

ON CONSTRUCTIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE INTERFERENCES IN THE LIFE AND IN ART WORLDS: A REPLY

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Abstract

Twelve critics responded to reflections presented in the monograph *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*. In the article “On Constructive and Destructive Interferences in the Life and Art Worlds: A Reply”, I focus on one particularly challenging thought by each scholar, and respond to all of the replies, clarify related thoughts, and highlight specific insights, which might be in need of additional reflections.

Keywords

Posthumanism, transhumanism, metahumanism, art, philosophy, ontology, ethics, aesthetics

1. Introduction

I am extremely grateful to the editors of *Deliberatio* (2022) for having compiled such an amazingly stimulating special issue dedicated to my monograph *Philosophy of Posthuman Art* (2022a), and to all the contributors for their perceptive, poignant, and challenging reflections. There are many thoughts worthy of being addressed, but I will limit myself to particularly challenging reflections to which I present some additional clarification, responses, and thoughts.

2. Tuncel and the Überwindung-Verwindung-Distinction

Yunus Tuncel stresses the need for sticking to either *Überwindung* or overcoming rather than the *Verwindung* (twist), which is what I propose. His main contention seems to be that in overcoming “we do not leave our past entirely behind,” (Tuncel, 2022, p. 12) whereby he adds that “overcoming does not assume any dualism” (Tuncel, 2022, p. 12). This criticism is implausible. We cross a bridge to get from

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one side to the other. The process of crossing a bridge clearly implies two different sides. These sides are not completely separate, as the bridge represents a relational connection between them, but otherwise they are radically separate. Posthumanists aim to overcome ontological dualities to affirm a materialist world view. This example demonstrates even better why overcoming is a highly problematic concept. The categorical ontological duality that posthumanists try to overcome is that between the sensually accessible material realm and the immaterial realm of the mind. Many posthumanists present a new materialism as a consequence of overcoming humanism. It is this formulation that reveals various philosophical challenges connected with this way of formulating their revised understanding of the world. Humanists affirm a material body and an immaterial mind. Posthumanists focus on the material body. They forget that we actually possess both a mind as well as rationality. This judgement does not imply, however, that there is an immaterial mind or a unified rationality. Both judgements would be implausible. However, by drawing on the concept of the twist, we can interweave separate strands into a new unity. It is not the case that we need to get rid of the mind, rationality, or the immaterial/material distinction. The mind is something that enables us to have intuitions, and rationality is a prerequisite for the use of language. We can have intuitions and possess the capacity for language, so we clearly have both a mind as well as rationality. Instead of talking about the immaterial or the material, I use the term psychophysiology, which implies a unity between entities that used to be identified within the material and immaterial realms. The material body and the immaterial mind are twisted within our psychophysiology. It is a processual and non-dualistic way of referring to the various capacities that we possess. To limit ourselves to a material body is an intellectually implausible way of thinking non-dualistically. We can use language, so we clearly have some kind of rational mind. The question is what are the qualities that can be associated with this rational mind? It cannot be a unified understanding of rationality, as each idiosyncratic rationality comes about as a complex interplay between psychophysiological prerequisites and environmental influences. There are manifold interferences that are permanently taking place between one's psychophysiology and one's environment. However, it would be implausible to stress that each of these concepts is a closed one. Yet, there is a contingent nodal point that unifies several interferences, but this point again is nothing unchanging, eternal, or stable. This point is rather a part of this web of interferences, and it can be altered as can any other point at each moment. At the same time, each unifying point is not just a contingent nodal point, but also a vibration, a wave that moves and interferes with other such vibrations, of which some are more destructive and others more constructive, and we are always enmeshed within a myriad of such interferences, which can be both constructive as well as destructive. A psychophysiology is both a contingent nodal point as well as a moving vibration, and the same applies to the environment that consists of many such contingent nodal points, which permanently interfere with several others. What happens in all these descriptions are twists. Psychophysiology is interwoven with other entities, and all of these entities are contingent nodal points, which are in the

process of continual becoming all the time. It is not the case that something is overcome so that something radically separate can be realized.

Here, I have described how a contingent psychophysiological nodal point interferes with entities around it in the life world. This is a particular situation as here all con- and destructive interferences are immediately meaningful for one's own psychophysiological contingent nodal point. If you are harmed by sunlight, are cut by a knife, or are threatened by a virus, you are confronted with a destructive interference. This is a situation very different from being confronted with a posthuman artwork. Here, the situation is different. On the one hand, you might find yourself identifying with a protagonist of Sven Helbig's *From the Noise of the World* non-totalitarian total work of art, as you realize similarities between yourself and the protagonist. In such a situation, you might experience what it is like to be the protagonist, if you can identify with the protagonist. Thus, you might feel *fear* in a specific situation—the fear the protagonist experiences. On the other hand, you can also distance yourself from the situation and realize that you are not the protagonist, so that you can experience *pity* with the protagonist who experiences the fear, as you are both like the protagonist but also a different (nodal) point. It is this interplay between involvement and separation that Aristotle has identified with *katharsis* in his *Poetics*. In contrast to the way Aristotle described such a dramatic situation, in this case it is not presumed that a rational and essential human nature is assumed, which enables such a perception for spectators without any involvement. The contingent nodal point does not have an essential nature, which implies that each aesthetic experience is different, as drama, situation and nodal points have been altered so that it becomes impossible to be confronted with the same artwork twice.

However, it needs to be highlighted that it is meaningful to talk about aesthetic and lifeworld experiences. Aesthetic experiences are such that an interplay between *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* takes place. It is a permanent interplay of identification and separation, between seeing yourself as the protagonist of an artwork or a dramatic story and realizing the distance between the protagonist and yourself, whereby neither protagonist, nor yourself or the general setting are unchanging entities. Aesthetic experiences imply a mixture of constructive and destructive interferences, just like one's experiences in the lifeworld. However, in contrast to lifeworld experiences, it is possible to swing in between entanglement and distance, whereas in the lifeworld, one is always meaningfully connected to a situation without having the opportunity to distance oneself, which is the prerequisite for taking a contemplative stance, whereby this distance never implies the option of fully dropping out. Even a contemplative stance implies a comprehensive entanglement, as a posthuman aesthetic experience does not involve the option of an essentialist contemplative entity which can fully distance itself from the world of becoming. It is this entanglement that represents further elements of the twist.

My intention in highlighting the differences as well as the similarities between constructive and destructive interferences in the lifeworld and in the artworld was to show why the *twist* better captures the meaning of an ontology of becoming of everything in all respects at all times rather than that of overcoming.

3. Mali and Truth

There has been a lot of discussion about the ontology of becoming of everything in all ways and at all times. This gives the impression that this ontology might represent a new fundamental essence of nature, and thus a new truth, which is not the case. The issue of truth is also raised by Franc Mali (2022), whereby he highlights Popper's approach, which he characterizes as "guided by the idea of truth as a regulative principle" (p. 27). It is important that Mali is not referring to tautologies when discussing truth. A bachelor as an unmarried man is such a tautology. Judgements that are true by definition are, of course, tautologically true. What is at stake is whether science enables a "progress towards the truth," (Mali, 2022, p. 27) or whether this is not the case. I clearly distinguish between scientific and philosophical truths, whereby scientific truths are based on empirical observations and induction, while philosophical truths are truths related to meaning and are, as such, related to ontological, ethical, epistemological as well as logical issues. The relevance of empirical observations depends on the reasoning logic of each specific philosophy. Empirical observations are extremely helpful and are, thus, scientific truths. Scientific truths are such that we feel safe flying on planes, or why it is easy mend a broken leg, or possible to cure humans and other animals of bacterial infections. All these achievements are related to scientific truths. However, these truths do not tell us what a human is at its core, and consequently, they are not concerned with philosophical truths. Is there a human nature? Is rationality immaterial? Does personhood depend on a divine spark? These are the issues that philosophical truths address. However, scientific truths enable us to safely fly from Rome to Seoul. Scientific truths are greatly useful. Yet, they cannot provide us with appropriate replies to questions of meaning. A value cannot be perceived by means of our senses. It is an ought, a norm, and implies something that *should* be. This does not mean that scientific truths have no relevance for philosophical insights. This is not the case. I am merely distinguishing between different fields of enquiry, empirical research, and philosophical investigations. Science can tell us that water turns to ice at zero degrees Celsius on Earth. Here, the context matters. This insight applies under normal circumstances on Earth, but other judgements would have to be made on other planets. A scientific truth has a context-sensitive validity. Within this specific context, scientific truths function in a reliable manner and are, thus, extremely useful. However, given the fact of a changing context, or given a different planet, the judgements often would not apply in the same manner. This does not apply in the case of philosophical judgements, i.e., when I put forward the philosophical perspective that we are part of an ontology of becoming of everything in all respects at all times. This is a philosophical perspective. I cannot demonstrate this to be a truth in correspondence with the world. It is an interpretation of the world, whereby an interpretation does not imply that the perspective is false, but merely that it can be false.

In the first section, I explained the difference between aesthetic and lifeworld experiences. Here, I provide some reasons for separating scientific truths from philosophical and tautological truths. Scientific truths are pragmatic truths, which enable technological innovations that usually work and predictions that are reliable

in most circumstances. Philosophical truths on the other hand reflect on issues related to meaning. From where do we get our initial premises? When someone gets them from God by means of revelation, it is a theological enquiry. When someone gets insights from rationality, then the person might be a philosophical rationalist. When someone gets them from an interplay between personal experiences and theoretical reflections, then it could be a hermeneutic approach. I draw upon a meta-humanist lifeworld hermeneutics myself, which affirms that each philosophical criterion only applies to the situation at hand. Altered circumstances may require a modification of the plausibility criterion. However, it seems to be the case that we are merely confronted with momentary plausibility criteria and not with a linear-directed progression towards the truth in correspondence with the world. At least, the currently plausible criteria do not imply the plausibility of a criterion that can demand a continuous progress towards truth in correspondence to the world, or whereby a permanent approximation of the truth in correspondence with the world can be justified. This is what I mean by alethic nihilism.

4. Borchardt and Myth, Paić and “Stabilization” and the Coming about of Biotypes

Kerstin Borchardt (2022) calls “for a New Mythology”, and Žarko Paić (2022) wonders how the permanent becoming of the posthuman condition can lead to “stabilization.” Both scholars raise relevant philosophical questions with their arguments. How can order be realized in a world without any stability, without rest, and without any being? Can new myth be a way for generating such stabilities? Do myths have to be timely, or are there archetypes, which, as essential foundational structures, unfold in permanently new ways? It is noteworthy that the figure of Prometheus has played an important role for various beyond humanism movements. Tiresias and Pygmalion are other mythical figures that resonate strongly with elements of these cultural movements. So, it seems plausible that myths can play a role for realizing orientation, order, and stability, even though such a permanence cannot be justified ontologically. A realm of ontological essential archetypes has become highly implausible. Unified rationality has become idiosyncratic, whereby each psychophysiology has its unique rationality at each moment, and with each further alteration, rationalities are altered again and again. They remain sufficiently stable such that communication can be pragmatically realized. However, concerning specific structures, even the notion of rationality remaining identical with itself over the period of several moments becomes meaningless and nonsensical. The question remains how the persistency of certain cultural types can be explained in an ontology of permanent becoming.

Here, the cultural structures in our lifeworld become relevant. In my work on this topic found in my book *We Have Always Been Cyborgs* (2022b), I stress the moral relevance of *autonomy* even though, philosophically and ontologically, autonomy cannot be meaningfully justified. Nevertheless, I explain the relevance of the fiction of autonomy and why I embrace it strongly, even though it is a fiction that has no epistemological superiority with respect to any other ethical principle. The same can

be said of myths, like the already mentioned Prometheus myth. Different myths turn up in a variety of ways in different part of the world at different times. It is not the case that they reveal themselves again and again, but they seem to correspond to significant personal, raw, and intimate interferences. They exist partly in our psychophysiological structures and partly in the cultural structures of our lifeworld, where they are permanently altered, modified, and adapted. They are alive, but not in the same sense in which living organisms are alive, as these move by themselves and possess a metabolism. These forms or types are psychophysiologicaly alive, which leads to strong constructive interferences when an appropriate event occurs with these forms. Due to their psychophysiological liveliness, it might be suitable to refer to them as biotypes, which are non-essentialist contingent nodal points in permanent becoming, which correspond to widely shared personal concepts of meaning. Biotypes are forms in the process of becoming. When there is an appropriate interplay between an artwork and a psychophysiology, an intense constructive interference occurs, which leads to a fulfilled moment of overflowing joy. These are aesthetic moments of significant meaning, which I experienced during performances of Wagner's *Rheingold* or his *Tannhäuser*, or when reading Dostoevsky's *Notes From the Underground* or his *Notes From the House of the Dead*, Goethe's *Faust*, or Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. These moments are rare, fleeting, and special. Biotypes neither exist in psychophysiologicals, nor in artworks. Biotypes occur during intense constructive interference, and, once they have occurred, they vanish again, are altered, and move away. Biotypes are events of utmost meaning. Biotypes are my helpless way of describing moments of fulfilment that evade verbal expression. They might represent some elements of what Borchardt, and Paic were looking for in their contributions. This does not mean that any constructive interference has to be a biotype, but the meaningful occurrence of biotypes is related to intense constructive interferences.

5. Sampanikou and Post-, Trans- and Metahumanism

Evi Sampanikou's contribution contains many extremely perceptive remarks and reflections. I was particularly intrigued by her comment that I published two books in the same period that seem *diametrically different*. This might be the case. The language, the focus, as well as the topics that I deal with might seem diametrically different, if not opposed to each other. I would, however, argue that this is not the case. In both monographs, I tackle different aspects of an ontology of permanent becoming in all respects at each moment. This ontology implies a philosophical perspectivism, which leads to an affirmation of both alethic and ethical nihilism. However, this short characterization of thinking becoming might be more explicit in my posthuman art book rather than in my cyborg monograph. Still, I wish to stress that the cyborg book is rooted in the same circular onto-epistemological structure as the art book. In that book, I attempt to primarily develop a fictive ethics, which might represent an as-good-as-it-gets-approach. It is neither utilitarian, nor would it be appropriate to refer to it as a piece of analytical ethics. This does not mean that I am not dealing with thinkers who belong to the analytical ethical tradition. I do deal with them, but I permanently try to hint at the challenges of the

various philosophical perspectives with which I am concerned. As a pragmatic as-good-as-it-gets alternative, I present a social liberal ethics of fictive autonomy. I do not have a foundational reason for demonstrating an epistemological superiority of this approach. I am merely presenting various narratives, which might provide the reader with some clues for holding on to this ethical theory. I am presenting reasons why I affirm this ethical theory and hope thereby that some elements become clear for why this approach is indeed in our interest.

In the book on posthuman art, I am not just concerned with the realm of fictive forms, which is what I do in the cyborg monograph. There, I clearly distinguish post-, trans-, and metahumanism, and their implications for posthuman artworks. Sampanikou claims that transhumanism can be referred to as the Promethean mode, metahumanism as the Dionysian mode, and critical posthumanism as the Apollonian mode. I am glad that she uses Nietzschean categories for highlighting some aspects of what I am presenting in the art book. Given the former reflections on a social-liberal ethics of fictive autonomy that I identify with a transhumanist approach, it might have become clear by now that these reflections can best be called Apollonian in the Nietzschean sense. They represent forms, fictive form, human-made forms, created forms, which have been realized in order to bring about as-good-as-it-gets solutions—nothing more, but also nothing less than this. Critical posthumanists, on the other hand, have a tendency to stress the Dionysian mode, without realizing the relevance of fictive forms. Thus, metahumanism—at least in the version I propose—can be seen as trans- and critical posthumanism dancing the twist. It is a Promethean child at play, as it is both creative, as well as an embrace of a twisted ontology of becoming. There is a permanent interplay between an ontology of permanent becoming and the various fictive forms that continuously come about and dissolve again. Fictive forms are important, but they become problematic when they are essentialized, as this is what brings about paternalistic structures. It is the attempt to present forms as suggestions without associating any superior validity with them. In the life world, this can be quite a challenging task. However, it is this approach, which undermines dogmatism, totalitarianism, and paternalism. Yet, this approach is not a final state. It is, rather, an attitude that needs to be applied again and again to permanently new cultural circumstances. It is this lack of certainty and finality that might seem a philosophical challenge for some, but it is an as-good-as-it-gets solution to the most problematic moral challenges with which we need to be concerned.

6. Killbourn and the Human Subject

Russell Killbourn has raised many complex and important questions related to the status of human beings, whereby he particularly draws upon, deals with, and highlights differences between contemporary theoretical works and older critical and philosophical texts. Adorno and Habermas represent an older critical tradition with a strong focus on the human subject that was clearly distinguished from objects. Contemporary theoretical works, on the other hand, move away from this attitude and attempt to present an anti-anthropocentric perspective, whereby this phrase can stand for and be associated with many different meanings. It can imply an anti-

natalist approach, a context-sensitive ethics, but also an ethics of personhood, whereby persons can also be non-human animals, and there might be the option of different degrees of personhood. The initial two suggestions can be associated with critical posthumanism, where the latter can be particularly associated with transhumanism. In a nutshell, it could be claimed that the older critical tradition affirms an anthropocentric ethics, which is clearly different from a natural law ethics and much more dialectic than a traditional Neo-Aristotelian approach, whereas contemporary critical perspectives are in favor of non-anthropocentric approaches. This is quite a significant and decisive shift, which has important philosophical implications.

It is intellectually thrilling to see how Killbourn wrestles with the reflections presented by contemporary posthuman approaches, and he highlights many ethical challenges that are less central for older critical, e.g., the question of racism. If the affirmation of the human subject is a central premise, it is clear that any mere instrumentalization of a human subject is morally false. Any attempt to distinguish between different kinds of human beings who deserve a different kind of moral respect cannot be justified using the philosophy of the human as subject as its basis. Once the descriptive concept of the human gets disentangled from the normative concept of the person, the situation is different. Suddenly, there are non-human persons, but there are also human beings who no longer qualify as persons. This is the challenge that Killbourn rightly highlights. I am not even claiming that I have a fully satisfactory response to all the challenges that go along with this challenge. In the section on the meaning of harming another person in my monograph *We Have Always Been Cyborgs* (2022b), I present many elements of my as-good-as-it-gets solution to some of these respective challenges. The most important insight is that only entities who can suffer deserve moral respect, and that there can be many different degrees of capacities for suffering. How we distinguish between these degrees is a difficult issue, but maybe, it is possible to empirically analyze and distinguish between various intensities of suffering. I am not excluding the possibility that we will be able to do so eventually. Until then, we need as-good-as-it-gets narratives for responding to this challenge. This may not be a fully satisfactory reply, but I have not come across a better one yet. To move towards an anti-natalist approach, as some critical posthumanists do, is not a plausible alternative, as such an approach needs to introduce new essentialist, totalitarian, or paternalist structures. Hence, a non-totalitarian, non-essentialist, and non-anthropocentric approach is needed. The social-liberal ethics of fictive autonomy, which I present in *We Have Always Been Cyborgs* is my as-good-as-it-gets response to this challenge. I would be curious to hear how Killbourn would challenge this ethical approach I propose.

7. Balistreri and the Art of Aborting Human Embryos, Markuckas and Human Creativity, and Selected Philosophical Challenges related to Silicon-Based and Carbonate-Based Posthuman Artworks

Maurizio Balistreri (2022) reflects upon the aesthetic possibility of realizing a work of art that consists of conceiving embryos for the sake of aborting them, so that they can be used for a work of art. The artist Aliza Shvarts (n.d.) realized such a work of art as an *Untitled (Senior Thesis)* at Yale University. Yale claimed it was a work of creative fiction. It stirred up an enormous amount of international controversy, outrage, and debate among ethicists, philosophers as well as art critics. Given its reception in the art world, it clearly was accepted as work of art. Will it stand the test of time? This remains to be seen. It seems to have the potential to do so. Does it fall into the range of posthuman artworks? Yes, as it considers a new anthropology, is concerned with emerging technologies, and puts forward a philosophical suggestion, it represents a non-totalitarian total work of art, it suggests an alternative ontology of becoming without presenting it as the only possible option. I am happy that Balistreri dealt with it in the context of this special issue, as it is a posthuman artwork that deserves much more critical attention than it has received thus far. Whether it bears more traces of meta-, post- or transhumanism remains to be analyzed.

Marius Markuckas, on the other hand, is not concerned with biotechnologies but with digital technologies and their potential for creativity, whereby he raises doubts concerning the possibility of AI creativity. Thereby, he particularly stresses that the problem lies in the fact that AI is an “artifact created by humans” (Markuckas, 2022, p. 142). However, humans are created by other humans, too, but this does not preclude them from the possibility of turning into an artist. Humans are influenced by their genetic heritage and environmental circumstances. This genetic heritage can be compared to an embodied algorithm of an AI, and the environmental influences can be traced back to the environmental inputs an AI with sensors, or an embodied AI receives. Hence, there seems to be strong structural analogy between humans and embodied AIs. The main difference between them seems to be that of intentionality. Thus far, an embodied AI seems unable to intentionally create a specific artwork. Whether this is a crucial issue or not must be investigated further. Current artworks, realized by deep learning, do not seem to be sufficiently well received in the artworld to provide a solid case study for further aesthetic reflections. However, it seems likely that further impressive AI artworks will soon be made.

As we have seen with respect to both silicon-based as well as carbonate-based posthuman artworks, emerging technologies lead to paradigm-shifting developments that challenge our most firmly grounded judgements concerning artworks. In particular, digital and bio-technologies challenge our being in the world. Whether an embodied AI can create a posthuman artwork is an intriguing philosophical challenge. So far, there is no practical evidence that this has occurred so far. Additional philosophical reflections on artificial intentionality are needed to investigate this question further. It is less of an open question whether the work *Untitled (Senior Thesis)* by the artist Aliza Shvarts should count as a posthuman work of art, as it clearly has been accepted in the artworld so far. Here, further thoughts

on whether it bears more traces of meta-, post- or transhumanism are needed. In any case, both emerging digital as well as emerging biotechnologies permanently confront us with new philosophical challenges. This is what makes it so intellectually exciting to engage with the various philosophies of the posthuman.

8. Frey and Non-Western Aesthetical Reflections

Malte Frey (2022) stresses that my reflections predominantly represent the “Western perspective,” and he is correct in pointing this out, as various posthuman philosophies primarily need to be understood as an outgrowth of Western philosophical approaches, whereby transhumanism is most closely related to the Anglo-American world, whereas critical posthumanism draws more strongly on Continental European traditions. Even though, these posthuman approaches are closely related to Western thinking, they present a spirit of *plurality and diversity*, which was the reason for also including aesthetic concepts that are intimately related to Eastern aesthetic approaches, like *smoothness* and *kawaii*. By dealing with elements of non-Western posthumanism in anime, Frey has taken on the task of analyzing traces of a posthuman aesthetics in the Eastern Asian cultural context, which he manages to highlight in a nuanced and perceptive manner. However, the various constructive and destructive interferences of the posthuman cannot only be found in Eastern Asian cultures. The phenomenon of glocalization plays a particularly relevant role in this context, and it is possible to find several different types of glocalization in various parts of the world. It would be inappropriate to simply analyze technological cultural phenomena that occur in China using transhumanism as a reference point, even though the topics dealt with clearly fall into the range of issues relevant for transhumanism. Lawrence Lek’s trilogy entitled *Sinofuturism* is such a phenomenon in question. However, it should not be analyzed, neither aesthetically nor culturally, as merely a colonial adaptation of transhumanism in China. It is rather the phenomenon of the twisting of various technological and cultural phenomena. Sinofuturism has its roots in the Chinese cultural heritage. It merely weaves selected elements of transhumanism into its yarn. It is not the case that transhumanism is necessarily ascendant in China.

The same can be said of a Euro-Transhumanism which seems to have come about in recent decades. It is clearly culturally different from the Anglo-American, analytic, and utilitarian transhumanism which has already been around for about seventy years. The European tradition has its cultural roots in hermeneutic thinking, a dialectical way of reflecting, and postmodern philosophies. Judgements often identified with critical posthumanism are widely shared in the European continental cultural context. However, the relevance of emerging technologies is also becoming more integrated in the European lifeworld. Consequently, critical posthumanist elements merge with transhumanist insights to bring forth a Euro-Transhumanism. Metahumanism represents such a case, at least in the version currently defended by me. It is non-utilitarian, non-utopian, and non-libertarian, and it primarily engages with philosophical reflections from the continental European tradition. In the realm of transhumanist arts, it is also possible to trace a specific aesthetics, as well as tasks and methodologies, which are clearly more strongly embedded in the continental

context than in the Anglo-American world. Moon Ribas, Theresa Schubert, Joanna Grochowska and Tatyana von Leys are artists who can be identified with such an approach. In the same way as Lek's aesthetics is rooted in the Chinese culture, their aesthetic resonances are embedded in the continental cultural tradition.

An alternative cultural tradition has developed in various African cultures. These have been characterized as Afrofuturism by Mark Dery in 1993, and it can be seen as a glocal phenomenon with respect to emerging technologies within many different African traces. It would be inappropriate to describe this phenomenon as a transhumanism taking over various African cultures. A more appropriate understanding might be that some African cultures engage with emerging technologies in Afrofuturism and that a constructive interference with selected elements of transhumanism is also occurring. It is the academic task of further studies to clearly work out and describe such nuanced and complex glocal phenomena as Afrofuturism, Sinofuturism or Euro-Transhumanism, and the myriad of interferences between them and critical posthumanism, transhumanism, and metahumanism. I am grateful to Frey for having analyzed selected facets of the posthuman and Eastern Asian cultural interferences.

9. Pérez and the Role of Emerging Technologies in Posthuman Artworks

Ferén D. Pérez (2022) claims that I stress that “one of the main characteristics of posthuman art is its focus on emerging technologies” (p. 148), which he doubts by stressing that “the reference to technology” (p. 148) can be absent in a posthuman work of art. He also adds that he doubts that “a positive attitude towards emerging technologies is a must for posthuman philosophy or posthuman art” (p. 159). I need to highlight that this is not a claim I have made, nor one which could plausibly be made. It might be a judgement that many transhumanists affirm, however, it would be false to hold that posthuman artworks or posthuman philosophies must affirm a positive attitude to emerging technologies. This is clearly not the case. Critical posthumanism is a posthuman philosophy, and hardly any—if any at all—critical posthumanist would affirm only a positive attitude towards emerging technologies. This claim is different, however, from the first judgement concerning the relevance of technologies for posthuman artworks. I do indeed stress that the “focus on technology” is “one of the central features of a posthuman work of art”. (Sorgner, 2022a, p. 23) However, this judgement must be framed in the appropriate manner, as I also mentioned that the *Sweet* paintings by Mr. paradigmatically represent the aesthetics of kawaii, which is an important posthuman aesthetic category. These paintings do represent posthuman artworks even though the element of emerging technologies is absent in their visual representations. It is about many different shades of kawaii. This, however, does not mean that these artworks do not focus on technologies. The kawaii aesthetics of these artworks are culturally present, active, and meaningful as Instagram filters, and in digital exchanges on social media sites. Without the digital relevance of kawaii on social media sites, the *Sweet* paintings by Mr. would not have gained the cultural relevance that they did as artworks, as we

live in a technology-driven lifeworld, and any intellectual engagement with our surroundings needs to take these events into consideration. The concept of the posthuman is a timely topic. It is characteristic of philosophical challenges, ethical issues, and aesthetic representation relevant for the time we live in. It would be anachronistic to use the words in a different manner. Does it make sense to talk about Frankenstein as a transhumanist novel? This is not the case. Transhumanism as a concept was coined in 1951 by Julian Huxley. There was no such thing as transhumanism before 1951. The Prometheus myth as represented in the famous Goethe poem on Prometheus tackles the issue of human beings creating other human beings. Does this turn the poem into a transhumanist poem? I do not think so. Transhumanism would have had to be an existing movement in order for an artwork to be considered a transhumanist one. It makes sense to stress that various transhumanist elements can be found in the *Prometheus* poem by Goethe. The same applies to the myth of Icarus, the Golem of Prague, or the gods in Wagner's *Rheingold*. All of these works can be seen as ancestors of transhumanist artworks, but this does not turn them into transhumanist artworks. It would be anachronistic to make such a claim. I think that similar reflections apply to the painting *Les Femmes d'Alger* by Pablo Picasso, which Pérez seems to regard as a posthuman artwork. I agree with him that *Les Femmes d'Alger* bears many characteristics of posthuman artworks, but not all of them. This is sufficient for including it in the category of ancestors of posthuman artworks. However, due to its creation in 1907, this already precludes the work from counting as a posthuman artwork. Yet, it clearly belongs to the pedigree of posthuman artworks. Posthuman artworks are characteristic for a certain cultural, regional, and chronological epoch. It is anachronistic to regard the Icarus myth as posthuman. It includes many transhumanist elements and can be seen as an ancestor to posthuman approaches, but it is not posthuman.

10. Giugliano and the Risk of Absolutization

Dario Giugliano's article represents a further intriguing response, focusing on the foundations of posthumanist thinking, and whether a specific aesthetic, such as an aesthetic of the posthuman, can be claimed to be a philosophy. He claims that this approach is trapped within its own limits, and I agree with this judgment. However, in contrast to Giugliano, I do not regard being trapped as a problematic challenge. It is rather a logical necessity, which supports the plausibility of this approach. Giugliano (2022) further argues the following: "If it is the disguise of history that one wants to propose as nature, it is always so as an absolutization of a particular point of view" (p. 168). This is a strong statement, but it does not correspond to what I have suggested. There is a significant difference between the following philosophical attitudes: 1. Claiming something is true in correspondence with the world, because one has the foundational knowledge of it being the case; 2. Claiming something is true in correspondence with the world, because one applies a criterion which is epistemologically superior to any of the other criteria currently suggested; 3. Presenting a philosophical suggestion, whereby the criteria applied correspond to widely shared insights, are in agreement with empirical observations, and are in tune with personal reflections. In the case of the attitudes 1 and 2, it can plausibly be

claimed that an absolutization of a particular point of view occurs. However, this is not the case concerning judgement 3. What is being presented in the case of judgement 3 is the insight that what we are confronted with is merely a suggestion, a suggestion which acknowledges that it can be false, but that it does not have to be false, and which is aware that someone else's judgement could also be true. It is a humbler philosophical attitude, which is aware of its own possible contingency. It is this philosophical attitude that I present in the *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*, and it is this kind of philosophical suggestion that should be considered when reflecting on the concept of a non-totalitarian total work of art.

A total work of art can have several different meanings and various respondents have wondered which understanding corresponds to the one I employ here. I must admit that there are several degrees and kinds of total works of art, and an artistic totality clearly has to be distinguished from an ontological totality. A music drama that includes staging, new instruments, stage painting, stage clothing, a specific plot, a musical language has a different, and more complex level of artistic totality than a piano piece, but both can affirm the same kind of ontological totality. Helbig's piece "Eisenhüttenstadt" when played by Poetzsch on the piano includes a different understanding of artistic totality than "Eisenhüttenstadt" performed by an orchestra or Helbig's "Vom Lärm der Welt" when performed in the national theatre in Weimar, which represents high degree of artistic totality. At the same time, all these musical works ontologically can be considered non-totalitarian total works of art, as they affirm a non-dualistic ontology of becoming. Nevertheless, they take a self-relativizing stance to the ontology, they affirm. They do not present their ontological reflections as necessary truths in correspondence to the world, but merely as philosophical suggestions, which turns them into non-totalitarian total works of art from an ontological perspective. The level of artistic totality differs. This matters when it comes to the critical artistic analysis of a specific work. However, when it comes to the question of ontologically classifying a musical piece as a non-totalitarian work of art or not, this qualification depends on other elements. This classification depends on the philosophical truth claims presented. If the underlying judgement is a claim of a truth in correspondence with the world, then we are confronted with a total work of art that has all the highly problematic paternalistic implications, which have been highlighted by Adorno already. However, this is not the case if we are confronted with an artistic work that presents a philosophical suggestion, whereby the ultimate validity of the reflections presented gets self-relativized.

This kind of self-relativization needs to be distinguished from a simple postmodern irony. It is not self-relativization for the sake of presenting a postmodern playfulness. There is a serious playfulness connected with non-totalitarian total works of art that are posthuman artworks. Philosophical suggestions are not just presented to keep the discourse going, or to test new perspectives for the sake of their novelty. However, these philosophical suggestions are presented as a consequence of a profound, deeply rooted, and engaging process of wrestling with fundamental philosophical issues, which have led philosophers of the posthuman to present judgements as as-good-as-they-get suggestions. Sometimes the artistic and philosophical presentations might seem superficial, but they are the consequence of

a profound engagement with meaningful acts. They represent a profound superficiality, whereby the superficial elements should not be identified with simple-minded ironies presented only in order to demonstrate a lighthearted engagement with the world. This profound superficiality must not be mixed up with a lighthearted postmodern irony. There is a serious playfulness that goes along with posthuman philosophical suggestions, which are the result of a strongly felt philosophical pessimism, realizing the condition of permanent suffering, the posthuman wisdom of Duhkha, and present as-good-as-it gets reflections for dealing with this fundamental challenge.

Giugliano's point that posthuman philosophies present absolutized judgments in disguise is a strong point. However, it is a judgement I clearly must reject. Posthuman reflections are not absolutes in disguise, and they are not playful ironies either. There is a nuanced difference between these two attitudes, and the posthuman philosophical stance, which presents philosophical suggestions that seriously consider the posthuman wisdom of Duhkha, while the reflections embody a profound superficiality, they appear lighter than they are while they always keep a sufficiently wide distance from lighthearted playful ironies. This is as good as I can describe them for the time being.

11. Conclusion

Having closely read and reflected on the vast amount of complex intellectual engagements with the thoughts from my monograph *Philosophy of Posthuman Art*, I wish to once again express my immense gratitude to all contributors as well as the editors involved in shaping and realizing this special issue. I am already looking forward to reading further responses to the reflections I presented in this response article. The complexity of reflections on posthuman artworks, thus, can become much more refined, intimate, and perceptive.

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