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# VIRTUAL AND IMMORTAL HUMAN OR SUNSET OF THE HOMO SAPIENS CIVILIZATION

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## Abstract

The discoveries and achievements in the field of nano- and biotechnology, genetic engineering, and artificial intelligence that have raised science to a new level in quantitative and qualitative terms already allow looking with balanced optimism at the ideas of extending the life of humanity and achieving immortality in applied, practical sense of understanding this concept. The purpose of this study is to analyze the modern sociocultural situation, the state of modern scientific and technological achievements, especially in regard to Homo virtualis projects. The researchers used the latest worldviews and theoretical and methodological foundations, a number of general scientific, philosophical, general sociological, general cultural, and specific scientific concepts, confirmed by a large number of empirical and cultural facts. It seems that modern transhumanistic ideas offer humanity the prospect of a “bad” infinity of existence as the embodiment of hell on Earth, which contradicts both modern cosmological theory, religious concepts (reincarnation and the miracle of the Resurrection also carry contradictions), and moral and ethical motives and goals of the society and the individual existence. As our analysis has shown, at present, the problem of immortality has begun to turn from abstract to theoretical and practical, requiring not only scientific but also philosophical and cultural substantiation and understanding, which, in fact, makes the research relevant.

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*Keywords:* Eternity, Homo virtualis, immortality, immortology, post-non-classical paradigm, transhumanism



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## **1. Introduction**

Today, humanity is on the threshold of a new global anthropological turn giving rise to a radical restructuring of human corporeality, a modification of nodal existential values, and as a result, a transformation of the image of civilization itself. However, new advances in science and technology require comprehensive understanding in the biological and humanitarian field, since any achievements of the scientific and technical genius of mankind can enter the life of people only to the extent that they are acceptable from the point of view of cultural ideas and norms widespread in society (Yudin, 2005).

Present-day life dictates the last trend of human self-knowledge, turns it into an object of construction and design. Technologies began to “live” within us. A person becomes a project, behind which are NBICS technologies (nano-, bio-, info-, cognitive, and socio-humanitarian technologies). The utopian format of such judgments is gradually democratizing: ideals of this kind are to be made publicly available due to the active introduction of technology and the improvement of a human as a species (Revina et al., 2020). The introduction of technological innovations outstrips (and possibly grows exponentially, someday reaching the point of singularity) the degree of civilization development promptitude, and perception of technology by the well-established cultural and historical environment; it brings many challenges of worldview and moral character that acquire pronounced religious, cultural and philosophical aspects, and go beyond the competence of natural science.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The fast development of science and technology has changed the boundaries of the symbolic understanding of the phenomenon of immortality and raised the question of its practical implementation. This problem is most fully disclosed in the works of famous transhumanists Bostrom (2003), Kurzweil (2005), Ettinger (2005) and others. The achievements of science have also contributed to the fact that nowadays, the concepts of reincarnation and other irrational and parascientific ideas about immortality became popular in mass culture.

Nevertheless, with all the relevance of previously conducted research on immortality, a paradoxical problematic situation is emerging when the focus of attention of researchers from the sphere of humanitarian discourse is increasingly shifting towards the study of the physical reality of Homo sapiens based on natural scientific achievements and transhumanist ideology. Such a discrepancy between the emerging trend of scientific research and the need for a deeper study and use of the spiritual potential of a human in the modern world can negatively affect the prospects for the civilizational development of mankind.

## **3. Research Questions**

Modern advances in biotechnology, genetic engineering in the field of cloning, and IT technologies allow researchers to take a fresh look at the possibility of achieving human physical immortality (Müller et al., 2020). Supporters of the concept of transhumanism (Ettinger, 2005; Kurzweil, 2005) predict real ways of reformatting a person through genetic mutation, nanocycborgization, and even the transfer of

consciousness into the virtual world. All possible consequences of such actions: a) go beyond the sphere of natural sciences; b) can lead to the loss of the biosocial nature of man, society, and culture; c) contribute to the emergence of irrational ideas in modern mass culture; d) require an appropriate philosophical and cultural analysis and assessment.

The answers to the questions posed in the study of the peculiarities of the post-nonclassical interpretation of the phenomenon under consideration can be obtained by reviewing perspective approaches and methods of comprehending the problem of human immortality at the junction of natural science and socio-humanitarian types of mentality; analyzing the achievements of modern natural science in the field of immortology; identifying the main problems of transhumanism and immortology, their possible social consequences; it will outline the prospects for rethinking the considered phenomenon in scientific and everyday practice.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

According to the opinion of the philosopher Belyaev (2014), today, one can clearly imagine three basic directions of reformatting human nature which become evident due to present-day scientific and technological progress:

1. Homo Genetically Transformed.
2. Nano-Cybernetic Homo Organism.
3. Homo Virtualis (Belyaev, 2014):

Nowadays, the scientific developments in the field of artificial intelligence are considered the most promising in solving the problem of physical immortality of a human. Great hopes are pinned here on the predicted progress in microelectronics, due to which, as it is believed, there will be an opportunity for the full transfer of human consciousness to an inorganic carrier (Munsell et al., 2020).

The approach to creating Homo virtualis is often criticized, as from the point of view of the person, the consciousness recorded on an external carrier cannot be fully called immortality, because it will only be only a copy of the individuality, but not the individuality per se or the personality a fortiori (Ogu et al., 2020). There are doubts about the possibility of the existence of an artificial intelligence capable of thinking equal to or superior to a human intelligence, because the computer acts algorithmically, consistently, and relying on mathematical laws; today, science knows about the continuity of the nervous system and that infinity is not algorithmic, which creates an endless field for creative and constructive human activity (Yoon et al., 2020). In addition, it is worth asking the question: is it necessary to dream of such “heavenly bliss” if, most likely, this creature will be immortal only because it will not be alive?

Individual immortality would allow the implementation of an infinite number of life projects, but there is the danger of an objective loss of individuality and selfhood of a human being. The infinite existence should have an adequate correspondence, i.e., the meaning, which acquisition would last infinitely (it, of course, contradicts the traditional “natural” idea of it) (Yurkov, 2016).

There is another important fact, often overlooked by researchers in this field, namely, that nature has repeatedly experienced the idea of vegetative and asexual reproduction and rejected it as not resulting in evolutionary success. This wise construction, genetically programmed by nature, would collapse if the individual immortality of a human was possible.

## 5. Research Methods

The following general philosophical principles and scientific concepts were used as the theoretical platform for research: the principle of dialectical connection and interdependence of the phenomena of nature and society, the principle of universal evolutionism (according to which a person is the most important part of being and has a decisive influence on it); understanding of culture as a process of preserving and improving the vital foundations of human existence; the concepts of the eternity of life in the structure of the eternal Cosmos (Gurevich, 2020); the idea of the cognitive equivalence of materialistic and idealistic positions in relation to immortality in the theory of sociocultural dynamics.

The main general scientific research methods were a systematic approach for a comprehensive disclosure of the complexly organized being of a human and its specific historical manifestations in various cultural traditions; a comparative typological approach to consider the problem of immortality in the classical, non-classical, and post-non-classical periods of cultural development (Flier, 2016); synergetic approach, according to which a person is treated as a special dissipative system, in which the finiteness-infinity of a human existence is as a special “resonance point”, influencing which it is possible to transform the consciousness and behavior of the individual; methods of extrapolation, analysis, idealization, and generalization as general philosophical and cultural techniques.

The empirical base was formed with the mass media and Internet sources, folklore, works of art, religious, and esoteric practices. The theoretical material consisted of the works of historians, philosophers, culturologists, and scientists representing the field of natural science.

## 6. Findings

The potential implementation of the cybernetic immortality project would inevitably lead to the creation of another digital civilization next to us. Such “modernization” can hardly be called human life, since it is impossible without culture, personality, and communication. The intimate component of personal life will also be destroyed. Culture and corporeality are inextricably linked, and if this unity is destroyed, then humanity will face many troubles or simply perish (Nabiullina, 2019). The risks that await us on this path should be comprehended.

It is assumed that the society after these supposed innovations will be mixed, consisting of natural people, humanoid robots, and robots, into which the minds of already deceased people were moved “by their own decision”. If this happens, one can imagine how, in the name of the majestic posthuman future, fanatical posthumanists will justify the extinction of such mythical Christian, post-Christian, and humanistic ideals as individual freedom, art, self-realization, and old-fashioned personal and social morality.

A complex computer equipped with human consciousness, but devoid of the most complex range of emotions and experiences inherent only to the Homo sapiens genus, will never be “on an equal footing” with a person, for example, if betrayed it will not feel resentment or anger. If circumstances call for it, it is not shameful to betray or even destroy an artificial organism, since its help is based on rational calculations, and not on its “good will”. The “death” of a robot (for example, through disconnecting the power source)

can hardly be perceived as the death of a living being and can be equated with the loss of expensive property (Fiorucci et al., 2020).

In the world where ordinary representatives of the *Homo sapiens* species and their various modifications will exist, any scenario is possible: from peaceful coexistence or a form of a cold civil war to the complete destruction of “ancestors” (Akhmadullin et al., 2020). Reaching the singularity “point”, in which the adherents of transhumanism believe, can lead to unexpected cataclysms, including the unification of all people into a single Absolute, a super-being, which actually raises doubts even among the most fanatical representatives of the transhumanist movement. A much closer perspective seems to be the onset of gerontocracy, and its signs are already partially seen in the modern world. The probability that science will come up with a deal that bargains for life expectancy in exchange for human individuality is high.

We adhere to the point of view that in the future, NBICS technologies will not help to achieve immortality (corresponding to available and actual knowledge of reality); their goal is to improve the quality, content and duration of life, to prevent and cure diseases (gerontology). Today, within the framework of this trend, there is a problem and threat of using a person as a tool, a function, as was often the case within the framework of classical and non-classical cultures. Such approach does not fit into the structure of modern post-non-classical philosophy, which offers a completely different interpretation of a person precisely as a “social” person, i.e. within the framework of the anthropic principle.

## **7. Conclusion**

The concept of “human immortality” is very vague, it means only the denial of the fact of death and the possibility of achieving eternal life outside of physical time. Physical immortality is impossible; it leads to the loss of the meaning of the historical process and human life. All existing ideas about the immortality of man (philosophical, scientific, etc.) refer not to the theoretical, but to the empirical level of knowledge and have the status of only phenomenological theories. The mass culture that dominates the public consciousness generally replaces the scientific discourse about this problem. At the same time, the achievements of modern science and technology connected with the extension of human life or the transfer of consciousness from the brain to virtual reality (the so-called philosophy of transhumanism) can only partially solve the problem of immortality, leading to enormous ideological and ethical consequences. Human consciousness cannot exist in isolation from the body, and the very existence of the *Homo sapiens* species is possible only in a physical body, but not in a digitalized one, because immortality is inherent in the very secret of life and cultural images generated by human creativity.

The research results showed that transhumanistic problems of modern society, if approached correctly, can serve to determine the ways and prospects for further philosophical and cultural development of a human in understanding individual immortality as an integral part of the endless universe. We believe that the idea of NBICS technologies convergence, which lies at the foundation of the modern transhumanist movement, should be considered in close connection with the moral prerequisites for the development of scientific knowledge, where cultural studies should play a consolidating role.

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