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Reclaiming Humanity in The Post-Human Era Through Emotional Education as a Philosophical Response

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Abstract

This article examines the contemporary crisis of human existence within the framework of post-humanism and proposes emotional education as a philosophical response to reclaim the meaning of being human. Post-humanism, as a critical movement beyond traditional anthrophocentrism, challenges the priviliged position of humans by situating them within a complex network of relations involving technology, non-human entities, and ecological systes. While this shift opens new possibilities for understanding existence, it also generates significant challenges, including the decentering of the human subject, the fluidity of identity, and the gradual weakening of human values such as emphaty, relational depth, and existential meaning. Employing a qualitative philosophical approach based on conceptual analysis and systematic literature review, this study enganges critically with post-humanist thought and reconstructs the concept of emotional education as developed by Alain de Botton. His ideas are interpreted as a coherent philosophical framework that emphasizes self understanding, emotional awareness, acceptance of imperfection, and reflective engagement with one's inner life. The analysis demonstrates that emotional education provides a viable pathway for addresing the challenges of post-humanism. First, it enables a reconfiguration of the human subject through emotional skepticism and the acceptance of cognitive limitations, thereby avoiding both naïve anthropocentrism and complete relativism. Second, it contributes to stabilizing identity in a fluid world by fostering coherence through reflection, relational awareness, and live practices. Third, it supports the preservation of human values in a technological age by cultivating balanced self-judgement, moderating excessive ambition, and sustaining meaningful interpersonal relations. Ultimately, this article argues that reclaiming humanity in the post-human era does nit require a return to human supremacy, but rather a rearticulation of human subjectivity grounded in emotional intelligence and philosophical reflection. Emotional education thus emerges as a critical resource for navigating the complexities of contemporary existence.

Keywords

Post-humanism; Emotional education, Philosophical anthropology, Technological society, Existensial crisis, Self-understanding, Human values

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world is moving toward a new landscape often described as the era of post-humanism. This term refers to a condition "beyond" humanism, a paradigm that for centuries has positioned the human being as the center of reality.[1] Post-humanism emerges not only as a critique of this anthropocentric view but also as an effort to reconceptualize the human position within a broader network that includes technology, ecology, and non-human entities. Rather than affirming human dominance, it proposes a more relational and non-hierarchical understanding of existence.

Within this framework, human beings are no longer regarded as the sole producers of knowledge and meaning.[2] Non-human entities—such as animals, artificial intelligence, and ecological systems—are increasingly acknowledged as part of the epistemological landscape. This shift implies that humans are not the ultimate measure of all things, but rather one actor among many within a complex network of relations. Post-humanism therefore functions both as a critique of anthropocentrism and as an attempt to transcend rigid definitions of the human, making it simultaneously deconstructive and reconstructive.

Historically, the emergence of post-humanism is closely linked to the development of postmodernism. While postmodernism challenged grand narratives and the idea of an autonomous rational subject, post-humanism extends this critique by questioning the privileged position of the human itself.[3] This development is also rooted in social and political movements such as feminism and postcolonialism, which exposed how the category of "human" has often been constructed through exclusion. As a result, post-humanism seeks to reopen the definition of humanity by recognizing the significance of alterity and difference.

In its contemporary development, post-humanism also intersects with transhumanism, which focuses on enhancing human capacities through technology. While transhumanism envisions the transformation of human biological limits, post-humanism emphasizes a philosophical rethinking of the human condition.[4] Despite

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[1] Helen Kopina, "Anthropocentrisme and Post-Humanism," dalam *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology.* Diedit oleh Hillary Callan (New Jersey: John Willey and Sons, 2020), 1.

[2] David Roden, *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 117.

[3] Francesca Ferrando, "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialism: Differences and Relations," *Existenz* 8, No. 2 (2013): 29.

[4] Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism,* 38.

their differences, both perspectives contribute to reshaping how humans understand themselves. In this sense, the post-human condition can be seen not only as a future possibility but also as a present reality, reflected in the ways humans live, act, and relate beyond traditional anthropocentric assumptions.[5]

Amid these transformations, modern society is increasingly shaped by demands for speed, efficiency, and adaptability. However, this acceleration often comes at the cost of self-reflection. While individuals are more connected externally, they frequently experience a growing disconnection from themselves. [6] One significant consequence is the diminishing ability to recognize and understand one's own emotional states. Individuals may struggle to identify what they feel, indicating that technological and social progress is not necessarily accompanied by deeper self-understanding.

This condition points to a broader existential problem. As humans lose their central position while simultaneously losing clarity about themselves, the question of what it means to be human becomes more urgent. This is not merely a psychological issue but a philosophical one, as it concerns how individuals interpret their existence within a rapidly changing paradigm. The challenge is not only to adapt to new conditions but also to maintain a coherent sense of self.

Although many studies have addressed post-humanism from technological, ethical, and social perspectives, relatively little attention has been given to emotional education as a philosophical response to this crisis.[7] Education is often framed in terms of cognitive skills or technical competencies, while the emotional dimension is treated as secondary. Yet in the context of existential uncertainty, the ability to understand and manage emotions becomes essential for reconstructing meaning and sustaining relationships.

In this regard, the thought of Alain de Botton offers a valuable perspective. He proposes that emotions are not merely spontaneous or irrational experiences, but can be cultivated through learning. Emotional education, therefore, becomes a structured effort to develop self-understanding and relational awareness.[8] It extends beyond

[5] Kopnina, "Anthropocentrisme and Post-Humanism", 5.

[6] Ferrando dan Rozzoni, "Vision Quest in Posthumanism Education: Focuses, Praxes, and Experiences," 2.

[7] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (London: Chicago Press, 1999), 2.

[8] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life: An Emotional Education* (London: Penguin Random House, 2019): 16.

personal well-being, influencing how individuals interact with others and navigate social life. In this way, emotional education provides a more holistic approach to understanding the human condition.

Based on this background, this article aims to examine how emotional education, as articulated in Alain de Botton's thought, can function as a philosophical response to the crisis of humanity in the post-human era. The novelty of this study lies in connecting post-humanism with emotional education and positioning the latter as a philosophical intervention rather than merely a psychological tool. Accordingly, this article argues that emotional education is not only a personal skill but also a pathway to reclaim the meaning of being human. In a context where humans are increasingly oriented toward transcending their limitations, emotional education redirects attention toward deeper self-understanding.[9] Thus, the future of humanity depends not only on technological advancement but also on the capacity to understand and interpret human experience itself.

METHOD

This article employs a qualitative philosophical approach grounded in conceptual analysis and systematic literature review. The primary objective is not to generate empirical data but to critically interpret and synthesize theoritical frameworks related to post-humanism and emotinal education, particularly as articulated in the works of Alain de Botton. The research begins wit a comprehensive review of key philosophical texts on post humanism, with particuar attention to its critique of anthropocentrism, its emphasis on relational ontology, and its implications for human identity in a technologically mediated world. Foundational ideas from contemporary post-humanist thinkers are examined to establish the conceptual background of the crisis of being human. This stage functions as the analytical lens through which the problem is framed. Subsequently, the study conducts a focused textual analysis of de Botton's works on emotional education.

His ideas ar systematically reconstructed into a coherent philosophical framework, highlighting core principles such as self-understanding, emotional skepticism, acceptance of imperfection, and the cultivation of reflective inner dialogue. Rather than treating these ideas as isolated insights, the method integrates them into a structured account of emotional education as a form of philosophical

[9] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life An Emotional Education,* 6.

practice. The final stage involeves a critical synthesis between post-humanist discourse and de Botton's philosophical insights. Through a comparative and interpretative method, the study demonstrates how emotional education can function as a response to key post-human challenges, including the decentering of the human subject, the fluidity of identity, and the erosion of human values in a techonological age. Overall, this method allows for a normative and conceptual by proposing emotional education as a philosophical pathway to reclaim and stabilize human subjectivity without reverting to traditional anthropocentric assumptions.

RESULT

The Crisis of Being Human in The Post-Human Condition Decentering the Human

One of the central premises of post-humanist philosophy is its critique of the long-standing assumption that human beings occupy the highest position in the order of existence.[10] As emphasized by Francesca Ferrando, post-humanism does not simply offer a new perspective but fundamentally challenges the anthropocentric framework that has shaped how humans understand reality. For centuries, humans have been positioned as the primary measure of value, knowledge, and meaning. Post-humanism questions this privileged status by situating humans within a broader network that includes non-human entities such as animals, technology, and ecological systems. Unlike transhumanism, which seeks to enhance human capacities through technological advancement, post-humanism operates at a critical and reflective level.[11] It does not aim to replace the human with a more advanced form, but rather to interrogate the very concept of the "human" itself. In doing so, it reveals that this concept has never been neutral. Historically, the category of the human has been constructed through processes of exclusion, marginalizing those who do not conform to dominant norms, including non-European populations, women, and other "others." Post-humanism reopens these boundaries, allowing for a more inclusive understanding of existence.

A key consequence of this critique is the collapse of hierarchical structures that place humans at the top. Instead of viewing humans as superior beings, post-humanism presents them as participants in a complex and interconnected web of life.

[10] Ferrando, *The Art of Being Posthuman: Who Are We in 21st Century?*. 4.

[11] Ferrando, "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialism: Differences and Relations," 27.

Relationships between humans and non-human entities are no longer defined by domination, but by interdependence. Traditional classification systems that rank living beings hierarchically become insufficient in capturing this relational reality. In their place, post-humanism proposes a perspective in which existence is defined by interconnectedness rather than hierarchy.

This shift also reshapes the understanding of human identity. Rather than being fixed and stable, identity is viewed as fluid and continuously evolving through relationships and experiences. This includes the relationship between humans and technology, which is no longer seen as purely instrumental. Technology becomes an integral part of human existence, forming a symbiotic relationship in which both humans and technologies shape each other.[12] At the same time, post-humanism resists reducing human existence solely to technological terms. Ferrando warns against techno-reductionism, emphasizing that while technology is central to contemporary life, it must not be treated as the sole determinant of human identity.

This perspective resonates with Martin Heidegger's critique of technology, particularly his concept of enframing (Gestell), which describes how technological thinking shapes human perception of the world.[13] Heidegger argues that technology is not merely a neutral tool, but a framework that influences how reality is understood. Building on this insight, Ferrando highlights that technological design and use are always shaped by underlying assumptions about humanity and the world. Technology, therefore, is not value-neutral but reflects broader philosophical orientations.[14] To illustrate this, Ferrando imagines alternative forms of technology that do not isolate humans from their environment but instead enhance their engagement with it. For example, a computational system integrated with bodily movement and natural surroundings would allow individuals to interact with technology in more dynamic and embodied ways. Such a vision demonstrates that technology can be designed to foster connection rather than alienation, bridging the divide between humans, their bodies, and the environment.

Through this lens, post-humanism seeks to transcend traditional dualisms, such as those between humans and animals or between the physical and the

[12] Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism*, 51.

[13] Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism,* 49.

[14] T. Philips Nichols dan Gerald Campano, "Posthumanism and Literacy Studies," *Language Arts* 94, No. 4 (2017): 248.

technological. It opens possibilities for reimagining existence in more integrative and relational terms. Decentering the human, therefore, is not simply about diminishing human importance, but about transforming how existence is understood. Humans are no longer fixed centers but participants in an evolving network of relations.

However, this transformation raises a critical question: if humans are no longer the center, how are they to understand themselves? Without sufficient reflective capacity, this shift may lead to a loss of clarity about human identity. It is within this tension that a crisis of being human emerges—not because humans have lost their position, but because they struggle to redefine themselves within a decentered and relational framework.

Fluid Identities and The Fragmented Self

One of the most significant consequences of post-humanism is the transformation of how human identity is understood. In classical frameworks, identity is typically seen as stable and grounded in a fixed essence. By contrast, post-humanist thought views identity as fluid, dynamic, and continuously in the process of becoming.[15] The human being is no longer a completed entity, but an ongoing project shaped by changing relationships and experiences.

Post-humanism can thus be understood as a form of post-centrism and post-exclusivism. It rejects the idea of a single center that defines meaning and instead opens space for multiple forms of existence within more egalitarian relations. This approach also challenges rigid dualisms—such as human versus non-human or subject versus object—by dissolving these boundaries and emphasizing relational complexity. As a result, identity is no longer confined within hierarchical structures, but emerges from a plural and interconnected framework.

However, this fluidity does not imply the disappearance of the human as a meaningful category. Rather, post-humanism relativizes the human position without eliminating it. Drawing on Martin Heidegger, as interpreted by Francesca Ferrando, the human is no longer the ruler of beings but the "shepherd of being," responsible for sustaining and caring for other forms of existence.[16] This redefines human identity in ethical and relational terms, rather than in terms of superiority.

[15] Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism*, 154.
[16] Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism,* 62.

In this context, identity is no longer determined by fixed categories such as biology or social classification. Instead, it is formed through complex interactions between humans and non-human entities, including technology and the environment. Human identity becomes hybrid, emerging from the entanglement of elements that were once considered separate. Consequently, the boundary between human and non-human becomes increasingly blurred, making identity neither pure nor isolated.

Post-humanism also challenges the notion that identity is fully given at birth. Becoming human is understood as an ongoing process shaped by experience, social interaction, and the internalization of values. This process of "humanizing" reflects the idea that identity is actively constructed rather than passively received.[17] At the same time, relationships with non-human entities become more reciprocal. Humans may acknowledge their instinctual dimensions, while non-human entities are increasingly recognized as part of meaningful relational networks.

These dynamics lead to a condition in which identity is inherently unstable. The self no longer has a fixed center but consists of multiple layers that may not always align coherently. This fragmentation does not imply destruction, but rather reflects the complexity of contemporary existence. Individuals must navigate shifting roles, expectations, and relationships, resulting in a continuous process of self-negotiation.[18]

As a consequence, maintaining a stable sense of self becomes more difficult. There is no longer a single, reliable framework through which individuals can interpret their experiences. While this condition allows for greater freedom and creativity in self-formation, it also introduces risks of confusion and disorientation. Identity becomes something that must be constantly redefined rather than securely possessed.

Ultimately, the fluidity of identity in the post-human condition highlights a deeper existential challenge. When identity is no longer stable, the question of what it means to be human becomes increasingly complex. Individuals can no longer rely on fixed definitions but must construct meaning within ever-changing conditions. This raises a crucial question: how can a sense of coherence be maintained amid fragmentation? This tension lies at the heart of the contemporary crisis of being

[17] Ferrando, *The Art of Being Posthuman: Who Are We in 21st Century?*, 7.
[18] Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism,* 125.

human, while also opening possibilities for more reflective and adaptive forms of self-understanding.

The Degradation of Human Values

The development of digital technology and artificial intelligence has profoundly transformed not only patterns of work but also the quality of interpersonal relationships and the way individuals interpret their existence. One of the most visible shifts in the post-human era is the migration of relational spaces from physical to digital environments. Interactions once grounded in face-to-face encounters are now mediated by screens, algorithms, and virtual systems. This transformation is not neutral; it reshapes how humans experience intimacy, empathy, and the meaning of relationships.

In this context, Francesca Ferrando raises a critical question: what happens when humans form relationships with entities that are no longer fully human, such as humanoid robots equipped with cognitive and affective capacities? [19] Such a possibility challenges traditional notions of friendship and relationality. As technology increasingly performs cognitive and emotional functions, it ceases to be merely a tool and begins to act as a partner—or even a competitor—in shaping meaning and interaction. This shift creates a need to reaffirm the human position, not as dominant, but as reflective. Ferrando relates this to the concept of *auto-poiesis*, the capacity of humans to actively shape and sustain their own existence rather than passively adapting to technological change.[20]

However, this reaffirmation must avoid falling into a renewed form of anthropocentrism, particularly cognitive anthropocentrism, which assumes the superiority of human reasoning. From a post-humanist perspective, such claims are problematic, as different forms of existence possess distinct ways of engaging with the world. Human uniqueness lies not in superiority, but in the capacity for reflection and responsibility within a broader relational network. Cultural responses to technology further illustrate this tension. In Japan, technology is often integrated into spiritual and cultural life, as seen in practices where robots participate in rituals.[21] This reflects a worldview in which technology is not radically separated from human existence. In

[19] Francesca Ferrando, "The Posthuman Divine: When Robots Can Be Enlightened," *Sophia* 58, No. 1 (2019): 647.
[20] Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism,* 121.
[21] Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism*, 100.

contrast, Western contexts frequently frame technology as a potential threat, producing narratives of anxiety about artificial intelligence. These differing perspectives reveal that the human–technology relationship is shaped not only by technical developments but also by deeper philosophical and cultural assumptions.

At the level of everyday life, the increasing mediation of relationships through technology has significant consequences for empathy. Direct, embodied interaction—once central to the development of emotional understanding—is increasingly replaced by rapid, surface-level digital exchanges. While connections become easier to establish, they also become more fragile and less profound.[22] The depth of human relationships is thus at risk, as digital communication often limits opportunities for sustained attentiveness and genuine presence.

This transformation also affects the construction of meaning. In highly technologized societies, life is increasingly oriented toward efficiency, productivity, and speed. Values such as patience, attentiveness, and presence are marginalized. As a result, individuals may experience a loss of existential grounding, as meaning is no longer cultivated through deep, lived experiences but through fragmented and accelerated interactions.[23]

Nevertheless, post-humanism does not advocate a purely pessimistic view. It opens the possibility of developing a more balanced and symbiotic relationship between humans and technology. Such a perspective emphasizes awareness of interconnectivity, encouraging humans to act responsibly within a network that includes technology, the environment, and other forms of life. This awareness is essential, as technology is no longer external to human existence but an integral part of it.

Ultimately, the degradation of human values in the post-human era emerges from a complex interaction between technological systems, cultural frameworks, and shifting modes of thought. The central challenge is not simply to control technology, but to ensure that human capacities for empathy, reflection, and meaning-making are preserved. The future of humanity depends on whether individuals can integrate

[22] Francesca Ferrando, "Who is Afraid of Artificial Intelligence? A Posthumanist Take on the AI Takeover Scenario," *Humanities and Artificial Intelligence* (2022), 86.

[23] Francesca Ferrando dan Stefano Rozzoni, "Vision Quest in Posthumanism Education: Focuses, Praxes, and Experiences," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 31, No. 4 (2024), 14.

technological advancement with a sustained commitment to the values that define what it means to be human.

Emotional Education in Thought of Alain de Botton

Alain de Botton's concept of emotional education emerges from a critical assessment of modern education, which tends to prioritize technical skills and cognitive achievement while neglecting the emotional dimension of human life.[24] In contemporary society, education is often reduced to a pathway toward professional success and economic productivity. As a result, capacities such as self-understanding, emotional regulation, and relational maturity are marginalized, even though they fundamentally shape the quality of human existence.[25] For de Botton, this imbalance represents a serious deficiency in how education is conceived.

Emotional education, in his framework, is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing from philosophy, psychology, art, sociology, and even economics. This approach reflects the view that emotions are not merely private or internal states, but forces that influence how individuals think, relate, and act in the world. Thus, emotional education is not supplementary but foundational, equipping individuals to navigate the complexities of modern life with greater awareness and meaning.

A central concern in de Botton's thought is the limited degree of self-understanding among individuals. He argues that people are often the last to recognize what they truly feel.[26] In a fast-paced environment saturated with information, emotions frequently arise without being properly identified or interpreted. Individuals may experience anxiety, anger, or joy without understanding their origins, leading to a sense of estrangement from their own inner life. This disconnection weakens one's capacity to respond to experience in a reflective and coherent manner.

This condition is intensified by social pressures that encourage constant comparison. Individuals often measure themselves against external standards of success, adopting goals that may not align with their authentic needs. While

[24] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life Guide to Modern Manners: 20 Skills to Navigate The Dillemas of Social Life* (London: The School of Life, 2019), 4.

[25] Sebastian Espoz-Lazo, dkk, "Emotional Education for the Development of Primary and Secondary School Students Through Physical Education: Literature Review," *Education Sciences* 10 No. 192 (2020), 10.

[26] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life: An Emotional Education*, 29.

comparison can motivate growth, it can also generate emotional strain and a loss of personal orientation. The pursuit of externally defined ideals frequently results in dissatisfaction and inner conflict.

As a response, de Botton proposes what he calls "philosophical meditation," a reflective practice aimed at cultivating awareness of emotional experience. Unlike spiritual meditation, this approach emphasizes deliberate questioning and analysis of one's feelings. Individuals are encouraged to pause and ask: What is the source of my anxiety? Why do I feel disappointed? What drives my ambition?[27] Through such inquiry, vague emotions become more intelligible, allowing for deeper understanding and more thoughtful responses.

Emotional education also extends to interpersonal relationships. De Botton highlights that human actions are rarely emotionally simple. Even acts perceived as virtuous, such as generosity, may be shaped by underlying feelings like guilt or insecurity. Recognizing these complexities fosters a more nuanced understanding of relationships and reduces the tendency to idealize or oversimplify human behavior.

A key marker of emotional maturity, in de Botton's view, is the capacity for acceptance. Rather than attempting to control or "correct" others, individuals are called to adopt a more realistic and open stance. This involves acknowledging both personal limitations and those of others. De Botton further emphasizes the importance of reconciling with imperfection, even embracing what he terms "foolishness" as an inherent aspect of being human. [28] Such awareness cultivates humility, tolerance, and a more compassionate approach to relationships.

These insights are also relevant in the context of work. De Botton critiques the tendency to conform to external expectations without questioning their meaning, producing individuals who are efficient yet lack direction. Emotional education helps restore balance by encouraging authenticity and reflection, enabling individuals to align their professional lives with their inner experiences.

Finally, de Botton identifies a tension between romantic and classical approaches to life: the former emphasizing intuition and sincerity, the latter rationality and discipline. Emotional education seeks to integrate these orientations, ensuring that neither emotion nor reason dominates in isolation. Ultimately, it aims

[27] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life: An Emotional Education*, 68.
[28] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life: An Emotional Education,* 124.

to form individuals capable of understanding themselves, relating meaningfully to others, and navigating life with clarity.

Emotional Education as a Response to Post-Humanism Reclaiming the Human Subject

Within the broader project of post-humanism, which challenges anthropocentrism, a fundamental question emerges: can the human being still function as a meaningful subject? The answer does not lie in restoring human dominance, but in reconstructing the human subject in a more reflective and humble way. In this regard, Alain de Botton's concept of emotional education offers a valuable contribution, particularly through what can be described as emotional skepticism.

Rooted in the classical tradition of Socratic thought, emotional skepticism begins with the recognition of one's own limitations. True self-knowledge does not lead to certainty, but to an awareness that human understanding is always partial and prone to error. De Botton emphasizes that individuals frequently misinterpret situations, misunderstand others, and generate disproportionate emotional responses.[29] Thus, maturity is not defined by perfect self-awareness, but by the ability to acknowledge these limitations. Drawing on the skeptical tradition of Pyrrho, this perspective highlights the inherent "blind spots" in human cognition, reinforcing the idea that human judgment cannot serve as an absolute measure of reality.

This insight has important implications for critiques of anthropocentrism. If human cognition itself is unreliable, then placing the human at the center of all meaning becomes problematic.[30] Post humanism rightly challenges this assumption, yet de Botton complements this critique by insisting on the importance of internal reflection. The deconstruction of human centrality must be accompanied by a deeper awareness of human cognitive and emotional limits.

De Botton also critiques the modern fixation on success, which divides individuals into simplistic categories of winners and losers. This framework encourages constant achievement while ignoring the enduring reality of failure. In many cases, failure is not temporary but becomes part of one's identity. Rather than denying or concealing it, de Botton proposes embracing failure as a source of self-

[29] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life: An Emotional Education*, 30.

[30] Syan Bayne dan Petar Jandric, "From Anthropocentric Humanism to Critical Posthumanism in Digital Education," *Knowledge Cultures* 5, No. 2 (2017): 24.

understanding. Here, the concept of tragedy becomes significant: it reveals that even well-intentioned individuals may suffer unjust outcomes, challenging the assumption that life is governed by fairness or proportionality.

Through the lens of tragedy, individuals are invited to reinterpret their experiences with greater compassion. This approach fosters empathy, enabling a more humane understanding of both oneself and others. Importantly, this reflection extends beyond human relationships to include interactions with technology. In the post-human era, technology is often perceived as flawless, yet it too is subject to limitations and failure.[31] Recognizing this prevents blind reliance on technological systems and encourages a more balanced perspective.

In this context, empathy expands beyond human-centered boundaries. It involves acknowledging the limitations of all entities—human and non-human—without collapsing their differences. Such an approach reframes relationships not in terms of domination or fear, but in terms of mutual recognition. De Botton further suggests that meaningful relationships are grounded not in shared identity, but in emotional resonance—the ability to connect through shared ways of feeling and interpreting experience.

Ultimately, reclaiming the human subject in the post-human era does not mean restoring supremacy, but cultivating a subject who is aware of its limitations, open to relationality, and capable of empathy.[32] Emotional education plays a central role in this process by fostering honest self-understanding, acceptance of failure, and deeper relational awareness. In this way, the human remains significant—not as the center of all things, but as a reflective and responsible participant within an interconnected world.

Stabilizing Identity in a Fluid World

Within the post-human condition, where identity is increasingly fluid, a key challenge emerges: how can individuals maintain stability without reverting to rigid essentialism?[33] Alain de Botton offers a nuanced response by reframing stability not

[31] V. Bozalek dan M. Zembylas, "Critical Posthumanism, New Materialism, and the Afeective Turn for Socially Just Pedagoges in Higher Education," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, No. 3 (2016): 197.

[32] T. Philip Nichols dan Gerald Campano, "Post-humanism and Literacy Studies," *Language Arts* 95, No. 4 (2017): 248.

[33] Syan Bayne, "Posthumanism: A Navigation Aid for Educators," *Journal for Research and Debate* 2, No. 1 (2018): 3.

as certainty or perfection, but as the capacity to accept limitation, understand suffering, and cultivate meaningful relationships.

A central problem in modern life, according to de Botton, is the implicit demand for perfection—the expectation to be consistently successful, happy, and in control.[34] Such ideals are inherently unrealistic and often lead to dissatisfaction. When individuals fail to meet these standards, they experience not only disappointment but also a deeper disorientation, as they lose a stable framework through which to interpret themselves. Identity becomes fragile because it is tied to unattainable ideals.

As an alternative, de Botton proposes the concept of consolation. Rather than eliminating suffering, consolation allows individuals to live meaningfully despite it. Stability, in this sense, is not built upon flawless achievement but upon the ability to endure imperfection with awareness. Two key elements support this process: understanding and companionship. Understanding involves recognizing and articulating one's emotional experiences, thereby reducing their overwhelming power.[35] Companionship, meanwhile, arises from the realization that suffering is universal. This shared condition fosters solidarity and prevents individuals from feeling isolated in their struggles.

De Botton also emphasizes that identity is inherently relational. It is formed through interactions with others and with the broader world, rather than in isolation. This perspective is deepened through cosmological reflection: when individuals consider the vastness of the universe, their personal struggles appear less absolute. This does not diminish the meaning of experience, but situates it within a wider context, allowing for a more balanced and sustainable sense of self.

In addition to reflection, identity stability is cultivated through everyday practices, particularly work. Drawing on Adam Smith's notion of specialization, de Botton extends its significance beyond economics to the formation of identity. Work shapes habits, perspectives, and dispositions that gradually influence how individuals understand themselves. These patterns extend beyond professional roles, contributing to a sense of continuity in life. Even when individuals change careers, their accumulated experiences provide a structured basis for adaptation.

[34] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life: An Emotional Education*, 23.
[35] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life: An Emotional Education*, 23.

This suggests that identity, while flexible, is not entirely without structure. It contains points of stabilization derived from repeated actions and lived experiences. Moreover, the capacity to navigate shifting identities is not unique to the post-human era. From childhood through adulthood, individuals continuously adapt to new roles and contexts. What distinguishes the present condition is the intensity and speed of these transformations.

The central issue, therefore, is not change itself, but how individuals respond to it. When change is perceived as a threat, it can produce fragmentation and confusion.[36] However, when understood as an ongoing process of self-formation, it becomes a source of growth. Emotional education is crucial in this regard, as it enables individuals to interpret change reflectively rather than reactively. Ultimately, stabilizing identity in a fluid world does not mean restoring a fixed self, but cultivating coherence within transformation. This coherence is dynamic, sustained through self-understanding, relationships, and everyday practices. A stable identity is not one that resists change, but one that remains open to it while maintaining a sense of continuity and meaning.

Preserving Humanity in a Technological Age

Within the post-human landscape—defined by increasingly intense interactions between humans and technology—the central challenge is how to preserve human values without rejecting ongoing transformation. While technological engagement expands possibilities and reshapes identity, it also risks disorienting individuals from what fundamentally defines the human.[37] The question, therefore, is not whether humans should adapt to technology, but how they can remain human in the process of adaptation.

Francesca Ferrando warns against an excessive reliance on technology as a means of overcoming all human limitations. Such an orientation reflects the logic of transhumanism, which risks reducing the human condition to a project of constant enhancement. This perspective neglects the fact that limitation is not a defect to be eliminated, but an essential dimension of human existence. Similarly, Alain de Botton critiques the modern tendency toward unrestrained ambition. While ambition can

[36] Annouchka Bayley, "Posthumanism, Decolonility, and Re-Imagining Pedagogy," *Parallax* 24, No. 3 (2018): 251.

[37] Nicole Ross, "My Octopus Teacher, Posthumanism, and Posthuman Education: A Pedagogical Conceptualization," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 36, No. 2 (2021): 12.

motivate growth, it often generates anxiety and dissatisfaction when tied to unrealistic expectations of perfection.

As an alternative, de Botton proposes the "philosophy of good enough." This approach does not endorse mediocrity, but promotes a realistic orientation toward life. Meaning is not derived from perfection, but from adequacy: relationships need not be flawless to be valuable, work need not be ideal to be meaningful, and life itself need not meet absolute standards to be worthwhile.[38] In a technological culture driven by efficiency and optimization, this perspective functions as a form of resistance against excessive demands.

Another crucial dimension of preserving humanity lies in the management of inner life. De Botton observes that individuals are shaped by internalized voices originating from parents, social environments, and cultural expectations.[39] These voices often become sources of harsh self-criticism, particularly in a digital context where individuals are constantly exposed to idealized standards. As a result, the inner voice, which should enable reflection, can instead produce persistent feelings of inadequacy.

To address this, de Botton introduces the idea of becoming a "kind judge" of oneself. This involves cultivating a form of self-assessment that is fair, compassionate, and proportionate. Rather than allowing negative internal voices to dominate, individuals learn to distinguish between constructive and destructive criticism. Emotional education plays a key role here, fostering the reflective capacity needed to manage internal dynamics in a healthier way.

This process also reveals the ontological complexity of human existence. Individuals are not only thinkers and actors, but also beings who continuously internalize external influences. In a digitally interconnected world, this process intensifies, exposing individuals to competing norms and expectations. Consequently, preserving humanity involves not only navigating external relationships but also maintaining balance within one's internal world. Emotional education becomes essential in this context. It equips individuals with the ability to understand their emotions, interpret experiences critically, and respond to change without losing direction.[40] Rather than rejecting technology, individuals are called to

[38] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life: An Emotional Education*, 262.
[39] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life: An Emotional Education*, 62.
[40] Alain de Botton, *The School of Life: An Emotional Education*, 66.

integrate it thoughtfully into their lives, ensuring that it enhances rather than diminishes human values.

Ultimately, preserving humanity in the technological age depends less on technological development itself and more on how individuals respond to it. By regulating ambition, embracing imperfection, and cultivating self-awareness, humans can sustain their identity as reflective and meaningful subjects. In this way, technology becomes not a threat, but part of an ongoing process of human self-understanding in a rapidly changing world.

CONCLUSION:

This article arises from a fundamental concern about what it means to be human in a post-human landscape marked by the decentering of anthropocentrism, fluid identities, and the pervasive role of technology. In such a context, humans can no longer claim a stable position as the center of reality, leading to an existential crisis characterized by self-alienation, fragmented identity, and weakened relational depth. Through an analysis of Alain de Botton's thought, this study argues that emotional education offers a philosophical response to this condition. Rather than functioning merely as psychological therapy, emotional education enables individuals to interpret their experiences, manage emotional responses, and cultivate more authentic relationships. It fosters self-skepticism, acceptance of limitation, and recognition of failure as intrinsic to human existence. Moreover, it contributes to stabilizing identity not as something fixed, but as a dynamic coherence formed through understanding, relationships, and daily practices. In relation to technology, emotional education helps preserve human values without rejecting progress. Concepts such as "good enough" and the management of inner voices allow individuals to resist perfectionism and develop a more balanced self-understanding. Ultimately, reclaiming humanity in the post-human era does not mean restoring human dominance, but reconstructing a reflective, relational, and self-aware subject capable of living meaningfully within ongoing transformation.

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