

Post... Modern!

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Translated by Thomas Winn

The recent conference held at the Pompeu Fabra University (where my archives are kept) for the 30th anniversary of my book *The Transparent Society* showed that still, even today, postmodernism has a lot to teach us. I am grateful to all of the participants for having contributed with their texts, which I read with great care and attention. Instead of responding to each contribution, which the *Journal of Italian Philosophy* kindly publishes here, I would like to quickly emphasise the meaning of the posthuman for postmodernism, given the importance that it has assumed in contemporary culture.

Postmodernism has also been a way to criticise the humanism of the metaphysical tradition. If you take it in the Heideggerian sense, this type of humanism was based on the idea of the subject and the object, which in Heidegger were criticised for remaining captive to the ‘technical scheme’ (the thing is that which is manipulated, the subject is the one which manipulates).

Does it make sense to think that the posthuman can be connected to the postmodern through this critique of humanism? This would be a way of lifting the condemnation with which posthumanism is normally charged, in its embarrassing connection with animality or organicity.

This connection to the ‘nonhuman’ cannot be ignored, especially if one thinks of how much the machine has — and in general the machines have — to do with the overcoming of humanism, and therefore with something non-human.

The idea of the posthuman opens up that particular field of thought which is concerned with the insertion of the mechanical, electrical, and other related elements into human life. It is difficult to say where this leads us: even now, the most advanced surgery or the practice of carrying out transplants appears to be moving in this direction, which is worth investigating and pursuing. On the other hand, more and more people will find themselves situated in a position where there is no longer any quantitative domination of knowledge and information available on the web. Even now, a single Hegelian scholar cannot dominate the whole of the bibliographical space surrounding Hegelianism. They can only hope to become acquainted with a part of the space, leaving the knowledge and use of the rest of the material to others. A Hegelian scholar will therefore be just one specialist among many. How could they be any different?

Another observation. You may think that the quantitative reduction in your outlook requires a very high level of confidence in giving every part of yourself to that reduction. If the whole is a system, approaching a part as a specialist includes the hope and possibility of not being consigned to the margins.

Second observation. Also, in light of this, can an argument in favour of Spirit (with a capital S) find any room here? In the Hegelian sense? I can only think of ‘the truth’ because I am supported by the entirety of the knowledge that I approach, even if my approach is only partial.

I’m reminded here of one of my Spanish meetings on the topic of the possibility that the historicising of a text, occurring through the accumulation of interpretations, does not necessarily have to be deployed over time (that is, historically) but rather in recalling and returning to one another in the present network.

This reflection, which seems trivial, leads us to consider the posthuman as being ‘post-’ or ‘trans-’ subjective. An endless bibliography, like Hegel’s, is no longer bound up together for one scholar alone. We can see in this a suggestion that allows us to consider the posthuman as transindividual, as being cooperative, but as something which we still know little about.

The word ‘network’ takes the usual sense in which it signifies the entire computerised world. Even when it is examined from this point of view, the posthuman conversation risks being cut short, or making progress but only with great difficulty. We are no longer subjects in the traditional sense of the word. Although, again, this observation includes the risk of overcoming such subjection in the direction of a collectivisation which might kindle a nostalgia for humanism.