

The Houellebecq Cure: All Malady Will End in the Neohuman¹

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Abstract

Michel Houellebecq's novels evoke a contemporary society obsessed with dying. Most of its behaviour is determined by this constant dread. Houellebecq often alludes to three principal human enterprises designed to escape this predicament: hedonism, love, and scientific knowledge, all of which are founded on denial. This article explores the distinct relationship that these worldviews possess with the awareness of death. It will focus extensively on the scientific worldview through the futuristic neohuman community described by *Atomised* and *The Possibility of an Island*. The neohuman is seen to be science's success in creating a being that does not grow old and die. I will argue, however, that this achievement is limited to the physical aspect of death. The neohuman ultimately still finds itself suffering from *an awareness* of death. Like the other two worldviews, science here also fails to solve the existential experience of senescence. For Houellebecq, science is conceived as leading one *towards*, rather than *away from*, the malady it was designed to cure.

Keywords: *Michel Houellebecq, death awareness, rationality, science, Maurice Blanchot, secret*

Michel Houellebecq's novels evoke a contemporary society obsessed with ageing and death. In the absence of any religious and spiritual faith, this predicament illuminates existence with an unbearable meaninglessness and anguish. To be aware of death is to find oneself slowly heading towards nothingness, and this in turn construes one's life simply as a gradual decline and life as therefore purposeless. Human conduct, for Houellebecq, is ultimately predicated on *escaping* this consciousness. Current modes of thought and action are to a large extent seen as provoked or stimulated by this singular menace.

The novels in general present three principal human enterprises which are motivated by the denial of the human condition. These comprise what can be broadly termed 'hedonism', 'love', and 'scientific knowledge'. Intrinsic to the identity of each and every one of these attitudes is its function as a substitute for God and organized religion. Each one assumes the cosmic significance of a belief that humanity has decided to give itself to – completely, without reserve. They are all in a certain way the new true faiths.

My essay will explore the distinct relationship that these worldviews possess with the awareness of death, focusing extensively on the scientific discourse, and more

¹ The original version of this essay first appeared under the same title in the online journal *The Gender Forum: An Internet Journal for Gender Studies* 28 (2010): <http://www.genderforum.org/issues/engaging-questions/editorial/>. The present article rewrites and greatly expands on many of the themes that had been broached in the earlier, much shorter publication.

generally, on the concept of rationality which it is a part of. These are described through the futuristic community evoked in the last chapters of *Atomised* and *The Possibility of an Island*. Here, Houellebecq stages a new world order whose structure and beliefs are based absolutely on rationality. Its inhabitants form a new species of human clone known as the ‘neohuman’.²

The neohuman is science’s success in creating a being that does not grow old and die. I will argue, however, that this achievement is limited to the somatic aspect of senescence and death: the neohuman still finds itself suffering of *an awareness* of death. Its worldview ultimately fails to solve the existential experience of mortality. Science proves to be just as ineffectual, just as powerless before death, as all the other forms of belief. Like them, it is seen to lead one *towards*, rather than *away from*, the main problem. Paradoxically, the neohuman’s life exposes one to that same malady it was designed to cure.

Death Awareness³

The consciousness of death that the enterprises of hedonism, love, and scientific knowledge seek to escape from entails the experience of a particular kind of mental and emotional pain. All three stances are at bottom defined by their attempt to put a stop to this unbearable suffering once and for all.

Death awareness comes from the inexorable inability to comprehend our subjection to dying. Our incapacity to effectively reconcile the process of dying with our ideologies instigates the miseries of death awareness. Since we cannot appropriate it to who we are, to our perceptions of ourselves and all that is around us, we therefore cannot cope with it. Its presence is confusing as well as uncontrollable, and thus horrifying. If we cannot seize it with our horizons of understanding, it seizes us. This, for Houellebecq, is the distinct malady of the contemporary consciousness. It “is no longer equipped to deal with our mortality. More than at any time or in any other civilisation, human beings are obsessed with ageing.”⁴

Death awareness does not signify an awareness of my oncoming death as a final and absolute destination. It does not figure as the realization that I am going to be no more at some point eventually, ultimately. It is not the consciousness of my future death but rather the consciousness of me *dying* right now, this instant. What I am faced with is the *perpetuity* of my approach towards death. I am aware of the slow but sure advance that I am making towards the end. This event is the wake-up call that I am on my way, getting ever closer, to the terminal point. I understand that I am *increasingly* heading towards death: I am submitted to *dying-ness*.

To remember the fact that you are ageing can often lead to the shock of this peculiar awareness. It reveals itself to many of Houellebecq’s characters when they awake to the actuality that they are getting older and that they are therefore advancing head-on towards their expiration. The body can frequently serve as a reminder of this fact.

² The definition of the ‘neohuman’ here refers exclusively to Houellebecq’s trademark notion of the *néo-humain* and its fictional contexts, and is not intended to relate in any way to the rich corpus of literature on the posthuman and other similar themes.

³ The term ‘death awareness’ will be used consistently throughout this article to describe a particular insufferable experience of death that is frequently present in Houellebecq’s fiction.

⁴ Michel Houellebecq, *Atomised*, trans. Frank Wynne (London: Vintage, 2001), 297.

As *Atomised* points out, “In contemporary Western society, death is like *white noise* to a man in good health; it fills his mind when his dreams and plans fade. With age, the noise becomes increasingly insistent, like a dull roar with an occasional clang.”⁵ “People,” Annabelle tells Michel in the same novel,

think that when you’re young you go out and have fun and only later do you start to think about death. But every man I ever met was terrified of getting old. They worried all the time about how old they were. They get obsessed about it when they’re quite young – I’ve seen twenty-five-year-olds worried about getting old – and it just gets worse.⁶

What my physical changes alert me to when I am ageing is the *autarchy* of my body. The process of senescence as inscribed on my body brings into full attention its tyranny over me. I am most singularly aware of the determinism that my biology holds over myself and my life. There is the surprise of my enslavement to my own somatic mechanisms. My will cannot control my corporeal decline. This brings about an estrangement of my self from my body. My looks defamiliarize themselves from me. They assume a presence that alienates me, an outside that I cannot come to terms with. My exterior self stops being mine. It asserts its exteriority from my world. My physical being as home has suddenly estranged itself, is slowly estranging itself from me, and is thus turning into my own prison. In my body, I am not in my body. Death awareness signifies this shocking apprehension of a paradox between what I thought I was and what I actually am, what I actually look like. It signals to the *irreconcilability* of how I see myself and how I am seen.

Consciousness of my physical foreignness to my self alerts me to my subjection to a force that is outside of me. It reveals my helpless exposure to the operations of a process that is completely unconcerned with who I am or who I think I am. I am an absolute exposure to a biological mechanism that is not my own and is coldly indifferent to me.

What I suffer from therefore is an endless incapacity at being myself, at asserting and understanding everything through myself. I am becoming more and more aware that gradually and ever increasingly I am losing control over the world which I thought I owned. My reaction to my somatic deterioration is the intensifying awareness and feeling of being completely stripped of everything, naked and more than naked before the despotism of ‘nature’. I am awoken to what is not me *in me*. I am aware of myself as *other*.

The tortuousness behind this lucidity is not only caused because of the utter abjection I find myself in. My agony comes especially from the realization that what I am subdued to will remain subduing me for the rest of my life. I will be degraded by this anonymous force inside of me for as long as I live. There is a perverse infinite patience to this degradation. My decline will happen, is happening with a continuity spread out for a long time to come, as long as I will be me. Even more horrifyingly, it will not simply persist: it will get worse and worse. I will be and I will look worse and worse. In the future, I will only degenerate further. I suffer because I also know that I will suffer this suffering again and again forever, in a worse and worse form forever.

The anguish, sadness, horror, and other responses death awareness provokes are all reactions to the impact of its *eternity* upon me. They express the recognition of an

⁵ Houellebecq, *Atomised*, 95.

⁶ Houellebecq, *Atomised*, 279.

existence with *no way out*. All of them constitute different emotional responses to the revelation of a life with no exits, no escape from my humiliation. There is here no anguish of myself as existing no longer sometime in the indefinite future. What my anguish comes from is precisely the continuation of my life *through* this death. My fear is a fear of the presence of death *in* me, *as* I am living. I am tormented by this otherness lurking in what is most intimately me, its indifferent impersonal existence somehow coinciding with mine.

At this point, the prospect of death as complete nothingness can be appealing. It would be a relief to exist no longer. It would be a way out of the irrevocable malady. Maurice Blanchot describes this insufferable condition very accurately in *The Space of Literature*. For Blanchot, the torment of dying is “not of that tranquil worldly death which is rest, silence, and end, but of that other death which is death without end, the ordeal of the end’s absence.”⁷ It is the inability to die in this dying, the inability to escape into non-existence, that makes the dying excruciating. This is the underlying reason why Christiane in *Atomised* commits suicide. When her osteoporosis suddenly impacts on her bones, she comes to a more vivid realization that her condition is implacable; it will carry on and get worse forever. The only way to stop it would be to end her life and thus end the ‘dyingness’ in her life.⁸

Suicide becomes attractive to many other characters in Houellebecq’s novels. At some point most of the protagonists express a desire to kill themselves in response to a stark consciousness of their predicament. Suicide offers the promise of a definite termination to the endless torture:

[T]wo highly respected *fin-de-siècle* intellectuals, Gilles Deleuze and Guy Debord, both committed suicide for no reason other than that they could not bear the idea of their own physical decline [...]. It is perhaps also useful to cite public reaction to the prospect of a terrorist attack as symptomatic: the overwhelming majority of people would prefer to be killed outright rather than tortured, maimed, or even disfigured. In part, this is probably because they are somewhat tired of life; but the principle reason is that nothing – not even death – seems worse than the prospect of living in a broken body.⁹

The Worldviews of Hedonism and Love

Contemporary society, for Houellebecq, often seeks escape from death awareness by giving itself to one or more of three worldviews. All of these mind-sets aim at achieving a comprehensive understanding of being. Each and every one of them seeks to give a distinct all-encompassing meaning to existence. In doing so, a worldview charts a project for its adherent to follow. Through its interpretations of the world, it instigates a plan of action with its goals. The subject is empowered to decide and act through this scheme. By making it my own, a worldview defines or redefines my identity. Since it inspires me with a particular perception I can take and realize, it can help me attain some form of satisfaction and control over my life. The significance it inspires in my

⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 172.

⁸ Houellebecq, *Atomised*, 336.

⁹ Houellebecq, *Atomised*, 297.

existence allows me to strengthen my sense of selfhood through a purpose. I am granted the possibility of fulfilling myself because my worldview gives direction to my world.¹⁰

Hedonism, one of the leading ideologies in Houellebecq, entails a mentality obsessed with the relentless search for sensation. As *Atomised* points out,

Most of the people Bruno had encountered in his life had been motivated solely by the pursuit of pleasure – if one includes in the definition those narcissistic pleasures so central to self-esteem or to the admiration of others. And so different strategies are adopted and these are called human lives.¹¹

Daniel, the protagonist of *The Possibility of an Island*, points out that his society is creating “an artificial mankind, a frivolous one that will no longer be open to seriousness or to humour, which, until it dies will engage in an increasingly desperate quest for *fun* and sex; a generation of definitive *kids*.”¹²

In Houellebecq’s fiction, the hedonistic fixation is above all tied with sexuality, very often involving a variety of diverse experiences with different partners. The genitals – described obsessively with obsessive detail – and the female body – objectified as a number of fetishes by the male gaze – are seen as outlets to true freedom and salvation. Their veneration sometimes verges on a divine worship.¹³

Sexuality, however, as depicted by Houellebecq, has become yet another consumerist strategy. It has acquired the same logic as any other product available on the market. In the capitalist world, sexual pleasures of all imaginable kinds are ready to be accessed as long as one can pay the price equivalent to the kind of pleasure desired. Here, there is virtually no limit to the type of erotic enjoyment and/or the type of person one can choose from as long as the costs can be met. The logic of physical desire has become subsumed into the logic of the free market.¹⁴

The assimilation of eroticism in the profit-and-loss culture of neo-liberal capitalism deprives it of any form of existential meaningfulness. It is stripped of a symbolic order of any kind. All of its precedent taboos, lyricism, and sanctity have been divested from it. Instead, it has been reduced to the same level of any marketable product. One purchases it in accordance with one’s own individual tastes. It is bought strictly because it satisfies one’s certain physical needs. Sex has become one more form of alimentation, yet another means of satiating oneself. “[E]quated with the accessibility of entertainment outlets”,¹⁵ it has assumed the value of egotistic gratification. *Platform* vividly illustrates this through its emphatic concern with sex tourism as an industry rampantly expanding around the world and ever increasing in popularity in the West. Together with the pervasive presence of extreme pornography in the characters’ lives,

¹⁰ In his seminal book *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973) Ernest Becker likewise discusses the significance of cultural worldviews and their function as instruments to keep the horror of death at bay. Worldviews operate by repressing the paralyzing awareness of death. For Becker, they are defiant creations of meaning brought about by society, whose purpose is to engender self-esteem and the sense of immortality by succeeding in their projects.

¹¹ Houellebecq, *Atomised*, 255.

¹² Michel Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, trans. Gavin Bowd (London: Phoenix, 2006), 26.

¹³ See for instance Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 341.

¹⁴ Zoë Roth, “The Death of Desire: Bataille, Transgression, and the Erotic Extreme in Michel Houellebecq’s *Plateforme*,” in *The Contemporary Extreme*, ed. Russell Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 116.

¹⁵ Roth, “The Death of Desire,” 115.

the global commodification of sexual desire is also seen in *Platform* in the portrayal of the creative sadomasochistic practices that people subject themselves to in the Bar-Bar S&M club Michel and Valérie visit one night.¹⁶

Sometimes, however, Houellebecq perceives carnal desire as eventually developing into a deeper desire. Eroticism can inspire that emotional longing to be completely one with the other. To be in love is to yearn for a perfect unity with your lover. It is the desire to abandon oneself unreservedly to reach complete communion. Many of the protagonist couples in Houellebecq's fiction tend to discover this through their sexual experiences. Through their intimacy with the lover's body, Michel in *Platform*, Bruno in *Atomised*, and Daniel in *The Possibility of an Island*, for instance, all find themselves desiring in turn an intimacy with their lover's selfhood.¹⁷

If love, according to Houellebecq, cannot be dissociated from sexuality, it likewise cannot be dissociated from the consciousness of death. One gives oneself over to love for the same reason that one gives oneself over to hedonism. Both experiences are often reactions away from the looming presence of dyingness. Love is simply another route of action which some of the characters surrender themselves to in response to their agonizing lucidity. As Daniel25 – the twenty-fifth clone of Daniel – claims, “[J]ealousy, desire and the appetite for procreation share the same origin, which is the suffering of being. It is the suffering of being that makes us seek out the other, as a palliative [...]” In this regard, love is pursued just as viciously and relentlessly as sexual pleasure. “Love,” Daniel25 attests, “seems to have been, for humans of the final period, the acme and the impossible, the regret and the grace, the focal point upon which all suffering and joy could be concentrated.”¹⁸

The Worldviews as Denials of Death Awareness

The three predominant courses of action which most characters follow in Houellebecq's fiction are fulfilling in different ways. In hedonism, happiness can be achieved through sensual gratification. Self-affirmation is here reached through the pleasure of the senses. Love plans its fulfilment through a union with the lover. The emotions are for the most part the means through which this constant goal is undergone. Through my intimacy with an other, I reach the emotional contentment that will enable a certain command over my life. Finally, science plans my self-realization through the intellect. A sense of mastery over my world is attained through intellectual knowledge. As the neohuman enterprise makes clear, the final goal science ultimately aspires to is power: an absolute rational power over reality and the human condition.

Where the worldviews fail, however, is in the very *nature* of their interpretations of existence. None of them allows for the event of death awareness within the horizons of their understanding. Their illustrations of being do not account for the possibility of this peculiar suffering in actual experience. In all of them, there is a refusal to face up to it. Their effective operation even *depends* on its absence. They are efficacious only if one's consciousness of death is inexistent. What this means is that these life choices function only inasmuch as they *deny* this consciousness, inasmuch as they suppress it time and again, exclude it from the limits of their visions. Intrinsic to their

¹⁶ Roth, “The Death of Desire,” 115-18.

¹⁷ Christian Moraru, “The Genomic Imperative: Michel Houellebecq's *The Possibility of an Island*,” *Utopian Studies* 19.2 (2008): 273-74. Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 367.

¹⁸ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 326, 162.

meaningfulness is a forgetfulness of this experience. Happiness is ensured as long as you pretend that you are not dying.

Houellebecq's writings suggest that this pretence, implicit in every one of the three systems of belief, is calculated. These modes of being are all deliberate attempts at forgetting death awareness. They are strategies of distraction from it, wilful forms of a methodological amnesia. This, in fact, is one of the main reasons they even exist.

The three worldviews interact with death awareness in three important ways. These relationships are widely synonymous with the relationships which Steven Shaviro in *Passion and Excess: Blanchot, Bataille and Literary Theory* charts between human systems of meaning on the one hand and the reality of instinctive energies on the other hand. Discussing Georges Bataille's philosophy of excess, Shaviro discusses three ways how the utilitarian world of social institutions and ideologies reacts with the world of visceral impulses and its need to expend itself. Three modes of exchange are seen to take place between the capitalist economic sphere of logic and power, homogeneity, and the natural world of primal forces, heterogeneity. Heterogeneity, Shaviro states, is "primarily affirmative, subversive, and catastrophic".¹⁹ It *constitutes, disrupts, and evades* the homogeneous political-economic world. Every one of these actions will be described in relation to how death awareness affects the worldviews in the context of Houellebecq's works.

The thoughts, decisions, and actions that are undertaken through and for a worldview are often an *instinctive defensive reaction* to death awareness. I do what I do in my given mind-set to get away as far as possible from the suffering of dying. In this regard, the worldview invests or reinvests itself through this suffering. I pursue it impulsively when exposed, the more I am exposed, to my limits. The more the pain threatens my sense of self-empowerment, the more I give myself over to my worldview. The more imposing the menace, the more I surrender myself to my beliefs.²⁰

If such decisions (taken in the name of my worldview) define or interpret who I am, are *all* that I am, then, my very subjectivity can be defined in the same manner as the nature of these decisions. This is the case with many of Houellebecq's characters. The I that thinks and acts is here an entity that is time and again constituted by a compulsive opposition to death awareness. It is (re)assumed by a resisting impetus to the event of its own powerlessness. I as an empowered I (re)arises out of the moments of that I's disempowerment. Selfhood here sustains itself through a counteractive response to its own impotence.²¹ Many of the neohumans know this. They are aware that their system is ultimately a failure in being incapable of transcending this predicament that establishes selfhood. As Daniel24 elaborates, "It is in failure, and through failure, that the subject constitutes itself, and the passage of humans to neohumans [...] has in no way modified this basic ontological given. We, like humans, have not been delivered from our status as *individuals* [...]."²²

Some of Houellebecq's starkest depictions of the way death awareness galvanizes worldviews are often those that are related to sexuality. Esther's promiscuity, in *The*

¹⁹ Steven Shaviro, *Passion and Excess: Blanchot, Bataille, and Literary Theory* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1990), 46. See also 47-48.

²⁰ See also Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 185-86.

²¹ Shaviro, *Passion and Excess*, 46-48.

²² Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 118.

Possibility of an Island, is seen to coincide with her awareness of a serious kidney condition. As Daniel points out

It was only now I learned that Esther had had a serious kidney illness, at the age of thirteen, which had necessitated a long operation, and that one of her kidneys had remained definitively atrophied [...] while the second one, saved for the time being, could at any moment show signs of weakness; it seemed obvious to me that this was an essential detail, that it was even no doubt for this reason that she had not *calmed down* on the sexual level: she knew the price of life, and how short it was [...]. [T]here was in her the consciousness of illness, weakness and death [...].²³

Worldviews for Houellebecq are structured *as if* death's abjection did not exist. At the heart of their nature is a diversion from this reality. Their *raison d'être* is precisely based on the logic of a convincing distraction. They are indeed engineered to justify themselves as escapisms. They operate by charming the individual into believing that the fantasized absence of dying implicit in their perception of life is the route to true happiness and salvation. Rather than acknowledging this event and seeking to reconcile it with themselves, they establish themselves as glamorous pretexts for running away from it. In doing so, their claims to understand existence and sustain the self through such an understanding fall short of the nature of what they have expelled. Their resistance to death awareness makes this ostracized awareness evasive to them. It eludes the very spectrum of experiences they presuppose.²⁴

In their exclusions, these human attitudes are completely unprepared and vulnerable to the irruption of what they have excluded. This irruption disrupts them. To find myself exposed to death awareness is to suffer the total collapse of my belief system, a falling apart. What this means is that the composition of that belief system ultimately proves to be its own downfall. The very manner in which it is constituted is constituted intensifies and above all *provokes* the violence that death awareness brings with it. Because of its resistance to it, it stimulates it. That perception which was supposed to liberate me from the painful event ends up pushing me into that event. My escape leads exactly to what it had been escaping from.²⁵

Worldviews therefore are incited by death awareness just as they incite it in return out of their absolute vulnerability towards it. They are easily provoked by this suffering just as they easily give in to it. They are sustained just as they are destroyed by a singular source. Underlying the worldviews' very existence is thus their complete subordination. These human behaviours are seen to be an effect of something else. Emerging and leading to death awareness, they are essentially manifestations of it. They are *symptoms* of its sickness. They are all signs of the same malady.



In the future evoked in *The Possibility of an Island*, humans finally accept the inability of sexuality and love to fulfil their lives. They come to terms once and for all with the fact that throughout their history these conducts have time and again failed to provide them with any lasting happiness. Most importantly, they could never stop the

²³ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 186-88.

²⁴ Shaviro, *Passion and Excess*, 46-48, 130, 136.

²⁵ Shaviro, *Passion and Excess*, 46-48.

inexorable process of ageing. What Daniel24 calls the “grey age” is that period of time in the future when societies finally give up on these beliefs as remedies to their condition. This final abdication lasts until most of the species has disappeared.²⁶

Having discarded two of its most important worldviews, humanity, in its struggle against mortality, proceeds to stake everything on the third one: science. Science becomes “the arbiter of unique, irrefutable truth”.²⁷ Only its positivistic knowledge, and more generally, rational knowledge, is seen to be *the* effective means of defeating death and attaining some form of immortality. Through the DNA research of such scientists as Michel Djerzinski, and after him, Frederic Hubczejak, a cure for death is finally discovered. Progress in molecular biology and genetic engineering finally reveals a definite way out of human mortality. Hence the slogan for Hubczejak’s 2013 public campaign: ““THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE MENTAL, BUT GENETIC”.”²⁸

The Neohuman System: A Paragon of Science

In *The Possibility of an Island*, the new world order of the future attains immortality through the genomic cloning of humans. Once the human dies, its clone will take its place, and once the lifespan of that clone is over, another clone will be created. The process is indefinite. The individual’s DNA can be replicated endlessly. By bearing the genetic information of its human predecessor, every clone or neohuman carries its same personality and memories. Recollection is furthered ensured and improved through a contemplative reading of the life story which the human would have been required to write when he or she was alive. It is every clone’s task to study these detailed written memoirs and add its own insights to them. The written observations the clone leaves behind are the only legacy it can bequeath to its next one. This accumulating legacy aims at expanding the clone’s knowledge which in turn helps to further develop its ideas on the life story. Communication with the predecessors is achieved only through their written insights which one then uses to meditate on a more mature vision to be written about one’s human ancestor. The teachings of the Supreme Sister, who formulates the doctrines of the neohuman system, are also a significant authority over these writings. All neohumans are expected to study the ideology propagated by this obscure entity in order to help them form and live their particular lives.

By reading the system’s doctrines, the life story, and the ever increasing commentaries of its antecedents, it is believed that the clone will then be guaranteed a higher realization of intellect than its ancestor. Every member in a clone series originating from a human is intended to come to a deeper awareness of itself and its world especially through the influence of the accreted thoughts of all the previous members. The neohuman lineage is designed to be a progression of rational enlightenment. It signifies an assiduous attempt at reaching the epitome of omniscient knowledge. It is a climb – every clone a step – towards the fulfilment of the intellect: an emancipation of the mind.

The neohuman system’s conception of enlightenment is predicated on how it conceives the human being. This is revealed quite pointedly by what the molecular biologist behind the neohuman’s creation says about the world around us. Michel states

²⁶ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 33.

²⁷ Houellebecq, *Atomised*, 377.

²⁸ Houellebecq, *Atomised*, 377. See also 322-23.

that from a scientific perspective, “[t]he world is precisely the sum of information we have about it.”²⁹ By the same logic, the human being here comes to signify the amount of data this field of knowledge already knows about it. What it means to be human is expressed in the total information which science has already discovered about it in its DNA. And it comes to signify this information *exclusively*. No space is left for definitions pertaining to other systems of belief or the unknown in general. Houellebecq’s system of the future conceives the human as no more and no less than what is known (scientifically) of its DNA data. As Moraru points out, the body at this point amounts to “data that can be organized and reproduced as code [...]”:³⁰ the human levelled to reproducible information. The neohuman society is thus predetermined on scientific reductionism.

Any concept of enlightenment or evolution within the new society is therefore based on science. This system of thought defines the very notion of improvement within the neohuman world. Its criteria determine what evolution here means. The neohuman is a being created as much as is possible in the image of science. This ideology dictates the very *method* by which the clone has reached its *post*-human status together with the *results* that this *post*-human status should possess. The method by which the neohuman is ‘evolved’ entails the modifications of certain data in its human DNA. What these alterations are meant to do is to predispose the new species towards a perception that is an absolute embodiment of scientific values.

The result which the genetic changes aim for is an orientation of one’s consciousness towards a purely positivistic mind-set. The intention behind the neohuman’s origin, Hubczejak explains, “was not to recreate the human species to the smallest detail, but to create a new, rational species [...]”.³¹ What was aspired for in the idea of the “post-” of posthuman was “the maintenance of a weakened, non-tragic, energy, purely conservative in nature, which would have continued to enable the functioning of thought – a thought less quick but more exact because more lucid, a thought that knew *deliverance*.” Genomic alterations incline the neohuman towards experiencing its world with as much rational clarity and objectivity as is possible. A strong proclivity is acquired that can allow it to be significantly unaffected by a subjective and emotional singularity. Indeed, its emotional sensitivities and sexual appetites have been drastically weakened, “moderated.”³² Whatever evolved state the neohuman is programmed to assume, it is one that is qualitatively measured only by scientific values.

The kind of knowledge the neohuman is instructed to absorb from its life story is also supposed to help it progress further down the path of pure rationality. Its meditation and observations of these memory databases are in fact strictly rational, often theoretical by nature. In its studies, the clone is required to look down on all those thoughts, decisions, and actions that its human predecessor had undertaken because of love and other emotional states. In the name of rational certainty, it is encouraged even to draw pragmatic lessons from the dissents and miseries these emotions have caused throughout history.³³

²⁹ Houellebecq, *Atomised*, 324.

³⁰ Moraru, “The Genomic Imperative,” 268. See also 268-69.

³¹ Houellebecq, *Atomised*, 374.

³² Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 383, 139.

³³ See for instance Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 153-54.

Most of the other activities which the neohuman pursues serve to sustain its thinking selfhood as well as help empower it. They are there to help preserve a continuous logical engagement with the world. Their purpose consists in the perpetuation of a rational objectification of their world. They aim to help them see their environment as capable of being appropriated by the intellect. For the neohuman regime, the only state of being that will lead to enlightenment is a consistent affirmation of this mind-set through every experience it encounters.

To maintain this assertion without end, one's lifestyle is preset to ensure that it will minimize, as far as possible, any form of external interruption in its procedures. It devises a discipline that does its best to alienate randomness and innovativeness from its programme. The neohuman daily regime is grafted by "an exhaustive cartography of all imaginable life situations."³⁴ It seeks to fortify itself from any experience that it has not planned. In this regard, physical contact with other beings is also discouraged. Everything is structured in such a way that the rational ego will not be threatened or challenged by the new. This is indeed anticipated by Vincent, the prophet of a religion upholding the neohuman form of immortality. Daniel25 expresses this fundamental character of his regime when he says:

It can be said that what characterises us best, in relation to our predecessors, is undoubtedly a certain conservatism. Humans, or at least humans of the last period, adhered, it seems very easily, to any new project, quite independently of the direction of the proposed movement; *change* in itself was apparently, in their eyes, a value. On the contrary, we greet innovation with the utmost reticence, and only adopt it if it seems to us to constitute an undeniable improvement.³⁵

The unfamiliar can contest the autonomy and confidence of the rational ego by having it face what it might not be able to understand. Nothing should be able to undermine the free authority of the intellect over existence. The neohuman day-to-day conduct is structured in such a way that the ego would remain intact and secure in its mastery. The regime is predicated on stasis rather than change, stability rather than flux, and ultimately, one that is based on timelessness rather than time. As Daniel25 announces, "Closing the brackets on becoming, we are from now on in unlimited, indefinite stasis."³⁶ Stasis allows for the uneventfulness necessary to practice one's rational contemplativeness.

A mode of life tending towards security and familiarity is mandatory if I am to distance myself from my emotions, personality, and world in order to engage in objective reflection. Noumenal knowledge can only be truly gained if I separate myself from the concerns of my particular identity and the immediate effects that the surrounding environment can have upon me. In this respect, one of the main tenets of the Supreme Sister is the strong belief in "[t]he existence of a residual mental activity, detached from all everyday concerns and oriented towards pure knowledge." Existence must assume the neutrality of a lifeless object so that the self will be free enough to dissect it with its intellectual processes of thought. Subjectivity must inhabit an impassive space that is untouched and uncommitted to existence, indifferent to it, to

³⁴ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 392.

³⁵ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 361. See also 280.

³⁶ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 372.

understand that existence *as itself, in itself*, without biases. To partake of ‘true’ knowledge, one must perpetually abide in the “obvious neutrality of the real.”³⁷

For the neohumans, the final enlightenment of the rational mind will bring about pure and eternal analytical detachment. A mind that has realized its rational potentialities to its fullest is a mind that will abide forever as an absolute dissociation from the idiosyncrasies of one’s character and feelings, and one’s world. According to neohuman doctrine, this highest attainment is the key to true freedom. Forever unencumbered by anything, one will reside in a freedom or lightness of being that brings calm, tranquillity. “We must, in a word”, says Daniel²⁵, “reach [this] freedom of indifference, the condition for the possibility of perfect serenity.”³⁸ The epiphany of the grand finale which the neohuman lineages are supposed to be advancing towards will inaugurate this deep peace that resides in the nothingness sustaining the fully rational gaze.³⁹

Scientific disengagement is practiced in the very studying of the life story. By meditating on the memoirs’ events *through* the principles of the Supreme Sister and an ever accumulating body of previous critiques on the events and critiques commenting on each other, one is increasingly alienating oneself from the emotional ‘truths’ which those events speak of. The further one goes down the line of clones, the more these memoirs lose their human singularity as they are progressively distorted by the growing work of analyses being written about them. The life story is progressively subjected and eclipsed by a rational appropriation. The illogical intensity of its lived events, what it means *to live* through such events, is steadily neutered and thus forgotten by the cold categories of the analytical mind. An intellectual detachment is therefore ever growing between the original vision of the story and its reader. The neohumans’ reading process is marked by an increasing separation between the emotional subversions expressed by the narration and the cool stance of the rational gaze absorbed deeper and deeper in its logical judgements. To read here is to fortify and expand one’s cognitive ego. What was lived becomes yet another neutral spectacle for the spectator mind to decipher.

The neohuman’s extensive daily routines also serve to sustain its detachment. To bar off any interruption to its perpetual equanimity, it is encouraged to live a sedated and isolated life. The neohuman indeed spends most of its time inside its enclave meditating on existence. Physical interaction with other members of the community is very rare. Communication takes place only electronically through the safe distance provided by screens. Even so, this interchange is often apathetic simply because the subjects are prone to misanthropy. Their genomic modifications and the type of behaviour they are trained to follow both aim to reduce their potentiality for emotion to the barest minimum. They incline them to live in the “cold ecstasy”⁴⁰ of intellectual self-absorption.

The Neohuman Tragedy: When Science Fails

Routines make up a good part of the neohumans’ lives. Their effect is of central significance to the kind of mind-set which the neohuman is supposed to uphold at all

³⁷ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 371, 393.

³⁸ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 326.

³⁹ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 326; Moraru, “The Genomic Imperative,” 271.

⁴⁰ Moraru, “The Genomic Imperative,” 276.

times day by day. Habitual actions create security and comfortable familiarity within one's life in excluding any new possibilities from taking place within their sphere of influence. The predictability of their rhythms constitutes protectiveness, which in turn induces reassurance and calm. The anxiety or excitement of novel experiences is barred from this kind of conduct: existence as a threat is constantly kept at bay.⁴¹

Repeated daily activities lull by virtue of their repetitiveness. They tone everything down to the equanimity that comes from the protection felt by their foreseeability. Their security acts as a tranquilizer. It coaxes one into a mild trance that is absent of any strong feeling or any thought. The subject forgets itself as it lets itself give in to the rhythms. A gentle entrancement takes place, taking it away from its self-identity and the emotional sensitivity that comes with it. It now finds itself situated outside all the pressures that come from its past and future. It inhabits the continuity of a present that is serene in its freedom from everything else, in its nothingness. Routines are a numbing procedure.

Senescent human characters in Houellebecq's fiction also often submit themselves completely to a lifestyle of habitualness. Their reason for this choice, however, differs from the neohumans'. While the neohumans see routine as a means of helping them maintain a rationally perceptive state of mind, ageing humans see routine as an escape route from their awareness of death. The numbing quality of repetitive actions here acts as an anaesthetic for their plight.

On the one hand, the nothingness behind repetitiveness is instrumental towards the analytical mind-set. It is seen as a method which in the end can help direct the subject towards a deliverance of the rational mind. On the other hand, this nothingness is sought as its own end, its hypnotic qualities. In luring the subject away from its self-consciousness and its distress, it becomes therapeutic. The effect of routine supplies one with a certain amount of precious sedation. For several of the characters, this is further augmented with the use of pharmaceutical drugs. The pursuit of routine and the consumption of drugs are often seen to coexist with one another in Houellebecq's portrayal of those who have 'retired' from life. "I live a quiet, a joyless life," Annabelle tells Michel in *Atomised*,

At nights I read, I make herbal tea and hot drinks. I go to see my parents every weekend, I spend a lot of time looking after my nephew and my nieces. Sometimes I get scared at night; sometimes I feel that I need a man around. I take tranquillisers and sleeping pills, but they're never really enough. I just want life to go by as quickly as possible.⁴²

"I don't do any dance, no more sport, nothing," Isabelle confesses to Daniel in *The Possibility of an Island*. "I don't even go swimming anymore. I do an injection in the morning, one in the evening, and in between I look at the sea, that's all. I don't even miss you, at least not often. I want for nothing [...]."⁴³ The nothingness sought for in routine is ultimately a weak form of the true nothingness which these characters ultimately all desire: the absolute oblivion of death. Repetitive moments are here seen as small doses of the final end.

⁴¹ See also Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 406-407.

⁴² Houellebecq, *Atomised*, 279-80.

⁴³ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 116.

It is in the nature of recurrence that it can eventually estrange itself from the purpose that had instigated it at its origins. Ritual actions, if followed for a long period of time, can gradually distance themselves from the peculiar significance one had once attributed to them. A growing detachment from these actions' cause takes place. Their infinite repetitiveness drains their meaning, even their very *meaningfulness*, out of them. Their endless perseverance gradually abstracts them from the very possibility of any comprehensiveness. Instead, they assume an existence *for themselves*. The procedures carry on but as devoid of any signified. They are performed perfunctorily, for the sole purpose of being performed. They persist as empty actions, actions followed mechanically.

To dedicate one's life to routines can eventually lead to their absorption in oneself as impulses. The subject starts exercising them with the same unconsciousness it exercises its other natural habits. Their former deliberateness becomes instinctive. In gaining possession of the subject, repetitiveness can divest it of its individual will, of its freedom of thought. The subject would surrender itself to a machine of movements of its own making. In this sense, routine assumes an autonomous life of its own. Detached from a free will and meaning, it can grow into a performance that refers only to itself. It becomes a self-reflexive conduct played outside of any conscious decision.

Likewise the neohumans' lives are progressively taken over by the discipline of activities they are taught to adopt. This discipline comes to dictate not only what they do but who they are. All of the clones are subsumed by its increasingly meaningless movements, appropriated by them. Their individual wills give way to an almost complete conformation with this impersonal code of conduct. Intellectual autonomy is oppressed by this overwhelming arrogation. One's independence of thought is surrendered to the mindless ease of habits. Ironically, what was intended to function as a means to preserve one's contemplative detachment now turns out to be its terrible suppressor. Routine as a deliverer of scientific detachment becomes an oppressor of this same detachment. There is here a loss of oneself to the tranquil addiction of recurrence. As Daniel²⁴ remarks,

there was undoubtedly the pleasure of constituting a functional organism, one that was adequate, conceived with the purpose of accomplishing a discrete series of tasks – and these tasks, through repetition, constituted a discrete series of days. All that has disappeared, along with the series of tasks; we no longer really have any specific objective [...].⁴⁴

Torpor, apathy, weariness, exhaustion, and boredom are all states that expressing this full slide into the passivity of habit. "Happiness should have come," Daniel²⁵ says later on,

the happiness felt by good children, guaranteed by the respect of small procedures, by the security that flowed from them, by the absence of pain and risk; but happiness had not come, and equanimity had led to torpor. Among the feeble joys of the neohumans, the most constant revolved around organisation and classification, the constitution of small ordered sets, the meticulous and rational displacement of small objects; these had proved insufficient [...]. [The lucid thought that knew deliverance] had only been produced in insignificant proportions, and it was, on the contrary, sadness, melancholy, languid and finally mortal apathy that had submerged our disincarnated generations.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 3.

⁴⁵ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 383.

The failure of the scientific worldview that underpins the neohuman community hinges upon its *excess*. Paradoxically, by promoting a life that is predetermined *exclusively* on one ideology, it undermines the very authority and effectiveness of that ideology. The invulnerable security this worldview aims for ends up becoming a source of suffocation. The quotidian that it obsessively propagates as liberation brings about a perpetual depression clogging any capacity for lucid thought.

Blanchot describes this threat implicit in a life devoted to familiarity and predictability through what he calls the “secret”. To give oneself to a life “without secrets and which has taken away all possibilities”,⁴⁶ can lead to an experience of that very secret of “*no secret, or no appearance of any secret*”.⁴⁷ A life where all possibilities are known and foreknown, where the possibility of novelty or any form of possibility beyond my control is virtually inexistent, can lead to my subjection to the *unknown*. I come to a point where my world has become so mundane, so hackneyed, that it ceases to mean anything anymore. The familiarity of my surroundings has become so exhausted, so exhausting, that this very exhaustion deprives them of their usual comfort. The clarity in everything is so clear that it loses its clarity. Repetitiveness can defamiliarize the familiar, reducing it to something that is obscure to my commonplace interpretative gaze. A world that has no secret gradually appears *itself* as a secret. This is a secret that comes from the very lack of all secrecy. It comes from an exposure that is too redundant to expose anything. “The quotidian”, Blanchot explains in *The Infinite Conversation*, is “that which is most difficult to uncover [...]. It does not let itself be grasped. It escapes. It belongs to insignificance, and the insignificant is without truth, without reality, without secrets.”⁴⁸

What is secretive about the secret of no secret is its heavy superfluity. Suffering it, I am submitted to a world that is too transparent in its habitualness to signify anything. Phenomena reveal nothing: they appear as revealing nothing. Beings, places, and objects manifest themselves as a presence of this nothingness. Any thing that is encountered displays itself like everything else: yet another face of insignificance disclosing nonsignification. I cannot really distinguish this from that because all that I am surrounded by is a presence of absence, an “exteriority without interiority”.⁴⁹ Objects and beings have retreated into the superficiality of their own ‘image’. They expose themselves as copies of their original selves, presences without their usual presence, visible as infinitely empty. I find myself before what has

no more interiority, for everything that is interior is deployed outwardly, takes the form of an image [...]. [T]he essence of the image is to be entirely outside, without intimacy, and yet more inaccessible and more mysterious than the innermost thought, without signification, but summoning the profundity of every possible meaning unrevealed and yet manifest.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. Lycette Nelson (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 46.

⁴⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 137.

⁴⁸ Quoted and translated by Shaviro, *Passion and Excess*, 112, from Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*.

⁴⁹ Pascal Massie, “The Secret and the Neuter: On Heidegger and Blanchot,” *Research in Phenomenology* 37 (2007): 49.

⁵⁰ Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 14.

There is an inexorable starkness in images that incessantly contests all understanding. The implacableness of their exorbitant visibility alienates them from my reality. Their bareness is too bare to leave or hint at any form of acquaintance with it. An existence of images belongs to what is irrevocably foreign; a place that reveals itself as the immutable outside to my self-identity and its perception. Daniel24's last poem before he leaves his incarnation testifies to this crushing ennui emerging from a life submitted to the recurrence of the known:

*Insects bang between the walls,
Limited to their tedious flight
Which carries no message other
Than the repetition of the worst.*⁵¹

The same excruciating emptiness is sometimes also suffered by humans who, like the neohuman, lead a life or a long period of that life estranged from passion. As Houellebecq insists, "When the sexual instinct is dead, writes Schopenhauer, the true core of life is consumed; thus, he notes in a metaphor of terrifying violence, "human existence resembles a theatre performance which, begun by living actors, is ended by automatons dressed in the same costumes"."⁵²

It is the very nature of the neohuman regime that brings down its own authority. This subversion takes place through a transition from one mode of experience to another. The nothingness affected by routine, the nothingness that elicits equanimity and serenity, turns into the nothingness of intense weariness and exhaustion. The nothingness that allows a composed detachment from one's existence turns into the experience of a nothingness *within* that same existence. Whereas the first sustains a rationally lucid relationship with the world, the second disrupts the world as meaningful, as mine, and therefore disrupts its relationship with me, disrupts me, my selfhood. One helps assert the ego while the other oppresses and subverts that ego. A nothingness that empowers is perverted into a nothingness that disempowers.

The way this condition is suffered also identifies it as another form of death awareness. Its distinct agony seems to characterize it as another event of submission to dyingness. The malady incited by the decline of the human body is the same as the malady incited by the neohuman's ideology. The agonies of the first are essentially of the same nature as the second's.

Both ageing humans and neohumans find themselves exposed to an existence which they have no power over. They are awoken to an actuality which is fatally dissociated and indifferent to their quotidian world. Whether it is somatic deterioration or the neohuman's ritualistic life, this actuality assumes a sovereign and autonomous foreign presence of its own. It irrupts into everything: what had been *my* reality, my *selfhood* that had lived and understood that reality. What marks the suffering that captures this interference is its sense of violation. It destroys the foundations of my familiar world and its experiences and in doing so it restrains me from affirming myself. I am alienated from the habitual security or stability upholding my life because this

⁵¹ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 153.

⁵² Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 189-90. See also *Atomised*, 338-39; *The Possibility of an Island*, 59, 373.

force is incessantly disjointing all my attempts at reassuming existence in accordance with my understandings. Every possibility of interpretation and decision is incessantly made impossible, every determination subjected to futility. I am plunged into the despair of an endless inhibition at reclaiming myself through my possibilities. Before this foreign existence, I am thus left powerless. I suffer myself as an inability to be myself. I am incapable of being anything but myself as incapacity.

One Last Denial: Desiring Desire

The peculiar malady caused by their system motivates some of the neohumans to leave their community of isolation in search for a better alternative. The depressive condition which their worldview subjects them to provokes some of them to take off in the hope of finding a new society where neohumans and some remaining humans live peacefully together. Marie23's, and after her, Daniel25's 'defection' is driven by the possibility of a new form of community.⁵³

What attracts the deserters to this kind of life is the prospect of passionate intensity. By living with other humans, they intend to experience above all what they had once called 'love'. Barred from this experience by the values of their ideology, they are now in search for it. Their quest is a quest for something they lack any understanding of simply because their society had always closed its doors to all forms of emotional sensitivity. Since its very beginning, it had predetermined them and predisposed them to an existence devoid of feeling.⁵⁴ What often really drives the neohuman out of its home is in fact not a desire for love but *a nostalgia* for that desire. Speaking for himself as well, Daniel25 points out:

I was convinced that neither Marie23 [...] nor Marie22 [...] had known desire either. On the other hand what they had known, and in a singularly painful way, was nostalgia for desire, the wish to experience it again, to be irradiated like their distant ancestors with that force that seemed so powerful.⁵⁵

The desire to rekindle what humans had felt presents for these neohumans the promise of a way out of the worldview that had been imposed upon them. More accurately, it anticipates a freedom out of the subjugation they had been suffering under that worldview. Theirs is a search for a way *out of themselves*. Love or a certain idea of love is aspired to because of its promise of self-surrender, the promise to leave behind the distress that the scientific regime provokes in the rational self. Emotional abandon becomes the new panacea of the future. Just like their human predecessors, these clones run towards love once again as a flight from existential agony, to *escape* from death awareness.

The neohuman willingness to seek ways of living that are different from the solipsistic isolation encouraged by its community is the end result of the *failure* inherent in the scientific-rational worldview. It is a decision that is ultimately spurred from a crucial misconception rooted in the very nature of this ideology. Science sees itself as

⁵³ Moraru, "The Genomic Imperative," 281-82.

⁵⁴ See Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 49, 63.

⁵⁵ Houellebecq, *The Possibility of an Island*, 370-71. See also *Atomised*, 239; *The Possibility of an Island*, 275, for the human characters' experience of nostalgia for desire.

having cured death through the neohuman system. It sees itself as having accomplished what other worldviews could not accomplish. The death it has defeated, however, is a physical death. It relates to one's corporeal degradation and its final demise. The true problem remains unsolved. Death as an existential experience still haunts the new species. Existence still brings the existent to its heels, dispossessing it of itself and all its powers. Notwithstanding their immortality, the neohumans are still brought face to face with the miseries of dying, with its process of continuous debilitation. Death presides over them as the insufferableness of a living paralysis. If science has overcome death as a biological condition, it has not overcome death as a suffering *in* life. At the heart of the science establishing the neohuman system is the confusion of death awareness with death. The cure turns out to be its own poison.



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Cura lui Houellebecq: toate maladiile se vor sfârși în neoumani⁵⁶

Romanele lui Michel Houellebecq evocă o societate contemporană obsedată de moarte. Comportamentul său de bază este determinat de o groază permanentă. Houellebecq adesea face aluzie la cele trei acțiuni umane principale care sunt întreprinse cu scopul de a ieși din această situație penibilă: hedonismul, iubirea și cunoașterea științifică, toate bazându-se pe negare.

Acest articol explorează relația distinctă pe care aceste viziuni ale lumii le posedă în cunoașterea morții. Se axează în mod extins pe viziunea științifică din comunitatea futuristă a neoumanilor, descrisă în *Atomised* [Particule elementare] și *The Possibility of an Island* [Posibilitatea unei insule]. Neoumanii sunt văzuți ca succesul științei de a fi creat o ființă care nu îmbătrânește și nu moare. Eseul dovedește însă că această realizare se referă doar la aspectul fizic al morții. Neoumanul, în cele din urmă, se regăsește pe sine suferind de o *conștientizare* a morții. Ca și celelalte două viziuni, știința nu reușește să dezlege misterul experienței existențiale a senectuții. Pentru Houellebecq, știința este concepută cu rolul de a conduce omul *către*, în loc să-l salveze din maladia pe care era proiectată să o vindece.

⁵⁶ The original version of this essay first appeared under the same title in the online journal *The Gender Forum: An Internet Journal for Gender Studies* 28 (2010): <http://www.genderforum.org/issues/engaging-questions/editorial/>. The present article rewrites and greatly expands on many of the themes that had been broached in the earlier, much shorter publication.