

# PHILOSOPHY OF POSTHUMAN ART

STEFAN LORENZ SORGNER

SCHWABE VERLAG





# **Posthuman Studies**

**Stefan Lorenz Sorgner (ed.)**

**Volume 5**

**Stefan Lorenz Sorgner**

# **Philosophy of Posthuman Art**

**Schwabe Verlag**



MIX  
Papier aus verantwortungsvollen Quellen  
FSC® C083411

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek  
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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Cover illustration: © Jaime del Val

Cover: icona basel gmbh, Basel

Graphic design: icona basel gmbh, Basel

Typesetting: 3w+p, Rimpf

Print: CPI books GmbH, Leck

Printed in Germany

ISBN Hardcover 978-3-7965-4568-9

ISBN eBook (PDF) 978-3-7965-4569-6

DOI 10.24894/978-3-7965-4569-6

The ebook has identical page numbers to the print edition (first printing) and supports full-text search. Furthermore, the table of contents is linked to the headings.

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[www.schwabe.ch](http://www.schwabe.ch)

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	9
<b>Chapter One: Posthuman Aesthetic Intimacies</b> .....	11
<b>Chapter Two: Preface</b> .....	13
<b>Chapter Three: Philosophy of Posthuman Artworks</b> .....	15
1. Philosophical Underpinnings of Posthuman Reflections .....	20
2. Non-Duality, Technology and Posthuman Works of Art .....	23
3. Posthuman Beauty .....	28
4. Bioart .....	33
5. Cryptoart .....	35
6. A Twist of Art and Technology .....	38
7. Non-Totalitarian Total Works of Art .....	39
8. Conclusion .....	40
<b>Chapter Four: The Posthuman Paradigm Shift as the End of Monotheistic Religions?</b> .....	43
1. Philosophy as Intellectual War of Values .....	43
2. Transhumanism .....	49
3. Critical Posthumanism .....	52
4. The Possibility of Monotheistic Religions after the Posthuman Paradigm Shift .....	56
5. Consequences for the Possibility of Posthuman Religions .....	59
6. Conclusion .....	59

<b>Chapter Five: Aesthetic Concepts of Posthuman Artworks</b> .....	61
1. Aesthetics of Monsters: Patricia Piccinini’s “Graham” .....	64
2. Aesthetics of Hybridity: Eduardo Kac’s “Edunia” .....	66
3. Aesthetics of the Amorphous: Jaime del Val’s “Microdanzas” Video	68
4. Aesthetics of Becoming: Damien Hirst’s “A Thousand Years” .....	70
5. Aesthetics of Twisting: Stelarc’s “Second Life” Performance .....	73
6. Aesthetics of Relationality: Random International’s “Rain Room” ..	75
7. Aesthetics of Bodily Plurality: Orlan’s “Omniprésence. Sourire de Plaisir” .....	78
8. Aesthetics of Superheroines and Superheroes: Jeff Koons’ “Hulk Elvis” .....	82
9. Aesthetics of Smoothness: Hajime Sorayama’s “Sexy Robot” .....	85
10. Aesthetics of Kawaii: Mr.’s “Sweet” Paintings .....	87
11. Conclusion .....	89
<b>Chapter Six: Music</b> .....	91
1. Posthuman Total Works of Music Drama .....	92
2. Opera Now .....	94
3. Techno, Digital and Cyborg Music .....	96
4. Björk and the Creation of New Instruments .....	97
5. AI Music and a Beatles song based on Deep Learning .....	98
6. Conclusion .....	100
<b>Chapter Seven: Leisure in Posthuman Times</b> .....	101
1. The Non-Totalitarian Total Work of Art of the Posthuman Future ..	104
2. The Problem – Plato, Galileo, Wagner .....	104
3. Present – Nietzsche, Sven Helbig and the Total Work of Art .....	107
4. A Relational Ontology of Becoming and Mindfulness .....	110
5. Leisure in Posthuman Times .....	111
6. Helbig’s Choral Work “I eat the Sun and Drink the Moon” .....	113
7. Conclusion .....	116

<b>Chapter Eight: Afterthoughts on Religion, Culture and Art</b> .....	119
1. The Posthuman Paradigm Shift and the Possibility of Catholic Religious Leisure .....	120
2. Cyborgs as a Twist of the Homo Faber and the Homo Ludens .....	127
3. Adage of Metahumanism .....	130
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	133
<b>Index of Names</b> .....	139
<b>Index of Subjects</b> .....	141





## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my Research Assistants at John Cabot University (JCU) Rome for their support in getting this manuscript ready for publication: Selma Coleman, Moya Seneb, Moustafa Tlass, Megan Dhlamini, Benedetta Grilli, Ihsan Baris Gedizlioglu, Daniela Movileanu, Yurim Ko and Francesca Dalmazzo. I particularly wish to highlight the efforts at polishing this manuscript of my JCU Research Assistants Nicole Ilieva and Chryssi Soteriades. Furthermore, I am grateful for the exchanges I have had, and comments I received, from Prof Brunella Antomarini and Dr Pascal Henke.



## Chapter One: Posthuman Aesthetic Intimacies

You cannot experience one artwork twice as you cannot step into the same river twice. Being engaged with an artwork is an intimate encounter. You discover something which intrigues you. Awakes your desires, arouses you, and lets your fantasies develop from an exciting encounter via a moment of intense intimacy to a liberating exuberant relief. A story develops by itself. A discourse happens. Yet, the exchange is not merely a propositional exchange. It can involve an intellectual stimulation, but it can also be an intense emotional encounter. You are the artwork. You live it. You feel it. A moment of unity between the artwork and yourself, which alters both you as well as the artwork, and you will never be able to engage with the artwork as you did before. Then, a distancing process occurs, which leads to the separation between you and the artistic piece. You realize the gap, which enables you to intellectually reflect upon it. To deal with the philosophical issues involved. You realize the traces of the thoughts involved as well as the potential for further unfolding. This intellectual occupation triggers specific insights, intuitions. Motives lead to visions. No logical connection needed. It is an intuitive triggering which occurs. The unfolding continues with an intense emotional stance. Yet, this time it is not the fear an involved protagonist experiences, but it is the pity of a distanced observer. You realize the gap between the event and your involvement, and you can grasp the underlying structures, the logic of the corresponding emotions, the order of feelings. This intimate emotional encounter takes you further to the aesthetic properties: the playfulness of kawaii, the exciting perfection of smoothness, the glorious leadership of superheroines and superheroes, the philosophical fascination of non-duality, the hidden unity of hybridity, the insightful realization of the monsterly in all of us, the puzzling eroticism of the amorphous, the emerging potentialities of permanent becoming, the wisdom of twisting by spinning several strands of yarn into a thread, the continuous relevance of relationality, as well as the affirmation of bodily plurality, while stressing that any plurality consists merely of an immense diversity of contingent nodal points. Here, we are left with the sensual, but the sensual is already another encounter, an interaction, and no perception leaves no traces. The perception is the encounter of the perceiver with the perceived whereby neither the perceiver nor the perceived exist as independent entities. They form a contingent relational unity which leaves traces on both contingent nodal points. It is an intimate encounter, which is occupied with our most meaningful worries: our survival, our

healthspan, our embeddedness in structures of domination, and our intimate connections. Do we wish to survive just for the sake of survival? When we are confronted with the most serious worries, it might be the case. We just want our permanent becoming to continue. There is another *Elisenlebkuchen*, which wants to be eaten tomorrow. Yet, what can be done if the suffering gets too intense and lasts longer and longer? It is the healthspan, which needs to be increased. We wish to be healthy and alive to realize the overflowing moments of high jinks. They cannot be realized easily. Determination, ordering, persistence and *buona fortuna* are needed for realizing structures of domination, whereby you turn into a singular contingent nodal point, which can realize that others do something which they would not do by themselves. This is a central part in the continuous twist of unity and singularity. Order and obey. Activity and reactivity. Act and let it occur. We all have traces of both drives in us – not all of them have the same intensity. Each nodal point longs for resonating others with which it can allow intimacies, an openness to new experiences and the readiness for a boundless innocent playfulness. Beyond good and evil, beyond what one does and beyond the political and moral norms of one's own cultural context, nodal points experience the manifold bunch of intimacies of the innocence of becoming. These excitements fulfil us. Getting fully aroused is what we long for. It is the intoxication of living beyond the norms which brings about a bodily bliss, and an earthly sensuality. The same types of intimacies occur in encounters with artworks. Intimate encounters with resonating nodal points are the moments to which we might say "please remain". They do not. They merely remain as imprints on us, and as traces of our drives. Yet, they are what is longed for. They might stand for the *amor intellectualis dei*. They would make Mephistopheles win the bet against Faust. They could turn you into an *Übermensch*. It is the full affirmation of a moment that has all this transformative potential. The judgement "moment please remain" might be able to justify your entire existence. Everything which has happened in the past and which will happen in the future is necessary for you having experienced this special moment. *Amor fati*. It helps if you have *buona fortuna*. This is the best we can hope for. Intense moments of special intimacies are the justifications of our permanent struggles. Yes, these moments are extremely rare, and difficult to realize. Life is a permanent fight. There are permanently new obstacles which need to be confronted. One must not get crushed by them and hope that they are not so devastating that nothing can be done against them. If they get you down for some time, you must make sure to get back up again. *Sic mundus est*. An intimate encounter with an artwork enables you a brief relief from these struggles. It can excite you, reinvigorate you, enable your leisure, and give you a sense of what matters. The event of encountering an artwork changes you. It also changes the artwork, and you will never ever encounter it the way you did before. You cannot experience one artwork twice as you cannot step into the same river twice. Off to new intimate encounters.

## Chapter Two: Preface

In the time of a posthuman paradigm shift, we also get confronted with new aesthetic challenges. Technologically modified animals come up as works of art. Performances and metaformances get realized which address a non-dualistic ontology of permanent becoming. Formal arrangements of posthuman artworks get created which affirm a notion of harmonious beauty which has been looked on with suspicion in particular after the Breker and Riefenstahl aesthetics of the so called “Third Reich”. The cyborg turns up as a figure of ontological relevance in the arts, which enables us to reflect upon the appropriate meaning of non-duality. Religious myths are being referred to in artworks that otherwise stress the relevance of plurality and relationality. AI and gene technologies are considered in the production process of artworks.

All of these developments represent challenges for 20th century philosophies of art, in particular the Frankfurt School avant-garde aesthetics, which has been dominant in the art world in the second half of the 20th century, whereby Adorno’s aesthetic theory has been particularly influential. This is a shame, because Adorno’s aesthetics undermines what it claims to promote, i.e., plurality. Furthermore, it attacks totalitarianism, but is totalitarian itself, as it is founded on a categorically ontological duality which claims to be universally valid. The subject-object distinction as well as the complex dialectic between subject and object by means of which he moves beyond the Kantian distinction between the concepts in question are of fundamental relevance for Adorno’s aesthetics. In addition, it claims to be critical, so that the perspectives of minorities always get taken into consideration but starts from an arrogant aristocratic perspective itself, an intellectual snobbism. Its aristocracy is associated with the capacity of reflecting rationally. In the ideal case, an avant-garde work of art represents a genre by itself, as it ought to be different from everything else which was present before. Consequently, avant-garde artworks can only be accessed by highly rational experts from the art world, who have the time and money to dedicate themselves primarily to intellectual reflections. The intellectual arrogance on which this avant-garde aesthetics is founded undermines plurality and democracy and is morally problematic. A posthuman aesthetics, on the other hand, is twisting categorical ontological dualities, aware of permanent becoming, inclusive, non-dualistic, non-anthropocentric, non-foundational, non-essentialist, non-speciesist, non-alethic, non-logocentric, non-heteronormative, perspectival, non-utopian