

**Posthuman Feminism's Diagnostics and Horizons for
International Law: Review Essay on Emily Jones' *Feminist
Theory and International Law: Posthuman Perspectives***

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This review essay critically examines Emily Jones' *Feminist Theory and International Law: Posthuman Perspectives*, which develops “posthuman feminism” to diagnose the exclusionary humanism and anthropocentrism of international law. It unpacks key elements of Jones' approach, her critique of international law's foundations, and her attempt to move “beyond liberal legalism.” While tensions arise between Jones' theoretical framework and reform proposals, her insistent bridging of theory and practice demonstrates posthuman feminism's potential for inspiring creative re-imaginings of legal praxis.

Keywords: posthuman feminism – legal ontology – anthropocentrism – critical postmodern theories – feminist philosophy

Introduction

In *Feminist Theory and International Law: Posthuman Perspectives*, Emily Jones intervenes at the intersection of feminist theory, international law, and posthumanism. Drawing on feminist jurisprudence, critical race theory, and science and technology studies, Jones advances “posthuman feminism” to diagnose the exclusionary humanism and anthropocentrism of international law and generate alternatives beyond its liberal legalist paradigm. Jones unpacks how foundational elements of international law systematically privilege particular forms of agency tied to exclusionary constructions of the “Human.” She also sustains a hopeful stance concerning prospects for transforming international law via posthuman feminism. This review essay

critically examines Jones' development of "posthuman feminism" as a lens for diagnosing and transforming international law. Section one explores posthuman feminism's key elements and roots in earlier feminist debates. Section two turns to Jones' diagnosis of international law as structured by "exclusionary humanism" and "anthropocentrism." Section three unfolds Jones' attempt to move "beyond liberal legalism" via posthuman feminism. The conclusion reflects on the significance of Jones' book for ongoing conversations integrating feminist theory, international law, and the posthuman condition.

I. Posthuman Feminism: Key Elements

Jones frames her monograph as an exercise in "posthuman feminism," which operates as her theoretical framework, analytical orientation, and vision for transforming international law (Jones 2023, 1). Given posthumanism's contested status within feminist theory (Braidotti 2013), carefully reconstructing Jones' particular version is vital before evaluating its application to international law. This section excavates four dimensions of Jones' posthuman feminism: (A) its convergence between anti-essentialist feminist theory and critical posthumanism; (B) its intersectional commitment to challenging interlocking domination; (C) its interdisciplinary critique and analysis; and (D) its bridging of theory-practice by fostering political change.

A. Posthuman Feminism as Convergence

Jones' approach centers on characterizing posthuman feminism as a "convergence" between two developments in recent critical theory: post-humanism and post-anthropocentrism (Jones 2023, 9 – 10). This twofold focus on challenging interlocking human hierarchies while also de-centering human exceptionalism distances her "posthumanism" from reactionary, technophilic trends that reinscribe liberal individualism (Braidotti 2013). Jones also highlights the deep entanglement between feminist insights on difference, identity, and power and critical posthumanist questioning of human/nature or society/nature binaries to spotlight essential precursors to her project within earlier feminist debates.

Jones positions her monograph as extending pioneering 1980s and 1990s feminist scholarship that already challenged essentialist constructions of "woman" by theorizing subjectivity as radically hybrid, materially embedded, and irreducibly multiple (Grosz 1994; Haraway 1990). She builds directly on Donna Haraway's groundbreaking essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1985) which questions rigid distinctions between organisms and machines to

draw out its implications for an anti-essentialist, post-anthropocentric legal subject (Jones 2023, 61). Foregrounding this lineage anchors Jones' posthuman feminism within feminist theory's anti-essentialist turn while connecting anti-essentialism to contemporary posthumanism (Åsberg – Braidotti 2018). Her "convergence" and "intersection" between critiques of humanism and anthropocentrism thus marks an essential advance in linking anti-essentialist insights from earlier feminist debates with more recent ecological and posthumanist turns across the humanities and social sciences.

B. Intersectional Orientation

A second dimension of Jones' posthuman feminism is its unapologetic embrace of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989). Jones insists on a multi-dimensional analytical lens attuned to interlocking domination and hierarchies. This intersectional orientation enables her to avoid gender essentialism, while retaining feminist insights on the gendered workings of power within male-dominated structures. It also highlights commonalities between feminist projects and struggles for racial, environmental, and cognitive justice, echoing recent expansions of intersectionality beyond an initial focus on black women (Collins – Bilge 2016).

Moreover, Jones' intersectionality productively complicates both dominant constructions of legal personhood, equating it with the white, male, property-owning subject of Western modernity (Gear 2015), and hegemonic understandings of "the human" within anthropocentric discourse (Weheliye 2014). By approaching environmental ethics and subjectivity through an intersectional lens, she poses questions about which human lives matter more within international law, how racialized and gendered logics inform designations of nonhuman others as resources for exploitation, and how universalized constructions of legal personhood and humanity have historically depended upon the violent exclusion or abjection of subaltern identities and life worlds. Intersectionality thus figures as an indispensable framework, enabling a multi-dimensional diagnostic of international law while keeping differential vulnerability and struggles for justice in view.

C. Interdisciplinarity as Methodology

A third component of Jones' posthuman feminism is its steadfast interdisciplinarity (Jones 2023, 10), reflecting her view of posthuman feminism as simultaneously a theoretical perspective, analytical tool, and pathway toward political change. This expansive understanding of posthuman feminism as

interdisciplinary critical praxis—rather than narrow theoretical doctrine or fixed meaning—enables Jones to draw upon resources from a wide array of fields, including science and technology studies, critical race theory, postcolonial theory, queer theory, Indigenous epistemologies, feminist science studies, and animal studies. This wide-ranging hybridity allows multiple angles on debates about environmental governance or emerging military technologies while avoiding overreliance on disciplinary assumptions.

Jones remains aware of tensions from interdisciplinary boundary-crossings, such as conflicting analytical frameworks, incommensurable premises, or contradictory political orientations (Jones 2023, 11 – 12). She allows them to productively generate expansive dialogue across perspectives rather than forcing artificial consensus, reflecting “multiperspectival” feminist standpoint epistemology (Haraway 1988). This interdisciplinary—and unapologetically conflictual—theoretical matrix informs all dimensions of Jones’ project, from diagnosing international law’s exclusionary aspects to exploring its radical reconstruction. Thus, interdisciplinarity is indispensable to her posthuman feminist approach, enabling wide-ranging critical analysis across multiple scales.

D. Theory and Practice

A final component of Jones’ posthuman feminism is her concerted attempt to bridge theory and practice by using posthuman feminism to inspire legal reform from the governance of emerging military technologies to environmental protections. She explains this choice:

I have chosen posthuman feminism as my central theoretical framework for two reasons. First, posthuman feminist theory, as outlined above, brings together multiple different areas of study, providing for a complex and integrated analysis of the structural underpinnings of international law. Second, posthuman feminist theory has a strong focus on environmental issues and on techno-scientific innovation (Jones 2023, 11).

Jones thus chooses posthuman feminism given its perceived capacities for structural critique and political transformation in key contemporary arenas. She also distinguishes her contribution from most existing posthuman scholarship as predominantly focusing on “theoretical and philosophical questions” rather than “questions of practice” (Jones 2023, 154).

In this regard, Jones’ book might be an intriguing experiment in moving posthuman feminist theory into the messy domains of legal reform and

policy change. Her project interweaves abstract conceptual analysis with detailed case studies and concrete reform proposals to activate “critical-creative” potentials of posthuman feminist theory within tangible political contexts (Braidotti 2019). Though undeniable tensions accompany this bridging of theory and practice—as explored below regarding Jones’ attempt to generate posthuman feminist alternatives “beyond liberal legalism”—her consistent linking of critique to imaginaries of alternative futures is arguably her monograph’s most exciting dimension from a philosophical perspective. In addition to sophisticated conceptual analysis, Jones mobilizes posthuman feminism to ask: How might law be otherwise? What new communities? And how might we craft more just futures? (Jones 2023, 153 – 154). Whatever the complexities of her answers, Jones’ consistent linking of posthuman feminist theory to radical re-imaginings of legal futures constitutes an important contribution to feminist philosophy.

II. Revisiting International Law’s Exclusionary Dimensions

Having excavated the components of Jones’ posthuman feminist approach, this section examines Jones’ critique of international law’s exclusionary dimensions, focusing on her analysis of embedded anthropocentrism and “exclusionary humanism” (Jones 2023, 9). It unpacks Jones’ arguments, connecting to earlier feminist scholarship while noting questions and tensions.

A. Diagnosing Anthropocentrism

A first noteworthy dimension of Jones’ critical analysis targets how international law conceptually reinforces anthropocentric binaries that position “the human” or “culture” above “nature” in justifying nearly unlimited appropriation of environmental goods to satisfy human interests and ends. As she explains regarding the orientation of international environmental law: “International environmental law defines the environment as a resource, justifying environmental damage and extraction in the name of human interests” (Jones 2023, 27). Whether considering foundational principles like common concern of humankind or sovereign rights over natural resources (Jones 2023, 47 – 53), procedural devices like environmental impact assessments or integrated conservation plans (Jones 2023, 52 – 53, 148 – 149), or specialized instruments like the law of sea or Convention on Biological Diversity (Jones 2023, 51 – 52, 54, 143), Jones presents a compelling case that international environmental law retains a thoroughly anthropocentric character that subordinates ecological integrity to human benefit. Environmental goods are

recognized only insofar as they satisfy human interests, while intrinsic ecological values remain obscured (Stone 2010).

This critique of anthropocentrism's role in legitimating unconstrained appropriation resonates strongly with precedents in both feminist philosophy and critical environmental scholarship. Val Plumwood's classic text *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* for instance, offered an equally searing indictment of how Western traditions of rationalism encode a logic of colonial mastery vis-à-vis nonhuman natures (Plumwood 1993). Meanwhile, in legal scholarship, Gear (2015) has explored international law's domination of nature in terms of its reproduction of a particularly neoliberal model of humanity: the possessive, acquisitive, white, male property owner of capitalist modernity. By emphasizing continuities between feminist and ecological critiques of anthropocentrism—filtered through detailed analysis of international law's operative assumptions and concepts—Jones strengthens the case for overcoming exhausted “human vs nature” binaries by pursuing more reciprocal understandings of environmental ethics and values (Plumwood, 1993).

However, Jones' strong claim that international environmental law is inherently anthropocentric invites further scrutiny. The 2015 Paris Agreement's temperature goals ostensibly pursue climate mitigation in view of safeguarding ecological stability rather than directly satisfying perceived human interests. The recently recognized human right to a healthy environment potentially transforms earlier anthropocentric rights discourses by embedding human wellbeing firmly within wider ecological parameters (Boyd 2017). The draft Global Pact for the Environment aims to consolidate existing principles around protecting the “community of life” rather than exclusively human needs (Kriki 2018). Each development suggests departures from the thoroughgoing anthropocentrism Jones attributes to international environmental law. While Jones briefly discusses the right to healthy environment (Jones 2023, 53 – 54) and draft Pact (Jones 2023, 52 – 53), her blanket characterization of the field's anthropocentrism would benefit from more nuanced attention to internal complexities and counter-tendencies.

This is not to deny the evidence confirming international environmental law's entrenched anthropocentrism. However, greater recognition of tensions and exceptions would strengthen her case for posthuman feminist alternatives. By more directly engaging likely counterpoints, Jones could reinforce her critique's force while also laying further groundwork for realistic alternatives.

B. Excavating Exclusionary Humanism

Jones' account of international law's "exclusionary humanism" is more complex than her anthropocentrism critique. She argues that concepts like state sovereignty, legal personality, and rights encode cultural assumptions privileging attributes associated with elite Western masculinities (Jones 2023, 28 – 3). International law constructs a hierarchy of legal subjects, subordinating alternative models of relationality, interdependence, pluralism, hybridity, and opacity (Jones 2023, 41 – 54), reinscribing liberal humanist ideals of personhood that feminist philosophers have deconstructed (Benhabib 1992; Gatens 1996).

In developing this critique of exclusionary humanism, Jones fruitfully interweaves insights from postcolonial scholarship on the imperial underpinnings of international law, Marxist analysis of capitalism's accumulative logics, and critiques of legal personhood's erasure of intersectional differences and lived materialities. Throughout her chapter unpacking assumptions behind foundational concepts such as sources, subjects, and sovereignty doctrines, Jones stays attentive to how formal equivalence in international law often masks substantial inequities, whether in norms of sovereign consent that ignore histories of coercion or universal human rights that privilege male experiences. Her excavation of exclusionary humanism shaping international law's architecture parallels earlier feminist efforts to denaturalize seemingly neutral legal principles in order to expose their gendered logics and unequal effects (Charlesworth et al. 1991).

However, in emphasizing international law's reproduction of a particular liberal humanist model of subjectivity, Jones' account would benefit from more sustained attention to diversity and contestations within the liberal tradition itself. While she signals important limitations in how human rights frameworks individualize harms and depoliticize their systemic sources (Jones 2023, 157 – 158), the counter-hegemonic utilization of rights discourse by subordinated groups receives less developed attention. By engaging a broader range of human rights scholarship, especially from postcolonial and subaltern perspectives, Jones could further enrich her critique of legal liberalism's exclusions.

Furthermore, in targeting how the ideal liberal legal subject aligns with masculine attributes of rationality, individualism, and self-control, Jones' account would benefit from more explicit attention to law's role in materially (re)constructing such gender distinctions beyond the conceptual domain. Addressing such questions around law's materialization of gendered

capacities would further strengthen her critique of abstract legal equality masking deeply unequal effects.

III. Beyond Liberal Legalism?

Having explored how Jones deploys posthuman feminism to diagnose anthropocentrism and exclusionary humanism at international law's foundations, this section turns to examine her attempt to formulate positive alternatives "beyond liberal legalism" via posthuman feminism (Jones 2023, 153). I suggest this forward-looking dimension constitutes the most significant contribution of Jones' book—yet also where tensions surrounding theory and practice intensify given posthuman feminism's counter-systemic implications. This section unpacks two components of Jones' constructive project, emphasizing tensions with concrete reform efforts before suggesting that deeper engagement with debates at the intersection of radical philosophy and emancipatory legal praxis could enrich her alternative vision.

A. Legal Reform Proposals

The first main component of Jones' effort to move "beyond liberal legalism" consists in her multi-layered proposals to transform the regulation of emerging military technologies and extend environmental protections in more posthumanist directions. Regarding military technologies, Jones suggests reforming the arms control process via ethical criteria that emphasize relationality between humans and intelligent machines while expanding opportunities for public oversight (Jones 2023, 96 – 100). She then proposes looking beyond international law altogether to frameworks like data feminism and Indigenous AI protocols that could better center values like context, pluralism, and anti-essentialism in technological design (Jones 2023, 101 – 108). Pivoting to environmental politics, Jones critically explores Rights of Nature statutes as a promising vehicle for smuggling posthumanist assumptions concerning distributed ecology into the legal apparatus on scales from local to global (Jones 2023, 136 – 147). Across both domains of war-making and environmental stewardship, spanning multiple political scales, Jones suggests intriguing legal reforms to advance a posthuman feminist politics.

Nevertheless, tensions accompany Jones' effort to promote posthuman feminism via legal reform channels dealing with entrenched regimes of military dominance and profit-driven environmental despoliation. For instance, she acknowledges that any proposed regulation or limitation through multilateral arms control processes risks legitimizing some weapons

a priori by cordoning a permissible domain of state violence (also see Jones 2018). Similar concerns arise regarding Rights of Nature statutes, which might merely extend international law's liberal paradigm rather than transforming its core ontology (Jones 2023, 143-144). Moreover, Jones concedes the unlikelihood of powerful military states seriously entertaining proposals to cede meaningful oversight capacity or control, especially regarding defining features of national sovereignty (Jones 2023, 107). Such reform proposals may thus end up reinforcing features of the system they aspire to change.

These tensions in Jones' reform agenda echo wider feminist debates concerning strategies of resistance versus compliance when dealing with entrenched regimes of power upheld by international law (Kuovo & Pearson, 2011). Yet, they also signal possibilities for connecting Jones' vision with more radical legal discourses oriented to systemic structural change rather than bounded reform. Especially since Jones concedes the improbability of realizing her reform proposals absent massive political mobilization (Jones 2023, 108), deeper engagement with discourses of prison abolition, revolutionary jurisprudence, or counter-hegemonic legal praxis could substantially complement her framework.

B. Activating Philosophical Creativity

A second avenue through which Jones pursues positive alternatives beyond liberal legalism resides in her insistent linkage of critique with reimagining possible futures. Throughout her chapters, Jones inhabits a philosophical register that consistently connects penetrating diagnosis with imaginative speculation concerning potential transformations in legal ontology. As she explains regarding her posthuman feminism, "critique and creativity" operate as interlinked dimensions rather than isolated moments (also see Jones 2019). This speculative commitment to exploring legal alternatives coheres strongly with the orientation of posthuman figures like Donna Haraway or Rosi Braidotti, for whom proliferating alternative possible worlds functions as a key dimension of ethics (Braidotti 2019; Haraway 2016). It equally parallels Adriana Cavarero's insistence for feminist philosophy on activating creative capacities for radically re-envisioning coexistence so as to avoid narrowly reactive moralism (Cavarero, 2011). From this perspective, Jones' regular efforts throughout her monograph to reimagine how international law might be otherwise constituting a vital resource with deep resonances across posthuman feminism.

At the same time, Jones' speculative register consistently bumps up against stubborn limitations in existing legal language and doctrine for articulating radically alternative visions of subjectivity or communal flourishing. Her attempts throughout to promote understandings of legal personality as porous, relational, and ecologically embedded deliberately cut against the grain of possessively individualist models of personhood still hegemonic within legal liberalism. They suggest intriguing bridges with emerging holistic frameworks like Rights of Nature or Earth jurisprudence while signaling the vital need for further jurisprudential creativity and imagination (Burdon 2015). Nonetheless her proposals remain necessarily constrained so long as they are tethered—even counterfactually—to doctrinal evolutions within international law. Perhaps this constructive tension between immanent critique and speculative excess simply remains integral to the critical theoretical register, in which case Jones importantly keeps open vital spaces for forward-looking creativity (Geerts – Van der Tuin 2013). However, it equally reinforces questions signaled above about how thoroughly re-envisioning communal wellbeing and our place within wider ecological orders may depend upon looking beyond—or at least well beyond—the parameters of international law as we know them today.

IV. Conclusion

Jones' monograph makes a significant contribution by bringing posthuman feminism into dialogue with international legal scholarship. Her intersectional and interdisciplinary approach enables a comprehensive critique of international law's exclusionary dimensions while gesturing towards more inclusive legal futures. However, tensions arise between Jones' theoretical framework and her reform proposals, which risk reinforcing the very structures they aim to transform. Engaging with more radical discourses oriented towards systemic change could strengthen her project. Despite these limitations, Jones' insistent bridging of theory and practice is a major contribution, demonstrating posthuman feminism's potential for inspiring creative re-imaginings of legal praxis. Her work deserves wide engagement across critical legal studies, feminist theory, and posthuman philosophy as scholars and activists continue to pursue more just and sustainable worlds.

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