

Ferrando, Francesca. *Philosophical Posthumanism*. Bloomsbury Academic. 2019. 271. ISBN 9781350059504

Posthumanism has gained serious traction from the beginning of the twenty-first century onwards. No longer an exotic buzz word, erroneously interpreted as just another manifestation either of humanity's self-loathing, or of technophilic rejoicing, it is currently fundamental to philosophical reflections, be it on "the human," "humanity," "species," "human technogenesis," "zoe," "techne," "biotechnology," "bioethics," and their future. A major contribution to this philosophical elevation of Posthumanism is Francesca Ferrando's thought-provoking and meaningful inquiry published under the title *Philosophical Posthumanism*. Released in 2019 by Bloomsbury Academic as part of the publisher's Series on Theory, with Rosi Braidotti as general editor and author of the Preface, Ferrando's monograph asks and answers some of the most pertinent, and troubling (in the context of a global pandemic), questions regarding the multi-perspectival, multilayered approaches to Posthumanism and the vast array of attendant concepts, ideas, and beliefs.

Ferrando has elected to organize the expansive field she investigates following the Socratic principle by asking three fundamental questions around which she constructs the three main parts of the book. In addition, she has provided a useful navigational tool of thirty subsets of questions, which she investigates in her study. The Glossary of Questions, complemented by the Index, serves as a conceptual map aiding the navigation of the book, which no doubt serves as a valuable study guide and reference text in the field. Major assets of the analysis are the lucidity of the language, the clarity and precision of the straightforward answers to the questions, which are provided, without downgrading the complexity of the issues discussed. Ferrando builds her analysis and expounds on the argumentation previously developed in a number of seminal contributions to the field of Philosophical Posthumanism by Donna Haraway (2004, 2007, 2015, 2016), Rosi Braidotti (2013, 2017, 2018), Katherine Hayles (1999, 2008), Neil Badmington (2000, 2004), Cary Wolfe (2010), and (not to forget) Stefan Herbrechter (2012, 2013, 2014), to name a few.

Ferrando's understanding of Philosophical Posthumanism is defined by a radical and synergetic critique of humanism, anthropocentrism, and dualism. The book's project has three main goals reflected in three main positions: to deconstruct the concept of the human as a historically emergent and exclusionist ideology (regarding race, gender, class, etc.) – post-humanism; to overcome the ontological privilege of the human in relation to the non-human – post-anthropocentrism; to transcend the pairs of dichotomies defining self versus others – post-dualism.

The first part of the book discusses what Philosophical Posthumanism is. Here Ferrando clears up the fog of theoretical confusion regarding the multitude of schools of thought and movements subsumed under the umbrella term of "posthumanism." On the one hand, Ferrando traces the genealogy of the term, specifically in relation to postmodernism and antihumanism with their projects of deconstructing the human (24). For this she pulls important philosophical threads to Heidegger and Nietzsche. On the other hand, she distinguishes between Critical Posthumanism, Cultural Posthumanism, Speculative Posthumanism, Metahumanism, Transhumanism(s) (further subdivided in Democratic, Libertarian, Extropianism, Singularity), and Philosophical Posthumanism, which she sees as connected to other movements: New Realism, Speculative Realism, and Object-Oriented Ontology. In this part Ferrando advances and defends her most important arguments concerning the historical formation of the notion of the human and humanism and claims that although Philosophical Posthumanism does not recognize "any onto-technological primacy to the human, [it] actually resumes the possibility of human agency in a deconstructive and relational form" (52). Ferrando clarifies that posthumanism as a term is also often used to collectively refer to the future developments of humankind. For this meaning, the author proposes the term Speculative Posthumanism (138-139): an important and useful distinction. In addition, Ferrando resists technophilic and technophobic attitudes, characteristic of the digital age, but offers a perception of the machine as an integral part of human evolution perceived as diversification.

The second part of the text revolves around a linguistic and semantic analysis of the constituent elements of posthumanism in both the hyphenated and non-hyphenated variants of the term. By exam-

ining the etymological and taxonomical roots of the non-neutral concept “human,” Ferrando elucidates the ideological constraints of anthropocentrism, which has postulated a hegemonic position of the human versus the non-human animal. It is here that she posits a dual interpretation of the term “human” denoting (a) the human species and (b) a humanistic tradition with a specific historical contextualization. Her call is for an inclusivist and a relational approach to diverse life-forms along the nature-culture continuum.

The third part examines the question whether humans have always been posthuman. Here Ferrando succeeds in deconstructing binary oppositions, which are perceived as reductionist. In particular, she insists on overcoming the limiting mind/body separation. A materialistic approach comes to the fore, which stresses “the embrainment of the body” and “the embodiment of the mind”: the latter with a significant twist, for embodiment in her view does not necessarily have to be physical. Ferrando claims it could be “digital, virtual, or even oneiric” (155). The analysis extends to include important phenomena and processes such as AI (artificial intelligence), Alife (Artificial life), epigenetics, bioethics, eugenics, and others. This section of the book is ground-breaking not only in bringing in interdisciplinary perspectives on the posthuman ranging from quantum physics to Object-Oriented Ontology, but also in offering an original thought experiment in multiverse by way of elucidating Ferrando’s onto-existential understanding of posthumanism.

The concluding part of the book focuses on the question of how we can exist as posthuman(ists). It is in the framework of Philosophical Posthumanism that Ferrando subjects the human to an ultimate decentralization: a radical onto-epistemological, ethical, sociopolitical, biotechnological, and existential “re-signification of being” (181). Being emerges instead as open networks of energies and non-hierarchical relations.

Ferrando’s expounds her view on the philosophy of posthumanism as a cohabitation of theory, poiesis, and praxis, that is, at the intersection of knowledge, production, and action. One can only hope that following the remarkable fusion of theory and poiesis in this text, the praxis of posthumanism can indeed overcome reductionist and discriminatory practices of identity formation and dichotomies between human (self) and non-human (others).

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