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While posthumanism has become an established framework for critically approaching a wide array of phenomena and challenges, its creative and generative potentials do not appear to cease. On the contrary, posthumanism manifests in ever-new, original forms and topics within processes of academic knowledge production and writing. This is exemplified in the latest book by Francesca Ferrando: *The Art of Being Posthuman: Who Are We in the 21st Century?*

The volume follows Ferrando's successful 2019 monograph, titled *Philosophical Posthumanism*, which was translated into several languages. In this new volume, Ferrando adopts an 'encyclopedic' approach, addressing a range of topics—from technological advancements to ecological concerns, passing through education, spirituality, and cultural discriminatory patterns—to examine the existential condition of (post)humans today. The term 'encyclopedic' is not meant here in the rationalistic assumptions of the Enlightenment era, nor in the presumptuous willingness of covering the entire field of knowledge. Instead, it is adopted in its etymological sense of "encyclical education," referring to the circle of arts and sciences considered essential to a liberal education by the Greeks (OED 2024). In fact, the book addresses an extensive array of arguments, creating a kaleidoscopic exhibition of critical issues, gathering around one main (research) question: "who are we?". This classical philosophical query is, however, reinterpreted in a posthumanist sense by assuming a pluralistic understanding of the self at different levels—"the individual, the social, the species, the planetary, and beyond" (2)—and calling for (a) visionary awareness of this condition in light of the growing urgencies of our century.

The traditional structure of a book with chapters undergoes a revamping in this work, which, instead, develops through "Meditations" of different lengths. This expression not only suggests the depth of Ferrando's arguments, but it also implies the active involvement of the readers in a process of self-transformation as the book progresses. As the author explains, this organizational structure functions as a labyrinth, aligning with the term's "symbolic meanings cross-culturally and trans-historically representing the journey of life and death in the search for self-knowledge" (14); this structure invites readers to engage in a non-linear fruition of the volume, encouraging them to "follow their intuitions and deconstruct the transitory structure" of it (14). Each meditation concludes with a section titled 'Farewell,' where Ferrando suggests further ways to break the linear

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fruition of the book by encouraging users to jump back and forth between sections based on the connections they inspire.

The first Meditation focuses on the theme of “Posthuman Self-Enquiry,” where, after clarifying the meaning of the expression “existential posthumanism” —which effectively delineates the author’s perspective to posthumanism in this book (“Existential posthumanism is a path of self-enquiry and self-discovery, aimed at full existential awareness”, 17)—attention is given to elucidating that being posthuman is always a form of ‘inter-being’. Building on Thích Nhất Hạnh’s famous concept “interbeing” (2021) Ferrando expands (and hyphenates) this notion to illustrate its capacity to make people aware that “we are always (p)art of everything” (26) as a way to prompt change and heal the world’s leading assumptions still grounded in anthropocentric and discriminatory humanist axioms.

A more attentive critique to these issues is evident in Meditation 2, “Human Decluttering” where the updated and pop-culture term—‘decluttering’, recently being employed, for instance, in house management and lifestyle content creations on social media—enriches a philosophical discussion illustrating “the practice of removing unnecessary items from overcrowded areas” (31) also in reference to reframing human subjectivities. Ferrando does so by exploring topics such as the human-centric biases ingrained in culture and anthropocentrism, something that, although receiving wide attention by posthumanist scholars in the past few years, becomes beneficial for possible newcomers in the field embarking on the reading of this book. Yet, an original aspect emerges in Ferrando’s development of these issues which ties together different perspectives and arguments: for instance, one can consider how the author combines a more scientific discussion on the evolution of *Homo Sapiens* with a critically revisioning of traditional, dismissive understanding of prehistory. It is through this multivocal argumentative practice that Ferrando highlights how humans are to be refigured as being part of a planetary, material and ontological unicum (albeit pluralistic): “This embodied perception of the Earth, as (p)art of the self, brings forth revealing: we are *where* we are” (52; emphasis in original).

Meditation 3 delves deeper into this topic by embracing the theme of “Biotic Co-emergence.” In this section, Ferrando investigates the embodiment of being by revising processes of micro- and macro- co-emergence that pertain to who we are, in both an organic and a nonorganic sense: “Embodiments do not need to be physical or biological; they can be technological, digital, virtual, symbiotic, oneiric, and even potential” (55). To explain these processes, this section explores topics such as the long-standing evolutionary, biological processes testified by DNA structures, but also current developments in genetic engineering and biotechnologies that can alter them. It is interesting how Ferrando includes in this Meditation a reference to virus and virality, both as an example of inter-being involving both humans and nonhumans (to the extent that this relationship is assessed with the creative expression “viru-us”) and to underscore the role that COVID-19 played in the genesis of the book, as illustrated in the book’s premise.

Meditation 4 offers a discussion on “Ecological Presence,” emphasizing that “We do not just live on a planet: we are (p)art of this planet” (72). This section elaborates on the complexity inherent in the notion of ‘nature’ and how dualistic cultural legacies have often confined it to dichotomous meaning-making—resulting in binaries such as rural/urban; nature/culture—which is now urgent to renegotiate in favor of more integrated visions. This argument both raises awareness on established cultural discourses on ‘greenwashing’ in different contexts, starting from philosophy, and touches on topics such as ‘rights of nature,’ ‘climate change,’ ‘ecosophy,’ and “eco-logy/economy” (86). Ferrando presents these and other issues as crucial for stressing the significance of participating in an existential posthuman evolution plan today. This plan includes, among other



actions, exploring new forms of multi-species coexistence and recognizing environmental dignity: these processes, as described in the book, are instrumental to underline our agency “not only as individuals and societies but as a species,” and ultimately to evaluate our (material and ontological) connection to planet Earth (90).

“Cosmic Constellation” is the title of Meditation 5, where the book’s main argument is expanded onto a broader scope through the incorporation of knowledge and wisdom from astronomy, ancient (civilizations’) cultures, and references to current rising debates on space exploration. Notions such as ‘cosmic chaos,’ ‘gravity,’ and ‘space migration’ are discussed through a posthumanist lens to demonstrate how this wider spacetime perspective allows one to rethink the human along a “possible path towards self-realization,” which eventually leads to the re-conception of us (also) on the basis of “our cosmic self” (94). In addition, this approach invites a broader reflection on the responsibilities and ethical issues regarding new economic patterns, hypothetical extraterrestrial life, and past and present visions of the world.

The book progresses with Meditation 6, titled “Technological Enhancement,” which adds another layer to Ferrando’s core discussion on human-nonhuman ‘inter-being’. As she explains, “Technology is not something we use but something we are: dynamics of existence, modes of revealing” (110). This observation is grounded in the awareness that today’s existence is so intertwined with technological and digital devices—material and immaterial—that an original reinterpretation of Descartes’ famous first principle is needed: “**I am...online; therefore, I am**” (110; emphasis in original). Additionally, by emphasizing that in Ancient Greece, the term *technē*, beyond the notion of *epistēmē*, was also linked to the notion of *poiēsis*, Ferrando shows how technology also functions as a process of worlding. In this sense, AI, alongside other technology-related issues (such as biohacking, big data, microtargeting, and the simulation hypothesis), is to be understood beyond mere dystopian depictions of future scenarios, serving, instead, also as a tool for exploring possibilities of existential dignity, planetary awareness, and self-knowledge.

Meditation 7 delves into “Socio-Cultural Agency,” ensuring that, despite large attention dedicated to posthumanist and post-anthropocentric perspectives, the volume does not neglect urgent social issues, including human rights, politics, war culture, and forms of inclusion and exclusion linked to ableism, sexism, and racism. The tone of this Meditation is affirmative in showing that, as entrenched as these issues may seem in culture today, “it is actually impossible not to change the state of things – **everything is always changing anyway**” (143; emphasis in original). This Meditation advocates for a more attentive approach to processes of categorization connected to one’s identity in systems of societal control, such as through document and data management (“Identity”), as well as practices of knowledge production and education. It is in reference to this very topic that Ferrando envisions and manifests new forms of educational patterns, curricula, and parenting (among other topics) as ways to foster processes of developing awareness regarding the condition of the self in posthumanist terms.

The eighth and final Meditation elaborates on the topic “Ontological Presence,” where many of the reflections emerging throughout the book receive more attentive treatment. These include the clarification of the notion of “(p)art” as an expression of the existential creativity acknowledged by different traditions worldwide. Moreover, attention is given to questions like “What is the art of being posthuman?” (176); “What is the mind?” (178); “Is there a ‘subject?’” (181) through an array of argumentative formats, from storytelling linked to personal experience to references to Western and non-Western philosophical frameworks. This narrative entanglement epitomizes the general pattern of the book, which is pluralistic and rhizomatic, yet with several topics intertwining. This

leads readers to realize that a potential response to the questions posed by the book's subtitle, "Who are We in the 21st Century?" could be: "We Are Everything" (189). This answer, in fact, reflects the awareness, as revealed throughout the book, that personal experiences, reflections, and cultural circumstances are to be taken into account collectively when exploring existential questions.

This consideration is reiterated in a more systematic closing section of the book, titled "Posthuman Mantra," which presents a powerful, summative, inspiring line capable of synthesizing the main argument of the volume: "We Are (P)Art, and Art. Beyond the Human: We Are" (193). This mantra does not function as a traditional conclusion, but rather as the final stage of a journey of self-knowledge that the reading of the book enacts. At the same time, it opens space for continuing to rethink the self, the others, and the world in light of the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The breadth of topics covered in the book makes it valuable for at least two distinct audiences: first, newcomers to the field of posthuman studies, who can find in it practical examples showing how this framework is profitable for engaging critically with multiple contemporary cultural issues; second, experts in posthumanism, who may benefit from Ferrando's inspiring, visionary stance, encouraging exploration of new paths in their research.

Another advantage of this book is the enjoyable reading experience it provides, thanks to the creative narrative style that Ferrando employs. This includes storytelling through biographical anecdotes, succinct summative aphorisms as well as a wise use of repetitions and returns to similar concepts, which creates a circular structure, paralleling the book cover image of a spiral tunnel. Beyond appearing as an original investigation of new forms of academic knowledge production and writing, *The Art of Being Posthuman* favors a dialogue with a wider audience without sacrificing scientific rigor. The book flows seamlessly through a diverse array of references, with crafted notes at the end of the volume guiding readers to solidify the theoretical framework upon which it is based.

Perhaps the book's creative dimension could have been further enhanced by integrating additional exercises into the suggested meditative patterns, which are indeed present in the book but only accessible through a link provided at the end of the volume to Polity's website for free download. I believe that including these materials in the publication itself would provide readers with greater opportunity for reflection and self-discovery, thereby enhancing the existential journey that the book aims to facilitate. Additionally, this choice would promote a slow-paced reading of the volume, which remains a rhythm essential for any meditation. However, this is not a critique but rather a suggestion for possible future editions of the book—which I believe will not be long in coming.

With this original and profound publication, Ferrando not only reaffirms herself as a particularly creative and out-of-the-box voice in posthumanism, but also as a leading scholar aligned with pioneering ways of thinking and envisioning the world alongside what it means to be (post)human in the twenty-first century. It is a must-have book to (dis)orient yourself in the challenges of current times.

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