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The problem of improving human nature and the cultural project of transhumanism

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Abstract. The article deals with the problem of personal self-perfection in a philosophical context, analyzes scientific approaches to understanding this phenomenon. In the process of growing technologization of human existence, his nature undergoes significant transformations. There is a merging of human with his technological creations.

Keywords: human, human nature, humanism, transhumanism, technology, person

1. Introduction

The current stage of social development is characterized by deep, qualitatively new changes in the social, economic, political, sentience and cultural life of society. The rapid development of scientific and technological progress, as well as the all-round informatization and computerization of all sectors of the economy and spheres of public life, gave a number of qualitative changes in human existence. The emergence and improvement of high technologies (the concept of "high-tech," "high technology," "high knowledge intensive technology," "supertechnology" we use as synonyms) already have a significant impact on a person's socio-natural qualities, changing his anthropological characteristics.

However, it must be borne in mind that the development of new technologies can not only cause significant damage to humans and nature, but also call into question the very existence of life on Earth. These questions cause fierce dispute among scientists, philosophers, anthropologists, and futurologists. Therefore, the study of potential opportunities, prospects, and dangers of using new technologies aimed at improving the nature of man is very relevant.

2. Materials and Methods

Therefore, the study of potential opportunities, prospects, and dangers of using new technologies aimed at improving the human nature is very relevant. First, fantasies about a human's ability to use technological advances for self-improvement were realized in the writings of science fiction writers. Such authors as J. Huxley, A. Azimov, S. Hawking, A. Toffler, S. Huntington in their works raised the question of the ability of a person to transcend his own limits, change the perception of the surrounding world and modify the naturally inherent characteristics. The nationalist who developed posthuman theories and concepts also belong to N. Bostrom, R. Kurzweil, D. Pierce, S. Istvan, and others. At the same time, among them there are those who consider posthumanism "one of the most dangerous ideas." Y. Habermas, and F. Fukuyama note that such practices will lead to a splitting of consciousness and the loss of vital values by a person [12].

Thus, despite the results achieved in understanding the changes that have arisen in the field of scientific discourse, in the context of scientific and technological progress and its impact on humans, this problem is open for further research.

The purpose of the study is to provide a critical analysis of the role of transhumanism ideas in substantiating the concept of a postman, based on a review of scientific approaches to a philosophical understanding of the phenomenon of self-improvement of the individual.

The methods of historical and logical analysis, synergetics, as well as evolutionary, systemic, structural, and functional approaches were used in the work.

3. Results

It is known that the idea of human perfection deeply penetrates the history of human development. Even in the religious-ideological systems of ancient India (Upanishads, yoga), emerged practical ways to improve human nature. For example, in yoga the logical-meditative practice was designed to improve a person physically, psychologically, intellectually, morally, and spiritually.

Ideas about human perfection were actively spread in ancient anthropocentrism. Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, created the concept of personality, according to which a human regardless of origin is able to constantly develop and improve his personality. The motto of the ancient Greek notionalist was "Know yourself." It implied conducting an analysis of the whole person. Socrates believed that only by knowing him/herself, having found both his/her own shortcomings and new forces and capabilities, one can act accordingly, get rid of the first and realize others [5]. Plato had a different view on the role of the individual and the conditions for its realization. According to him, a separate individual cannot be self-sufficient and needs collective support in the form of a state that contributes to the realization of his natural abilities. Representatives of Stoicism Zeno and Marcus Aurelius argued that personal self-improvement was not only a means of self-correction, but also a path to spiritual freedom, a way to sage ahappy life filled with a sense of confidence and self-esteem.

The theologians of the Middle Ages had an idealistic understanding of the phenomenon of human self-improvement. The monistic principle comes to replace the dualism of antiquity: God is the absolute beginning, everything else is God's creation. Everything that he created is perfect.

Anthropocentrism becomes the main feature of the Renaissance philosophy. Man is not only the main link of the universe, he is a creative, thinking being. Moreover, a human by his efforts can compensate for what God has not given to him. Thus, the human destiny largely depends on the personality itself, on its ability to self-improve, acquire the necessary qualities and implement them in accordance with individual interests for the benefit of the whole society.

The idea of the need to change the human nature is reflected in the writings of the English materialists of the XVII-XVIII centuries. So, Thomas Hobbes believed that the imperfect natural state of a person should be corrected by various forms of education [2], and for Francis Bacon, it was knowledge that acted as a person's stimulus to action [1].

In the 19th century, two main approaches to the study of the problem of personality activity and self-improvement can be singled out; one of them was based on the idea of the power of the human mind and considered self-realization as the primary condition for the effective functioning of society. Its representatives were V. Humboldt, K. Marx, and M. Weber. Among the representatives of another direction (the direction of the "philosophy of life"), we should note A. Schopenhauer, F. Nietzsche, A. Adler, Z. Freud [4].

At the end of the 19th century, the further evolution of humanity began to be viewed through overcoming the limitations of the human body as the desired perspective of immortality. Nikolai Fyodorov not only predicted the prospects for technological immortality (immortality) by a person, but also with logical necessity developed the idea of resurrection of the dead, because it would be unfair to deprive previous generations of the possibilities of using new technologies mastered by descendants [9].

In the 20th century, representatives of the existentialism of the Frankfurt School and "humanistic philosophy" worked to develop the problem of personal self-improvement as one of the conditions for

its successful self-realization. In the understanding of E. Fromm, real self-realization is associated with the practical embodiment of the "need of being", the prerequisites of which are independence, freedom, the presence of a critical mind [11].

So, the problem of personal self-perfection was relevant at all times, but scientific approaches to the definition of the essence, meaning and mechanisms for implementing the process of self-improvement were diverse, since they were determined by the existing socio-economic, cultural, spiritual, mental conditions. A person is always in a state of becoming and development. Technique and technology are powerful tools for this human self-transcendence (self-overcoming). Although, at the same time, they limit the freedom of human will, set the maximum parameters for its existence, determine its behavior in each specific historical segment.

Against the background of a new wave of scientific and technological development of mankind, which causes an invasion of human nature, in its physicality, the problem of human nature acquires a new relevance. A new vision of a humanintroduces the problem of "post-human future," which becomes one of the central problems of transhumanism's worldview.

Transhumanism is a complex sociocultural phenomenon that has not only intellectual, but also institutional and ideological dimensions. The task is complicated by the fact that so far there is no academic thesaurus of transhumanism and generally accepted definitions [8]. The radical separation of the mode of existence of a person and the value form of his identity, fundamentally distinguishes transhumanism from the classical humanism of the New Age.

The concepts of "transhumanism" or "posthumanism" have appeals not to improve human organic nature, but to fully go beyond its limits, to completely overcome the imperfect old man in favor of the new. In other words, the complete elimination of the contradiction between the spirituality and the physicality of man, about the transfer of human consciousness, spirituality, etc. can be achieved on a qualitatively new material carrier.

The process of human perfection was considered an act of moral tension, the ultimate spiritual concentration. But in modern transhumanism, not the spirituality, but the comfort of human existence, its renunciation of the divine nature is of paramount importance [3]. In the transhumanist approach there is an internal contradiction. On the one hand, representatives of this philosophical direction reject all normative evaluation criteria; on the other hand, they accept the utilitarian criteria of human existence, according to which the quality of life is measured by such determinants as health, cognitive abilities, etc. [16]. The reasoning of transhumanists is as follows: human properties are dynamic, we cannot point out the permanent features of human nature. They are the evolutionary result of human adaptation to the conditions in which he lives [18].

One of the founders of posthumanism is R. Kurzweil. He notes that technologies have two sides; on the one hand, they give people the opportunity to unleash their potential and realize plans that previously could not be embodied through the biological imperfections of the body; and on the other hand, they turn around unlimited possibilities and endless spaces for the desired. The next question arises: do technologies provide a person with a chance to go beyond the boundaries of the organic world and finally get rid of physical limitations? or they simply build walls of total control and dependence on the scientific sector around people? [17].

N. Bostrom, one of the founders of the world transhuman movement, claims that various artificial devices increase the level of human dignity, surpassing human biological capabilities, because the human nature is manifested in them. Therefore, the entire artificial human environment (gadgets and devices, etc.) necessarily acquires a moral and ethical dimension; accordingly, supporters of humanism and transhumanism try to spread the principle of human dignity [13].

Current technologies do give mankind a chance to cross the border of natural limitations and turn into a kind of God on Earth. Research in the field of artificial intelligence necessarily take into account possible scenarios in which the world is flooded with machines, and the human race is on the verge of extinction, and they also try to protect us from such a threat and program the devices so that they do not harm people. Let's face it. People are the kind that, although it has some very noble features, but is also known for performing absurd acts. Genocides, slavery, child labor – only a part of them.

Frightening is that sometimes people do not even know what they did (or do not recognize it) until they expire for many years. I often said that the question is not that people are blinded, but how blinded are we? [15].

Francis Fukuyama asks, in this context, a reasonable, though rhetorical question. In particular, he states, "If we begin the process of transforming ourselves into something super-perfect, what rights would these improved beings have and can their claims be compared to the rights of those left behind?" [14]. Here, the development of a legal framework in relation to a transhuman is relevant [6]. It is necessary to create special units whose task would be to issue permits for transformation, to monitor compliance with the terms of this agreement and, if necessary, to isolate and punish post-people who can get out of control because of confidence in their impunity and power.

4. Discussion

The ideas of human perfection in the framework of the cultural project of transhumanism (in particular, based on NBICS technologies) are combined with the intention to create a certain new creature – a "postman", "transman," and others. By such "improvement" of a person, the identity of the existing Homo sapiens is abandoned, in essence it is the "dehumanization," turning it into a cyborg.

5. Conclusion

Evaluating the humanistic and transhumanist movements as a product of the latest information technologies from a philosophical and methodological point of view, they should not be idealized or demonized. Especially, given the fact that the contradictions of science, technology, and religion have never been too antinomic, irreconcilable, and the assertion that science is "beyond values and evaluations: [7] must be perceived with a considerable degree of skepticism. The creed of transhumanism briefly formulated in Encyclopedic References [10] is internally inconsistent. It is impossible. at the same time, to declare an attractive intention of the "limitless improvement" of a person and state the desire not to "remain a human," but to become a more perfect being. The thesis of improving without borders in a logical sense is very dubious. Since the concept of "improvement" provides for the introduction of changes while maintaining the appropriate qualitative specificity of things. If absolutely everything changes, then an object of improvement disappears. And using the concept of "improvement" becomes inappropriate. In theoretical terms, it is imperative to determine what exactly is the qualitative specificity of a person, to delineate the boundaries of this quality, beyond which a person disappears. Apparently, transhumanists do not have the corresponding desire.

The future of a transhuman society is rather uncertain. His models may not fit in the framework of the world view of a modern person, but regardless of the attitude of different citizens to this problem, the fact of the likelihood of the onset of new reality cannot be denied. The main thing is that in this modernized world there should be a place for ordinary people who themselves will create it once.

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