

Editor's Note

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The current issue of *Deliberatio: Studies in Contemporary Philosophical Challenges* is dedicated to Professor Stefan Lorenz Sorgner's recent book, entitled *Philosophy of Posthuman Art* published by Schwabe Verlag (one of the oldest printing and publishing houses in the world) in 2022. This issue of *Deliberatio* brings together articles written by contemporary philosophers and trans-/posthumanist thinkers who are trying to reveal the challenging and open dimension of posthuman art.

As the editor of this particular issue of *Deliberatio* I had the pleasure of discovering many theories, paradigm shifts, philosophical and posthuman inquiries. This was due to Sorgner's newest reflections on posthuman art and also to the contributors to this special issue who brought, what Sorgner identifies as the birth of posthuman aesthetics and beauty, to our attention. The *Philosophy of Posthuman Art* introduces both a critical and comparative analysis with regard to the philosophical background that is at the basis of posthuman art—that of critical posthumanism, transhumanism and metahumanism. Relying on a metahumanist methodological insight, Sorgner names the concept of “twist” as the pillar of his philosophical analysis of posthuman art. This concept is meant to bring together, as a stratified and transversal plateau of the realm of posthuman art and artworks, the idea of our multiple possible becomings, in, and through art, which make us “contingent nodal points” (Sorgner, 2022) in an open and shared world. In this ordering of ideas, the book paves the way for a new form of critical thinking with regard to the Frankfurt School's avant-garde aesthetics, and the Platonic, Christian and Kantian legacy. It emphasizes the importance of perspectivism and plurality in

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art, by twisting the categorical ontological dualities, specific to the continental philosophical tradition. Thus, a posthuman work of art is characterized by what Sorgner calls a “non-totalitarian total work of art” (Sorgner, 2022, p. 104). This means a non-universal, non-paternalist, non-dualist, relational and inclusive way of approaching or experiencing art, as a contingent flow in the paradigm of permanent becoming. In order to introduce the reader to the realm of posthuman beauty and posthuman artwork, Sorgner has analyzed several works of art and their artists that come under the umbrella of what he calls posthuman art.

Thus, Eduardo Kac’s bio-art-work, such as the well-known fluorescent bunny (*Alba*) and the genetically-modified petunia (*Edunia*), bring an “aesthetic of hybridity” (Sorgner, 2022, p. 66) to the discussion. This aims to dissolve the ontological stability between species, and to emphasize the multiple potentiality of science and technology in art. To this we can add the human-animal hybrid sculptures of the Australian artist, Patricia Piccinini, such as the famous pig-human-hybrid creation known as *The Young Family*. This raises the idea of an “aesthetic of monsters” (Sorgner, 2022, p. 64), in a non-anthropocentric approach, and is also a fusion between the cultural reminiscences of hybridity, which is present in almost all ancient mythologies, and Piccinini’s non-speciesist position that there is a convergence, rather than a divergence between species. The “metaformances” of the metahumanist artist, Jaime del Val, such as the *Pangender Cyborg* or *Microdanzas* reveal an “aesthetic of amorphous” (Sorgner, 2022, p. 68) that is a dissolution of both subject-object dualistic ontology, as well as the performer/artist–audience/public, dialectical dualism. It is an open, fluid, interwoven, and rhizomatic movement rendered by the perpetual process of becoming, of our embodied and embedded inter-relationality with the self, others, technology, culture, and the environment in this worldly existence. Stelarc’s *Second Life* performances, in which he is connected to his avatar from the “Second Life” online multimedia platform, raises the “aesthetic of twisting” (Sorgner, 2022, p. 73). This is an aesthetic experience that twists the Cartesian dualism, following a neo-Spinozist approach regarding our “psychophysiological unity” (Sorgner, 2022, p. 73). In such a paradigm shift, Stelarc’s performance is a transversal movement on the plane of immanence, that brings together the material and the immaterial, mind and body, the organic and the artificial, the natural and the technological, in a non-dualist dynamic of continuous inter-relationships. Wagner’s heritage, that rooted the idea of a total work of art in European artistic consciousness, is also twisted by the German composer Sven Helbig’s musical creations. The idea of “twist” here, is that Helbig’s musical operas are also total works of art. However, the key point from which Helbig’s music distances itself from the Wagnerian ideology, is in the non-paternalistic and non-universal understanding of music. This is alongside the dissolution of boundaries between the realms of art and technology, and also between the realms of music, the social

world, ethical rules and personal emotions. It is a position that reinforces the importance of “weak thinking” and “perspectivism” that characterizes posthuman art-work. As Sorgner emphasizes, Helbig’s music is a “non-totalitarian total work of art” (Sorgner, 2022, p. 104). It is meant to reinforce the importance of “mindfulness” and “leisure” (as emotional insight, contemplation, creativity and active life) in our existence, which is created to be enjoyed and experienced by everyone, not only by a privileged category of people.

The complex and philosophical analysis found in Sorgner’s book has not left the contemporary philosophical world indifferent. This is why the contributors to this issue of *Deliberatio* have taken on the task of supporting, critiquing and questioning, in a creative, intriguing and rational way, many of the topics previously mentioned here by me, as well as many others found in the book.

Yunus Tuncel’s “Arts in the Age of Posthumanism: Reflections on Stefan Lorenz Sorgner’s *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*”, is a critical approach to Sorgner’s main ideas. It analyzes the main aspects that Sorgner identifies in the paradigm shift that the posthuman future is bringing to the field of art and aesthetics. The author focuses on the ten aesthetic concepts that Sorgner introduces to posthuman aesthetics: “monstrosity,” “hybridity,” “amorphousness,” “becoming,” “twisting,” “relationality,” “bodily plurality,” “superheroism,” “smoothness,” and “kawaii”. It also includes new art forms, such as bioart, cryptoart and metaformance. By adopting a critical and reflective position on Sorgner’s central concepts, such as that of the *twist*, Tuncel emphasizes several aesthetic ideas and theories that bring together old and new philosophical thinking under the umbrella of posthuman aesthetics. In this context, *leisure* (another central concept in Sorgner’s book) becomes one of the challenging must-haves for the (post) human condition and art world. Tuncel’s reflections on the Wagnerian project, regarding the idea of a total artwork, are closely related to Sorgner’s, being a playful cartography of the reminiscences of the Nietzschean-Dionysian maze in the context of Helbig’s music or Del Val’s metaformances.

Franc Mali analyzes the future posthuman world in his article “The Way Transhumanism is Leading to the Convergence of all Spheres of Creative Human Thought”. It is a critical reaffirmation of Sorgner’s position on the need to adopt a non-dualistic ontology starting from the current period of technological and scientific progress. Such a non-dualistic ontology is understood to be one of the keys that unlocks the binary constructs in the sphere of art, towards the fluidity of the non-binarity of cyborgs, bioart and crypto art etc. Mali’s transhumanist discourse has neither a utopian, nor a dystopian tone regarding the not-so distant transhuman future of gene technologies, cyborg technologies or digital technologies. Rather, it tries to establish a balance between the bioconservative and traditional bioethicist positions, which follow the “precautionary principle” in order to short circuit “human enhancement”, and that of transhumanist thinkers

who follow the “proactionary principle” in the name of technological progress. His reflections have raised many challenging questions regarding transhumanism, religion and posthuman art. For instance, is transhumanism the new ideological link that can bring together art, religion, science and technology in order to “transcend” our current boundaries in the name of a good life? Or, is transhumanism moving towards the dissolution of the boundaries of the physical and the digital? And, what type of aesthetics is relevant to transhumanism?

Not only is art a way in which man uses his aesthetic sensibility, but it also opens our eyes to our nature-culture groundings that nowadays slide towards a broken unity. In its many facets, art is linked not only to human creativity but also to nature. Kerstin Borchhardt’s paper “Of Plastic Selkies and Hybrid Puppies: Posthuman Mythopoesia in Times of the Ecological Crisis” presents an aesthetic and hermeneutical analysis. It is set in a framework of posthuman thinking, regarding the current posthuman aesthetic strategies that seek to (re)activate both “the mythopoetic condition” and the traditional mythological figures, in order to develop new science, technology, and art practices that support a collaborative and relational coexistence with non-human entities such as hybrids, monsters, and cyborgs. Borchhardt’s core thesis on the mythopoetic strategies also seeks to unify fine arts and popular culture. This aspect is demonstrated in the two case studies of artwork (the *Imagining Godzilla* project and Maja Smrekar’s multidimensional project *K9_topology*) used as examples of a new multispecies coexistence in a porous ecological entanglement.

Žarko Paić’s article “Singularity, Aisthesis and Artwork. Postscript on Stefan Lorenz Sorgner’s *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*”, introduces the notion of “technosphere” as a key concept and the basis of his analysis of Sorgner’s book regarding the paradigm shift that is taking place in the sphere of aesthetics. In the parameters of posthuman art, it distances aesthetics from the old axiological values of the beautiful and the sublime by moving towards the world of “techno-genetic constructions” and cybernetics. This brings together, under the umbrella of trans- and posthumanism, the living and the non-living and the natural and the artificial, in order to create things that, go beyond the limitations of human creativity and the natural order. Using these parameters, Paić places the future of art and aesthetics under the label “aisthesis”. This is seen as a new modulation of aesthetics, as a synaesthetic knowledge that opens up the transition to the posthuman condition as an immanent process of becoming the *homo kybernetes*. This could neutralize classical aesthetics by giving birth to the age of the technosphere and technological singularity, characterized by the hybrid fluidity of the human, non-human, and artificial intelligence (AI) life.

Evi Sampanikou’s “Art Has Always Been the Product of a Philosophizing Cyborg. Looking Inside “Philosophy of Posthuman Art” by Stefan Lorenz Sorgner” is a critical posthumanist approach to the aesthetics of the “twist” in a

fluid connection to the non-dualist ontology of the Cyborg. As Sampanikou emphasizes, the concept of the cyborg in Sorgner's metahumanist thinking is the hidden piece of the puzzle that connects all of the missing pieces of the large picture together into what we call posthuman art. Even if the author is following Sorgner's book step-by-step in the article, it is more than a rigorous analysis. It is a playful and creative way of putting together the concepts, theories and works of art found in Sorgner's book, in such a way as to challenge both, our vision of art and aesthetics as well our way of conceptualizing the world we live in. It is a philosophical journey that makes the readers aware of the fact that the fluidity of art and aesthetics is part of a continuous process of our becoming, relating and enjoying life (whether as humans, posthumans, cyborgs and so on).

In a critical posthumanist framework, Russell Kilbourn shows that, in order to understand "posthuman art" it is necessary to look inside the many historical events that have shaped 21st century "art," even if this means to speak of the "unspeakable," which in a Wieselian paradigm, is an *event* such as the Holocaust. In "Adorno, Beckett...Wagner, Artaud: Reflections on Stefan Sorgner's *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*", Kilbourn draws a red line. This is emphasized as a porous threshold between Samuel Beckett's literary-modernist approach regarding the self (which opens up a proto-posthumanist understanding of the human—after the Holocaust event) and Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory (in the dialectic of a post-war European culture), Richard Wagner's total work of art concept (which in Kilbourn's perspective has a structural analogy with 20th century "cinematic apparatus") and Antonin Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" that encapsulates the intrinsic condition of what Sorgner calls a "metaformance" (the non-dualistic condition of the logical binarities that studded the world of artistic performances). The porosity of this red line implies a critical approach to what art represents today that suggests the *traces* (of what art ceases to be) and the *supplements* (of what art is in the process of becoming).

The field of posthuman art is rich in new perspectives and paradigm shifts regarding not only the ontological questions that a posthuman artwork raises, but also the bioethical considerations when it comes to bioart. Maurizio Balistreri's article "The Use of Human Embryos for Artistic Applications. Bioethical Considerations on Stefan Lorenz Sorgner's *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*" is a complex critical approach to the paternalistic implications regarding the ban on using human embryos in creating works of art. His posthuman philosophical investigation seeks to question not only the purpose of art and that of medical research in human life, but also the moral dimensions of this action, by creating a relational and symbiotic bridge between philosophical thinking and bioethical reflection in the framework of posthuman art. By deconstructing the strong ontological status of the human embryo, Balistreri's work seeks to answer one of the fundamental questions that the fields of medicine and bioart have raised today,

which is why the use of human embryos for therapeutic purposes is morally accepted, but their use for artistic purposes is not? Such a philosophical and bioethical dilemma seeks to shake the ontological and conceptual walls that stand between art and science, humans and technology or art and morality, rather than one that opens Pandora's box.

Malte Frey's article "Posthumanism's Western Localization and non-Western Posthumanism in Anime. On Stefan Lorenz Sorgner's *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*" introduces a new perspective on how posthuman art finds its manifestation in various cultures, by creating a convergence, rather than a divergence. In an anti-essentialist paradigm of understanding cultures, Frey's incursion into the Japanese cultural environment, which at first glance is characterized by the categories of *kawaii*, present in many *anime*, aims to reveal the fact that anime is not only a global phenomenon, but is also one of the mediums that enclose a posthuman understanding of selfhood. It deconstructs the autonomous-essentialist subject of the western anthropocentric dualistic-ontology, towards a relational, fluid and immanent non-western religion/philosophy. Frey's critical-religious framework is developed in the analysis of Mamoru Oshii's cyberpunk anime *Ghost in the Shell*, where, by using the Buddhist and Shinto concept of "interrelatedness", he shows how the anime aesthetics may be regarded as a form of posthuman art as well as a "relational entanglement" which weakens the boundaries of both the Christian-metaphysical tradition, as well as the techno-optimistic transhumanists.

Marius Markuckas's article "On the Question of the Possibility to Replace the Human with Technology in the Creative Process" is a critical analysis of the paradigm shift that posthuman thinking is bringing, where reason and creativity (including artistic creations) specific to humans in the traditional humanistic thinking, are qualities that may also be developed/held by non-human entities, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). In this idea, the question regarding the creative status of AI technologies is central. By applying a critical and comparative methodology Markuckas is emphasizing both the way in which the posthuman paradigm shift is distancing technology from its pure instrumentalist framework, as well as the possibility of seeing AI-driven robots as artists. However, the human-centric tone that the author uses throughout this work supports the idea that, for now, creativity in general and artistic creativity in particular, are human essences that cannot be replaced by even the most sophisticated technology.

Ferén David Barrios Pérez's reflections on Stefan Sorgner's *Philosophy of Posthuman Art* reveals the idea that, any incursion into a philosophy of posthuman art needs a deep philosophical investigation of the characteristics of posthuman artworks, that is, a posthuman philosophy of art. His article "Towards a Posthuman Philosophy of Art: a Response to Stefan Sorgner's *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*" is a critical posthumanist inquiry applied to both posthuman art and traditional forms of art. At the core of Ferén's reflections is the need to develop a theoretical

and practical nodal point, between the criterion that characterizes posthuman aesthetics/art and the traditional aesthetics/art, by showing that the roots of the posthuman in art history is not necessarily, what we nowadays call “emergent technologies,” but rather a pluralistic criticism of values. This is an aspect that is grounded in Nietzsche’s radical plurality of perspectives. In other words, the “essence” of posthuman art is something that needs to be understood in terms of its evolutionary, multiple and stratified emergences, as an open and relational dialogue between the “conscious” (language, reason, technicity) and the “unconscious” (symbols, affects, instincts), between the past, present and future in a non-dualistic spatio-temporal ontology of becoming.

Dario Giugliano’s article “A Poetics of Contemporary Art to Understand the Meaning of Our Age”, is an intellectual journey that seeks to identify a theoretical link between posthuman art, aesthetics and art criticism, based on Sorgner’s reflections on the philosophy of posthuman art. Giugliano’s discourse places contemporary art under the umbrella of heterogeneity—as a hybrid, unique and fluid manifestation of our relationality and inter-dependency with the experience of a work of art. In doing so, he raises several questions that bring together ontological and epistemological insights related to science, ideology, knowledge, works of art and reality. By placing the birth of posthumanism in the history of Italian Humanism, Giugliano sees Pico della Mirandola’s reflections as encapsulating the reminiscences of posthumanist thinking. His cartographic analysis of the past, present and future of aesthetics and the art world is meant to reveal both the idiosyncratic experience and the process of continual becoming of what we may call posthuman art.

To conclude, there is no doubt that the complexity, of what nowadays we might call the field of posthuman art, is far from being exhausted. Nevertheless, the papers gathered together in this issue of *Deliberatio* constitute a starting point for broadening the philosophical and conceptual horizons of posthuman art and aesthetics. Each article presents both a unique approach to Stefan Lorenz Sorgner’s *Philosophy of Posthuman Art* and multiple open perspectives on how we may live, experience, understand or embrace both posthuman art and the posthuman philosophy of art.

References

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