

## TRANSHUMANISM AS A PROBLEM OF MODERN PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

**Fedorova Inna Valeriivna**

Postgraduate Student at the Department of Philosophy, Sociology  
and Management of Socio-Cultural Activities  
South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K. D. Ushynsky  
26, Staroportofrankivska str., Odesa, Ukraine  
[orcid.org/0000-0002-6345-2309](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6345-2309)

***The relevance of research.** Recent decades have led to significant transformations in the understanding of human nature and the assessment of the prospects for his life. Modern thought, which is significantly influenced by information technology and the results of genetic engineering, is increasingly inclined to revise the previous critical position. It seeks to form a new image of man - harmonious and even more reasonable than it was in the Enlightenment.*

*Transhumanism poses and attempts to address very real problems, the philosophical aspect of which is reflected in the awareness of new types of connections between subject and object, between humanity and nature. The overall understanding of these findings provides a methodological and ideological basis for the formulation and resolution of a whole complex of social and humanitarian problems that may be of undoubted relevance, but they also may have low moral problems. Also, the analysis of the main ideas of transhumanism from the point of view of morality is consistent with relevant and current research.*

***The purpose of this article** is to analyze the philosophical and anthropological aspects of the transhumanism movement.*

***The methodological basis** of the work was the most important principles, categories and provisions of modern philosophical anthropology, the theoretical and methodological basis for criticism of transhumanism and the provisions of evolutionary ethics.*

***Research results.** Today's technology has truly transformed and will continue to transform our lives in diverse and unforeseen ways. These achievements should not be categorically rejected, because many of them have alleviated and will continue to alleviate human suffering. However, we should not be naïve in accepting all technologies, and we should not allow scientists to determine our technological future on their own. On the contrary, we should engage theologians, philosophers, ethicists, historians, sociologists, and political scientists in discussions about technology and not be afraid of healthy debate.*

*To live with dignity, we must strengthen our fragile social fabric and allow people to have a decent family life, decent work, and opportunities to realize themselves in society. We must do what is necessary to end exploitation, poverty, violence and corruption and restore human creativity, which is often hindered by technology.*

***Key words:** transhumanism, posthumanity, posthumanism, hedonism, happiness, immortality.*

**Introduction.** The achievements of scientific and technological progress in the field of genetic engineering and information technology, neuropsychology and experiments on the creation of artificial intelligence, bring to the fore a number of problems: the relationship between the biological and the social in human life, the boundaries of the hereditary and acquired in human nature, and in general a new meaning of the very concept of "man".

All these problems go beyond the competence of natural science and acquire clearly expressed philosophical aspects. Along with the possibility and scope of the boundaries of a particular technology, the question of its admissibility or inadmissibility from an ethical point of view is no less acute. The fundamental religious and philosophical differences regarding the change in human nature in

the future society, the improvement of the genotype of human populations and the increase in the cognitive abilities of the individual are quite natural. It is no coincidence that these issues go beyond purely academic discussions and find a natural response in public sentiment, influencing the decision-making process in the field of politics and jurisprudence.

If we take into account all these circumstances, then we should not be surprised that in the second half of the twentieth century a specifically philosophical, ideological and even to some extent religious and moral movement of transhumanism was formed, in the center of which was the possibility of improving human nature with the help of new technologies, including genetic engineering.

Transhumanism poses and tries to solve very real problems, the philosophical aspect of which is expressed in the awareness of new types of relations between subject and object, between humanity and nature. A fruitful understanding of these relations is a methodological and ideological basis for the formulation and solution of a whole range of social and humanitarian problems that have undoubted relevance.

**The purpose of** this article is to analyze the philosophical and anthropological aspects of the transhumanism movement.

**Results.** "Transhumanism" is a product of secular humanism and the Enlightenment. He argues that the human nature of our day is improving with the help of applied science and other rational methods that can allow us to increase the length of a healthy human life, expand our intellectual and physical abilities, and give us more and more control over our own mental states. These applied sciences include radical advances in neuroscience, genetics, robotics, nanotechnology, computerization and artificial intelligence. In a certain combination of the above-mentioned bioengineering, transhumanists see an opportunity in the near future to dramatically expand the mental and physical capabilities of a person, slow down and stop the aging process, and gain control over their emotional and mental states. The foreseeable future is a new era in which people will be freed from mental illness and physical decrepitude and will be able to consciously choose their "nature" and the "nature" of their children. At first glance, all this looks like a beautiful miracle, but Francis Fukuyama calls this transhumanist vision "the most dangerous idea in the world" [1].

The debate on transhumanism is an extremely fruitful area for philosophical and theological research. The last hundred years of human history have shown us amazing scientific and technological transformations. If the pace of change continues, and even accelerates, in the 21st century, we will soon find ourselves with a transformed view of a very markedly transformed planet. The idea of immutable human nature, the human essence from which we derive our notion of human dignity and fundamental human rights, no longer applies in this brave new world of free market evolution. On what basis do we then make moral judgments and pursue pragmatic goals? Is it worth trying to limit the development of any science and technology? How could we do this? And is it possible? Do traditional religious or Enlightenment values correspond to the horizon line separating humans and posthumans, if nature itself is no longer what we are used to? Isn't the ideology of transhumanism dangerous regardless of technology? Isn't the ideology of bioconservatives, i.e., those who oppose transhumanism, also dangerous? Are the new sciences and technologies glorified by transhumanists real, or is it just a new way of wishful thinking? And whose utopian or dystopian vision can illuminate and motivate the future? To these and many other questions, modern philosophers have to give quite unambiguous answers.

The term transhumanism was coined in 1957 by Julian Huxley, grandson of Darwinist Thomas Henry Huxley. The scholar regards transhumanism as a "key concept" with an entirely new intellectual structure, as a "new ideology" or "a new system of ideas corresponding to a new position of man" [2, p. 17]. He saw transhumanism as a "new attitude of reason" to which humanity would transform in a state of crisis, combining science and art and using scientific knowledge to build a better world [2, p. 255].

In the 1980s, the philosopher Max O'Connor(2003) formalized transhumanist doctrine by advocating the "principles of extropy" [3] for the continual improvement of the human condition. According to Mohr, humans are only "a transitional stage standing between our animal heredity

and our posthuman future" [4, p. 6] that will be achieved through "genetic engineering, life-extending biological sciences, intelligence amplifiers, more advanced interfaces to faster computers, neural computer integration, global data networks, virtual reality, rapid electronic communication, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, neural networks, artificial life, Interplanetary Travel and Molecular Nanotechnology" [4, p. 10]. According to Mohr and other genetic engineering enthusiasts, cloning and eugenics will reshape selected humans into a higher transhumanistic species and, using robotics, bionics, and nanotechnology, make these humans independent of nature. Humans will evolve into posthumans, namely "people with unprecedented physical, intellectual and psychological abilities, with the ability to self-program, into potentially immortal and unlimited individuals" [4, p. 15].

In the late 1990s, a group of transhumanist activists adopted the Transhumanist Declaration, which establishes various ethical provisions related to the use and planning of technological advances. In 1998, philosophers Nick Bostrom and David Pearce founded the World Transhumanist Association (WTA) [5]. Other modern organizations, such as the Institute of Extropy, the Institute of Foresight, the Institute of Immortality, the Institute of Ethics and New Technologies, and the Special Institute of Artificial Intelligence, also play a role. In a large way, these organizations were helped by the communication revolution of the 80s and 90s, which provided the opportunity for instant communication around the world. In fact, cyberspace is not only a means of disseminating transhumanist ideas, but also an integral part of the transhumanist, eschatological and utopian vision.

Transhumanism, however, is not just a utopian vision of techno-optimists; Rather, it is a program that receives significant funding and scientific legitimacy from various scientific foundations and fairly wealthy funders. Futuristic notions of the physical and cognitive heights of human development, achieved by mixing man and machine, have aroused great interest among organizations dealing with military issues. Tech enthusiasts who promote concepts of transhumanism have considerable control over financial resources, and this is one of the reasons why transhumanists deride their critics as "bioludites" or "bioconservatives." It may seem that the conflict between transhumanists and their critics boils down to the issue of funding, rather than to different perspectives on the future of humanity.

By the first decade of the twenty-first century, various religions have begun to take transhumanism more seriously, and scholars have begun to notice that the transhumanist vision of heaven on earth, accompanied by posthuman immortality, has a strong religious dimension, despite the fact that the leaders of transhumanism treat traditional religions and religious institutions with contempt. Indeed, for many transhumanists, technology itself is divine, and scientists have godlike power to structure matter and recreate nature.

Modern philosophers also take an active part in these discussions. Thus, N. Bostrom (1996), the leading philosopher of transhumanism, defines transhumanism as a way of thinking about the future, which is based on the assumption that the human species in its present form does not represent the ultimate goal of our development, but rather its relatively early phase. According to this definition, being a transhumanist does not necessarily mean being physically enhanced by new biotechnologies. To be a transhumanist is to adopt a perspective that affirms the possibility and desirability of the fundamental improving the human condition with the help of coincident technologies [6].

Young S. (2005) presents transhumanism as a fusion of science and ethics and sees it as an alternative to academic postmodernism, religious theism, and the radical environmental movement.

Contrasting transhumanism with left-wing academic postmodernism, Young presents it as a critique of cognitive skepticism, social constructivism, and cultural relativism [7].

Another philosophical view of transhumanism was formulated by R. Pepperell (2009), who defines the "posthumanist conditions of human existence" as "the end of the anthropocentric universe", "an energetic theory of the mind in which human thinking and memory are understood in terms of the activity of an energy-regulating system" [8]. For Pepperell, transhumanism signifies the end of humanism, namely "the widespread belief in the infallibility of human power and the arrogant belief in our superiority and uniqueness" [8].

Pepperell's postmodern critique of humanism is supported by so-called cultural posthumanists, who reflect on the interplay of scientific theorizing and cultural imagination based on several postmodern discourses. These cultural critiques diverge from each other on the meaning of humanism or transhumanism. While for some humanism means the spread of atheism and scientific rationality, for others humanism is a reactionary concept that "refers to the notion of essence humanity or a common essential attribute within which human beings can be defined and understood."

One of the main ideas of transhumanists is the idea of the incompleteness of nature. This view of human nature is shared by Gr. Stock (1993), head of the Center for the Study of Evolution and the Origin of Life, who similarly states that the human species comes from childhood. "It is time for us to recognize our growing opportunities and take responsibility for them. We have a small chance to do that, because we have already started playing gods in some areas of our lives" [9, p. 16] Here we are talking about technologies that will allow people to gradually transform themselves in such a way that their abilities will far exceed what we understand today by the term human. Proponents of transhumanism fully welcome this development.

Another point of transhumanism is also noteworthy, namely its focus on the achievement of individual happiness. The pursuit of happiness has been the main concern of mankind and the main function of Western thought, at least since the time of ancient Greek philosophy. Happiness, or human well-being and prosperity, as understood by the Greek and Hellenistic philosophers, was the objective standard that organized all human activity into a meaningful pattern throughout life. According to Aristotle, who was the first to offer a systematic analysis of the concept of happiness (eudaimony, εὖ – good, δαίμων – divinity), happiness is not an affect or a subjective feeling, but an objective state that expresses human nature, and to be happy means to prosper and experience well-being in accordance with the nature of the human species. Aristotle considered reason as a distinctive feature and concluded that in order to be happy, to thrive as a human being, it is necessary to actualize human potential and know abstract and eternal truths. The highest kind of reason, according to Aristotle, belongs to God.

When the Greek and Hellenistic discourse on happiness was integrated into the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the pursuit of happiness received a religious interpretation, even if analyzed philosophically, illustrating the integration of science and religion typical of the pre-modern era. In the modern period, the secularization of the Christian West and the scientific revolution gave rise to materialism and naturalism, which led to the separation of science and religion. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, happiness came to be equated with well-being. In the nineteenth century, this idea gave rise to utilitarianism and the interpretation of happiness as a balance between pleasure and suffering for the greatest number of people. Departing from the Eudaimonian conception of happiness, utilitarians defined happiness subjectively. For Jeremy Bentham, for example, pleasure is the only good and pain is the only evil; Pleasure and pain determine what we do, and only a scientific analysis of the balance between the two will lead to happiness without requiring any return to religious faith. Sometimes Bentham used the phrase "the greatest happiness of the majority," but he usually corrected it by saying that he meant the greatest fullness of happiness [10].

As science and religion gradually separated from each other during the nineteenth century, the materialistic and hedonistic notion of happiness came to prevail: happiness is a subjective, mental state of human beings, close to joy and inextricably linked to a series of pleasures. Under capitalism, the hedonistic notion of happiness means that happiness is increasingly reduced to the possession of material possessions or to the momentary gratification of physical desire. The discovery of chemicals (legal and illegal) that control mood and mental states has further simplified the pursuit of happiness. When neuroscientists uncovered the chemical mechanisms of brain processes, they gave the pharmaceutical industry the ability to produce chemicals that control, soften, or alter mood and emotions. Influenced by the brain sciences, both happiness and unhappiness are now viewed in materialistic terms: the pill allows you to achieve happiness or mitigate unhappiness. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a purely materialistic approach to understanding happiness has become predominant.

This has led to one of the most troubling aspects of the transhumanist approach to happiness – the notion that technology will allow us to produce pleasurable sensations continuously. The ability to control molecules and electrical impulses in the brain reaches a new, more complex level thanks to precise brain scanning, and soon nerve implants will act on areas of the brain to awaken or suppress certain emotions. It is this specter of transhumanism that raises the most questions, as it ignores the value of risk, anxiety and uncertainty, which are an important aspect of being human. Human culture (especially art and philosophy) would not be possible without these supposedly negative aspects of human existence. But, if chemicals eradicate these human abilities, what will be the source of creativity? Hedonistic engineering is not prone to cultural depth and creativity; She is prone to childish pettiness, who believes that a pleasant pastime and well-being are more important than higher values.

Another disturbing aspect, in our opinion, is the problem of prolonging human life and delaying death. Anti-aging medicine is the fastest-growing medical specialty in the United States and other Western countries. The goal of the anti-aging program is to age without aging. There are many theories of the aging process, and there is a special area of knowledge, gerontology, which is designed to synthesize all the knowledge in this area.

Turning to gerontological issues, transhumanists view aging as a "humanitarian crisis." They define aging as a "deadly pandemic disease" and call on all of us to declare a "war on aging" similar to the "war on cancer" declared in 1970. Transhumanists approach the problem of aging as engineers who believe that the problem has a purely technical, biomedical solution.

This notion of a radical increase in life is problematic for the following reasons. First, it is important to note that while transhumanists define aging as a disease and consider it a humanitarian crisis, they approach the problem not as doctors interested in healing, but as engineers interested in fixing mechanical failures. Secondly, one cannot be sure that aging as such should be seen as a disease that kills us, although it is certainly true that to the extent that we age, we become more susceptible to disease. Since man is an organism and not a machine, man is subject to the cycle of birth, maturity, aging, and death, which distinguishes the rhythm of creation and the gift of life. All organisms experience aging and death precisely because that they are alive, and the gift of life does not become less valuable because it is finite.

Here it would be appropriate to recall the position of G. Jonas (2001) on biotechnology and transhumanism[11]. As for the continuation of life, Jonas suggested that mortality was not only a curse or a burden; it is also a blessing. It is a burden to the point that we, as organic beings, must pull our being out of the constant threat of non-being. But, it is a blessing, since our very struggle for life is the condition of any affirmation of existence in general, and it is only through mortality, as through a narrow gate, that the value of the affirmation of life can enter our indifferent world. For Jonas, the desire to prevent death or overcome mortality is a fundamental refutation of what makes us human.

**Conclusions.** Modern technology has truly transformed and will continue to transform our lives in diverse and unforeseen ways. These achievements should not be categorically rejected, because many of them have alleviated and will continue to alleviate human suffering. However, we should not be naïve in accepting all technology, and we should not allow scientists to determine our technological future on their own. On the contrary, we should engage theologians, philosophers, ethicists, historians, sociologists, and political scientists in discussions about technology and not be afraid of healthy debate.

To live with dignity, we must strengthen our fragile social fabric and allow people to have a decent family life, decent work, and opportunities to realize themselves in society. We must do what is necessary to end exploitation, poverty, violence and corruption and restore human creativity, which is often hindered by technology.

As for a dignified old age, within the framework of biotechnology, efforts should be made not only to prolong aging; Rather, we must recognize the beauty of life processes and the cycle of birth, maturation, aging, and death. Understanding the rhythm of human life, living according to this rhythm and not contrary to it, is a source of wisdom that many ancient thinkers have already taught

us, starting with Ecclesiastes. To grow old and become wise, we must pay attention to the wisdom of the ancients in all traditions and in all societies, and we must reject the cult of foolish youth; Youth has its virtues, but they do not exhaust the meaning of human existence. If we focus on aging with dignity, we will pay attention not only to weight management and regular exercise, but also to the arts, wisdom, traditions, and religions that enable us to penetrate the purpose of human life and its innate value. If we aim at ageing with dignity, then we will not allow the health system to be guided by pragmatic arguments alone, and we will create forms of observation and care that take into account the whole person, not just their material body.

Thus, it seems to us that the transhumanist project is a delusion because of its mechanistic engineering approach to what is human, because of its obsession with perfection, understood as an activity and not a moral whole, because of its ignorance of the unknown future. Transhumanism is a utopian vision that, like all utopias, is distorted, since transhumanism mistakenly believes that the ideal can be realized in the present and not remain only a beacon for the future. Instead of a transhumanist obsession with postponing or overcoming death, human beings would be better off accepting the reality of death as one aspect of the very fabric of human life and paying tribute to how we live, how we age, and how we die.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Fukuyama Francis. Transhumanism // *Foreign Policy / Washingtonpost. Newsweek Interactive*. LLC. No. 144 (Sep. – Oct., 2004). P. 42–43.
2. Huxley J. *New Bottles for New Wine*. London: Chatto & Windus. 1957. 340 pp.
3. More M. Principles of Extropy. 2003. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20131015142449/http://extropy.org/principles.htm>
4. More M. The Philosophy of Transhumanism. *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future*, 2013. P. 3–17. URL: [http://media.johnwiley.com.au/product\\_data/excerpt/](http://media.johnwiley.com.au/product_data/excerpt/)
5. World Transhumanist Association. (WTA) URL: <http://www.transhumanism.org/>
6. Bostrom, N. Observational Selection Effects and Probability. 1996. URL: <http://www.anthropic-principle.com/preprints.html>
7. Young S. *Designer Evolution : A Transhumanist Manifesto*. Amherst, NY : Prometheus Books. 2005. 417 pp.
8. Pepperell R. *The Posthuman Condition : Consciousness beyond the Brain*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press. 2003. 203 pp.
9. Stock G. *Metaman : The Making of Humans and Machines into a Global Superorganism*. New York : Simon and Schuster. 1993. 374 pp.
10. Jeremy Bentham. *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. New York : Dover Publications. Edited by J. H. Burns & H. L. A. Hart. 1780/2007. 248 pp.
11. Ганс Йонас. Принцип відповідальності. У пошуках етики для технологічної цивілізації. (пер. з нім. А Єрмоленко, В. Єрмоленко). Київ : Лібра, 2001. 400 с.

### REFERENCES

1. Fukuyama, Francis (2004) Transhumanism // *Foreign Policy / Washingtonpost. Newsweek Interactive*. LLC. No. 144 (Sep. – Oct., 2004). P. 42–43.
2. Huxley, J. (1957) *New Bottles for New Wine*. London: Chatto & Windus. P. 17. P. 255.
3. More, M. (2003). Principles of Extropy. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20131015142449/http://extropy.org/principles.htm>
4. More, M. (2013). The Philosophy of Transhumanism. *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future*, p. 3–17. URL: [http://media.johnwiley.com.au/product\\_data/excerpt/](http://media.johnwiley.com.au/product_data/excerpt/)
5. World Transhumanist Association. (WTA) URL: <http://www.transhumanism.org/>
6. Bostrom, N. (1996). Observational Selection Effects and Probability. URL: <http://www.anthropic-principle.com/preprints.html>
7. Young S. (2005) *Designer Evolution : A Transhumanist Manifesto*. Amherst, NY : Prometheus Books.

8. Pepperell R. (2009) *The Posthuman Condition : Consciousness beyond the Brain*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.

9. Stock G. (1993) *Metaman : The Making of Humans and Machines into a Global Superorganism*. New York : Simon and Schuster. P. 16.

10. Jeremy Bentham. (1780/2007). *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. New York : Dover Publications. Edited by J. H. Burns & H. L. A. Hart.

11. Hans Jonas. (2001) *Pryntsyp vidpovidalnosti. U poshukakh etyky dlia tekhnolohichnoi tsyvilizatsii [The Principle of Responsibility. In Search of Ethics for a Technological Civilization]*. (translated from German by A. Yermolenko, V. Yermolenko). Kyiv : Libra, 400 c.

**Федорова Інна Валеріївна**

аспірантка кафедри філософії, соціології

та менеджменту соціокультурної діяльності

ДЗ «Південноукраїнський національний

педагогічний університет імені К. Д. Ушинського»

вул. Старопортофранківська, 26, Одеса, Україна

orcid.org/0000-0002-6345-2309

## ТРАНСГУМАНІЗМ ЯК ПРОБЛЕМА СУЧАСНОЇ ФІЛОСОФСЬКОЇ АНТРОПОЛОГІЇ

*Актуальність теми дослідження.* Останні десятиліття привели до значних перетворень у розумінні природи людини і оцінці перспектив її життя. Сучасна думка, на яку істотно впливають інформаційні технології і результати генної інженерії, все більше схиляється до перегляду колишньої критичної позиції. Вона прагне сформувати новий образ людини - гармонійний і навіть більш розумний, ніж це було в епоху Просвітництва.

Трансгуманізм ставить і намагається вирішити цілком реальні проблеми, філософський аспект яких виражається в усвідомленні нових типів відносин між суб'єктом і об'єктом, між людством і природою. Плідне розуміння цих відносин є методологічною та ідеологічною основою для постановки і вирішення цілого комплексу соціально-гуманітарних проблем, що мають безсумнівну актуальність, але вони також мають і низку моральних проблем. Тож аналіз основних ідей трансгуманізму з точки зору моралі є досить актуальним та своєчасним дослідженням.

*Метою* даної статті є аналіз філософських та антропологічних аспектів руху трансгуманізму.

*Методологічним базисом* роботи послужили найважливіші принципи, категорії та положення сучасної філософської антропології, теоретико-методологічною основою критики трансгуманізму є положення еволюційної етики.

*Результати дослідження.* Сьогоднішні технології дійсно трансформувалися і будуть продовжувати трансформувати наше життя різноманітними і непередбаченими способами. Ці досягнення не варто категорично відкидати, адже багато хто з них полегшили і будуть продовжувати полегшувати людські страждання. Однак ми не повинні бути наївними в прийнятті всіх технологій, і ми не повинні дозволяти вченим самостійно визначати наше технологічне майбутнє. Навпаки, ми повинні залучати богословів, філософів, етиків, істориків, соціологів і політологів до дискусій про технології і не боятися здорових дебатів.

Щоб жити гідно, ми повинні зміцнити нашу крихку соціальну структуру і дозволити людям мати гідне сімейне життя, гідну працю і можливості реалізувати себе в суспільстві. Ми повинні зробити все необхідне, щоб покласти край експлуатації, бідності, насильству і корупції і відновити людську творчість, якій часто заважають технології.

*Ключові слова:* трансгуманізм, постгуманізм, постгуманізм, гедонізм, щастя, безсмертя.