

Post-Human and Trans-Human in the Future Perspective of the Humanity

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The article considers the issue of changing the main anthropic characteristics of a human under the influence of the rapid development of the latest technologies. Such changes cause the need to revise the usual interpretation of the concept of 'human', which is gradually being substituted by the currently popular concepts of 'trans-' and 'post-human'. These concepts are favourably perceived by the techno-optimists, who believe that the latest technologies will allow us to create people who will be physically, intellectually and spiritually superior to the people of today, although they admit that this may lead to greater social inequality.

The article states that the post-human potential is too ambiguous to clearly outline it. On the one hand, it opens up unprecedented possibilities, which can be considered the highest manifestation of human freedom, i.e. the ability to model a person according to one's vision. On the other – there is a real threat to human existence itself, namely, the danger of technological capture of the potential for human improvement. Therefore, the task of the article is to outline the possible prospects for the formation and improvement of modern human identity under the conditions of its combination with the other, non-human species and the latest technologies. This is possible under the condition of acceptance of new possibilities for the post-human as the liberating force that overcomes the negativity and limitations of human nature.

The comparative method and the method of analysis were used in the article.

Keywords: post-human, trans-human, self-organising structure, post-humanism, technology, machine

INTRODUCTION

A human has always sought perfection, whether internal or external. The modern trend is precisely the external modification of the body, which is implemented with the help of the latest technologies that provide 'possible means of great human satisfaction' (Haraway 1991: 181). Due to genetic engineering, cyborgisation, robotics, nanotechnology, etc., a human is gradually liberated from biological 'shackles' and they get the opportunity to improve themselves in various forms, including non-human ones (such as humanoids, cyborgs, robots, etc.). The concepts of 'trans-human' and 'post-human' appeared in the scientific sphere and popular literature, where 'technology' and the 'human' are understood in contiguous rather than in oppositional terms (Balsamo 1993: 684).

The human desire to go beyond the limits of its natural capabilities is perceived extremely ambiguously, causing many questions, namely, what will happen when these limits are completely erased? Is there any limit beyond which a person ceases to be a person in the usual sense of the word? Will everyone have the opportunity to make such a modification, or will it only widen the chasm of social inequality? And, most importantly – is the appearance of the post-human a threat or an unprecedented opportunity for humanity? In this study, which can be attributed to the field of philosophy of science and technology and philosophical anthropology, we will try to seek answers to these questions, as well as outline all the dangers and prospects of the development of science and technology and trace their impact on the future of a human, using the method of comparativism and analysis.

In times of new technologies that confuse human identity and blur the boundaries of individual uniqueness, humanity faces the new challenges (Donskis 2009). The common opposition man/animal changes to a different format, namely, human/post-human. The concept of post-human requires thinking beyond the established humanist attitudes and accepting possible risks. We cannot completely abandon the good old humanism, but its key points are to be revised. From now on, the central role no longer belongs to the human, but to the post-human. Post-human times require appropriate research, and we cannot rely on the traditional ways of thinking or the established philosophy, since they do not help to navigate the new circumstances.

Today, there are many researches that study the possibilities of integrating technologies into the human body, i.e. Guerreiro et al. (2021), Osborne et al. (2023), Cielemeńska et al. (2019), Daigle (2022), Halapsis (2019), Talovic (2022), etc. Analysing them, it is worth noting the problematic nature of the introduction of the latest technologies into the human sphere of life, which is connected with the contradictory expectations of a person, since we observe here the gradual loss of the usual existential principles of life and the spread of fantastic ideas about the rapid scientific and technological progress (Petrushenko, Chursinova 2019; Rimkus 2020). This contradiction is connected, on the one hand, with human hopes for a better life and, on the other, with the risks of the identity loss and various methods of manipulation. Despite the obvious threats that may relate to external surface changes and do not affect the deep levels of being, modern society is literally obsessed with the 'new' prospects. It pursues change with maniacal faith in its beneficial side-effects (Braidotti 2013: 2).

Therefore, the emergence of the concept of post-human obliges us to see the gap between the humanistic desire for the maximum realisation of human potential and the disappointment in modern realities. Thus, 'the posthuman condition urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming' (Braidotti 2013: 12). The contemplation about the post-human helps us to understand our flexible and multiple identities, and the concept of post-humanism allows us not to lose control over our own lives and our unique essence.

POST-HUMAN. THE SEARCH FOR THE HUMAN IN THE POST-HUMAN WORLD

I am what I choose to become.

Carl Jung Wisdom

'I was born human. But this was an accident of fate – a condition merely of time and place. I believe it's something we have the power to change' (Warwick 2000: 145). By this opinion

Warwick confirms M. Foucault's position that the 'man' is a historical construction, which can be changed over time (Foucault 1973: 370). Hence, today, the construction of a human known to us is being replaced by a new one – the post-human. Although, the post-human is not some new species that has certain superhuman abilities and is not limited by the biological body, it is rather 'a new way of talking about a human' (Hayles 1999).

Today, people are increasingly beginning to be identified not as natural, but as technological 'homo technologicus, a symbiotic creature in which biology and technology intimately interact', so that what results is 'not simply "homo sapiens plus technology", but rather "homo sapiens transformed by technology" into a new evolutionary unit, undergoing a new kind of evolution in a new environment' (Longo 2002: 23).

In view of this, the techno-optimists assert that we should be satisfied with the connection that emerges in the human-machine interface (Bostrom 2001; Haraway 2016). However, are they optimistic enough to recommend such an interface as the new way of life? After all, the expansion of human capabilities as the result of its integration with the latest technologies, which gradually blurs the boundaries between living, non-living, natural and artificial, causes a considerable concern.

In this regard, Braidotti introduces the concept of *zoe*, a dynamic, self-organising structure of life itself, which characterises animal and non-human life (Braidotti 2006: 201). Thus, 'life' ceases to be the prerogative of the human species alone. In this non-human life, we can find a way to overcome the limitations of our all-too-human 'self' (Taylor 1989). After all, *zoe* is the very force capable of uniting previously separated species and categories into the whole. Therefore, as K. Hayles rightly points out, 'the more one insists on absolute boundary lines between the human and non-human, the more the two become entwined' (Hayles 2003: 135–136).

In this case, the body is considered as the material extension of our 'Self', which has a certain transformational potential, capable of 'morphogenesis' (DeLanda 2016). Due to this, a human reaches new biological limits, turning into the Bio-Technological Hybrid. As a consequence, there is a real danger of the disappearance of human nature, which is 'flexible', though not 'infinitely malleable' (Fukuyama 2003: 128).

Contributing to the expansion of human boundaries, technologies still give rise to the corresponding questions. How far can these limits be pushed? What does a human acquire, and what does he or she lose in the process of technology? Should he or she perceive this process as the threat or as the opportunity? The greatest concern is about the excessive technological interference in human nature, since it may result in the loss of control over his or her own improvement. Therefore, the most obvious threat that can arise from the symbiosis of a man and a machine is 'that human beings create computers and then computers create a new species of humans' (Poster 1990: 4).

Considering this, such technologisation of a man can be perceived as an attempt to eradicate the 'human' from the man. This obliges us to rethink what it means to be 'human' and to reconsider the boundaries that separate us from technology. In this regard, S. Gilani uses the term 'bionic body' to describe a human body that has undergone technological improvement or addition to its natural capabilities (Gilani 2021: 182). This makes it possible to inscribe the 'technical' into the very structure of the human, thereby turning him or her into an 'originary prosthesis' (Derridean) or a 'supplement' to technology (Herbrechter 2013: 4). In this way 'our most powerful 21st-century technologies ... are threatening to make humans an endangered species' (Joy 2000: 238). After all, for most people, their body is who they actually

are. The fact that certain parts can be replaced with mechanical or synthetic surrogates has significant implications for how a human perceives and identifies him or herself in the future.

Therefore, on the one hand, the use of science and technology can be considered as the modification and overcoming of human nature, and, on the other, as its unconditional improvement. The first possibility of such expansion is a cyborg, where an organic body is connected with its technological implants, i.e. devices. Such devices receive power from an independent energy source and use software algorithms that are executed using non-biological means, namely, chips created on the basis of silicon. Today there already exist people who have embarked on the path of cyborgisation. For instance, Kevin Warwick, who combined his own nervous system with a neural interface, and by 2022 turned into a real cyborg. Another cyborg-activist, Neil Harbisson, by osseointegrating a special antenna into his skull, expanded his ability to perceive colours. Having attached his photo with this antenna to his passport, he can be considered the world's first official cyborg.

However, these interventions do not yet mean that a human becomes a post-human. In fact, the defining post-human characteristics are the creation of subjectivity and not the presence of non-biological components. For the post-human the boundaries of the autonomous subject are not clearly defined, that is why he or she 'becomes a system to be assembled and disassembled rather than an entity whose organic wholeness can be assumed' (Hayles 1999: 160). Having taken that into consideration, Braidotti introduces the concept of 'nomadic subjectivity' as the contested space of mutations that are not subject to either moral imperatives or technological directives (Braidotti 2006: 4).

Therefore, today it is extremely difficult to even imagine, let alone clearly form our realistic understanding of what it would be like to be posthuman (Bostrom 2001). However, despite this, the premonition of the appearance of post-human brings to life post-humanism, within which a thorough rethinking of the relationship between the man, the nature and the technology takes place. Considering this, a number of questions arise, namely, whether any human being will be able to get the opportunity to develop into a post-human with the help of technology or other means, or whether the coercion and violence will be used against those people who do not want to manipulate their biological nature.

These questions reveal the great danger that the emergence of the post-human can cause, namely, the undermining of human freedom. Consequently, only those with money, power and connections will be able to gain access to the technologies, making the rich and poor potentially physiologically distinct subspecies. A Swedish philosopher N. Bostrom confirms that the growth in human capabilities will follow the financial ability to pay for such improvements, thus further exacerbating social inequality (Bostrom 2003). Moreover, 'the new species ("post-human"), will likely view the old "normal" humans as inferior, even savages, and fit for slavery or slaughter' (Bostrom 2005: 24). In their turn, the 'ordinary' people will see the post-humans as the potential threat to their existence. And for good reason, as, according to S. Hughes, since people do not do what is best for themselves, they should be forced to become better (Hughes 2010: 628–629).

With this in mind, the post-human cannot be perceived as the 'universal human condition when in fact it affects only a small fraction of the world's population' (Hayles 1999: 6). People with greater material potential will actively improve, while people with limited material resources will remain 'ordinary'. However, according to N. Bostrom 'the increase in unjust inequalities due to technology is not a sufficient reason for discouraging the development and use of the technology' (Bostrom 2003: 498).

In this regard, the post-human should be perceived as a measure or standard by which we can measure ourselves. The peculiarity of the post-human lies in his or her openness to everything that can happen, to 'the genuine alternatives' for the human and for subjectivity itself (Callus, Herbrechter 2012: 260). Unlike existentialism or personalism, which also emphasised the openness of a human, the project of the future post-human offers a more realistic (though not always unambiguous) perspective of the technological improvement of the human personality.

TRANS-HUMAN. IS THE HUMAN STILL 'TOO HUMAN'?

It would be naive to think that the human condition and human nature will remain pretty much the same for very much longer.

Niklas Bostrom

Transhumanism occupies a special place in the system of post-humanist ideological area. Unlike post-humanism, that can be characterised primarily as a theoretical direction of human improvement, transhumanism is rather a practice that prefers 'the transformation of the biological human species through technological augmentation and enhancement' (Merlo 2019: 48). Transhumanism is a bold vision of improving human nature, with its help we can learn to reengineer technologically, eliminating such undesirable aspects of existence as disease, aging, and even death. Transhumanists envision the future that will slow down aging, increase life expectancy, and improve human cognitive and emotional abilities.

In fact, transhumanism creates favourable conditions for the emergence of trans-human and post-human. A trans-human is a person who has artificially enhanced mental and physical abilities that go far beyond the limits of the normal for the human species from the evolutionary point of view. A transhuman is a 'transitional human', someone, who by virtue of their technology usage, cultural values and lifestyle constitutes an evolutionary link to the coming era of posthumanity (Esfandiary, Aubrey 1989).

Transhumanism, as well as post-humanism, are about overcoming the limitations of Renaissance humanism, which are embedded in racial, species and gender biases. This is unacceptable in today's world, where there are already transgender men and women who have been given the freedom to choose their gender according to their inner feeling. There are also the so-called Nonbinary People who do not identify themselves with any gender at all. Considering this, transhumanism 'should be seen as an intensification of humanism', from which the idea of comprehensive human development is borrowed, though it is significantly radicalised due to the greater biological possibilities of the latest technologies (Wolfe 2010: xv).

The opinions of the philosophers regarding such human improvement and re-planning differ considerably. Thus, F. Fukuyama considers transhumanism to be 'the world's most dangerous idea', since the latest technologies may have a 'frightful moral cost' that a person will have to pay (Fukuyama 2004: 42–43). In addition, the consequences of human improvement are difficult to predict. This, Fukuyama states, can give rise to a kind of evil that will be quite difficult to identify (Fukuyama 2004: 42). Today, this kind of evil can be defined as a technological phenomenon, which is characterised by the harm that technology causes or can potentially cause to a person. In view of this, one must take into account all the dangers that new technologies may lead to in order to further regulate and control them (Chursinova, Sinelnikova 2022).

On the other hand, transhumanists value the technological self-improvement of the human and believe that this is the basic right of the individual. Many amateurs emerge in this field today; they take matters into their own hands striving for independent improvement. Such independent activity raises many concerns, since, due to the freedom, accessibility and effectiveness of conducting research and experiments, there is a risk of creating dangerous viruses, mutations, etc., which can cause irreparable harm to a human.

Although the scientific and technical potential of our time is continuously increasing, our ability to predict the results of the research is not advancing. Therefore, humanity is exposed to serious risks associated with the misuse of technology. These risks are extremely high today, which is why they are even called existential (Leslie 1996; Rees 2003; Bostrom 2002). This means that the adverse result of the impact of the latest technologies will either completely destroy humanity as a biological species, or drastically limit its possible potential. Therefore, our main goal for today is to reduce these risks while accelerating the effective and harmless use of technology for human betterment.

The trans-human has a complex of superpowers, which makes it quite appropriate to compare him or her with the Marvel superheroes, who are becoming prominent figures in popular culture today. This comparison of the trans-human to the superheroes helps us feel the reality of our anxiety about the possibility of the loss of human control. Besides, transhumanism is a modern scientific and philosophical movement, which means that people can and should become trans-humans, and not limit themselves to a selection of few superheroes who came across their abilities through extraordinary, external circumstances. Thus, transhumanism asserts that anyone can acquire superhuman powers, excluding any kind of randomness or exceptionalism.

Transhumanists believe that the responsible use of science, technology and other rational means will help us become post-humans, the beings with much greater capabilities that will encourage us to achieve a greater level of control over ourselves and our lives. Therefore, the final type of overcoming, i.e. the overcoming of human nature, can be considered in the Nietzschean interpretation as the self-overcoming, together with the latest technologies that significantly expand human potential. Hence, self-overcoming and self-affirmation of a human in this case means the opportunity for a human to become who he or she really is. This is another step so as to approach the post-human future, towards which we are heading so confidently and rapidly.

CONCLUSIONS

The ideas of human change are far from new, though earlier they were expressed by less powerful, technological means. The human way of being must be liberated from the limitations imposed by our biological nature. Digital second life, genetically modified food, advanced prosthetics, robotics and reproductive technologies are the familiar aspects of our global and technologically mediated societies. This is gradually erasing the traditional distinction between a human and the other, non-human species, creating new dilemmas for which humanity is not yet ready.

Due to this, the technologies of today are perceived extremely ambiguously; they pose a direct threat to the survival of a human and humanity or, on the contrary, they promise to create new unique opportunities to overcome fundamental human limitations. The latter option is more popular, since it affirms that new technologies offer us new ways to become who we really are, making another step towards the post-human. Therefore, it is naive to

believe that modern technologies are just technologies and nothing more. They have transformed our understanding of a human so much, forcing us to talk about the trans-human and the post-human, and practically convincing us that they are already at our door.

Today, we still cannot clearly imagine what a post-human is, though it can mean the improvement of a human in all the aspects, i.e. physiological, emotional and intellectual. The post-human can liberate the 'ordinary' human from the material, 'natural' existence, and, consequently, people will be able to live in the world of pure rationality and spirituality; this is what Plato dreamed about. However, the danger of such a transformation is for the human not to turn into a simple observer, who creates a system in which there is no longer a clearly defined dominant place for him or her.

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Posthumanizmas ir transhumanizmas žmonijos ateities požiūriu

Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama pagrindinių žmogaus antropomorfinių savybių keitimosi, sparčiai besiplėtojant naujausioms technologijoms, problema. Dėl tokių pokyčių peržiūrėtinas įprastas sąvokos „humanizmas“ (žmogiškumas) aiškinimas. Pastarąją palaipsniui keičia šiuo metu populiarios „transhumanizmo“ ir „posthumanizmo“ sąvokos. Šias sąvokas palankiai vertina technooptimistai, tikintys, kad naujausios technologijos leis mums sukurti žmones, kurie bus fiziškai, intelektualiai ir dvasiškai pranašesni už dabartinius, nors pripažįsta, kad tai gali lemti didesnę socialinę nelygybę. Straipsnyje teigiama, kad posthumanizmo potencialas yra per daug dviprasmiškas, kad jį būtų galima aiškiai apibrėžti. Viena vertus, tai atveria neregėtas galimybes, kurias galima laikyti aukščiausia žmogaus laisvės, t. y. gebėjimo modeliuoti žmogų pagal savo viziją, apraiška. Kita vertus, kyla reali grėsmė pačiai žmogaus egzistencijai, t. y. pavojus tobulėjančiam žmogaus potencialui technologinėje aplinkoje. Todėl straipsnio užduotis – nubrėžti galimas šiuolaikinio žmogaus tapatybės formavimosi ir tobulėjimo perspektyvas, derinant ją su kitomis, ne žmogaus, rūšimis bei naujausiomis technologijomis. Tai įmanoma su sąlyga, kad posthumanizmas priima naujas galimybes kaip išlaisvinančią jėgą, kuri įveikia žmogaus prigimties negatyvumą ir ribotumą. Straipsnyje taikytas palyginamasis ir analizės metodai.

Raktažodžiai: posthumanizmas, transhumanizmas, savaime besitvarkanti struktūra, technologija, mašina