

about the relationship between Mukherjee and her historical milieu, especially other diasporic authors who are not of South Asian origin. Moreover, Maxey at times only briefly alludes to critical books or articles without explaining their significance. For example, while she refers to the postcolonial dynamics present in “Gayatri Spivak’s reassessment of” Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (66), a brief discussion of Spivak’s reading of the novel would help the reader understand what this pronouncement means. However, these issues in no way undermine the achievements of *Understanding Bharati Mukherjee*, which is a welcome addition to the already substantial body of scholarship on Mukherjee.

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Works Cited

Wagner-Martin, Linda. Series Editor’s Preface. *Understanding Bharati Mukherjee*, by Ruth Maxey, South Carolina UP, 2019, p. ix.

Francesca Ferrando. *Philosophical Posthumanism*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. 271. US\$103.50.

In this updated and revised translation (by the author) of Francesca Ferrando’s *Il Postumanesimo filosofico e le sue alterità*, Ferrando skillfully disentangles the umbrella term “posthumanism” and offers original thought experiments concerning a posthuman future. Her monograph achieves two things: it introduces readers to the field of posthumanism with its different streams and definitions and offers strategies necessary for being or becoming posthuman. As such, *Philosophical Posthumanism* is well-suited to audiences who are new to posthuman theory, but it also provides original critical material that will interest readers familiar with the field of posthumanism.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part explains what philosophical posthumanism is, the second covers the history of the human, and the third emphasizes the importance of post-anthropocentrism for the current era—the Anthropocene—and defines the posthuman multiverse as a relational, networked, post-dualistic ontology. While each part builds on the last, it is possible to immediately dive into any of the later parts if the reader is familiar with the various philosophies—such as humanism and anti-humanism—that feed into posthumanism as well as with the distinction between transhumanism and posthumanism.

Ferrando makes each part accessible through the questions that guide the subsections: not only every chapter within the parts but even most paragraphs are introduced by a question. These questions can also be found after the table of contents and can be used as a quick reference for specific aspects of posthumanism, at least in theory. The questions form a conversation between Ferrando and the reader, oftentimes anticipating a potential counterargument or need for clarification; as such, they are most effective when accessed within the flow and context of the individual chapters rather than consulted individually. Therefore, despite its structural similarity to a glossary, *Philosophical Posthumanism* remains most useful as a thorough introduction to be read in its entirety.

The particular strength of Ferrando's monograph rests with its accessibility for readers new either to the field of posthumanism or to reading philosophical works in general. *Philosophical Posthumanism* takes no previous knowledge for granted; instead, Ferrando patiently and skillfully explains not only terminology specific to posthumanism—such as “posthumanities” for the “hypothetical future species which would be genetically related to the human species (*Homo sapiens*), but no longer definable as such” (124)—but all jargon, from solipsism to multiverse. While this might strike some readers as unnecessary, it means that Ferrando's arguments are based on clearly defined terms that anyone can follow. Furthermore, Ferrando also explains all the foundational texts on which her arguments rely. From Friedrich Nietzsche's Übermensch in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to Carl Linnaeus' classification of *Homo sapiens* as a relative of primates in *Systema Naturae*, Ferrando contextualizes each work, highlighting its significance within its historical and cultural frame, and introduces the main arguments in easy-to-understand terms.

Concrete examples drawn from relatable, everyday scenarios further make *Philosophical Posthumanism* less abstract than other publications on posthuman theory. In order to explain that “the ways we are developing technology are not neutral, but have deeper consequences” (43–44), Ferrando uses the example of the computer: the computer's development and rise has caused poor posture and other health problems, such as vitamin D deficiency, because of its static setup and indoor use. Ferrando meditates on other ways that this piece of technology could have developed: what if the computer was a solar-powered device with a less stationary interface? Humans might develop strong legs and would require stronger UV protection in the long run (43). In short, technology and humans mutually shape each other (44). Even when Ferrando delves into the concepts from physics of string theory and the multiverse, she does so through easy-to-imagine scenarios: to enable

the reader to think through one's entangled existence—or the ripple effect of one's habits and actions—she proposes to think about “you” as singular; yet, the “you” of the present moment is also inextricably related to the “you” of yesterday, or five years ago, or fifteen years ago (178).

It is not just Ferrando's willingness to lead her readers through her arguments one step at a time and her readiness to provide illustrative examples that makes *Philosophical Posthumanism* eminently readable. She also deconstructs the notion of the human. In order to demonstrate why the prefix “post-” constitutes “a continuity, a discontinuity, and a transcendence” of the human (66), Ferrando reveals the human to be a process, created in opposition to the nonhuman (in human or other form), rather than an inherent entity—a “humanizing” (98) rather than an “essence” (71). She relies on the work of Giorgio Agamben as well as work from Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler to lay out the role that language plays in constituting the human and thereby show that “the recognition of the human has been sustained by a negative reduction of the others . . . through related concomitant exclusions, marked as the inhuman, the subhuman, the less-than-human, and so on” (71).

Ferrando's argument does not remain in the field of linguistics, however, but continues into the realm of biology through the Latin and Greek roots of the human—the *humanus* and *anthropos*, respectively—and its classification as *Homo sapiens*. In persuasive detail, Ferrando demonstrates that “nomenclatures are not neutral, but they are part of a wider apparatus of sociopolitical as well as economic and symbolic signification,” making the human part of a hierarchical scale from its inception in both terminology and as a scientific category (98).

While Ferrando acknowledges posthumanism's potential pitfalls as a concept, she always returns to its capacity for envisioning a sustainable, post-dualistic future. To do so, Ferrando addresses the shortcomings of and critiques directed at her sources—such as Martin Heidegger's anthropocentrism (39) or the dualism inherent in the Gaia theory (106)—but returns to what remains valuable about these theories and concepts. This focus on post-humanism's possibilities makes Ferrando's book stand out from other texts. Her work on posthuman perspectivism, in particular, presents a veritable action plan (152) that moves beyond theoretical paralysis and into everyday life. *Philosophical Posthumanism* provides an easy-to-follow introduction to the field of posthumanism while also addressing practical strategies for post-anthropocentric and post-dualistic living.

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