

TOWARDS A POSTHUMAN PHILOSOPHY OF ART: A RESPONSE TO STEFAN SORGNER'S *PHILOSOPHY OF POSTHUMAN ART*

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Abstract

This article is a critical compilation of notes about Stefan Sorgner's *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*. Instead of summarizing or exhaustively analyzing Sorgner's work, I focus on some aspects of his book, namely the relationship between art and posthuman philosophy, the connection between his philosophy of posthuman art and critical posthumanism, and the Nietzschean character of his project. I argue that Sorgner's philosophy of posthuman art requires a wider context to provide the basic criteria for an analysis of posthuman artworks, namely, a posthuman philosophy of art. This means that, despite the great philosophical innovation of characterizing posthuman art, a philosophy of posthuman art needs to be inscribed in the wider context of a posthuman philosophy of art. From a critical posthuman perspective, i.e., a radical criticism of humanism as a breeding technique, it is not enough to just provide a characterization of posthuman art excluding the possibility of analyzing other forms of art from a posthuman standpoint. Taking into account that Nietzsche suggests a genealogical approach to aesthetic and moral values, a philosophy of posthuman art must also account for the emergence of the posthuman in art. Consequently, it seems necessary to establish posthuman criteria to evaluate non-posthuman works of art. My criticism does not undermine Sorgner's philosophy of posthuman art but it calls for further development of a posthuman philosophy of art focused on understanding artistic traditions from a posthuman perspective.

Keywords

Posthuman art, philosophy of art, aesthetics, transhumanism, critical posthumanism, Nietzsche, Sloterdijk, Braidotti

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1. Introduction

Stefan Sorgner's *Philosophy of Posthuman Art* (2022) presents guidelines for a philosophical characterization and discussion of posthuman art and establishes the foundations of a transhumanist philosophy of art. I would not like to say that the reader will find a critique of Sorgner's work in this article. Instead, this article should be understood as an attempt to contribute to a posthuman philosophy of art inspired by Sorgner's work. However, some understandings of mine that might contradict Sorgner's conceptualization of posthuman art will arise as I present my line of reasoning.

As it will become clear, my main discrepancy with Sorgner has to do with his claim that one of the main characteristics of posthuman art is its focus on emerging technologies (Sorgner, 2022, p. 23). As a consequence, Sorgner's philosophy of posthuman art excludes most of what we know as modern art, and much contemporary art as well. I maintain that this claim about posthuman art's relation to technology is not necessarily true since the reference to technology can be absent or only incidentally present in a posthuman work of art, and it might still express other posthuman aesthetic characteristics, such as non-duality and perspectivism. But, more importantly, even if posthuman art is inevitably linked to emerging technologies, a posthuman philosophy of art must undertake the task of providing posthuman coordinates for a historical understanding of art in general.

I will argue that there must be a definition of posthuman art that does not exclude most modern and postmodern works of art only because they are not focused on emerging technologies. As an example of posthuman art that does not focus on technology, I will refer to Pablo Picasso's painting, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)*, which, as well as cubist and post-war abstract paintings, I see as clearly illustrating perspectivism, pluralism, and non-duality. Also, I will argue that even though posthuman artists cannot ignore technology, they can establish a variety of relationships with it, including critical ones, as has been the case with critical posthuman philosophers such as Sloterdijk and Braidotti.

2. Sorgner's Posthumanism and Emerging Technologies

Posthuman art can reflect upon technology or it can use technology as a means for an aesthetic end. However, the meaning of posthumanism and the posthuman is not univocal, and it should not be, because pluralism is, precisely, a posthuman value. In a wide, non-essentialist, non-dualistic way, Sorgner claims that a relationship with emerging technologies is essential to posthuman art. In other words: posthuman art could hardly exist in a cultural environment where technology is not highly developed. The description of posthuman art as closely related to emerging technologies implies that there is also a close relationship between posthumanism itself and emerging technologies.

But, what is exactly the relationship we are describing? Sorgner's claim that posthuman art focuses on emerging technologies (Sorgner, 2022, p. 23) talks about two different relationships: one between posthuman aesthetics and emerging technologies, and the other between art (in general) and emerging technologies. The

first one is a theoretical one, and it is a part of a “philosophy of posthuman art” (Sorgner, 2022). The second is historical in nature and has to do with the fact that art and technology have common roots in what the Greeks understood as *techné* and *poiesis*. Aristotle described the relationship between *techné* and *poiesis* (Aristotle, 2004, p. 106; 1140a, 10–20), usually translated as *skill* and *production*, as a teleology, since in his view, skill is naturally oriented toward production. Even though I cannot expand on Aristotle’s view, it is worth noting that, in a wide understanding, art and technology are old acquaintances. The fact that art is changed and challenged by technologies is not in question here as it is undeniable that emerging technologies allow for new forms of artwork, and enable us to access works of art from new perspectives. What matters most, in a more global view, is how what we now know as posthuman art is inscribed in the history of art in general.

Let us focus, first, on the relationship between posthuman aesthetics and emerging technologies. According to Sorgner, posthuman aesthetics is “aware of permanent becoming, inclusive, non-dualistic, non-anthropocentric, non-foundational, non-essentialist, non-speciesist, non-alethic, non-logocentric, non-heteronormative, perspectival, non-utopian and pluralistic” (Sorgner, 2022, p. 13). In this view, a posthuman aesthetics will be present in works of art that revolve around these topics or that have them as formal characteristics. At the same time, a posthuman aesthetics will deny the posthuman status to those works of art that lack these characteristics.

Now, even if we understand the previous as the main posthuman aesthetic characteristics, it is hard to see why or how emergent technologies are of such importance to posthuman aesthetics as to exclude most of the greatest works of modern (and postmodern) art from posthuman art or from a posthuman analysis. I find this technological notion of posthuman art implausible since it is thanks to modern artistic developments, including Wagner’s idea of the opera as a total work of art (Sorgner, 2022, pp. 92–93), that posthuman art can be regarded as an artistic phenomenon on its own. For this reason, the question of the relationship between art and technology, and with it a posthuman, essentially genealogical philosophy of art continues to be relevant for a critical understanding of posthuman works of art.

Before moving on to a general characterization of what could be another focus of a posthuman philosophy, i.e., how a posthuman philosophy establishes other relationships with technology, different from enthusiastic affirmation, I would like to suggest that a philosophy of posthuman art can also have a relationship with the history of art in general, which has little to do with emergent technologies but still represents a posthuman task, namely the genealogy of the posthuman in art history.

3. Les Demoiselles d’Avignon

Let us take as an example the painting that André Breton referred to as the one with which “we say goodbye to all other paintings of the past”, suggesting both the excitement for what is to come and the melancholy for what is never to return. I think anyone can relate this feeling to their own relationship with technology, but let us for a second leave technology alone. *Les Demoiselles* means a great aesthetic advancement since it changes the way in which the two dimensions were traditionally

used in European visual arts. The painting portrays five female prostitutes posing in such ways that resemble stereotypical seductive yet vulgar gestures. Their faces look like caricatured African masks, and their limbs are deformed and unfinished. The view that the five demoiselles in fact represent prostitutes is uncontroversial since the title itself is related to an old brothel located on Avinyò Street in Barcelona, but the meaning of the scene, and what Picasso is trying to say has been discussed, not without controversy, from several points of view. These include the views of Picasso's colleagues, most of whom saw the painting as a mockery of traditional, classicist painting; as well as the views of philosophers and critics for more than a century (Chave, 1994).

The first receptions of the work, back in the first decade of the 20th century, saw it "as something mad and monstrous" (Rubin, 1989, p. 348). It should not surprise us that the language of the monstrous, today decidedly linked to a cyborg aesthetics (Haraway, 2016), appears to be associated with a work of modern art since the perspectival twist that we relate to posthumanism starts out, precisely, as something turned against what traditionally has been understood as natural and beautiful. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, Picasso's displacement of a classical idea of beauty, along with his "deidealization of the human form, his disuse of illusionistic space, and his deployment of a mixture of visual idioms" (Chave, 1994, p. 596) were not taken in a positive way: Picasso was accused of attacking the feminine, and symbolically "disabling them" (Chave, 1994, p. 599), in a misogynistic representation of his own ill relationship with all women. The cyborg culture had not yet arrived amongst his contemporaries.

Later accounts, appear to absolve Picasso of the charge of misogyny but situate the violence of the painting in a supposedly fierce, sickly enticing attitude of the prostitutes that "force their eroticized flesh upon us" in a kind of "female aggression" (Steinberg, 1972, p. 22) against the spectator perpetrated by "avenging furies of a new order" (Kozloff, 1972). It is explicit in this view that the painting also reveals "a strain of aggression in one man's (Picasso's) feelings toward women" (Kozloff, 1972, p. 36). In both interpretations, though ferociously attacking the traditional concept of beauty and most of the longly respected standards of composition, the painting is interpreted as a dualist war of genders in which the author and the observer both tend to participate as part of the masculine team. Luckily, this view has been replaced by feminist and postmodern accounts that stress the war of values represented in Picasso's work, disregarding or rejecting dualist accounts that usually focus their analyses on such contradictions or dialectical pairs as the public and the painting, the artist and the public, male and female, victim and victimizer.

In a cubist painting, of which *Les Demoiselles* is disputedly said to be the first, virtually all the perspectives are seen at once. This feature of cubist works is subtly present in *Les Demoiselles*, but its use of space, i.e., of the empty canvas, does not correspond to the cubist tendency to occupy the whole canvas without leaving any space for an empty background. In cubist works, every perspective that the artist wishes or is able to show is shown at the same time, demanding a change in the core of traditional composition rules, but also requiring a change in the observer's attitude

toward the painting. This change of rules in art correlates to a perspectival change in epistemology as Western philosophy turns away from the concept of truth as correspondence. Light, shadows, colors, lines, and perspectives no longer have to be in correspondence with the *objective* point of view of an observer, but they can and must show the radical plurality of meaning and desire.

From a historical perspective, the discussion around *Les Demoiselles* has been focused on the status of the painting as the inauguration of cubism. This focus has actually led to critics neglecting some of the most relevant characteristics of the work, consequently misplacing it in the history of art. According to Chave, there are good aesthetic and historiographical reasons not to situate the beginning of cubism in this painting, and that realization seems to be necessary to authentically grasp its deeper meaning as an expression of the artist's and his culture's fear of women and outsiders (Chave, 1994, p. 606).

At first glance, the acknowledgment of Picasso's sexism and xenophobia seems like a good reason to situate him in a pre-modern, pre-enlightenment era. But in a posthuman interpretation of the work of art, what is most interesting is the way in which he expresses those fears, using a new aesthetics that allows and demands pluralistic criticism. Even though the case has been made that Picasso used a dualist ontology (man-woman, inside-outside, white-black, work-public) to express the kind of feelings that focus on duality and hierarchy, promoting the kind of aesthetic experience that focus on duality, there is no reason why a posthuman philosophy of art could not draw new and deep understandings about the genealogy of those feelings and experiences, as well as about the genealogy of the posthuman itself.

The implications of a posthuman understanding of *Les Demoiselles* for the historiography of European art and culture are yet to be discussed, but they will presumably help understand the genealogical linkages between modern art and totalitarianism, as it is clear that the fear of *the outsider* or *the ethnically impure*, was common to many Europeans in the decades previous to the World War II catastrophe. A posthuman philosophy that aims to shed some light on the past has to be willing to observe it in a new light; it has to be willing to apply new posthuman concepts and values to problems belonging to a past where those values did not exist or had no visibility. For this reason, a philosophy of posthuman art must also be, from the very beginning, a posthuman philosophy of art.

4. Notes on a *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*

By *philosophy of posthuman art*, I understand the kind of philosophical reflections that seek to understand the principles of posthuman art as they put into words the problems and findings of posthuman artists. But the very concept of posthuman art entails a posthuman way of seeing things, so these philosophical reflections about posthuman art must be nothing but posthuman themselves. I think that an explicit, wider perspective on art as a whole, and philosophy of art, is mostly missing from Sorgner's work, nonetheless, I believe it would be consistent with his philosophy of posthuman art as well as with his more general posthuman philosophy. Some questions about Sorgner's philosophy of art remain unresponded for the moment,

namely, those questions around the matter of the relationship between posthuman art and more traditional forms of art.

Sorgner's posthuman philosophy has certainly opened new, plausible paths for the philosophy of art, but it seems to me that such philosophy should somehow include pre-technological works of art, especially those that exhibit, like *Les Femmes d'Alger* does, posthuman characteristics that do not necessarily include a close or affirmative relationship to today's emerging technologies. This can easily be achieved by expanding the dominion of posthuman art to include any artistic display of innovative thinking intimately linked to an exploration of the limits of the human condition. I think Sorgner could agree with me that this is a weak enough definition of posthuman art. And it is one that would help define the task of posthuman philosophy of art, inasmuch as it provides an orientation to understand the relationship between posthuman art and traditional art.

Lacking a posthuman theory of art implies the impossibility to attack the matter of what counts as art from a posthuman point of view. Although the usefulness and the necessity of a definition of art have been discussed (Adajian, 2022), and can be doubted, it seems that Sorgner's posthumanism needs to at least acknowledge the discussion in order to propose a weak definition of art that accounts for the aesthetic characteristics of posthuman artworks. Sorgner (2022, pp. 63–89) uses the concept of "aesthetic characteristics" to succinctly describe what makes a work of art a posthuman one, but he does not unfold the category as one would expect, i.e., by explaining and hierarchizing a set of characteristics that ought to be present in a work of art for it to be considered posthuman. Instead, he offers a characterization of ten types of posthuman aesthetics: the aesthetics of the monstrous, the aesthetics of hybridity, the aesthetics of becoming, the aesthetics of the amorphous, the aesthetics of twisting, of relationality, of body plurality, of superheroes, the aesthetics of smoothness and the aesthetics of *kawaii*. I am convinced that most of these can also be understood as aesthetic characteristics of posthuman artworks, but in Sorgner's philosophy of art, they are presented as types of aesthetics. Most posthuman works of art usually focus on one of these characteristics, but this strategy limits the scope and depth of this philosophy as it only indicates some characteristics of posthuman art without establishing any criteria to identify a work of art as posthuman.

This list had never been put together, and it is certain that it will grow longer as posthuman pluralism becomes the norm in contemporary art. It accounts for posthuman aesthetics as a whole by providing examples of posthuman artistic moods. Anyway, the question remains whether all of the works cited are actually examples of posthuman art, or if some of them, even exhibiting one particular posthuman aesthetic characteristic, are not yet posthuman. If it is the case that only one quality is not enough to define a work as posthuman, another question must be asked: which are the main characteristics, which are the ones that define a posthuman work of art? I think Sorgner evades this question, and he has good reasons to do so.

Aesthetics are sets of aesthetic values. As such, they can be associated with many different political, ethical, and epistemological views, including grand narratives.

According to Sorgner's posthumanism, strongly rooted in the Heraclitean-Nietzschean tradition (Sorgner, 2022, p. 21), the most defining feature of posthumanism is its rejection of duality: dual thinking, dual representation, ethical duality. Nietzsche would have called this simply *metaphysics*, and he would have said that the problem with metaphysics is morality. The question of which exactly are the main or the most important characteristics, or the ones that must not be absent from a posthuman work of art, is the typical kind of question that metaphysical thinking would ask: which are the essential characteristics of posthuman arts? If, on another line of reasoning, each of these *aesthetics* represents posthuman art on their own, the question of what they have in common as to be considered posthuman should be clarified further. I feel that this is exactly the kind of question that a posthuman philosophy would regard as loaded with duality since we are using an ancient philosophical way of asking about the nature or about the *essence* of things.

From a posthuman point of view, the *essential*, what is and cannot be another way, eternal forms, universal truths, are non-existent, non-concepts. However, a posthuman philosophy must be able to account for those ideas and those truths that claim universality and eternity, to reveal their perspectival nature. In other words, the question of the essential characteristics of a posthuman work of art needs to be understood in posthuman terms, translated into a posthuman language. In a similar way, older works of art can be understood and interpreted from a posthuman point of view. A way to do so is to read an artwork with a critical eye to find traces of the posthuman, a genealogical quest, as I tried to exemplify with Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*.

Even though Sorgner does not elaborate on a theory of art capable of articulating posthuman art with more traditional or classical forms of art, he has a well-defined idea of posthuman art. He thinks of the posthuman artwork as a non-totalitarian total work of art. A total work of art is the artwork *par excellence*, one that combines several aesthetics, several artistic disciplines, and several philosophical concerns. Especially regarding Helbig's music, del Val's metaformances and Kac's fluorescent rabbit, Sorgner (2022) describes the posthuman non-totalitarian total work of art as capturing "a totality of human experiences" or using "a totality of artistic means to transfer philosophical understandings and bridge the gap between the musical and the social and ethical world" (p. 39).

It is not clear, however, what a *totality* stands for in this context. In the traditional language of European metaphysics, totalit means *ex pluribus unum*, one out of many, and it entails duality as an essential feature of being even if the goal is to reconcile the two sides of the inequation. Clearly, if one is willing to make sense of Sorgner's posthuman philosophy of art, the idea of totality should not be understood in a dualistic way. But dualistic ways are hard to change. In the context of posthuman philosophy, it is hard to understand why the concept of *total work of art*, or the concept of *totality* itself is necessary. I think Sorgner is aware of these questions, but they are left out of his philosophy of posthuman art simply because his focus was not to deliver a posthuman philosophy of art, which in any case, I think he should in the future.

I think that Sorgner's project of a posthuman philosophy of art would benefit from taking into account other posthuman philosophies from the continental tradition such as Sloterdijk's plural spherology (Sloterdijk, 2016) and acrobatic ethics (Sloterdijk, 2013), or Rosi Braidotti's nomadic ethics (Braidotti, 2013; 2016). Critical posthumanists have invested a great deal of thought into analyzing, deconstructing, and criticizing humanism, suggesting pluralist strategies to attack traditional and new philosophical problems. In the following paragraphs, I will try to show how Sorgner's posthuman philosophy of art might benefit from incorporating critical posthumanism. With this, I do not intend to contradict any of the basic posthuman assumptions in Sorgner's philosophy of posthuman art or his more general posthuman positions about science, enhancement, or human nature, but to provide a perspective that might contribute to further posthuman philosophical developments and discussions.

5. Notes on Other Posthumanisms: Nietzsche, Sloterdijk, and Braidotti

To be able to revisit and reinterpret artistic traditions prior to the posthuman twist, a philosophy of posthuman art needs to rely on a wide understanding of art as a whole, as a human activity that has had concrete effects on who we are as a species, who we have become. This framework has to be provided by a global perspective on human artistic activities throughout history. However, instead of a principle such as *god* or *being*, *force*, *atoms* or any other kind of unit from which aesthetic principles emanate, a posthuman philosophy must base its observations on the *factum* of perspective, i.e., on the radical plurality of perspective.

Perspective, as understood in the still short posthuman tradition, can be seen as Nietzsche's greatest discovery, because it works as a foundation after foundations have been questioned almost to exhaustion. Even the ultimate foundation, God, have been seriously questioned. Perspective is a weak foundation, and that is what makes it suitable for a posthuman philosophy, a foundation not in the totalitarian sense of dualist thinking, but in the sense that it provides a starting point for a new and improved understanding of existence. It is not a principle that was found or discovered through thorough use of reason, in a cartesian fashion, nor by a dialectic investigation, in a Platonic fashion. The radical plurality of perspective is what is left after the modern collapse of every other eternal or universal principle, i.e., after the death of God. Nietzsche calls the undermining of universal principles "the death of God", implying that every principle is in fact the same principle: the one that declares its own universal validity.

In an ontological point of view, Nietzsche refers to the radical plurality of perspective as the *will to power*. Will to power is not intelligence, nor an orientation towards an end. Ends are the result of the will to power; individual perspectives and interpretations, moral values, and political feelings are the results of the will to power. The will to power is not a principle or a force, but an immense plurality of forces that converge in energetic "nodal points" (Sorgner, 2022) that we call bodies, ideas, feelings, perspectives, and individuals. Any *unity* or *totality* that we can think of or perceive based on our experience or our reasonings entails the dominance of certain forces that constitute variable, mobile, relatively stable nodal points. One can

but ask how can a posthuman philosophy understand art as will to power, and how can a posthuman philosophy interpret a work of art, be it posthuman or not, as will to power. This is certainly something that can be done, as it has been done in other philosophical realms, for example, when Michel Foucault describes the relationship between power and knowledge as a circular process in which “the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process” (Foucault, 1995, p. 224), implying that truth is established by force (p. 184), rather than by reasoning.

But the opening to perspective also implies the coming about of the symbolic and the unconscious, as a posthuman theme. Art is not only an expression of our conscious desires, feelings, and thoughts: it is also a manifestation of our unconscious life. Nietzsche might have not been far from this idea, as he always stressed the importance of the unconscious (Katsafanas, 2015), and he deemed consciousness as something *superficial* compared with the depths of the unconscious, full of non-conceptual contents. In this view, the connection of arts with Science and ethics, understood as consciously created bodies of value, is not as important or as rich as the connection of arts with our unspoken, deeper selves, not because that is *who we really are* or *our true self*, but because they represent, according to Nietzsche, an incredibly larger domain.

A posthuman philosophy of art must take into account the ontological twist represented by Nietzsche’s new focus on perspective underpinned by the conception of the will to power. Posthuman ontologies, largely based on some variation of Nietzsche’s perspectivist ontology, an ontology of the will to power, open up the possibility of new understandings of the work of art and the relationships between the artwork, the artist, and the public. So, if Picasso’s *Demoiselles* were to be interpreted in this new perspectival optic, we would not focus on Picasso’s values and personality (misogyny, sexism etc.), but on the aesthetic experience that the painting offers to the posthuman observer: the painting tells a story about the history of European ethos—that includes sexism and misogyny—and invites the observer to feel the discomfort and the violence implicit in being a woman or a man in the early 20th-century Europe. In this fashion, without reducing the artwork’s contents to the conscious, rational intention of the artist, a posthuman account of art can draw conclusions about its deeper meaning, i.e. as a channel for impersonal, unconscious, cultural forces that leave their traces in different spheres of existence.

Similarly, if values, ethics, and the question of the meaning of life were to be revised in this light, radically new ethical standards and new ideas of the good should arise. And they are arising, as it should be acknowledged by any posthuman thinker. Two great examples of the emergence of new, perspectival sets of values can be found in Rosi Braidotti’s nomadic ethics, and Peter Sloterdijk’s acrobatic ethics. Both of them belong to a Nietzschean tradition.

Peter Sloterdijk develops Nietzsche’s reflections on asceticism and describes humans as “practicing beings” and as “inescapably subject to vertical tensions” (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 19). Remarkably, Sloterdijk uses an aesthetic example to explain the phenomenon of verticality: a poem by Rilke biblically entitled *Du mußt dein leben*

ändern, “You must change your life”, which in turn speaks about a classic sculpture of Apollo’s torso, referring to a certain idea of perfection (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 21) that commands us: “you must change your life,” you have to become better, you have to become great at something. Sloterdijk believes that this is the ethos of our time. According to his account, a great indication of this ethos is what he calls the “late” or “athletic and somatic” renaissance, accompanied by a kind of pagan body cult that has been taking place in Europe since the early 1900s (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 38) with the inauguration of the modern Olympic Games. This phenomenon is an ongoing one, and we can still observe it today in the form of new athletic cultures. But what is important about this renaissance is not the cult of the body but the appearance of a diversity of disciplines offering a multiplicity of ways to achieve virtuosity. This way, Sloterdijk describes human practices as forms of art that lead the artist to great achievements thanks to repetition, and this analysis can be applied to traditional forms of art as well as to innovative practices that involve the mastery of one’s body, desires, or thoughts. From this point of view, technology is a human being’s ally in their pursuit of verticality, though it can certainly work as an easy way to their further domestication and sedentarization.

The case of Rosi Braidotti is slightly different since she does identify as a critical posthumanist, and maintains a very critical position regarding emerging technologies. She, too, takes on a Nietzschean tradition, combining “Foucauldian genealogies with feminist politics of location to provide embodied and embedded accounts of the multilayered and complex relations of power that structure our ‘being human’ ” (Braidotti 2016, p. 15). While Sloterdijk understands humanism as the kind of *breeding* that we have been practicing through a culture of writing and reading, the culture of shared texts (not exempt of violence, of course), Rosi Braidotti understands humanism as the belief system founded on the renaissance ideal of *man* further developed by the Enlightenment as the unitary, autonomous subject, and as the white, heterosexual, urbanized male. While Braidotti condemns technology for its part in our negative relationship with nature, as well as for its role in the capitalist status quo, Sloterdijk finds that the discovery of ascetic practices as authentic engines of culture sets us free to choose our own verticality, becoming artists of our own life, able to overcome the obsolete humanist breeding method.

Unfortunately, I do not have the space here to expand on these thoughts, but I would like to suggest that, since critical posthumanist theories such as Braidotti’s and Sloterdijk’s bring the world of art, ethics, and politics closer by offering new ontologies and new understandings about the relationship, or should I say continuity, between the conscious (language, reason, technicity) and the unconscious (symbols, affects, instincts), a posthuman philosophy of art, yet to come, might benefit from a dialogue with these theories. This is a promising way to compile a philosophical toolbox that, combined with Sorgner’s advancements in the characterization of posthuman art and Nietzschean transhumanism, can set the stage for an authentic posthuman philosophy of art.

6. Conclusions

Sorgner is right to dismiss the School of Frankfurt's aesthetics based on their reliance upon a dualistic understanding of existence, but that means that all previous art forms must be re-assessed based on the posthuman paradigm. This is certainly something that has happened in humanities before: Picasso's *Demoiselles* is a good example of how celebrated works of art can be interpreted in a dualistic fashion by centering the attention on the artist as an autonomous subject that *makes decisions* and *expresses his/her feelings*, and it is as well a good example of how these interpretations can and must be revisited as new aesthetic approaches become available.

As critical posthumanism moves away from a utilitarian/liberal logic toward a more deeply progressivist pluralism, it becomes apparent that the usefulness of human activities should no longer be evaluated in terms of immediate or practical utility but in terms of their entanglement and plurality of connections with other aspects of life, such as values, citizenship or religion. In a naturalistic understanding of culture as a tension of dynamic nodal points, art can be seen as having an evolutionary function. This must not be understood as the affirmation of some kind of functionalism, but it does imply a kind of constructivism. This is certainly controversial since it seems to suggest that there is some kind of intelligence, meaning, or even teleology in nature. In a posthuman perspective, we have to reject such metaphysical assumptions, but, as I suggest, if the Nietzschean ontology of the will to power, which is a perspectivist one, a weak one, to use Vattimo's term, is the common ground and starting point of contemporary posthumanism, then the work of art can and should be seen as taking part in the larger picture of human practices. Practices at which we get better and better, at which some of us become excellent, and at which some of us, very few, become virtuous, thus able to inspire others and set new standards, new values.

I take it as uncontroversial that there is strong a connection between posthuman art and emerging technologies. However, this does not mean that a positive attitude towards emerging technologies is a must for posthuman philosophy or posthuman art. In the plurality of perspectives unleashed by the emergence of the posthuman, there is a big space for optimism. Why not? But a close look at today's world with the suspicious eye of a Nietzschean tradition, reveals that the relationship is complex and that a critique of new technological values is also a necessary part of a philosophy of posthuman art.

Another essential understanding of mine is that the term *posthuman* can be superfluous if it does not entail a critical view of technology. In a way, art has always been posthuman since it has been a driving force of moral and aesthetic change for so many centuries. In some other way, however, art has always been very *human*, since the subjection to vertical tensions, the desire to excel, is the highest human quality (Sloterdijk, 2013). In this view, I do not think that the forms of art that Sorgner describes in his book escape the category of human in a significant way. Art is certainly an expression of who humans are. Sometimes humanity looks like desire and expectation, and some other times it looks like melancholy and longing for a paradise lost; sometimes we are sophisticated and complex, and sometimes we just take whatever comes. Sometimes we can experience both feelings at the same time,

as it appears to be the case with Andre Breton's melancholic enthusiasm about Picasso's *Demoiselles*. It is a posthuman philosophy's task to offer a posthuman understanding of art, not the other way around.

If I am correct, Sorgner's *Philosophy of Posthuman Art* (2022) must be understood as an introduction to a posthuman philosophy of art, rather than just a philosophical reflection on an artistic movement. For this reason, Sorgner's findings about posthuman art are a reminder of the need to revisit the philosophy of art in posthuman terms. A philosophy of posthuman art must be a posthuman philosophy of art as well, and as such it must be able to track back the posthuman along the history of art. Despite posthumanism tends to be reluctant to adopt rigid categories, there is both the theoretical need to define and discuss the main aesthetic characteristics of posthuman art, which has been Sorgner's main focus so far, as well as the genealogical task to describe the emergence of the posthuman in the history of artistic disciplines, which can help us gain a deeper understanding of the history of the posthuman as we look forward to the future of art and of humanity.

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