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TRANSHUMANISM AND RADICAL LONGEVITY

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Abstract

A growing minority of scientists and thinkers assert that the main goal of modern science is to defeat death and grant eternal youth to human beings. For scientists, death is not an inevitable fate, but merely a technical problem. People die not because the gods have decreed it, but because of various technical malfunctions—a heart attack, cancer, an infection, etc. However, every technical problem has a technical solution. On the path to "immortality", we must ask ourselves not only "can we?" but especially "should we?" The future will depend on our ability to integrate ethics, fairness, and discernment into the development of these technologies, without losing sight of our humanity.

Keywords: transhumanism; social commitment; social commitment

Introduction

Throughout history, humans have been obsessed with the idea of immortality. This desire to defeat death has not only been a literary or religious theme, but also a constant concern in the political, scientific, and cultural spheres. From the pharaohs of Ancient Egypt to modern research in the field of longevity, the idea of immortality has been closely linked to power, vanity, faith, but also to a deep fear of nothingness. The history of humanity can be read, to a certain extent, as a chronicle of efforts to achieve eternity—whether through deeds, buildings, religions, or discoveries.

In ancient literature, the issue of immortality appears as early as the Epic of Gilgamesh, one of humanity's oldest literary creations. King Gilgamesh embarks on an initiatory journey in search of eternal life, terrified by the death of his friend Enkidu. In the end, he understands that physical immortality is impossible, but that man can achieve a form of immortality through his deeds and wisdom. Thus, the epic offers a mature vision: accepting death as part of life and valuing the memory and legacy we leave behind.

In the Middle Ages, religious literature proposed a vision of immortality from a spiritual perspective. Dante Alighieri's allegory "The Divine Comedy" attempts to show us the path of the soul to salvation. The journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise is a symbolic representation of the struggle to attain eternal life in the divine kingdom. Immortality is not accessible through one's own efforts, but through faith, love, and spiritual enlightenment.

In Renaissance and Romantic literature, immortality is often treated as a dangerous temptation. In Goethe's *Faust*, the character sells his soul to the Devil for knowledge, youth, and fulfilment. The pact with Mephistopheles symbolizes the desire for absolute power and spiritual immortality, but also the risk of alienation and loss of the soul. The drama highlights the conflict between unlimited human aspiration and its moral consequences.

Another significant example is Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Dorian retains his youth and beauty, while his portrait ages and deteriorates in his place. This form of immortality gradually becomes a source of moral corruption and suffering, suggesting that eternity can destroy humanity in man when it is achieved unnaturally.

Also in world literature, romantic poetry often proposes a form of immortality through creation and love. In Shakespeare's sonnets, the author states that the beauty of his beloved will live forever through his verses: "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this and this gives life to thee." Thus, art becomes a means of defying time and death, offering a refuge of eternity.

In Eminescu's work, immortality is presented as a burden, a curse that brings suffering and isolation. Thus, Hyperion, an immortal being, cannot experience human love; he remains a prisoner of his own divine condition, deprived of human emotions and feelings. In the poem "Luceafărul" (The Morning Star), cold eternity and spiritual perfection are contrasted with the intensity of human feelings, suggesting that ephemerality has its own beauty. Ultimately, literature does not offer recipes for eternal life, but invites us to meditate on the value of life, the meaning of existence, and how we can truly live, even if we are mortal.

In the postmodern era, the idea of immortality takes on scientific and technological forms. With advances in genetics, medicine, and artificial intelligence, research into life extension or even consciousness transfer has intensified. Initiatives such as cryogenics or mind "upload" projects reflect a mindset in which immortality is no longer just a religious concept, but a technological possibility. However, the ethical question remains: is man ready for eternity?

Biological escape velocity between scientific progress and transhumanist utopia

The concept of "longevity escape velocity" proposed by British gerontologist Aubrey de Grey refers to the idea that, as scientific advances in longevity progress, we may reach a point where aging can be delayed or reversed faster than it occurs naturally (de Grey & Rae, 2008). In other words, human life can be extended indefinitely thanks to continuous and accelerated progress in anti-aging treatments. The term was conceived as an analogy to the concept of escape velocity in physics, which is the minimum speed required for an object to move away from a gravitational body indefinitely, despite the gravitational force pulling the object toward the body.

De Grey's approach emphasizes repairing cellular and molecular damage caused by aging, rather than treating individual diseases. Although the concept may sound futuristic, de Grey argues that it is a predictable scientific reality and estimates a 50% probability of it occurring within 25 years, if sufficient funding were available, according to an article on ResearchGate. There are authors such as Ray Kurzweil and Aubrey de Grey who have predicted that the escape velocity of longevity could be reached before humanity realizes it (Diamandis, 2017).

Essentially, the escape velocity of longevity involves a race between scientific progress and the biological aging process. If scientific progress (the speed at which new anti-aging therapies and interventions are developed) exceeds the speed at which we age biologically, then we will reach an escape point.

Although scientifically and philosophically appealing, biological escape velocity raises multiple questions regarding its feasibility, social and ethical implications, and the risks of turning a utopian vision into a potentially dangerous ideal.

A first argument in favour of the feasibility of biological escape velocity is supported by the exponential pace of medical and technological progress, particularly in areas such as genetic engineering, cell therapies, tissue regeneration, and artificial organs (Murphy & Atala, 2014). Examples such as the use of CRISPR-Cas9 for genetic editing (Bak et al., 2018)

or 3D printing of biological tissues indicate that interventions in the aging process are no longer just speculative, but are already in advanced stages of research (Zhou et al., 2021). Artificial intelligence (AI) also plays a key role in accelerating medical discoveries by rapidly analysing genetic data and identifying personalized treatments. It is already being used in cancer diagnosis, cardiovascular disease prediction, and clinical trial optimization. In addition, conceptualizing aging as a degenerative disease rather than an inevitable natural process paves the way for a paradigm shift in medicine. If aging is treatable, then prolonging healthy life becomes a legitimate and achievable goal.

There is also a critical argument against transhumanism and radical modifications to the human being. First, aging is a complex biological process influenced by genetic, epigenetic, and environmental factors. Although partial causes have been identified—such as telomere shortening, oxidative stress, or chronic inflammation—effective treatments are still in the experimental stages (Harari, 2015).

Furthermore, reaching biological escape velocity raises ethical and socio-economic issues. Regeneration and rejuvenation technologies may only be available to financial elites, exacerbating global inequality in access to healthcare (Fukuyama, 2002). At the same time, questions arise regarding demographic sustainability. Extending human life by decades or even centuries could lead to overpopulation, pressure on natural resources, and dramatic changes in labour, pension, and education systems.

The level of intervention on human nature

Rapid advances in biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and neuroscience are generating numerous debates about what it means to be human and how our ability to intervene on the body and mind affects human ontology. These discussions attempt to distinguish between moderate, radical, and transhumanist enhancements, each category involving different levels of intervention in human nature, with distinct ethical and theological implications.

Moderate enhancements aim to restore or support normal human functions without exceeding the natural physiological limits of the species. These include the use of eyeglasses, prostheses, hearing implants, hormonal treatments for known glandular dysfunctions, and vaccines. In general, these interventions are perceived as forms of care for health and life, compatible with the theological view of man as a vulnerable being, but perfectible through grace and responsibility (Fukuyama, 2002). Radical enhancements involve significant interventions in the biological or cognitive structure of humans, with the aim of exceeding natural performance. Examples include germline genetic editing, neuro-implants to enhance intelligence, artificial sensory augmentations, or anti-aging therapies.

Although promising from a medical or technological point of view, these forms of enhancement are ethically controversial because of the risk of inequality, loss of personal identity, and manipulation of the intrinsic nature of human beings. From a theological perspective, however, they raise issues related to pride, excessive control, and the weakening of the relationship between humans and God (Bostrom, 2009). Transhumanism involves a radical break with current human nature, advancing the idea of transcending biological limits in favour of a posthuman condition. This includes ideas such as the "upload" of consciousness into digital environments, the fusion of humans with artificial intelligence, or cybernetic immortality (Bostrom, 2014). Unlike other types, transhumanist enhancements aim to abolish human frailty as a form of transcending creation. From a theological point of view, these are most often rejected, being perceived as a form of "technological Prometheanism," a defiance of the limits imposed by God, and an undermining of the idea of the divine image in man (*Imago Dei*) (Krüger et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the distinction between the three types of enhancements reflects different levels of relationship to the human body, technology, and the meaning of existence. From restoration (moderate) to transcendence (radical) to total reconfiguration (transhumanist), each paradigm raises distinct challenges for ethics and theology. It is essential that these debates be conducted in a responsible framework that affirms human dignity, social justice, and the spiritual orientation of technological progress.

Christianity and transhumanist technology

Considering that human life in general is imperfect due to the many limitations of the human body, such as illness, disability, aging, and even death, transhumanists seek to use advanced technology to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of possible happiness. They aim for immortality, or at least radical longevity, using various forms of cybernetics/biotechnology, whether it be extensive genetic reprogramming, brain/head transplantation, cryonic suspension, or uploading consciousness to a cybernetic mainframe (de Grey, 2004). In other words, transhumanists seek to create posthumans by passing through an intermediate evolutionary state called transhuman. The final product is so enhanced that it can no longer be considered a member of the human species (Transhumanist FAQ — Humanity, 2025). If Christians hope for the perfection of human nature, transhumanists hope for an evolution beyond human nature, which would lead to its destruction because, due to the enhancements, they no longer belong to the human species. From the perspective of Thomistichylomorphism, ethics is based on natural law, that is, man's participatory reason in divine law. Man has a dignity derived from his spiritual nature, and changes that contradict this nature (e.g., radical genetic manipulation, invasive augmentation) are considered disordered (Servais Pinckaers, 1993). Transhumanism rejects the idea of a "normative nature." In this view, humans are sovereign over their own evolution, and technology is the essential tool in this process. Transhumanist bioethics is primarily utilitarian, with subjective good, efficiency, and individual autonomy as its criteria (More, 2013).

Ultimately, the two perspectives reflect radically different views of humanity: for Thomistichylomorphism, humans are creatures dependent on a personal God, with a stable and orderly nature open to transcendence, while for transhumanism, humans are projects open to infinity, and transcendence is technological self-creation rather than a divine gift.

The confrontation between the two conceptions is more than a theoretical disagreement; it is a dispute over the meaning of human existence. If we accept that man is defined by his relationship with the divine and by the unity of body and soul, then transhumanism appears as a Promethean illusion that risks dehumanizing us. If, on the contrary, man is only a set of perfectible processes, then the Thomist tradition seems outdated.

The choice between the two paradigms is not only philosophical, but existential. From an ethical point of view, we must ask ourselves whether radical longevity or technologically mediated immortality would be conducive to the prosperity or well-being of a human being.

For scientists, death is not an inevitable fate, but merely a technical problem. People die not because the gods have decreed it, but because of various technical malfunctions—a heart attack, cancer, an infection, etc. However, every technical problem has a technical solution (Harari, 2015). Through science, we have achieved a better understanding of the human body. Although it continuously deteriorates with age, our understanding would allow us to repair it indefinitely, perhaps even for several centuries. Let's compare how a car, although it deteriorates continuously, can be repaired by replacing its defective parts indefinitely, even though we know that the car is not technically immortal because it can be

blown up or, why not, the thermal death of the universe would render oil changes useless (Sportiello, 2025).

We wonder, however, whether a life extended to infinity would not eventually become boring to the extent that a person loses interest in various activities in which they previously found satisfaction and considers that other goals in life are not worth pursuing. From a Lockean perspective, personal life is linked to memory, consciousness, and moral identity, not just the physical body. Endlessly prolonging life would eventually create a posthuman person with a distinct set of interests and desires, no longer psychologically connected to the original matrix (Agar, 2014). In other words, the longer you live, the less psychologically connected you will be to your later self, especially if that person's self has been radically altered. Even if personal identity is preserved, one's life will eventually lose its meaning and general interest.

The social commitment of transhumanism: promise, illusion, or danger?

Transhumanism is an ideological and technological movement that advocates the use of scientific progress to amplify human capabilities, to the point of transcending the biological limits of the species. From genetic therapies to artificial intelligence integrated into the human body, transhumanism promises not only a longer and healthier life, but also a redefinition of humanity. Although it aspires to improve the human condition, the lack of a coherent ethical and social framework risks accentuating inequalities and undermining human solidarity. This is why there is a need for clear ethical and theological guidance to steer the application of these technologies in support of the common good.

Some supporters of transhumanism believe that new technologies can become instruments of social equity. This is a form of "democratic transhumanism," in which access to biological enhancements is universal and ethically regulated. In this vision, technology is a means of liberation from suffering, disability, and death, not just a privilege of the elite. Furthermore, some authors argue that transhumanism can increase empathy, compassion, and rationality through neurotechnological interventions—which would strengthen social cohesion (Hughes, 2004).

There are also critics of transhumanism, such as Francis Fukuyama and Amy Debates, who warn that without mechanisms for control and equitable distribution, transhumanist technologies will amplify existing inequalities. Limited access to genetic enhancements, neuro-implants, or longevity therapies could create a new privileged class of "posthumans" and a marginalized majority of "unmodified" people. This biological stratification could have destructive effects on social solidarity, justice, and human dignity. From the perspective of Christian bioethics, such scenarios are incompatible with the principles of solidarity and care for the vulnerable (Debates, 2025).

Theologically, transhumanism is deeply ambiguous. On the one hand, the desire to heal, prolong life, and overcome the limits of suffering can be interpreted as an extension of humanity's mandate as co-creators with God. On the other hand, the obsession with biological perfection and technological immortality can lead to an idolization of progress and the marginalization of the intrinsic value of human limitations. Authentic Christian theology requires that any technological development be subordinate to the principle of the dignity of every human being and the priority of the common good (Bostrom, 2005).

For transhumanism to be integrated into an ethically and socially acceptable framework, a clear set of normative criteria is necessary. These include: (a) equitable accessibility, (b) transparency in research and implementation, (c) protection of human dignity, (d) involvement of vulnerable communities in decision-making, and (e) ongoing interdisciplinary ethical evaluation. In the absence of these principles, the risk of

instrumentalizing human beings becomes imminent, and transhumanism risks becoming not a solution but an amplifier of social problems.

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