even in American cities, inequality restricts access. Postmodernism is in fact purchased.

　　"Progress," thus, comes with price tags. And advantages come with trade-offs: "No longer defined by locality, or even nationality, the subject is open to, even dispersed amongst, an endlessly proliferating number of information streams. We gain information instantly at the cost of becoming information ourselves, outside of any consideration of personal choice, as liberal political theory understood it" (Mansfield 2000, *Subjectivity*, Kindle locations 2747–2752). Our desires become structured by the available technologies, such that "new possibilities open up to us, but only as they become technologically efficient, manageable and therefore standardized." In this way, "the horizons of the subject are simultaneously expanded and reduced" (Mansfield 2000, *Subjectivity*, Kindle locations 2747–2752).

dominate landscapes far beyond [their] metropolitan zone," the "changing forms of urbanization" have led to "urban sprawl and the decentralization of non-residential functions[: for example, of] retail parks close to intercity highway junctions, massively increased levels of commuting between urban and rural areas, . . . and the emergence of polycentric urban configurations" (James 2015, *Circles*, p. 25). Beyond these lies the hinterland, a rural area "close enough to a major urban centre for its inhabitants to orient a significant proportion of their activities" to that "dominant urban area of their region" (James 2015, *Circles*, p. 27).

In today's parlance, *rural* has become "a catch-all category for 'not urban'" (James 2015, *Circles*, p. 26). Still, these "settlement categories" belong to the mid- to late 20th century. In the 21st century, we need to think in global-local terms. In this tech-driven shift from urban-rural to global-local, we'll be completing our transit through postmodernism. The entrepreneur today may drive to work—out of town or down the street—on behalf of a multinational corporation based in Beijing, China or Basel, Switzerland and drive home to a lakeside condo or a loft apartment in downtown Anywhere U.S.A. For some, their commute might be by FaceTime, Zoom, or Skype. Where one sleeps, and where one does business, can be in different communities on different continents. For instantaneous global communication reconfigures our relationship to physical space—to where we reside and work and play. Given access to technology, anyone can do business anywhere, "broadcasting" worldwide. The difference between urban and rural areas lies, not in access to technology, *but in lifestyle*: specifically, in access to "citified" culture with its eclectic architecture, diverse cuisines, museums, and zones of shopping and entertainment.

Increasingly urbanized in population, the U.S. has transited from a primarily production-based to a service-based economy; and, in seeking its share of an expanding global market, the prized commodity of American production is *not* mined or grown or manufactured goods, but *information*. Indeed, contemporary technoculture overwhelms us with information, such that no one person has access to the whole. A *surplus* of data is one marker of postmodernity; the *fragmentation* of this data into "expert systems" is another. That is, postmodern technoculture functions by dividing information among "experts," who "specialize" in *components* of larger systems—institutional, disciplinary, commercial, technological—without full knowledge or understanding of the functioning of the whole.[18] If we are to thrive as a community within the larger "global village," we need to build a conversation, and a collaboration, among the various "experts" and stakeholders in contemporary technoculture. For the nonce, we'll reduce the conversation to four agents (or, as we'll learn to call them, actants): "the citizen," "the scientist," "the politician," and "the corporation." Out of these four agencies, we can build a viable community. But trust, you'll note, remains a necessary prerequisite: in a decentered, fragmented world, *we rely on others' expertise*.

Such is the postmodern condition: Given the black-boxing of technology, "the citizen" must rely on "the corporation," which must rely on "the politician," who must rely on "the scientist," who must rely on "the citizen," and so on. We'll be returning to this topic, as it pertains to our collective response to the coronavirus. First, we have to illustrate ways that technology reshapes, not simply our habitus, but our embodied self-identities, as well. We'll be focusing on two versions of postmodernist "hybrid" ethos, Bruno Latour's actant and Donna Haraway's cyborg.

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[18] "As late as the 1870s," Pagan Kennedy notes, "families settling on the American prairie would mend their own coffeepots, nail together hog-slaughtering stands, and repair wagon axles" (Kennedy 2016, *Inventology*, p. 168). She continues:

> "Every active and ingenious farmer should have a good workshop and his own set of tools for repairing implements," wrote a [newspaper] columnist of the time. Back then, a town was not just a collection of houses but also a gathering place for blacksmiths, tinkers, seamstresses, and cobblers who manufactured the accouterments of daily life. Inventors weren't remote experts; they lived next door.
> (p. 168)

> Such pioneer self-reliance belongs to the past: Unless we've expertise in the items following, our SUVs and HVAC systems and iPhones—and even, for goodness' sake, our own coffee pots—lie beyond our mending.

5. Actants and Cyborgs: From Postmodernism to Posthumanism

> A body corporate is what we and our artifacts have become. We are an object-institution. The point sounds trivial if applied asymmetrically. "Of course," one might say, "a piece of technology must be seized and activated by a human subject, a purposeful agent." But the point I am making is symmetrical: what is true of the "object" is still truer of the "subject." There is no sense in which humans may be said to exist as humans without entering into commerce with what authorizes and enables them to exist (that is, to act).
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> > —Bruno Latour, "A Collective of Humans and NonHumans" (Latour 2009, p. 168)

> [I]f the proper study of mankind used to be Man and the proper study of humanity was the human, it seems to follow that the proper study of the posthuman condition is the posthuman itself. This new knowing subject is a complex assemblage of human and non-human, planetary and cosmic, given and manufactured, which requires major re-adjustments in our ways of thinking.
>
> > —Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Braidotti 2013, p. 159)

> If bodies come into being without the usual procedure, would they be human? Or, if a body has several of its parts replaced by machines or organic parts from other species (xenotransplantation) or even made from genetic material from assorted species, would the body be human? Do clones have human rights? Are foreign parts within our bodies nativized, or do they stay alien and foreign?
>
> > —Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Nayar 2014, p. 60)

In "A Collective of Humans and NonHumans,"[19] Bruno Latour "seeks to overcome the dualistic paradigm" marking earlier Enlightenment philosophy: specifically, "the separation of subjectivity from objectivity, facts from values, and humans from technology" (Kaplan 2009, *Readings*, p. 7). As Kaplan observes, "there has never been such a thing as humanity without technology nor technology without humanity," nor has society existed "apart from science and technology." Rather, "nonhumans, (social) actors, and (objective) networks are 'symmetrical.' Neither is more important than the other; both are always bound up together. Humans and technology are active agents (or rather, actants)" (Kaplan 2009, *Readings*, p. 7). Such is the basis of actor-network theory (ANT), which sees the social and natural worlds as engaged in continuous, shifting interrelationships. Since "agents and technologies act jointly together," ANT is ethotic in describing the roles human actants play in "human-technology relations." For "each artifact has its script, its potential to take hold of passersby and force them to play roles in its story" (Latour 2009, "Collective," p. 158). Kaplan illustrates: "I become a motorist when I drive a car; a gardener when I use a rake. As a result, it is more helpful to understand our lives as social-technical; our lives are composed of actants" (Kaplan 2009, *Readings*, p. 7). Latour's own illustration makes for a savvy commentary on the American "gun-slinger" ethos:

> "Guns kill people" is a slogan of those who try to control the unrestricted sale of guns. To which the National Rifle Association (NRA) replies with another slogan, "Guns don't kill people; people kill people." The first slogan is materialist: the gun acts by virtue of material components irreducible to the social qualities of the gunman. On account of the gun the law-abiding citizen, a good guy, becomes dangerous. The NRA, meanwhile, offers (amusingly enough, given its political views) a *sociological* version more often associated with the Left: that the gun does nothing in itself or by virtue of its material components. The gun is a tool, a medium, a neutral carrier of human will. (Latour 2009, "Collective," p. 157)

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[19] Excerpted from *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 174–93.

"What does the gun add to the shooting?" Latour asks. He answers, "In the materialist account, *everything*: an innocent citizen becomes a criminal by virtue of the gun in her hand. The gun enables, of course, but also instructs, directs, even pulls the trigger—and who, with a knife in her hand, has not wanted at some time to stab someone or something?" (Latour 2009, "Collective," pp. 157–8; emphasis in original).

The "translation" (Latour's term for the creation of actants) is rendered in narrative—as "the series of goals and steps and intentions that an agent can describe in a story like the one about the gun and the gunman" (Latour 2009, "Collective," p. 158):

> If the agent is human, is angry, wants to take revenge, and if the accomplishment of the agent's goal is interrupted for whatever reason (perhaps the agent is not strong enough), then the agent makes a detour: . . . Agent 1 falls back on Agent 2, here a gun. Agent 1 enlists the gun or is enlisted by it—it does not matter which—and a third agent emerges from a fusion of the other two. (Latour 2009, "Collective," pp. 158–59)

Latour's follow-up question takes us to the heart of actor-network theory: "Which of them, then, the gun or the citizen, is the actor in this situation? *Someone else* (a citizen-gun, a gun-citizen)" (Latour 2009, "Collective," p. 159; emphasis added). We find Latour's analysis compelling:

> *You are a different person with the gun in your hand*. Essence is existence and existence is action. If I define you by what you have (the gun), and by the series of associations that you enter into when you use what you have (when you fire the gun), then you are modified by the gun . . . . This translation is wholly symmetrical. You are different with a gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it. You are another subject because you hold the gun; the gun is another object because it has entered into a relationship with you. (Latour 2009, "Collective," p. 159; emphasis added)

Thus, the tool-using human agent—*homo faber*, in Enlightenment tradition—becomes "someone, something" else: Call him *homo faber fabricatus.* This "someone, something else," this "hybrid actor" comprising gun and gunman, needs its own terminology, since "agents can be human or (like the gun) nonhuman, and each can have goals (or functions, as engineers prefer to say). Since the word 'agent' in the case of nonhumans is uncommon, a better term, as we have seen, is actant" (Latour 2009, "Collective," p. 159).[20]

This social-technological hybridization can be applied to the human body, itself.[21] With this insight, we arrive at Haraway's influential essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1991). "Late twentieth-century machines," Haraway states, "have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that

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[20]　I am, myself, living illustration of Latour's actant: The eyeglasses that I have worn since age seven have become exoskeletal, and the iPhone and laptop are now so thoroughly part of my lifestyle that they accompany me to bed. Indeed, teaching online (the university classroom being closed to pandemic) and pursuing a habit of dawn-to-dusk reading and writing have bound me to my laptop (well named, that); during those times when I'm *not* connected to the web, I'm likely connected to the steering wheel of my SUV or cooking at my electric stove. Even during those "focal activities" of daily domesticity, the cable news might likely be on. My habitus is defined, not by its urban setting alone, but by its black-boxed technologies. My home has two wood-burning stoves, but I've never used them for cooking or for heat. If the power grid failed and my HVAC shut down, I'd alternatively freeze or swelter; if my freezer defrosted, I'd likely go hungry. Such is my reliance on postmodern technoculture and its standing-reserve of energy.

[21]　As Nayar writes, "In vitro fertilization, cloning, artificial ventilators and organ transplants in clinical medicine have changed the ways in which we perceive life" (Nayar 2014, *Posthumanism*, p. 107) He continues:

> Technologies have called into question the very definition of life when the patient is kept alive by assorted machines. "Bioethics" is the set of ethical issues that arise from health care, clinical medicine and biomedical sciences. It extends the older "medical ethics" paradigm (which focused on patient–doctor relationships) by examining "the value of life, what it is to be a person, the significance of being human". (Nayar 2014, *Posthumanism*, p. 107)

used to apply to organisms and machines" (Haraway 2000, "Cyborg," p. 72). As in Latour, there's a symmetry in Haraway's model: Within the cyborg "assemblage," "nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other" (Haraway 2000, "Cyborg," p. 71). But, whereas Latour redefines human agency *by addition* (gun + gunman), Haraway proceeds *by incorporation*. The human organism is redefined from within, both as a "biotic system" and (importantly for our later discussion) as a data-driven system of informatics:

> It is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine. It is not clear what is mind and what body in machines that resolve into coding practices. In so far as we know ourselves in both formal discourse (for example, biology) and in daily practice (for example, the homework economy in the integrated circuit), we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras. Biological organisms have become biotic systems, communication devices like others. There is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic. (Haraway 2000, "Cyborg," p. 82)

We cannot overstate Haraway's influence upon theorists of the posthuman, for whom "the boundary between human and animal is thoroughly breached" (Haraway 2000, "Cyborg," p. 72). Throughout the following discussion, two terms recur: "assemblage" and "becoming-"—the latter hyphenated, in that it rejects essentialist definitions while anticipating further evolution in bodies, lifeworlds, and lifestyles.

In his "Transhumanist FAQ" (2003), Nick Bostrom describes what he sees as our current lifeworld lying somewhere "between the human and the posthuman" (Kaplan 2009, *Readings*, p. 347) but evolving toward the latter: for, "eventually," technology "will . . . enable us to move beyond what some would think of as 'human'" (Bostrom 2009, "Transhumanist," p. 345). He elaborates:

> It is not our human shape or the details of our current human biology that define what is valuable about us, but rather our aspirations and ideals, our experiences, and the kinds of lives we lead. To a transhumanist, progress occurs when more people become more able to shape themselves, their lives, and the ways they relate to others, in accordance with their own deepest values. Transhumanists place a high value on autonomy: *the ability and right of individuals to plan and choose their own lives.* (Bostrom 2009, "Transhumanist," pp. 345–6; emphasis added)

More than rewrite the scripts of our lifestyle choices, transhumanism reconstructs the human habitus in its near-entirety.[22]

In the following outline, we rely on Rosi Braidotti for a variety of reasons, not least of which is her defense of traditional humanist categories of subjectivity, selfhood, ethics, and ethotics.[23] "For posthuman theory," writes Braidotti, "the subject is a transversal entity, fully immersed in and immanent to a network of non-human (animal, vegetable, viral) relations" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 193). It is, further, "a moveable assemblage within a common life-space that the subject never masters nor possesses but merely inhabits, crosses, always in a community, a pack, a group or a cluster" (p. 193). While becoming-posthuman marks our evolution as an "interspecies" organism,

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[22] As I reread the paragraphs above, I find the ANT version of myself (Baumlin + eyeglasses + laptop + iPhone + "sheltering" in viral prophylaxis) inching toward Bostrom's transhumanism, that "intermediary form between the human and the posthuman" (Kaplan 2009, *Readings*, p. 347). I'm open to that expanded self-identity, despite my existentialist commitments.

[23] As Braidotti deploys it, a postmodern subjectivity "defies our separation into distinct selves," at the same time that it "encourages us to imagine that, or simply helps us to understand why, *our interior lives inevitably seem to involve other people,* either as objects of need, desire and interest or as necessary sharers of common experience" (Mansfield 2000, *Subjectivity*, Kindle locations 122–125; emphasis added). In this way, Mansfield notes, the posthuman subject "is always linked to something outside of it—an idea or principle or the society of other subjects" (Mansfield 2000, Subjectivity, Kindle locations 122–125). It is a subjectivity built upon empathy (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 26): More precisely, it is a "complex and relational subject framed by embodiment, sexuality, affectivity, empathy and desire as core qualities" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 26).

it by no means renders us inhuman; it does, however, demand our rejection of biological essentialism, species supremacy, and individualist ideologies.[24] Braidotti returns us, too, to the planetary-ecological "sparing" previously outlined while casting the fate of humanity as one shared with all zoological life.[25] Once we have articulated this planetary ethos—which she terms "pan-humanity"—we'll have gathered up our tools and can attend, at last, to ethos in an age of pandemic.

Braidotti offers a clear, bold definition: "I define the critical posthuman subject within an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 49). It's "an embodied and embedded and hence partial form of accountability, based on a strong sense of collectivity, relationality and hence community building" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 49). And it "expresses the affirmative, ethical dimension of becoming-posthuman as a gesture of collective self-styling" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 100). We take "collective self-styling" as habitus writ large.

Thus far, we've noted the advances in and advantages of postmodern technoculture. There's a flip side, obviously. Though Braidotti's pan-humanity describes "a web of intricate interdependencies" (urban, social, and political) "between the human and the non-human environment" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 40), its globalist sense of interconnection offers no guarantee of cooperation, much less of "peaceful co-existence":

> This new pan-humanity is paradoxical in two ways: firstly, because a great deal of its inter-connections are negative and based on a shared sense of vulnerability and fear of imminent catastrophes and, secondly, because this new global proximity does not always breed tolerance and peaceful co-existence; on the contrary, forms of xenophobic rejection of otherness and increasing armed violence are key features of our times[.] (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 40)

This "shared sense of vulnerability" carries us to brink of our own historical moment, when catastrophes are no longer "imminent" but upon us. *We should have been better prepared*, since "we live permanently in the shadow of the 'imminent disaster,'" writes Brian Massumi (1993, "Everywhere," p. 10):

> What [postmodern] society looks toward is no longer a return to the promised land but a general disaster that is already upon us, woven into the fabric of day-to-day life. The content of the disaster is unimportant. Its particulars are annulled by its plurality of possible agents and times: here and to come. What registers is its magnitude. In its most compelling and characteristic incarnations, the now unspecified enemy is infinite. Infinitely small or infinitely large: viral or environmental. (Massumi 1993, "Everywhere," p. 10)

The sirens and alarms are no longer outside of us; they pulse through our nervous systems and viscera, keeping us in "fight, flight, or fright mode," adrenally exhausted.[26] I mention this as the pathos-aspect of our response, which has tended to express itself in fear, anger, denial, or paralysis. Rationally, we've known that pandemic was inevitable: Scientists had been warning us for decades.

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[24] As Braidotti writes, "a sustainable ethics" for pan-humanity "rests on an enlarged sense of interconnection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 190). Hence, becoming-posthuman "does not mean to be indifferent to the humans, or to be de-humanized." Rather, "it implies a new way of combining ethical values with the well-being of an enlarged sense of community, which includes one's territorial or environmental interconnections" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 190).

[25] The coronavirus, by the way, is clearly one of "the variety of shared diseases that tie humans and animals" together (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 162). Coining the term *zoonosis*, German physician-biologist Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902) sought to break down dividing lines between animal and human medicine, given "the isomorphism of structures between humans and animals in immunology, bacteriology, and vaccine developments. This means that humans are both exposed and vulnerable to new diseases, like bird flu and other epidemics, which they share with animal species" (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 161). Such is the etiology of the coronavirus, which can infect our pets, as well.

[26] For many, it's fright especially: If W. H. Auden's poem, "Age of Anxiety" (1947), defined the postwar condition, then ours is an age of outright panic. "Panic is the key psychological mood of postmodern culture," write Arthur Kroker, Marilouise Kroker, and David Cook: "Panic culture" comes to serve "as a floating reality, with the actual as a dream world, where we live on the edge of ecstasy and dread" (Kroker et al. 1989, *Panic*, pp. 13–14).

We cannot deny the paradox described by Braidotti and others: The very instruments of posthuman assemblage—biotechnology, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence—"pose especially serious risks of accidents and abuse" (Bostrom 2009, "Transhumanist," pp. 353–54). "The gravest existential risks facing us," Bostrom writes, "will be of our own making" (p. 354); to the list above, he adds biological warfare, nuclear war and, prophetically, "something unknown" (Bostrom 2009, "Transhumanist," pp. 353–54). Indeed, it's the "novelty" of the novel coronavirus that surprised us, and against which current biotechnology proves (at this still-early phase of response) largely inadequate. And while COVID-19 is not, strictly speaking, "of our own making" (we reject conspiratorial claims that a genetically-modified SARS virus escaped from a Chinese lab), what *is* of our "making" is our psychological, sociological, political, and economic response.

As theorized above, the nature-culture "assemblage" has something more to teach us: specifically, that the virus, the computer, and the human body (with its "machining" *via* prosthetic enhancements, genetic alterations, hormonal-pharmacological adjustments, and social-behavioral modifications) are made of the same substance. It's not the Heideggerian "standing-reserve" that we're talking about: It's coded information. Paradoxically, the viruses that sicken and kill us are not, themselves, alive. They inhabit an indeterminate space between living and nonliving. On their own, they are inert strings of protein, incapable of any action whatsoever, including self-replication. Placed inside a living host, they spring into action and replicate like wildfire. Now, a virus is little more than a coded sequence of genetic information—of DNA. Consider that a computer virus is a coded sequence of information, too. Such, indeed, is the "condition of postmodernism," wherein the boundaries between living and nonliving, human and nonhuman, biological and engineered, have dissolved. Haraway notes the homology between virtual and viral pandemic: The diseases evoked by machines "are 'no more' than the minuscule coding changes of an antigen in the immune system, 'no more' than the experience of stress" (Haraway 2000, "Cyborg," p. 74).[27]

Haraway brings us to the final stage of our analysis, which is a reconsideration of rhetoric in an age of posthumanism. Within a cyborg ethos, "'Integrity' and 'sincerity' of the Western self gives way to decision procedures and expert systems" (Haraway 2000, "Cyborg," p. 79). Integrity and sincerity—*arete* and *eunoia*, as Aristotle would term them—are components of classical ethos, the third component being *phronesis*, the "good sense" or (in postmodernist terms) "expertise" *that is no longer the sole province of the speaking human subject*. Mansfield glosses Haraway on this point:

> [O]ur present culture is one not of essences and identities, but of overlaps and interfaces—of communication flow and systems management. She writes: "Integrity" and "sincerity" of the Western self gives way to decision procedures and expert systems . . . . No objects, spaces, or bodies are sacred in themselves; any component can be interfaced with any other if the proper standard, the proper code, can be constructed for processing signals in a common language" (Haraway 2000, p. 163). *The body itself is now read as a machine. Genes are seen as codes, carrying messages*. This is an image not of the individual body as a self-sustaining system, but as a set of shifting signifying surfaces turned not inwards towards a mysterious, untouchable and sublime essence, but outwards towards an ever-multiplying number of possible interconnections. (Mansfield 2000, *Subjectivity*, Kindle locations 2827–2832; emphasis added)

What, then, shall we do with the information we are gathering on the virus, on its spread, and on the ways of its containment? Who shall speak on the subject? To whom shall we listen?

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[27] Baudrillard's version is more ominous: "Virulence takes hold of a body, a network or other system when that system rejects all its negative components and resolves itself into a combinatorial system of simple elements. It is because a circuit or a network has thus become a virtual being, a non-body, that viruses can run riot within it; hence too the much greater vulnerability of 'immaterial' machines as compared with traditional mechanical devices" (Baudrillard 2000, "Prophylaxis," pp. 33–34). "Virtual and viral," he continues, "go hand in hand. It is because the body itself has become a non-body, a virtual machine, that viruses are taking it over" (Baudrillard 2000, "Prophylaxis," p. 34).

6. Responding to Pandemic: "The Scientist" *Vs.* "The Politician" *Vs.* "The Citizen"

> The new *ethos* for computational systems, which I associate with cyborg discourse, focuses on the establishment of trust.
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> —Carolyn Miller, "Expertise and Agency" (Miller 1994, p. 207)

> We live in a scientific age; yet we assume that knowledge of science is the prerogative of only a small number of human beings, isolated and priest-like in their laboratories. This is not true. The materials of science are the materials of life itself. Science is part of the reality of living; it is the what, the how, the why of everything in our experience. It is impossible to understand man without understanding his environment and the forces that have molded him physically and mentally.
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> —Rachel Carson, 1952 National Book Award Acceptance Speech
> (qtd. in Lear 2009, *Witness*, p. 218)

In receiving a National Book Award for *The Sea Around Us* (Carson 1951), Rachel Carson (1907–1964) was honored for "bring[ing] attention to the public a hitherto unconsidered field of scientific inquiry" (Lear 2009, p. 218). Her acceptance speech was revolutionary in its time. Carson aimed *to make science matter* to the public, giving it voice and authority. In recent years, this challenge has increased. Starting with "climate skepticism," the growing popular mistrust of science (and of academia more broadly) has brought us to a crisis not simply of fact and value, but also of messaging.

Today, we stand at a crossroads. The "American Century" ended two decades ago, and promises to "Make America Great Again" play nostalgically on that political-economic past. (The future *belonged to us*, did it not? Does it still?) In the 21st century, attitudes seem to have downshifted. "The citizen," "the politician," "the corporation," and "the scientist" seem too often to work at cross-purposes. Does "the corporation" *serve* "the citizen" economically, socially? Do they share the same goals? Surely they share the same community, the same resources, the same planet. While some on the corporate side work to protect profits, others work to protect health and the environment, along with the economy. In a post-pandemic world, claims of "American exceptionalism" will ring increasingly hollow, since the U.S. has long ceased to be self-providing and self-reliant in resources.[28] And *there will be more crises*—not just in politics and economics but in climate, ecology, biology.

The global-local nexus presupposes a viable lifeworld; for which reason "our biggest worries," writes Don Ihde, "*ought to be global*, first in the sense of concern for the earth's environment, and second in finding [a] means of securing intercultural . . . modes of tolerance and cultural pluralism" (Ihde 1993, *Philosophy*, p. 115; emphasis in original). Some of us pay lip-service to the "global village." Ironically, it's the postmodernist defeat of time and space that makes infection anywhere an infection everywhere: Some of the earliest American cases of COVID-19 may have arrived at Kennedy International by passenger jet—from Europe, not from Asia. As time and space continue to shrink, events occurring "around the world" and "around the block" affect us equally. Yet the steady rise of nationalism and "identity politics" expresses widespread anxieties over globalism. The "American lifestyle" benefits from global markets. Can Americans continue this pursuit in a world where their lifestyle is untenable on a global scale? Can we insulate ourselves from the world's problems while enjoying the world's resources? Can we continue to consume resources beyond the planet's capacities? Above all: Can we continue to produce and consume without caring for ecology—for planetary health?

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[28] The current administration has threatened China, for example, with some sort of reprisal (most likely economic) over the outbreak's origin in Wuhan, without acknowledging that U.S. laboratories need chemical reagents supplied by China to produce and process test kits for viral exposure.Similarly, the pandemic offers brutal demonstration, not simply of the insufficiency of current biomedical technology, but of the fragility of global supply chains that can bring down entire industries through the lack of one ingredient, component, or resource. At the time of writing, communities throughout the U.S. cobbled together a supply of lab test kits that are effectively useless without application swabs—a mere swirl of cotton tipping a lengthy cardboard rod. An entire system can be brought to its knees by something so simple as a cotton swab.

Braidotti's pan-humanity reminds us of our species interdependency. Were we to act collectively, we could defeat the virus more quickly and with fewer deaths. But it's the American ideology of "rugged individualism" that undermines any possibility of a collective, federally-coordinated response. Quite literally, it's the American ideology that's turned us into the world's pandemic center. Unlike in other countries, *there is currently no national response to pandemic*: The federal government's refusal to mandate (much less enforce) nationwide policies is driven, not by incompetence merely, but by a conservative anti-federalism that asserts "state's rights" in establishing policies (including such dire decisions as to when and how "to open up" social gathering places, despite continuing viral spread). Such is the ideology that privileges individual "freedom" over communal health. A collectivist ethos would spare lives; rugged individualism is killing us.

The COVID-19 crisis offers to mobilize science, technology, labor, industry, and communities in a common cause—the sort of communal effort that the U.S. has not seen since World War II. Will we rise to the occasion? Can we set challenges for entrepreneurs today? Can "the citizen" and "the politician" and "the corporation" and "the scientist" agree on priorities? Can we work to solve inequalities in global economy and consumption? Can we work to conserve natural resources necessary for "quality of life" in our own urbanized cultural setting? Can we build consensus over "quality of life" issues? Can contemporary technoscience contribute to health and prosperity for all, globally as well as locally? And can we learn to include "companion species" in this communitarianism? Can we work to keep nonhuman species from extinction, "sparing" them as if our own biological existence were at stake (which, in fact, it is)? "The scientist" prepares for such projects; whether we have the political will remains an unanswered question. Arguably, "the scientist" working today faces greater challenges than "the scientist" working in "machine age" modernism of a century ago, when polio and tuberculosis, deforestation, economic depression, and military competition among regional powers were the most pressing threats. The stakes were high back then; they seem higher now, and the time much shorter.

Applying the ethotic theories described above (Heidegger, Bourdieu, Latour, Haraway, and Braidotti in particular), we can ask: What changes has the coronavirus wrought? Transforming the countryside and its standing-reserve into "built space," the city remains our habitus; yet the virus has effectively transformed urban spaces, reclaiming them for its own. The largest infection- and death-rates to date belong to New York City, its suburbs and tri-state exurbs. Socially as well as psychologically, the practice of sheltering at home has impacted the American urban lifestyle *by subtraction*: all the advantages of "citified" culture—the pleasures of public gathering in downtown spaces with their cosmopolitan architecture, cuisines, museums, shops, and entertainments—have been taken from us, however temporarily.

For families sheltering together, the coronavirus encourages us to live traditionally *as families*, not just in sharing the same living space but in cooking and eating and conversing and entertaining each other, together. Heideggerian in inspiration, Albert Borgmann's *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* (1984) describes these as "focal activities." In so doing, he invokes the Latin etymology of *focus* as "hearth," the traditional multigenerational center of domesticity and source of physical warmth, food preparation, and close conversation.[29] While these "focal activities" are harmonizing

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[29] In our human-social lifeworlds, Borgmann distinguishes between "mere devices" that recede into the white-noise background (HVAC systems, for example) and focal objects that contribute to "the reflective care of the good life" (Borgmann 2009, "Focal," p. 62). Kaplan summarizes Borgmann's argument:

The "promise of modern technology," Borgmann explains, is that the use of devices will free us from the misery and toil imposed by nature, thereby enriching our lives. But, as Borgmann points out, technology has failed to live up to its promise because it is silent as to the ends, purposes, and goods that make up an enriched, fulfilled life. To reform technology we need to revive focal things and practices, not simply make better devices. Focal things and practices contain within them a vision of the good life missing from the device paradigm. We need to become more not less engaged; our technologies need to become more not less conspicuous. Borgmann's examples of focal practices include performing music (rather than listening to it on a device), jogging outside (rather than working out at a gym), and enjoying a traditional home-cooked meal with friends and family (rather than consuming fast food alone). (Kaplan 2009, *Readings*, pp. 4–5)

(and, ideally, humanizing), we also note an increase in child and spousal abuse: Enforced sheltering has emphasized the dysfunctionality in many families, effectively imprisoning victims in their own homes.

The ethotic dimensions of human embodiment are impacted radically by COVID-19 and its invasive presence, transforming its human hosts into interspecies "assemblages." If the coronavirus teaches us anything, it should lead us to rethink human biology: More than a macro-organism, the body describes a colony of trillions of separate microorganisms, many dwelling within us symbiotically and beneficially, some threatening us with sickness unto death. Over years of "purifying" the environment of germs, the urban lifestyle has seemingly weakened our native immune systems, allowing viral storms to hit with greater force.[30] Note that this is *not* a criticism of vaccination programs and antibiotics; if and when a COVID-19 vaccine is produced, we'll gladly take it under medical supervision. This *is*, however, to acknowledge that the mid-20th century "culture of antibiotics" is coming to a sorrowful end, having failed before MRSA and other supergerms capable of defeating our strongest pharmaceuticals. The 1930s gave us sulfa drugs; the 1940s streptomycin; the 1950s penicillin; the 1960s doxycycline; the 1970s amoxicillin; the 1980s azithromycin; the 1990s Levaquin; and the 2000s gave us . . . what? It remains to be seen what new antibiotics, if any, shall be synthesized or discovered.[31]

Infection is ethotic: people infected become "carriers," their every cough a viral bullet-spray. People are defined by the infection in ways that change their self-image as "healthy," as "at risk," as "infected" in quarantine, as "infected" in hospital, and as "infected" on ventilator life-support. Latour's actor-network theory provides the equations: an assemblage (person + virus + ventilator) describes an actant in ICU. When out in public, an assemblage (person + mask + social distancing) describes a conscientious citizen following CDC guidelines, whereas (person − mask − social distancing) describes a "risktaker" showing little care for self or others. Healthcare workers have earned a heroic ethos in putting their own lives at risk. Again, Latour provides the equation: (nurse + PPE + safety protocols + coronavirus patient = "caretaker"). Remove the PPE—the personal protective equipment of mask, gloves, and gown—and you've destroyed the healthcare workers' efficacy and safety (and, effectively, their "caretaker" ethos). Survivors of COVID-19 have a near-charismatic status; theirs is an ethos of the "survivor," whose blood is of keen interest for antibody research. And we can cross-reference culture and lifestyle, noting that some populations—the African American and Native American especially—have been hit hard by the virus: Classism, ageism, and racism are exacerbated by COVID-19. Other pandemic-related actants are primarily nonhuman: A test kit, for example,

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COVID-19, I must confess, has affected many of my own lifestyle habits, including such nontechnological, "focal activities" as cooking, housecleaning, and gardening—which I've done *a lot* more of while sheltering at home. (I've expressed pride in my mother's Polish heritage and have cooked Polish foods occasionally; otherwise, the "traditional" cultural components of my habitus are purely nostalgic.) I should add that, with the school gym closed, I bike. And while I play internet chess daily (I'd call that a fairly harmless addiction), I've also begun to play board games with my spouse—something we haven't done in decades.

[30]   "In a hyperprotected space the body loses all its defences," writes Baudrillard: "So sterile are operating rooms that no germ or bacterium can survive there. Yet this is the very place where mysterious, anomalous viral diseases make their appearance. The fact is that viruses proliferate as soon as they find a free space. A world purged of the old forms of infection, a world 'ideal' from the clinical point of view, offers a perfect field of operations for the impalpable and implacable pathology which arises from the sterilisation itself" (Baudrillard 2000, "Prophylaxis," p. 34).

[31]   Writing as a critic of postmodern technoscience, Baudrillard declares that biotechnological actants have in fact weakened the body and its defenses:

Inasmuch as bodies are less and less able to count on their own antibodies, they are more and more in need of protection from outside. An artificial sterilisation of all environments must compensate for faltering internal immunological defences. And if these are indeed faltering, it is because the irreversible process often referred to as progress tends to strip the human body and mind of their systems of initiative and defence, reassigning these functions to technical artifacts. Once dispossessed of their defences, human beings become eminently vulnerable to science and technology; dispossessed of their passions, they likewise become eminently vulnerable to psychology and its attendant therapies; similarly, too, once relieved of emotions and illnesses, they become eminently vulnerable to medicine. (Baudrillard 2000, "Prophylaxis," p. 34)

Baudrillard is like right, though the postmodernist train has left the station *and I'm on it and there's no turning back.* In this respect, I'm currently an assemblage of (Baumlin + hand sanitizers + azithromycin)—but not of penicillin, which would throw me into anaphylactic shock: in this respect, I have "become eminently vulnerable to medicine."

is supposed to provide reliable diagnosis (assuming proper construction, all necessary equipment, proper human administration, and timely interpretation). The test kit is also a black box, in that its construction and working (and evaluation for accuracy) lie beyond the layperson's expertise. In sum: Every aspect of the pandemic affects habitus, embodiment, informatics and "expert systems," practices of self-care, and projected self-image.

In the above survey of ethotic perceptions and practices, we've focused on the various actants of citizenship: "the risktaker," "the carrier," "the patient in quarantine," "the patient in hospital," "the survivor," and "the caretaker." Sadly, "the victim" belongs to this growing list, as well. We have now to treat of "the scientist" and "the politician." As for "the corporation"—the ultimate nonhuman actant in Latour's ANT model—we'll observe, simply, that the fates of businesses parallel those of their human foils, with some profiting, many surviving, some taking risks, many acting conscientiously, and some falling victim to the virus's devastation.

In the midst of our postmodern reliance upon "expert systems," we've entered into a crisis of trust "in institutions, technology, and expertise" (Miller 1994, "Expertise," p. 207). Again, "the politician" *must* rely on "the scientist" and "the citizen" *must* rely on "the corporation" if we're to survive, much less thrive, during the pandemic and in its aftermath. Urbanized and globally interconnected, our lifeworld resides in technoculture. There's no turning back. Though technoscience made much of the mess that we're in, it's our best chance at cleaning the mess up. And yet, given the current fierce competition among political-economic narratives, trust in "the scientist" has eroded at a time when this trust is needed most. In the 21st century, the best public policy—for corporations and communities alike—will promote economy, ecology, and health concomitantly, using technoscience as its means.

It seems ironic that this present age—call it transhumanist or pan-humanist or posthumanist—looks to Aristotle's "rational ethos" as an antidote to the current crisis.[32] The reason is simple: The "expert systems" of postmodern technoscience require the logos-based "expertise" of the scientist in guiding us forward. Yet ours remains, first and foremost, a crisis of ethos, in that large segments of the population nationwide and worldwide "trust" the advice of non-scientists while the scientists—whose expertise earns them the right to be heard and followed—have been distrusted, ignored, or silenced by various means. At this critical moment in the nation's discourse, *we need* the Aristotelian model of ethos: We need to restore *arete* to *eunoia* to *phronesis*.

An aim of ethical/ethotic communication ought to be to make policy—that needful conversation among "the citizen," "the politician," "the corporation," and "the scientist"—more informed, balanced, and intelligible to "the citizen" especially, for whom technology remains black-boxed. And while "the citizen" possesses neither the expertise of "the scientist" nor the power of "the politician," what "the citizen" *does* possess is the postmodern *skeptron* of social media. As Braidotti notes,

> [M]ore Internet-backed interactivity will allow citizens to participate in all forms of planning, managing and assessing their urban environment. The key words are: open source, open governance, open data and open science, granting free access by the public to all scientific and administrative data. (Braidotti 2013, *Posthuman*, p. 180)

While "the citizen" may not have answers, she *does* "have the same capacity to question things as experts. The key is to know what kinds of questions to ask . . . . We have to question technology. *It is*

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32 In describing the interrelation between classical-Aristotelian logos and ethos, Carolyn Miller notes that, "in Aristotelian rhetoric, *ethos* stands in for expertise, because rhetoric occurs where either complete knowledge is not available or the audience is not adequately knowledgeable or competent: *pathos* and *ethos*, *arete* and *eunoia* make up for lack of knowledge" (Miller 1994, "Expertise," p. 204). Yet the rhetoric of science remains committed to "a rhetorical style of impersonality, in which facts "speak for themselves"" (Miller 1994, "Expertise," p. 203). This universalizing of thought—seemingly an Enlightenment legacy—might help us escape the current partisan strategies of *ad hominem* attack: that is, of rejecting the speech (in this case, the recommendations of science) *because of the speaker*. This style of depersonalization, notes Carolyn Miller, creates the paradox of "an *ethos* that denies the importance of *ethos*. The technical *ethos* must be informed but impartial, authoritative but self-effacing. One of the major strategies for achieving this delicate balance is the transformation of *ethos* into *logos*" (Miller 1994, "Expertise," p. 203).

our responsibility" ([Kaplan 2009](#), *Readings*, p. xv; emphasis added). We agree with Kaplan, in that science is itself a mode of discourse whose truth claims are built on consensus. There is, further, a social-constructionist underside to its workings: "The much-praised 'objectivity of science' . . . rests on active inter-subjectivity and social interaction" ([Braidotti 2013](#), *Posthuman*, pp. 175–6). A key to "democratizing science" is to transform its rhetorical praxis by an expansion of audience: Unless practiced as a mode of ethical-ethotic public discourse, science fails to inform policy.

Relying on Bourdieu, our previous essay described the Homeric *skeptron* in its ancient origins and current functioning:

> In Homer, the *skeptron* "is the attribute of the king, of heralds, messengers, judges, and all persons who, whether of their own nature or because of a particular occasion, are invested with authority" ([Bourdieu 1991](#), *Language*, p. 193). But, as Bourdieu states elsewhere, this "authority *comes to language from outside*, a fact concretely exemplified by the *skeptron* that, in Homer, is passed to the orator who is about to speak. Language at most *represents* this authority, manifests and symbolizes it" (*Language* 109; emphasis added). A speaker's assumption of authority, thus, is not a *consequence* of ethos (as per Aristotle); rather, *it is a precondition*—a "given," and accessed by means of the *skeptron*. ([Baumlin and Meyer 2018](#), "Positioning," p. 8)

It's in contemporary media that Bourdieu locates the material-technological-cultural symbols of *skeptron* authority:

> The abundance of microphones, cameras, journalists and photographers, is, like the Homeric *skeptron* . . . the visible manifestation of the hearing granted to the orator, of his credit, of the social importance of his acts and his words. Photography—which, by recording, eternizes—has the effect . . . of *solemnizing* the exemplary acts of the political ritual. ([Bourdieu 1991](#), *Language*, p. 193; emphasis in original)

Our analysis continued: "While the camera records a speaker's visual presence, it's the microphone that stands in for the *skeptron* today. As women and people of color have learned too well, the difficulty in achieving social justice—in being *seen* and *heard*, whether individually or as a group—lies not in refutation within public debate, but in practices of silencing: that is, of being denied the *skeptron*" ([Baumlin and Meyer 2018](#), "Positioning," p. 8). We can describe these as actants: (speaker + *skeptron* = authority) *vs.* (speaker − *skeptron* = silence). While this present essay seeks "to give voice" to science, our previous essay focused on the *skeptron* as an instrument of social justice.

As noted, we've become urbanized and globally connected in habitus. In clothing, cuisines, and entertainments, our tastes are cosmopolitan. Without discounting the markings of birth and markers of cultural identity, we've turned self-identity into choices of lifestyle. Embedded in our lifeworld, AI technologies provide cyborg companions for us, responsive to our needs. Swarm AI may soon evolve, wherein distributed user networks function as a collective intelligence—a "human swarm." Memory has become communal, external: When one stores information on a cell phone, the machine "remembers for us." One day, perhaps, memory will expand internally by microchip implant. Our bodies have become machinable prosthetically, hormonally, genetically. The boundaries between human and nonhuman have dissolved. More than rely on the electric power grid that enervates computer circuitry, *we have become part of that grid* by virtue of the human-machine interface. Much like our eyeglasses, our iPhones and computer tablets have become exoskeletal. We're "plugged in."

By the same token, these technocultural advantages reflect socioeconomic privileges built upon classism, racism, sexism, and ageism. *Most of us* will survive the virus. The same can't be said with much confidence of people in prisons, VA hospitals, or senior care facilities, nor can it be said of people whose living spaces and workplaces are tightly packed, like urban housing projects and peri-urban

meatpacking plants.[33] Other populations—the homeless, the addicted, the immunocompromised—are dying in disproportionate numbers. It's been said that the coronavirus "doesn't discriminate" in its victims; statistics in death-rates among populations give the lie to this superficial claim. "Where you are is who you are": That's an old Marxist saying that holds for us, still. Poverty is ethotic; race is ethotic; age is ethotic; immunodeficiency is ethotic. And so is the coronavirus: Beyond affecting our bodies, lifestyles, and lifeworlds, the coronavirus proves ethos-building in that *it positions us*, biologically and ecologically as well as socio-economically, in its effects and in our response. In behaviors of social-distancing, there are "risktakers" and "caretakers" (and those who simply don't care); in the politics of "shutting down" *vs.* "opening up" shops and businesses, there are those who put life before wealth while others put wealth before life; in partisan media, there are those who suppress the facts and stats while others scramble to tell the truth.

We cannot ignore the abuses of fact by partisan media and of power by conservative pundits and politicians. Throughout the month of April, we endured the daily White House briefings in which an American president kept the mic largely to himself, minimizing and often silencing the health experts standing behind him—experts whose words carried ethos, had they been given freedom to speak and sufficient time at the podium. Unconscionably, the current administration is exercising its coercive authority in suppressing facts and silencing opponents. But consider the COVID-19 patients and those who care for them: Will *they* speak? If so, will they be heard *and be seen* in their speaking? Or who will speak on their behalf? We are reminded, once more, of Heidegger's conscientious call to "serve the world as witness, companion, and caretaker." Unless bound to "an ethic of care," ethos reduces to mere image-making and self-advertising. In our lifeworlds and personal experience, the story of pandemic is being written.[34] The pandemic enfolds us; the pandemic is part of our lives, *is* our lives.

We'd like to end on a hopeful note. In a recent essay collection (Baumlin and Edgar 2018, *Living*), I asked Phillip "Cloudpiler" Landis to weigh in on the present and future of our planet. Describing himself as "a ranking elder and Native American Practitioner of the Sehaptin Culture," Cloudpiler is a member of the Nemenhah tribe local to the Missouri Ozarks. In the following, he takes up the *skeptron* to speak on the planet's behalf. His response returns us, perhaps unsurprisingly, to Gaian cosmology, "focal practices" in family farming, species interdependence, and Heideggerian "sparing":

> I am a medicine man whose vocation and mission, as passed down through generations of the Ahkehkt clan, is to heal the individual, family, community, society, and planet. Though the indigenous technologies of healing are traditional, they are continuously adaptive to conditions at hand, relying always on the gifts of the Earth: water, soil, stones, plants, animals, air, heat, cold—all gifts, but one gift. The Sehaptin cosmos is a unity, wherein the strength of one element sustains the rest, while weakness in one diminishes the rest. A Eurocentric worldview tends to dissect and analyze and compartmentalize, whereas the indigenous worldview seeks unity and synergy and synthesis. Science and religion are one: both gifts, but one gift.
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> I have been asked how I view the present state of things. The medicine man's technology rests in knowledge, discernment, and decision making. Without these, tools are useless. People come to me with their illnesses, but the illnesses are not theirs alone: They're signs of exhaustion and toxicity in the water, soil, plants, animals, air. We humans are a microcosm of the planet: Having wasted its resources and destroyed its health, we find ourselves wasting away. We live longer than generations before us, but do we live better? The Eurocentric

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[33]　Though agribusinesses build their processing plants in smaller communities outside of urban centers, the traditional human assembly line of shoulder-to-shoulder labor has been turned, through viral infection, into a humanimal abattoir.

[34]　As Giddens notes, "A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor—important though this is—in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*. The individual's biography, . . . must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self" (Giddens 1991, *Modernity*, p. 54). Giddens's narrative model turns ethos into an individual's storytelling: Such was a theme of our prior essay (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, "Positioning," pp. 15–22). Ours, clearly, has become the story of pandemic and its impact upon our lifeworlds.

habit is to exploit nature, depleting its resources. In using up the land, we are using up the future. Look at the soil. Once a region of native forests and prairies, southwest Missouri was transformed into farms, orchards, and ranches. One hundred years ago, Missouri fed itself. Now, almost all our food is shipped in. If we relied on the land in its current depleted state, we'd starve.

We have a way forward, which the land itself teaches if we're willing to look, listen, and learn. The cosmos is a unified, living creation. Left alone, the soil will regenerate; but one hundred years of human exploitation might take one thousand years to restore at nature's pace. The soil needs our help in regenerating; and we best serve the soil, not by behaving as chemists, but by learning to behave like the millennial forests and prairies that built layer upon layer of topsoil. The technology of proper stewardship consists of a shovel, a rake, and a wheelbarrow. My current homestead was soil-poor when I first took possession of it, showing a quarter inch of tilth depth over most of the acreage. After four years, the soil depth is sixteen inches in places and rising. Yes, I grow my own herbs and vegetables, organically. My family takes care of the soil, and the soil gifts us in return.

I have been asked about the planet's future. The language of the Sehaptin people speaks the unity of the cosmos; and, with every loss of a species of plant or insect or animal, we have to relearn our language. Every loss of species diminishes the whole of life and the language of life. Creation is a song. But ours is a diminished song, with fewer words and fewer notes. Today, the indigenous people sing a song of mourning. With proper stewardship, we can bring some measure of healing to the land. We can add notes to the song and sing it in a more hopeful key. As we do so, we shall restore to the planet its original, recuperative powers. And we'll be restoring our own health, as well. (Landis 2018, "Land," pp. 215–16)

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