

## N. 24 – 2017 (II)

### Limiti e confini del Postumano

### Limits and Boundaries of the Posthuman

#### CURATORI / EDITORS

Giovanni Leghissa, Carlo Molinar Min, Carlo Salzani

---

#### 1. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Carlo Molinar Min, Carlo Salzani

---

*Limiti e confini del Postumano • Limits and Boundaries of the Posthuman*

The Editorial of Lo Sguardo's 24th issue. The article introduces the collection discussing the articles as well as their historiographical placement.

---

#### 2. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Thomas Macho

---

*Animali, umani, macchine. Per un umanismo inclusivo • Animals, Humans, Machines. For an Inclusive Humanism*

The question concerning the relationship between humans, animals and machines has been often posed as a core thematic of post-humanism. The problem is presented with a specific culture-historical perspective, which enables to understand the historical role played by differences and analogies between these three entities. Philip K. Dick's science-fiction work offers a way to engage with the problem, whose imaginative power expressed in his body of work manages to anticipate possible solutions. The author shows nonetheless how history itself can be the right key to understand humans, animals and machines, not only as empty essentialities, but also as agencies in complex relationships, through which we can re-think the existing hierarchies.

---

#### 3. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Roberto Marchesini

---

*Possiamo parlare di una filosofia postumanista? • Is There a Posthumanist Philosophy?*

The past thirty years saw intense discussions about the concept of «post-human» or posthuman condition. Though often starting from profoundly different presuppositions and intellectual perspectives, these debates have inevitably created a well defined and recognizable cultural climate.

What we intend to do in this article is to clarify: a) whether it is possible to define the posthuman project in terms of a movement or cultural climate, or whether the divergence between the different approaches is such that no common coordinates can be found to justify a homogeneous definition; b) what are the most important schools of thought within this philosophical proposal, and whether it is possible to contextualize them according to precise standards; c) whether the definition of posthumanist philosophy is tenable, and what are its peculiarities with respect to the posthuman movement.

---

#### 4. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Francesca Ferrando

---

*Postumanesimo, transumanesimo, antiumanesimo, metaumanesimo e nuovo materialismo. Relazioni e differenze • Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism and New Materialism. Relationships and Differences*

‘Posthuman’ has become an umbrella term to refer to a variety of different movements and schools of thought, including philosophical, cultural, and critical posthumanism; transhumanism (in its variations of extropianism, liberal and democratic transhumanism, among others); the feminist approach of new materialisms; the heterogeneous landscape of antihumanism, metahumanism, metahumanities, and posthumanities. Such a generic and all-inclusive use of the term has created methodological and theoretical confusion between experts and non-experts alike. This article will explore the differences between these movements, focusing in particular on the areas of signification shared by posthumanism and transhumanism. In presenting these two independent, yet related philosophies, posthumanism will stand as a more complete standpoint to reflect upon possible futures.

---

#### 5. INTERVISTA/INTERVIEW: Giovanni Aloï

---

*Arte, postumano e animalità. Intervista a Cary Wolfe • Art, Posthuman and Animality. An Interview with Cary Wolfe*

Since the very beginning, rethinking human/animal relations has entailed reconsidering epistemology, ontology, and ethics. Along the way, on this ambitious journey, contemporary art has constantly provided invaluable opportunities to push disciplinary boundaries and test philosophical notions to a breaking point. Twenty years later, so much has happened in Animal Studies and much more has changed in contemporary art and philosophical discourse. Giovanni Aloï, Editor in Chief of «Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture» interviews Cary Wolfe on the current state of affairs of Animal Studies, posthumanism, and the arts. Over the past ten years, Wolfe has distinguished himself as one of the most influential voices in posthumanist philosophical discourses. What’s left to say? What’s not been said? And what lies ahead for contemporary art and animal studies as speculative realism brings another wave of radical, ontological revisionism?

## 6. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Alberto Giustiniano

---

*Dal sistema al diastema. Il postumanesimo secondo Cary Wolfe • From the System to the Diastema. The Posthuman according to Cary Wolfe*

This article examines American philosopher Cary Wolfe's considerations on the need to redefine the notion of 'posthuman'. The analysis is focused on the reflection on the difference between *humanitas* and *animalitas* and, in the general theoretical framework, its epistemological effects related to the study of life. Moving from some paradigmatic positions emerged in the recent American debate concerning the possibility of delineating a political perspective for the posthuman, the author points out how the reformulation of the term 'posthuman' in 'posthumanism' may represent an alternative way to the opposition between normative essentialism and aporetic critic.

## 7. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Carlo Salzani

---

*From Post-Human to Post-Animal. Posthumanism and the 'Animal Turn'*

The so-called 'animal turn' of the past couple of decades brought about a new focus on animals and animality that traverses the whole spectrum of the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Certainly part of a wider cultural phenomenon – the crisis of humanism in late twentieth century –, it has in turn influenced and transformed posthumanist thought itself, not only enabling it to probe the boundaries of the 'human', but also partially reorienting it towards questions of immanence, embodiment, affects, and providing a more marked ethical and political impulse. On the other hand, the encounter with posthumanism brought to the new discipline of Animal Studies the awareness of the limits of the traditional, still very humanist approaches to animal ethics, and of the necessity of an overcoming of the humanist paradigm, of a new theoretical and methodological approach.

## 8. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Felice Cimatti

---

*Posthumanism and Animality*

*Homo sapiens* has always been an animal species which somewhat 'exceeds' its own nature. Therefore, transhumanism is not that different from humanism. In fact, the latter is but another form of humanism, while posthumanism is a condition completely beyond humanity. More specifically, posthumanism means a form of life which is beyond 'subjectivity'. Such a subjectless life places itself beyond ethics and politics too. Therefore, posthumanism implies a non-humanistic humanity, that is, a form of humanity that finally is animal.

## 9. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Ida De Dominicis

---

*L'interiorizzazione della tecnica. Dal protesico all'estetico • The Interiorization of Technology. From the Prothesic to the Aesthetic*

How would the hybridization between Homo sapiens and machine be considered if this concept could be traced back to the thought of Leroi-Gourhan? The article reviews the concept of hybridization in the posthuman theoretical view, through the accurate scientific demonstration about the 'technical manners' of the genre Homo by Leroi-Gourhan. The paleontologist also redefined the idea of the technique milieu: the focus of his research is on the evolution of the human technical ability and the detection of 'tendencies' that prove the technical nature of the genre Homo. The physical characteristics of the genre Homo are the key which proves how the human technical capacity is not an acquired one but is the result of the match between the human intellectual ability and its environment.

## 10. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Giovanni Aloï

---

*La questione della materialità artistica nel Postumano • The Question Concerning Artistic Materiality in the Posthuman*

This essay addresses the growing importance of materiality in relation to posthumanist discourses in contemporary art. It traces a genealogy of materiality in the Histories of classical, modern, and contemporary Art to explain how the recent philosophical waves of Object-Oriented Ontology and New Materialism have substantially shifted attention to the new materialist conception of matter as recalcitrant: a subversion of the traditional definitions of agency, resistance, and power in art. From this perspective, materiality becomes a provocative ontological problematizer, mapping a dimension of undeniable bio-traces that relentlessly gesture towards new and urgent registers of ethical realism. It is in this sense, that art with a posthumanist focus considers the corporeality and the place of embodied humans and animals within a material world defined by the interconnectedness of bio- and eco-spheres.

## 11. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Davide Sisto

---

*Digital Death. Una morte postumana? • Digital Death. A Posthuman Death?*

This paper analyzes the concept of Digital Death as related to post-humanism. In the first part, the article highlights the features of the dialectic between life and death and how said dialectic is changed by the spread of digital culture. In the second part, it dwells on some digital devices aimed at dissociating electronic identity from biological existence, so as to reach a form of immortality. In opposition to these devices, we find social networks, with their intersubjective nature that, as it updates the philosophical concept of Geisterwelt, brings death back at the core of life. In the third

and last part, the paper compares digital devices and social networks, underlining the difference between those who want to remove death from life and those who want to preserve the educational role of death in our life.

---

## 12. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Boria Sax

---

*Going Back, and Starting Over. The Posthumanism of Shepard, Derrida, Braidotti, and Marchesini*

This article will look at four scholars who belong, at least broadly speaking, to the ‘posthumanist’ tradition, and at the ways in which they endeavor to correct mistakes in the distant past. First, there is Paul Shepard, who believes a false turn took place with the domestication of crops and animals in Neolithic times. His solution is a return to an economy of hunting. Next, there is Jacques Derrida, who finds the fatal wrong turn in Descartes’ *Meditations*, a work often regarded as the manifesto of modernity. Derrida’s solution is to repeat Descartes’ thought experiment of universal doubt, deciding that the one thing impossible to doubt is the existence of his cat rather than of himself. Finally, Roberto Marchesini and Rosi Braidotti locate the error in the Renaissance, most especially in Leonardo’s depiction of Vitruvian Man, and they endeavor to correct its glorification of humankind. All four regard the errors of their mentors as emblematic of an even more universal mistake of humanity at some undetermined time. They are based on highly speculative historical reconstructions, yet they have a resonance, and even a lyricism, that transcends purely intellectual analysis.

---

## 13. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Veronica Cavedagna, Daniele Poccia

---

*Felci, baobab, licheni. Contributo per un’ontologia sympoiética • Ferns, Baobabs and Lichens. A Contribute for a Sympoiethic Ontology*

This article focuses on vegetal life as a paradigmatic alternative to animal and human existence in terms of systematic organization. Through the analysis of three symptomatic vegetal species – ferns, baobabs, lichens – we try to broaden the anthropomorphic/anthropocentrism deconstruction by the inclusion of vegetal alterity, proposing a revision of crucial terms in the posthuman discourse, such as individual, intern and extern, whole and parts. Rejecting the construction of a new normative frame for bioalterity, we aim at defining the ‘stay with’ relation as the valid model of individuation not only for other living beings, but also for that peculiar way of individuation that is knowledge.

## 14. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Gabriele Scardovi

---

*L'ibridazione eccentrica. Alla ricerca di una libertà postumana • The Eccentric Hybridization. Seeking for a Posthuman Freedom*

Interpreting the transition from human beings to human-robotic hybrids, this paper considers the two opposite tendencies of keeping the biological form of life and its neglect in favor of whole artificial bodies, to understand what room there would be for a post-human freedom of movement and action. Comparing some conceptions from last century's anthropological philosophy with the inclination to 'become a thing' that can be found in some process of hybridization with machines, the paper deals with biological metabolism, human eccentricity and the extreme introversion that would possibly be obtained in consequence of cyborg's definitive success. It concludes that it is impossible to exclude that in the future the story of the human species will be represented as an arch of parabola lifting from the level of the inert thing, and finally going back to it.

## 15. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Karin Harasser

---

*Parahuman. Technology, Semi-sovereignty, and Bodies in the Future Perfect*

The article starts with an outline of the current debate on the technical extension and modification of the body. Subsequently, I will argue in favor of adopting a skeptical stance towards any form of versioning and optimization logic related to the body. I will, by contrast, propose other terms: semi-sovereignty and a conception of the body in the future perfect, framed within an understanding of the relation between bodies and technology that I have tentatively called 'parahuman'. Futuristic scenarios all too often already know where the body will end up, which is why they mostly have the character of a curse or a rather banal self-fulfilling prophecy. Therefore, I am asking to consider first of all how it is possible to rethink in a more interesting way the already existing hybridisation between bodies and technology, and how it is possible to challenge futuristic scenarios according to which the 'post' of post-humans is an overcoming of something flawed (the 'natural' body).

## 16. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Roberto Manzocco

---

*Evoluzione autodiretta, tramonto della specie umana e alba degli individui post-umani - Self-direct Evolution, the Sunset of the Human Kind and the Dawn of the Posthuman Individuals*

One of the main concepts promoted by the transhumanist ideology is what we can call 'self-directed evolution': the idea that using more and more sophisticated technologies, we will be able to alter in a non-univocal way our bodily and cognitive configuration. And if we bring this suggestion to the limit, we can easily envision a distant future in which our species will undergo a process of

‘hyper-speciation’, multiplying itself in an almost endless set of new species. More than that: the notion of species itself would lose any meaning, to the advantage of the single individual, which will be able to choose any and every kind of trait he will deem worthwhile. In other words, the evolutionary process will most likely be introjected by the individual, which will become in a certain sense a species in and of itself. If this will be the case, self-directed evolution will not bring about one or more new species, but it will rather dissolve the idea of species in itself: the individual will become ontologically preeminent in regard to its relationship with the notion of species, acquiring a new kind of ‘essential individuality’. In other words, it is an ‘ontological leap’, which would prevent us to apply to our post-human descendants any concept of species. In the first part of this paper, I will cover some inter-related ideas of transhumanism, like ‘self-directed evolution’ and ‘morphological freedom’. In the second part, I will analyze some points of the philosophical debate about the nature of the ‘species’ concept. In the last part I will merge the two topics, trying to extract the philosophical consequences of these transhumanist ideas for the concept of ‘species’.

---

## 17. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Tommaso Guariento

---

*Introduzione al pensiero di Nick Land • An Introduction to Nick Land's Thought*

With this article, I intend to propose a comprehensive introduction to Nick Land's philosophy, taking into account all of his philosophical writings and identifying three main phases of his thought. The first is characterized by the development of libidinal materialism through Kant's metaphysics and aesthetics, Freud's *Todestrieb* and Bataille's *dépense*. The second is focused on Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis, cyberpunk imaginary and the composition of hyperstitional texts, like *Meltdown* and *Machinic Desire*. The last phase, inseparable from his association with the CCRU, leads towards the invention of geotraumatism and complex numerological practices. Eventually, I will try to analyze the ambiguities of Land's thought, especially within the context of his neo-reactionary turn. The viral power of hyperstitions is opposed to the teleological becoming-machine of humanity, creating a dead end. Reza Negarestani's conceptualization of human nature as upgradable entity seems to me the only possible follow-up to Land's original project of ‘escaping the Human Security System’.

---

## 18. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Nick Land

---

*Collasso - Meltdown*

*Meltdown*, here offered in its first Italian translation, is an experimental essay originally performed by British philosopher Nick Land in 1994, successively disseminated online, and recently republished in *Fanged Noumena*, a collection of Land's writings edited by Urbanomic. Following a renewed interest for Nick Land's thought spurred by discussions around the philosophical propo-

sitions of accelerationism, the tangle of post-human visions, geopolitical speculation and xenovirological fantasies developed throughout the dense paragraphs of *Meltdown* has been rediscovered as a classic of cyberpunk theory-fiction, capable of combining the urgency for an exit from the quagmires of postmodernity with prophesizing visions about the inevitable consequences of techno-computational emergence.