

## THE CONCEPT OF TRANSHUMANISM: THE PHILOSOPHICAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECTS

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**Abstract:** Modern transhumanism is an international movement for the use of technology that enhances the abilities of human beings. At the same time it is a philosophical concept that raises in a fresh new way many important questions of philosophical anthropology. The article refers to the concept of “posthuman being”, which is often associated with cybernetic anti-humanism, contrary to the ordinary humanism. We analyze the argument of “the impermissibility of interference with nature”, which is sometimes used by the opponents of transhumanism. Furthermore, we consider denaturalization as an internally contradictory process, involving the dynamics of natural and cultural systems of different levels. The focal idea of the research is the discussion about the chance of fixing the content of brain of one person on artificial media, which can create a personality identical to the donor. We also consider the idea of paradise-engineering, which assumes control of all biochemical processes in the human body.

**Keywords:** Transhumanism, the essence and the existence of a human being, paradise-engineering, immortalism, mind uploading.

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the idea of transhumanism is realized as an international movement, supporting the idea of science and technology to dramatically expand the possibilities of a human being. Within the framework of transhumanism the most notable body, no doubt, is Humanity Plus (formerly known as World Transhumanist Association), associated with such scientists as Ben Goertzel, Nick Bostrom, Giulio Prisco, Aubrey de Grey, Michael Vassar et. al., Noteworthy, that Russian experts created Russian Transhumanist Movement, which runs in line with the process of creating transhumanist parties worldwide.

However, transhumanism is a modern philosophical concept, which, in our opinion, updates and puts on a new a lot of important questions of philosophical anthropology. Transhumanist developments contribute to anthropological discourse a range of new concepts: posthuman being, transhuman being, technological singularity, extropy, super-intelligence, mind uploading, paradise-engineering, etc. Behind the range of new concepts, one can observe dramatic changes, radically transforming human life-world. The changes are often disturbing and frightening, especially if we start from the concept of hard format or anthropological constant of human nature. Transhumanism shows a new level of the man’s problem complexity, the problem of a creature, constantly expanding its limits, but seeking to keep the borders to protect its human essence.

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## METHODS

The paper is based on the method of philosophical reconstruction of a wide corpus of transhumanist literature. The conceptualization, of course, must be done in the context of a holistic philosophical comprehension of a man as a special reality. However, the authors proceeded from the principle of the analyzed texts' introduction to the context of society culture as a whole, their correlation with the specific socio-historical conditions. The implemented discourse analysis required further critical considerations of transhumanist discourse, which reveal the historical and cultural conditioning of the ways of understanding human and social role of new technologies that it developed. Transhumanist ideas were highlighted in modern scientific and philosophical literature. Therefore, it was necessary to analyze the works, in which the concept of transhumanism was considered as the main focal point. Such works include, for example, the work by Francis Fukuyama "Our Posthuman Future" (Fukuyama 2008). The analysis of the philosophical and scientific literature, in which the problem is considered in a broader context, is based on the assumption by S.S. Horuzhy, who identified it as "transformative anthropology" (Horuzhy 2008). We take into account the methodological orientations of philosophical anthropology. This trend is impossible without a philosophical comprehension of a man. The identification of philosophical and anthropological aspects of transhumanism requires recourse to axiological method to reconstruct the unique frame of modern transhumanism.

## RESULTS

Many transhumanists believe that the continuously accelerating technological progress by the year 2030-2050 will have resulted in a posthuman being, the capacities of whom will be fundamentally different from the abilities of modern people. Genetic engineering, molecular nanotechnology, neuro pharmaceuticals, neuroprosthesis, the creation of the so-called exoskeleton and direct "machine-brain" interfaces are directed to this end (Kosarev and 2008). It was suggested that the posthuman being in the near future may leave the class of mammals, and form a new class of "technoparous", where people will vary, according to their brand manufacturer. Experts believe it is possible to think about a new type of evolution, where each new generation of people will be a new species.

However, there are ideological opponents of transhumanism, among which we can find the representatives of fanatical environmentalism, with its rejection of the idea of technological development and the „return to nature“, bioconservatism, bioluddism, nationalism, fascism, and statism. The rest of the social concepts are evaluated as tolerant and fully compatible with the ideals of transhumanism. However, some transhumanism authors in their concepts lay the foundation for totalitarian aristocratic utopias, impending dictatorship and hard eugenic selection

criteria for the elite. Thus, I.A. Maslov interprets transhumanism as an embodied myth of Prometheus and Lucifer and the realization of a dream of Superhuman. The dream of a Superhuman is interpreted here as a revolt of the individual against nature, as such, against that of the bio system, in which a person was originally inscribed. Superman, in his view, is a person, formed in the body of an individual homo sapiens, but the means of science and technology has changed much his own nature. Natural biological motivations in the mind of a Superman will be substituted for knowledge and creativity. His biological life activity will be regulated not by his intrinsic regulators, but by the regulators of his personality. Superhuman will not need religion, morality, politics and public life. Most likely, according to I.A. Maslow, people will not come to terms with the Superhuman power and will be conquered and partly ruthlessly destroyed (Maslov 2008). Reading these texts, one might think that the thought of Max Stirner about a teleological exclusive empirical man, who overcomes morality, religion, government, public regulations has entered a new phase at a new, unknown before technological level. (Shtirner 2001).

A posthuman being is separated from normal human being with an unconquerable barrier: on the one end of the spectrum we see a cybernetic anti-humanistic creature, on the other end of the spectrum we see a usual biosocial human being. For example, N.A. Komleva interprets the cyborgization of a man as the factor of absolute controllability, which allows you to use post human beings to effectively capture the resource base of the world (Komleva 2013). This danger is shared by F. Fukuyama, who considers it essential to talk about the person using the category “human nature”, related to the understanding of man as a complex whole, with the understanding of human dignity and the moral status that distinguishes it from other animals (Fukuyama 2008). Do not mention as old as the world, the argument of “non-intervention to nature”, which is always resorted to by the opponents of posthumanism. Let us consider this argument in more detail, paying attention to the fact, that transhumanists advocate the opposite thesis that there is no moral or any other reasons, which make it impossible to interfere with nature.

In one of his speeches, Michael Crichton, talked enthusiastically about ecological environmentalism, as a system of false beliefs on the man, who had allegedly lost the original Paradise (unity with nature). People believe that the first man was expelled from his natural paradise in the natural environment and polluted the Earth, waiting for ecological doomsday (Crichton 2008). Despite the fact that in his speech Crichton uses a lot of Judeo-Christian symbolism, mainstream Christianity, of course, does not comprise any idea of “non-interference with nature.” On the contrary, nature is understood as “anthropological sphere” where “the true hope of God communicates to us the full omnipotence” (Maksimovich 1994). Therefore, the interpretation of culture as “unnatural”, i.e. an artificial casing, molding natural receives a completely new content (Medvedev 1999). This new content does not contradict Christian thought.

According to supporters of the concept of *homo naturalis*, denaturalization is not just one possible way of human existence and human culture, for a human being it is the only path. Although human created art technology presents a big risk, without the use of technology our chances of avoiding global risks will be zero. Due to the fact that modern medicine has been able to eliminate massive epidemic diseases, it became possible to ensure the lives of people with hereditary abnormalities, resulting in the weakening of natural selection. The gene pool of humanity started accumulating dangerous lethal mutations. Cleaning the global gene pool becomes possible not in the case of “human return to nature”, but rather only by the person entering a new technological level (Stolyarov 2008). Notwithstanding, the return to the natural selection is not possible, the only alternative to the natural mechanisms of biological regulations are artificial: genetic engineering, cell therapy, etc.

The biosphere, becoming part an anthropological sphere, needs a more and more careful regulation, whose complexity grows and requires a more and more complex matching of a human being with his natural environment and technological sphere. At the same time, a modern man, living in an artificial environment, possesses a “second nature”, which, in a sense, is the result of centuries of artificial development. A new stage of denaturalization is associated with the emergence of the Internet, forming a new level of human subjectivity.

The “natural man” of the Enlightenment is in the past. In philosophy, a huge role in the criticism of this concept was played by F. Nietzsche and the existentialists. The art of modernism and postmodernism declared anti-naturalism (anti-psychology) as a paradigmatic setup. Cubism began to set up its experiments not on vague emotional states of the artist and his observations of nature, but on the ideas of Plato, Kant and Hegel. For Mondrian denaturalization becomes a kind of purification of the reality of the external illusory diversity and the identification of some lurking in its original scheme. Of course, assessing the new artistic call for denaturalization, we have to be ironic, for example, the pompous mechanistic objectivism of Futurism is perceived as extreme. However, the meaning of this movement lies elsewhere - in an effort to make art a truly constructive activity. It seems that contemporary art is close to the search of modern and contemporary philosophy. We can't but mention the program by Husserl who sought for denaturalization and anti-psychology not only of knowledge, but also of the whole culture.

Denaturalization is an internally contradictory process; it is centered around a dichotomous division of “culture – nature”. Nature and culture do not exist without each other. The history has been represented as the dynamics of natural and cultural systems. There have been an infinite number of “natures” as well as “cultures”. The man's revolt against the bio-system is of much importance, despite the fact, that a man is a part of this system.

There is an understandable philosophical doubt about many transhumanist ideas, related to the fundamental transformation of a human being. In particular, the idea that by using artificial media for fixing brain content which can result in a personality, identical to the former. Transhumanism is organically linked to immortalism. Transhumanists express an idea that it is possible to speak not about maintaining some structure (human) unchanged throughout the life of the universe, but rather about the preservation of the changing identity of this structure throughout this period. The structure of the self-identify of a thinking being at the same time will continue to undergo evolutionary changes. All things considered, we see that immortal propositions of transhumanists are primarily directed at preserving the so-called “objective personality traits”. However, these traits are not the only ones which are typical of a human being. Our “self” and ego are elusive and the personality is to be seen as an “the axis of ontological being”.

Transhumanists are striving to prove it that the new person will retain consciousness of the old person after rewriting the old brain content on artificial media. This is the so-called “childhood argument”. The idea of this argument is that strong changes in a human being do not cause much damage. For example, as a child, each human being was different and in stature, and in chemical composition, and in the properties of nature, and, nevertheless, we do not believe that we have become a different person. The question is: why should we be afraid of changes in the body associated with immortality procedures if we are not afraid of changes, generated naturally over time? K. Frumkin in his letter to the leader of the Russian Transhumanist Movement D. Medvedev considers the “argument of childhood” and comes to the conclusion that it just shows that all available external specific characteristics of the individual - character traits, memories content, specific composition of molecules, of which is the brain - are not related to a person’s identity as a self-conscious being. Meanwhile, the copy of the individual on the computer can more accurately reproduce the content of our brain - memory contents, features of the reactions and so on. Why do you need to copy them, if a person in his natural life does not copy them and change? Why do we need accuracy where difference is the most important thing? The argument about the difference between child and adult mental content just says that the accuracy of the reproduction of the content is not important to establish the identity of a human being. Thus, copying and rewriting the psyche are not related to the problem of reproduction of the human Self (Frumkin 2012).

Another doubtful transhumanist idea is the idea of Paradise-engineering. It is alleged that the molecular nano-technology has the potential to provide a person with complete control over the biochemical processes in his body, allowing to get rid of pain and diseases. We will be able to experience a wider range of emotions, endless happiness and unlimited in intensity joyful experience every day through the restructuring or pharmacological stimulation of the pleasure centers in our brain.

David Pearce in “hedonistic imperative,” writes about the biological program, the abolition of all forms of violence and suffering, emotional enrichment of life with treatments, the possibility of genetically-programmed well-being (Bogomiakov 2010).

From these considerations it can be concluded that the point of view of transhumanism is close to the position of philosophical utilitarianism (Bentham, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, and others). According to these experts, the right action is an action whose consequences would bring the greatest possible happiness for the greatest number of people. From the axiological point of view, this position has always been very vulnerable. It is difficult to prove that it is better to be a happy pig than an unhappy scientist. Moreover, happiness and pleasure are very complex psychological states. A man can be happy, living in poverty and deprivation, but doing his duty. If pain disappears, compassion will disappear, as well, together with a lot of our emotions. Pain is a response to the suffering and, as always, it makes us more human. Human suffering as well as human happiness, are contradictory and complementary. According to the conventional example, a typical drug addict may wish simultaneously to get the next dose of drugs, and dream of a life free from drugs. K. Marx very cleverly and convincingly criticized J. Bentham. One more example. In the „Brave New World“ by A. Huxley it is said how to be happy slaves, but not masters. In addition, Paradise-engineering, which is supported by transhumanists, allows us to save people from suffering, which will lead to the emergence of suffering and pleasure at the next level, because human pleasure and pain form an indissoluble unity.

## DISCUSSION

It must be said that the debate about transhumanism brings us back to the fundamental problems of human existence, to the eternal attempt to understand who and what a human being is. There is a level of “anthropology of everyday life” with the concept of “natural person”, of man as a finished product or anthropogenesis of Creation (in this case the cause of a person is not important). Other human understanding - is the understanding of a man as an amazing creature, forced to constantly expand his existential horizons. Thus, the doctrine of the Christian theosis is the doctrine of fundamental existential choice of strategies, awareness of the prospects to “become a god by grace.” Historically, however, there is another way for a human-being - self-deification of man, who becomes the object of absolute worship. It is tempting to interpret transhumanism as a continuation of the case of “mystical humanists” of the past in a new phase, with the use of technologies capable of transforming the biological nature of man. However, if we do not tend to equate science with magic, it should be recognized that the technology is the only tool that can be used in different ways and for different purposes.

Transhumanists believe their teaching to be an extension of humanism, since they stick to the position that people can not only use reasonable means for the improvement of human and environmental situation, but also can improve themselves. The position of the transhumanist continuation of humanity seems to be very important and interesting because, in fact, in history and philosophy there was not a unilateral theory of humanism. Suffice it to say that there are fundamentally two different types of humanism: secular and religious. Secular humanism affirms the value of human life, dignity and freedom of the individual; religious humanism supports the idea that the man is the “crown of creation”, ordered to become God by grace and perform a meta-anthropological duty to exempt every creature from the slavery of decay.

Starting from the XVIII century, humanism is increasingly beginning to be approved on the basis of the ideas of the Enlightenment, suggesting confidence in the natural progress of society: the rights, freedom and dignity are the natural conditions of civil society (Modern philosophical dictionary, 1996). In the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, we see the crisis of Enlightenment humanism: in particular, it is argued that the ideals of humanism do not work in the spheres of economy, industry and science. These spheres standardize human beings. In the XX<sup>th</sup> century the crisis of Enlightenment humanism becomes evident: philosophers point to the lack of communication between the progress in the various spheres of public life and the affirmation of humanistic values. There are many works, devoted to the crisis of Enlightenment humanism. For example, E. Levinas described the causes of the Enlightenment crisis in the scope of claims of human resources and the abundance of activities of technological civilization. The way-out for Levinas was a renaissance of the Transcendent (Postmodernism. Encyclopedia, 2001).

The problem of new humanism encounters great difficulties. For example, in philosophical literature much is said about the division of knowledge about man and society into two parts: social sciences and humanities knowledge, converted to personal spiritual aspects. Jean-Paul Sartre in “Existentialism is humanism” offered his way of solving the problems of humanism. Unlike the spirit of “confined humanism” in the works by Auguste Comte, the humanism by Jean-Paul Sartre is the understanding of a person who resides outside of itself, projecting itself outwards and pursuing the transcendent purpose. Existentialist humanism postulates that man has no other legislator but himself; people realize themselves searching for purpose outside, which can be a specific exemption or other self-realization (Sartre 1989).

Humanism in the representation of transhumanists is a continuation of the Enlightenment humanism, with its ideals of human life value, dignity, rights and freedoms of a human being. This is not a “closed humanism”, namely, it is a desire to overcome himself and go beyond all conceivable limits. Is the humanism of a posthuman being compatible with the lack of the need for morality, religion and

politics? Loneliness, antisocial behavior, extreme individualism - these features make the new humanism to ask a question about the humanity of a posthuman being.

## CONCLUSIONS

Here are some conclusions. (1) The terms, used by transhumanism, starting with the concept of “posthuman being”, will undoubtedly require further philosophical reflections and conceptual development. The idea of the Super human being has been a major issue of modernity and modernism. However, we see that people of post-modern, do not want to live in a single story, trying to move away from a rigid determination and alignment, despite losing superhuman heroism. Options for a new humanism are very vague and difficult to build on the foundation of technological eudemonism. (2) Overcoming the “all too human” is inextricably linked to the part of the transhumanist understanding of society as a “place of detention”, where the Self is the only one (according to M. Stirner). Therefore, it is clear that there is much ground for the concern that transhumanism automatically leads to the rupture of social ties and relationships, to full antisociality. (3) It is possible to agree with S.S. Horuzhy who writes: “The hermeneutics of posthumanity trends should be considered not from the point of view of technology, but exclusively from the point of view of anthropology, considering only the following questions. What happens to the consciousness and integrity of the human person? What happens with the sphere of emotions, aesthetic perceptions? With the sphere of communication? The social dimension of existence? etc. “(Horuzhy 2008). (4) There is a clearly expressed need for a broad public debate about the transhumanist expansion of human capabilities through new technologies. (5) Of course, there is a need for social and political control of the processes of technological perfection of man, as it was written, for example, by F. Fukuyama.

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