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EXPLORING THE POST-ESSENTIALIST, PLURALIST,
AND INTERACTIVE HUMAN NATURE: APPLICATIONS,
IMPLICATIONS, AND CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

ISTRAŽIVANJE POST-ESENCIJALISTIČKE, PLURALISTIČKE I
INTERAKTIVNE LJUDSKE PRIRODE: PRIMENE, IMPLIKACIJE
I KRITIČKO PREISPITIVANJE

EDITOR'S NOTE

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The papers featured in this special issue offer an original and critical perspective on the complexities surrounding the concept of human nature, sparked by an in-depth exploration of Maria Kronfeldner's seminal work: *What's Left of Human Nature?*

In June 2022, Kronfeldner visited the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory to discuss the key ideas of her book. She explained why we can talk about post-essentialist, interactive human natures (namely, classificatory, descriptive, and explanatory human nature), despite the widely received arguments that expose the outdated essentialism about human nature and the misleading nature versus nurture, or nature versus culture dichotomy.¹

The authors of this special issue, some of whom participated in the June event and others new to the discussion, extend beyond Kronfeldner's book.² Marko Porčić demonstrates the application of Kronfeldner's classificatory and descriptive accounts of human nature in archeology. Ana Lipij delves into explanatory human nature, exploring Kronfeldner's response to the developmentalist challenge and its applications to discussions about the origin of human language faculties. (The developmentalist challenge is the claim that human nature cannot be explained by appealing to genes only due to the intricate

1 More on the June event: <https://ifdt.bg.ac.rs/events/lecture-maria-kronfeldner-whats-left-of-human-nature-criticlab/?lang=en> (Accessed: 18th March 2023)

2 For readers looking at this special issue as a whole, please note that the order in which the papers are mentioned here and their sequence in the special issue differs. While Porčić and Lipij focus on applications, Knežević explores implications, and Žakula and Janković critically assess either Kronfeldner's work (Žakula) or topics surrounding the issue of human nature (Janković). The ordering of papers in the special issue follows a different logic.



interaction of genes (nature) and developmental resources (culture) during development.) Within the context of an uneasy relationship between socio-cultural anthropology (studying human cultures) and evolutionary psychology (studying human nature), Aleksandra Knežević examines Kronfeldner's integrative pluralism, the claim that scientific disciplines can be integrated but only as separate ones. Knežević approaches this issue by comparing Kronfeldner's separationism with Tim Ingold's holism regarding the conceptual relationship between nature and culture.

Sonja Žakula remains faithful to the anthropological tradition that abandons any concept of human nature. Concerning Kronfeldner's tripartite model of human nature, Žakula argues that while it effectively navigates challenges related to the idea of human nature, it nevertheless implies human exceptionalism in comparison to other animals. Furthermore, she raises concerns about the social ramifications of scientific narratives that perpetuate human exceptionalism, particularly within the context of the Anthropocene. Amid discussions on the Anthropocene, Stefan Janković, however, suggests a reintroduction of the notion of human nature into social theory (despite the previous theoretical exclusion of this concept due to its association with dehumanization, as delineated by Kronfeldner in what she terms "the dehumanization challenge"). Janković proposes that doing so could lead to a more "humanizing" understanding of the relationship between humans and their natural world, creating a "geo-bio-social" epistemic synthesis.

The exchange of views, arguments, and criticism following the June event does not stop here. Namely, Kronfeldner's contribution to this special issue serves as an answer to concerns raised in the individual papers. Thus, although her paper opens the special issue, it stands as the last (but not final) word in this discussion. In her paper, Kronfeldner emphasizes the scope of her pluralism regarding human nature considering that other tenets of her view (anti-essentialism and interactionism) were less contested. She argues that an account of what it means to be human is always partial and hinges on the perspective one adopts in the pursuit of knowledge. However, such pluralism, in principle, allows the integration of knowledge in cases when a concrete, local issue awaits resolution. Thus, for Kronfeldner, exploring post-essentialist, pluralist, and interactive human nature is like looking through a kaleidoscope – the view is complex yet it is possible to find order in it.