

# John A. Weaver - III. 18, 17

## (Georgia Southern University, USA)

*18) Posthuman perspectives (What does posthuman future introduce into today's education? In face of the end of humans and environmental crisis. Technocratization as a problem for education. Being human in a digital age. The possibilities, limitations, threats/ challenges of human education in a digital age).*

*17) Being human in relations with other living beings (Role, position, and place of other beings in human society as a matter for education)*

*During our time together and in regards to posthumanism I hope we will cover the four tra-jectories of posthumanism: Humans and technology, humans and other non-human animals, Humans and ecological crisis, and the crisis of the humanities. I would like to cover how technology in the realm of the sciences and medicine are morphing with humans, how we can rethink human rela-tions with other animals, how we can discuss the idea of democracies within the context of who shall count as human and who shall have a voice in determining what priorities should be made in living democracies, and finally I would like to discuss the many ways the humanities inform our thinking about education and are vital to any definition of life beyond the bare and towards the good.*

When I think of posthumanism I think of four traditions and a few important discussion points to highlight in connection to human education.

**First, posthumanism. There are four traditions** that have emerged in this multidisciplinary field of study. **The first one** deals with the merging of technology with human bodies. This is the most common thought people have when the word posthuman is mentioned, and it is an important point. This line of thought covers issues such as war and the development of prosthetics, education and psychotropic drugs as a means to control young people, cosmetic surgery and wealth, DNA manipulation and the construction of a new form of humanity, theology and humans assuming the role of a god.

**The second tradition** deals with the relationships between human animals and other non-human animals. As many begin to challenge the humanist assumptions of human superiority, how do we rethink our relationships with other animals, how do we navigate our way back into “nature” and the kingdoms of animal species as we face the extinction of thousands of species and millions of forms of life? Are we too late in thinking these questions? Has humanism run its natural course thereby marking the end of the earth and humanity the logical conclusion? These last two questions take us to the **third tradition**.

These scholars and thinkers contemplate the possibility of the existence of this planet without humans. If this indeed is our destiny then we should be thinking about issues that pertain to population growth, environmental destruction that moves beyond our comprehension, and the genocidal, pandemic realities of war and disease that will make the previous two world wars combined look like a small family feud. I am talking about at a minimum six to eight billion people killed because of ecological crisis.

**The fourth tradition** is a little less intense and that is the decline of the humanities. Some like Michael Berube do not think the humanities are in decline. In fact, he makes a great case that the humanities are still holding their own within the university and he has the numbers to back up his case. What is not disputed is that the humanities are not as valued as they were within the university and society in general. While the third tradition

creates an existential crisis (The ultimate crisis for us, not true?) this fourth tradition creates a crisis of values. What is it we value when we think of human beings? Is it merely we value the value we bring to any relationship? That is, has everything indeed followed Gary Becker's warped dream and can be reduced to economic exchange?

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**From these traditions I would like to raise a few important questions. *Italic text***

Who shall count?

There has never been a time in the history of human education that all human beings were allowed to count and were seen as important enough to educate. This of course includes our own era. How shall we go about making sure everyone counts?

This question ultimately is about how deep will democratic principles take root in a world hostile to democracy.

How shall we educate humans in relationship with other animals?

When will we begin to recognize that other animals educate their young as well and to what extent does a child's and an adult's education intersect with the education of other animals?

How will environmental crises shape the way we educate each other?

And can we simultaneously abandon humanism and save the humanities (the child of humanism)?

In relationship to the idea of a democracy, throughout the world we are seeing an assault on democratic principles. How will we shape our ideals about education around principles of a democracy?

Is democracy dying with humanism since it appears many people prefer the ramblings of egomaniacal men over the uncertainties of democratic self-rule, and it equally appears the whims of oligarchs throughout the world trump the needs of the many?

What will a future democracy look like?

Finally, science seems to be at many of the centers of these questions given that technological and scientific advances are behind many of the issues posthumanism covers.

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