

# An Interview about Posthumanism in a Time of Crisis

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*In this interview, Francesca Ferrando discusses how Posthumanism can help individuals and societies face the COVID-19 crisis at different scales, from the personal realm to the level of the species and the planet. In deconstructing the notion of species-based supremacy, the philosopher engages us to develop a new awareness prompting improved and more meaningful relationships with not only other humans, but all beings, biological or non-biological, from insects to robots. Ferrando, author of the foundational book Philosophical Posthumanism (Bloomsbury, 2009), introduces the multi-faceted work that being posthuman does for imagining and bringing about a world that is dynamic, inclusive, non-hierarchical, and non-linear, also focusing on how this current of thought provides answers for us to craft our own place in the world as we navigate various Anthropocenic predicaments. Teasing out the layers of what it means to be a posthumanist, she challenges us to rethink the human as plural and co-creator of the universe. To this effect, she urges us to abandon anthropocentrism and dualism to operate a shift in our understanding of the positionality of the human towards an acknowledgement that it is only one among many interconnected influences on Earth—among them emerging forces such as artificial intelligence. Ferrando’s words inspire us to commit to a renewed perspective on interspecies relations and to envisage the pandemic as “a revealing”—an opportunity for introspection and for a necessary existential inquiry that opens possibilities for ridding ourselves of the detrimental illusion of mastery over nature and fallacy of the primacy of the human.*

—Hélène B. Ducros

**Rohan Hassan** In the face of the current planetary crisis—a by-product of human action—how imperative or urgent has it become to reconsider ourselves as “humans” and act accordingly?

**Francesca Ferrando** Thank you for thinking about this moment of crisis not only in an intellectual way, but also a practical one. What does the crisis mean for our existence and what will come out of it? I think that the posthuman is going to help us navigate it because the first precious insight that Posthumanism gives us to understand what it means to be human in a moment of planetary crisis is the realization of the interconnection of existence. This specific crisis is a result of human action, in particular action based on the idea that we are separated from and masters of nature—these assumptions have all been and continue to be part of social and political narratives. This has to change. As a reminder, the word “crisis” comes from the Greek *crino*, meaning to judge, to choose, to decide. Surely, the crisis is a tragic moment because there is death, misery, sadness, and disease. However, it’s also a moment of introspection and deep insight, of decision and

choice. COVID-19 shakes us all to realize that we, and the people around us, will die someday. In that sense it's very Heideggerian—there is no life without death, which gives meaning to our existence. If you know that your life is going to end, you will do something with it and no longer postpone or procrastinate. Seeing death is the moment that allows us to be alive. But, even if a crisis is indeed a breakthrough or an epiphany, it is also hard to navigate, especially in an already unstable society.

As individuals, if we were already unbalanced when the crisis hit, this situation will push us to the limit. It's a moment of pause because as a species there is nowhere to go. We can no longer move, fly from here to there, be lost in hundreds of projects and committees. This moment of brutal honesty is hard to digest. With social distancing (when you can socially distance), you become your own mirror and see what you may not have wanted to see before. In my case, I became hypercritical about some of the ways I was existing—for instance, in a city and producing a lot of garbage. I realized that I needed a deeper connection with the land, where I could hear more non-human voices. Without COVID-19, I would have been too busy moving around and giving lectures here and there to see my footprint on this planet and what I might do with my life. I was able to realize that I had to be there for others, which also meant being present digitally to connect with others, because it was no longer an option but an urgency to be present for the human species. Together, we can create different paths and deconstruct habits that have been part of our species for too long.

On some level, having to face ourselves in a moment that is a mirror of ourselves is a great gift, because in the twenty-first century many human societies have been pushed to a schizophrenic approach in which nothing is never enough, where you always need more money, more possessions, and more of everything. In this linear approach based on infinite quantity, there is never enough time. The crisis forces us to stop this narrative. The pause allows us to see where we are in our existence and whether we are doing what we need to be doing, want to be doing, and are here to be doing. We also must not be scared to connect all the layers: the individual, the social, the species, the planet, and beyond to the universe and multiverse. We are at an intersection of different energies, relations, insights, movements, and dynamics, which are shifting. It is important to realize the power of our presence in the way we exist from our thoughts, from the way we write, the way we treat others, the way we dream.

Posthumanism is becoming more than a mere field in academia, but a way to understand and access what's happening. In this sense, I define Posthumanism as a philosophy of existence. Philosophy is the love of wisdom. It is not simply something to study or write about, nor just a theory. Otherwise, it would not assist us in facing the COVID-19 crisis. As a philosophy, the insight Posthumanism brings us is that we are not just living on planet Earth, but are part of it. I like the metaphor by Alan Watts—a Taoist philosopher from England who was especially influenced by Indian and Chinese philosophies—of thinking of humans as apples. Instead of those who take the apples from the tree, he conceptualizes humans as the apple, the fruit of the planet. Therefore, as nature ourselves, we must think in intra-relational ways with other species, with the *bios* and the *oikos*—which represents our home and who we are—and of course with technology, of

which the importance has been enhanced by the COVID-19 pandemic. No longer only associated with Transhumanism, technology now applies to our daily life. Think of the power of Zoom socializing, where people, from virtually any country, can be in the same “room;” or the technologies used to track COVID-19.

Posthumanism is indeed emerging as a way to understand what is happening, but also to enhance our lives, not just through technological speculative developments—which may or may not come—but through our existential presence and understanding of who we are. We grow up learning and taking for granted that we are humans. Most people respond yes when asked “Are you human?” But the question of what it means to be human is more complicated. Every tradition of wisdom, from ancient times to the contemporary world, underlines one key aspect to full existential realization: know who you are—the best gift you can give to yourself, the planet, the species, and any other entity that you may want to bring to the conversation. Not restricted to being a trendy theory in academia, Posthumanism becomes a tool to navigate everyday existence, especially during a crisis that is a moment of decision, of choice about ourselves as a species.

**Rohan Hassan** Going back to the fundamentals: What do you mean by “posthuman?” And from which human is the posthuman “post?”

**Francesca Ferrando** To understand history comprehensively, we must look back beyond recorded writing, since humans have been around for much longer. On some level, we have always been posthuman, because the human is a historical construction. The history of the human shows that it is more than a notion. It is a process, which I call “humanization,” or, better, “humanizing,” because through that global history, the human has been perceived in a hierarchical way. Societies or groups of people defined who was human in separation from other humans. Etymologically, in English, the term comes from Latin *humanus*—*anthropos* in ancient Greek. But that notion of the human has not included all humans. Unless you were Greek and spoke Greek, you were considered barbarian—a recurrent notion in the history of humanity.

When Europeans “discovered” the Americas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (of course, if you were Native American, you already knew and cared about this land), they discussed whether Native Americans were human, with some people believing that they were not, or that they were sub-human. These ideas were heavily influenced by slavery, colonization, and economic interests. Genocide, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, all are evidence that the notion of the human has been used as a tool to bring some groups above others in a hierarchical way. So even if we’re all humans genetically, in the history of humanity—in the history of humanizing—not every human has been considered as such, and some humans have not been considered as human as others. This is a political and sociopolitical aspect of Posthumanism. It’s not about revenge or victimization, but rather about recognition and acknowledgement of everyone’s voices. We need to see that the plural is not separated from the one and that we are all connected, yet different, so we can understand who we are as individuals, as a species, and as existential beings.

Some relate Posthumanism to deep ecology, which I see as one of its genealogical sources and rhizomatic roots. One difference is that while deep ecology focuses on going beyond Anthropocentrism and bringing the non-human back to the conversation, this non-human is still biological. A biocentric worldview places the *bios* (Greek for “human life”) above *zoe*—non-human life. In contrast, Posthumanism is not biocentric, because the solution is not to move from a center to another, but to realize that the centers are everywhere depending on the perspective and location, with no one perspective being more central than the other, including technology. Biocentrism deconstructs the human, to see life as, for instance, non-human life, plants, and ecology. But it’s still a “centrism.” Posthumanism is also not technocentric, even if it opens a reflection of existential awareness being manifested in technology. You could even claim—it’s rarely done—that technology itself is biological since everything it is made with can be traced back to the Earth: specific minerals for your computer, etc. Paleontology defines the human as the animal that creates tools out of tools; some philosophers see technology as the core of philosophy and humanity. Hence, Posthumanism differs from deep ecology as it acknowledges existential awareness in a wider perspective of not only deconstructing the human to biological life, but in seeing technology as an ontological manifestation. Some people use the term AI to refer to artificial life or artificial intelligence. There are many issues with technology: societal and individual addictions, control, privacy breaks, etc. However, we need to acknowledge that it is not just a tool we use, but that it changes the way we perceive existence and thus must be reconsidered in relation to what it means to be human in the twenty-first century.

**Rohan Hassan** In your work on philosophical Posthumanism, you have noted that it is genealogically related to the radical deconstruction of the human and can be defined as a post-humanism, post-anthropocentrism, and post-dualism. How do these notions interconnect for a better understanding of what being posthuman means?

**Francesca Ferrando** I came to realize that Posthumanism was confusing to people because they mistook it for Transhumanism. But, whereas the goal of Transhumanism is human enhancement, in contrast, Posthumanism takes different angles, focusing on the deconstruction of the human. Because of the confusion, we need to have a general understanding of what Posthumanism is to talk and do something about it. At this time, I use three interconnected non-hierarchical layers to describe it. The first is *post-humanism*, which means that the human is a plural and non-hierarchical notion. To be fully human, or “post-human,” we must acknowledge with joy that we are many. Evolution does not work towards complexity, but towards diversification. Our self as a being, our self as a person, comes with different biota and different microbes, such as the gut biota that live inside of us and contribute to making us healthy, or unhealthy. In that sense, the many and the one are not separate.

The second layer is *post-anthropocentrism*. When we deconstruct the human, we deconstruct something that we think we know. We unfold different layers that allow us to understand ourselves in deeper ways. Post-anthropocentrism means bravely and joyfully recognizing that the human is not the best or most intelligent species, nor the highest in the realm of existence. We are one of many species, and we are in this together. We

should recognize the beauty, dignity, and importance of other species—not in the sense that they are there for us or that we are here for them. Sometimes, it can be difficult to do. For example, are we going to “co-exist” with a mosquito trying to sting us in a malaria-ridden area? Probably not, because we also need to protect ourselves. I am saying this to clarify that the path is neither linear nor obvious, but requires constant reflection and full existential honesty. The narrative that presents the human as the best species, the most intelligent and evolved, must stop. It is the wrong narrative that brings us onto the wrong path, to the crises we are facing, including the Anthropocene and the sixth mass extinction. While many of the current movements—Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, and many others that talk about the voices that have been silenced in the history of humankind—are being acknowledged, anthropocentrism, for the most part, is not; it is taken for granted. So, this second layer is about letting go of the privilege of the human. We don't need it.

The third layer is *post-dualism*, which has not been explored enough in academia, unlike in other traditions and approaches—mysticism, for instance. Many societies in the twenty-first century come with a dualistic mindset that is taught to young children from day one of their existence. We need to deconstruct those layers. I see post-humanism, post-anthropocentrism, and post-dualism as key to bringing out posthuman visions, experiences, and praxis. Moreover, they are not to be thought of in an orderly way. You don't accomplish the first one, then the second and third. You must think of them in an integrated, organic way. We need to be brave enough to acknowledge what we're manifesting as a species—to be honest with what we are experiencing—and be able to say “it doesn't have to be this way.” Habits engrained in our species can be broken, such as war, for instance. The crisis has allowed us to pause and realize that we are here for more than killing or hating each other. Post-humanism, post-anthropocentrism, and post-dualism can help us in navigating these different visions and ways of existing.

**Rohan Hassan** As a related question, what do you mean when you write that Posthumanism is a theoretical revision to speciesism?

**Francesca Ferrando** There are numerous types of discrimination. Sexism is discrimination based on someone's gender, sex, or sexual orientation; racism is discrimination based on someone's race or ethnicity. “Speciesism” focuses on discrimination based on your species. In general, as humans, we feel supremacy and entitlement to discriminate against other species. In the philosophical debate, different traditions have addressed speciesism early on—for instance, in India, some have historically embraced a non-anthropocentric approach to living. But, in general, many traditions consider the human from an anthropocentric perspective, which posits that the human is the best and most intelligent species, the best reincarnation, or the best creature of God. Historically, speciesism comes about as a notion in the 1970s and out of the field of animal rights, with which Posthumanism has a strong connection as it tries to expand the idea of deconstructing a species-based supremacy. The 70s were about starting a conversation on discrimination in the name of one's species. Nothing may happen if you kill a dog. Someone might ask why you did it, but you know you're not going to go to prison. But laws are changing. India, for example, now recognizes the

rights of dolphins as non-human persons, so that harming a dolphin has become a serious legal matter. Moreover, it's no longer just about biological species and discrimination against other non-human animals.

I am excited to see a shift in the legal realm with the jurisprudence of the Rights of Nature; there are now legal rights being granted even to natural entities like rivers and lakes, or the Amazon forest. The criticism here is that the realm of rights still comes out of a specific humanistic tradition in which the notion of the human has been universalized on the basis of a specific type of human, who was white, male, Western, physically able, etc. So, some people say that the answer is not the expansion of rights, but a radical change in the whole discourse. I think that one doesn't go against the other. Recognizing rights may not be the one solution, but it is part of the change that is operating, even if we should acknowledge that the narrative rooted in the humanistic tradition has limits—and do something about it. Others think of diets—veganism or vegetarianism, for instance. These are all welcomed parts of the conversation and of the many ways in which we can bring about other ways of existing and interacting. I think the legal answer to recognize rights of natural phenomena and non-human animals is very important because we live in a legalistic system. Society asks us to be part of a social contract, which by being born and raised in specific societies, we usually silently acknowledge and accept. Moving from humanistic to post-anthropocentric laws is to be encouraged.

With Posthumanism, speciesism is about discrimination based on biological species, but also on other types of species, because existence is not dualistic and doesn't only manifest in biological life. So, we also think of robots, AI, and technology. The term robot comes from the Czech *robota*, which means “slave.” And it is as if humans are beginning to think of robots as their next slaves. That's very problematic. First, because it keeps bringing to human consciousness this sense of entitlement, dualism, dichotomy, and supremacy that is damaging to individuals, societies, and to the species itself. Moreover, it's also dangerous for the human now that AI is becoming prominent. If in the future AI took supremacy, there would no longer be humans discriminating against AI, but perhaps AI discriminating against humans. AI may look at humans and their history of tyranny, dictatorship, war, rape, killing, and stealing, and conclude that our species is in fact not that smart. They may want to keep us as something akin to nice pets. Therefore, we should consider speciesism in a serious and comprehensive way that leads to post-dualism and the understanding that this sense of exceptionalism should not be embraced. We must not feel superior to other biological non-human others, nor to technology, which is itself a way of revealing, a way of manifesting—an ontological manifestation. Technology is changing the way we think of existence; it exists with us and partakes in the existential quest. Trying to separate ourselves by designating robots as our new slaves and treating other species as if they were inferior is not only wrong, but damaging and very, very risky—not only for the individual understanding of existence, but for us as a species.

**Rohan Hassan** Movements and practices that acknowledge the authority and acceptance of a disenfranchised “other” often generate new types of hierarchies and different sorts of marginalization. A non-human entity—for example, a robot—or an

artificially intelligent being is often seen as the new “other,” subjected to new forms of exploitation and abuse. How does Posthumanism address this problem?

**Francesca Ferrando** Let’s first focus on Transhumanism, to then explore Posthumanism. Transhumanism does not bring much human diversity to the conversation, its main tenet being that humans are somewhat outdated and that we can do better. But we need to acknowledge that humans are many and approach robotic and exotic diversity with excitement. When speaking about the new technological “other,” on one hand, robot technology is seen as a positive; on the other hand, in certain narratives technology causes fear and becomes the new risk. Hollywood, for instance, instills fear in people, by constructing in movies a narrative around technology that is completely disruptive, where AI takes over and technology gets out of the dominion of the human and rebels. Humans fight back and ultimately make it after almost everyone dies. I think that this narrative is partial because we should not talk about technology in this dualistic frame—as something separated and different from us. Instead, we should think of it as an ontological manifestation.

From a physics perspective, everything is energy; everything is interacting, connecting, moving, and vibrating. In this sense, technology is not different from us. The narrative we are constructing today about technology will be the prophecy of the future. Prophecies often come out of social narratives that are repeated and taught to multiple minds, generation after generation. Laws and societies come out of philosophies, ideas, and notions that are taught—for instance, the prophecy of slavery taught for centuries that some humans were less than others. The future is already here in the way we think, exist, and manifest. How we construct the narrative of technology is key to the way technology is going to develop in and beyond the twenty-first and twenty-second centuries. Time is not linear, it’s a spiral or, in some traditions, a circle. I don’t see a future in which suddenly the human is keeping the robot as the slave, or the robot is enslaving the human. I have never supported any kind of fixed and hierarchical discourse between humans and non-humans, and I won’t apply that to technology either. Furthermore, the way we speak about technology is crucial to its development itself. It’s important to be humble, comprehensive, and in touch with our technological, biological, and ecological roots—to see the interconnection of existence with joy, awareness, and dignity.

**Rohan Hassan** Speaking of interconnectedness and merging, how do you view the link between feminism and Posthumanism?

**Francesca Ferrando** Feminism and Posthumanism are very connected. The idea of Posthumanism is rooted in many movements, but critical Posthumanism—and cultural Posthumanism specifically—comes out of the feminist movement of the 90s, which was a post-modern feminism. Academically speaking, the deconstruction of the human, which started in the 70s based on many different layers of the human, was carried on in the work of Katherine Hayles, who popularized within academia the notion of the posthuman, which she saw from a deeply embodied feminist perspective—for example in her 1999 book *How We Became Posthuman*. Today, Posthumanism is getting traction outside of academia, with much interest coming from journalists, the media, movies, etc. Feminism is not only relevant to Posthumanism because we are many (gender is one of the layers

that we need to embrace). The epistemological teaching that feminists gave us, especially since the 90s, was based on the idea of situated knowledges—the idea that every knowledge comes out of a specific experience and perspective. This view is deeply related to perspectivism, which can be traced through Nietzsche, as well as the Jain tradition in India and the Mahavira six centuries before the common era, to understand how these philosophers and traditions think about a network of relations. The roots are not linear and, as Deleuze and Guattari did, we can look to the roots of a rhizome, which grows in irregular ways. Feminism is important for, on the one side, the teaching that comes out of its epistemology of situated knowledges, and on the other side for its teachings on the notion of ethics.

Feminist ethics are not based on abstract notions, but on the notion, for instance, of caring. Thinking of ethics as the *ethos*, we can see that the habits of our existence are not based on abstractions. We should not ask ourselves, “What should they do in this situation?” but, “How am I treating others? How am I living on this planet? How am I taking care of the place I inhabit? Of the people I’m living with?” Feminism brings much to this conversation, including the idea of human diversity and the importance of the end of patriarchy as a historical time. From the Paleolithic to the Neolithic period, we had a matrifocal society. Patriarchal time starts with the end of nomadic life—the beginning of urbanization—and continued until recently. Today, we have a hybrid cosmology, a hybrid symbolism—the cyborg, the chimera, the hybrid which doesn’t need to be female or male to be in power, or black or white, or human or non-human. Power is everywhere, and this again reflects Nietzsche, Foucault, and many other traditions. Or, if you want, God is everywhere. It doesn’t matter which kind of language you use to acknowledge fully the perspective and existential dignity of others, and of ourselves.

**Rohan Hassan** In its range of social awareness, Posthumanism—or philosophical Posthumanism—is politically charged. Do you think that today’s philosophies have a prerogative to be politically conscious to make sense of the turbulent world order in which we live?

**Francesca Ferrando** A crisis brings the possibility of a revealing. When the pandemic started, many people involved in the posthuman movement had to face themselves with Posthumanism as a philosophy. Was it simply an academic trend that we write about, or could it help us navigate this historical moment? There were different answers. If it’s just an academic trend, this philosophy does not help you in a situation where people around you are dying and you may die yourself. But when the whole world is going through a pandemic, if you understand Posthumanism as a way of existing, then you realize that it is not just an academic trend. I went through this process myself. I thought that if I had one month left in my life, I was not going to waste time writing on something that was not helping me. But looking deeply into Posthumanism, I realized that it was indeed helping me navigate this specific moment. At the beginning of the pandemic, for instance, I was based in New York, and I also had family in Italy and friends in China—all places that were severely threatened by COVID-19. Thinking that you might lose someone forever makes you have to stop and be in silence because there is not much more that you want to do. In those moments where I could only find peace in silence, I had to be completely



honest with myself. And that's when I realized that Posthumanism was not just an academic trend and that we were risking losing the meaning of this message in the terminology—the “post” of the “post” of the “post.” I also realized that being in the ivory tower was not enough, nor was writing about a great idea that does not change any lives. We were becoming public intellectuals.

I call “posthuman presence” our duty to be present for the community. Apart from the tragedy of this current crisis, one positive aspect is the global connection that has flourished. It is a moment of realizing that you need to connect with others who speak your existential language. I'm not talking about Italian or Hindu or Arabic or English, or about ethnicity, nationality, or religion, but the way we understand our existence from a similar perspective out of living on this planet for so long. Posthuman networks are booming globally, flourishing in India, Latin America, and Africa. There are Turkish, Italian, and Chinese networks. These are not based on real politics, because they are not based on the well-being of an individual *polis*. If we are in this together, we are talking about how, as a species, we should think of the *polis* as planet Earth.

Today's politics are often about this country or nation against another. For me those are based on economic interests or access to resources, not real politics. I think that once we realize that we are in this together, after years of living on this planet, we will understand that we are all connected and that different religions, ethnicities, genders, races, and cultures are enriching the human understanding of existence. Once we arrive there, we can be on a platform together, talking together. We realize that we may be speaking a different language, but we are not each other's enemies and we are not reflecting the dichotomous, oppressive, and mainstream divisions that are taught to humans. Posthumanism can free us in that way. It helped me reach this level of awareness that we are not at the center of the universe (as expressed, for instance, in da Vinci's Vitruvian Man). It enabled me to connect to anyone from any part of the world and understand that we are manifesting, co-creating, and part of the ocean of existence. That's the beauty and power of this moment that Posthumanism helped me realize.

**Rohan Hassan** Posthumanism relates to Transhumanism, sharing a similar dream about the betterment of the human species. Yet, it differs radically in its philosophical underpinning and way of developing as theory. How do you approach these divergences?

**Francesca Ferrando** There are other movements beyond Transhumanism and Posthumanism that are redefining and rethinking the human: anti-humanism, meta-humanism, new materialism, object-oriented ontology, and more. All agree that the human is not to be taken for granted as a simple notion or point of arrival. It is moving and changing; it is a bridge, a cycle, a process. I call this era the Posthuman Era, not just because of philosophical Posthumanism—which is just one of the many voices speaking about this issue—but because the pressing question within the philosophical debate is: “What does it mean to be human in an age of major bio-technological developments, ecological disasters, and global interaction?” Historically, different movements have brought different answers because what it means to be human in the twenty-first century is not the same as five hundred or one thousand years ago. Any big shift in human consciousness has developed in a plurality of related philosophies, for example during

the Italian Renaissance. Even then, there was not just one humanism and philosophers did not agree with each other. Clarity about terms and -isms usually comes centuries later, when people look back.

The specific goal of Transhumanism is enhancing the human. But it does not deconstruct the human since it roots itself in the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth-century, within the context of the Industrial Revolution. While the goal of Posthumanism is to develop an existential awareness, Transhumanism brings about the notion of progress and better futures by re-engineering the human to address issues with which we have constantly struggled. One such issue is common throughout history and across traditions, from ancient and Mesopotamian mythologies to Gilgamesh: the search for immortality. Some religious traditions hold that immortality is achieved in the afterlife; others say that we are already immortal because constantly changing, so that physically speaking, we never die, we're only transforming. Transhumanists provide yet another answer to the question of becoming immortal. Since obviously humans have not achieved immortality in the physical sense, they critique the term and have changed it to "radical life extension," which is about possibilities. It becomes not only about human life as it is and could be, but also about bodies that are not necessarily physical and speculative emerging technologies.

One could explore, for instance, the idea of mind uploading. Our body might die, but our "consciousness" may be transferred into a machine, which may live for thousands of years. Some people speak about gerontology and the idea that through nanotechnology you could reconstitute yourself over and over. We could also think of physical bodies that reconstruct, regenerate, and rejuvenate themselves for centuries, without limits in time. As an example of another perspective on the notion of death, with cryonics it is not seen as the end, but instead as a long sleep until technology finds a way to solve the issue that killed you. If you die of a cancer that is not treatable today, you could be cryonized with the hope that future technology will be able to cure you and bring you back to life. Other people are not so interested in bringing the whole body back and may only cryonize their head with the idea that their brain could one day be transferred. What's beautiful about Transhumanism is that it opens many possibilities the human could embrace, some of which are already in progress. It is this power of radical imagination that I appreciate in this movement, even if I do not consider myself a transhumanist.

Transhumanism is very efficient at bringing technology into the conversation, not only as emerging possibilities of what we could do in the future, but also right now with technology available today. When attending "humanity plus" events, I heard people say, "I just wish I was born two hundred years from now." Indeed, while basing themselves inside a notion of linear time, Transhumanists envision possible futures with great hope, expectation, and faith. In Transhumanism, there is nostalgia about the future, not about the way we are or were. We should also mention that over time, there have been rapid changes in the movement. In the 90s, most transhumanists came from an atheistic perspective—the idea was that you lost God but found technology—but this is no longer accurate. Nowadays, they may also come from religious backgrounds: there are Christian transhumanists, Muslim transhumanists, Hindu transhumanists, etc.

Moreover, most transhumanists are bioliberal, who support genetic engineering and the altering of human DNA—a very controversial topic about which there is great public debate, many people opposing the idea. The first designer babies were officially born in 2018, and unofficially others may have been born earlier than that. You may be in favor or against it, but we should be talking about it because it's happening. No longer belonging to the realm of science fiction, if anything, it is the past already. But human enhancement is generally not the goal in Posthumanism, which is more diversified on the notion—with some posthumanists in favor of it and others very much against it. Whereas Transhumanism is proactive about it, Posthumanism is precautionary: What are the intentions and consequences? Posthumanists recognize that there are possibilities and that it's happening, but also that we don't know much about it. For example, they believe that we should proceed slowly with altering human DNA because consequences are not well-known.

**Rohan Hassan** Humans have shown an insatiable consumerist greed and anthropocentric sense of nature, even becoming agents able to change the climate of the planet. As we have entered the era of the “Anthropocene,” how does Posthumanism as a philosophy critique the notion?

**Francesca Ferrando** This question is at the very core of Posthumanism, which focuses not only on how the human could be, but on how the human is, because the future does not come from nowhere. We are the prophecy of the future and we create it. The human, from a posthumanist perspective, is located and embodied in a geological time that is being readdressed by geologists. Currently, although widely accepted, the Anthropocene is an informal term. We used to learn that we lived in the era of the Holocene, where humans are just one part of a wider picture and where our actions don't have real consequences because we are too much of a fragment. The Anthropocene changes the whole narrative since it focuses on the *anthropos* to realize that we not only have a huge impact on planet Earth, but that we can be recognized as a geological force, akin to earthquakes or volcanos. We are not merely a drop in the ocean without agency to effect change; we are huge waves that are changing the whole biosphere. This is taken seriously by the posthumans because we can no longer think of the humanities, philosophies, laws, sciences, or ourselves in separation from everything on the planet, such as other species, plants, and technology. The Anthropocene becomes a perspective, a location that must be acknowledged and cannot be forgotten nor erased.

That's another difference between Posthumanism and Transhumanism. The transhumanists are, for me, too lost in the future to realize where we are in the present. The future is not linear, as they see it, but rooted in a rhizomatic way, like ginger or turmeric. The Anthropocene cannot be separated from a posthumanist understanding of existence, and it also does not come with the idea that humans are such a negative force that we should become extinct. It doesn't have this flavor of tragedy, self-compassion, and self-hate. Going back to the beginning of our conversation, realizing who you are is the best gift you can give to yourself, the human species, and the planet. The Anthropocene is part of who we are—part of the planet. We cannot forget that we are part of a species that is not one but many. We cannot think of anything, not even ourselves, in separation

from an embodied geo-historical location. This should not come with drama, but in a rooted, acknowledged position that involves changing not out of self-compassion or self-pity, but out of the recognition that if the planet is in crisis, we are in crisis. We need to acknowledge that the ecological crisis will impact human crises, as the pandemic has shown. This pandemic is coming out of us, of our actions, proving that we are part of everything and that what we do does matter.

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