



BOOK REVIEW

The Posthuman Child: Educational Transformation through Philosophy with Picture books

Karin Murriss

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Paperback: £29.99

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This is one of the most challenging book reviews I have ever written, not because I did not enjoy 'The Posthuman Child', quite the contrary: this is one of the most interesting and stimulating books I have read in a long time, thus I am in the position of trying to ensure that I do this book the justice it deserves in this review. For me, Murriss is utterly captivating in her writing as she guides the reader through a 'labyrinth' (p.23) of challenging philosophical ideas stemming from posthumanism. Ideas which encourage deep and existential questions, particularly in relation to dominant Western figurations of 'children' and 'childhood'. Despite the deep intensity of the philosophical and theoretical content, Murriss manages to take the reader through this process of questioning, unpicking and 'diffracting' (p.14) in a highly supportive manner.

As I became increasingly engrossed in reading, I found myself trying to fathom how Murriss managed to achieve this level of challenge and stimulation in such a supportive way, when it suddenly became clear to me: Murriss achieved this seemingly impossible balancing act by remaining entirely committed to the very philosophical ideas she has written about. From a Posthuman perspective, traditional binaries and dualisms do not exist: binaries, such as those that have been constructed to separate: ontology and epistemology; body and mind; theory and practice. It is her embodiment of this completely entangled and relational 'ontoepistemological' (p.51) view of the world that provides the level of support I experienced while reading: challenging philosophical ideas and practical examples and insights from her own lived experiences as a teacher, teacher educator and mother are seamlessly woven together. The succinct weaving of theory with practice creates a very satisfying read, as the figuration of child 'as rich, resilient and resourceful' (p.119) comes more clearly to the fore.

This continuous weaving of theory with practice is also supported by the overall structure of the book. Murriss opens with a preliminary chapter, which is dense with theoretical ideas, expressed through Murriss' own experiences (the very experiences that motivated her turn towards posthumanism) as a practitioner teaching philosophy to children. Through her poignant and insightful memoirs, particularly those of Laika, a child who was considered to be a 'slow thinker' (p.1), Murriss introduces many of the key ideas and concepts, such as 'intra-

action' (p.12), 'diffractive methodology' (p.14) and 'materialdiscursive philosophy' (p.9), which are pivotal to posthumanism. While reading this chapter, I found myself trying to hurriedly make sense of all concepts being introduced. This was however unnecessary, Murriss takes time to provide a full explanation of these underpinning core concepts through the following chapters of the book, which are organised into two distinct, but connected parts.

Through Parts One and Two, Murriss traces the emergence of posthumanism, outlining how it has developed in response to the type of dominant discourses that have given rise to the possibility that children can be 'slow', or otherwise. This process, which might feel unsettling, is supported throughout by Murriss' offerings of the type of pedagogical approaches she has explored as an educator and teacher educator in practice: further adding to and reinforcing the entanglement of theory with practice. This book is therefore a very practical resource, which may open up possibilities for educators who want to challenge themselves and their learners to relate to each other and the world in new ways.

As a teacher, teacher educator and researcher, with a growing interest in posthumanism, I would be considered the ideal audience for this book, however this book has far greater reach in terms of its readership. I would not only recommend this book to all colleagues and students who are interested in educational philosophy, but to anyone who is keen to consider the world they think they know from another perspective. Although as Murriss points out, drawing on the insight of Taguchi, that posthumanism might 'chafe at first, just like a new pair of shoes' (Lenz Taguchi, 2010, cited by Murriss, p.93), the rubbing and possible blisters are most definitely worthwhile.