Theorizing Cyborg: Posthumanism and Approaches to Public Health

Annliya Shaijan
Postgraduate in English Language and Literature
St. Joseph’s College, Devagiri, Calicut

Abstract

Cyborg is defined by Donna Haraway, in her “A Cyborg Manifesto” (1986), as “a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity.” A cyborg or a cybernetic organism is a hybrid of machine and organism. The cyborg theory de-stabilizes from gender politics, traditional notions of feminism, critical race theory, and queer theory and identity studies. The technologies associated with the cyborg theory are complex and diverse. It valorizes the “monstrous, hybrid, disabled, mutated or otherwise ‘imperfect’ or ‘unwhole’ body.” Scholars have founded it useful and fruitful in the social and cultural analysis of health and medicine. Cyborg theory is an intriguing approach to analyze the range of arenas such as biotechnology, medical issues and health conditions that incorporate disability, menopause, female reproduction, Prozac, foetal surgery and stem cells. The One Health Initiative is a movement that ran as a partial precursor to the posthuman approaches to public health. Cyborg theory offers perspectives to analyze the cultural and social meanings of contemporary digital health technologies. Theorizing cyborg called for cultural interrogations. Critics challenged Haraway’s cyborg and the cyborg theory for not affecting political changes.

In the study of international relations, the ‘posthuman turn’ reflects on the role played by humans in the contemporary global context. This provocation defamiliarizes the mainstream narratives of humanity. Animals and robots are integral to the core of posthumanism as they are
vital for the posthumanist distributed cognition. Robots are central to the contemporary modern lives that they are the other, the same or the chimera with respect to humans. Posthumanism allows the human and the robotic world to develop interconnected potentials, venturing into the existential quest. Posthuman ecocriticism is concerned with the implications of hybrid life forms. It investigates on how to graft the technological onto the biological. Posthuman theories explore the environmental and the socio-technological reasons. By integrating the human and the ‘non-human’, it focuses on the humanity rather than the supernatural and the divine, thus emphasizing on the traditions of feminist and post-modern writings. Posthumanism, thus understands the human species as a historical effect, with humanism as an ideological effect.


The cyborg theory de-stabilizes from gender politics, traditional notions of feminism, critical race theory, queer theory and identity studies. The cyborg incorporates the potential to eradicate the fear of any limitations in man. Haraway’s use of feminist theory of cyborg politics in her *A Cyborg Manifesto*, open up new ways in the arena of fragmentation in traditional identity politics. Her cyborg feminism offers a political struggle that revolves around coalitions rather than divisions and it represents ‘transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities.’ It blurs the categorical distinctions such as human-machine, nature-culture and human-animal. Cyborgs create new modes of resistance and recoupling, and thus unsettle the existing order. Haraway’s conception reflects the replacement of the post-gendered world with the post-cultural world. The social construction of race, culture and ethnicity are shed off. The metaphor of the cyborg has also entered the music and visual art of Bjork Guðmundsdóttir. Bjork incorporated her hybrid metaphorical figure that he tends to lose physical embodiment. In his verse, Bachelorette,
he introduces the cyborg world through the image of the “fountain of blood”, in which Haraway’s sense of perversion can be found.

The technologies associated with the cyborg theory are complex and diverse. It valorizes the “monstrous, hybrid, disabled, mutated or otherwise ‘imperfect’ or ‘unwhole’ body” (Collyer). Scholars have found it useful and fruitful in the social and cultural analysis of health and medicine. Cyborg theory is an intriguing approach to analyze the range of arenas such as biotechnology, medical issues and health conditions that incorporate disability, menopause, female reproduction, Prozac, foetal surgery and stem cells. Cyborg theory offers perspectives to analyze the cultural and social meanings of contemporary digital health technologies. Theorizing cyborg called for cultural interrogations. Haraway’s cyborg theory, an intriguing approach, rejected essentialism and proposed a monstrous world merging the animal and the machine. The utopian existence created by the Haraway’s vision produce human-like beings that break the gender binaries. She urges the feminists to rely on posthumanism and the technoscientific knowledge as a source of radical liberation. The society’s imposition of the dualism and binaries are interrogated with the binary of the human and the machine. However, she herself is aware of the “antagonistic dualisms” hidden behind the metaphor of the ‘cyborg’ figure that results in the domination of the master over the vulnerable. “Haraway notes that she no longer views cyborgs as machine-organism hybrids or ‘indeed hybrids at all’, but rather as ‘imploded entities, dense material semiotic things” (Collyer). She envisions her cyborg at the intersection of feminism, science and technology.

The biomechanics introduces two hybrids of genetic body and cyborg body. The pioneers, Clynes and Kline, in the field to generate man-machine systems, drew ways to new health technologies and their vision of the kind of cyborg has turned to a reality. In health and medicine, the body becomes a central concept. A digital cyborg incorporates the digital technology into the
body and an ideal cyborg barely sees itself to be one among them. The technological aspect simply turns out to be the part of their everyday world, usual habits and routine modes of operation. The cyborg becomes an important segment of the digital health discourses. The digitized cyborg supports a reflexive, self-monitoring awareness of the body. The digitized cyborg assemblage often becomes conservative in the sense that it seeks the ideals of wholeness, purity and self-responsibility espoused by medicine and public health, and recognizes the potential to enhance and improve the well-being, health and medical care. However, Haraway’s fictional disruptive cyborg of political purposes often threatens the figure of the digitized cyborg assemblage.

The concept of the digitized cyborg as part of the configuration of digital data assemblages results in the hybrid forms acting cybernetically as data generated in real time. The invention marks the move from the static cyborg to the dynamic nature of contemporary digitized bodies. The capacities of the bodies extend and present themselves in varied ways. The digitized cyborg assemblage, that are configured by the digital health technologies gives a strong support system to the self-monitoring awareness of the body. The habits and the movements of the body are monitored constantly. Gregory Bateson opines that the cyborg includes all the external pathways via which the information travels along with the skin. The hybrid body holds the capacity to disrupt the persisting dualisms and is transgressive of the dominant cultural order.

The One Health Initiative is a movement that ran as a partial precursor to the posthuman approaches to public health. The initiative aims to juxtapose human, animal and environment health. The mutual interdependences between these sectors underlines the concept of ‘one health,’ that marks a paradigm shift in the discipline. One Health, though is a new term, has ancient roots. The Greek physician, Hippocrates in his On Airs, Waters, and Places, introduced impacts of environmental conditions on health of human. It focusses on the surveillance of the environment,
animals and humans to develop upstream interventions and provide practical solutions with broad implications. The essence of the initiative lies in the approaches to improve health in these domains through a collaborative, integrated and multidisciplinary processes. The human-animal interface is an important phase in One-Health initiative. The sanitation practices of ‘One World One Health’ initiative unite the veterinary medicine and the humans. The interposition of various theories operates under this realm. Walter Benjamin’s angelic host, Jacques Derrida’s monstrous arrivant, Michel Foucault’s abnormal, and Donna Haraway’s cyborg find space under the discipline. The interdisciplinary alliance unites the physicians, osteopaths, veterinaries, dentists, nurses and other scientific-health and environmentally related disciplines, on the basis of a simple hypothesis. It has social repercussions and pursues ecological and social sustainability. Urbanization, globalization, climate change, wars and terrorism, and microbial and chemical pollution of land and water sources create new threats to the health of both humans and animals, and increases the concerns of public health. One-health is a post-anthropocentric concept and brings together human care practitioners, veterinaries, and public health professionals for the sake of environmental, social and individual sustainability. The One Health initiative is seen as a partial precursor to posthumanism because it views the health of the population as a combination of human and animal health.

“The posthuman Humanities can create and evolve a new set of narratives about the planetary dimension of globalized humanity; the evolutionary sources of morality; the future of our and other species; the semiotic systems of technological apparatus; the processes of translation underscoring the Digital Humanities; the role of gender and ethnicity as factors that index access to the posthuman predicament and the institutional implications of them all. This is a new and innovative agenda, which builds on but is not confined to either humanism or anthropocentrism- a
genuinely new programme for the Humanities in the twentieth century” (Braidotti). Posthumanism contextualizes new tools for public health enquiry. Will putforths the perspective of posthumanism that provides space to acknowledge multiplicity of public health practices. It foregrounds the encounters and relations between the human and the non-human. Posthuman perspectives offers much more than merely a concern for new possibilities for human existence. Posthumanism reframes current social enquiry by looking more carefully at the role non-human elements, such as objects, other organisms and the environment play. Attempts link posthumanism and transhumanism. Transhumanism engages with ideas of non-organic, biological and pharmaceutical enhancement. While some of this literature cautions on the ethical consequences of making humans more than they currently are, much of this work has a celebratory, science-fiction orientation, not to say messianic sentiment, given that forms of transhumanism have morphed into a number of new religious movements. Apparent crosses between literature and certain terms such as hybrid or cyborg of Haraway, invoke processes of melding, mixing and the unsettling existing categories, rather than as literal accounts of human augmentation.

The intellectual and moral commitments underscoring public health are driven by the fundamental aim of studying and improving human health. In various contexts, health implies animal health, plant health, the health of the environment, and that of internet in postmodern era. Posthumanism enlarges the potential of the category to broaden and reconceive non-human elements. Public health emphasizes rational approaches to health research. “Biopsychosocial environmental” models, derived from epidemiology, places humans at the center of various domains of influence. Posthuman perspectives attempt to dissolve the human centrality and recognizes relationships leading to conceptualization of health as a diffuse quality across diverse entities that include the human, even though it cannot be solely attributed to the human.
Delineating the human from the non-human health foreclose theoretical insight and practical potential. Posthuman approaches tend to resist describing the relationships between things as a system or bounded field. Dennis takes posthuman approach to drug-taking in order to critically explore current techniques of harm reduction. Drawing on the concept of posthumanist performativity, HIV and ARVs are presented as travelling complex pathways in, and within, women’s bodies as women navigate the challenging healthcare resources of South Africa. The encounters and relations between the human and the non-human, includes wider values, political concerns and conceptual framings of public health approaches. Posthumanism is an intellectual exercise that includes the potential to generate productive and practical alternative accounts and identifies new spaces and opportunities to intervene. Posthuman perspectives explores what being human means in relation to what might be deemed as not human.

“The common concerns about public health among humans and animals is intensified as a result of urbanization, globalization, climate change, wars and terrorism, and microbial and chemical pollution of land and water sources, which have created new threats to the health of both animals and humans. Medical doctors and veterinarians need to join forces with environmental health scientists and practitioners to deal with disease outbreaks, prevent chronic disease caused by chemical exposure, and create heathier living environments” (Braidotti). Bourdieu contributed to a revitalization of humanism. Foucault emphasized that the very notion of a human being or being human is historically rooted. Foucault’s concept or insights of discourse in qualitative health research underplayed the materiality of embodied agency as well as the imprint of non-human animals in social life. Bourdieu’s poststructuralist contributions to humanism and Foucault’s poststructuralist contributions to posthumanism provide incisive insights. In humanist terms, tobacco control interventions themselves have become part of why gender and social class are
deeply implicated in where and when different groups of people smoke, what type and brands of
tobacco products are consumed, and by whom. Posthumanist scholarship foregrounds the
materiality of the cigarettes and place-based features in smoking as a social practice. This body of
scholarship invites greater reflexivity on public health’s history, present, and future.
Poststructuralism gives to these approaches the rise of non-representational theories, that signal a
conceptual and methodological shift away from social constructivism, the dominant mode of
critical analysis in the social sciences and humanities throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s.

Humans make use of prostheses to replace lost body parts such as limbs or teeth. These
could, in fact, replace the function of the lost parts to a certain degree, but seldom could replace
the lost. The limitations of this phenomenon are overcome through technological developments
and through the enhancement of human capabilities. The use of prostheses and man-machine
interfaces has moved technically to the foreground. Cochlea implants are examples. The process
aims in replacing certain functions, making the replacement better than the natural organ of the
body. The artificial organs establish a direct tie with the body and with the brain. Outer stimulus
is not transformed through human sensory organs into information for the brain, but directly
conducted to the central nervous system. The ontological shift representative of posthumanism
connects the social and the technical in ways that rearranges nonhuman and brings materiality to
the foreground. The posthuman re-visions shift our understanding of techno-sociological systems
and give new insights with the potential to illuminate new problems in the world. Earlier views of
reality privileged humans over nonhumans. However, Latour’s methodology and philosophy
interrogates the hierarchical relationship between humans and nonhumans in terms of influence
and agency. The posthuman necessarily brings along a new configuration of the role of theory.
New frameworks develop on building existing forms of critical, cultural, biopolitical and sociopolitical posthumanism. ‘Technologization’ and ‘posthumanization’ are reshaping contemporary organizations. The ‘organizational’ posthumanism attempts to approach to analyze, create and manage organizations that employs a post-dualistic and post-anthropocentric perspective. It recognizes that emerging technologies will increasingly transform the kinds of members, structures, systems, processes, physical and virtual spaces, and external ecosystems that are available for organizations to utilize. Posthumanist approaches can be delineated in technologies for human augmentation and enhancement, that includes forms of neuroprosthetics and genetic engineering, technologies for synthetic agency, that includes robotics, artificial intelligence and artificial life and technologies for digital-physical ecosystems and networks that create the environments within which and infrastructure through which human and artificial agents interact. Under the typology of contemporary posthumanism, ‘organizational’ posthumanism is shown as a hybrid form of posthumanism that combines both analytic, synthetic, theoretical, and practical elements. It recognizes the extent to which posthumanism has already transformed business and other organizations and also anticipates the fact that intensifying and accelerating processes of posthumanization will create future realities that are different from the current ones.

Robots and cyborgs increasingly challenge the understanding of human intelligence and rationality. Posthumanist theories decentered a previous understanding of the human known as the ‘enlightenment human’. Human like robots mould and transform human bodies with technological and biological machine-made parts. Posthumanist theories call for transversal approaches that aims to connect old dualisms in new and productive ways. Materialization of transversal theories of boundary crossing can be found in the development of robots and cyborgs. “The new posthumanist theories of relational ontologies and transversalities appear simultaneously with engineered
creations of increasingly complex robotic and cyborg machine devices. Both endeavors, the new technical “posthuman” inventions and posthumanist theories, put a spotlight on the prevalent theories of the “human” that have prevailed more or less explicitly in the learning sciences” (Hasse). Human-posthuman relationships are thematized in both robotics and in science fiction. The process work toward the technological development of anthropomorphic robots that are capable of providing social assistance, emotional support and sexual pleasure. Animals and robots are integral to the core of posthumanism as they are vital for the posthumanist distributed cognition. Robots are central to the contemporary modern lives that they are the other, the same or the chimera with respect to humans. Posthumanism allows the human and the robotic world to develop interconnected potentials, venturing into the existential quest.

Aesthetic representations of intimacy between man and machine gives a more nuanced and critical picture of possible future forms of desire. The fictional works are often complicit with the use of familiar dualistic paradigms as male-female or self-other. Drawing on Delueze and Guattari’s ideas of ‘becoming-other,’ scholars of posthumanism juxtaposes traditional approach of nondualist reconceptualization of human beings and of the technological other, reconceiving the centers on ‘encounters of alterity’ and ‘unnatural alliances.’ Robotics is a young field with ambitious goals, the ultimate one being the creation of machines that behave and think like humans. The interdisciplinary branch of engineering and science includes various branches of engineering like mechanical, electronic, information, computer science and others. It includes operation, use design and operation and computer systems that keep track of control, perception, information processing and sensory feedback. It aims to design intelligent machines that can aid humans in their everyday chores and keep them safe. The word “robotics” come from the word ‘robot’, which was introduced by Czech writer Karel Capek in his play Rossum’s Universal
Robots. Robots replace humans and can replicate human actions. They can take any form or demeanor, but mostly they resemble humans in appearance. The conceptualization of the use of machines that can operate autonomously can be traced back to the classical times. Scholars throughout history assumed the capability of robots to behave and manage tasks in human-like fashion. The field of robotics is rapidly evolving and the technological advances continue. The advancement of microscopic robots or nanorobots that can be injected into the human body, could revolutionize medicine and human health.

Ecocriticism and posthumanism are parallel and potentially overlapping fields concerned with biological change and highlights the need for both discipline to address the idea of culture as defined by the binary of nature and culture. Ecocriticism is becoming more post-human and post-natural in its questioning of the entrenched notion of the human, as well as the blurred boundaries between inorganic and organic matter. Posthuman ecocriticism expands the material ecocritical vision of storied matter to critically discern the cultural implications of currently emerging posthuman agencies such as synthetic matter responding to stimuli and exhibiting signs of spontaneous activity that ostensibly transfigure human ecologies and material-discursive practices. Posthumanism moves, relentlessly shifting the boundaries of being and things, of ontology, epistemology, and even politics. And these boundaries, especially those between human and nonhuman, are not only shifting but also porous: based on the – biological, cultural, structural – combination of agencies flowing from, through, and alongside the human, the posthuman discloses a dimension in which “we” and “they” are caught together in an ontological dance whose choreography follows patterns of irredeemable hybridization and stubborn entanglement. Life, in other words, discloses an environmental intimacy of connective matter, explained as “the co-constitutive materiality of human corporeality and nonhuman natures”.

The ‘posthuman turn’ in the study of international relations, a phrasing certain to raise eyebrows and possibly ire amongst some IR scholars, essentially asks us to reflect critically on the role of humanity in the contemporary global context. More specifically, this provocation asks us to defamiliarize mainstream narratives of ‘humanity’ so that it is possible to better understand how it is constructed, performed and protected. Given rapid and far-reaching technological development, unprecedented environmental change, and more broadly the profoundly transnational nature of key challenges confronting the earth, this approach asks whether we can continue to work with implicit but powerful modern conceptions of a humanity separated from nature. Olaf Corry’s intervention examines the role of ‘nature’ in international relations thought. Reflecting directly on how IR has engaged ‘nature’ or ‘the environment’ over time, Corry suggests that IR had ultimately forgotten about rediscovering nature since World War II. Turning his attention to the question of how IR should engage the human-nature social-natural distinction, he ultimately makes the case for preserving an analytical distinction between the two while recognizing the possibility for dialectical ‘progress’ associated with changing conceptions of both the natural world and the human condition. Posthuman dialogues in International Relations, seeks to promote post-humanism by incorporating contributions drawing on a diverse set of theoretical approaches—including ‘new’ materialism, actor–network theory, assemblage theory and complex systems theory.

Haraway’s cyborg theory often proved fruitful in the social and cultural analysis of health and medicine, especially to the biotechnology, medical issues and health conditions, including Prozac, disability, menopause, female reproduction, foetal surgery and stem cells. However, critics challenged Haraway’s cyborg and the cyborg theory for not affecting political changes. They argue that the cyborg figure turns out to be an escape from the body, thus representing an aggressive
masculinized technophilia. They lay interrogations over the novelty of her theory and their critiques focused on the material rather than the metaphorical interpretations. “Other critics have contended that stating that ‘we are all cyborgs’ is in itself the kind of essentialism that Haraway is attempting to avoid, and find her definition of the cyborg confused. Many of the critiques above focus on the material rather than the metaphorical interpretation of the cyborg. Haraway herself has expressed concern about how her cyborg theorizing has been simplified in some approaches to hardly more than ‘blissed out techno-bunny babbling’ and that its radical political project has often been overlooked” (Collyer).

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Although robot technologies, genetic engineering, cybernetic mechanisms, and biotechnological developments indicate a speedy move beyond the speculative in alarming ways toward a more literal disavowing of human control, the fundamental question framing
posthumanism is not about superseding the human and establishing a robotic culture, but admitting the human as an interdependent part of the material configurations of the world “in its differential becomings”. The postmodern does not really imply the end of humanism. Katherine Hayles notes that “it signals instead the end of a certain conception of the human.” Confronting the question of “humanness itself” the formulation of posthumanism calls upon a relational ontology that announces itself in an affirmative fashion. Posthumanism is rather not an anti-humanism that dismisses the human existence to celebrate posthuman succession. Francesca Ferrando notes that the “posthuman refusal of the ontological primacy of human existence, invites a review of practices such as uncritical omnivorism, overharvesting, and the unrestricted consumption of nonrenewable resources”.

Eileen Joy and Christine M. Neufeld argue that posthumanism have “complicated how we conceptualize and enact our human identities” and destabilized “the category ‘human’, in its biological, social, and political aspects”. Rosi Braidotti calls this strand of posthuman thought as “contemporary critical posthumanism.” According to Braidotti, “it produces a new way of combining self-interests with the well-being of an enlarged community, based on environmental inter-connections.” Posthumanism promises a new critical paradigm without leaving humanism entirely behind, and progressively co-opts postmodern skepticism towards the idea of a central human subject. Not surprisingly, posthumanism has elicited unique epistemological configurations, encompassing theoretical discourse, literary-cultural production, and biotechnological developments. Scholars like Katherine Hayles, who helped inaugurate posthumanist theorizing, aver that “the posthuman evokes the exhilarating prospect of getting out of some of the old boxes and opening up new ways of thinking about what being human means” Like Hayles, Cary Wolfe suggests that we must “rethink the notion of the human tout court”.

Thinking the human tout court means rethinking the conceptual frameworks within which we have defined human subjectivity, agency, identity and self, acknowledging the permeable boundaries of species in the natural-cultural continuum, and recognizing the profound interconnections between different forms of life in the composite world where previously we had seen separations. One crucial outcome of posthumanist thinking is, therefore, delegitimation of human exceptionalism as implicitly determined by illusory rules. Pramod K. Nayar (2014, 4), for instance, posits that “the human incorporates difference in the form of other DNA, species and forms of life, so that its uniqueness is a myth”.

In this hybridized world, while we can understandably remain skeptical of the possibility of our dissolution into an utterly alien category, like disembodied intelligence entrenched in a digital medium, many of us would acknowledge the human indexed in processes of co-emergence with other beings. Jane Bennett’s identification of human agency as “an interfolding network of humanity and non-humanity” exemplifies this process as the key point in posthumanist accounts of human ontologies. Importantly, this shift away from the conjectural singularity of the human agency is not a wholesale rejection of humanism, but a critical reframing aimed to dissolve the accompanying impulse of exploiting the coexisting sphere of the nonhuman. The prospect of posthumanism in this sense entails a deter-mined theoretical move to resist the tenacious patterns of humanist resurrection that potentially harbor such impulses. Emerging thus from the “postmodernist critiques of Enlightenment thought”, and abandoning all anthropocentric dualisms, posthumanism espouses a progressive thought that dispenses with the species barriers.

Posthumanists themselves distinguish between two types of criticism of their ideas: the practical one, targeting the possibilities of actually achieving its declared goals; and the moral one, targeting its sense. There are then two main versions of the practical critique. The advocate of the
first one, Steve Jones, claims that the development of technology will never lead to the kind of potential that posthumanists talk about; there will be no such advancement that would turn us into cyborgs and transfer our minds into a network; there will not even appear a possibility to genetically enhance our bodies. In its second version, the practical criticism is much more significant. In 1989 Max Dublin, a sociologist from the University of Toronto, published a book *Futurehype: The Tyranny of Prophecy*, in which he brought back a number of completely failed futurologist predictions about the development of technology. He claimed that the theses put forward by posthumanists run a risk of being equally imprecise. Indeed, there are a lot of similarities between posthumanism and futurology of the 1960s and 1970s. The futurological predictions were not meant to create utopian visions, but merely extrapolate the existing state of things. Futurologists never claimed that humanity would make a leap toward posthuman forms. The one criticism that was certainly the most important for posthumanists themselves was presented in 2000 by Bill Joy. It is important not only due to the intellectual heavy weight of arguments used, but also because the author is not one of those “ignorant” humanists, “loony” environmentalists or academic theoreticians – he comes from the very core of technocracy.

Another form of moral critique of posthumanism is the eugenics charge. Indeed, auto-evolutionary concepts in all their versions might bring to mind the 20th-century ideas to “improve” man. It should be reminded here that in view of eugenics’ creator, Francis Galton, it was meant to be a means of improving humanity as a whole. The third and final example of a moral critique of posthumanism is Francis Fukuyama’s *Our Posthuman Future*, which accuses posthumanism of destroying the notion of human nature.

The public health literature engages with nonhuman animals in another, distinct way, however. While an extensive part of the literature focuses on zoonotic diseases, public health
research also engages in standard biomedical research involving animal models. Biomedical research has long used nonhuman animals as surrogates for humans in research, and public health does this is as well. The animal model paradigm presumes that species retain certain biological forms and processes through evolution, making it possible for one species to stand as a surrogate for another. This is why Rachel Ankeny argues that comparison is always part of the modelling process, even if it is implicit in the case of ‘exemplary’ models. Here the porosity of species’ bodies is a key resource for public health research. What links these two discrete areas of scholarship is the ‘One-health’ paradigm. The ‘One-health’ literature is medical in its orientation, and has not engaged with the social sciences. For posthumanist theory to influence public health research, the differences between ‘One-health’ and ‘posthumanism’ need to be discussed as well. Both posthumanist social theory and ‘One-health’ emphasize the mutual dependence of humans, other species and other things. But where posthumanist thought is rooted in a philosophical problem, ‘One-health’ is rooted in an organizational problem. The agency of nonhumans is in turn a focal point and site of potentiality in the more philosophically-oriented, posthumanist literature, whereas nonhuman agency is either not considered or considered a problem in the One-health literature. Posthumanism argues that we need to better understand human interactions with other species and things in historically, culturally and politically contingent ways, to ensure the posthumanist approach to various disciplines.

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