

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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"The Ethics of Human Enhancement. A Critical Analysis of Transhumanist Proposals"

prepared under the guidance of

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This doctoral dissertation addresses the ethical issues surrounding human enhancement. It is an attempt to fill a gap in the Polish-language literature on this topic and to highlight the author's contribution to the ongoing debate on this topic, as no work has yet been published that comprehensively summarizes the views and arguments of the participants in the debate in the manner presented by the author.

The main premise of this dissertation is to present an ethical and philosophical dispute concerning human enhancement, a topic of crucial importance for contemporary culture, between its proponents (transhumanists) and opponents (bioconservatives), the main points of contention in this debate, and its leading authors. The primary research goals are: (1) to reconstruct the ethical arguments of transhumanism proponents and the opposing arguments advanced by bioconservatives; (2) to critically examine the propositions advanced by transhumanists; (3) to address polemical and controversial issues concerning selected ethical and anthropological issues; (4) to critique which of the propositions advanced by transhumanists are unacceptable and impossible to justify; and (5) to outline the author's own position within the ongoing debate on the ethical issues of human enhancement.

The methodology employed in this doctoral dissertation is appropriate for the humanities, specifically the discipline of philosophy. It involves the interpretation and reconstruction of texts written by various transhumanists, as well as their opponents. Reconstruction of texts involves extracting the meanings of various conceptual categories, while interpretation focuses on constructing a synthetic whole of the often fragmented views represented by transhumanists. Due to the complexity of the topic, the dissertation required the use of knowledge from cognitive science, various branches of philosophy, including philosophical ethics and the philosophy of technology, anthropology, bioethics, psychology, computer science, and other social sciences. The analysis encompasses the work of various researchers, as well as the philosophical views to which these authors refer (either approvingly

or critically), their studies, and other philosophical works relevant to the ethical assessment of the proposed solutions. Therefore, many of the analyses included in the dissertation are comparative in nature.

The doctoral dissertation consists of three chapters, preceded by an introduction and concluded with an extended recapitulation.

Chapter I presents definitions and the main assumptions and postulates of transhumanism in source texts and commentaries; definitions of human enhancement, pointing out the difficulties and challenges in defining this concept; the distinction between enhancement and therapy, pointing out precisely the similarities and differences between the two terms; problems and fundamental ethical issues around which the debate revolves in the context of enhancements of human nature, along with a presentation and justification of the axiology and ethical position of transhumanists, i.e. utilitarianism.

Chapter II presents the areas and spheres in which human enhancement is already being implemented and is planned for the future, which forces us to intensively ask questions about the nature of the convergence between the biological and the technological. This section of the work presents four areas of enhancement: cognitive, physical, moral, and emotional, as well as two paths of transhumanism: organic and digital. It discusses phenomena such as "uploading," "avatarization," "wearable technology," "cyborgization," and "biohacking." The issue of potential longevity and immortality is also addressed. The positions and arguments of proponents of enhancement are reconstructed. The positions of the most prominent proponents of enhancement, such as J. Harris, J. Savulescu, N. Bostrom, I. Persson, and R. Kurzweil, who, in their own unique ways, argue for the necessity of enhancing human nature.

Chapter III of the dissertation is devoted to opponents of human enhancement, i.e. the so-called bioconservatives, across the entire spectrum of both their forms and their views, from staunch opponents who reject virtually all ideas for enhancement, most often deemed contrary to nature; through those who, in principle, oppose it, but see some possibilities for applying some of the proposals of the proponents of enhancement as morally permissible; to those who accept certain proposals but agree with them only to a certain extent. The ethical positions and arguments of figures such as L. Kass, F. Fukuyama, J. Habermas, M. Sandel, M. Hauskeller, N. Agar, J. Eberl, as well as Polish researchers: G. Hołub, P. Duchliński, T. Grabińska, A. Lekka-Kowalik, M. Wójtowicz, M. Nowacka and J. Kopania, who undertake

and focus on various controversial issues in the debate with transhumanists, essentially invoking the broadly understood protection of both the naturalness of life and human nature, have been reconstructed.

The doctoral dissertation concludes with an extended Recapitulation, which summarizes the most important observations and conclusions and addresses polemical and debatable issues concerning selected ethical and anthropological issues. A critique is provided to demonstrate which of the transhumanist propositions, in the author's opinion, are unacceptable and unjustifiable. Proposals for further research and analysis undertaken in the dissertation are also presented.

The author concludes that, at the current stage of research, the debate in question is theoretically intractable. This is impossible due to unclear concepts or unclear application of concepts. The discourse often takes on a metaphorical form, which hinders precise understanding and rational ordering of many issues. Participants in the debate employ persuasive arguments, which may be an attempt to shift the debate from a theoretical to a practical level. Furthermore, the debate is extremely complex and complicated. This, in turn, makes it easy to succumb to the temptation to either enthusiastically and uncritically support it, dismiss it entirely as negative, or ignore the problem as nonexistent and fictitious.

Studying the positions of the parties to the debate, the author notes the need to create a platform for dialogue (not just pragmatic ones) that could become a space for understanding, rather than merely a space for confrontation. This dialogue would enable a better understanding of the arguments of the adversaries. It could lead to the creation of new ideas, thus helping the parties to the discussion emerge from the trenches in which they are stuck, and help determine the extent to which objective development of technology and knowledge can be offered at least a relatively integral vision of human development, one that takes human nature into account.

Among other postulates, the author highlights the need for a balanced separation of facts from ideological narratives or fiction. To achieve the desired level of debate, it would be necessary to clarify many elements of the ontological models assumed by individual thinkers. Attention should also be paid to the real possibilities of technology, thus avoiding the extremes to which participants in the debate tend to fall, whether by absolutizing achievements and drawing inadequate conclusions from them, or by underestimating them. It is crucial that thinkers considering the issues under discussion clarify the arguments they employ, as their

overly superficial invocation and use generates too many unnecessary doubts. There is a need for a clearer understanding of basic philosophical categories, such as "human nature" or "dignity." It is also crucial for participants to be more attentive and take opponents' arguments more seriously.

This dissertation offers an unprecedented exploration of a relatively new and crucial issue within the increasingly popular trans- and posthumanist ideology, demonstrating the need for further research into this phenomenon. I believe that, in light of personalist ethics, one possible conclusion can be drawn: the intention to endlessly enhance humanity should be critically assessed. This is because it fails to consider the potential costs, risks, and harmfulness of technological endeavors for the prospects of human life, as well as the threats associated with biotechnological progress, which are a source of fears and anxieties that should compel humanity to take responsibility. This dissertation is an important contribution to the debate on transhumanism, its origins, and its connections to philosophical, theological, and social issues. Despite its comparative nature, it highlights one of the key axes of the debate on humanity and humanist culture, on progress and the actual improvement of the human world. We constantly face the dilemma of whether human enhancement and its possible consequences in the form of transhumans and posthumans represent new, desirable qualities that we urgently need, or whether they are part of a dangerous utopia. In conclusion, this dissertation is extremely timely. We are dealing with a unique explosion of new ideas and proposals within the transhumanist trend, and familiarizing ourselves with them, and moreover, adequately evaluating them, are tasks that contemporary philosophers cannot avoid.

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