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Introduction

This volume of the *Ignatianum Philosophical Yearbook* is dedicated to the issue of transhumanism. The texts in this issue focus predominantly on various bioethical issues discussed by transhumanists. Bioethical reflection around transhumanism is present primarily in the English-language literature, with the bulk of the debates taking place with the participation of prominent scholars from the Anglo-American area. Increasingly, the issue is also visible in the German-speaking area. In Poland, on the other hand, it is only just entering the sphere of interest of bioethicists from various scientific and research backgrounds. Recent years have abounded in publications addressing various issues related to transhumanism.

Transhumanism is a contemporary philosophical, social and cultural movement whose adherents, fascinated by contemporary developments in technology and biotechnology in the broadest sense, put forward various proposals for improving the human condition. Many of these proposals are controversial and require deep and critical philosophical reflection. This is because the Transhumanists aim to radically change the image of man to which we have been accustomed by classical humanism and its various reinterpretations. In their view, the technological tools

of modern science can effectively contribute to the improvement of the manifold human condition. The goal of this improvement is, of course, the emergence of a new human being – the post-human. Of course, it will not resemble the human being as we know it in any way. It will no longer be a flesh-and-blood human being, but a radically improved one, that is, stripped of its biological component.

The bioethical problems in question here are primarily normative. They concern the ontic and axiological status of man as a human person. Hence, they cannot escape the attention of critical philosophical reflection. The adoption of the postulates of transhumanism may lead to the elimination of homo sapiens not only in the area of theoretical thinking, but above all on practical grounds.

If one accepts the assumption that bioethical reflection deals with problems arising at the beginning, during and at the end of human life, then transhumanism radically changes the vision of bioethics understood in this way. Indeed, the problem of the linearity of human existence is not something that preoccupies the representatives of this trend, striving to improve human existence so that it has no biological finale. At the beginning of human life, they propose genetic modifications of the human genome, the purpose of which would be to equip him or her with such genes that would guarantee development beyond average abilities, whether cognitive or emotional. In the course of existence, transhumanists propose the gradual replacement of human body parts, for example, with various synthetic elements, hence, for example, the problem of cyborgization or hybridization of human life is being discussed. In this context, it is even said that man is not a natural entity at all, but a hybrid being that functions in close connection with various technological artifacts. Finally, transhumanists aim to extend human life, or rather, to endow it with a form of infinity or immortality. The condition for ensuring such a form of existence is to get rid of the biological component and place the future posthuman in such a reality in which it can exist without experiencing any pain, suffering and disease.

From the perspective of the demands proclaimed by transhumanists, classical bioethical reflection, to which we have been accustomed over the years, thus undergoes a radical change both as to its subject matter and research purpose. Could it be, then, that transhumanism will lead to the elimination of the practice of a certain form of bioethical reflection?

In this volume, readers will find a wide variety of general papers, in which various bioethical issues discussed in transhumanism are addressed. Of course, this is not an exhaustive overview of the issues, but only a certain outline, the main purpose of which is to introduce

readers to the bioethical issues of transhumanism, as well as to stimulate them to reflect critically on the subject matter on their own. Therefore, a maximalist reader will not find all the possible bioethical problems discussed by transhumanists in this volume. Nor did the editors aim to include all possible bioethical problems arising from transhumanism in a single volume. Rather, their intention was to show that bioethical issues in transhumanism are worthy of consideration, understanding and critical reflection, which may result in proposing new solutions.

The editors of the volume
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