

Acceleration. Address. Anthropocene
Unseen: A Lexicon. Anticipation.
Apocalypse. Appreciation. Bloom.
Business. Carbon. Care. Cloud.
Conditions. Cosmos. Death.
Dispossession. Distribution. Dog.
Dream. Dredge. Drone. Earths.
Ecopolitics. Edited by Cymene Howe
& Anand Pandian. Ends. Environing.
Eschaton. Expenditure. Exposure.
Extinction. Fiction. Fire. Flatulence.
Flock. Generation. Gluten. Gratitude.
Heat. Hyposubjects. Industrialism.
Installation. Interstellar. Leviathans.
Melt. Miracles. Models. Monoculture.
Mood. Narcissus. Nature. Nemesis.
Ocean. Petroleum. Photosynthesis.
Plastic. Plenitude. Power. Predation.
Preparedness. Price. Probiotic.
Quotidian. Recalcitrance.
Relationships. Riddle. Rivers. Ruin.
Seeds. Shit. Slavery. Smugglers. Species.
Stability. Steps. Suburbs. Surprise!
Surreal. Sustainability. Terrain.
Thermodynamics. Thresholds. Timely.
Trump. Turtle. Unknowns. Unseens.
Vulnerability. Wildness. Zoonosis.

ANTHROPOCENE UNSEEN

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Fig. 1. Hieronymus Bosch, *Ship of Fools* (1490–1500)

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Anthropocene Unseen: A Lexicon

Edited by Cymene Howe
& Anand Pandian



*This book is dedicated to the young climate activists
in the streets and in our communities
who are demanding a better future yet unseen.*

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Gratitude

Iza Kavedžija

Considerations of the Anthropocene and its changing landscape are urgent and unsettling. They have to be. But is there a way to help people consider the current state of affairs while preventing the impulse to disavow responsibility, or to at least diminish an escapist urge to change the topic? I would like to suggest that gratitude, as a particular mode of attunement, might be fruitful in this regard and is ripe for cultivation.

Gratitude combines generosity and humility. It allows for a recognition that what we have and what we deserve are not the same. It encourages us to recognize the importance of others in making our lives liveable. Even the most autonomous individuals will have to admit that we all owe a great debt of gratitude to a great many people, for all kinds of favors, support, and kindness throughout our lives. During my own fieldwork with older Japanese in Osaka, I was repeatedly struck by the extent to which the involvement of others and serendipitous encounters were woven into people's life stories. One can easily recount a certain sequence of events in terms of one's own choices and decisions—but equally, like my older interlocutors, one could consider carefully the roles that other people, situations, and events have played in those choices.

Their stories reminded me that gratitude, while bringing out the role of others in our decisions and actions, does not make

us feel as though our life choices have been made for us either. It could be said that gratitude makes acting in the world possible, by making us aware of the interconnected nature of life. Becoming attuned in this way, one sees the involvement of others not as a limit to our freedom, but as enabling, facilitating, protecting.

My senior acquaintances and friends expressed gratitude, to me and in conversations with each other, even in relation to challenging events which were, upon reflection, seen to have been valuable opportunities for learning. In this sense they transformed negative experiences into sources of value — gratitude here underpins the sense of living well. This reminded me somewhat of *naikan*, a therapeutic practice developed in Japan, sometimes compared to a form of psychotherapy (Reynolds 1989). It can be seen as an example of the powerful effects gratitude can have for the way we inhabit the world. As Chikako Ozawa-de Silva (2006) writes in her insightful ethnography, *naikan*'s roots in Buddhist thought draw on the insight of “interdependent selfhood”: we are not independent actors in this world, but are here thanks to others. The person undertaking *naikan* (literally “inner-looking,” an introspection), guided by a practitioner's questions, is asked to quietly recollect their past while reflecting on three specific themes in relation to a significant person in their life: what they received from this person, what they returned to this person, and what trouble they caused to this person. The interviewer guiding the process visits them every few hours in a semi-secluded space and inquires about their recollections over the course of seven days, reconstructing or rearranging the memories of their life. This frequently results not only in an altered perception, but also in intense feelings of guilt and gratitude in relation to the care and favours received from others, which are seen to constitute one's life (Ozawa-de Silva 2006). While *naikan* is far from widespread, what captured my attention in its description was the emphasis on the efficacy of gratitude, and how strongly this resonated with my own interlocutors' discussions of living well.

If gratitude fosters attention to relationships, these need not be limited to people. Gratitude enmeshes human and non-human actors in subtle ways. My older friends were thoughtful in relation to their possessions and to the environment around them. They often passed on the things they were no longer using as part of the eternal, incessant, and extensive gift giving network. Grateful for a favor they received, they tried to offer something that might in turn be useful to the receiver. Many older women told me they preferred passing on their kimonos and precious possessions to people around them while alive, not waiting for them to be redistributed after their passing: “That way, you can see things being used and get so much more joy out of them.” When handing things to others, they would often express the hope that something might be of use. If disposing of something, with reluctance, they might think how well the thing had served them. In this way gratitude involves non-human beings and material objects.

What are the consequences of such an orientation in ethical terms? Political theorist William Connolly proposes an ethical orientation of immanent naturalism, in other words, an ethics not grounded in a transcendental field, acknowledging that many of our ethical reactions originate in the visceral and “infransensible.” To temper this tendency, he calls for a cultivation of a “nontheistic gratitude for the rich abundance of being amid the suffering that comes with being mortal” (Connolly 2002, 105) as a source of ethical inspiration. While not necessarily available or suited to everyone, in Connolly’s pluralist framework, this kind of orientation can be likened to a Foucauldian technology or “tactic” of the self (Connolly 2002, 107) — one among many. In his recent work, Connolly links this orientation of gratitude explicitly to the increasing recognition of complex interactions of global capitalist processes and non-human geological processes in the Anthropocene. He suggests an orientation of existential gratitude as one of the ways to “face the planetary” and the reality of climate change (Connolly 2017). If existential gratitude seems somewhat abstract, taking a cue from Japanese elders might make it seem more palpable and practical: small gestures

and daily objects all figure differently around one when received with gratitude.

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Acceleration A biodiesel plant in agro-industrial Amazonia.
Photo by the author.

Anticipation Larson C Ice Shelf Rift In Motion. Courtesy of
NASA.

Apocalypse “The Fourth Horseman” from the *Apocalypse of
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Courtesy of the artist.

Business Workers carrying solar panels for Masdar City
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Carbon Still from an infrared video published by
Environmental Defense Fund. Invisible to the human eye,
the Aliso Canyon methane plume released an equivalent
of about 2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the
atmosphere in 2015–2016. Used with permission.

Care Students of herbal medicine “garbling” goldenrod
blossoms by pulling them off their dried stems. The
blossoms will be used in medicinal tincture and teas. Photo
by Charis Boke.

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- Extinction** Activists in dinosaur costumes protested a planned freeway expansion project by “haunting” a BC Liberal Party campaign stop in Tsawwassen, British Columbia, 2 May 2009. Photo courtesy of StopThePave.org.
- Fiction** Rachel Whalen. Gated Community, 2019. Acrylic, metal pull tabs, and thread on canvas.
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- Plenitude** Population to plenitude? Photo by Rob Curran on Unsplash.
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- Surreal** Negative space of a removed warning sticker on the window of a former FEMA trailer. Photo by Nicholas Shapiro.
- Terrain** A windy day in Salta Forestal, province of Salta, Argentina. Photo by Gastón Gordillo.
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- Timely** Glacier. Fláajökull, East Iceland. Photo by author.
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- Unknowns** MEDIUM MEDIAN, Alicja Kwade, 2016. Image courtesy of Whitechapel Gallery, London.
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- Vulnerability** A typical Sophia home. Photo by author.
- Wildness** Lichen growing on a brick wall in Massachusetts. Photo by Dana J. Graef.
- Zoonosis** Child receiving a rabies vaccination after a dog bite at Moramanga Hospital, Madagascar. Photo by Genese Sodikoff, 2015.

