Transhumanismo y bioetica en su aplicación

Transhumanism and bioethics in their application

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Palabras claves:

Transhumanismo, Genética, Bioética, Racionalidad, Bioideología

Resumen

Introducción: El transhumanismo es una ideología que ha tomado fuerza en los últimos años ya que con la innovación en biotecnologías se han abierto puertas para llevar a cabo procesos que ayudan a mejorar al ser humano, plantea mejorar características físicas e intelectuales para alcanzar la perfección. **Objetivo:** Se pretende exponer problemáticas de índole social, biológico, además de describir como la concepción que se tiene sobre el hombre o humanidad puede verse afectado por la implementación de la tecnología y los diversos procesos de transformación. **Metodología:** El modelo de investigación se trata de una revisión narrativa que tiene como fin recaudar y analizar el contenido de diversas fuentes bibliográficas como artículos, revistas o bases digitales que estén sujetos a una visión antropológica del transhumanismo y factores que influyan en su aplicación **Resultados:** Se contrastaron las visiones de diversos autores sobre lo que significa ser humano y las posibles repercusiones a nivel social, además de demostrar que la implementación de tecnologías es un paso natural para la evolución de la humanidad. **Conclusión:** Las fuentes usadas durante el estudio apoyan el pensamiento de que las tecnologías deben ser implementadas para mejorar la calidad y cantidad de vida, por lo que tener una base moral sólida para su aplicación es fundamental para evitar atentar contra la integridad de aquellos que se sometan a dichos procedimientos.

Keywords:

Transhumanism, Genetics, Bioethics, Rationality, Bioideology

Abstract

Introduction: Transhumanism is an ideology that has grown in importance in recent years since innovations in biotechnology have opened doors to carry out processes that help improve human beings and enhance physical and intellectual characteristics to achieve perfection. Objective: The aim is to expose problems of a social and biological nature and describe how technological implementation and the different transformation processes can influence the conception of man or humanity. Methodology: This research approach is a narrative review that aims to collect and analyze the content of several literature sources, such as articles, journals, or online databases related to an anthropological vision of

transhumanism and the factors that influence its application. Results: The views of various authors on what it means to be human and the possible social repercussions were contrasted, in addition to demonstrating that the implementation of technologies is a natural step in the evolution of humankind. Conclusion: The sources used during the study support the thought that technologies should be implemented to improve the quality and quantity of life; Thus, having a solid moral basis for their application is fundamental to avoid undermining the integrity of those who undergo such procedures.

Introduction

Within transhumanist thought, multiple ideologies have been generated about what it is, among them Nick Bostrom interprets it as the willingness to reach "new capabilities" with an idea as simple as that, it is hoped to open the debate of what the human being would be capable of achieving if the imperfections that today are limiting in their development are eliminated, after the boom in innovation in science and all its possible applications, topics such as transhumanism arise with more force and those who support that people "transcend" to something more than the conception that we have about what we are and are destined to be (1).

In this article, various perspectives of the transhumanist movement will be analyzed in order to expose problems of a social and biological nature, in addition to describing how the conception of man or humanity can be affected by the implementation of technology and the various transformation processes. In this way, it is hoped to convey that the search for improvement is a feeling that has accompanied man since he became aware of his existence (1).

It is also expected to present transhumanism not as an atrocity but as the natural step of human evolution since the benefits it offers are of great impact if they are implemented efficiently, its viability is a separate issue since although certain techniques can be used today, they are very basic compared to all the applications that could be achieved if their development is not interfered with, but progress should not be related to moral or ethical violations (1).

The research model is a narrative review that aims to collect and analyze the content of various bibliographic sources such as articles, magazines and publications from 2019 to

date from digital databases such as PUBMED, Scielo, etc. The standard for selecting sources are articles that are subject to an anthropological vision, that have Transhumanism as their main theme and factors that influence its application.

Development

1. Fundamentals of transhumanism

Nick Bostrom proposes as one of the main ideals of this movement to improve the human being, after the application of different technologies, to avoid natural processes such as aging and death, in addition to improving physical and intellectual capacities to stand out among those who have not made use of these technologies, in order to give a new meaning to the word "Man", this does not seem to be a homogeneous ideology because there are discrepancies between those who support it or not. If we talk about the term transhumanism, we cannot leave aside posthumanism, in the first concept the general idea is that everything that is predisposed by nature is nothing more than limitations that when corrected or eliminated allow man to evolve and transcend (2,3).

Posthumanism for Robert Pepperell is nothing more than the end of centralist thought in which man is the axis of existence due to an arrogant feeling of superiority, that is, the end of the humanist era, which rejects the belief that man is an incomplete being since he has undergone multiple transformations using the tools he has had at his disposal resulting in what we are today, thus demonstrating that improvement is essential to make way for that empowered individual and how he will relate to or explore the space around him, creating foundations that seek to understand his new place within the universe (3,4).

Although a difference in thought can be noted, both concepts speak about "perfect beings", which is why, for the purposes of a simple understanding, any type of improvement that seeks to avoid the problems previously mentioned falls within the definition of transhumanism (4).

2. Use of biotechnology

Rafael Santa María explains how innovations and their application can be aimed at improving quality, life expectancy, etc. in order to achieve stability and well-being after their use. This is not exclusively for humans, since the environment that surrounds them can be affected or molded depending on what is wanted to achieve. In the field of transhumanism, it is one of the fundamental bases, since through this, new advances in medicine are observed, such as personalized, regenerative or preventive medicine, all with a multidisciplinary approach to repair organs or tissue damaged by diseases that are currently untreatable. Although they are emerging techniques to be tested, there are other types of options, among which genetic therapies, genome mapping, highlighting genetic editing, which could help avoid errors or improve certain characteristics during

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embryonic development or even reach what is known today as "catalog babies" which would be genetically modified to obtain the best physical characteristics, all this in order to avoid possible complications during their development (5,6).

This last point is the one that draws the most attention, since it would take an important step which is the correction of errors before birth in order to be able to choose what is desired long before conception and even as mentioned above it gives free rein to the development of individuals whose only sense of existence would be to fulfill a specific task for which they were created, this from a philosophical point of view is an atrocity since it completely eliminates the meaning that each one gives to their existence, the way in which as humans we deal with all those situations that make us choose a path which is unknown but is part of our nature to understand what place we occupy within society. The Renaissance philosopher Pico della Mirandola said "The possibility of transforming man to achieve the perfection of human dignity is given by the freedom to choose one's destiny", this phrase, although short, is very profound in terms of what we decide to be, since an empty existence could not be considered life, knowing the only reason why we are in the world is to fulfill something that someone arbitrarily chose for us, would make miserable the fact of knowing that one is nothing more than a disposable product with an unknown expiration date (7).

Authors such as Kurzweil speak about Immortality in which not only genetic technologies are used but also technological implements ranging from computing, artificial intelligence or robotic parts, this because it is considered that the fact of transcending is not linked to a spiritual issue, achieving this would be the greatest milestone in human history, it must be understood that immortality within this ideological current is not limited to a physical body but could also be based on transferring consciousness to a computer or robots if we speak with a futuristic vision; certain human characteristics could also be maintained by replacing organs with artificial products to extend life expectancy indefinitely (7,8).

For Elena Postigo, being transhuman does not guarantee happiness, since there is no formula or guarantee that fits everyone, the perspectives can be philosophical/spiritual, immortality in various conceptions is achieved through the soul, which has an infinite existence where it achieves plenitude and reaches happiness. Immortality in anytermused means a transformation that "defeats" time leaving aside the fact of having a time limit to leave a mark to a greater or lesser extent, while it is true the fact of existing eternally seems a wonderful idea for some, there are people who think that part of being human is knowing that we are finite beings, this makes the time we share with the beings we love, what we learn and do is gratifying because it has a real impact on everything around us. Eternity seems to be nothing more than a refuge for those people who are unable to deal

with the fear of death, because it is about avoiding an important part within the biological cycle in which no living being escapes this destiny (9).

3. Changes in social structure

Pascal Pick, from an anthropological point of view, analyses the possible risks at an ethical level, since it must be taken into account that the feeling of superiority is part of the human being compared to others who perhaps do not have the same opportunities or qualities, so that "superior" humans could segregate those who do not have improvements, they would not be the only ones since, if individuals are designed for certain tasks, society will gradually isolate ordinary people, giving priority to those whose only purpose is to complete a previously assigned task (10).

Part of what makes us human is the ability to socialize and this is regardless of the time since the support of others will always be needed to progress. Although it is true that until now there are groups or sectors that resist living with others for ideological reasons, it must be taken into account that this defect is not eliminated since this "new species" could simply ignore or stop collaborating with inferior people, this leads to a sociocultural inequality, which would not seek to equalize conditions but to eliminate that which is considered a burden on progress (10,11).

The fact that there are individuals who have not been improved in some way in this future scenario means delays in development since while those who are able to adapt quickly to new conditions will not wait for others whose process is slower to be ready to act. The class struggle that has been attempted to be eliminated today would re-emerge and no longer only between rich and poor people but due to issues such as genetic superiority, in which the more followers there are, the less can be done because if the end justifies the means, normal people would lose a large part of the rights and benefits that they have today (11).

The biological/genetic struggle that leads to this dissatisfaction must be analyzed from the starting point, that is, conception, since if a price is put on it to be able to choose those desired characteristics in future individuals, this must be done through in vitro techniques, which could have high costs, making them exclusive to a particular sector, which if they already have a privileged position normally, will make their offspring enjoy physical, emotional, mental advantages, among many others, which will only make this gap bigger, generating dissatisfaction. While it is true that today there are laws that prohibit or restrict embryo modifications for ethical reasons simpler than the situation that arises, the fact that something is designed or has the desired characteristics does not make it functional, it must be taken into account that this is a human being who could or could not accept what he was created for or simply choose another path, making useless everything in which he stands out (11).

4. Change in the concept of "Person"

Elena Postigo when talking about the concept of person does so introspectively, "learn to be who you are" is a reflection that invites the reader to ask himself if he really takes advantage of all the capacities he has before even thinking about artificially enhancing any of them, the harmony between all the innate qualities is the main step to determine if someone is ready to make use of transhumanist processes since within the movement several conceptions are radically modified, the fact of thinking of the body as something completely instrumental gives us to understand that it is already completely separated from traditional thoughts which can help to avoid falling into unethical practices, because the more the sense of morality is deformed to justify the projects, advances or experiments shows how concepts as basic as safeguarding the integrity of those involved are ignored (12).

Carlos Hugo Sierra rescues how for several promoters of transhumanism the brain is completely responsible for everything we are and the ability we have to understand the environment in which we develop depends entirely on the stimuli it receives, that is why they hope through the understanding and exploration of this, it is possible to get to know man beyond a shell that we can modify, it is of great interest to be able to know how the feelings, ideas and memories that are stored in it can be preserved for posterity, but if only these characteristics are those that allow us to call ourselves humans; those individuals who are subjected to improvement processes, can continue to be called this way or enter another category within the hierarchical level in society, perhaps what is known today as "super humans", since being almost perfect who abandoned a physical environment to relate, they are not tied to the biological processes that governed them which means greater advantage over direct competition (13).

In more radical cases, beings who have the ability to reason are considered people. This excludes fetuses, newborns or people with some disorder, which within the classic conception are people equal to any other. This shows that transhumanist morality in some cases is practically non-existent because it would deny the opportunity to beings whose potential is unknown, who in a risk-benefit comparison seem to have a greater benefit in terms of the place within society that they will occupy. There are contradictions since it is thought that improvements can reduce our quality of life or even take away our dignity, making others see us without empathy or see it as an act of compassion to prevent the existence of individuals who do not meet the new standards. This is why emphasis is placed on the fact that what we are does not depend on previous programming but on what can be done with the capacities developed throughout life (13).

5. Decision making

A fundamental part is the approval or not of said processes, for which different points of view can be given, such as: religious and philosophical.

Religious

Bostrom proposes that the theological debate should not be radicalized since religion as such is not contrary to the implementation of technology to improve the quality and expectation of life, however, it usually has ideas very far from how to do it since within its conception of creation there is a superior being in charge of governing the norms and the destiny of each one, so ideologies such as transhumanism where another meaning is given to the being attack the bases that for centuries have governed the different religions (14).

The fact of accepting transhumanist projects goes against the most conservative values within many religions since doing so would mean trying to imitate or surpass the work of "God", this as such would be unacceptable since if we see the human from a theocratic point of view, he is not the master of his destiny but is tied to an unbreakable bond with the one who allowed him to exist so trying to break this bond is an offense, while it is true that religion has helped to set limits as to how the treatment with our fellow men should be and the limits that must be had in order not to cause harm, there have also been positions of opposition to measures that they fail to understand and that it is much easier to reject them (14,15).

As for the transhumanist current, it is not a very different case from other topics that are taboo within these beliefs; theologians affirm that "Opening just one eye would reveal that religion is not the enemy here, if the different improvement techniques are implemented, this would give way to a new era in which there is no evil that affects the development of society and the dependence on divine beings would be unnecessary since man would fix these defects long before they happen (15).

Philosophical

Pico della Mirandola describes man as a being capable of recreating himself to fulfill the desire he has about himself and the impact on others, being able to transform himself into what he wants, live as he wants or give his life the meaning he wants, compared to the religious man he is more tolerant in the possible decisions that can be taken in favor of development. Although here he enjoys greater freedom because he is not concerned with a soul to preserve but with a single existence in which all potential must be unleashed, evaluating possible risks and unbridled practices that would leave aside the integrity of the subject with the justification of progress and development. Morality is subjective so it will not be possible to have total control of the limits to which they are capable of reaching, the line between the ethical and the Machiavellian is very thin since in the name

of science one can incur in techniques that no longer have the purpose of helping people but exploring the physical limits to which a person can be subjected (16).

The fact of knowing that the decisions that are going to be made trigger a series of consequences still unknown is already a limit which must be taken into account, the capacity of man to differentiate between good and evil over the years has been weakened by justifying progress, the fact of thinking that the only valid reason to attempt against life is progress means a regression, this implies that no matter the time, the human being is evil by nature and the only thing he needs to justify his actions is to excuse himself behind the common good, which is nothing more than an empty justification since many times the result is known prior to the experimentation and it is done for the morbidity of what can happen during the process, transhumanist thinkers often leave aside the human part to focus directly on the future ignoring what has to be left behind to move forward (16,17).

Conclusions

- From all of the above, ideas emerge such as that human beings constantly seek the desire to advance, improving either their environment or in this case themselves to force their evolution in a certain way and achieve a better status within society. The consequences are still unknown, so developing certain control systems for transhumant individuals is important to keep a record of the possible adverse effects that impact the daily lives of those who decide to take the step in the use of biotechnologies.
- It is important to emphasize that man retains his humanity depending on the point of view of those involved in the process, therefore the understanding of the deconstruction that the meaning of "being" has suffered is vital to dimension how the future of the species will be because there could come a point in which the modifications are so common and accessible causing the source material to be lost assuming that the humanist era is over and there is no evidence of what we once were.
- This review shows how technologies are very useful, but they should not only be applied for a selfish purpose in which the only objective is to stand out from the rest without contributing anything significant to society, decisions should not be made from radicalized thoughts without first considering the possible variables that arise during their application, the fact of being "perfect" is subjective for each one and the impact generated by this depends on how prepared society is at the time they occur, since it will be there when it is judged if progress took the right route.

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