

KİTAP ELEŞTİRİLERİ / BOOK REVIEWS

JEFFREY BISHOP, *The Anticipatory Corpse: Medicine, Power, and the Care of the Dying* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 432 pp. ISBN 978-0-268-02227-3

The Anticipatory Corpse: Medicine, Power, and the Care of the Dying by Jeffrey Bishop is an absorbing analysis of how contemporary medicine's epistemology and metaphysics relate to the dying body and death in a biomedical context. From the perspectives of medicine, philosophy, and history, Bishop's powerful synthesis is aimed at medicine's attainment of power and efficient control over life, death, and dying in the twentieth century. Moreover, his thesis can aptly be interpreted as a counter to the arguments of Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens who have declared religion the loser in the centuries old war between science and religion.¹

Importantly, Bishop's argument is not merely another about the economic influence of healthcare and medicine, but instead a critique of the industry's bio-political power. Even so, his position against modern medicine does not begin nor end with explicit political premises. Instead, his argument is a convincing, old-fashioned philosophical case against the materialistic/naturalistic metaphysics of contemporary medicine. However, because Bishop so easily blends Neo-Scholastic thought grounded in natural law and theistic teleology with contemporary concepts from Immanuel Levinas² and Foucault³, *The Anticipatory Corpse* is nothing short of a masterful, interdisciplinary contribution to biopolitical thought. Therefore, students and scholars of bioethics, ethics of care, the history of medicine, modernity, medical sociology, healthcare law, human development, and theology of the body will find Bishop's critical, historical perspective equally indispensable.

Openly borrowing from Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic*, Bishop begins the book by identifying death's place in medicine as a political space and grounds his argument in the provocative claim that the dead body, the cadaver, is epistemologically normative for medicine. Furthermore, he argues that the dead body is epistemologically normative for medicine because medicine's metaphysics emphasize only efficient and material causes while systematically neglecting consideration for final and formal causation. As strange and counterintuitive as it may seem, Bishop is correct; the dead human body is actually a convenient source for medicine's knowledge, power, and political authority. After all, the dead body is the perfect, perhaps only body from which a purely impersonal, functional understanding of the body can be drawn. Moreover, living bodies are difficult if not impossible to adequately manipulate, study, and acquire knowledge from because they are in constant motion and flux, shielded by skin, and prone to pain. Therefore he is quite reasonable to claim that death is medicine's transcendental, death is immanent, death is medicine's un-supersede-able model.

In chapters three and four, Bishop links the dead body to the very heart of medicine and casts the industry in a new light that contrasts sharply with its reputation as a benevolent institution existing for the sake of living bodies. Specifically, he explains how medicine is not concerned with "why" living bodies function as they do, but only "how" living bodies function as they do; which can best be observed, learned, and taught using dead bodies. Dead bodies, cadavers, are used throughout medical education where the metaphysics of efficient and material causes pull it from its former context in history, community, and family where purpose and meaning were embodied and expressed through its animation.

1. This argument is skillfully discussed in Edward Feser's book, *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2008).

2. See Levinas, Immanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay in Exteriority* (Pittsburg: Duquesne Press, 1969).

3. See Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

Taking this viewpoint a logical step further it is clear that medicine is not concerned with why we live or die, but only how we live or die. Through this functionalist conception of life and death, medicine has reduced living bodies to mere functional, animated, nonliving matter whose purpose is function, not meaning. So, from medicine's perspective: live and dead bodies are the same. Both are just forms of meaningless matter. Dead bodies just happen to be ideally suited for observation, demonstration, and knowledge-attainment because of their stillness and ease of manipulation.

Decontextualized in this way the dead body becomes a political space and a platform for performing measurable assessments from which hypotheses, conclusions, and generalizable knowledge can be made. In other words, the dead body is medicine's means to status as a legitimate science. As such, medicine then has a license to promote material function over meaning, purpose, and the particular significance of individual lives. Thus is the realization of medicine's metaphysical preference for efficient and material causes in lieu of final and formal causes; a foul that Bishop repeatedly decries.

Identifying medicine's governing role in how we should live and die is a profound feature of *The Anticipatory Corpse*. Revealing medicine as a form of politics whose power is built on knowledge gained from dead bodies for the sake of manipulating living bodies toward a "good death" sets up Bishop's critique of one particular aspect of medicine where he detects severe epistemological and metaphysical shortcomings: care of the dying. There he sees a political, teleological movement from meaning and purpose (as formal and final causation presupposing a first cause) to mere functionality (as material and efficient causation regardless of any first cause). Placing the dead body at the heart of medicine allows medicine to value and promote material function over meaning, purpose, and individual life projects. The dead body is medicine's secret weapon against embodied purpose, especially in palliative medicine, which Bishop considers a sham science for managing both the dying body and the corresponding family's grief.

In chapters five through seven, Bishop deals with the question of brain death. Specifically, he explores the problem medicine has due to its attitude toward life as mechanical function; that is, what to do when those whose basic healthy physiology (breathing, blood circulation, etc.) has become dependent on artificial respirators and dialysis machines. In sum, he concludes that medicine with its educational structure, technology, and control of the death environment has found a way to reliably appease social conservatives' respect and reverence for bare, biological life and social liberals' distaste for bare life⁴ as it pales in comparison to the good life. In other words, Bishop portrays medicine as an industry with technologies and protocols for managing and facilitating death in ways that appear dignified and sacred, yet liberating and in accordance with autonomy. As such, medicine appears as the governing authority that determines how long those existing between bare life and the good life can linger in a state many consider worse than death. Put succinctly, Bishop contends that medicine's aim is to make sure people die when they ought to according to the metaphysics of material and efficient causes and a narrow conception of normativity gained from the study of dead bodies. Accordingly, Bishop argues that the metaphysics of medicine equates dying and killing in cases where removing technology results in death. In either case, what has been lost cannot be valued in bio-politics. That is, if there is no chance and no trace of the good life in an individual body, then the body politic benefits from advancing its death.

According to Bishop, this manner of managing death obscures all consideration for particularity. Interestingly, his reverence and religious orientation toward particularity remains hidden until chapter nine, "The Palliative Gaze", where his worldview appears more clearly. His "spiritual turn" in the book begins with the topic of *hospitum* and the role that hospitality played in the Church's care of the sick and dying during the Middle Ages. He describes those encounters in phenomenological terms where the sick and

4. See Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

dying appeared to care providers as the sacred other, individuals who were ends in themselves and worthy of respect and dignified care. Hospitality was offered, extended to the dying in particularistic ways so as to meet the particular need or relieve particular sufferings. Today, dying is managed more universally through palliative care, according to the overall good of the polis. As Bishop puts it, new populations such as the aging, and the dying, have been created as to be recipients of the new technologies of “palliative care.”⁵

Bishop’s final chapter, “Anticipating Life”, argues that the dying body should be cared for with respect to the particular meaning and purpose embodied within it. Because contemporary medicine understands bodies merely in terms of knowledge gained from cadavers, it neglects the embodied purposes of particular bodies, that is, the projects, works, and meanings of individual lives. Furthermore, he argues that medicine needs to de-governmentalize its agenda and recapture a knowledge of bodies that fully appreciates the particular embodied histories, experiences, and life projects lost when death occurs. Bishop’s thesis and conclusion also fits well with the tenants of Ethics of Care⁶ which hold that care should be contextualized to fit the particular needs of individuals in accordance with their particular life circumstances. In fact, the overlap between Bishop’s thesis and Ethics of Care is so clear and fruitful that his argument could provide a strong philosophical foundation for the ethical approach often consigned to “alternative” status.

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TAMAR SHARON, *Human Nature in an Age of Biotechnology: The Case for Mediated Posthumanism* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 241 pp. ISBN 978-9400775534

“The question of what it means to be human surfaces time and again in periods of important technological change,” writes Tamar Sharon, in the opening lines of *Human Nature in an Age of Biotechnology: The Case for Mediated Posthumanism*. The advanced and emerging biotechnologies, such as highly developed prosthetic devices, assisted reproduction, embryo cloning for therapeutic and reproductive purposes, and neuroscience, have a significant effect on both the human body as corporeality and the human as a much contested concept. In the twenty-first century, the question of what it means to be human gains more impetus than before due to these technologies, and thus, the concepts of the posthuman and posthumanism are becoming increasingly widespread. Tamar Sharon’s book, therefore, entails the question of what it means to be human — or posthuman — from a broader scope with an insight into the posthumanities, a field that merges the social, natural, and medical sciences. Sharon’s critical assessment over the posthumanist debates presents a detailed analysis of various approaches to posthumanism. The author critically engages with the alternatives presented to explain the meaning of being human, and she suggests that several of the approaches to posthumanism that have been grounded in a humanist ontology highlighting a distinction between the human and the technological do not address the question of what it means to be human from a fully posthumanist perspective. After discussing the limitations and contributions

5. See Edmund D. Pellegrino *et al.* (eds.), *Human Dignity and Bioethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009) for a collection of essays related to this concern.

6. See Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

of the current uses of posthumanism that have run through literature so far, Sharon presents the idea of mediated posthumanism, in which the human subject is re-questioned through philosophical, sociological, biomedical, and ethical perspectives.

Sharon divides her book into nine chapters and several subheadings. The first chapter is "Introduction," which involves a "polarized framework" (p.2) for discussing posthumanist discourses as a paradigm shift and highlights its shortcomings and contributions. The second chapter, entitled "A Cartography of the Posthuman," provides "three axes of differentiation" for mapping the concept of the posthuman: "an optimistic/pessimistic axis, a historical-materialist/philosophical-ontological axis, and a humanist/non-humanist axis" (p.17), hence indicating the rhizomatic pathways through which the posthumanist discussions are fed and enhanced. The third chapter, "The Human Enhancement Debate: For, Against, and from Human Nature," takes a look at enhancement technologies, such as "preimplantation genetic diagnosis, the use of psychopharmaceuticals for mood and cognitive enhancement, and genetic engineering," and contests the concept of the human and its nature as a "fixed" and stable essence (p.57). The fourth chapter is entitled "Towards a Non-Humanist Posthumanism: The Originary Prostheticity of Radical and Methodological Posthumanism," in which the author takes a closer look at what she calls radical and methodological posthumanisms as non-anthropocentric alternatives to the humanist approaches of liberal and dystopic posthumanisms. Radical and methodological posthumanisms hold onto the idea that technology is not a method or tool for enhancing the human body, but rather it is the originary prosthetics, by the help of which and in relation to which the human, as a body and as a concept, exists. Both of these approaches take on a stance that proposes an existence for the human as a prosthetic nature (p.79). In the fifth chapter, which is entitled "From Molar to Molecular Bodies: Posthumanist Frameworks in Contemporary Biology," the author analyzes the ways in which the humanist dualist paradigms are challenged by biomedicine and evolutionary biology, from whose perspective the human body is understood as a molecular formation, rather than a self-contained entity (p.113). The sixth chapter is "Posthuman Subjectivity: Beyond Modern Metaphysics," and in this chapter, Sharon focuses on the views of Heidegger, Levinas, and Deleuze, as the important precursors of non-humanist discussions, and she brings up the discussion of non-humanist posthumanisms such as those of Latour and Haraway. In this chapter, the human is contested as an "independent and autonomous entity" and it is claimed that it is rather "a heterogeneous subject, whose self-definition is continuously shifting," as it exists within zones and networks of interactions with the non-human others (p.135). The seventh chapter, which is entitled "Technologically Produced Nature: Nature Beyond Schizophrenia and Paranoia," uses Deleuze and Guattari's "schizoanalytic" framework to look at "assisted reproductive technologies" and analyzes how the concept of nature is "deconstructed," and at the same time, "re-naturalized" by "legislative and discursive strategies" (p.175). The eighth chapter, "New Modes of Ethical Selfhood: Geneticization and Genetically Responsible Subjectivity," offers "a new mode of selfhood," a mediated form of posthumanism, which is influenced by Deleuze, Guattari, and Foucault's approaches to humanism and their contestation of the concept of the human (p.199). In the "Conclusion," Sharon provides an overall look at the concepts she has discussed throughout the chapters, and although each chapter already has its own conclusion, the general conclusion of the book outlines the basic framework of what Sharon calls "mediated posthumanism." Throughout the chapters, Sharon presents a critical overview of posthumanist discourse from different angles. Her attempt to categorize these angles may seem like a way of historicizing the posthuman and posthumanism; however, it is rather a critique of the discourses or theoretical frameworks of these concepts while she endeavors to bring together the nonhumanist approaches to posthumanism, by which she aims to offer a novel perspective that hopes to provide a richer and a more multifaceted framework to the posthuman and posthumanism.

In her critique, Sharon maps posthumanism within four main categories. Dystopic, liberal, radical, and methodological posthumanisms, the former two of which tend to be aligned with humanist ontologies, and the latter two being nonhumanist approaches, provide a broader perspective to posthumanism and its various conglomerations within both popular and academic arenas. For Sharon, dystopic posthumanism is a critical defense of humanism in the face of emerging biotechnologies, and this kind of approach stems from the ethical concerns that the use of technology to enhance the human body in order to achieve a form of super-humanness might result in the sacrifice of the underprivileged others. In contrast to dystopic posthumanism, liberal posthumanism is a proponent of the use of these enhancing technologies whenever possible, as it holds onto the belief that these technologies exist only for the betterment of humankind. Both approaches, however, despite the fact that they take their stance from the connection between human and technology, still highlight an ontological divide between the human and the nonhuman, and formulated as such, they are characterized by a belief in a universal essence of human; therefore, they are grounded in the humanist forms of posthumanism.

Sharon presents a dividing line between these two humanist approaches and the nonhumanist forms of posthumanism, putting more emphasis on these nonhumanist perspectives. Drawing attention to radical posthumanism's view that the emerging biotechnologies are in fact contributing to the deconstruction of the dichotomies such as culture and nature, male and female, and human and nonhuman, Sharon moves onto her analysis of what she calls methodological posthumanism, which, according to her, is a way of looking into posthumanist discourse through the lens of the networks and zones of intersection between the human and the nonhuman. In spite of Sharon's radicalizing the distinction between radical and methodological posthumanism, these two nonhumanist categories were already known as "critical posthumanism," or "posthumanism" in the critical theory, which rejects the humanist perceptions or popular exhaustions of the term. However, Sharon prefers to segregate the two veins of critical posthumanism, and she suggests that radical posthumanism, which has celebratory inclinations regarding the dismantling of the divide between the human and nature, thematically draws upon the work of cyborg theorists such as Donna Haraway, Neil Badminton, Anne Balsamo, and Rosi Braidotti. These studies have questioned the human as a self-conscious entity, focusing on embracing the blurred boundaries between nature and culture. The authors compellingly argue that the concept of the human is not a fixed category, and they claim that the body of the human is originally a prosthetic device, even from the embryogenic stage onwards. In other words, technology is not an appendix or a supplement to enhance the human body, which will carry the human to a hierarchically higher level of super-human. Rather, technology is not extrinsic to human nature—if there is any—but it is an integral part of the organization as prostheses. Therefore, technology cannot be situated as an Other to the human. Methodological posthumanism, as Sharon continues to argue, follows a similar pattern, but it takes its roots from the work of Bruno Latour and Andrew Pickering, who philosophically highlight the enmeshment of nature and culture, as well as the human and the nonhuman. Methodological posthumanists, like their radical counterparts, reject the existence of a human autonomous subject that is entirely a distinct entity, ontologically divided from the world, or the object. Building on Latour's actor-network theory or Pickering's manglings, methodological posthumanists draw their idea upon the concept of ontological relationality, breaking down the organic / technological boundary, and demonstrating that there is no *a priori* distinction between humans and nonhumans. Despite her attempt to offer a genealogical link as well as a philosophical distinction between radical and methodological posthumanisms, Sharon's account does not directly state why there is a need to highlight these distinctions and why there is a need to offer a more mediated solution to posthumanist theories. Still, Sharon's mediated posthumanism is an attempt to propose a fresher look at the posthuman and posthumanism(s) when the

term is in danger of popular exhaustion; Sharon, by offering a combination of what she calls radical and what she labels as methodological, articulates the ambiguity within these posthumanisms. She embraces the radical posthumanists' celebration of the socio-political implications of the emerging biotechnologies' ability to collapse the binary oppositions that are underlying the current state of affairs within the domain of power relations. At the same time, she highlights, just as methodological posthumanists do, the ambivalence presented by technology, which renders new forms of engagement between the human and the nonhuman. Therefore, she provides a basis for viewing biotechnologies as a possibility to amplify new emergences within the more-than-human world, which encompasses the posthuman mode of being, knowing, and valuing. What Sharon offers as an alternative, thus, paves the way for, perhaps, an ethically supplemented, insatiably enriched, and a more praxis-oriented alternative approach to posthumanisms.

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