**Review of the Book
“Umanism,
transumanism,
postumanism.
Perspective
filosofice”
[Humanism,
transhumanism,
posthumanism.
Philosophical
perspectives],
authored by
Loredana VLAD,
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Abstract: The relationship with technology means that nowadays we are all behaviorally modified by the impact of technology, we are all technologized. Why are we talking about something that is "post" and why are we talking about posthuman people, as long as, if we accept evolutionism, man is, according to evolutionism, a descendant of the monkey? Starting from this point we will begin the debate we propose in connection to the book “Humanism, transhumanism, posthumanism. Philosophical perspectives”, authored by Loredana Vlad, published by Lumen Publishing House, from Iasi, Romania, in 2019.

Keywords: *humanism; transhumanism; posthumanism; philosophy.*

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Are we a posthuman species or not? Are we going through something beyond our own humanity? I have collaborated in recent years on various articles (Sandu & Vlad, 2016) with Loredana Vlad and the main common concern was to understand what exactly this positioning beyond humanity means, because it can be placed in the sphere of transcendence, in search of divinity, or a situation of self-transcendence, in search of technological evolution to a point where we go beyond ourselves. I think that this point, which I have called anthropological singularity and which the author Loredana Vlad has accepted as a suggestion, is that point where we are no longer fully human, but we are not another species either. The human species has withdrawn from natural (biological) evolution and has begun a technological evolution (a techno-humanity) in which the impact of technology is perhaps as important as that of genetics, because one of the goals is to change genetics through technology. And not just genetics ... to change behaviors, ethics, our way of being or existing, of what we show to others through technology. And we are of course talking about an additional dimension of our own existence. We discussed in a previous volume (Sandu, 2020) about the virtualization of social space and about the fact that an extended social space (updated or improved) is currently a reality due to the Internet. Especially when we talk about live broadcasts, this simultaneity makes us transcend one of the limitations that the human condition has, namely the limitation in space (Sandu & Vlad, 2018). This transcendence of limitations makes us wonder to what extent we still belong to the human condition. Of course, this question was also the subject of a chapter in the book "Humanism, transhumanism, posthumanism. Philosophical perspectives", in which Loredana Vlad discusses a series of aspects related to transhuman / posthuman ethics in a possible posthuman society.

I was saying that this is a chapter that I initially approached in a joint paper (Sandu & Terec-Vlad, 2016) and that the author of this volume extended with meticulousness, responsibility, in order to write an absolutely interesting and challenging volume, because we overcome the limitation in spatiality, in temporality, because we have increased life expectancy, we want to obtain a technological immortality, a transfer of consciousness in the virtual environment, we talk about synthetic biology and synthetic entities, etc., and all these are in full swing. Of course we are in an anthropological singularity, that is, at a point where the laws of evolution, of the human condition, cease to be valid, cease to exist and humanity takes its evolution into its own hands, leading this posthumanity either to a divine condition or to a pseudo-divine condition, when we only appear to be gods, but we have a very limited consciousness of what it would mean to have the

consciousness of a god, or of what is leading humanity to be the slave of technological gods such as Google, Facebook and others, who, so as it is said in science fiction literature, become gods by accumulating the power of the internet in a single machine, a machine capable of changing political regimes, changing geographies physically, including by changing the way we perceive the universe, but also by the fact that this machine can answer, like an oracle, any question. Then we ask ourselves the question - and we hope that at least a human and not a machine will answer us: where are we at the present moment?

This is the question that Loredana Vlad aims to answer in this volume: where does humanity currently stand? Is humanity still at the stage we know to be the human condition as described by Hegel or Heidegger, through existential anguish, for example, in which the feeling of mortality or finitude makes us humble, or in a point when creative ambition makes us full of enthusiasm for a future cosmo-humanity, a humanity that will modify the universe according to its image and likeness? And in order to answer these questions, the author had to reinvent humanism. Or the relationship between humanism, transhumanism and posthumanism, and again approached a subject that I addressed a long time ago, and I am glad that Loredana Vlad managed to integrate it in the volume as a result of the discussions and articles that we published together and which she managed to enhance in an absolutely particular and absolutely creative direction, ie to talk about the myths of modernity and to recontextualize them for the understanding of techno-humanity or a 2.0 humanity. In fact, we are no longer in a 2.0 humanity, but we are in a 3.0, 4.0 humanity, an upgraded humanity, because people have started to improve the human condition since the times when humanity lived in caves, that is, since humans invented fire. That was the first upload of the human condition from beings who are totally dependent on nature, to beings who begin, as God indicated in Genesis, to master nature or creation. And humans came to master it until they obtained the ability to enslave nature, and everything that is not technological disappears little by little.

From beings who are afraid of the gods, of the elements of nature (fire and water) and who control us or who have tried in the past to control natural elements in a magical way, current anthropology talks about controlling the weather with weather missiles, lightning rods and similar artifacts. I remember a very interesting discussion, initially an observation that was made to Loredana Vlad when she was discussing, in the sphere of technological advancement, the invention of the refrigerator. How come the refrigerator changed the human condition so much? And the answer is that

we invented, starting from the refrigerator, the agricultural food industry. If we could not preserve food in the cold, we would not be able to industrialize food. And here, the human condition, that of beings who toil to obtain food, becomes the condition of a master, who, at the risk of destroying nature, managed to create a food industry. But now we are talking about a hotel hospitality industry, which is a consequence of the mass food industry; from here we also have a growing number of population, because we can better feed a larger number of people. Then we will also talk about a cosmo-humanity. The refrigerator is such a technology that changes humanity, along with the Internet, television and communication technologies, which makes us perceive space as no longer being a border, but rather a transparent border, which no longer separates us, but unites us.

Loredana Vlad analyzes these issues from the perspective of myths. We are talking about progress, and the main myth that Loredana Vlad analyzes is the myth of progress. This myth is constitutive for modern society; it did not exist in the societies before the modern era, because in those times (I remind you of Mircea Eliade) we are talking about a time of eternal return, in which nothing new is under the sun, the golden age becomes silver, iron, bronze, or iron and again turns golden, for both the Greeks and the Indians, or other people. Everything happens according to celestial astronomical, astrological, planetary rhythms. Modernity has invented another time, a linear time, compared to the circular time of the traditional. The modern man is a linear man, who goes from birth to death not through cycles, but through successive ruptures of existence. And then, the myth that makes us believe in the linearity of our lives is the myth of progress.

From birth to death we transform ourselves and progress by something. The whole myth of progress tells us that humanity, as a collective organism, is evolving from primitive social organization to a posthuman future, towards a future (the representatives of modernity told us) in which, if we continue to progress indefinitely, we reach new heights of progress and civilization. And yet, from time to time a series of crises strike us and bring us down, whether we are talking about wars and the Holocaust, or we are talking about the tiny virus COVID-19, which reminded us of that the infinite progress towards the glorious posthuman society can be slowed down by something we only take into account when our freedoms are called into question. But this does not necessarily make Loredana Vlad's object of interest, the object is the understanding of this myth of continuous progress (the manner is that of Habermas, of communicative action, and not only Habermas, among philosophers, refers to this myth of progress), which is a myth that interested postmodern thinkers, who tried, starting with Derrida

and Lyotard, to deconstruct it, that is, to establish what remains of this myth after an analysis of reality. Representatives of posthumanist, transhuman thinking have proposed a future, a future in which we can establish our own future, a future in which through technological artifacts we continue to exist within the biological limits of the body, whether we are talking about successive organ transplants, or that supercomputers can at least apparently make our personality survive in the virtual environment. And this answer is presented as the self-transcendence of the human being, a human being who becomes, through ones own efforts, through ones own technology, what once perceived as the ability of gods. And if the effort of humanity of all times has been to be as likely as the gods, here we are suddenly proposed to become gods, and not only to those who invented technology, but to us all, because we implement various technologies, we have virtual ubiquity, therefore we have temporary transcendence to computerized storage environments outside the body, and thus this myth of progress leads us to be posthuman.

To be "post" means to go beyond, but not only in the sense that we link the idea of posthuman to that of postmodern, but even beyond postmodernity, in the sense that it calls into question postmodernity itself. The posthuman does not philosophically and interrogatively deconstruct humanism or humanity, but simply deconstructs it technologically. The posthuman man is as much a man as man is still a monkey. If there will ever be a posthuman society, we who live today will be the pygmies of history, of that history written from the perspective of posthumous people, in the sense that we are talking about planetary consciousness, about an interconnectivity of thoughts, consciousness ... all these ideas comprising the new myth of progress. The author's merit is to try to deconstruct it and to tell us that no matter how different we are as a posthuman society, some human aspects will still be found in the future, and humanism will not be abandoned, because in fact posthumanism is a neohumanism, both while the myth of modern progress still endures, which on other levels, nowadays, resumes a myth that humanity has always had, but especially in Modernity, because the myth of progress was not necessarily a traditional one. This myth is traditional when the object of the search is divinity. Progress is neither material, nor continuous. Of course, we also speak of the spiritual traditions of progress, but progress does not concern the materiality of our existence, but rather the increasingly accentuated access to the inner depth. Then, of course, posthumous searches for access to our own interiority are included here, also through physical human enhancement and moral enhancement, which through technology or genetics induce a change that makes us better, more altruistic, more generous and so on. Or at least not to be immoral beings.

And yet we are still talking in terms of progress. We are still transhuman, that is, between humanity and something else. And this is the definition that the author and I accept of the idea of the transhuman, although other thinkers consider the transhuman to be far beyond our understanding of the concept, including in it the posthuman, as something completely different. We spoke of the transhuman in the sense of being human and more than that, that is, of having an improved humanity, a humanity that no longer has the same phenomenological, existential limitations. All this is also part of the myth of progress. These myths are an ideology that has generated modernity. Loredana Vlad tries to deconstruct this ideology of Modernity. The ideology of progress is that of removing man from mystery, because science and knowledge unravel the mysteries, by trying to comprehend them. We can have a technological progress, a progress of knowledge in general, therefore the ideology of modernity is that of detachment (of the divine from the human, of the logos from logocentrism etc.), followed of course by the ideology of deconstruction. Only this detachment has made possible the contemporary, consumerist society, which manifests an ethics of the interval, an ethics in the twilight of duty, as the thinkers who place us in this twilight of duty call it.

By deconstructing the idea of progress and the myth of progress, we come to the conclusion that human / posthuman progress is nothing but a search for transcendence. If the ancients sought this transcendence above all, and the mystics sought it inwardly, the moderns began to seek more and more the resemblance to divinity in a logocentric position, that is, in the inner logos, in their own reason, which is somewhat similar to that of divinity and as such can generate creation and reality. If my mind is like the divine, then nothing should be hidden from man, nothing should be a mystery. This deconstruction of mystery is perhaps the origin of modern society and especially of today's society, which has a fear of mystery, as nineteenth-century thinkers said. This final deconstruction of the idea of progress, of flight from mystery, makes us invent the luminous and make the luminous our own trait. In this sense, communication technologies, the so-called disruptive technologies, which change reality completely, make the mystery disappear. Today there is a dependence on technology and those who know how to manipulate technology. Now we are no longer dependent on God, but on search, which puts us in a position of communication or not. If God can be tamed, through incantations, prayers and so on, search engines, by several strategies (search optimization) are nothing else but the act of taming technology. And then, of course, the myth of progress is deconstructed by the fact that we are not talking about endless progress, but

about a return to Self, to mystery, but in a spiral and not linear way, as the representatives of Modernity believed.

Another myth that Loredana Vlad seeks to deconstruct is that of the ideological, of the fact that we can understand everything. Of course, correlated with the myth of progress. The ideological myth is the myth of our inner capacity to signify and create meaning for everything around us. As I said, we can only make sense to the extent that consciousness absorbs technological reality. Of course, there are some important aspects to understand what the condition of posthumanity or its levels are: we are speaking about transhumanist technoethics or the ethical evaluation of technologies, which are as many challenges for the reader who is passionate about philosophy and especially passionate about the philosophy of technology to look beyond the singular, to look at that moment when maybe everything is possible or maybe nothingness will invade the world.

Leaving you with this impression, that we are talking about a book that transforms or can transform our understanding of the future, the evolution of the present, and the desperate search for a future in which man is transcendent, but by his own strength, I invite you to read the book "Humanism, transhumanism, posthumanism. Philosophical perspectives".

Acknowledgment

An initial version of this book review was presented in Romanian as a video-review on YouTube, entitled „Umanism, transumanism, postumanism” [Humanism, transhumanism, posthumanism], it was posted on August 20th, 2020, on the official YouTube channel of Lumen Publishing House and can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtBHI04IH70>

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