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<T>Beyond the Humanism/Posthumanism Debate: The Educational Implications of Said's Critical, Humane Praxis</T>

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<AB>ABSTRACT. The late Edward Said sought to place critique and, indeed, self-critique at the heart of humanism. While the posthuman critiques surrounding the (im)possibility of humanism in postmodern times tend to focus on human autonomy, rationality, and essentialism, Stephen Chatelier here explores the idea that Said's writing on humanism could help us shift the focus from issues of ontology towards those of practice. Such a move, he argues, prioritizes the ethico-political aspect of human engagement. Rather than making an attempt to defend Enlightenment or Eurocentric forms of humanism, Chatelier probes two distinct possibilities that arise from Said's democratic humanism. First, he considers to what extent a construction of humanism as practice can enable us to see critical posthumanism as a

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form of Saidian humanism. Second, he explores how (post)humanist discourse might continue to be of use in precipitating thinking among educators about ethico-political imperatives of education in an era shaped by complex cultural and political relations and a dominant neoliberal rationality.

Introduction

Although it could be argued that humanistic ideas remain firmly embedded in Western education today,¹ it is also the case that many in academia have long given up on humanism, both as a viable philosophy and as a foundation for education. On one level, in regards to humanistic education specifically, some may argue, as do Duck-Joo Kwak and Paul Standish, that the “obvious enemy of humanistic education today seems to be the predominance and pervasiveness of economic concern.” Such a driving force, they suggest, “brutally instrumentalizes every level and corner of education from national policies for public schooling geared toward the economic interests of the nation to individual learners’ pursuit of education dedicated exclusively to the acquisition of skills suited to the market.”² If humanistic education is the romanticized idea of cultivating the inner self for its own sake, how could it survive in such a context? On another level, humanism faces a perhaps even more serious philosophical and ethical problem. Gert Biesta writes: “I have not only argued that it is questionable whether it is possible for human beings to define their own essence or nature — something which is connected to discussions about the death of the subject and the end of man,” but, more importantly, he suggests, “humanism is an undesirable strategy because it introduces a dividing line between those who meet the particular “‘norm’ of what it means to

be human and those who do not or are unable to meet this 'norm.'"³ The philosophical critique of humanism has given rise to a variety of posthumanisms that, despite their differences in perspective and emphasis, seek to chart a future in which humanism exists as a trace. As some posthumanists have put it, there is not only the need to mount a metaphysical critique of humanism, but also the ethical challenge of overcoming its anthropocentrism.⁴

While this philosophical and ethical critique is certainly an important one, I want to suggest that humanism needs to be freed from the assumption that it is a static, easily definable notion that exists as an unchangeable entity. As such, humanistic education itself needs to be reimagined as something different than *paideia* or "the cultivation of something that is not only potentially already 'there,' but that is also seen as the 'true form' or essence of the human being."⁵ In the remainder of this article, I will first attempt to show how Edward Said's particular understanding of humanism questions the fixed assumptions of the kind of humanism criticized by Biesta. Next, despite its attempt to overcome humanism, I will try to show how posthumanism, rather than being antithetical to humanism in a necessary sense, could actually be conceived as a form of humanism. In doing so, I make a humble attempt to try and shift the humanism/posthumanism discourse away both from the space of binaries and from the paradigm of emergence that conceives of posthumanism as extinguishing its predecessor. Finally, I will offer some modest suggestions as to how this Saidian (post)humanism might contribute to the promotion of an educational agenda that counts for more than national and individual economic progress, emphasizing instead the lived experiences of people in their entanglement with the realities of a world structured in

dominance. Furthermore, I argue, a specifically Saidian humanism has the theoretical and political resources to make a difference in the complex spaces of education that are marked by cultural, ideological, and religious difference. In doing this, I hope to illustrate how it is that Saidian humanism is better suited to provide a more complex and creative response to the influences of more instrumentalized approaches to contemporary education than other critiques reliant on binary logic and structuralist renderings of concepts such as neoliberalism. In short, I am arguing that Saidian humanism has specific contemporary relevance that other approaches such as critical pedagogy may not. And, importantly, in doing this, I hope to help the reader to see and reflect on why it is that a Saidian form of humanism might be particularly important for a contemporary education landscape that must be understood as taking place within a highly negotiated, and therefore dynamic and complex, set of relations.</TXT>

<1>Edward Said and Humanism of Democratic Critical Praxis</1>

<TXT>The common conception of an essentializing humanism is a construct that can seemingly be dismissed out of hand. Why, indeed, would anyone wish to resurrect it? From the outset, I want to make clear that such a humanism is not something I would wish to defend or resurrect. Nor am I interested in recapturing a Eurocentric humanism and its accompanying canon of “worthy literature.” Instead, I am interested in a more complicated — if ambiguous, even slippery — kind of humanism that is championed by Said. This is a humanism of praxis that, he argues, must be critical of itself to be a humanism at all.⁶

For Said, commitment to the exploration of the specific historical conditions that gave rise to discursive formations such as Orientalism and Humanism, ensures that provisionality

and contingency are always part of his understanding of humanism.⁷ Said's *Orientalism* was indebted theoretically to Michel Foucault, as evidenced by his lack of interest in the "origins" of Orientalism and his focus on both the conditions giving rise to Orientalism and its effects.⁸ Hence, I suggest, Said's provisional and nonessentialist understanding of humanism makes ontologically based definitions, and critiques, of humanism problematic. As soon as a critique of humanism presumes a static "naturalized" existence, this critique fails to grasp the dynamic nature of humanism. This is not to say that we can completely avoid using language that suggests fixity or something ontological, but we can try and examine humanism not only philosophically but also with a keener awareness of its cultural politics. Said helps in this regard, I argue, in the way he presents us with a model of humanism "in" and "as" practice; that is, humanism as democratic criticism.</TXT>

<1>Problems with Posthumanist Critiques of Humanism</1>

<TXT>I suggest, therefore, that we immediately have a problem with the ways in which posthumanist critique tends to function. Largely concerned with the Enlightenment version that envisions the triumph of Man, posthumanist critics tend to have little interest in the broader genealogy of humanism. Rather, working from the basis of an Enlightenment humanism, their interest is in exploring the implications of future possibilities for a decentered man,⁹ identity politics,¹⁰ the conceptualization of subjectivities,¹¹ the impact of technology,¹² and nonhuman materialities¹³ for how we understand the human person. Such interests have little to do with humanism as a practice or a strategy, but see it as an ontological construct. Indeed, Cary Wolfe makes clear that the philosophical foundations of humanism and the subsequent essentialized

notion of the human are at the heart of the posthumanist critique. He writes, “the philosophical and theoretical frameworks used by humanism ... reproduce the very kind of normative subjectivity — a specific concept of the human — that grounds discrimination against nonhuman animals and the disabled in the first place.” So too, in her important book, *The Posthuman*, Rosi Braidotti begins with the claim that “not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been human, or that we are only that.”¹⁴ She continues, “the concept of the human has exploded under the double pressure of contemporary scientific advances and global economic concerns” and we have, thus, “entered the post-human predicament.”¹⁵ Yet the inevitability of the posthuman overcoming of the human is, as Braidotti acknowledges, based on an understanding of the human in Enlightenment terms; that is, philosophical, essentialized, and universalistic.

As I have already suggested, however, despite Said’s own critique of essentializing and totalizing discourses, he was not prepared to dismiss a humanism that, as practice, functions to question, scrutinize, and critique. It would seem that he was too convinced that “speaking truth to power” — moving beyond the quietism of the personal and into the din of public debate — was a necessary practice in the pursuit of justice.¹⁶ Put another way, Said was motivated by an ethical imperative to question authorities in pursuit of a freer and more equitable world.

This is not to imply in any way, however, that advocates of posthumanism are somehow uninterested in ethics. This is certainly not the case.¹⁷ Many posthumanist writers have emerged from disciplines that have a deep concern for the ethico-political, such as critical studies and feminism. This is evidenced by Braidotti’s, *The Posthuman*, in which her argument has a deeply

ethical core and trajectory. One cannot help but get the sense that, over time, Braidotti herself became increasingly concerned with the problem of ethics within the antihumanist strands of posthumanism. Her book is, in many ways, an argument for a new kind of posthumanist understanding that prioritizes the ethical impulse of affirmation over critique. So it seems to me that we can see Braidotti as sharing with Said what could be described as an ethical urgency in her theorizing. Yet, Braidotti differs from Said in her continuing focus on ontological questions surrounding the human. Conversely, Said's focus on, and involvement in, what he would see as humanistic practice does not concern itself with the ontological. While, of course, posthumanists may be involved in political issues, there appears to be a greater focus on the philosophical underpinnings of the human as a notion in their scholarly work. Conversely, while Said obviously engages in theorizing, his greater focus post-*Orientalism* seems to be on the political value of critique. Thus, Said's humanism, as political practice, takes a very different shape to that of those with a philosophical interest in humanism.

This is not to say that Said does not theorize, but rather to suggest that his aim is not theory but political intervention. And of course, on the other side of the ledger, just because philosophical inquiry might not immediately address the needs of present lived experience does not mean that such a concern is absent. Indeed, I have been trying to defend posthumanists on this point. But what I am concerned to highlight here is the contrast between Said's political articulation of humanism over and against posthumanist ontological critiques of humanism. However, while Said may have eschewed the label "posthumanist," he may not have dismissed it out of hand. As Hau-man Ng writes:</TXT>

<EXT>Said prefers the anachronistic term “non-humanist humanist” rather than “post-humanist” or “anti-humanist” because he is thinking between humanism and antihumanism or posthumanism dialectically, reciprocally, contrapuntally and relationally in spatial rather than temporal terms; there is no overcoming of any position across historical time but only criss-crossing dialectics and relations in the intellectual space.¹⁸</EXT>

<BlockTXT>So, beyond the paradigmatic differences between Said and posthumanist theorizing, Ng suggests that there may be a space in which the two share more than it seems. Indeed, one just might argue, however tentatively, that a Saidian humanism could be understood as a kind of posthumanism.</BlockTXT>

<1>Posthumanisms as Saidian Humanism</1>

<TXT>As such, before concluding with a discussion of what a Saidian humanism might mean for education, I want to briefly consider this possibility of the Saidian and posthumanist projects having more in common than a focus on — albeit an altogether different — humanism. While wary of the possible conflation of posthumanism into Said’s democratic criticism, I want nevertheless to explore the questions of whether or not, once our understanding of humanism shifts from the realm of ontology into that of praxis, posthumanism could actually be considered a form of humanism. It is a dangerous question largely because posthumanism is so often seen as antithetical to humanism. To test this a little, I want to suggest that, inasmuch as

posthumanisms critique Enlightenment humanism, they actually function as a Saidian form of humanism. Even those posthumanisms that are committed to antihumanism could arguably be seen as humanistic in the Saidian sense because of their commitment to the practice of democratic critique. There are at least two caveats that I think need to be made at this point.

First, while I am asking whether or not posthumanism could be considered a form of Saidian humanism, I do not think that the two are the same. To try and illustrate this, we might consider soccer/football. There is the version of soccer that is played outdoors, as a contest between two teams, with eleven players on each side, for a duration of ninety minutes. This sport is played at an elite, professional level, with countries across the globe competing in the World Cup. There is also an indoor version of the game that is played between two teams, with five players per side, for a duration of forty minutes. This version of soccer is not played at an elite level. While again wanting to avoid a “purist,” “nativist,” or “Platonic-form” characterization of the outdoor version, it is fair to say that indoor soccer is a type of the outdoor version without being the same as it. Indeed, there are differences between the structure and practice of each form of soccer that make them quite distinct. In the same way, I want to suggest that critical posthumanism may be considered a type of Saidian humanism that cannot simply be reduced to it.

Second, the question of whether or not posthumanism is a *form* of humanism is unlikely to be of much interest to Said. The reader may have already begun to wonder if the point I am making and, indeed, the previous analogy, assumes an ontological rendering of humanism. As stated earlier, it is difficult to speak of humanism in any other way. To always differentiate

between posthumanism and humanistic practice would be cumbersome for both the author and the reader. Moreover, “humanistic” does inhere the notion of humanism or it would be meaningless. Nevertheless, it is at least worth noting that I am not trying here to establish the existence of a humanism, so much as attempting to understand the relationship between posthumanism and Said’s humanism. This is because it could be readily assumed that one is necessarily antagonistic of the other. Certainly, it could be that, in the realm of discourse, the two speak past one another. What I am trying to argue, however, is that posthumanism, if seen as a critical practice, becomes not antagonistic or dismissive of humanism, but actually participates in it. Here, I take a phrase from Radhakrishnan: “humanism is what humanism does.”¹⁹ It is in this sense, I suggest, tentatively, that posthumanism may be able to be thought of as a humanism.

Interestingly, the posthumanism that Braidotti advocates throughout her book is referred to as “critical posthumanism,” which she traces, in part, to the postcolonial work of Said.²⁰ In fact, Braidotti reads Said’s claim that “it is possible to be critical of humanism in the name of humanism” as a critical posthumanistic sentiment.²¹ That is, self-critique becomes necessary once one acknowledges the situatedness of subjective experiences in history as well as the injustices that follow; for example, cultural dominance, such as Eurocentrism. But, once we have acknowledged, along with Foucault, that there is no real humanism to discover, but, rather, there is the interrogation of the conditions that give rise to constructions of humanism, one may ask why the concept of humanism must be overcome by posthumanism. Is it possible for the ethical and political problems with Enlightenment humanism to be addressed through a critical

humanistic interrogation? Could it just be that many of the perceived problems for humanism — the human atrocities during World War II, for example — suggest the need for a renewed rather than reneged humanism? Certainly, any assumption that antihumanism is the necessary outcome of a crisis in Enlightenment humanism seems far too simplistic.

Indeed, in some of the more recent literature, there appears to be a shift away from antihumanism as the foundation for posthumanism.²² Furthermore, greater attention has been paid to the trace of humanism in the work of critical posthumanists such as Neil Badmington, who, while writing that he is “not for one moment interested in preserving humanism,”²³ suggests that the “writing of the posthumanist condition should not seek to fashion ‘scriptural tombs’ for humanism, but must, rather, take the form of a critical practice that occurs *inside* humanism, consisting not of the wake but the working-through of humanist discourse.”²⁴ Perhaps such acknowledgments suggest that critiques of humanism need to be more nuanced and specific, rather than focusing too much on a particular Enlightenment version, just as an analysis of posthumanism should consider its internal difference. Moreover, if, as Badmington notes, posthumanism must be seen as the working through of humanism, rather than viewing posthumanism as dissolving humanism, one might argue that its persistent dialogue with, and critique of, humanism sees posthumanism as *functioning* in a way that is not too different from a Saidian version of humanism. Perhaps, then, there is the possibility for offering a fatal critique of essentialist and homogenized universalist elements of humanism without assuming that it is possible to overcome humanism.

One fruitful way of understanding humanism in a way that disarms the critique of

posthumanism is, I think, offered by Chris Higgins's notion of the "humanist moment."²⁵ He writes that "if humanism entails essentialism (the view that human beings have a capacity or quality that defines them as such), the antihumanist is right to see danger." Moreover, he acknowledges that it is indeed possible — as has been suggested in this article — to work from within "a strand of humanist discourse concerned with identifying what distinguishes us from 'the brutes'."²⁶ But similar to what I have been arguing here, such a humanism is not, Higgins contends, our only option and certainly not our best option. Instead, he argues that humanism is a moment — an intervention — that occurs within the cultural space of a dialectical tension. That is, when one extreme or the other within a dialectic threatens to extinguish the existence of the very dialectic through its triumph over the other, humanism intervenes as a moment that prioritizes a radical middle ground.²⁷

The reader has undoubtedly already identified the irony of this notion of the "humanist moment" as it relates to the posthumanist discourse and its treatment of humanism. Indeed, Higgins argues that often, antihumanists themselves, through their critique of the excesses of traditional humanism, actually practice humanism. Such a view relies on a notion of humanism that is neither a theory nor a neat philosophical construct but, instead, is a practice, a strategy, an intervention or, in Higgins's words, a moment. More than that, humanism is always something that is, in a Gadamerian sense, becoming as it is interpreted and named. Thus, Higgins argues, "it should not be seen as static or monolithic."²⁸ Instead, he aligns himself with Said who, he argues, "rightly observes ... [that at the heart of humanism] is 'resistance to *idées reçues* ... opposition to every kind of cliché and unthinking language.'"²⁹ Moreover, he writes, "the

humanist is devoted, Said insists, to ‘dismantling’ the bombardment of ‘pre-packaged and reified representations of the world that usurp consciousness.’”³⁰ Indeed, included in this dismantling work is that which is done by those, including posthumanists, who seek to challenge the representation of the human as a fixed essence. Again, highlighting the similarity between posthumanists’ complex articulations of the human (such as those indebted to Gilles Deleuze, Bruno Latour, and others) and that of Said, Higgins continues to argue that “allergic to fixed essences, reductive definitions, and final verdicts, the humanist strives to see the world as it is, in its messiness and complexity.” Echoing Said’s commitment to provisionality, he writes that “the humanist offers not a conclusion for all times, but an intervention tailored to his or her time.”³¹ For the purposes of the argument being put forward in this article, it is this tailored intervention, conceptualizing humanism as a practice or, as Higgins prefers, a “moment,” that helps us to see the posthumanists (writing along an antihumanist trajectory) as functioning humanists. To be clear on this point, the posthumanist intervention into the philosophical, political, and ethical problems associated with a Eurocentric humanism is this “humanist moment” that Higgins speaks of.

As the final section of my article will suggest, by engaging posthumanism in a less antithetical, or binary, manner — a manner that is motivated by a desire to overcome humanism — and seeing it instead as a form of humanist practice, we may be able to reinscribe certain elements of humanism such as agency, ethics, equality, democracy etc. without succumbing to oppressive, totalizing European notions of humanity. And perhaps most importantly, by reimagining humanism as a practice and a political strategy, we may be able to draw on the

kinds of resources we need for reimagining an education that counts for more than national productivity in a global market. To do this, however, it is worth first summarizing the argument so far about exactly how we might understand humanism.

To articulate an easy — that is, an uncomplicated — version of humanism that might guide and mark educational endeavors, I suggest, an impossible task.³² In acknowledging this, I wish to identify the following characteristics — all intertwined to varying degrees — of a humanism that is useful for education broadly speaking.³³ First, humanism need not assume an essentialized self, but it does affirm human agency. That is, with Said we acknowledge that all identities are produced and cultivated,³⁴ and that this production is the result of contributions made by all humankind (not just the Western or European self).³⁵ But this acknowledgment — this critique of Eurocentric and universalist humanism — need not lead us to abandon the human altogether. As I suggested earlier, there is good reason to suggest that even some of the posthumanist attempts to do this find themselves returning to the human subject all the same. Yet there is a need to relativize both the value and the significance of the human. To acknowledge human agency is not to discount the agency of nonhuman entities. Thus, life is always one of interdependence between the human and the nonhuman. Second, when acknowledging human involvement in the construction of meaning and the production of discourse and political activity, humanism must include the commitment to questioning and critiquing all orthodoxies that will, otherwise, tend towards totalization. This element of humanism, I suggest, carries a politico-ethical weight. Ingrained in this need to question is not only the acknowledgment that humans (though not exclusively) do possess agency, but also an,

arguably, consistent characteristic of humanism — an orientation toward a better world for all.³⁶ Humanism is not an elitist agenda that allows the privileged to maintain their privilege at the expense of the marginalized. Humanism assumes that a better world always involves greater freedom, peace, opportunity, and justice for those who need these most. There is no ultimate picture or end-point, but there is a trajectory. As Stathis Gourgouris puts it, Said's work manages "the most extraordinary intertwining of the skeptical with the utopian,"³⁷ and this can make it difficult for the critic to "get at" his humanism. Third, and I hope this should be clear by now, humanism is flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances. Part of this plurality is that there may be multiple forms of humanism within a particular time and place. In this article I have suggested that, while the particular critical posthumanism of some scholars may well be a form of Saidian humanism, I have tried not to conflate the two so as to naively ignore their differences. The plurality of humanism results from the reality that it is a practice that takes place historically within specific sociocultural settings and thus, necessarily, is both shaped by culture as well as being a shaper of culture. This is true also, of course, of the human. So, our understanding of the human self and of humanism must always be provisional and contingent.³⁸ Thus, the humanism we are speaking of assumes that humans have agency, but this is not uncomplicated or unfettered. It sustains a commitment to questioning orthodoxies and ensuring both critique of the self and the other. It has an ethical impulse for a better world; it is democratic in nature rather than elitist. Finally, it is plural, differentiated, and dynamic. We might say that "humanism is, then, a critical relation to the world which aims for the betterment of the individual and of society. For education, this means educating for human flourishing,"

which always involves an engagement with the nonhuman in mutually beneficial ways.³⁹

Perhaps what needs to be made explicit here is that central to this explication of humanism lies the idea(s) of human flourishing and a better world as worked for by humans; goals that become lost either intentionally or unintentionally outside of the humanist frame. The implications that such a humanism, as described here and throughout the article, might have for education are many and varied. Indeed, the implications cut across educational philosophy and policy as well as curriculum and pedagogy.

Toward an Alternative Humanistic Education

It may be that the key for education in this relationship between humanism and posthumanism is that by discussing again the ethical, political, and material implications of theorizing the human life, we educators might find ways to foreground the importance of education based on criteria other than those confined to national and individual school interests. Certainly, at a policy level, it is difficult to argue against the idea that education globally is increasingly bound to goals of productivity, whether in relation to students' skill development or capability as a "global citizen."⁴⁰ It is necessary to note, however, that, following this article's reconceptualizing of humanism as practice, a humanistic approach to education should not necessarily be conceived one-dimensionally as developing and "bringing out" the human essence of an individual.⁴¹ Such an endeavor would be an immediate return to a philosophical/ontological basis of humanism. As Kwak and Standish suggest, "The idea of humanistic education, construed in terms of the development of the life of the mind for its own sake comes to be seen as ideological remnants of the Western Enlightenment project: it is

focused on 'a humanism of the self' to the neglect of 'a humanism of the other.'"⁴² This is not to suggest that the concept of the individual or indeed humanity can be abandoned. It is simply to suggest that humanism as a practice does not have its focus on the development of the individual self. Rather, the kind of humanistic education that might ensue from Said's democratic criticism is one that seeks the continued calling into question of both knowledge claims and the problems of equity and justice in everyday practice. Such an education certainly seeks the "betterment of humanity," but not in a way that assumes a priori exactly what this looks like. A democratic ethic of questioning and interrogation is continually open to what might emerge in each particular context. Indeed, while neoliberal conceptions of productivity may well be of particular relevance today, key questions about educational priorities, content, and processes will change, as they always have, with shifts in the cultural and political contexts of education. In other words, any conception of humanism or humanistic education should always bear a "provisionality."⁴³ Such provisionality should be the product of an education that is self-critical in the name of humanism. Moreover, this revisionist impulse animates an ongoing challenge to the orthodoxies and the imperialism that can develop within the history of culture. While no doubt not entirely unique, Said's humanism seems to be more intentional, or perhaps self-conscious, about the need to understand any humanism as provisional than other, more orthodox renderings of humanism are.⁴⁴

The interrogation of knowledge claims can be seen as a particularly important task in an era in which cited evidence can seem to amount to uncontested claims to knowledge or truth. Critical humanism, of which posthumanism may be considered a part, seeks to disrupt and hold

accountable such authoritative claims to knowledge and truth. Thus, despite the common critique of humanism as a totalizing project, its actual function, according to Said, is to question anything that makes totalizing claims. Such a practice of humanism requires educators to develop their curriculum and pedagogy in ways that help students to investigate the conditions in which “evidence” and “knowledge” have been understood, constructed, negotiated, validated, and, importantly, used. Such a task will need, at various times, to involve analysis of both the “foundations” and the *telos* of authoritative claims to knowledge. Said’s analysis of Orientalism is an example of this. He seeks to show not only the historical conditions in which Orientalism developed, but also why Orientalism developed; that is, the kinds of end that Orientalism serves. Greg Dimitriadis writes that, in *Orientalism*, Said “discussed the ways texts become part of a larger ‘strategic formation’ or assemblage of material about the Orient that takes on the veneer of self-evident truth or fact.”⁴⁵ Once this truth or fact is established, not only can one now claim to possess “expert knowledge,” but also the ensuing body of authoritative knowledge — which is seemingly beyond critique — crafts “for Said, a fantasy about the Orient that has effectively served to underscore and support the dominance of the West.”⁴⁶ Where possible, educators at all levels should encourage the questioning of the “Orientalisms” of the day.

Of course, it could be argued that one of the continuing “Orientalisms” today, perhaps often affirmed unknowingly due to its self-evident truth, is humanism. In *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Said critiques twentieth-century humanism in terms of both the conditions in which it developed and the ends it served. Beginning his critique, Said contests that

Eurocentrism, in “its misleadingly skewed historiography, the parochiality of its universalism, its unexamined assumptions about Western civilization, its Orientalism, and its attempts to impose a uniformly directed theory of progress,” ultimately ends up “reducing, rather than expanding, the possibility of catholic inclusiveness, of genuinely cosmopolitan or internationalist perspective, of intellectual curiosity.” The problem is, he suggests, that “looking back at most of the twentieth-century history of American humanism, one is obliged to say that it has been seriously afflicted with the kind of Eurocentrism that can no longer be allowed to remain unquestioned.”⁴⁷ If this is part of the foundation of a humanism to be critiqued, the purpose or *telos* is to reclaim triumphantly “our” heritage, or to celebrate the Western miracle or American globalization.⁴⁸ In other words, it is a positioning of the Occident over the Orient, which is, of course, an act of violence towards the Other. Yet, this very critique of humanism is, for Said, why humanism must not be abandoned in our sites of education. Humanism that is critical of itself provides the resources to interrogate knowledge claims that tend to dominate.

The practice of humanism as critique is about living lives oriented towards justice and inclusiveness. Education that upholds this practice of humanism aims to question orthodoxies in the pursuit of disempowering oppressive ideas, forms of knowledge, and practices. It is an education concerned less with national identity or competitiveness than with cosmopolitanism and co-operation. And it is also an education concerned less with the measurement of outcomes through testing than with testing the measures by which we construct knowledge. So humanistic education — that is, an education where critical humanism is practised — is an education that actually aims to ensure that truth can be spoken to power so that justice can

prevail. As such, Said challenges educators to engage in work that moves beyond the flattened and instrumentalist measures of success prevalent in universities and schools today.

In response to the dominant conditions forming contemporary educational policy and practice, educators — whether they see themselves as posthumanist or humanist — may choose to follow Said by creating spaces where democracy, humanism, and criticism converge. While not possible all the time, teachers can try, within their curriculum planning, to prepare lessons where students engage in criticism, motivated by a humanism, rather than mere quibbling; a humanism that opposes the inhuman and that is also infused with a democracy that sees notions of justice and equality as clearly linked to the actual lives of people. This would mean that learning involves not a philosophizing over the abstract, but a critical reading of the “texts” that are the concrete realities of everyday life, both locally and in other cultures and lands. To understand humanism as a practice, educators are dispositioned to shift their primary focus from the preservation of the cultural giants of the Western tradition and onto helping their students negotiate the complexity of the world.⁴⁹ “What concerns me,” Said writes, “is humanism as a useable praxis for intellectuals and academics [and I would add teachers and students] who want to know what they are doing, what they are committed to as scholars [educators and learners], and who also want to connect these principles to the world in which they live as citizens.”⁵⁰ The power of engaging this kind of humanistic education, I suggest, is not related to its capacity to precipitate what might seem like the impossible destruction of the “neoliberal” agenda. Rather it is its ability to intervene in this and any other historical moment, to question, problematize, and dismantle the status quo and to creatively imagine and actively

engage in the practice of alternatives that function subversively.

It could well be argued that the kind of critical pedagogy developed by educationalists such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren already functions to question and undo the dominance of technocratic education. One value of Saidian humanism, however, alongside its avoidance of essentialism, relates to the way in which it approaches the object of critique. Whereas critical pedagogy generally assumes that the problems facing education are structural, Said's literary-based humanism is more sensitive to the shifting dynamic between "text" and "context." This is important if one is to accept the point made above that the neoliberal agenda cannot simply be destroyed. Dominant notions of critical pedagogy historically conform to a structuralist ontology, which positions it to understand neoliberalism as something that can be overcome or dismantled.⁵¹ As Wendy Brown has persuasively argued, however, neoliberalism is better thought of as "a normative order of reason [which has] developed over three decades into a widely and deeply disseminated governing rationality."⁵² Neoliberalism is, then, according to Brown, more amorphous than traditional critical pedagogy might have it. To conceptualize neoliberalism in this way necessarily changes the way in which educators should approach the critique of its influences. I would argue that any theory or practice is misguided if it presumes the possibility of something akin to a revolution, or that the subjects of the neoliberal regime possess the possibility of emancipation from it. The intention is laudable, but the analysis of the contemporary conditions is, perhaps, insufficient. Said's humanism, through its focus on local and specific critique, and on contrapuntality, does not assume political revolution with a predetermined *telos*. For educators burdened by various and differently manifested implications

of neoliberal rationality, a resistance that requires the complete overthrow of neoliberalism is likely to lead to despair. Such a scenario is not conducive to action. Hope remains, however, when educators are able to find everyday ways to creatively critique specific structures and practices that instrumentalize the field of education and degrade its purpose.

Moreover, there are many forms the critique can take. One example from Edward Said relates to his long-running involvement in the Israel–Palestine conflict. When, in 1999, he collaborated with the Israeli pianist and conductor, Daniel Barenboim, to create an orchestra comprised of talented young musicians from both Israel and Palestine, Said offered a creative critique of the conflict, without eradicating it.⁵³ The orchestra, nevertheless, continues to receive its share of criticism: one being that the orchestra's existence means little when Israeli tanks continue to occupy Palestinian space, and another being the Eurocentrism of a Middle Eastern orchestra performing a Western repertoire.⁵⁴ Yet, both these issues illustrate the importance of Said's notion of humanistic criticism. It is a practice that does not see paradox as something to be avoided but, rather, something generative in the search for new ways of being. Moreover, there is a certain modesty in the political claims of the orchestra in not pretending to be the ultimate undoing of the political conflict but merely an example of peaceful cooperation. The relationship of this to the Western musicality of the orchestra illustrates that a dominant rationality can be used in service of the dominated. When "difference" is encountered relationally, the ontological status of "dominant" and "dominated" is disrupted, if not eradicated. Finally, the example of music is used here because of the way in which it makes explicit that Saidian humanism as the practice of democratic criticism is not confined to the logics and practices of, for example,

literature or political activism. Thus, for educators, the lessons are that humanistic practice may take many forms, and treats the problem of neoliberalism as something to be challenged from within. Whereas critical pedagogy is more inclined to an emancipatory rhetoric that assumes a binary structure,⁵⁵ Saidian humanism aims to speak truth within the recognition of a complex set of power relations. In very plain language, a humanistic framework for education acts as an ethico-political imperative to empower educators to make a human intervention in matters of policy, philosophy, and practice as an attempt to focus the educational program toward working to foster a better world for all. Within an educational landscape now so clearly marked by the consequences of transnational movement of people, ideas, and cultures — a landscape that necessitates genuine and careful cultural relations between people — as well as by the growing influence of neoliberal rationality, Said's nonessentialist, politically engaged humanistic practice is desirable because of the way in which it so relevantly provides opportunities for today's educators to work toward educating for a better world.</TXT>

<FN>1. My research focuses on the West, but this issue affects both West and East. See, for example, the collection of papers concerning humanistic education in both the West and the East in Duck-Joo Kwak and Paul Standish, eds., "Cultivating Humanity and Transforming the Knowledge Society," special Issue, *Asia Pacific Education Review* 15, no. 1 (2014).

2. Duck-Joo Kwak and Paul Standish, "Introduction: Cultivating Humanities and Transforming the Knowledge Society," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 15, no. 1 (2014): 1.

3. Gert Biesta, "Cultivating Humanity or Educating the Human? Two Options for Education in the Knowledge Age," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 15, no. 1 (2014): 18.
4. See Gavin Rae, "Heidegger's Influence on Posthumanism: The Destruction of Metaphysics, Technology and the Overcoming of Anthropocentrism," *History of the Human Sciences* 27, no. 1 (2013): 52. Here Rae argues that a focus on Heidegger's influence on posthumanism emphasizes the "destruction of metaphysics" and "attempted overcoming of anthropocentrism." Francesca Ferrando also sees posthumanism as the "overcoming of human primacy." Francesca Ferrando, "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations," *Existenz* 8, no. 2 (2013): 26–32.
5. Biesta, "Cultivating Humanity or Educating the Human?," 15.
6. Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 10–11.
7. Ibid., 12.
8. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), 22–23.
9. See Rosi Braidotti, "Posthuman, All Too Human: Towards a New Process Ontology," *Theory, Culture and Society* 23, nos. 7–8 (2006): 197–208; and Florence Chiew, "Posthuman Ethics with Cary Wolfe and Karen Barad: Animal Compassion as Trans-Species Entanglement," *Theory, Culture and Society* 31, no. 4 (2014): 51–69.
10. See Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
11. See Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2013).

12. See Nicholas Gane, "Posthuman," *Theory, Culture and Society* 23, nos. 2–3 (2006): 431–434; and Elaine L. Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).
13. See Chiew, "Posthuman Ethics with Cary Wolfe and Karen Barad"; the interview with Karan Barad in Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2012); and Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?*.
14. Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?*, xvii.
15. Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 1.
16. Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Vintage, 1996), 102.
17. Perhaps especially so with respect to the posthumanist scholars I engage with in this article, who we might regard as critical posthumanists. For a brief discussion of *critical* posthumanism, see Stefan Herbrechter, "Review of *The Posthuman* by Rosi Braidotti," *Culture Machine* (April 2013): 1–13, <http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/495/516>.
18. Hau-man Ng, "'The Non-Humanist Humanist': Edward W. Said and His Critical Practice" (PhD diss., University of Hong Kong, 2008), 14, <http://library.hku.hk/record=b4163395>.
19. R. Radhakrishnan, "Edward Said and the Possibilities of Humanism," in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, ed. Adel Iskander and Hakem Rustom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 435.
20. Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 45–54.
21. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, 10.

22. Rosi Braidotti's work is one example of this, though it is worth noting that she cites her antihumanistic roots as the inspiration for her posthumanism. See Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 45–46.
23. Neil Badmington, "Theorizing Posthumanism," *Cultural Critique* 53, no. 1 (2003): 10.
24. Ibid., 22.
25. Chris Higgins, "The Humanist Moment," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 15, no. 1 (2014): 29–36.
26. Chris Higgins, "Humanism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Ethics of Translation," *Educational Theory* 64, no. 5 (2014): 431.
27. Higgins, "The Humanist Moment."
28. Ibid., 35.
29. Higgins, "Humanism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Ethics of Translation," 431.
30. Ibid., 432.
31. Ibid.
32. This is in part because, as I have argued here, Said performs his work in a register altogether different from both the conservative defenders of humanism and the staunch antihumanists.
33. My articulation of humanism in particular does, for the purposes of this article, draw inspiration primarily from Edward Said. What follows here, however, includes ideas about humanism and education from previous work I have done on the subject.
34. Stathis Gourgouris, "The Late Style of Edward Said," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 25 (2005): 41.
35. Edward W. Said, "On the University," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 25 (2005): 28.

36. Stephen Chatelier, "Towards a Renewed Flourishing of Humanistic Education?," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 36, no. 1 (2013): 81–94.
37. Gourgouris, "The Late Style of Edward Said," 41.
38. Fazal Rizvi and Bob Lingard, "Edward Said and the Cultural Politics of Education," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 27, no. 3 (2006): 294.
39. Chatelier, "Towards a Renewed Flourishing of Humanistic Education?," 83.
40. Leslie G. Roman, "This Earthly World: Edward Said, the Praxis of Secular Humanisms and Situated Cosmopolitanisms," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 27, no. 3 (2006): 357–368.
41. Biesta, "Cultivating Humanity or Educating the Human?," 15–16.
42. Kwak and Standish, "Introduction," 1–2.
43. Rizvi and Lingard, "Edward Said and the Cultural Politics of Education," 294.
44. Closely linked to this, as I will raise briefly later in the article, Said's commitment to issues of culture — or cultural politics — also highlights the way in which he takes more seriously, perhaps, the necessity of cultural exchange as characteristic of humanism. I would suggest that this is another way in which Said's humanism might be seen as different from that of, say, Martha Nussbaum or many critical pedagogues.
45. Greg Dimitriadis, "On the Production of Expert Knowledge: Revisiting Edward Said's Work on the Intellectual," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 27, no. 3 (2006): 371.
46. *Ibid.*, 372.
47. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, 53.

48. Ibid., 54.

49. This is not to say that there is a problem, per se, with the “Western Canon.” Indeed, while Said provides a particularly stinging criticism in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* of the kind of relationship that Allan Bloom and others have to the Canon (pp. 17–21), he also argues for — and demonstrates — philology (with particular reference to Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* [1953; repr. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003]) as a central resource for humanism (pp. 57–118). This move of Said’s could beneficially be explored further, but such exploration is beyond the scope of this article.

50. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, 7.

51. For example, Peter Mayo writes, “It is the neoliberal ideology that underlies much of the discourse concerning education in this day and age.” Peter Mayo, “A Rationale for a Transformative Approach to Education,” *Journal of Transformative Education* 1, no. 1 (2003): 39.

52. Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 9.

53. Chuen-Fung Wong, “Conflicts, Occupation, and Music-Making in Palestine,” *Macalester International* 23, no. 1 (2009): 279,

<http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol23/iss1/19>; and

Gert Biesta, “Cultivating Humanity or Educating the Human?,” 18.

54. Peter Tregear, “Edward Said and Theodor Adorno: The Musician as Public Intellectual,” in *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, ed. Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007).

55. In "Paulo Freire and the Politics of Postcolonialism," Henry Giroux confirms this tendency toward binarity in Freire while also indicating that contemporary critical pedagogy has become more aware of the complex set of relations highlighted by postcolonial scholars such as Edward Said. Henry Giroux, "Paulo Freire and the Politics of Postcolonialism," in *Breaching the Colonial Contract*, ed. Arlo Kempf (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2009).

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