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TRANSHUMANISM AND BIOETHICS: CONTEMPORARY ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF PRESERVING HUMAN DIGNITY

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Abstract
This article analyzes the complex dialectical relationship between transhumanism and bioethics. The author emphasizes that intellectual and technological progress must be balanced with moral maturity. The article also highlights the importance of cultural, historical, and religious values in evaluating transhumanist ideas, as well as the need to protect human dignity in the process of technological enhancement. The critical and regulatory role of bioethics in relation to transhumanist projects is substantiated from a humanistic perspective.

Keywords: Transhumanism, bioethics, cultural differences, religious ethics, responsibility, humanism.

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Introduction

In the context of globalization, one of the most controversial directions in the development of science and technology is associated with the idea of transhumanism. Transhumanism is a philosophical and scientific movement that advances the possibility of overcoming human biological limitations through technology and artificially enhancing physical, intellectual, and spiritual capacities [1]. Transhumanists discuss the possibility of extending human life, eliminating diseases entirely, expanding intelligence through artificial devices, and even transferring human consciousness into a digital environment. At first glance, transhumanism appears to be a positive movement aimed at improving human life, reducing suffering, and strengthening health. From a bioethical perspective, however, these ideas may pose serious threats to the ontological nature of the human being, as well as to human honor and dignity. This is because transhumanism tends to interpret human beings not as biological and spiritual entities but as “projects to be improved” or “technological objects.” Bioethics, by contrast, defends the human person as an inviolable value that takes precedence over any technological experiment [2].

One of the central ideas of transhumanism is the belief that the human body can be modified without limit. Implants, prostheses, genetic modifications, and neurotechnologies are envisaged as means of raising human physical abilities to a level “above the norm.” This makes the question “Who is a human being?” even more complex. If an individual transforms their body into a fully technological system, how can their identity and spiritual essence be preserved? Bioethics places this question at the center of the debate. One of the most dangerous aspects of transhumanism from a bioethical standpoint is its instrumental interpretation of the human person. If the body and mind are treated as “mechanisms to be improved,” human dignity becomes subordinate to standards of technical efficiency. Drawing on Kantian philosophy, bioethics emphasizes that a human being must never be treated merely as a means, but always as an end in themselves [3].

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The transhumanist approach, however, may weaken this principle.

Transhumanism also raises serious concerns about social equality. If opportunities for technological "enhancement" are available only to wealthy individuals or developed societies, a "biological elite" may emerge. Such a development would contradict the principles of social equality, justice, and human rights. Guided by the principle of justice, bioethics firmly maintains that human dignity must not be measured by technological capabilities. Transhumanist ideas also tend to challenge the natural limits of human life. Death, aging, and illness increasingly come to be viewed not as unavoidable aspects of human existence, but as "technical problems." Bioethics, on the other hand, stresses that the natural limits of life are important for spiritual development, responsibility, and moral maturity. If human beings begin to imagine themselves as unlimited and unchanging entities, their sense of responsibility may diminish [4].

Transhumanism also promotes the idea of transferring human consciousness into a digital environment, often referred to as "digital immortality." This idea is based on equating human identity with an information system. Bioethics, however, understands personhood not merely as a collection of information, but as a holistic phenomenon arising from the unity of the body, consciousness, social relationships, and spiritual experience. Reducing a human being to digital code oversimplifies the ontological nature of personhood. The tension between transhumanism and bioethics is also evident in the question of human freedom. On the one hand, transhumanism holds that individuals should have the right to modify their bodies and minds as they wish. On the other hand, bioethics argues that this freedom has limits, since one person's technological choices may affect society and the fate of future generations. Freedom must therefore be understood in conjunction with responsibility. Transhumanist views challenge the fundamental values of bioethics: the sanctity of life, human honor and dignity, justice, and responsibility. Bioethics does not reject transhumanism outright; rather, it subjects it to critical scrutiny and maintains that technological enhancement must be guided by humanistic standards.

An important feature of the bioethical critique of transhumanism is its defense of the spiritual essence of the human person. Technology may make human life easier, but it cannot replace the moral and spiritual qualities that make us human. Bioethics evaluates human beings not only by their physical or intellectual strength, but also by their compassion, responsibility, and moral choices. Bioethics also draws attention to the global consequences of transhumanism. If humanity pursues technological enhancement without limits, its relationship with nature may deteriorate further and ecological balance may be disrupted. Bioethics views human beings not as masters standing above nature, but as beings who should live in harmony with it.

It should be emphasized that, under conditions of globalization, transhumanism is among the most intensely contested issues in bioethics. Although it emerged from an intention to improve human life, it also contains elements that may threaten the ontological status, honor, and dignity of human beings. By critically examining transhumanism through the principles of humanism, justice, and responsibility, bioethics argues that technological progress must remain subordinate to the spiritual essence of the human person. Another important direction of the bioethical critique concerns the risk of losing human identity. Human identity develops through historical, cultural, religious, and social experience. Radically altering individuals through technology, or artificially "improving" them, may interrupt the natural process of human development. Bioethics emphasizes that human development is achieved not only through technical

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capabilities, but also through moral maturity, responsibility, and self-awareness. In transhumanist projects, the human body and mind are often interpreted as an "upgradeable platform." This creates a risk of undermining human individuality, uniqueness, and irreplaceability. If individuals are "enhanced" according to standardized technological models, interpersonal differences may diminish, and human beings may be reduced to biological and technological products. Bioethics, by contrast, protects the human being as a unique and inviolable entity that cannot be standardized [5].

Another important issue in the bioethical critique of transhumanism concerns the human relationship with the body. From a bioethical perspective, the human body is an inseparable part of personhood, not merely a mechanical system. The transhumanist approach, however, often regards the body as a mechanism that can be "repaired" or "upgraded." This may weaken respect for the human body and turn it into an instrumental object. Bioethics defends the body as a sacred expression of personhood. Transhumanism may also affect social relationships. If technologically "enhanced" individuals emerge within society, a new social divide may develop between them and those who have not been enhanced. This could weaken the principles of justice, equality, and solidarity. Bioethics considers the preservation of social unity, solidarity, and moral responsibility among individuals to be an important task.

Another problematic aspect of transhumanism is the possibility that it may become closely tied to economic interests. If technological "enhancement" becomes a market commodity, the human body and mind may become objects of trade. This would lead to the commercialization of human honor and dignity. Bioethics firmly rejects the reduction of human life to a source of economic profit. Transhumanist ideas often rest on technological optimism—that is, the belief that "technology can solve every problem." Bioethics approaches this optimism with caution. Throughout human history, technologies have brought not only prosperity but also new risks and crises. Bioethics therefore regards ethical oversight of technological development as essential. The concept of "human limits" occupies an important place in the critique of transhumanism. From a bioethical perspective, human physical and biological limitations are not simply weaknesses; they are important conditions for spiritual development. The existence of limits helps shape human beings as responsible, compassionate, and interdependent. If individuals seek to eliminate these limits entirely, they risk losing their moral essence as well [6].

Bioethical criticism also points out that transhumanism often equates the technical enhancement of human abilities with spiritual advancement. Greater intellectual power does not automatically produce moral maturity. History demonstrates that knowledge and power can become destructive forces when they are not accompanied by responsibility. Bioethics therefore argues that the moral development of the human person must take precedence over technological progress.

Cross-cultural differences are also important in discussions of transhumanism. In some societies, human beings are understood as creatures who live in harmony with nature; in others, they are viewed as beings who exercise dominion over nature. Taking these differences into account, bioethics seeks a universal yet humanistically grounded assessment of transhumanism.

Religious perspectives on transhumanism also occupy an important place in bioethical debate. In many religious traditions, human life is regarded as a divine gift, and radical intervention in it is approached with caution. Bioethics does not dismiss religious moral perspectives; instead, it brings them into dialogue with contemporary technological challenges.

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In conclusion, the relationship between transhumanism and bioethics is one of the most complex and controversial areas of contemporary philosophy. While bioethics partly acknowledges transhumanism as an aspiration to improve human life, it regards it as a project that must remain under strict ethical oversight. Technological enhancement must not conflict with the spiritual essence, honor, or dignity of the human person.

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