

REVIEW ESSAY

Posthumanism Reimagined: De-Westernizing Perspectives on Post/Humanity

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McQuillen, Colleen and Vaingurt, Julia (eds). *The Human Reimagined: Posthumanism in Russia*. Cultural Revolutions: Russia in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries. Academic Studies Press, Boston, MA, 2018. viii + 268 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Index. \$49.00.

WE are living through a massive and apparently unprecedented civilizational shift. Its first signs became manifest at least a century ago, but today this shift has finally been acknowledged widely and discussed with urgency by scientists, intellectuals, artists and the media. Recent scientific discoveries have fundamentally dislocated almost all of our accumulated knowledge, most importantly about us as the human species and the surrounding world. Neuroscientists tell us that in its intriguing complexity the human brain is comparable to the entire universe. Physicists and astronomers suggest that there may be an infinite number of universes. Mysterious dark matter appears to occupy over 80 per cent of all space, including inside our bodies. Time flows in different directions and at different speeds. Human beings are likely to be modified beyond recognition through genetic engineering. And artificial intelligence may soon render us redundant anyway. The world is becoming ever more digital, fluid, transparent, super-accelerated, and out of human scale — after all, we were not designed to operate in nanoseconds and nanometres. All this can be overwhelming. Not surprisingly, in almost every discipline an urgent need has been voiced to update basic concepts such as human, life, consciousness and memory. In short, we have entered the era of posthumanism. A new and rapidly growing academic field — posthuman studies — has recently

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arisen in response to these challenges. Over the last couple of decades it has produced an impressive range of ambitious discourses purporting to deconstruct previous definitions of humanity, to articulate our present condition and to propose strategies for the future. Decentring the human, the new discipline considers *anthropos* to be not some superior being, but just one of the species in the 'zoe/geo/techno' continuum, alongside 'non-human animals' or inorganic intelligent subjects (AI).

Drawing heavily on the poststructuralist legacy, theoretical posthumanism (or more accurately posthumanisms, given the proliferation of schools of thought under this umbrella term) has been articulated primarily by Western academics and remains a Western enterprise. Although there are departments and journals of posthuman studies in various non-European locations, e.g. Korea, the posthumanist debate remains largely informed by the logic, vocabulary and ideologies articulated in the key Western narratives that defined the field. Despite the internal diversity of the discipline, the main point of the posthumanist rhetoric is to attack the constructions of the human in the European humanist tradition. As Ferrando writes, 'In the West, the human has been historically posed in a hierarchical scale to the non-human realm. Such a symbolic structure, based on a human exceptionalism well depicted in the Great Chain of Being, has not only sustained the primacy of humans over non-human animals, but it has also (in)formed the human realm itself, with sexist, racist, classist, homophobic, and ethnocentric presumptions'.¹

As they militate against anthropocentrism, radical posthumanist critics see the Human located at the top of the pyramid as the 'White Western Man', recycling a perennial whipping-boy of academic trends from postcolonialism to queer studies, from feminism to the now-fashionable World Literature. Rosi Braidotti condemns humanism for a 'restricted notion of what counts as the human', which is, in her view, 'one of the keys to understand how we got to a post-human turn at all'.² Again a familiar paradigm is at play: a new Western academic discourse defines itself in opposition to another Western discourse, attacking its Euro-/phallo-centrism on behalf of some Others, ostensibly excluded from a canon that is targeted for debunking. But at the same time, non-Western traditions and discourses are rarely drawn into the conversation directly. In a situation where critical posthumanism continues to define itself

¹ Francesca Ferrando, 'Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations', *Existenz*, 8, 2013, 2, pp. 26–32 (p. 28).

² Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, Cambridge, 2013, p. 16.

against a reductively and tendentiously interpreted Western humanism, the collective volume, *The Human Reimagined: Posthumanism in Russia*, is a welcome attempt to expand the posthumanist inquiry to other cultural geographies.

One of the enduring myths about Russia, perpetuated by Russians and foreign experts alike, is that the Russian experience is somehow always a case apart. On this view, through Russian creative (mis)appropriation, any conceptual or artistic construct will be inverted and transformed. While this vision of Russians' cultivated self-alterity sounds like a platitude, it is not so easy to brush it aside. Is posthumanism likewise inflected, once filtered through Russian history and culture? The authors of the volume appear to start from this premise. It would be too simplistic to conclude that posthumanism is embraced in the West, while in Russia it tends to be viewed negatively, signalling 'dehumanization and spiritlessness', as Sophia Khagi suggests. Although Braidotti welcomes posthumanism as a launching pad for a new kind of planetary ethics and Francesca Ferrando invites her students to practise posthumanism in their daily lives, not all Western theorists are as enthusiastic, as Khagi herself admits.³ And other chapters in the volume describe more positive Russian assessments of posthumanism. Still, an examination of the posthumanist discourse in Russian culture, with its pronounced 'eschatological bent', reveals a level of anxiety that is largely absent from Western discourse.

In the introduction, the editors Colleen McQuillen and Julia Vaingurt provide a succinct survey of the evolution of posthumanism. They legitimately cite Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Neil Badmington, Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, Katherine Hayles and other key contributors to the development of posthumanist theoretical thought. McQuillen and Vaingurt clearly distinguish between the more popular understanding of posthumanism reflected in science fiction about cyborgs, future hi-tech civilizations and dystopian visions of robots revolting against their creators, and posthumanism as a critique of the philosophical doctrine that 'posits the human being as a rational, moral and free agent of teleologically ordered life' (p. 2), capable of infinite 'perfectibility'. They trace the origins of these humanist conceptions through the Enlightenment and Renaissance to classical Antiquity. Drawing on Braidotti, McQuillen and Vaingurt cite Protagoras's famous dictum, 'man is the measure of all

³ For example, Nick Bostrom, the founding director of Oxford University's Future of Humanity Institute, is convinced that the growth of AI carries a profound existential risk for human civilization. See Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*, Oxford and New York, 2014.

things', and Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man as classic expressions of Man's supremacy. Protagoras's often decontextualized quotation is not very useful here: apparently the ancient Sophist was trying to make quite a different point. The full statement of the *homo mensura* principle⁴ confirms its true thrust: Protagoras did not imply that man is the standard-bearer for everything in the universe; at least this is not how the ancients interpreted his words (cf. Plato's critique in the dialogue 'Theaetetus'). Rather, he insisted that no one but man himself can be the ultimate judge of his own perceptions, sensations and beliefs — quite a modern conception of relativity and subjectivity. More apposite is the reference to the Vitruvian Man as a statement that the human body is analogous in its harmonious structure to the perfect order of the universe. Or, as Leonardo himself noted, 'Man is the model of the world'.

The humanist vision of man and humanity has long inspired energetic critique. In this sense, although 'the discourse of posthumanism as such is distinctively postmodern and Western, the questions associated with it transcend time and geography' (p. 14). The editors' Introduction presents an overview of Russian thinkers who anticipated today's posthumanist debate by interrogating the nature of man, non-human forms of life, consciousness and subjectivity. Unsurprisingly, we find references to Dostoevskii, Berdyaev and, most importantly, Nikolai Fedorov. Fedorov's utopian plan of resynthesizing long-dead ancestors, ceasing natural human reproduction and populating other planets prefigured transhumanism, a branch of posthuman studies that celebrates biotechnological enhancement as a means to transcend natural human limitations and produce a superior creature. A substantial part of the Introduction is consecrated to Russian Cosmism, including scientist-philosophers who were inspired by Fedorov such as Konstantin Tsiolkovskii, who advocated space migration as a way to rescue humanity from crisis, and Vladimir Vernadskii, with his theory of the earth's interconnected geo-/bio-/noo-spheres and the future transformation of man into an autotrophic being (capable of self-nourishment through photosynthesis). Finally, the historical survey concludes with a review of post-revolutionary utopian projects, which sought to create a new sociobiological type and reflected the Soviet conviction that the human body and mind can be mastered and controlled like a machine. The editors suggest that the contributions to follow will tell the story of posthumanism in late- and post-Soviet Russian literature and culture.

⁴ 'Of all things the measure is Man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not.'

The twelve chapters of this volume tackle the problems outlined above from a variety of angles. It would have been helpful for the internal coherence of this study if the chapters had been cross-referenced. In the absence of a purposeful dialogue between contributions, some fictional texts are discussed on several occasions, each time in isolation from the other (often quite different) readings of the same works provided elsewhere. What emerges nonetheless from this collection of case studies is a preliminary canon of Russian posthumanist literature, with such key names as the Strugatskii brothers, Platonov, Sorokin and Pelevin at the top of the list. But why not Bulgakov, whose *Heart of a Dog* offered a prompt satire of Soviet posthumanist ambitions?

A characteristic feature of the volume is the overall importance of the Soviet context, with two main consequences. Firstly, the presumed universal validity of Western theoretical conceptions is often exploded when they are applied to the Soviet experiment. Secondly, the posthumanist perspective facilitates a reassessment of the Soviet experiment itself.

Elana Gomel's focus on the Soviet utopian project of creating the New Man allows her to explore the central contradiction within posthumanist rhetoric: the unresolved tension between the posthuman as better than, and the posthuman as different from, the human. In other words, is the posthuman subject a 'more ethical human being' (and in this sense the fulfillment of the utopian promise of humanism), or is the posthuman subject a radically different species that denies humanist morality? Gomel considers this aporia in her analysis of representations of posthumanism's three iconic figures (the alien, the animal and the cyborg) in late Soviet science fiction. Along the way, she argues persuasively that science fiction in its Soviet incarnation should be taken seriously as part of posthumanist thought. (In the following chapter, Julia Vaingurt's interpretation of the Strugatskiis alongside Fedorov and Lyotard further illustrates the intellectual dimension of Soviet Sci-Fi). Indeed, under totalitarian conditions, by estranging familiar contexts, this genre offered more freedom for deeper philosophical reflection, as well as disguised political commentary. In passing, Gomel ironically points out the unintended similarity between the 'ethics of Soviet humanism' and Braidotti's idealistic recipe for becoming posthuman through 'combining ethical values with the well-being of an enlarged sense of community' (p. 44). She also offers a brief but refreshingly unbiased reading of Fukuyama (long targeted in 'liberal' academic circles for flagellation as a retrograde 'essentialist'), pointing to the latest research in evolutionary psychology that supports his argument about ethics as a product of our biological and social conditions.

The posthumanist perspective facilitates a more balanced and open view of the Soviet period: not only as a 'historical mistake' but as an era that generated new creative energies. Turning to the evolving reception of Platonov, Jonathan Platt discusses the Communist era as a legitimate phase of Russian history, growing out of the pre-1917 cultural formation and stimulating debate among contemporary Russian intellectuals. He attempts to correct 1990s readings of Platonov's texts as exclusively dystopian, bringing to bear more recent interpretations by critics of the New Russian Left, who restore the writer's 'prerevolutionary desire' alongside his 'postrevolutionary anguish'.

The Anthropocene era (said to have begun with active, harmful human intervention in the ecosystem) is an important topic in posthumanist environmentalist criticism. The volume responds to this concern for ecology in several chapters. For Ketī Chukhrov, the present ecological condition of our planet is a regrettable reflection of our humanity. Colleen McQuillen discusses the problem of human corporal adaptation to external material conditions as portrayed in late-Soviet fiction.

Along with ecology, the animal realm looms large in posthumanist discourse as another way of dislocating the anthropocentric perspective. The dualist opposition between men and animals is erased by emphasizing the genetic commonality between them and rhetorically reinscribing the human species into the animal world through such terms as 'human animal' or, more creatively, 'humanimal', and a broader notion, 'natureculture', proposed by Donna Haraway in *The Companion Species Manifesto* (Chicago, IL, 2003). Even the common cultural practice of imparting to animals our own characteristics has been qualified in posthumanist literature as 'violent imposition' and 'discrimination'. Woe to La Fontaine and Krylov! But the use of animal tropes in contemporary Russian fiction appears to be at odds with the posthumanist celebration of the human/animal nexus. For instance, Khagi discusses images of 'animalistic dehumanization' in Garros-Evdokimov's *Gray Goo*, which signal 'problems of degraded reason, individuality, ethics, and [...] freedom in contemporary society' (p. 81). In Alexander Ilichevsky's *Matisse*, 'animalistic dehumanization' is a result of the social and ethical problems in contemporary techno-consumerist society. Showing the process of human 'devaluation' to the level of livestock is a rather conventional form of moral critique from the humanist perspective. Do these authors expose posthumanism 'as a form of biological and social degeneration' (p. 72), or do they simply operate within a humanist framework lamenting the degradation of their contemporaries to a sub-human level?

Several chapters address the intriguing topic of encoding human identity in a technological medium. Jacob Emery traces this desire of self-transmission into a more permanent non-organic form to the romantic dream about eternal artwork as a path to immortality for the artist. Less persuasively, Kristine Toland discusses Lev Rubinstein's use of YouTube videos, Live Journal, blogs and other digital platforms to support the far-reaching conclusion that new media 'creates the conditions for the existence of posthuman autobiographical identities shaped primarily by virtual, network-based interactions and mediations' (pp. 162–63). It is true that today we constantly encounter elusive virtual identities whose mode of existence depends on media technology. But this is hardly the case of Lev Rubinstein. When he reads his mini-narratives and records his singing, technology is used as a medium of self-expression, self-projection and communication with a broader audience, but not necessarily self-creation. It is unlikely that the dissemination of his video recordings and the increased presence of Rubinstein in virtual space has transformed him into 'a technologically prosthetic, posthuman being' (p. 178).

By contrast, Dmitri Glukhovski's transmedial fiction syndicate *Metro* discussed by Katerina Lakhmitko furnishes an example of a technologically-driven artistic construct not only transmitted but also generated though its virtual mode of existence. Originally based on a novel, *Metro* grew into a multimedia cybertext, comprising over sixty novellas, a magazine, artwork, music and other media content, contributed by readers immersed in the virtual universe. Thereby these readers are transformed from conventional consumers of fiction to producers (*prosumers*). Lakhmitko uses her analysis of the *Metro* franchise to suggest that the world exists through 'the collective perspective of multiple subjectivities and their intersubjectivity' (p. 196).

Some case studies considered in the volume are more tenuously related to posthumanism. The chapter, "Drilled Humans" or Automated Systems? Reconsidering Human-Machine Integration in Late-Soviet Design', makes ambitious claims based on an analysis of successive official programmes of household and workplace design from the 1950s to the 1980s. By implementing normative design strategies, the Soviet state is said to have been 'crafting a socialist collective of humans and non-humans' (p. 135). Scientifically researched and carefully calculated aesthetics and layout were intended to mould the Soviet consumer into an ideal socialist subject. Such manipulation may well have been the goal of state-run institutes that generated ideas for appointing the tiny living quarters that Soviet citizens could afford to inhabit. What is missing from this case study is

some assessment of the actual impact of these ideologically-driven design strategies. In the absence of such data, anyone familiar with the actual situation is likely to assume that, like many other grand government campaigns, the effect on people's lives was negligible. The proverbial *kvartirnyi vopros*, shortages of basic goods and lack of consumer choices plagued Soviet citizens throughout the Communist period. The most basic appliances like a vacuum cleaner or a food mixer were only accessible to a lucky few. These hardships, not rationalized household design, influenced and indeed helped to fashion *homo sovieticus*. The role of domestic interior design in programming human behaviour is certainly undeniable, and in the earlier twentieth century, Behaviourism had already explored its potential for controlling the mindset, conduct and tastes of the masses. However, the Soviet state's plans for fully-automated, scientifically calculated kitchens remained virtual. At least, the Soviet housewife was not transformed into a cyborg using kitchen utensils as a prosthesis. The housewife in the USSR was a debased figure, spending her few remaining hours after a long workday standing in endless queues, chopping vegetables with a primitive kitchen knife and washing the floor with a rag. She was dehumanized, but hardly posthumanized.

The posthuman lens stretches the imagination beyond our comfort zone by recognizing the limitations of our judgement, by underlining the relativity of our perception, and by reflecting reality from an unusual angle (for example, picturing the world through the eyes of a dolphin, a mosquito, an alien, or an android). Art has always been the most effective way to question conventions and to imagine alternatives. The last section of the volume, entitled 'Artistic Practices', features reflections from contemporary artists. Interviewed about her play, *Love Machines*, Ketī Chukhrov revisits the most essential points of posthuman philosophy, already discussed in specific, narrow contexts by other contributors. Narrow specializations may go deep, but this can be at the expense of disconnection from the overall agenda. The artistic experience helps to restore the missing links. Chukhrov is a conceptual artist, particularly interested in exploring the 'end of humanity' and the 'finalization of anthropocentrism'. Her argument revolves around several key questions: Why does the current human project involve being either greater or less than human? Why does the contemporary man consider the very category of humanity painful and shameful? Who was the subject of the universe before humanity appeared? Either God, she maintains, or, 'if there's no God, some mind other than human' (p. 250). The idea of a consciousness

residing in a non-human subject is further explored in Alex Anikhina's discussion of her unfinished film trilogy in the final chapter.

At the end of her interview, Chukhrov claims that, in contrast to Western audiences, Russians resist the idea of the crisis of the human. Her interview dates from 2015. Even then, alarmist scenarios about the impending disappearance of the human race, based not on science fiction but interdisciplinary scientific research, began to invade the media space in Russia, and these ideas have since captured the popular imagination. Experts in the field have been featured on 'Pozner' (possibly the only remaining show on state-controlled TV channels where the goal is neither propaganda nor empty entertainment, but information and discussion). In June 2019, Vladimir Pozner interviewed the renowned Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari, the author of the internationally acclaimed *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*.⁵ Harari cogently argues that advances in biotechnology will soon change the human species beyond recognition; the dramatic transformation of our physical bodies and brain will make irrelevant all the emotions, concepts and modes of self-identification that presently give meaning to our world.

In numerous public lectures and television appearances, Tatiana Chernigovskaia, specialist in cognitive sciences, warns about the inevitable anthropological crisis caused by the expansion of AI. Leading Russian neurophysiologist Konstantin Anokhin frequently raises awareness about the unpredictable consequences of creating AI by copying the human brain. Arguing that human consciousness developed over time, he warns that artificial neural networks may similarly develop consciousness and subjectivity in the process of education. He frames this question as both ethical (do we want robots to experience human-like emotions: suffering, anxiety, fear of death, etc., and how will this affect our decisions about restraining or terminating such programmes?), and as a question of humanity's survival (if AI acquires consciousness, will its goals still correspond to ours?).⁶ Likewise, Andrei Kurpatov, a popular psychiatrist and media personality, has explored the relations between the human mind, psychology and AI in many books. One of them is entitled *Krasnaia tabletka* (The Red Pill, 2017), a reference to the Wachowskis' 1999 film,

⁵ Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, London, 2015, and *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, London, 2017. Both books were promptly released in Russian translations.

⁶ For a focused discussion of these problems, see 'Chernigovskaia vs. Anokhin — Chto takoe soznanie?' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMg5r95MS7M>> [accessed 14 August 2019].

The Matrix, in which the red pill, swallowed by the protagonist, dispels illusions about reality to reveal the horrible condition of humanity. In his book, *Chetvertaia mirovaia voina. Budushchee uzhe riadom* (The Fourth World War: The Future is at Hand, 2019), Kurpatov defines the fourth world war (the third being the current war on terror) as the war against AI, and predicts a rather grim outcome for *homo sapiens*. So today, due to the input of all these experts, Russian audiences are fully aware of the threat of humanity's crisis. Characteristically, Russian scientists are just as apprehensive about our posthuman future as writers, proving the endurance of the apocalyptic streak in the Russian mentality.

The Human Reimagined does not generally engage directly with current scientific debates, except perhaps for Lakhmitko, who draws on the work of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio to analyse 'how the formerly discrete disciplines of ludology, humanities, psychology, and neuroscience mingle and coalesce through new modes of social and cultural production in the post-Soviet virtual space' (p. 180). This is a pioneering book, which does not purport to cover all the ground — the range of problems raised is impressive enough. But for any future study of cultural production in the framework of posthumanism it will be crucial to develop a sustained dialogue with current scientific research on the human brain, mind and language. Recent insight into the functioning of the brain and the processes that control our behaviour and perceptions has done at least as much to interrogate humanist philosophy as artists or intellectuals who dared to question accepted definitions of human nature. And conversely, neuroscientists frequently praise the intuition of writers and artists who have explored similar venues creatively long before they were rendered in a scientific language. Both fields of knowledge interrogate the condition of being human, approaching their object of study from two different but complementary perspectives. In the posthumanist context, today's academic push towards interdisciplinarity would be most appropriate.

One would also hope that this book will be followed by comparative studies, introducing non-Western perspectives on the key issues of the posthumanist inquiry. As the research presented in *The Human Reimagined* demonstrates, straddling East and West, Russia is fertile ground for testing posthumanist conceptions and assessing their novelty. Displacing them further toward Asia can enrich this theoretical framework through a productive conversation with various well-established philosophical, ethical and religious systems. Many ideas endorsed by Western posthumanism have been integral to the teachings of Yoga, Buddhism, Jainism, or Vedanta

(albeit under different appellations). It would be interesting to discuss how the concept of *zoe*, defined by Braidotti as the animating life force which belongs to the monolithic universe of matter rather than to any individual or species,⁷ correlates with *prana*, an ancient Sanskrit term for vital energy that permeates the entire world. Or whether there is a fundamental difference between the professed posthumanist concern for all living beings and the principle of *Ahimsa* (non-harming), deeply engrained in the spirit of ancient teachings and manifest in the behavioural code of Jainism? It is also worth investigating the Buddhist concept of emptiness as another approach to critiquing essentialism. As the Dalai Lama explains, emptiness does not mean that reality does not exist, but rather that it lacks an 'inherent nature': 'we automatically grasp on to things as enduring entities that possess self-defining characteristics, essential natures, and this leads to all our confusion'. Buddhism advocates that the true nature of reality is its 'essencelessness'.⁸

While posthumanism invests itself greatly into deconstructing hierarchical approaches to various species, the Eastern philosophical perspective illuminates the simple fact that anthropocentrism has not always, nor everywhere, been our principal optic. Georg Feuerstein's explanation of the Hindu concept of time presents the ostensible 'crown of creation' as a rather humble creature indeed:

His [God Brahma's] life-span extends over a 'century,' that is, a period of 311,040,000,000,000 human years. At the demise of the Creator, the whole manifest universe dissolves. After an immeasurable period, the process is reversed, and the whole cycle of space-time existence starts again. A truly awesome vision that leaves no doubt that the human race is utterly insignificant, to say nothing of the individual.⁹

According to Buddhist conceptions, the human being is not conceived as the master of the planet; the human dimension is just one of several interconnected realms (of devas, 'angry demons', animals, etc.), all of which offer venues for reincarnation. This attitude does not invalidate the importance of life in the guise of a human being, however. As Sogyal Rinpoche emphasizes, 'Every spiritual tradition has stressed that this

⁷ Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, p. 60.

⁸ Daniel Goleman and Robert A. F. Thurman (eds), *MindScience: An East-West Dialogue*, Somerville, MA, 1991, p. 25.

⁹ Georg Feuerstein, *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga: Theory and Practice*, Boston, MA and London, 2003, p. 179.

human life is unique, and has a potential that ordinarily we hardly even begin to imagine. If we miss the opportunity this life offers us for transforming ourselves, they say, it may well be an extremely long time before we have another'.¹⁰ From this point of view, human life does not entail an entitlement or superiority, but responsibility and opportunity for spiritual realization.

Concepts, analogous to the posthumanist lexicon, have been carefully considered at periodic encounters initiated by the Dalai Lama between Tibetan spiritual authorities and Western scientists (several years ago the Dalai Lama also held a productive conversation with the Russian delegation at his residence in Dharamsala). Such meetings have done a great deal to expand respective perspectives on science vs. religion, faith vs. reason, physical vs. spiritual, human vs. non-human, mind vs. body, and Self vs. Other. Tibetan Buddhism has long defined itself as the 'science of the mind', having for centuries studied the human condition and ways to transcend it. As an emerging academic field, posthumanism can only benefit from tapping into the reservoir of wisdom accumulated by various civilizations. This is particularly so because these ancient spiritual systems continue to evolve, often pursuing an agenda relevant to the philosophical concerns of posthumanism. Nearly thirty years ago, Harvard neurobiology professor David Porter asked the Dalai Lama for his view of artificial intelligence. He queried, 'If, at some future time when our ignorance is not so great, you could make by genetic engineering, with proteins and amino acids, or by engineering with chips and copper wires, an organism that had all of our good qualities and none of our bad ones, would you do it? Would this not be an interesting form of incarnation?' In his characteristic light-hearted manner, his Holiness replied: 'If this were possible it would be most welcome. It would save a lot of effort!'¹¹

¹⁰ Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, New York, 2002, p. 118.

¹¹ Goleman and Thurman (eds), *MindScience*, p. 35