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ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

**AN ANALYSIS OF FRANCIS FUKUYAMA'S ARGUMENTS
EXEMPLIFIED ON CONTEMPORARY DYSTOPIAN
CULTURAL PRODUCTION**

**Analýza argumentů Francise Fukuyamy ilustrovaná na současné dystopické
kulturní produkci**

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.....
Martin Šinal'

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Abstract

In this thesis I analyze and problematize Francis Fukuyama's position on posthumanism, largely expressed in his 2002 book *Our Posthuman Future*. In it he warns against the likely negative outcome of a potential biotechnological revolution, which could enable easy access to interfering with human genome via practices such as genetic modification or human cloning. Fukuyama's major assumption is that all members of society must meet some limited standards of humanity in order to be equal, because if people acquire different levels of artificially altered "human natures," the outcome will be stratification, irreparable inequality and perhaps even class warfare. For this reason, Fukuyama calls for a pre-emptive regulation of genetic manipulation so as to avoid a "posthuman future." I contrast this theory with a selection of transhumanist and feminist theorists as well as with examples from fiction, namely the trilogy *Lilith's Brood* (1987-1989) by Octavia Butler and the novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005) by Kazuo Ishiguro. Drawing on these sources I conclude that Fukuyama's position is harmfully exclusionary and divisive; and also counter-productive in the sense that in his pursuit of securing freedom and equality he renders potential posthuman subjects fundamentally inferior, thus principally defeating his own project and exposing his bias regarding what constitutes a morally worthy identity and subjectivity.

Keywords: posthumanism, human nature, Factor X, dystopia, transhumanism, Octavia Butler, Kazuo Ishiguro

Abstrakt

V této práci analyzuji a problematizuji přístup Francise Fukuyamy k posthumanizmu, který je vyjádřen převážně v knize *Our Posthuman Future* (2002). V ní Fukuyama varuje před pravděpodobným nepříznivým dopadem potenciální biotechnologické revoluce, která by mohla umožnit snadný přístup k manipulaci s lidským genomem, pomocí praktik jako je genetická modifikace nebo lidské klonování. Fukuyamův hlavní předpoklad je, že všichni členové společnosti musí splňovat jistá ohraničená kritéria humanity k tomu, aby si byli rovni, protože když různí lidé nabudou odlišné „lidské přirozenosti,“ výsledkem bude stratifikace, nezvratitelná nerovnost a možná dokonce třídní válka. Z toho důvodu Fukuyama volá po preventivní regulaci genetické manipulace, aby se předešlo „posthumanitní budoucnosti.“ Tuto teorii dávám do kontrastu s názory vybraných transhumanistických a feministických teoretiků. Dále se věnuji beletrii, konkrétně románové trilogii *Lilith's Brood* (1987-1989) od Octavie Butler a románu *Never Let Me Go* (2005) od Kazua Ishigura. Vycházejíc z těchto zdrojů vyvozují, že Fukuyamova pozice je škodlivě vylučující, rozdělující a kontraproduktivní v tom, že ve snaze zajistit svobodu a rovnost vykresluje potenciálně posthumánní subjekty jako fundamentálně podřadné, čímž v principu popírá vlastní projekt a odhaluje svůj předsudek ohledně toho, co konstituuje morálně cennou identitu a subjektivitu.

Klíčová slova: posthumanismus, lidská přirozenost, Faktor X, dystopie, transhumanismus, Octavia Butler, Kazuo Ishiguro

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Introduction

In his 1989 essay “The End of History?” the cultural theorist and philosopher Francis Fukuyama famously declared the end of history in a political and ideological sense, an argument which he later expanded in his book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). In it, he argues that the natural human condition has made the process of history a development towards the most suitable social and political environment, which he has declared is liberal democracy. As such, Fukuyama agrees with Hegel that the flow of history is purposeful and also that it effectively ended in 1806, when, as a result of the Battle of Jena, liberal principles of the Enlightenment were solidified. Since then, no better environment for human nature to thrive in has been found and the collapse of Fascism in 1945 and Communism in 1989 (which gave an impulse for Fukuyama to write the original article) further attest to the conviction that human beings naturally converge towards liberal democratic values.

Much has happened since in terms of international political relations and conflicts, including conflicts in Ukraine, parts of North Africa and the Middle East, the “war on terror” and the immigration crisis. Many people, including Samuel Huntington, interpret this global turmoil of the recent years as ‘the clash of civilizations (which) will dominate global politics.’¹ After events such as 9/11, and even before, Fukuyama was asked to reconsider his thesis as it had been largely criticized,² but he has remained confident that instead of being locked in a cultural struggle, we are facing a backlash against spreading democratic values, a ‘rearguard action that will in time be overwhelmed by the broader tide of modernization.’³

However, this generally invoked ‘invitation to write a retrospective on the “end of history”’⁴ prompted Fukuyama to recognize an increasingly visible barrier to the contention that no countercultural or ideological insurgence can endanger the continuous global solidification of liberal democratic values. The issue is biotechnological revolution, particularly in the form of possible large-scale genetic alterations of masses of people that in his view could have disastrous social consequences. Fukuyama’s reasoning builds directly on

¹ Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 72, Summer 1993: 1.

² Francis Fukuyama, “Second Thoughts: The Last Man in a Bottle,” *National Interest*, Summer 1999: 4.

³ Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* (New York: Picador, 2003) 7.

⁴ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 7.

his aforementioned Hegelian theory that the particular tenets of liberal democracy are direct political expressions of particular features of human nature. Once we have reached this political stage, no other system or ideology will seem more attractive because none (so far invented) aligns so well with what human needs are. However, that applies only insofar as our nature remains intact, for alterations made to human nature may 'move us into a "posthuman" stage of history,⁵ in which there is no guaranteed causal link between the "posthuman" nature and liberal values such as freedom or equality. The fear is, as Bart Simon writes in a review of *Our Posthuman Future*, that genetic modifications may 'alter the material and biological basis of the natural human equality that serves as the basis of political equality and human rights.'⁶

Fukuyama is by no means the first to discuss the risks of genetic engineering and of the possibility to alter the human body to the extent where the notion of the human would, for an increasing lack of meaning, eventually have to give way to an "updated" term posthuman. Cultural theory and social philosophy have been increasingly productive on the topic of posthumanism since the 1990s and have included authors and philosophers such as Jurgen Habermas, Hans Moravec, Cary Wolfe, Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway and others. Besides theory, the subject of the effects of genetic engineering and the nature of posthuman societies also thrives in contemporary fiction, and is present in the writing of authors such as Kazuo Ishiguro, Margaret Atwood, Octavia Butler, Ursula Le Guin and many others.

Fiction dedicated to exploring posthumanism often has utopian or dystopian undertones and tends to balance somewhere along the continuum between the two contrasting subgenres of speculative fiction. Posthuman utopias have often centred around a changed condition surrounding the issues of gender, oppression and social roles of the sexes, such as in Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* (1975), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915) or *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) written by Marge Piercy. In contrast, the prevalent trend of dystopian fiction has progressed from Orwellian political dystopias to the current stage, where it is not the political system but the posthuman condition that causes the misery surrounding the characters. Although the still most famous posthuman dystopia dates back to 1932 when Aldous Huxley published *Brave New World*, it is only since about a quarter of a century ago when the writing of posthuman dystopian or (less frequently) utopian fiction, as well as its counterpart cultural theory, dramatically gained on frequency. One can perhaps venture to

⁵ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 7.

⁶ Bart Simon, "Introduction: Toward a Critique of Posthuman Futures," *Cultural Critique*, 53 (2003): 1.

explain this thematic shift by pointing out the existing concerns with the increasing technologization of society and the fear of its derogatory future impact on human lives (a fear enunciated, among others, already in a 1909 short story “The Machine Stops” by E.M. Forster), but whatever the reason, it remains true that contemporary fiction and cultural theory with a posthumanist subject-matter have been largely informed by the dystopian horizons modelled according to a possible use and misuse of biotechnology.

Fukuyama’s writing on posthumanism has to be understood as being part of a complex net of intertwining, often contradictory theories, ideas, predictions and arguments whose common aim is to shed light on what may become the dominant topic of the 21st century, namely the ethical and political effects of an open possibility to radically change the human subject by means of biotechnological intervention. The aim of this thesis is to analyze Fukuyama’s theory about this disposition, in the light of an emerging theoretical and literary corpus that deals with this topic. The argumentative structure of *Our Posthuman Future* will be followed in this thesis but at each step of the way Fukuyama’s arguments will be challenged by a wider context. His conclusions will also be put into perspective not only with theory but also with several texts of posthuman, arguably dystopian fiction, namely the trilogy of novels *Lilith’s Brood* (1987-1989) by Octavia Butler and *Never Let Me Go* (2005) by Kazuo Ishiguro. These texts not only provide a thoughtful illustration of many emerging worries connected with posthumanism but also express a number of solid philosophical and political arguments that are apt to challenge the validity of Fukuyama’s views on the subject. As such the fiction will be used as a counterweight to his thesis, in order contextualize or problematize the tenet or reasoning at hand.

Before a comprehensive analysis of Fukuyama’s specific arguments can be carried out, some essential terms, namely the very term posthumanism as well as human nature, have to be defined and put into a historical and philosophical perspective, because their meaning is crucial when handled by Fukuyama as well as by his peers writing on this topic. After that, his core arguments will be analyzed and challenged. The last section of this thesis will be dedicated to the analysis of the aforementioned novels, which will provide further evidence as to why Fukuyama’s skeptical position should be seen as problematic.

Theory

Chapter 1: What is posthumanism?

While the term posthumanism was largely popularized in cultural theory and philosophy in the early 1990s, the word and its broader definition already appeared on several occasions earlier in the 20th century and before. Neil Badmington writes in *Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within* (2004) that ‘there is nothing new about the concept of posthumanism,⁷ since writers such as H.P. Blavatsky already wrote of ‘the post-Human’ in the late 19th century, even though, according to *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Science* (2011), he ‘did not develop a detailed theory of the posthuman.’⁸

In 1966, Michel Foucault wrote in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*: ‘As archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end.’⁹ Here Foucault not only anticipates the end of what we commonly mean when referring to the terms “man” or “human” but also implies that the nature of this thing called “human” has never been stable in the first place, much less involving an unchanging, eternal definition of what makes us who we are. Similar argument may be found in Ihab Hassan’s 1977 article “Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?” in which, according to *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (2013), critics ‘locate the first *critical* use of ‘post-humanism.’¹⁰ In this post-modern take on the ancient myth Hassan’s character Prometheus announces an emergent posthumanist culture. At one point Prometheus declares: ‘We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism.’¹¹ This anticipation of a change of paradigm, as well as Foucault’s assertion of flexibility and volatility of the meaning of “human” helped later form

⁷ Neil Badmington, *Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 87.

⁸ Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini, *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Science* (London: Routledge, 2011) 376.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1971) 387.

¹⁰ Stefan Herbrechter, *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) 34.

¹¹ Ihab Hassan, “Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Postmodern Culture?” *Performance in Postmodern Culture*, ed. Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello (Wisconsin: Coda Press, 1983) 201.

a specific strand within posthumanism called transhumanism, the proponents of which encourage this change and transformation with great enthusiasm.

When posthumanism as a field of study became firmly rooted in the scientific and academic discourse during the 1990s, posthumanism became an umbrella term for a number of theoretical concepts that permeate academic disciplines such as sociology, political sciences, cultural theory, technology, biology and bioethics, to the extent in which these disciplines discuss the issue of a radical change in the human condition and its various forms of impact. According to Francesca Ferrando's article "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms Differences and Relations" (2013), posthumanism has most frequently been understood as a gateway term to address the urgency for the integral redefinition of the notion of the human, following the onto-epistemological as well as scientific and bio-technological developments of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.¹² As such, posthumanism seems to constitute a space in which ideas that are spread across various disciplines interplay, rather than forming a monolithic, ideologically rooted position itself.

In contrast, transhumanism is an ideological strand within the broad category of posthumanism. Perhaps the most concise and lucid explanation of the notion, including all its contemporary connotations and aims of its proponents, was presented and defended in a manifesto named *Transhumanist Declaration*, crafted in 1998 by a group of international authors, scientists and philosophers such as David Pearce or Nick Bostrom.¹³ According to the manifesto, transhumanism is a theory which considers the posthuman condition to be a necessary step forward in the human evolution, but a step brought about by human intervention rather than evolution by natural selection. In this respect the transhumanists have no small goals. According to the first tenet of the declaration, their hope is to achieve "the possibility of broadening human potential by overcoming aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet Earth."¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, technology is of crucial importance for transhumanism, whether it be in order to control our environment or to alter or enhance the human body. According to Ferrando "human enhancement is a crucial

¹² Francesca Ferrando, "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms Differences and Relations," *Existenz*, Vol. 8, Fall 2013: 26.

¹³ Michael Hauskeller, "Utopia in Trans- and Posthumanism," *Academia.edu*, Jan. 2013: 3.

¹⁴ *Transhumanist Declaration*, <<http://www.transhumanism.org/index.php/wta/declaration>> 16 Feb. 2016.

notion to the transhumanist reflection; the main keys to access such a goal are identified in science and technology.¹⁵ The problem, however, is that science and technology are in transhumanism regarded with a noncritical adoration and with barely any trait of cautionary carefulness.

Understanding the problematic relationship between transhumanism and technology requires looking back at the predecessors of this particular strand of posthumanism. As Bostrom argues in an essay “A History of Transhuman Thought” (2005), transhumanism and its belief in the capacity of human perfectibility are directly linked with the ideals inherited from Renaissance humanism and the Enlightenment, which, through its representatives such as the philosopher Francis Bacon, advocated ‘the project of “effecting all things possible,” by which he meant using science to achieve mastery over nature in order to improve the living condition of human beings.¹⁶ The ideals of Renaissance humanism thus went in a vein of striving to break free from the prejudices and ideological restrains of the Middle Ages and of using all available intellectual and physical powers to perfect oneself and push the boundaries of what one can achieve indefinitely.

However, in his 1984 essay “Sapere Aude” (“What is Enlightenment?”) Michel Foucault calls for avoidance of a confusion between the Enlightenment and humanism. In his mind humanism, at least since the 17th century, has been making the same error which it had originally formed as a backlash against. Namely, as Foucault says, humanism ‘has been obliged to lean on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion, science, or politics.¹⁷ As Cary Wolfe expands the argument in his reading of Foucault in the book *What is Posthumanism* (2010), ‘what Foucault draws attention to (...) is that humanism is (...) its own dogma, replete with its own prejudices and assumptions, which are themselves a form of “superstition” from which the Enlightenment sought to break free.¹⁸ Humanism is thus said to have lost track of its own original mission and started clinging to doctrines it once sought to get rid of. This contradiction then creates paradoxes, such as the one of social Darwinism. According to Wolfe, the humanist (and consequently transhumanist) problem with social Darwinism is that its method of extracting humanity from animality is by means of an

¹⁵ Ferrando 27.

¹⁶ Nick Bostrom, “A History of Transhuman Thought,” *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, 14 (2005): 2.

¹⁷ Paul Rabinow, ed. *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 44.

¹⁸ Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) xiv.

enhancement – eugenics, which is said to be a form of human mastery over nature. However, the method to do so falls inside the territory of natural selection (survival of the fittest), and is thus decidedly naturalistic and uncontrollable. As such, we are left with ‘an “animal” competition between the different degrees of humanity.’¹⁹

Transhumanism thus faces a historical problem of failing to adhere to its radically progressive definition by relying on the notion of individuality and progressivity as an unquestioned dogma. This has arguably translated into what transhumanism has been criticized for in recent years, namely its unconditional adoration of technology and the lack of critical approach towards progression, enhancement and alteration.

One of the modern writers who popularized the concept of posthumanism was the feminist writer with demonstrably transhumanist outlooks Donna Haraway, even though she never used either of the two terms herself. As Ferrando writes, ‘the posthuman turn was fully enacted by feminist theorists in the Nineties,’²⁰ and it was Haraway who initiated this turn in 1983 when she published an essay called “A Cyborg Manifesto.” The essay gained a lot of attention due to Haraway’s sweeping criticism of the perception of humanity as a rigid, unchanging concept as well as for her criticism of traditional feminism for its focus on identity politics. Haraway set the modern definitions of how the transhuman strand of posthumanism later perceived the human condition. She aimed to refute the idea that human nature remains intact regardless of external factors and she argued that due to the 20th century’s technological advance the line between artificiality and nature had already been blurred. According to her, modern-day people are cyborgs, in other words indiscernible constructs of human and machine. ‘By the late twentieth century (...) we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism.’²¹ Although written in a playful, sometimes provocative form, Haraway’s concern is clear: to de-essentialize the notion of human nature and to rid it off binary oppositions that have accompanied humanism ever since its inception, such as human/animal, physical/non-physical, human/non-human, and ultimately the opposition between the technology and the self. This move can be understood as the essence of the transhumanist philosophy which seeks freedom from old concepts

¹⁹ Wolfe xiv.

²⁰ Ferrando 29.

²¹ Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 150.

surrounding the notion of humanism that may impede people from progress towards greater well-being achieved by the (technological) means of self-enhancement.

Katherine Hayles in her book *How We Became Posthuman* (2000) understands the territory of posthumanism to be occupied by beings very similar to Haraway's cyborgs. In her view 'the posthuman implies not only a coupling with intelligent machines but coupling so intense (...) that it is no longer possible to distinguish between the biological organism and the informational circuits in which the organism is enmeshed.'²² In other words, Hayles moves the rather metaphorical definition of a cyborg created by Haraway to the contemporary space in which the literal manifestation of the cyborg as a future reality seems more plausible than ever. According to Joel Dinerstein, who wrote a review of Hayles' book, all the inclinations towards 'what even cautious critics call "social revolution"'²³ are already in place, including the cultural belief in the omnipotence of technology as well as the consumer desire for self-enhancement. As a result, 'steroids, cloning, gene mapping, and surgical implants are just the tip of an iceberg that, when it melts, will rebaptize human beings as cyborgs.'²⁴

The transhumanists consider posthumanism to be a necessary theoretical possibility whose existence reassures an individual's freedom of self-alteration and self-enhancement. Equality and freedom in the choice and attainability of the biotechnological possibilities are also a crucial principle for the transhumanists. As James Hughes writes in *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future* (2004), 'transhumanism calls for an equal access to technological enhancements, which could otherwise be limited to certain socio-political classes and related to economic power, consequently encoding racial and sexual politics.'²⁵ One can argue that since transhumanism is through writers such as Haraway conceptually aligned with the feminist movement, i.e. movement that recognizes (and aims to eradicate) historically rooted oppression of social minorities, its proponents never considered humanism as a guarantor for social and political equality in the first place, and may therefore perceive a possible abolition of the transhumanist

²² Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999) 35.

²³ Joel Dinerstein, "Technology and Its Discontents: On the Verge of the Posthuman," *American Quarterly*, 58:3 (September 2006): 570.

²⁴ Dinerstein 570.

²⁵ Ferrando 27.

aspirations also as a threat, as a barrier to a necessary social and political progress towards greater welfare for all.

As opposed to Haraway and Hayles, Fukuyama considers human nature to be a relatively stable concept and he therefore clearly distinguishes between the human and the posthuman. In contrast with the transhumanists, being human in his view is almost a sacred territory, a necessary condition to maintain social and political stability. Therefore, the very concept of the posthuman is a threat. Fukuyama represents a more conservative approach to the wonders of science, and he is considerably skeptical about the prospects that the posthuman phase might bring about if it were to supersede the human one on a biotechnological basis. In the essay where he introduced the threat of posthumanism (as well as the term itself), called “Second Thoughts: The Last Man in a Bottle” (1999), Fukuyama writes that a ‘condition for the End of History, (...) is an end of science.’²⁶ The “End of History” is for Fukuyama of course the optimistic notion that there is no long-term moving beyond the stage of liberal democracy. The potential abuse of science, though, is what may very well demolish this grand historical project and it thus prompted Fukuyama to write this article and later the book as a cautionary warning.

The thesis of “Second Thoughts: The Last Man in a Bottle” is that the misuse of biotechnology is in its effects parallel, though much more potent, to the oppressive ideologies of the human history. ‘Biotechnology will be able to accomplish what the radical ideologies of the past, with their unbelievably crude techniques, were unable to accomplish: to bring about a new type of human being.’²⁷ By this Fukuyama means that ideologies such as fascism or communism applied social restrictions in order to contain or displace some unwanted, yet widespread expressions and desires of the people, whether it be inclinations towards private possession or freedom of movement. These restrictions, though, have always been applied externally, silencing various human desires but not extinguishing their source. As a result, political totalitarian regimes have a tendency to collapse at some point, when the resistance manages to gather in sufficient force. The effects of biotechnology, however, are much more subtle. Changing human nature in some radical way (and perhaps only a certain segment of the population) may mean that society will become intrinsically unequal, not because of a

²⁶ Fukuyama, “Second Thoughts: The Last Man In A Bottle” 14.

²⁷ Fukuyama, “Second Thoughts: The Last Man In A Bottle” 14.

tyrannical dictator but because of the absence of a common denominator, namely human nature as we know it that would eventually ensure equality and freedom.

Fukuyama, in fact, does not spend as much time defining the concept of posthumanism in *Our Posthuman Future* as he is defining the concept of human nature. The difference in the vantage point between him and the transhumanists is that for the former the field of opportunity lies in what the social expression of human nature has to offer, while the latter see the opportunity in the exploitation of the posthuman stage. Human nature is in the transhumanist philosophy a fluid concept. The Renaissance humanists transformed it and now, given the opportunity, biotechnology may and should as well. To Fukuyama, however, preserving human nature is of crucial importance. For this reason, the particular dangers of posthumanism as seen by Fukuyama can be fully analyzed and critiqued only after his definition of human nature has been understood including all its relevant historical and philosophical underpinnings.

Chapter 2: Fukuyama's definition of human nature

Before defining human nature, Fukuyama guides the reader through a short survey of the history of philosophy in order to demonstrate that human rights are justifiably derived from human nature. By holding this position he is in fact arguing against cultural relativists, who on an empirical basis claim that different cultures have different sets of rights and values, as well as against a more theoretical line of reasoning that exists 'under the label of naturalistic fallacy, a tradition that stretches from David Hume to twentieth-century analytical philosophers such as G.E. Moore, R.M. Hare, and others.'²⁸ Hume's distinction between "is" and "ought" is probably still the most popular way of phrasing the naturalistic fallacy argument. According to him the category of "is" is descriptive, as it simply comments on the current state of reality, while the category of "ought" means suddenly injecting this amoral reality with a normative precept. In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738) Hume writes: 'this ought or ought not express some new relation or affirmation, (and it) seems altogether unconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.'²⁹ In response to this widely established theoretical principle Fukuyama concedes that moral truths might not be deducible *a priori* from empirical observation but that there is nevertheless a common behaviour that links certain types of situations with certain types of action, i.e. behaviour whose common goal for most people is, for instance, well-being. According to Sam Harris, a contemporary moral philosopher, values, or in other words moral extractions of an "ought" from an "is," 'only exist relative to actual or potential changes in the well-being of conscious creatures. (...) For instance, to say that we ought to treat children with kindness seems identical to saying that everyone will tend to be better off if we do.'³⁰ Harris' point is a profoundly utilitarian one, for it identifies moral goodness with well-being, and at this point Fukuyama sides with him, because he shares the conviction that human nature craves specific objectives such as well-being, happiness or health, which objectively "ought" to be fulfilled, simply because they are a part of behaviour that is

²⁸ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 69.

²⁹ David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Project Gutenberg, 13 Feb. 2016
<<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4705/4705-h/4705-h.htm>>.

³⁰ Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 2011) 31.

common across the human race. Fukuyama then parts with the utilitarians, whom he accuses of ‘radical reductionism – that is, the overly simplified view of human nature.’³¹ In other words, Fukuyama and the utilitarians agree that human nature produces desires for ends that people tend to have in common, from which it follows that these ends objectively ought to be pursued; their difference lies in conflicting definitions of what constitutes human nature.

Fukuyama goes beyond the utilitarians in saying that what drives the “ought” is a set of complex emotional responses and not just a simple pursuit of pleasure or happiness, which utilitarians such as Jeremy Bentham would have believed. According to Fukuyama, every “good” and “bad” is either accompanied or born out of a strong emotion, which means that ‘the process of value derivations is not fundamentally a rational one, because its sources are the “is” of the emotions.’³² This claim may seem to be reminiscent of Hume who also maintained that emotions are the main drivers of what is commonly understood as moral reasoning, but Hume argued to the effect that moral reasoning therefore has no objective value because in reality it is only a subjective expression of one’s emotional preference. However, Fukuyama’s reading of both Locke and Hume implies that both philosophers fail to recognize certain universal tendencies that human beings share. While in Locke it is some common preconditions of the human brain, in Hume it is some shared threads of moral behaviour that exist in individuals and is, by extension, represented by social and political arrangements. Fukuyama’s argument is that generation of emotions that guide moral behaviour is rooted in a common human nature and is therefore not distributed randomly or merely as a result of an impact of culture. Therefore, while emotions are felt subjectively, their distribution is patterned as they are produced by the brain and its uniquely human qualities. This can be also traced to some universally shared features of different communities and societies. For instance, ‘the moral opprobrium that attaches to murder is due in large measure to the fact that the fear of death is part of human nature and does not vary substantially from one human community to another.’³³ Therefore, even though murder is universal, laws against murder are also universal, as they are a result of the universal moral sense, which, while subjective in character, is largely uniform in application.

³¹ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 72.

³² Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 73.

³³ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 73.

Fukuyama's take on human nature aligns to a large extent with that of the cultural theorist and philosopher Jurgen Habermas, who also argues that moral sense is universal as a defining quality of human nature and that it underlines essential features permeating all cultures. Habermas defines a "species-ethic," which is a set of 'intuitive self-descriptions that guide our own self-identifications as human beings – that is, our self-understanding as members of the species.³⁴ The social and political values that people have are a reflection of this species-ethics, namely in terms of how we perceive and, as a result, value, cooperate and judge each other as members of the same species. Like Fukuyama, Habermas concedes that various cultures are different but 'the vision different cultures have of "man" (...) is everywhere the same.³⁵ While different cultures may vary in their interpretations of the world and the human's place in it, according to Habermas they nevertheless tend to converge on a "minimal ethical self-understanding of the species," which provides a common basis for morality, laws and procedural justice. This minimal self-understanding involves seeing ourselves as autonomous, 'ethically free and morally equal beings guided by norms and reasons.³⁶ Habermas understands this to be the reason our social arrangements tend to preserve the autonomy of individuals by defending their right of self-determination and limiting possible impositions on their freedom as moral agents by others. This species-ethic, the minimal self-understanding of others as beings fundamentally equal by belonging to the same species, being persons of equal birth and having the capacity to be autonomous authors of their own lives, is what underlines human nature, and Habermas is concerned about saving it from the reaches of biotechnology as much as Fukuyama, even though their definitions of what constitutes human nature differ. While Habermas does not perceive moral sense to be as much emotion-driven as Fukuyama, they both are optimistic about the direct link between human nature and perceived natural equality of people, which a biotechnological modification of future generations can permanently threaten.

Fukuyama's definition of human nature, then, is as follows: ' Human nature is the sum of the behavior and characteristics that are typical of the human species, arising from genetic

³⁴ Jurgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature*, trans. William Rehg, Max Pensky and Hella Breister (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003) 39.

³⁵ Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* 39.

³⁶ Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* 41.

rather than environmental factors.³⁷ Firstly, behaviour that is typical of a species means in this context what ethologists refer to as a species-typical behaviour, which, according to *Comparative Psychology: A Handbook* (1998) may be defined as ‘behaviour that occurs in a similar fashion in nearly all members of a species.’³⁸ Here, the term “typical” allows for variance of behaviours or characteristics rather than defining a single model. Thus, ‘there is no such thing as a “species-typical” height, only a species-typical distribution of heights.’³⁹ For every characteristic there is a median and a mean, which are tools that are very telling in determining what the species-typical feature is. This is important to note because even though there are phenotypes of any species including human that possess an overdeveloped feature or lack the feature completely, that does not mean that the feature is not species-typical. In humans, for instance, a complex communication system – language – is decisively a species-typical feature, and the fact that some people do not possess this ability does not exclude language from qualities that are species-typical.

In the age-old philosophical dispute about what the role of nurture versus nature in forming the human self is, the species-typical theory represents a naturalistic position in the sense that it ascribes inborn predispositions to individuals, most of which tend to develop and guide their behaviour over the course of their life. These predispositions may involve catering for the offspring, repulsion to suffering, various emotional responses to certain situations, etc. In humans, whose nurture mechanisms (i.e. culture) are obviously more developed than in any other species, these predispositions may be developed, repressed, reshaped or redirected but they will nonetheless be there, simply for the virtue of the individual being a member of the human species. This line of thinking, however, has its long established adversaries. The most notorious, perhaps, is the philosopher John Locke, who maintained that there are no predispositions or innate ideas to the human mind. In his famous *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) he writes that the mind is a ‘white paper void of all characters, without any ideas. How comes it to be furnished? Whence has it all the materials of reason and

³⁷ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 80.

³⁸ Gary Greenberg and Maury M. Haraway, eds. *Comparative Psychology: A Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1998) 191.

³⁹ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 80.

knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from *experience*.⁴⁰ In other words, all that the human mind knows is through nurture, without which the mind is just like a white paper, *tabula rasa*, or as Fukuyama puts it, ‘a kind of general-purpose computer that can take in and manipulate the sensory data that appear to it.’⁴¹

Even though the species-typical behaviour theory is much more recent than the nurture-favouring theory of John Locke, there seems to be a sort of a revival of the *tabula rasa* concept within the contemporary gender studies, as much of its writing emphasizes the prevalent role of culture over nature in forming the individual self, including its innermost impulses. For instance, Judith Butler, one of the pioneers of contemporary gender studies, claims that even sex and gender are cultural rather than biological categories. In *Bodies That Matter* (1993) she writes that ‘sex’ is a regulatory ideal whose materialization (...) takes place through certain highly regulated (social) practices.⁴² Fukuyama recognizes this trend but dismisses its refusal to acknowledge any relevant biological distinctions between the sexes. He argues, referring to neurological studies in evolutionary biology, such as to Donald Symons’ book *The Evolution of Human Sexuality* (1979), that both male and female brains ‘have been shaped by differing requirements of evolutionary adaptation.’⁴³

Fukuyama deconstructs Locke’s argument in a similar manner. Referring to various discoveries in cognitive neuroscience and psychology he concludes that the brain is ‘a modular organ full of highly adapted cognitive structures, most of them unique to the human species,’⁴⁴ and consequently translates Locke’s vague notion of ‘innate ideas’ to a more workable language ‘species-typical emotional responses to cognition.’ If we therefore conclude that a developed brain is indeed predisposed in a certain way to produce a species-typical behaviour, what is, finally, the species-typical behaviour of humans? According to Fukuyama there are unique ‘ways in which we perceive, learn, and develop intellectually. Human beings have their own mode of cognition, which is different from that of apes and dolphins’⁴⁵ By this special mode of cognition Fukuyama means a similar set of mechanisms

⁴⁰ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Pennsylvania: The Penn State University Press, 1999) 87.

⁴¹ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 88.

⁴² Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 1.

⁴³ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 27.

⁴⁴ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 87.

⁴⁵ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 86.

to what Immanuel Kant called the transcendental unity of apperception: the *a priori* ways of arranging and giving sense to perception such as attributing causality, and locating objects in space and time, to which Fukuyama adds others, like the ways humans engage in reciprocity, pursue revenge, feel embarrassment, feel repulsion for incest and cannibalism.⁴⁶ Apart from the complexity of perception, there are other characteristics that individuals share across the human race. In his *Politics*, Aristotle famously states that man is by nature a political animal.⁴⁷ Aristotle explains that the fact that people are naturally sociable and have a tendency to create and engage in political organizations is because they have a highly developed language, which humans uniquely use to signal ideas much more complex than merely expressing primal instincts such as pain or pleasure. Aristotle further adds that man alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust.⁴⁸ Fukuyama recognizes all these patterns of behaviour, namely particularities of human perception, possession of language, culture, and a moral sense as species-typical forms of behaviour that humans evolved to have and to be partially defined by.

However, Fukuyama admits that even though in the past all aforementioned features were believed to be uniquely human, we have recently come to understand that there are some nonhuman species that share to some extent all these forms of behaviour. Chimpanzees for instance are able to learn parts of sign language, they have political struggles including struggle for recognition, and they have the ability to transmit learned behaviors across generations through nongenetic means,⁴⁹ hence the ability to maintain a rudimentary form of culture. It thus seems that the human-specific behaviour is not so unique after all and that an attempt to draw a line around human behaviour in order to point out what needs to be protected from biotechnology, as Fukuyama does, may seem to be eligible to be criticized as speciesist, a term popularized by the bioethicist Peter Singer. In his 1975 book *Animal Liberation*, Singer defines speciesism as 'a prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species.'⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 88.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Politics: A Treatise on Government*, trans. William Ellis (London: J M Dent & Sons, 1912) Book I, Chapter II, Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6762/6762-h/6762-h.htm>, 25. March 2016.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, Chapter II

⁴⁹ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 89.

⁵⁰ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2002) 6.

Singer, a hard-line utilitarian, argues that there is an unjustifiable bias in speciesism to disregard the relevance of life and suffering of animals merely for not belonging to the human species. In this respect speciesism is imagined to be conceptually similar to racism or sexism in that different values and rights are ascribed to the in-group members than to out-group members even though both groups share the capacity to pain and suffering.

Fukuyama, however, maintains that it is of crucial importance to separate humans and animals when it comes to natural rights, and that it is this very separation that ensures equality between all human beings. According to him all the different characteristics of people ranging from skin colour and natural talents to gender and sexual orientation will have been made nonessential to the distribution of human rights as long as we postulate the existence of an essential human trait that all people share, which will secure our unconditional equality. Fukuyama calls this trait Factor X and defines it as an 'essential human quality underneath (accidental human characteristics) that is worthy of a certain minimal level of respect.'⁵¹ The political consequence of possessing Factor X is having one's human rights protected, being equal to others regardless of accidental characteristics such as race, gender, IQ or sexual orientation, being able to vote (if adult), etc.

The recognition of Factor X was throughout history always limited to a group of people and never to all, as was (and is) demonstrably true in all forms of slavery. In fact, Fukuyama argues that it is only in the modern form of liberal democracy where the Factor X is acknowledged to be possessed by every human being. Without postulating the Factor X one could perhaps avoid being called a speciesist but would risk being exposed to inter-human discrimination. To clarify Fukuyama's point, let us take the following example. Responding to a homophobe who has no regard for gay people, one could say that despite our difference in sexual orientation, we all are nevertheless equally *human* in a deeper sense, and should therefore be treated equally. As Fukuyama says, 'we don't all need to be the same in order to have rights—but we need to be the same in some one critical respect in order to have equal rights.'⁵² The usage of the term human in a response to a homophobe (or a racist or sexist) refers to precisely this one critical respect in which human equality is rooted, i.e. the Factor X, a set of essential human characteristics which unites humans into a single moral category.

⁵¹ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 92.

⁵² Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 94.

What, then, is the Factor X? As we have seen, it is not merely language or culture or moral sense, because to some extent we share these with some nonhumans. Merely finding human-specific behaviour and capabilities will not do because they do not grant the uniqueness of human nature. For Fukuyama, therefore, it is the complexity of all these highly developed human features that builds a gap between humans and nonhumans. As he writes, 'Factor X cannot be reduced to the possession of moral choice, or reason, or language, or sociability, or sentience, or emotions, or consciousness, or any other quality (...), it is all of these qualities coming together in a human whole.'⁵³ Fukuyama's conclusion as to what makes us uniquely human is that the high complexity and sheer number of the human-specific cognitive and social abilities simply cannot be compared to a much less developed species-typical behaviour of other species, even if the grain of some of the human behaviour can be found elsewhere in nature (mostly in other hominids).

In basing human rights in human nature, Fukuyama is effectively assuming an ontological gap between human nature and the nature of other species. One of the reasons for doing so, as Fukuyama argues has been done in the Bill of Rights and most constitutions of democratic societies, is to avoid discrimination between humans based on nonessential characteristics. In fact, without this ontological gap it would be very difficult to provide a theoretical refutation of ideologies such as social Darwinism, because 'if there is a continuum of gradations between human and nonhuman, there is a continuum within the type of human as well.'⁵⁴

Thus, the essential idea behind the ontological gap concept is that humans are fundamentally different from other species. Perhaps at some point during the course of human evolution a leap in development occurred, based on which the complex whole that the human is today cannot be accounted simply by tracing back the commonly understood little steps of the evolutionary process. However, it is not that Fukuyama is ascribing any supernatural quality to human nature, his aim in fact is to attack the widespread scientific method called methodological reductionism whose attitude towards human beings as merely towards a more developed form of biological organism is falsely seen as an exhaustive enough scientific approach to unravel what it means to be human.

⁵³ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 104.

⁵⁴ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 95.

Scientific reductionism as a method traces everything back to prior material causes. Fukuyama is critical of it for its unfaltering classification of everything as objective, observable and calculable phenomena and for its stringent insistence on handling biological mechanisms, most importantly human beings, in the same terms, because it fails to explain the emotional, intellectual and cognitive complexity of human nature. As Fukuyama states ‘the problem with this kind of thinking is not that it is necessarily false but that it is insufficient to explain many of the most salient and unique human traits.’⁵⁵

In fact, there are established contemporary scientists and philosophers who share Fukuyama’s criticism of reductionism as an insufficient method to deal with human biological and mental processes and nowhere is this insufficiency more evident and openly conceded than in the study of the human mind. John Searle, an influential philosopher of language and mind has argued that the contemporary scientific discourse is in its approach to consciousness trapped in a false dichotomy, according to which all natural phenomena have to be understood as consisting of objectively perceptible particles, and when they cannot be explained in these objective terms, then the subject of scientific enquiry becomes a non-subject, a misleading concept unfit for scientific study. Searle has accused another philosopher of mind, Daniel Dennett, precisely of this methodological error. In their rather extensive exchange following the publication of Searle’s book *The Mystery of Consciousness* (1990) he wrote: ‘In his book, *Consciousness Explained*, Dennett denies the existence of consciousness. He continues to use the word, but he means something different by it.’⁵⁶ Then, in *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (1992), Searle claims that science has applied two types of scientific reductionism on mind: causal reductionism and ontological reductionism. Searle sees the two as related because ‘in general in the history of science, successful causal reductions tend to lead to ontological reductions.’⁵⁷ According to causal reductionism thoughts and subjective feelings are somehow caused by the neurological firings in the brain. Ontological reductionism, which is the one Searle (and Fukuyama) criticizes, claims that ‘objects of certain type can be shown to consist

⁵⁵ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 99.

⁵⁶ John Searle, “‘The Mystery of Consciousness’: An Exchange,” *The New York Review of Books*, December 1995 <<http://www.nybooks.com/>> 25 March 2016.

⁵⁷ John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind (Representation and Mind)* (New York: A Bradford Book, 1992) 115.

in nothing but objects of other types.⁵⁸ The problem, according to Searle, is that while the causal reductionism is clearly true, the ontological reductionism misinterprets the nature of mind because it ignores subjectivity as its key component. As such, ontological reductionism tends to falsely translate feelings and thoughts, ranging from the most basic ones such as pain to advanced mental and emotional processes behind complex choice-making, as identical to neural firings. However, this is true only causally, not ontologically. Attempting to explain pain by pointing to brainwaves means completely missing what subjective feeling of pain is. No objective description of a mental event comes close to truly explaining the subjective character of that event, just like objective explanation of the refraction of light does not begin to intimate what it is like to see red colour. Searle's conclusion, therefore, is that while consciousness is a natural product of the human brain (or rather its advanced feature), it is nevertheless a unique phenomenon in that it is an 'irreducible feature of physical reality.'⁵⁹

The basic argument of scientific reductionism is that every system is just a sum of its parts. Fukuyama aims to refute the application of this theory to human nature because according to him the combination of the highly complex human intellectual and emotional gamut cannot be accounted by the sum of the evolutionary steps that lead to the emergence of the human species. According to him even though 'all of the nonhuman precursors of these human traits existed in evolutionary history, (they) collectively add up to much less than the human whole.'⁶⁰ In one particular instance, the complexity of human behaviour, especially that on a higher social and political level, is impossible to explain or predict just by understanding the causality of the neural firings in the brain. In a similar fashion to Fukuyama and Searle, Thomas Nagel argues for the irreducibility of consciousness in his famous essay "What Is it Like to Be a Bat?" (1974). Notably, Nagel includes all conscious creatures, not only humans, in his declaration that an organism is immune to the reductionist method as long as 'there is something that it is like for the organism to be itself.'⁶¹ According to Nagel, modern science has no tools at the moment to understand consciousness because of its elusive subjective nature.

⁵⁸ Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* 113.

⁵⁹ Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* 117.

⁶⁰ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 103.

⁶¹ Thomas Nagel, "What is it Like to Be a Bat," *The Philosophical Review*, 83 (October 1974): 2.

Both Searle and Fukuyama would therefore agree that humans are wholes that amount to more than just a sum of its objectively observable biological parts. Even though most of the human traits are present elsewhere in nature (though in less developed forms), it is their simultaneous interplay that creates the kind of highly complex consciousness that is able to produce values, which are based on the species-typical emotional and intellectual responses that are subsequently consolidated by culture. This uniquely human mental and behavioural complexity therefore represents the first stage of a value-making process and for this reason Fukuyama deems it worthy of protection. Fukuyama names this protection-worthy ability “human dignity.” Therefore, ‘what gives us dignity and a moral status higher than that of other living creatures is related to the fact that we are complex wholes.’⁶² In other words, human dignity is the ability to derive moral axioms from human nature and is in itself a product of human nature’s uniquely great complexity. As such, dignity is the precondition for the existence of human rights and it therefore has to be protected from biotechnological intervention and preserved in its current status.

In conclusion to this chapter, Fukuyama’s argumentative framework puts two crucial terms in a causal connection, that of human nature and human rights, claiming that the latter is derived directly from the former, and calling the capability of such a connection human dignity. Thus, in order to show how societies can preserve equal human rights while possibly coming into the age of biotechnological opportunities, Fukuyama has to show that there is such a thing as human nature, and also that there is uniqueness to it. This human uniqueness is a point that Fukuyama has to make in order to fend off the social Darwinist tendencies to regard humans as simply developed animals with no objectively justifiable desire for equality and universal human rights, as well as the reductionist tendencies that ascribe no special value to human complexity, thereby ignoring the link between human nature and moral sense.

For this reason Fukuyama embarks on a historical survey of different philosophical approaches to human nature, only to arrive at a conclusion that it is only humans, due to a significant gap of development between them and other species, who have evolved to possess a comprehensible moral sense capable of generating universal values and incorporating them into the social and political establishments. For this reason the engine behind this capability has to be protected and in the next chapter I will show how and why Fukuyama believes biotechnology might attempt to threaten it

⁶² Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 104.

Chapter 3: Practical dangers of biotechnology in Fukuyama's view

One of the biggest threats that biotechnology may cause in the future is, according to Fukuyama, genetic enhancement of various human features that may be seen as less than optimal, as this may shake up the natural equality of human beings. This genetic enhancement, or as Habermas calls it “positive eugenics”, will most likely differ from the old, coercive, state-sponsored eugenics, such as the one exercised by the Nazi regime, in that the new eugenics will be rooted in democratic, capitalistic societies and will therefore be open as a possibility for individual use. Nevertheless, this ‘new eugenics would permit in principle the conversion of all the unfit to the highest genetic level.’⁶³ This may not seem that bad, especially when assuming, as Fukuyama does, that at some point in the future there will be a global consolidation of liberal democracy, and therefore no natural human qualities will be deemed as politically or economically deficient. However, this does not mean that some qualities will not be seen as better than others and with means to alter oneself or one’s offspring, it will be easy to erase those qualities with unexpected consequences for the society. Using the example with gay people again, it may be the case that even when homosexuality is totally accepted by the society, many people still ‘may perceive gayness to be something akin to baldness or shortness—not morally blameworthy, but nonetheless a less-than-optimal condition that, all other things being equal, one would rather have one’s children avoid.’⁶⁴ This way of “optimizing” human nature may lead to reopening the discrimination of gay people, as their status would cease to be upheld by the notion that it is a natural and unchangeable human condition.

Habermas is equally concerned about manipulation with the human genome, an activity involving the “instrumentalization of human nature.” Like Fukuyama, Habermas suspects that various pragmatic, ideological or even fashion reasons due to which some people or groups of people may wish to alter themselves ‘may give rise to a novel, curiously asymmetrical type of relationship between persons.’⁶⁵ To Habermas the underlining reason to prohibit genetic enhancement is a philosophical one and has to do with a possible change in the general perception of human nature which could ‘change our ethical self-understanding as

⁶³ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 29.

⁶⁴ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 29.

⁶⁵ Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* 42.

a species in a way that could also affect our moral consciousness.⁶⁶ At this point Habermas precisely articulates Fukuyama's concerns. The perceived unity and moral equality of people rests on an idea of a common rootedness in nature which distributes nonessential human features randomly. The common denominator of all people is that they are created and determined by unpredictable nature. Habermas is doubtful about whether people can consider themselves peers deserving morally equal status once this common denominator is substituted by varying degrees of man-made genetic intervention.

However, Habermas makes an important distinction between two forms of genetic interventions, one for therapeutic and other for enhancement purposes, and argues that it is only the latter that should be prohibited. Firstly, an intervention carried out for therapeutic purposes is justifiable 'as long as (it) is guided by the clinical goal of healing a disease or of making provisions for a healthy life.'⁶⁷ The reason why therapeutic intervention solely for the purpose of maintaining health is, as opposed to genetic enhancement, morally justified, is because one can reasonably work with 'the presumption of informed consent'⁶⁸ on the part of the patient, since according to Habermas (and Fukuyama) desire for health is species-typical to human beings. Habermas' argument against genetic enhancement goes as follows. The patient's (or an embryo's) assumed consent is the morally crucial value in assessing the justifiability of any intervention, because individual autonomy is also one of the values intrinsic to human nature. However, genetic modification for enhancement purposes does not respect the moral category of consent or autonomy, and for this reason should be prohibited.

When speaking about genetic enhancement, Habermas mostly considers pre-implantation genetic diagnosis with the parents having the ability to shape and pre-determine particular features of the embryo. Habermas' moral concern is that the parents here function as programmers, who effectively objectify their child by changing around its properties according to their liking, while 'there is no communicative scope for the projected child to be addressed as a second person and to be involved in a communication process.'⁶⁹ The child is simply acted upon, while its autonomy is completely ignored. One may argue that such determination occurs also during the child's life in the form of education. To this, Habermas

⁶⁶ Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* 42.

⁶⁷ Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* 52.

⁶⁸ Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* 52.

⁶⁹ Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* 62.

responds that education or any indoctrination during the person's life nevertheless succeeds in providing the addressee with an opportunity to take a *revisionist* stand⁷⁰ so that the person can consider these changes as a subject separate from him or herself, and potentially refine their impact. In other words, it is only modification occurring on a genetic level that can be considered as truly shaping human nature, but in a way which disregards the future person's own preferences and substitutes them by preferences of the parents, current trends, fashion, etc. Fukuyama makes a similar point when he observes that 'parents may be under the sway of a contemporary fad or cultural bias or simple political correctness: one generation may prefer ultrathin girls, or pliable boys, or children with red hair—preferences that can easily fall out of favour in the next generation.'⁷¹

Clearly, Fukuyama's approach to this topic is more utilitarian than that of Habermas. Even though both operate with the notion of human nature, for Habermas it is a moral category which is worth respecting and preserving for its own sake, since respecting autonomy and natural human desires is simply the morally right thing to do, whereas for Fukuyama human nature in its current, "natural" state is rather a means of justifying and maintaining equality and peace in societies, hence well-being for the people. When Fukuyama talks about possible emergent inequality rooted in the open possibility of genetic modification, he tends to talk about it as a social issue. While Habermas would maintain that the issue is that people are being unfairly determined and objectified by other people, Fukuyama is more concerned with the unequal distribution of opportunities among the social classes to undergo (or have one's offspring undergo) a genetic modification. He in a way surpasses Habermas in considering the detrimental consequences of genetic modification, in concluding that 'if wealthy parents suddenly have open to them the opportunity to increase the intelligence of their children as well as that of all their subsequent descendants, then we have the makings not just of a moral dilemma but of a full-scale class war.'⁷² Unequal human beings will emerge because some people will be able to afford genetic enhancement while others will not. While this may be considered secondary to the moral question of manipulation with someone's most personal features without their admission, Fukuyama is more of a

⁷⁰ Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* 51.

⁷¹ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 59.

⁷² Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 17.

sociologist on this matter in being concerned with how this may affect stability in existing democratic societies.

Moreover, Fukuyama discerns a problem with Habermas' distinction between therapy and enhancement, or rather lack thereof, which has further consequences. Fukuyama warns against what in his mind is an emerging medicalization of the society, which strengthens 'the tendency to expand the therapeutic realm to cover an ever larger number of conditions. It will always be possible to get a doctor somewhere to agree that someone's unpleasant or distressing situation constitutes a pathology'⁷³ For Fukuyama the often blurry line that exists between the concept of therapy and of enhancement constitutes a wider problem of biotechnology, whose dire consequences have been implied by the boom of neuropharmacology in the late twentieth century and the widespread prescription of drugs such as the antidepressant Prozac, a drug that elevates self-esteem, or the stimulant Ritalin, a drug that heightens concentration and in large dosages functions like cocaine. The documented use and abuse of these drugs demonstrate how shifty the definition of human pathology has become. Firstly, Fukuyama concedes that there are millions of people who are clinically depressed and to whom drugs like Prozac offer a genuinely needed help. However, the drug "helps" healthy people feel better, too, and since the demand for the drug has come from such a wide spectrum of the society, ranging from people with serious neurological disorders to perfectly healthy people, the line between when Prozac has therapeutic and when enhancement purposes has been truly blurred.

Fukuyama is concerned that the ominous pattern will continue into the age of biotechnology and genetic interventions. Namely, that there will be a satisfiable demand to disregard the natural distribution of various human qualities in favour of perfecting them to the maximum with considerable political repercussions. Let us take Ritalin as an example of how the idea of perfectibility results in strengthening social control through misunderstanding of human nature. Even though one can argue that control of behaviour via neurostimulators is not the same as genetic modification, Fukuyama is afraid that 'the politics of Ritalin (...) offers us a foretaste of what will come if and when genetic engineering, with its potentially far more powerful behavioural enhancements, becomes available.' Ritalin is a drug that expands attention span and helps concentration. Since its inception it has been prescribed to young "hyperactive" boys who had problems focusing and sitting still in class. The diagnosis that the

⁷³ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 37.

drug was prescribed against was named ADD – Attention Deficit Disorder. However, as with Prozac, Ritalin helps anyone concentrate better, regardless of their level of hyperactivity and the line between pathology and simple restlessness becomes also blurred, as there is no limit to the desire for perfectibility even though there is no disorder to be fixed.

Fukuyama writes: ‘It is certainly the case that there are many people whose hyperactivity or inability to concentrate is so extreme that one would grant that biology is the primary determinant of their behaviour. But what about people who find themselves in, say, the fifteenth percentile of the normal distribution for attentiveness?’⁷⁴ That is to say, the dangerous disregard for human nature lies in the idea that behavioural and later possibly genetic enhancement will interfere not with pathological disorders or deficiencies, but with perfectly natural scale of our species-typical distribution of qualities. The political dimension that this may translate into is that converging of masses via medical or genetic means to a singular mode of behaviour is a ready-made tool for social control, as it aligns motivations and makes distinctively different people uniform. One may recall the happiness-inducing drug soma from *Brave New World* or similarly oriented “treatments” from Ira Levin’s *This Perfect Day* (1970) to see how the blurred line between therapy and enhancement changes the perspective on what the function of human nature is. In *This Perfect Day*, for instance, only undergoing the monthly drug inducing treatments means that one is truly realizing one’s full human potential because they are avoiding socially undesirable elements such as misery, sadness, etc.

Even democratic societies may experience this uniformity in collectively pursuing perpetual self-improvement, leading to eventual un-freedom and dysfunction of the society. The trend in genetic modification that Fukuyama foresees, and which was partly demonstrated by the politics of Prozac and Ritalin, is ‘the desire on the part of ordinary people to medicalize as much of their behaviour as possible and thereby reduce their responsibility for their own actions (together with) the pressure of powerful economic interests to assist in this process.’⁷⁵ These interests exist because regardless of long-term detrimental effects, a genetic enhancement is nevertheless a more attractive shortcut to bringing about requested changes in behaviour or capabilities than complex behavioural interventions, training or education.

⁷⁴ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 35.

⁷⁵ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 37.

In conclusion to this point, if there is no clear line between therapy and enhancement, and Fukuyama argues that there often is not, then anyone can be susceptible to the prospect of immediate self-improvement, and philosophical discussions about the limits of therapy will be in the capitalistic societies superseded by economic pressures to follow the trend. The consequences may involve, as manipulation with Prozac and Ritalin show, social control, but not control that is state-based but one exercised by social players other than the state—by parents, teachers, school systems, and others with vested interests in how people behave.⁷⁶ Fukuyama and Habermas agree that it would be wrong to manipulate behaviour, tendency for social compliance, intellect or other social or personal capabilities, because it would mean restricting people's freedom of self-realization and self-determination.

Another possible consequence, as has been mentioned, is class warfare due to an uneven economic access to these possibilities. This in a long-term perspective may result in drastically changing the nature of different groups of people. Consequently, it may be followed by the failure to recognize fellow human beings as members of the same morally worthy category, thereby failing to universally apply the species-ethic (Habermas' terms) or species-typical distribution of ethical convictions, as Fukuyama would describe it, which otherwise adds to the stability and equality in democratic societies.

Fukuyama's approach to future uses of biotechnology such as genetic modification is that the state should take up the responsibility to impose harsh regulations on its practices and accessibility. The reason why he does not call for an outright ban is that he agrees with Habermas' view that it should be allowed for treatments which are clearly therapeutic, such as preimplantation diagnosis and screening (which) have begun to be used today to ensure the birth of children free of genetic diseases.⁷⁷ However, there is one practice which Fukuyama urges to be banned entirely, namely human cloning for reproductive purposes. There are several reasons for this claim. The first one is tactical. Since cloning is one of the few practices of genetic engineering that has already been successfully performed (though so far only on animals), it may be expected that it will be one of the first actual possibilities of biotechnology in the near future. However, according to Fukuyama, 'if we get used to cloning in the near future, it will be much harder to oppose germ-line engineering for enhancement

⁷⁶ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 38.

⁷⁷ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 124.

purposes in the future.⁷⁸ In other words, unrestricted cloning would be a tactical stepping stone to further possibilities in genetic engineering such as the opportunity to design the character of one's child or to undergo genetic self-enhancements. For this reason an outright ban seems necessary, despite it being possibly useful to further experiment with the manipulation with human genome, in order to establish the possibility of political control over biotechnology.⁷⁹

Another argument bases its claim on the earlier discussion of human nature and refers to possible sociological consequences of using cloning for reproductive purposes. Echoing Habermas, Fukuyama states that 'a cloned child will have a very asymmetrical relationship with his or her parents.'⁸⁰ From Fukuyama's exposition of nature and its link to our sense of morality and belonging to the species or community it is clear that nature is a valid point of reference when discussing values and harmony in a society. Subsequently, some types of relationships and particularly family arrangements can be expected to be dysfunctional because they ignore intrinsic requirements of human nature. For this reason Fukuyama considers it meaningful to accuse the practice of reproductive cloning of being 'a highly unnatural form of reproduction that will establish equally unnatural relationships between parents and children.'⁸¹ The problem is that a cloned child would be an exact replica of one of the parents while having no genetic connection with another, which may become increasingly problematic as the child grows up to sexual maturity. Fukuyama's concern is that the "foster" parent may have a problem raising the younger version of their spouse as their child and the unnaturalness of such disposition may cause disharmony inside family relationships and spread across the community, which may potentially turn against the clones themselves.

If the issue of cloning is seen through the critical lenses of writers such as Fukuyama or Habermas, the primary reason for potential inability to integrate clones harmoniously into society is that they constitute a disruption in the fluidity of the evolutionary process, through which we have emerged as self-recognizing members of a singular species. Recognition of one another's worth is a Hegelian concept which Fukuyama renders a cornerstone attribute of any functioning society. As he writes, 'the historical process was fundamentally driven by the

⁷⁸ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 124.

⁷⁹ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 124.

⁸⁰ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 124.

⁸¹ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 124.

struggle for recognition (...) ending in the emergence of modern democracy, in which all citizens were recognized as being free and worthy of equal recognition.⁸² This is exactly what Habermas means when he speaks of our 'self-understanding as members of the species.'⁸³ This mutual recognition is in fact an ontological one in the sense that human beings recognize one another's ontological journey which had resulted in their existence (evolution, natural conception) as their own. In this respect human beings are fundamentally equal and Fukuyama would argue that a democratic state alone fully recognizes this ontological equality. However, it is reasonable to expect that clones will not enjoy the same level of mutual ontological recognition with other people. Since they will be manufactured rather than conceived, their ontological background will be vastly different and this difference will continue to inform their sense of self-identity, as the biological link between them and other people will be completely different from usual biological relations between people, such as between family members. For instance, a particular biological relation between a mother and a child is partly constitutive of the child's self-identity and, as Harold W. Baillie and Timothy K. Casey write in the introduction to *Is Human Nature Obsolete?* (2005) 'to contravene this biological attachment of the fetus to its mother is to thwart the givenness of who and what we are.'⁸⁴

As Leon Kass has noted in his essay "The Wisdom of Repugnance" (1997), there is a moral issue with cloning in relation to the cloned subject, because cloning someone means giving the new subject an already predetermined genotype and as such depriving it of a 'distinctive identity not only because he will be in genotype and appearance identical to another human being, but, in this case, because he may also be twin to the person who is his "father" or "mother"—if one can still call them that.'⁸⁵ While the second part of the argument aligns with Fukuyama's concerns, the first is reminiscent of Habermas' assertion that it is immoral to allow the subject to be acted upon in such a drastic manner, since it involves an ignorance towards its autonomy. In a sense, the concept of the designer baby, meaning the ability to predetermine some qualities of one's foetus, involves less coercion and disregard for

⁸² Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 33.

⁸³ Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* 39.

⁸⁴ Harold W. Baillie and Timothy K. Casey, eds. *Is Human Nature Obsolete?* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005) 17.

⁸⁵ Leon Kass, "The Wisdom of Repugnance," *The New Republic*, June 1997: 20.

autonomy than cloning, because in the latter case the predetermination is total, as the foetus receives the exact same genotype to an already existing person. Kass even considers it 'inherently despotic, for it seeks to make one's children (...) after one's own image (...) and their future according to one's will.'⁸⁶

According to Fukuyama, the main argument of the book *Our Posthuman Future* is the conviction that there is a vital need 'to protect the full range of our complex, evolved natures against attempts at self-modification. We do not want to disrupt either the unity or the continuity of human nature, and thereby the human rights that are based on it.'⁸⁷ The immediate question that arises is how and why biotechnology would threaten human complexity. According to Fukuyama it will be threatened both on an individual and a collective level, while in the latter case complexity is associated with demographic diversity of people in a society. On an individual level, as the analysis of the issue with neuropharmacology and drugs like Ritalin and Prozac showed, an excessive amount of people, including ones with close-to-normal distribution of relevant mental and emotional capacities, chose to disproportionately boost a capacity for happiness or alertness at the expense of natural proportion of human emotional and mental qualities. Fukuyama warns that there is no reason to doubt that this trend will translate into the era of genetic enhancements, whereby the human emotional gamut will become simplified and as such will be passed on from generation to generation genetically. The collective level is a second step of the process and the idea is that various human qualities will cease to be distributed evenly and "fairly" through natural processes of unpredictably passing on some genes more than others, and start to be distributed according to social and economic classes in the society, depending on who has the status, power or money to undergo a genetic enhancement. According to Fukuyama this process will inevitably lead to radical distinction between fractions of society not merely based on status and wealth but also according to physical and mental capacities, and may subsequently result in what he has called a "full-scale class warfare."

The reason for this trend is an anticipated utilitarian tendency within biotechnology to strive to modify just a few categories of human nature at the expense of an overall human complexity. These focused-on categories may include the capacity for pain and pleasure or

⁸⁶ Kass 21.

⁸⁷ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 104.

perhaps invite further interventions such as ‘trying to make people less aggressive, more sociable, more compliant, less depressed.’⁸⁸ According to Fukuyama, manipulation with human emotional and intellectual complexity is dangerous because the fine-tuning of the human moral sense, the successful result of which lent itself to the creation of constitutions of liberal democracies, is dependent on facing features of the entirety of the human emotional and intellectual gamut as they are distributed across the species. For this reason, for instance ‘the utilitarian goal of minimizing suffering is itself very problematic.’⁸⁹ This is not because pain and suffering are desirable qualities in and on themselves but because human emotions and intellectual responses which inform moral sense are interrelated and develop mutually. For instance, many of human values and interpersonal relationships exist as a result of somehow dealing with pain and suffering. The underlining idea is that if genetic modification were an open opportunity, the status quo of natural and even distribution of both “good” and “bad” human traits would likely be overthrown by a utilitarian tendency of agents, ranging from institutions and their marketing strategies down to individual parents, to only focus on the selected few “good” ones.

The above mentioned Fukuyama’s quotation, whose first part is analysed above, presents a concise summary of his two major issues with biotechnology. Both concern an unnatural change to human nature that is bound to create social and moral havoc. The first relates to the fear of a structural change of human nature. The ambition that may bring this change about is what Fukuyama has called ‘the ultimate prize of modern genetic technology,’⁹⁰ namely the ability to manipulate with the genetic code of unborn foetuses, thereby creating the so-called “designer babies,” whose human nature will have been purposely designed for them. The second major issue relates to the mentions of continuity and unity of human nature as necessary conditions for equal human rights and warns against an ontological change of human nature. The practice that best represents this concern is that of human cloning. Cloning raises issues of a collective human identity, or as Habermas calls it our self-understanding as members of a species. Harold W. Baillie and Timothy K. Casey also write in *Is Human Nature Obsolete?* about ‘the potential impact of genetic engineering and cloning on our understanding of the human body, particularly the body’s role in the

⁸⁸ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 105.

⁸⁹ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 105.

⁹⁰ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 50.

constitution of self-identity.⁹¹ I would add, not only self-identity but also, and for sociological reasons perhaps more importantly, identity ascribed by the society will be an issue for societies with a fraction of the population inhabited by clones, because of the ontological gap between the clones and the rest of the population. Unnatural and asymmetrical relations in the society may arise and as a result a somewhat futuristic form of racism against cloned individuals, based on a rationally defensible claim that the human species is no longer a unified whole because it lacks the major common denominator, namely naturalness in terms of conception, acquiring of a unique genome, kin relations and birth. In this sense a clone is farther from the natural constitution of human nature than the “designer baby” who may least share in the naturalness of conception and a unique, though largely manipulated with, genome.

The particular dangers of biotechnology have therefore been filtered down to two major categories, one affecting the structure of human nature and the other affecting its natural ontology. The two trends in the anticipated biotechnological revolution that attract heated debates in the contemporary discourse and that best represent these two categories are pre-birth genetic modification representing the former, and human cloning representing the latter.

There are therefore two essential claims or groups of claims that uphold Fukuyama’s theory in its entire complexity. One is that human nature is unique and special and necessary for continuation of a free society. The second is that genetic interference with the human species such as cloning will have a tendency to change the structure and complexity of the social discourse to detrimental effects. Human cloning in particular is seen to be capable of shaking the foundations of the natural connection between human nature and moral sense and will have equally damaging, if not worse, social effects, especially for the cloned individuals involved. Fukuyama’s conclusion therefore is a recommendation to heavily regulate arising biotechnologies, ‘drawing red lines (...) within its range of possible uses to distinguish between what is legitimate and what is illegitimate,⁹² such as distinguishing between therapy and enhancements wherever it is possible.

⁹¹ Baillie and Casey 15.

⁹² Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 124.

The next section of this thesis is dedicated to a further assessment of Fukuyama's major claims that are fundamental to his attack of the culture of unregulated biotechnological possibilities. This assessment will take place through an analysis of two contemporary posthuman fictions, a novel and a trilogy of novels, each of which deals with one of these claims in detail and provide a surplus of further illustrations, evidence and arguments that combine to represent a very useful set of tools to maneuver in this socio-philosophical debate.

Fiction

Chapter 4: The future of human nature in Octavia Butler's trilogy *Lilith's Brood*

When analysing the novel *Parable of the Talents* (1998) by the science-fiction writer Octavia Butler, Tom Moylan writes about human communities leaving in spaceships for the stars, carrying 'an ecological and egalitarian promise into the galaxy, possibly preserving the only seeds of humanity that will outlast Armageddon on Earth.'⁹³ While Butler's writing often revolves around dilapidated conditions on Earth combined with an extra-terrestrial intervention, her trilogy *Xenogenesis* (1987-1989), later renamed as *Lilith's Brood*, is in a sense a direct reversal of the above-mentioned description. Here it is not humanity that is apt to spread the ecological and egalitarian message to other places, it is from the outer space of the "other" that this promise has to come to inform and modify humanity. Also, it is not the pure seed of humanity that needs protection from external corruption, rather humanity is seen as a form of corruption and has to be enhanced into a specific form of posthumanity in an effort to prevent the feared Armageddon on Earth.

Even though Butler, as Naomi Jacobs writes in "Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood*," has claimed that her writing avoids 'all critical theory,'⁹⁴ she did confess in a 1991 interview that the trilogy *Lilith's Brood* actively reflects feminist ideals 'in a sense that women do pretty much what they want to do,'⁹⁵ instead of assuming an archetypal feminine role in any given situation. Despite the fact that in the same interview Butler largely denounced any labels on her works, her own take on the feminist discourse adds to a complex, thoroughly ambiguous trilogy that explores the struggle between two ideologically opposite approaches to the posthuman project: a conservative one that aligns with Fukuyama's position, and a distinctive version of a transhumanist approach which welcomes not only change but perpetual change. *Lilith's Brood* traces the evolution of the human into the posthuman with the use of a narrator who is increasingly more distinct from being human in each novel. In the process the novels attempt to define the contours of human nature and provide arguments both for its rigorous defense and for its abolishment, in search

⁹³ Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (Oxford: Westview Press, 2000) 244.

⁹⁴ Naomi Jacobs, "Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood*," *Dark Horizons*, ed. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (London: Routledge, 2003) 91.

⁹⁵ Randall Kenan, "An Interview With Octavia E. Butler," *Callaloo* Spring 1991 501.

for a perfect social and environmental harmony. As Jacobs writes, ‘Butler proffers—and problematizes—two of the “utopian possibilities.”’⁹⁶ *Lilith’s Brood* is thus a profoundly ambiguous trilogy, as it gives a certain amount of credibility to both sides and never really resolves the struggle between the desire to preserve or to overcome human nature.

The three novels that comprise the trilogy are called *Dawn*, *Adulthood Rites* and *Imago*. They are set in a post-apocalyptic future in which the human race has nearly wiped itself out through global nuclear warfare. The few who have survived have been taken by an intelligent alien life form, called the Oankali, into their spacecraft that orbits the desolated Earth. The Oankali are a race of beings that are both intellectually and technologically superior to humans and who seem to be at a comparatively further step in their very specific kind of an evolutionary process. They have a large number of body tentacles that amplify their senses; they can manipulate the human (and their own) genome at will, in order to heal wounds, prevent diseases or make improvements to the body. They also have three sexes, male, female and ooloi, the latter being a mediator between male and female, through whom mating and producing offspring is possible.

On the spacecraft, each individual is kept in a single cell, regularly woken from an induced hibernation for interrogation and study. The reason why the Oankali rescued (or in a sense kidnapped) the human individuals is that, by nature, they constantly seek other life forms to perform a self-guided evolution by a so-called “gene trade” with other species. The gene trade is in fact a crucial activity for the existence of the Oankali species. In *Dawn*, an Oankali individual called Jdahya explains to Lilith: ‘We are committed to the trade as your body is to breathing. We were overdue when we found you. Now it will be done – to the rebirth of your people and mine.’⁹⁷ Both the Oankali and humans would merge genetically and produce offspring that would be a different species from either of them altogether, thus enunciating the very definition of the term “xenogenesis.”

One of the captives is a human woman Lilith, who has been chosen by the Oankali to become a leader of a group of humans whom she is supposed to awake and train to become loyal to the Oankali and to accept peacefully their offer of a gene trade. The entire *Dawn* is written from her perspective and follows her as she learns about the Oankali and struggles

⁹⁶ Jacobs 92.

⁹⁷ Octavia Butler, *Lilith’s Brood* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2000) 306.

with the idea of merging with the alien species, as it would effectively mean the end of the human race. *Dawn* leads the reader to sympathize with Lilith's sentiment and her sense of resistance, for several reasons. Firstly, from the outset the narration establishes an uneven power relation between the humans and the Oankali. Lilith first loses her spatial freedom, as she is held captive in a closed environment. Then, when she is let out among the Oankali, she discovers her role and future had been predetermined for her, and struggles to come to terms with losing her individual agency. Then, since the Oankali can, and are going to, manipulate Lilith's genetic code, she also fears losing her identity. Lastly, to some extent she shares the conviction of other, more impulsive humans, that giving in to the aliens and allowing them to radically transform the human race would be a fatal blow to human dignity.

Even though the Oankali are essentially nonviolent, they do not give Lilith or the other woken humans any real freedom to choose to do what they want with their lives. Either they submit to the plan laid out for them or they will remain to be captive on the ship until they die. Despite Oankali peacefulness, the narrative is initially structured as a classical dystopia, in which we encounter an oppressive, nearly omnipotent, ubiquitous power from the perspective of a resistant consciousness.⁹⁸ The Oankali, though uninvited, cross all kinds of boundaries: personal, sexual, physical, even genetic. They have prohibited people to reproduce freely. Some people are sterilized while others are impregnated without their consent, like Lilith with Joseph's sperm. All these transgressions reduce humans to beings without agency and increasingly without identity, and this ostensible form of oppression aligns with the aim of many classical dystopias in which the distribution of power is similarly uneven.

This initial disposition thus clearly suggests which side of this opposition holds the ethical high ground that the reader should sympathize with. Even though humans would have eradicated their own species in nuclear warfare, they are nevertheless imprisoned, enslaved, transgressed and devoid of agency. However, at this point Butler problematizes the entire quest to regain people's humanity by casting doubt on what human nature actually entails. In a sense this can be seen as an attack on Fukuyama's essential contentions of the uniqueness and goodness of human nature. *Lilith's Brood* demonstrates an anthropological bias in the perception of naturally evolved intelligence, sexuality, kin relations and social structures by

⁹⁸ Jacobs 101.

dislocating the human from their centre, the assumed point of their most complete convergence. Suddenly the social structures, “symmetrical” sexual and kin relations of the human race are made to look faulty and erroneous, compared to the non-hierarchical, almost completely pacifistic and seemingly flawless Oankali.

The main issue with human nature that Butler expresses, and which the Oankali use to justify their taking over of the human race, is that human nature contains a fatal inner flaw, which the Oankali call the Human Contradiction. According to Akin, Lilith’s human-Oankali son and the main character of *Adulthood Rites*, the contradiction consisted of the coexistence of intelligence and hierarchical behavior. It was fascinating, seductive, and lethal. It had brought Humans to their final war.⁹⁹ Obviously, the world of *Lilith’s Brood* is one in which the threat of a devastating nuclear war had already taken place and it seems that through the Oankali, Butler seems to suggest that it is an inherent human tendency to eventually come to the point of self-destruction. It seems that precisely the Hegelian quality that Fukuyama deems invaluable in humans, communities and nations, namely the need for mutual recognition as a sovereign agent, is in Oankali’s anthropogenic philosophy the human’s naturally self-defeating factor.

The behaviour of most humans in *Lilith’s Brood* further confirms this “genetic flaw” that humans carry in them. As Jacobs writes, ‘throughout the trilogy, those human beings who hold most tightly to their human identities are also the ones who exhibit the worst elements of humanity.’¹⁰⁰ Indeed, most humans on the ship, once they have learnt of their situation, either use their intelligence to calculate and plot against the Oankali and Lilith, whom they see as a traitor to the human race, or they exhibit frequent inclinations to violence, rape and murder as a response to the confusion of their predicament. In *Adulthood Rites* most people had been brought down to Earth where they can choose either to live in villages with the Oankali and have “construct” children with them, or they can settle in separate villages, but sterilized. In this situation the behaviour of the humans continues to be irrational, erratic, self-destructive and violent. Men of the so-called Resister villages raid other villages, rape and enslave women and even sometimes attack the Oankali, although they know they can barely hurt them, instead almost certainly inflicting enormous damage to themselves.

⁹⁹ Butler, *Lilith’s Brood* 396.

¹⁰⁰ Jacobs 98.

Although the Human Contradiction, as understood by the Oankali, consists of a fatal combination of hierarchy and intelligence, from the behaviour of humans aboard the ship and later in the villages it seems that rather than juxtaposing these two terms, they cancel each other out. The humans commit the most irrational acts in situations where the hierarchy that they were used to is missing or is substituted by another. In *Dawn*, most people, especially men, react with irrational reluctance to accept that Lilith, who is a black woman, has been chosen as their leader. Lilith constantly feels that the group is plotting against her. They become passive and later active aggressive towards Lilith and one man even tries to rape her. The humans also seem to have a hard time adjusting to no imposed hierarchy at all. Once they are freed back on Earth and left to build their own villages, various groups of humans go rampant, regularly terrorizing the humans and the Oankali in the vicinity.

In Jacobs' reading of *Lilith's Brood*, the main difference of the trilogy from classical dystopias is that the moral imbalance comes ultimately down not to an alien superpower that threatens the purity of humanity but rather to humanity itself, which in an absence of regulations and established social norms behaves in the most barbaric ways. Almost all that the humans do only further confirms the Oankali conviction that 'if human beings do not evolve toward posthumanity, their innate aggressiveness will destroy them.'¹⁰¹

It therefore seems that Butler takes a similar view on human nature to Thomas Hobbes. Namely, that without authoritarian order the agency of people will manifest in violent behaviour of groups in striving to overthrow one hierarchical system over another. Even worse, in complete anarchy a perpetual state of violence between individuals would exist in pursuit of power, food, materials, etc. As Hobbes famously wrote in his tract "De Cive - Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society" (1642), 'the state of men without civil society, which state we may properly call the state of nature, is nothing else but a mere war of all against all.'¹⁰² In contrast, on this subject Fukuyama holds a view similar to John Locke (even though he disagrees on the matter of innate ideas) that humans naturally converge on essential values and therefore cooperate and compromise rather than fight, and naturally seek to establish a benevolent social and political order.

¹⁰¹ Jacobs 101.

¹⁰² J. B. Schneewind, *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 115.

However, *Lilith's Brood* exposes humans for having an innate tendency of thinking and behaving in exclusionary terms, which have reflected in the political orders that eventually led to the final disaster. Unlike the Oankali, humans constantly think in terms of in-group and out-group members, and allocate one another into concentric circles according to the measure of difference that the other represents. Judging by the way the humans behave in *Lilith's Brood* towards Lilith, each other and the Oankali themselves, one can argue that while the most immediate concentric circles of "otherness" are inhabited by different race, gender or sexual orientation and cause a various degree of obstruction in successful social cohesion, some of the furthest spaces of "otherness" and therefore complete unacceptability are represented by beings of a different species. It is therefore no surprise that Butler vividly evokes the visceral terror the humans initially experience upon seeing the Oankali.¹⁰³ To the humans, the Oankali represent a complete subversion of humanity, a prototypical out-group community, and for this reason they are deeply reluctant to cooperate with them.

The reluctance to join the Oankali in their quest for posthumanism is therefore caused by the natural human flaw of "othering" various groups of individuals merely for being different, while dogmatically clinging to their own notion of humanity. However, it is not only the Oankali themselves but especially their proposed project of merging with the human species that humans find completely unacceptable, since for them even when more accustomed to the physical appearance of the aliens, they find the thought of having children who "won't be human" deeply repellent.¹⁰⁴ This position can be read as a hyperbole of Fukuyama's own clinging to the notion of humanity without fully understanding how posthumanism may alter it for the better.

However, *Lilith's Brood* does not unequivocally condemn human nature in favour of posthumanity. In fact, all three main characters of the novels, Lilith, Akin and Jodahs respectively, represent an ambiguous position towards the project of merging humans with the Oankali and of human nature becoming a mutable, relational entity. While Lilith is increasingly content with the Oankali prevailing over the human will for absolute freedom, she has arguably been forced into a position where most humans around her do not identify her as an ally and she thus has no other choice but to side with the Oankali. As Restituta

¹⁰³ Jacobs 98.

¹⁰⁴ Jacobs 98.

Castiello writes in an article “Xenogenesis: Lilith The “Other” And The Alien Origin Story in the Science Fiction Saga of Octavia Estelle Butler” (2010), Lilith ‘proves to be more a boycotter than a collaborator.’¹⁰⁵ Her desire to retain a degree of self-autonomy of the humans is abundantly present throughout *Dawn* and gives the humans choosing the status quo a sense of justifiability. Moreover, in Castiello’s reading of *Lilith’s Brood*, Lilith’s character by nature represents “the other” not only in relation to humans but to the Oankali as well. Lilith fails to meet any expectations that are asked of her. She is no ultimate saviour nor traitor to the humans, therefore she cannot be idealized and thus categorized as a “goddess” or a “demon” towards her own species. She also escapes the established category of the “mother” since the Oankali have redefined and dislocated this notion from the centre of procreation (every construct child has five parents altogether). In relation to the Oankali, also, she falls short of all expectations. She is not a complete collaborator but neither is she a resister. She cooperates but at the same time struggles for the rights of the humans for freedom. Lastly, her species-identity has also shifted away from any recognizable category. She is not Oankali nor a construct but she has also in a sense ceased to be just a human, due to the alterations and enhancements that the Oankali performed upon her. Lilith’s identity therefore meets the very notion “otherness,” which arguably gives her the ultimate perspective on any power structure she encounters. In Castiello’s words, ‘by virtue of her being so defying and displacing, she represents the “otherness” (...) able to disclose the power of oppressive discourses wherever they are.’¹⁰⁶

Lilith’s children Akin and Jodahs, who are the focalizers of the second and third volumes respectively, further emphasize the idea that Lilith represents both by her intersectional identity and her actions. Throughout their lives, Akin and Jodahs are both deeply engaged in making an appeal to the Oankali in favour of the human autonomy and self-preservation as a species. Akin, the protagonist of *Adulthood Rites*, is a construct male whose both physical and cognitive features are a combination of the human and the Oankali. Perhaps due to his mother’s legacy of carving a pathway between the two species, he continues the peace-making process, whose long-term goal is to win the right for selected

¹⁰⁵ Restituta Castiello, “Xenogenesis: Lilith The “Other” And The Alien Origin Story in the Science Fiction Saga of Octavia Estelle Butler,” *Illuminating the Dark Side. Evil, Women and the Feminine*, Eds. Andrea Ruthven and Gabriela Mádlo (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2010) 7.

¹⁰⁶ Castiello 7.

human individuals to start a settlement on Mars. While Akin realizes the fact of the human contradiction, as he has witnessed human barbarity, brutality and violence since his infancy, he retains his emotional capacity for empathy and compassion towards human suffering. While the Oankali themselves attribute no legitimacy to the idea of preserving human nature solely for its own sake, Akin, perhaps because he is partly human himself and thus knows what it is to have human nature, fights for the right of the humans not to have to give it up. In Jacobs' reading, it is Akin's intersectional nature that enables him to empathize fully with both species without seeing either one as the "other." Citing Diana Meyers, Jacob claims that Akin's posthuman nature entails 'tensions between the different dimensions of intersectional identity (which) introduce a wedge of optionality that authorizes individual reflection and choice.'¹⁰⁷ In other words, Akin's multiple identities, a heritage of the Oankali trades, allow him to dismiss the notion of centrality of any one identity, an achievement apparently unattainable to the humans, while being able to fully appreciate the uniqueness of both forms of agency from within, as these share in equally on the creation of his posthuman self. Akin therefore sees human nature as unique and worth preserving, but it is paradoxically his posthuman nature that allows him to appreciate it. Therefore, more than to the worthiness of humanity, the story of *Adulthood Rites* attests to the possible cognitive and emotional superiority of posthumanity.

The third volume, *Imago*, is, in contrast, the most critical one in its illustration of the possibilities and limitations of the posthuman project. It demonstrates how an extreme form of relational and intersectional nature of identity may endanger the very notion of the self. The protagonist of *Imago* is Akin's sibling Jodahs, who is also a human-Oankali construct, but the first one to develop into an ooloi. As such, Jodahs, as well as his other sibling Aor, who also becomes a construct ooloi, represents the furthest step in the posthuman evolution explored in the *Lilith's Brood* trilogy. Jodahs' human part of his identity is almost unrecognizable, not because the Oankali part overpowers it but rather because he almost completely lacks any species-specific nature apart from that of constant change; his identity, sexuality, appearance as well as his very genetic code are due to his fluid subjectivity constantly transforming. Jodahs' nature is extremely relational; he takes partial shape of almost everything he touches with his sensory tentacles and can only retain his self after having found human individuals

¹⁰⁷ Jacobs 104.

with whom he can mate. Even worse off is his sibling Aor, to whom the planned migration of many humans to Mars causes his inability to find human mates. Aor's mutability de facto makes loneliness and isolation a lethal enemy, for it leads to almost a complete dissolution of his self, which can only be reconstituted relationally. The weakness of Butler's idea of posthumanity is therefore exposed as being the other side of the coin from its biggest triumph. Posthumanity, which supersedes the human confinement in egocentrism, entails considerable powers, but 'the price of its powers (...) is interdependence, to the point that an ooloi will die if one of its mates dies.'¹⁰⁸ Indeed, it appears that after the metamorphosis into an ooloi Aor enters a lengthy but discontinuous kind of slumber, too long even for the Oankali, which may be interpreted as a deep state of depression from slowly losing the coherent version of one's self. Even though the novel ends in a somewhat more upbeat tone (some humans agree to mate with the oolois), it appears that the sense of a coherent identity, integrity and the self are notions that Butler considers more than just biased, anthropomorphic projections, but rather necessary conditions to the preservation of intelligent life.

Butler's ambiguous position on when the contribution of posthumanity switches from being productive to counter-productive informs the entire trilogy and is perhaps the message that ought to be considered when analysing some much more one-sided approaches to the subject such as transhumanism on the one hand or the Fukuyama's on the other. As Jacobs writes, 'Butler's trilogy conveys both the beauty and the horror of a future in which the self-determining humanist self has dissolved and the human body as we know it will have changed or even disappeared.'¹⁰⁹ It is the fear of completely losing individuality and agency that has given a degree of balance to the trilogy in which otherwise the Oankali always seem to be intellectually impeccable. However, Butler seems to distinguish between different motivations to preserve human nature. While the fear which stems from a reluctance to part with the historical reality of social and cultural hierarchy may be dogmatic (embracing human nature merely because this is what we have always been), there is a deeper worry that transforming into the posthuman may entail a dangerous dissolution of the subject, due to the lack of individuality, agency and self-autonomy. Butler seems to give this second reason for carefulness some justification.

¹⁰⁸ Jacobs 107.

¹⁰⁹ Jacobs 96.

The initial point of divergence between *Lilith's Brood* and classical dystopias is the moment Butler exposes human weakness in desperately clinging to their destructive and barbaric tendencies. At this point Fukuyama would probably take issue with Butler's presentation of barbarism and violence as standard human behaviour. Fukuyama's line of argument, as has been mentioned earlier, is that it is an intellectual as well as emotional achievement of human nature to realize that while everybody is different, there is an underlining quality, namely belonging to the same species, which should secure intra-species equality. However, as various human-Oankali constructs show, this argument unnecessarily draws the line at humanity. The essential difference on this matter between Fukuyama and Butler is that while for the former human nature sets everyone apart (everybody is different) and then unites them back along artificially created lines, for the latter the assurance of equality lies in an absence of stable nature, substituted by constant transformation and evolution. The notion of human nature as a safeguard for equality is in Fukuyama's theory rigid, unchanging and therefore exclusionary. The Oankali anthropogenic philosophy runs deeply against Fukuyama's humanist model in the sense that it is inclusionary rather than exclusionary. It grants inclusion to new subjects that are yet to emerge and therefore the line which Fukuyama holds steadfast at the current notion of human nature, shifts naturally with this continuous inclusion (of subjects such as the human-Oankali constructs, human ooloi, etc.) into the definition of what is human and thus worth protecting.

Human nature as perceived by Fukuyama therefore constantly defines and stands in opposition to some kind of an "other." However, the posthuman subjectivity that Butler envisions erodes this concept because the nature of Butler's posthumanism is difference and transformation, which means that all subjects are on equal grounds in that they are constantly changing. This move to posthumanism can also be seen as a way of liberation of constructions that are attached to human nature such as the binary oppositions between male and female, mind and body, self and other, etc. As can be seen throughout *Lilith's Brood*, these oppositions entail social hierarchies that the Oankali scorn and which are detrimental to the functioning of the human species due to the constant involvement of violence and assertion of power structures. In fact, Butler seems to welcome a posthuman future which does away with these 'humanist assumptions,'¹¹⁰ and which breaks down the anthropomorphic perception of values, intelligence and agency.

¹¹⁰ Katherine N. Hayles, "Afterword: The Human in the Posthuman," *Cultural Critique* Winter 2003: 135.

In proposing fluidity and inclusiveness as inherent to posthuman subjectivity, rather than accepting the humanist project of asserting a firm definition of the human, Butler becomes fully engaged with the feminist discourse, whose many theorists have also presented the multiplicity of the posthuman subject as a source of political resistance (which) can bring an epistemological advantage to members of disadvantaged groups.¹¹¹ The hybrid, intersectional subjectivity of the human-Oankali construct such as Lilith's son Akin is inherently incapable of discriminating or othering based on difference, because difference and fluid transgression are the cornerstones of Akin's nature. Similarly, the feminist author and activist Gloria E. Anzaldúa imagines a somewhat utopian "new consciousness." Instead of rigidity of human nature Anzaldúa imagines a being called "a new mestiza," which is a result of "racial, ideological, cultural and biological crosspollinization."¹¹² In the new mestiza there is a "confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly "crossing over,""¹¹³ just like the genetic information literally crosses over one Oankali body to another. Anzaldúa's project is largely informed by an effort to eliminate discrimination as a result of difference, which is how Butler portrays the Oankali's goal as well.

Other feminist writers understand the posthuman subject along similar lines. Donna Haraway's cyborg, for instance, has been heralded to be "embodying the liberatory potential of the posthuman subject and body."¹¹⁴ Apart from undermining socially established binary oppositions related to the notion of the human, Haraway uses the concept of the cyborg to espouse her alternative interpretation of history, namely origin stories that are a part of our culture, tradition, etc. Haraway claims that "we have all been colonized by those origin myths,"¹¹⁵ whose danger lies in perpetuating stereotypical understanding of hierarchy and power and as such are oppressive tools for "command and control"¹¹⁶ of various groups of marginalized people. Cyborgs, however, subvert these Western origin stories, by, as Cathy Peppers writes in an article "Dialogic Origins and Alien Identities in Butler's *Lilith's Brood*"

¹¹¹ Jacobs 94.

¹¹² Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Book Company, 1987) 77.

¹¹³ Anzaldúa 77.

¹¹⁴ Jacobs 94.

¹¹⁵ Haraway 175.

¹¹⁶ Haraway 175.

(1995) 'creating an other human identity by "seizing the tools to mark the world that has marked" everyone except white men "as other"; and it's also a story of our origins as cyborgs.'¹¹⁷ Haraway herself claims that 'we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology,'¹¹⁸ where cyborg is seen as breaking the boundaries not just between the human and the machine but also between human and animal, where animal can be understood as all that is non-human. In this sense, according to Peppers, *Lilith's Brood* is really a cyborg origin story as well as an origin story of posthuman bodies as cyborgs. It is a cyborg origin story in the sense that it subverts, rather than empowers, hierarchical roots; once humans have merged with the Oankali, established hierarchical social and biological structures break down and with them not only the rigidity of human nature but also the entire Western 'tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism.'¹¹⁹

The story of *Lilith's Brood* has not only 'wiped the cultural slate clean in order to retell the story of human evolution,'¹²⁰ but it has also set a pattern of how human beings ought to define their nature in the future. Posthumanism may not necessarily be a technological or genetic advancement of the human body but also an evolution in understanding human nature itself. Butler and other feminist writers seem to suggest that if human history is a history of hierarchy and oppression, posthumanism is an intellectual stage at which we will begin to see human nature as nomadic, integrating difference and fluidity in identity rather than excluding on the basis of difference. As Rosi Braidotti, a feminist writer and philosopher, suggests, human nature should be rethought as being intrinsically resistant to being captured as a definitive concept in that it involves, according to Braidotti, 'an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries'¹²¹ and also 'the intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing.'¹²²

In much feminist theory, the constant creation of the "other" is a form of maintaining hierarchical power relations between groups of people. In this sense the differentiations and ostensible oppositions within human nature, such as different gender or race, which

¹¹⁷ Cathy Peppers, "Dialogic Origins and Alien Identities in Butler's *Lilith's Brood*" *Science Fiction Studies* March 1995.

¹¹⁸ Haraway 150.

¹¹⁹ Haraway 150.

¹²⁰ Peppers

¹²¹ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* (USA: Columbia University Press, 1994) 37.

¹²² Braidotti 37.

Fukuyama defends and celebrates as a part of human complexity, is a societal tool of control. Fukuyama would argue that while difference is real, due to the universal possession of human nature (the Factor X) it would be illegitimate to exploit any of the secondary human characteristics for power-related purposes. However, Butler shows a world in which Huntington's idea of a large-scale clash of values and perpetual "othering" of other cultures leads to self-destruction before a major improvement in social conditions can be achieved. Moreover, even the ideal notion of a democratic society cannot prevent discrimination based on difference, on a social or political level. This is the result of power being understood as 'a monolithic structure (rather than) a constantly shifting interplay of forces and tendencies.'¹²³ Butler, instead, proposes erasure of power structures in forming a new, posthuman concept of the self, one that is truly related to others and to the world, constantly changing and evolving interdependently, as only then 'spaces can open up for resistance, spontaneity, self-creation.'¹²⁴

The posthuman future that Butler envisions thus contains aspects of ecological utopia where people coexist with the environment on a symbiotic basis. Instead of exploiting it for expansion and technological advancement, people and environment function relationally as one living organism, erasing firm physical as well as hierarchical boundaries, just like the Haraway's cyborg. In fact, symbiosis is the nature of the Oankali and increasingly more of the humans who engage with them. Moreover, the Oankali break down the boundaries between environment and technology, for there is no artificiality in anything they operate with. All houses, the spaceship, even the village *Lo* that they establish on Earth are living organisms that they can communicate with and with which they "trade". As such, instead of merging with the machine, as Haraway writes, Butler suggests replacing the machine altogether as a part of the posthuman condition.

In conclusion, *Lilith's Brood* is a critical dystopia that reflects and criticizes harmful tendencies of the contemporary interactions between humans on both individual and social level. The trilogy also contains traces of ecological utopia represented by works such as Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975), combined with distinctive forms of transhumanism, advocated by a number of feminist writers, which aim to reform human nature or at least

¹²³ Jacobs 95.

¹²⁴ Jacobs 95.

modify our perception of it. While refraining from an unequivocal condemnation of human nature, it is clear that Butler alleges it to be historically structured to emphasize difference over inclusion and power over reason. Butler shows the effort of the human resisters in *Lilith's Brood* to maintain identity, autonomy and agency as almost as biased as though they were a matter of nationalistic pride. The trilogy rather sympathizes with human individuals who have come to reasonably conclude that integration with the Oankali is not only inevitable but also justified and who therefore accept the transhumanist view that human nature is a process or a development rather than a rigid concept.

Fukuyama and his adversaries in the feminist and transhumanist discourse agree that certain aspects of the society have to change in order to achieve prosperity and equality. However, for Fukuyama the issues of oppressive power relations are aspects of a wrongly structured society, not of human nature, which has been almost to this day restricted from fully formulating its social and political potential. The more fundamental disagreement, however, lies in the distribution of moral status. While Fukuyama celebrates difference and only requires an essential commonality, the strand of feminist discourse described above cannot accept that, not only because it is anti-essentialist, but also because difference is exclusionary and thus constitutes the power relations in the first place. This line of reasoning follows Foucault for whom the desire for individuality and identity is simultaneously a result and a perpetuator of the game for power. As he writes in an essay "*Space, Knowledge and Power*," 'the individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities.'¹²⁵ The story of *Lilith's Brood*, however, does not unequivocally promote embracing difference over individuality, instead it remains an ambiguous text that gives some, though unequal, credit to both sides of the argument. As such it manages not to be an ideological text, further shedding critical light on Fukuyama and others who firmly hold a singular position on a complex issue such as posthumanism. Nevertheless, Butler's trilogy helps pave the intellectual way into the multicultural space in which it is reasonable to 'set aside (...) fears of difference and of change'¹²⁶ and try to live more cohesively with each other and the environment. Posthumanism may in this sense mean

¹²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980) 74.

¹²⁶ Jacobs 109.

a cultural and social evolution in human practices rather than a biotechnologically based project aimed at altering the human genome.

Chapter 5: The value of posthuman life in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

Fukuyama's main effort in *Our Posthuman Future* is to warn against the way biotechnological advancement may lead to a future of large-scale discrimination between groups of people with different, artificially predetermined human natures. However, as the previous chapter has shown, his idea of human nature has come under attack by theorists who disagree with its definitional rigidity and a latent hostility to difference, and who argue that his moral reasoning which renders a specific type of human nature as the locus of moral weight perpetuates tendencies for discrimination and stratification instead of extinguishing them. When the focus shifts from the theoretical debate about the constituents of human nature to the specific moral analysis of a posthuman society, the problematic nature of Fukuyama's (and Habermas') position becomes even more visible. In order to elucidate it, this chapter will analyse the 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go*, written by Kazuo Ishiguro, a text that serves a dialogic function in the posthumanist discourse in that it counterbalances the position of the theorists with the voice of the posthuman subjects themselves.

Never Let Me Go has been described as representing 'intersections of ethics and biopolitics'¹²⁷ and indeed the novel foregrounds the ethical side of handling a posthuman life more than an economic or political one. Instead of a large-scale debate about the challenges that the human species may come to face, thematically dominating in novels such as the trilogy *Lilith's Brood*, Ishiguro's novel is a very intimate first-person account of a posthuman subjectivity which is consumed in the seeming every day mundanity. The story of the novel revolves around a group of human clones living in an alternative 20th century England, who are, by unspecified social and political mechanisms, bred and brought up with the single purpose to become donors of their vital organs around the time they reach their late twenties. The narration consists of a number of temporally layered reminiscences by a clone named Kathy H., who has been, along with her closest friends Tommy and Ruth, brought up and educated in an isolated boarding school called Hailsham, ostensibly treated just like regular children, but continuously conditioned to accept the fact that not before long they will become "donors" and eventually "complete" (a euphemism for dying).

¹²⁷ Leanna Richardson, "The Modern Robot and the Postmodern Cyborg: The Post-Human as an Image of Anxiety" *Emergence: A Journal of Undergraduate Literary Criticism and Creative Research* Vol. 3, 2012: 13.

In *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro deliberately omits any mention of governmental control or oppression that would overtly restrict the clones' freedom, in order to show how completely the social conditioning has determined the status of the clones as secondary citizens. This is also why the novel frequently has a defeatist tone, as none of the clones ever contemplate organized resistance nor escape, as one would expect in traditional dystopias, no less in a very similar posthuman story about the exploitation of clones in the 2005 film *The Island*, directed by Michael Bay. The clones of the film are also bred in an isolated place, fed (more overt) lies about their lives and eventually taken one by one to be killed for organs. However, while the action-packed Hollywood film centres on the traditional dystopian counter-narrative revolving around rebellion and escape, *Never Let Me Go* is about the way the notion of humanity may blur one's moral compass in the territory of posthumanism. In one of the most important passages of the novel, Miss Emily, a former teacher of Kathy, explains why they used to collect the clones' art over the years in the boarding school. She explains that at first, all clones 'existed only to supply medical science,'¹²⁸ because the society determined that clones bore barely any ethical importance. By exposing the clones' art in various galleries, some activists tried to make clear to the public at large that the treatment of clones was immoral because the clones possessed a fully developed human nature. "There, look!" we could say. "Look at this art! How dare you claim that these children are anything less than fully human?"¹²⁹ During the course of the novel, however, it becomes clear that this effort has also failed to save the clones from the donations and it only secured a better treatment of them during their childhoods.

The dominant group of the society, the humans, therefore fail to ascribe equal moral status to the clones because they do not fit the criteria of what it is to be a standard human. As a result, a subversion of a social space opens up for the clones, a space that resembles Judith Butler's term 'a domain of abjection.'¹³⁰ In her theory, due to the hierarchical nature of the social and political power structure, groups of people whose identification does not align with the preferred standard of the general discourse (current examples may include homosexuals, transgender individuals, etc.), are pushed away from the dynamic levels of social existence and become the "abject bodies": a category of people who are unequivocally unaccepted,

¹²⁸ Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005) 256.

¹²⁹ Ishiguro 256.

¹³⁰ Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 3.

feared and ultimately repudiated. In the case of *Never Let Me Go*, the bodies of the clones are not only unaccepted, due to their “inhumanity” they cease to be subjects and become a mere set of signifiers: a signifier of body parts, of a biotechnological function, of health and rejuvenation for humans. Far more than the humans subjected to the will of the Oankali, the clones of *Never Let Me Go* are stripped of their subjectivity and agency by not meeting the established understanding of humanity.

In Carmen-Veronica Borbély’s reading of Ishiguro’s novel and the subsequent film adaptation, elaborated on in the essay “Body Drift: On the Precariousness of Posthuman Life in *Never Let Me Go*,” since the turn of the last century marked by an accelerated technologization and digitalization of both social and scientific discourse, the notions of the body, corporeality and individuality have been dislocated, obscured and inevitably undergone a shift in meaning. With the emerging biotechnological discourse of genetic manipulation with the human body, this dislocation of previously established meanings will be further reaffirmed. As such, we can no longer project a singular structure of a body in either social or scientific terms, because “with the aid of the new technologies, the multifarious codes of health, gender, class, age or ethnicity are scrambled up, remixed, respliced and redesigned, (and) are reconstructing the human as a posthuman body.”¹³¹ Borbély thus suggests that in this posthuman age our understanding of the body is best described by the concept of “body drift,” a term originally coined by a cyberculture theorist Arthur Kroker in his eponymous 2012 book. The term essentially means that the body can no longer be perceived as a singular whole, because it has largely disintegrated into codes that various discourses, such as the technological, digital or biotechnological one, piece together differently, thus creating a society of multiplicity of bodies which differ from each other both ontologically and teleologically.

Borbély argues that the hierarchical structure of the posthuman body politics in *Never Let Me Go* has enabled a certain combination of codes constitute the normative corporeality and humanity while pushing the posthuman element out of the sphere of social acceptance. The clones are by the law and the society at large perceived in strictly functional, pragmatic terms, thus foregrounding codes that are unified by a utilitarian project. Ignoring their own, posthuman subjectivity, the clones’ corporeality is broken down into commodificatory and

¹³¹ Carmen-Veronica Borbély, “Body Drift: On the Precariousness of Posthuman Life in *Never Let Me Go*,” *The Echinoc Journal* No. 29, 2015: 243.

quantifiable signifiers such as provider of health, cure or tool for restoration of life, while their bodies are literally broken down into particular organs. The otherness of the clones which has brought about this perception of a radical ontological difference is close to taking the form of the Uncanny valley, when the clones discuss their “possibles.” According to Borbély the clones “simultaneously define and encroach the boundaries of normative humanity,”¹³² a relation that takes a literal undertone in relation to the clones’ possibles, since they are both like them and radically unlike them. The clones are at the same time a reminder of genuine human nature and an affirmation of this nature’s assumed absence. As such “they both reinforce and invalidate notions of individual autonomous selfhood, conceived, within the Western paradigm, as located within the separate, distinct, and impermeable contours of normatively embodied individuals,”¹³³ whom the clones serve as a mere reminder of.

Borbély looks for a way to efface the perceived otherness of the clones, which has effectively rendered them a property of the society, and instead to find a basis for upholding their dignity as posthuman subjects. She finds it in the very structure of Ishiguro’s novel, which functions as a reconstruction of a clone’s identity as an individual with fully developed intellectual and emotional gamut, a complexity which Fukuyama would call Factor X. It is the complexity of Kathy’s highly intimate multiplicity of narrations, recollections and layers of internal monologue that successfully reconstitutes all the separate codes that the society identified her with into a coherent whole. It is “by narrating herself into existence, by compassionately embracing the other and by cultivating memory as the bulwark of identitarian singularity,”¹³⁴ that Kathy is proving herself to be a complete rather than deficient individual, a task that the efforts of Madame’s organization failed to accomplish.

The element that underlines the bleakness of an otherwise calm and collected narrative is the frequent theme of absence. There is an absence of resistance or a will to escape on the part of the clones; there is an absence of a visible coercive force, present in most dystopias, that would keep the clones in line; and in Kathy’s life there are absences that take form of anticlimactic events, which illustrate the impenetrability and almost incomprehensibility of the faceless establishment that has been systematically oppressing the clones. The anticlimactic events of Kathy’s life include the search for the Ruth’s “possible” which proved

¹³² Borbély 244.

¹³³ Borbély 244.

¹³⁴ Borbély 248.

to be in vain, or seeking with Tommy to get a “deferral,” a delay in their duty to become donors which they had heard they could obtain as a couple, which turns out to be false. These instances of absence are actually consequences of an elaborate system of manipulation and oppression of the clones, present throughout their lives from the panoptic Hailsham through the ostensible freedom as carers until their peaceful “completion” as donors.

According to Mark Fisher’s analysis of *Never Let Me Go*, it is the pervasive force of ideology that pre-empts even the contemplation of escape or resistance. In his reading, Hailsham is an ‘ideological state apparatus’¹³⁵ which prepares the clones for their bleak future without having to deal with backlash or aggression, by cannily shaping the clones’ unconscious, rather than conscious, knowledge of their future. At one point Kathy describes the distribution of information in Hailsham in the following words: ‘Certainly, it feels like I always knew about donations in some vague way, even as early as six or seven. And it’s curious, when we were older and the guardians were giving us those talks, nothing came as a complete surprise. It was like we’d heard everything somewhere before.’¹³⁶ This notion of half-knowledge, the knowing and not-knowing, is present throughout their childhoods. Even though everyone formally knows that there are donations, they are never spoken about openly and when Miss Lucy dares address them in a straightforward manner, she is immediately fired.

This manipulative distribution of information in carefully prearranged dosages is a factor that has helped shape the clones’ minds in a way that they do not feel there is any place to escape from nor to escape to. There was never a point when the cruel truth was suddenly revealed, which happens in most classical dystopias. Instead, the clones cannot remember a time when they had not known about the donations at all; it had always been a part of their subconscious. The ideological machinery has thus pre-empted any possibility of forming a resistant counter-narrative against the illusory narrative that is forced upon them, because that would entail acknowledging the illusion and being able detaching oneself from it. The notion of escape thus contains no meaning for the clones. As Fisher says, ‘if there is nowhere to escape to-the clones are already in the world; the world is their prison, then nor is there any

¹³⁵ Mark Fisher, “Precarious Dystopias: The Hunger Games, in Time, and Never Let Me Go” *Film Quarterly* 65:4 (2012): 31.

¹³⁶ Ishiguro 83.

attempt to escape.¹³⁷ The grand tragedy of *Never Let Me Go* thus lies in this failure to see through the ideology and the subsequent apathy to alter the status quo until it is too late.

Another consequence of a carefully crafted and applied ideology which keeps the clones' behaviour committed to the cause are the hopes and fantasies that schools like Hailsham perpetuate without ever overtly confirming or denying them. It is 'the kind of collective fantasy that seems to spontaneously grow from institutions like Hailsham (...) without which (...) the institution could not do its work.'¹³⁸ The fantasy centres around the notion of the "deferrals," the delays of the duty to become donors for couples of clones who are evidently in love. This idea, just like most pieces of half-knowledge circulating around Hailsham, have been picked up by the clones as unclear echoes of some past conversations rather than any clearly remembered statements uttered by a reliable source. According to Fisher, however, 'without this fantasy, the clones would have no hope and thus no reason not to rebel, or to destroy themselves.'¹³⁹ Even though at the end Kathy and Tommy discover the bitter truth about the falsehood of deferrals, it comes too late in their lives to cause a dent in the ideology's captivation of their mind and behaviour; the apathetic contentment and the idea of the seemingly natural destiny of the clones had been having a corrosive impact on their critical faculties for far too long.

The peculiar ideology in *Never Let Me Go* is one that dehumanizes the clones in the eyes of the society while working in the exact opposite way towards the clones themselves, stimulating their hopes, fantasies and aspirations. In this sense the ideology is even more comprehensive than the one practiced by IngSoc in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which, while having the capability of changing hearts of rebelling individuals from hatred to the most enthusiastic commitment, cannot help but collaterally create enemies by the use of brutal force and coercion. The ideology of *Never Let Me Go*, in contrast, is more that of *The Matrix*:¹⁴⁰ The victims are kept in an informational quarantine which indoctrinates them completely by making them see the world and their position in it in a carefully manipulated way. The consequence of this implementation of ideology is that the clones are hardwired to

¹³⁷ Fisher 32.

¹³⁸ Fisher 32.

¹³⁹ Fisher 32.

¹⁴⁰ A 1999 sci-fi dystopian film directed by the Wachowski brothers

dogmatically accept the dispersion of power, even though it leans drastically away from their favour.

The ideological apparatus that dehumanizes the posthuman subjects can be read in Foucaultian terms as an attribution of inferiority conducted from the position of power. In the preface to his book *Madness and Civilization* (1964), Foucault wrote:

In the serene world of mental illness, modern man no longer communicates with the madman: on one hand, the man of reason delegates the physician to madness, thereby authorizing a relation only through the abstract universality of disease; on the other, the man of madness communicates with society only by the intermediary of an equally abstract reason which is order, physical and moral constraint, the anonymous pressure of the group, the requirements of conformity.¹⁴¹

Foucault here talks about the role of language in the process of attributing insanity, a form of “otherness,” to the part of the population that exhibits non-standard traits of behaviour, as a result of which these individuals have to be confined, treated and controlled. The uneven ability to influence language, which in turn has the ability to shape the minds and worldviews of the population, is indeed present in *Never Let Me Go*, in which the clones represent a specific form of inferiority. The clones communicate with the society in a very limited manner, and their way of understanding it and relating to it is indeed mediated by order and physical constraint, represented by the boarding school Hailsham, by moral constraint, represented by conservative views about sexuality instilled into them by the Hailsham teachers and guards, and once out of Hailsham, by the anonymous pressure of the society to conform to the its very drastic expectations – in the clones’ case to become cares and ultimately donors.

According to Foucault, the anonymous majority is authorized to translate non-conforming forms of behaviour or identification as inferior or deficient because it is the majority that controls language from the position of power, whose source is the fact that they meet the standards of normality. The idea suggested here is that mental illness is to some extent a construct created by the society to identify the preferred form of existence as opposed

¹⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage books, 1965) x.

to the non-standard one. The distinction between the sane and the insane has according to Foucault's argument been mediated by language shaped by the former group and applied to the social and political discourse, which has come to relate to the two groups according to this distinction. Foucault's contention, applied to posthumanism, means that people who shape the public's view on the posthuman subject, such as theorists, professors, politicians, public speakers or writers on posthumanism, have the common power to pre-emptively deprive potential posthuman subjects of their "humanity," or of the equal status with the "standard" humans, and add to potentially unhospitable political and social circumstances for such subjects, as it also happens to the clones in Ishiguro's novel.

My concluding point in the analysis of Fukuyama's position on the issue of posthumanism therefore is that his line of argument professes to come from exactly the kind of reasoning which, though unwittingly, has the potential to bring about the oppressive regulations and unfavourable public opinion, of which Ishiguro warns, and which future posthuman subjects would be born into. In his rigorous distinction between the human and the posthuman, or the non-human, Fukuyama defines the posthuman subject "through the abstract universality of disease" or, more accurately, through the universality of difference. His attribution of Factor X, however well-meaning, asserts a hierarchical relation between various forms of subjectivity, based on power which the socially accepted can exert over others. As he writes, "in the political realm we are required to respect people equally on the basis of their possession of Factor X. You can cook, eat, torture, enslave, or render the carcass of any creature lacking Factor X, but if you do the same thing to a human being, you are guilty of a "crime against humanity."¹⁴² Fukuyama here talks about the difference between human and animal life but the prospect becomes much more serious when the difference between human and posthuman life will be on the line. This can be seen on the characters of *Never Let Me Go*, which serves here as a cautionary tale, as it not only shows how drastic the consequences of Fukuyama's Factor X theory put into practice may become, but arguably denies the validity of this argument in the first place. The entire novel follows the most intimate thoughts and emotions of a clone, showing on every page the full spectrum of her Factor X, which goes perpetually unrecognized by the society because it had been established that to qualify for Factor X one has to have been conceived in a way that the society deems natural and thus acceptable.

¹⁴² Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 92.

With this specific portrayal of the clones in *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro uncovers a larger dent in Fukuyama's theory. Why is it exactly that the clones should not possess Factor X? While Fukuyama's doubts reside on the social level, such that the clones as a group would fail to be identified with other humans, Habermas' arguments are more moralistic and accuse the society that produces clones of engaging in unnatural processes and stripping the clones of self-autonomy. However, some theorists, such as Yvette Pearson, have demonstrated that all such arguments lack substance because they wrongly assume that the circumstances of one's conception and birth decisively determine the individual's identity. Pearson deconstructs the importance of difference between clones and humans and she begins with the form of conception. While Fukuyama worries about the unnaturalness of the clones' creation, Pearson argues that many accepted forms of procreation are partially unnatural, such as in vitro fertilization or using an incubator at premature childbirth, and that if we are to be consistent in the criticism of cloning as unnatural, many other widely used methods and tools used in medicine to enhance reproduction should be scrutinized from the same point of view. 'Ultimately, it seems that we must choose between rejecting many of our procreative practices as morally problematic or conceding that reproductive cloning is acceptable.'¹⁴³

Next she tackles the issue of the nature of the cloned offspring. Habermas' argument is that the clones, having pre-determined natures, would have lost their self-autonomy but, according to Pearson, genotype is not the only factor in forming one's identity and asserting autonomy. While she agrees that the process of cloning would endow the clones with certain limitations, it is not clear whether or precisely how these limitations have an impact on its (the clone's) autonomy.¹⁴⁴ Instead, it is the individual upbringing and circumstances of life that are equally important factors. She illustrates this point by referring to *Never Let Me Go*, arguing that the clones' ontological status does not impact their personalities or ways of identification. On the contrary, even the clones themselves regard their genetic attachment to their "possibles" completely irrelevant. While they search for Ruth's "possible," Kathy's personal thoughts betray that 'our models were an irrelevance, a technical necessity for bringing us into the world... It was up to each of us to make our own lives.'¹⁴⁵ Following

¹⁴³ Yvette Pearson, "Never let me clone?: Countering an ethical argument against the reproductive cloning of humans," *EMBO Reports*, July 2006.

¹⁴⁴ Pearson.

¹⁴⁵ Ishiguro 138.

Pearson's argumentation, it seems that the dystopian society of *Never Let Me Go* will more likely be caused by a prejudiced society with false notions of what defines the human, rather than by an inborn urge to over-dwell on difference.

Another concern, which Pearson touches upon, is that Fukuyama's theory is misguided because it fails to discuss the posthuman subjects themselves, instead making a counter-productive point of dwelling on the circumstances of their origin. As Pearson writes, 'the emphasis on the means of procreation also detracts from the more important criterion for determining the moral permissibility of procreation, namely, how the offspring will fare once they are born.'¹⁴⁶ This is a major problem with Fukuyama's argument because instead of considering the posthuman subjects as morally autonomous and discussing the circumstances of their life, he excludes them from such consideration in the first place, thus effectively objectifying them and treating them as a problem to be prevented. This line of thinking may be harmless when applied to a posthuman-free world, but becomes lethal when applied to an actual posthuman society, such as the one of *Never Let Me Go*.

Furthermore, Fukuyama's Factor X theory assumes that there are certain privileged characteristics and capabilities which safely define humanity. While Habermas sees the advantage humans would have over clones in the latter's failure to develop one's self-autonomy, for Fukuyama a true human is endowed with full complexity of human nature. As he writes, 'every member of the human species possesses a genetic endowment that allows him or her to become a whole human being.'¹⁴⁷ These ideas of self-autonomy and wholeness, both behavioural and cognitive, constitute patterns identified with universal human conduct and are what Mark Jerng calls "narrative expectations" that one associates with humans. In his essay "Giving Form to Life: Cloning and Narrative Expectations of the Human," Jerng analyses *Never Let Me Go*, showing how the novel exposes these expectations to be artificial social constructs, harmful to the ones who do not, or cannot conform to them.

Jerng makes a comparison between the aforementioned film *The Island* and *Never Let Me Go* to show how cultural tropes feed into the expectations of humans and clones. In *The Island*, the protagonists, who are clones, try to hide their clone identity and substitute it for the human identity, thus reaffirming the inferiority of the former. They run away from the clone

¹⁴⁶ Pearson.

¹⁴⁷ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future* 104.

community, try to act as though they were regular humans, eventually even kill and substitute their original model. In contrast, *Never Let Me Go* is much more subversive in that the clones are trying to reconstruct their identities not as humans but as clones, which results in their behaviour taking different directions than one would expect from humans, such as the failure to contemplate organized resistance or escape. The clones do not rebel and thus “become human.” Rather, they learn to make sense of their lives as clones. In this way, *Never Let Me Go* disrupts the narrative of individuation and the values placed on the mysteriousness of birth, the “giftedness” of life, and wholeness.¹⁴⁸ Thus, against arguments such as a Factor X theory, Ishiguro does not claim that clones are in fact humans, as is the gist of narratives such as the one of the *The Island*. Instead, Ishiguro portrays the behaviour of clones as different than that of humans but at the same time, by intimating Kathy’s experience so closely, dislocates the centrality of the expected human conduct which, as has been portrayed, relates to force, rebelliousness and aggression. Thus, despite the obvious differences, there is no intrinsic moral, intellectual or emotional progression from clone to human, from less developed Factor X to the more developed one or from a lesser whole to a more complete whole.

As has been hinted above, *Never Let Me Go* functions as a succinct dialogue between theory and experience. It juxtaposes an overt behavioural failure of the clones to meet the established standards of human conduct, and a recapitulation of a first-hand personal experience that abounds with emotional and intellectual depth, and which is thus apt to meet any criteria of humanity including Fukuyama’s Factor X. According to Jerng, Ishiguro thereby accomplishes to substitute an expected form of self-realization by a multiplicity of conduct and behaviour, all of them palpably human but none assuming a centrally “human” role. Thus, by “disrupting the narrative trajectory of individuation, Ishiguro gives us the imaginative potential of shifting our expectation of the form of humanity,”¹⁴⁹ which helps undermine the unequivocalty of the manner in which a relatable identity is supposed to be constituted.

Instead of drawing exclusionary lines based on varyingly superficial criteria, Jerng invokes *Never Let Me Go* as a space that initiates open-ended dialogue, and echoes Pearson in

¹⁴⁸ Mark Jerng, “Giving Form to Life: Cloning and Narrative Expectations of the Human,” *Partial Answers*, June 2008 383.

¹⁴⁹ Jerng 383.

saying that 'instead of foregrounding the epistemological desire to find out what the clone is, it (*Never Let Me Go*) foregrounds an ethical project to discover how cloning might change how we relate to each other, (which) is a question that begins with a different orientation of the human.'¹⁵⁰ In this sense, Jerng's reading of Ishiguro's novel is close to the interpretation of Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood* from the previous chapter: rather than defining human nature based on what it is not, we should understand it as an umbrella term that continuously subsumes emerging identities.

¹⁵⁰ Jerng 391.

Conclusion

A portion of this thesis has been dedicated to discerning the arguments behind various approaches to posthumanism by the theorists writing on the subject. Specifically, Fukuyama's stark pessimism on the matter has been contrasted to other visions of posthumanism which consider it a constructive discourse, helpful in contextualizing the issues with inter-connected discourses such as humanism, feminism, postmodernism, colonialism, etc. During the analysis it has become clear that the very concept of posthumanism, including its likely potentials and limitations, is understood in completely different terms by Fukuyama and his adversaries. In his essay "Introduction: Toward a Critique of Posthuman Futures," Bart Simon tries to make sense of these contrasting approaches. He argues that Fukuyama and theorists such as Hayes or Haraway address fundamentally different concepts of posthumanism. Simon calls the one addressed by Fukuyama "popular posthumanism" while he calls the other one, practiced by the above-mentioned theorists, "critical posthumanism." Popular posthumanism takes the essential idea from classical dystopias that the only basis for a harmonious and morally sound life is unaltered human nature, and connects it with the idea that modern technology, biotechnology and cybernetics necessarily pose a threat to this pristine state of human existence. According to Simon, 'for popular posthumanism, the future is a space for the realization of individuality, the transcendence of biological limits and the creation of a new social order.'¹⁵¹ In Fukuyama's view the most relevant capability of posthumanism is its harmful invasiveness into something that needs no external improvement or modification. This is why, as Jeff Wallace notes in "Literature and Posthumanism," 'when Fukuyama wants a reference point for the dangers of a posthuman future, (...) he turns to Aldous Huxley's dystopian satire *Brave New World*,'¹⁵² instead of any narrative that would give posthumanism any credit, because *Brave New World* captures his fears of how inconspicuously human nature may become almost fully neutralized when either state or non-state actors embrace the open opportunity provided by a biotechnological breakthrough.

In contrast, critical posthumanism is, according to Simon, an interdisciplinary academic discourse whose field of focus includes a retrospective consolidation of established

¹⁵¹ Simon 2

¹⁵² Jeff Wallace, "Literature and Posthumanism," *Literature Compass*, 3 Aug. 2010 692

discourses such as humanism or postmodernism, as well as discussion of the future of posthumanism both as discipline and practice. As such, with the help of the contents of the posthuman discourse critical posthumanism reevaluates and contextualizes different forms of understanding the human, by 'calling into question (...) the politics and analytical prospects of various liberal and philosophical humanisms as well as popular posthumanism.'¹⁵³ Therefore, while popular posthumanism problematizes largely speculative forms of otherness and digressions from humanity, critical posthumanism is more retrospective and inward in problematizing the very concept of humanity as a historical, political and ideological concept, as seen through the lenses of posthumanism.

According to Simon, critical posthumanists, unlike Fukuyama, do not consider posthumanism and humanism to be two disjointed categories, but rather as 'implicated in the ongoing critique of what it is to be human.'¹⁵⁴ Fukuyama and Habermas in this sense occupy the opposite side of the posthumanist spectrum as they both see humanism and posthumanism as two contrasting concepts where the latter threatens to supersede the former, while considering the notion of humanism uncritically, as describing a default state of existence. In Fukuyama this lack of critique of humanism has its underpinnings in his Hegelian optimism about the one-way flow of historical events, interpreted as creating increasingly liberal, modern and democratic societies, where the pure and unaltered character of human nature is given full credit for this positive development. Fukuyama can be considered a "popular posthumanist" because his philosophy of history forces him to assess posthumanism with a forged prejudice leading to almost automatic dismissal of any space beyond the humanist model. This dismissal in *Our Posthuman Future* takes form of a constant, one-sided battering of the notion of posthumanism, enumerating its possible downsides without balancing them with any possible positive outcomes. The reason for this prejudice is Fukuyama's Hegelian view that there can principally be nothing after humanism because once humanism has taken full hold of the political and social mechanisms of the global society, there will be no space or incentive to develop ideologically, and history will have come to its ideological and political end. This vision has many attributes of a certain kind of utopia and since things cannot get potentially any better, the only transformation could be a radical downgrade to dystopian posthumanism.

¹⁵³ Simon 3.

¹⁵⁴ Simon 8.

The two novels analyzed in this thesis complement the academic takes on critical posthumanism, both functioning as antidotes to Fukuyama's clear-cut, simplistic reasoning on the topic. Just like their theoretical counterparts, Ishiguro's and Butler's novels present posthumanism as a critique, both of an essentializing conception of human nature, and of human exceptionalism,¹⁵⁵ and through posthumanism they reconstruct the notion of the human, highlighting and battling long established prejudices and harmful practices such as exclusionary politics, which are features that Fukuyama either chooses to ignore or embrace as a form of natural human conduct. The novels, moreover, help unravel humanism as an ideology rooted in specific historical contexts, as an ideological force that guides and often misguides human character and behavior, taking by Fukuyama for granted as a set of unchangeable patterns flowing directly from the structure of human nature.

Both novels also destabilize Fukuyama's Factor X theory, which is a set of ideas that feed into the concept of anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism. The method that they use to accomplish this is by introducing the posthuman subjects themselves and letting them not only interact dynamically with their human counterparts but also narrate their story, so that the reader is introduced to their innermost feelings and trains of thought "first-hand" and can understand that while they are not human in the traditional sense, they can possess Factor X nevertheless. Furthermore, the posthuman characters Akin and Jodahs of *Lilith's Brood* as well as Kathy H. of *Never Let Me Go* expose anthropocentrism to be a harmful construct formed by a prejudiced form of humanism which involves the presumption of an ideal subjectivity, the one fully human, and attributing moral value to other forms of human or posthuman subjectivities based on their relative distance from that ideal center. As Wallace puts it, "humanism can be a narrowly Western version of liberal-humanist individualism, sanctioning (...) a relation of domination and subjugation to its externalized others – animals, machines, nature, the environment, nonindividualistic cultures and – in the case of the ambiguously generic 'man' – women."¹⁵⁶ This exclusionary politics is reaffirmed by Fukuyama but consciously aimed only at posthumanism, even though the same rationale can be found in many historical cases of groups of people dominating one another and is an important ideological force behind concepts such as racial or sexual discrimination. A

¹⁵⁵ Wallace 692.

¹⁵⁶ Wallace 693.

succinct illustration of this can be found in *Lilith's Brood*, where Lilith faces a double challenge; she has to convince people to trust the Oankali - the posthuman subjects, but first she has to overcome the prejudice of her own people (most overtly expressed by men) about herself, a female, being the leader of the group.

In contrast, critical posthumanism tries to reform this established brand of humanism from being a rigid concept defining its subject-matter negatively based on difference. While the notion of humanism is not rejected altogether, the effort of writers such as Hayles and Haraway or novelists like Ishiguro or Butler is to change its character from being exclusive to inclusive, and from a closed space to an open space, whereby new subjectivities are allowed to enter, thus inevitably transforming the general definition of what makes up a human along the way. This pluralistic understanding of the human and the effort to decentralize the anthropocentric concept of the optimal identity aims to achieve a dispersion of attribution of moral value and autonomy to a larger spectrum of agency and identity than just to those who can be judged by an external authority to possess Factor X, a vaguely defined notion of innate humanity. As such, despite the evident effort to accomplish just the opposite, Fukuyama strengthens the rationale for maintaining inequality, not only between the human and the posthuman, but also among different groups of humans themselves, by maintaining the notions of difference and almost an Aristotelian definitional rigidity, when it comes to an unchanging nature of species, as cornerstones of his theory. In this light, Ishiguro's and Butler's novels can be seen as an effort to recuperate this misfired attempt to preserve freedom, equality and moral balance into the posthuman era, by radically widening the criteria to determine who should be eligible to be recognized by these liberal principles in the first place.

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