CRITIQUE OF TRANSHUMANISM'S CONCEPT OF HUMANS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

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Abstract

Transhumanism is defined as a human movement that believes in and attempts to implement ideas and practices aimed at developing and empowering the biological, psychological, and cognitive abilities of humans and helping them become superior to their current biological state through modern science and technological tools. Considering its promises and goals for humans and humanity, this science- and technology-based understanding is also recognized as a sociocultural and ideological movement. Given the effectiveness of areas such as virtual reality, genetic intervention, and artificial intelligence, it is clear that the promises of transhumanism are not so utopian. It is essential to subject the ontological approaches of transhumanism, which consider humans and the universe, to a theological interpretation based on current facts and arguments rather than philosophical and theoretical interpretations. Transhumanism clearly emphasizes that humans are

incomplete beings and need to be developed. In this context, it emphasizes the understanding that humans can be empowered to their maximum potential through technology and science. It sets the goal of achieving the transhuman stage initially and then the posthuman stage, which represents the empowered state of humans at their maximum cognitive, emotional, and psychological levels. Although this movement, considered a continuation of humanism, develops humans physically, cognitively, and emotionally, it also treats humans as objects in achieving these goals. In our study, we specifically focus on transhumanism's conception of humans and attempt to criticize this conception within the framework of the Islamic understanding of human beings. We first explain the concepts of transhuman and posthuman to understand transhumanists' conception of humans. Transhumanists, who consider the transhuman an intermediate form and an incomplete being that needs to be developed in many aspects, claim that humans will reach maximum competence in the process of posthumanization and that this will be achieved through science and technology. This understanding, which sees humans as a product of evolution, contrasts with the Islamic belief that humans are created by God. Although evolution has historically been positioned as an ideology against religion, we attempt to demonstrate that it can be approached in a way that is compatible with God's creation and that modern scientific data do not consider evolution impossible. When examined from the perspective of human nature, especially in general Islamic thought, the understanding of the human soul and body is incompatible with the transhumanist understanding of humans. This is because transhumanists reject the concept of the soul, which is considered an essence of the human being in Islamic thought. In contrast, transhumanists completely attribute the phenomenon that Islamic theology accepts as the soul to the biological structure of humans. Thus, they propose a different approach by emphasizing body-mind functionalism against soul-body duality. Because their claim is scientific, it has been proposed within the scope of modern science that the concept of the soul in Islamic thought can be understood as the energy that gives life to human beings or as human beings' state of consciousness. Another topic addressed in this study is the transhumanist approach that views humans as inherently deficient. This perspective contradicts the Islamic conception of a perfect human. This is because in Islam, it is believed that human beings were created as *aḥsan taqwīm* (the most beautiful form) and can express perfection in every aspect. Regarding this point, we find that the fundamental problem is the expression of perfection in Islamic thought concerning the human body. It is clear that people can be born with disabilities and that they do not have physical perfection due to illness, old age, or

other factors. Therefore, we suggest that the perfect aspect of humans should be positioned on the basis of their ability to think, use their mind in every way, and be conscious rather than referring to physical perfection since it is clear that humans can be born with disabilities.

Keywords: Kalām, transhumanism, human, transhuman, posthuman

Introduction

The concept of "humanism" that emerged after the Renaissance puts people at the center. In contrast, transhumanism, formed by adding the prefix "trans" is used in the sense of going from something to something else, going beyond or passing through. It can be defined as a human movement that uses technological tools within the framework of modern science to enable humans to be superior to their current cognitive, biological, and psychological states brought to light by evolution.[1]

Although transhumanism is a movement that emerged under the influence of humanism and is seen as a continuation, it is positioned in a way that goes beyond humanism with its perspective on the future. Science and technology aim to eliminate human biological, mental, and psychological deficiencies and to raise people's living standards to the best possible state.[2] People may not possess physical perfection

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[1] Seyithan Can, *Transhümanizm ve İnancın Geleceği* (İstanbul: Tezkire Yayınları, 2022), 20; Russell Blackford, "The Great Transition: Ideas and Anxieties", in *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology and Philosophy of the Human Future*, ed. Max More - Natasha Vita-More (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blacwell Publishing, 2013), 421-422; Ahmet Dağ, *İnsansız Dünya: Transhümanizm* (İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları, 2021), 144-145.

[2] Anders Sandberg, "Transhumanism and the Meaning of Life", in *Religion and Transhumanism: The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement*, ed. Calvin Mercer - Tracy J. Trothen (California: Praeger, 2015), 3-23; Newton Lee, "In Search of Super Longevity and the Meaning of Life", in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 316; Kali Carrigan, "Taking up the Cosmic Office: Transhumanism and the Necessity of Longevity", in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 472; Steven A. Benko - Amelia Hruby, "Critical Transhumanism as a Religious Ethic of Otherness", in *Religion and Transhumanism: The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement*, ed. Calvin Mercer - Tracy J. Trothen (California: Praeger, 2015), 259; Muhammet Yeşilyurt, "Hıristiyan Transhümanizmi: Hıristiyanlığın Tekno-Eskatolojik Yeni Yorumu", *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 21/2 (2021), 816.

due to conditions such as being born with disabilities, illness, and aging. By eliminating aging, humans would stay young for longer with the ultimate goal of eliminating death or leaving it to the choice of individuals.[3]

Transhumanists take technology as a fundamental reference to realize their goals for humanity and the world. According to transhumanists, if we continue to improve technology with sufficient foresight and planning and avoid actions that could pose a danger to humanity, we can surpass even the most unreachable dreams in terms of improving life on this planet.[4] An important figure in transhumanism, Bostrom, says that technological progress is one of the key factors in achieving the transhumanist vision. Another important figure of the movement, Max More, emphasizes that technology is the cornerstone of social and political progress. He argues that technology can not only transform society and the economy for the better but can also directly affect the human experience through bodily, cognitive, and psychological development.[5] Indicated by letter combinations such as NBIC, these proposed technology clusters, include the fields of nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science.

As suggested by the above information, transhumanism can be considered to have many effects on the present and the future of human beings and society when evaluated in the context of its claims, aims, and objectives. In this study, we focus on transhumanists' conception of human beings. Transhumanism has a humanist character. Therefore, we believe that it is important to first establish the

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[3]   Ronald Bailey, "For Enhancing People", in *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology and Philosophy of the Human Future*, ed. Max More - Natasha Vita-More (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blacwell Publishing, 2013), 329; Kate Levchuk, "How Transhumanism will Get Us through the Third Millennium", in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 77; Ray Kurzweil, *İnsanlık 2.0: Tekilliğe Doğru Biyolojisini Aşan İnsan*, trans. Mine Şengel (İstanbul: Alfa Bilim, 2019), 546-548.

[4]   Giulio Prisco, "Transcendent Engineering", in *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology and Philosophy of the Human Future*, ed. Max More - Natasha Vita-More (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blacwell Publishing, 2013), 239; Sandberg, "Transhumanism and the Meaning of Life", 4; Kurzweil, *İnsanlık 2.0*, 546.

[5]   Michael S. Burdett, "The Religion of Technology: Transhumanism and the Myth of Progress", in *Religion and Transhumanism: The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement*, ed. Calvin Mercer - Tracy J. Trothen (California: Praeger, 2015), 142.

conception of humans to properly understand the discourse of this movement regarding humans and the world. We present the transhumanist conception of humans and compare humans with the understanding of humans in Islamic thought. In this context, we attempt to determine whether the transhumanist approaches to human beings are compatible with the meaning that Islam attributes to human beings and at which points they are incompatible. We discuss the transhumanist conception of the human being in the context of creation, perfection, and imperfection. Simultaneously, we attempt to determine the possibilities and limitations of bringing together the science- and technology-based understanding of humans in transhumanism with the understanding of humans of Islam. Since transhumanism is a movement that has recently begun to be discussed in Turkish academia, we believe that a comparative analysis of the human being is important for scholars in this field. To properly understand the human conception of transhumanism, we believe that it is useful to address the concepts of "transhuman" and "posthuman" and their general frameworks. When we reveal the semantic framework of these concepts, transhumanism's understanding of human beings will emerge more clearly.

Transhuman and Posthuman

Transhumanism bases its understanding of human beings on two concepts: the concept of "transhuman" and the concept of "posthuman". A transhuman is considered a transitional human being who transcends the human condition and perception.[6] In other words, transhumans have more advanced physiological and cognitive features than humans with technological tools.[7] This concept emphasizes that human beings go beyond the status quo in terms of their nature and characteristics.[8] Transhumans are knowledgeable enough to see and

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[6]   Natasha Vita-More, "History of Transhumanism", in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 50; Newton Lee, "Brave New World of Transhumanism", in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 3-4.

[7]   Dağ, *İnsansız Dünya*, 26.

[8]   Max More, "The Philosophy of Transhumanism", in *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology and Philosophy of the Human Future*, ed. Max More - Natasha Vita-More (West Sussex UK: Wiley-Blacwell Publishing, 2013), 4.

plan for the radical possibilities of the future and to use every available option for self-improvement; they are ready to actively become posthuman.[9] Therefore, the transhuman is considered an intermediate form in the transition to the posthuman.[10] Although the word posthuman means "after human", it has been used with very different meanings by scientists. Here, we will focus on the posthuman in transhumanism in the context of this article. The posthuman in transhumanism is a future human being who can exist as a biological or semibiological being in the physical world, continuing the 19th- and 20th-century idea of natural selection.[11] Bostrom states that this concept represents the maximum of current human capacity, which is radically expanded both mentally and physically.[12] Posthumans, considered the humans of the future, will have many qualities that cannot emerge due to the limitations imposed by the body. They will live much longer than today's people and are likely to be able to leave the Earth's orbit.[13] Thanks to technological evolution, posthumans will not suffer from disease, aging, or even death and will represent the maximum in terms of physical, cognitive, and emotional development.[14] They will also have refined emotions with regard to music, humor, and eroticism. [15]

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[9] Damien Broderick, "Trans and Post", in *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology and Philosophy of the Human Future*, ed. Max More - Natasha Vita-More (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blacwell Publishing, 2013), 430.

[10] Dağ, *Transhümanizm: İnsanın ve Dünyanın Dönüşümü* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2020), 9.

[11] Ted Peters, "Boarding the Transhumanist Train: How Far Should the Christian Ride?", in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 798.

[12] Nick Bostrom, "Why I Want to be a Posthuman When I Grow Up", in *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology and Philosophy of the Human Future*, ed. Max More - Natasha Vita-More (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blacwell Publishing, 2013), 28; José Luis Cordeiro, "The Boundaries of the Human: From Humanism to Transhumanism", in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 68.

[13] Peters, "Boarding the Transhumanist Train", 798; Brent Waters, "Flesh Made Data: The Posthuman Project in light of the Incarnation", in *Religion and Transhumanism: The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement*, ed. Calvin Mercer - Tracy J. Trothen (California: Praeger, 2015), 291.

[14] Bostrom, "Why I Want to be a Posthuman When I Grow Up", 30-38; Can, *Transhümanizm ve İnancın Geleceği*, 22.

[15] More, "The Philosophy of Transhumanism", 4; Broderick, "Trans and Post", 430; Dağ, *İnsansız Dünya Transhümanizm*, 46; Bostrom, "Why I Want to be a

As a result, we can say that the posthuman will attempt to make it possible to realize humans 2.0 by transforming humans into superhumans through science and technology.[16]

Posthumans can also be considered new subjects created with technological bodies.[17] They can be thought of as cyborgs in the sense that their personality is injected into an almost indestructible robot after the human being is freed from the biological body. Transhumanists want to develop human beings into beings who can do anything they want by changing the problematic fleshy, bloody, and living body by mind transfer from a biological body to a more durable and immortal virtual or artificial body.[18] This is the goal that the transformation of the human into the posthuman wants to achieve.[19]

God's Creation versus Evolution's Human

Transhumanism is Darwinian and is influenced by the biological and psychological understanding of evolution.[20] Huxley used transhumanism in the sense of human evolution in his work where he defined it.[21] According to transhumanism, human beings are not at the end of evolution; in contrast, they are only at the beginning of technological evolution. Although the human being that evolution has produced thus far is a good start, it is certainly improvable,

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Posthuman When I Grow Up", 29.; Broderick, "Trans and Post", 430; Dağ, *İnsansız Dünya*, 46; Bostrom, "Why I Want to be a Posthuman When I Grow Up", 29.

16   Mahir Fatih Ünal, "Dijitalleşmenin Transhümanizme Etkisi", *Uluslararası Bilişim, Teknoloji ve Felsefe Dergisi* 2/2 (2019), 26.

17   Nick Bostrom, "A History of Transhumanist Thought", *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 14/1 (2005), 9; Abdurrazak Gültekin, "Transhümanizm Bağlamında Yapay Zekâ Tanrıya Bir Başkaldırı mıdır?", *Iğdır Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 28 (October 2021), 7.

18   Hannah Scheidt, "The Fleshless Future: A Phenomenological Perspective on Mind Uploading", in *Religion and Transhumanism: The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement*, ed. Calvin Mercer - Tracy J. Trothen (California: Praeger, 2015), 317.

19   Matthew Zaro Fisher, "More Human than the Human? Toward a 'Transhumanist' Christian Theological Anthropology", in *Religion and Transhumanism: The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement*, ed. Calvin Mercer - Tracy J. Trothen (California: Praeger, 2015), 23.

20   Carmen Fowler LaBerge, "Christian? Transhumanist? A Christian Primer for Engaging Transhumanism", in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 772.

21   Julian Huxley, *New Bottles for New Wine* (London: Chatto and Windus Publishing, 1957), 17.

upgradeable, and transcendable.[22] In this context, Bostrom states that in the existing natural process, humanity has not come to the end of evolution; in contrast, this situation should be seen as an early stage of evolution.[23] However, Bostrom wants to realize an artificial evolutionary process by subjecting human beings to a process of transformation based on Darwin's biological and natural evolutionary process, from a biological body to a bionic body.[24]

According to transhumanists, the evolutionary development of humans has resulted in an unplanned process and caused unwanted mutations because it was determined by random and external conditions that human beings could not intervene in natural selection.[25] Therefore, an evolutionary process driven by human intervention would not only lead to a more planned future but also offer the opportunity to prevent unintended consequences in advance.[26] Transhumanists' main argument is that evolution, which has thus far been a slow, uncontrolled, and unpredictable process, should be managed and accelerated by humans through technological evolution rather than waiting for it to move into its future.[27] Genetic engineering, intelligence-enhancing implants, faster computers, smarter interfaces, artificial neural networks, global data networks, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, an artificial life planet, and low-power and molecular nanotechnological smart devices will enable technology to produce the self-transformation of humans.[28] In particular, genetic engineering will reduce the element of

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[22]   Natasha Vita-More, "Life Expansion Media", in *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology and Philosophy of the Human Future*, ed. Max More - Natasha Vita-More (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blacwell Publishing, 2013), 79.

[23]   Tuğçe İyigüngör, "Doğal Yaşam Formundan Artırılmış Bedene Geçiş: Transhümanizm", *ISophos: Uluslararası Bilişim, Teknoloji ve Felsefe Dergisi* 3/5 (Fall 2020), 18.

[24]   Dağ, *Transhümanizm*, 114-115.

[25]   Mahsum Aytepe, "Posthümanizmde ve Transhümanizmde Varlık", in *Transhümanizm & Posthümanizm: Disiplinlerarası Bir Çalışma*, ed. Mustafa Tekin - Muhammet Özdemir (Ankara: Eskiyeni Yayınları, 2021), 326.

[26]   Hüsnü Aydeniz, "Geleneksel Değerler Üzerinden Bir Transhümanizm Eleştirisi", *İlahiyat Tetkikleri Dergisi* 53 (June 2020), 363.

[27]   Nick Bostrom - Anders Sandberg, "The Wisdom of Nature: An Evolutionary Heuristic for Human Enhancement", in *Human Enhancement*, ed. Julian Savulescu - Nick Bostrom (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 377; Vita-More, "Life Expansion Media", 79; Cordeiro, "The Boundaries of the Human", 70.

[28]   Kurzweil, *İnsanlık 2.0*, 136.

"chance" by fostering concepts of "artificial evolution" that support the evolutionary process in biological systems and enable designers to select new biological functions efficiently.[29] Transhumanists state that the first technologically noteworthy example in the evolution of living species was the knowledge and discovery of DNA, which provided a recorded and preserved copy of the design of life that could be used to initiate new experiments.[30] Transhumanists assert that human evolution is an ongoing process and that a species transition may become feasible by the end of this century thanks to advances in technology and science.[31]

In Abrahamic religions, the human being is conceived as a creature created by God in a close relationship with the creator.[32] For instance, in Islam, humans are conceived as having a special and close relationship with their creator. In this context, humans are not a product of evolution but were created in their current form by God with a predetermined purpose. In the Qurʾān, it is said, "*How can you be ungrateful to Allah Who bestowed life upon you when you were lifeless, then He will cause you to die and will again bring you back to life so that you will be returned to Him.*" (Q 2:28), "*He is the One Who shapes you in the wombs of your mothers as He wills. There is no god worthy of worship except Him—the Almighty, All-Wise.*" (Q 3:6), and "*O men! Fear your Lord Who created you from a single being and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread many men and women. Fear Allah in Whose name you plead for rights, and heed the ties of kinship. Surely, Allah is ever watchful over you.*" (Q 4:1). As can be understood from these verses, creation is carried out by God in Islam. Therefore, there are significant differences when this Islamic approach to human beings is compared with the understanding of human beings in transhumanism.

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[29] Rachel Armstrong, "Alternative Biologies", in *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology and Philosophy of the Human Future*, ed. Max More - Natasha Vita-More (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blacwell Publishing, 2013), 103.

[30] Kurzweil, *İnsanlık 2.0*, 69.

[31] Yaylagül Ceran Karataş, "Dijital Çağda Hümanizm Tartışmaları Açısından İnsan Doğası Biyoteknoloji ve Biyopolitika", *Kutadgubilig Felsefe-Bilim Araştırmaları Dergisi* 39 (2019), 52.

[32] Muhammet Yeşilyurt, "Transhümanizmin Hristiyanlık Kökenleri", in *Yapay Zekâ Transhümanizm ve Din*, ed. Muhammed Kızılgeçit et al. (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2021), 189-209.

When the evolution-religion relationship is considered, the transhumanist understanding of evolution is handled in a way that excludes God. The theory of evolution has become an ideological stance that excludes God based on the idea that the evolutionary process was not designed to bring about the emergence of Homo sapiens and did not operate according to a specific project or plan but rather through natural selection.[33] Throughout history, the positioning of evolution as an ideology against God's creation has led to the understanding of every evolutionary idea as entailing the absence of God. At this point, the common perception is the impossibility of reconciling the belief in God with evolution. Therefore, people with a belief in God have stayed away from evolution. However, contemporary studies clearly show that the evolutionary process requires us to revise our understanding of God's ongoing relationship with the living world. Taking seriously how our minds are shaped by their evolutionary origins must be recognized as a product of our efforts to understand God.[34]

When we think about evolution today, we realize that new ways of being, new activities, and new forms of behavior have emerged throughout evolutionary time. Considering this, a believer in God can reinforce the idea that God is a constantly creating entity. Thus, God can be considered a constantly creating entity through the process of nature, producing entities from other creatures. We can reach a new and life-giving conception of the creator, who is always at work through Darwin's understanding of the history of the world of living beings and the views of countless biologists that followed.[35] Taken in this context, God and natural selection no longer must be competing hypotheses. The best option to explain the existence of a greater consciousness and governmentality in the evolution of life is the existence of God.[36] Evolution can be understood as one of God's many

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[33] Elif Akçay, *Biyoteknoloji Çağında İnsan Kalabilmek* (İstanbul: Sarmal Kitabevi, 2022), 20.

[34] Russell Stannard, "Evrimsel Biyoloji", trans. Şaban Ali Düzgün, in *21. Yüzyıl İçin Tanrı: Büyük Patlamadan Evrime, Freud'dan Yapay Zekaya Tanrı ve Bilim*, ed. Russell Stannard (Ankara: Fol Yayıncılık, 2022), 53-54.

[35] Arthur Peacocke, "Kılık Değiştirmiş Dost: Darwinizm ve Teoloji", trans. Şaban Ali Düzgün, in *21. Yüzyıl İçin Tanrı: Büyük Patlamadan Evrime, Freud'dan Yapay Zekaya Tanrı ve Bilim*, ed. Russell Stannard (Ankara: Fol Yayıncılık, 2022), 62.

[36] Wentzel Van Huyssteen, "Evrim; Tanrı'ya Dair Bilginin Anahtarı mı?", trans. Şaban Ali Düzgün, in *21. Yüzyıl İçin Tanrı: Büyük Patlamadan Evrime, Freud'dan*

patterns of creation. Therefore, we can say that metaphysical and religious beliefs do not in any way conflict with evolution. On the contrary, they can be made reconcilable with evolution.

Mind-Body Functionalism versus Soul-Body Dualism

After humans became aware of their existence, they wondered about and investigated the essence of this existence. Some approaches related to the essence of existence have emerged in the historical process. Along with the materialist structure that explains the person entirely in terms of physical components, the generally accepted dualist understanding states that the human being is composed of soul and body. Despite the ontological fact that they have fundamentally different properties, attempts have been made to justify that humans are formed by the combination of these two entities.[37] However, the reductionist approach has been effective with the increasing weight of biology in basic sciences. Previously, the soul, which continued to exist mostly as a subject of belief, was excluded from empirical knowledge due to its nature. The amount of data obtained from brain research, in particular, has led to the attribution of all distinctive features of the soul to the brain.[38]

Contrary to the general approach, transhumanists reject the concept of the soul.[39] According to them, souls are not needed to achieve infinite life.[40] Because natural selection has been able to create the structure of being, human beings are made up of various parts. Since no parts constitute souls, they cannot undergo an evolutionary process.[41] Transhumanists state that what people refer to as souls are

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Yapay Zekaya Tanrı ve Bilim, ed. Russell Stannard (Ankara: Fol Yayıncılık, 2022), 66.

[37]   Gülizar Hazal Saka, "Bir Ütopya Olarak Teknolojik Ölümsüzlük Sorunsalı: Teknolojik Ölümsüzlük", in *V. Türkiye Lisansüstü Çalışmalar Kongresi - Bildiriler Kitabı IV (Edebiyat - Felsefe)* (İstanbul: İlmi Etüdler Derneği - Isparta Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, 2016), 244.

[38]   Mehmet Ödemiş, "Yapay Zekâda Ruh/Bilinç ve Menşei Problemi", in *Yapay Zekâ Transhümanizm ve Din*, ed. Muhammed Kızılgeçit et al. (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2022), 62.

[39]   Stephen J. Lilley, *Transhumanism and Society: The Social Debate over Human Enhancement* (New York: Springer, 2013), 30.

[40]   Sandberg, "Transhumanism and the Meaning of Life", 8.

[41]   Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: Yarının Kısa Bir Tarihi*, trans. Poyzan Nur Taneli (İstanbul: Kolektif, 2016), 115.

matter and energy.[42] They explain human nature with a materialist view, claiming that everything related to humans and their essence is made of matter. They argue that humans' senses, including consciousness, thoughts, and emotions, as well as their fears, hopes, loves, and beliefs, are formed by physical interactions. In this context, they attribute importance to the existence of the mind, which is a product of the brain, rather than the existence of an absolute soul.[43] Therefore, we can say that the soul-body relationship of human beings in classical theologies has evolved into a mind-body relationship in transhumanism. This claim of transhumanists has also produced debates about the "nature of humanity".[44]

Transhumanists agree that the mind makes a human being human. What they call the mind is also a product of the body and provides self-awareness.[45] While they can be seen as monists because they consider the mind to be part of the body, some claim that they are dualists based on discussions of "loading" their minds onto nonbiological substrates.[46] Transhumanists, however, claim that the mind is a bodily structure; that is, it resides within the physical brain.[47] They state that the mind is an input-output organization like computer software and therefore cannot be identified with a particular organ.[48] Therefore, from a transhumanist perspective, the mind and body may be separate and not need each other.[49] However, even though transhumanists hold this view, they are functionalists rather than dualists. A functionalist argues that a particular mental state or cognitive system must be physically embodied at any given time. According to functionalism,

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[42] Kurzweil, *İnsanlık 2.0*, 567.

[43] Dağ, *Transhümanizm*, 139-140; Kurzweil, *İnsanlık 2.0*, 543.

[44] Emin Çelebi, "Zihin-Beden İlişkisinin Ontolojik Düzlemi Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme", in *ECLSS Conferences on Language and Social Sciences*, ed. Selman Arslanbaş (Almaty, Kazakhstan: Kazakh National Pedagogical University, 2020), 340.

[45]   James Hughes, "The Compatibility of Religious and Transhumanist Views of Metaphysics, Suffering, Virtue and Transcendence in an Enhanced Future", *Global Spiral* 8/2 (2007), 6; Aytepe, "Posthümanizmde ve Transhümanizmde Varlık", 326.

[46] Anke Iman Bouzenita, "'The Most Dangerous Idea?' Islamic Deliberations on Transhumanism", *Darulfunun İlahiyat* 29/2 (2018), 206.

[47] Dağ, *İnsansız Dünya*, 202-203.

[48] Erdinç Sayan, "Analitik Zihin Felsefesinin Temel Problemlerine Bir Bakış", *Kaygı: Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Felsefe Dergisi* 19 (October 2012), 46.

[49] Dağ, *İnsansız Dünya*, 100-102.

mental states are causally related to sensory inputs and behavioral outputs. Thus, transhumanists believe that even if a person's biological neurons are gradually replaced with synthetic parts that support the same cognitive function, the same mind and personality can persist despite being "in" a nonbiological substrate.[50]

One of the most important examples for transhumanists, who accept that human beings do not have a soul separate from their biology, is the work accident experienced by a worker named Phineas Gage: "In Vermont in 1848, during an accidental explosion while working on the railroad tracks, a one-meter iron rod, after lodging in his face, passed through the frontal parts of his brain and exited through the back of his skull. Gage, who did not die in the accident, remained half-awake for weeks and finally seemed to have fully recovered. After the accident, his colleagues noticed sharp changes in his personality. Normally, a cheerful, helpful foreman, Gage, became foul-mouthed, hostile, and selfish. He became so dangerous that women were warned not to approach him. After observing these conditions, Dr. John Harlow, who treated him, stated that Gage had become capricious and indecisive, making many plans for the future but abandoning them as soon as he found an easier plan to execute. He stated that he was a strong man with the intellectual capacity and manifestation of a child as well as animal instincts and stated that he had changed radically. His friends also stated that he was not the Gage they had known before after this change. After Cage died in 1860, Dr. Harlow hid his skull and the iron rod that had driven into it. Detailed X-ray results confirmed that the iron rod caused severe bilateral damage to the brain region of the frontal lobe (the brain area responsible for conscious thinking). This incredible accident changed not only Phineas Gage's life but also the course of science. Before this, the prevailing view was dualism, which posits that the brain and mind are two distinct entities. It was clear that Gage's personality had changed due to the damage to his frontal lobe caused by the accident. Accordingly, a model change began to occur in scientific thought. After this event, scientists began to think that certain regions of the human

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[50]   More, "The Philosophy of Transhumanism", 7.

brain cause specific behaviors and that the physical structure of the brain is what affects it."[51]

From the perspective of transhumanism, accepting everything as biological necessitates the denial of the existence of the soul as a separate entity. Considering that the soul is accepted as the expression of both the vitality and the evolution process in classical theology, it can be said that this situation does not find a response in transhumanism. To establish scientific proof, it is also necessary to approach soul theories based on experimentation, observation, and science. Although there may be criticism that the soul is a metaphysical entity, not the subject of science, it is impossible to accept this criticism from a methodological perspective. Although the concept of the soul is accepted as part of the metaphysical realm, it also has a physical aspect due to being an essence found in humans.[52] To claim that an entity that is allegedly found in human biology is indefinable would lead to a contradictory situation.

One of the important reasons for adopting the concept of the soul is the belief that humans have a divine aspect. One of the main reasons for this situation is that the thinkers of the Islamic world, who were under the influence of Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus through philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, see matter as an inferior entity. According to them, existence becomes worthless as it moves away from God.[53] Many people who see matter as worthless want to think that there is more than matter. One reason for this concern may be that the soul was created by God and granted to humans (breathed into humans, according to the Qurʾān). In this context, matter is perceived as if it is not created by God or as something inferior. The fact that humans have a material structure and come into existence through material processes harms their divine status.[54] However, this reveals that the understanding of classical theologies based on the concept of humans and the essence of the soul should be reviewed within the framework of the data of modern science.

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[51]   Michio Kaku, *Zihnin Geleceği*, trans. Emre Kumral (Ankara: ODTÜ Yayıncılık, 2016), 17-18.

[52]   Mehmet Dalkılıç, *İslam Mezheplerinde Ruh* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2012), 183-247; Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Ruh", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2018), 35/187-192.

[53]   Aykut Alper Yılmaz, *İnsan Nedir?* (İstanbul: Albaraka Yayınları, 2022), 55-58.

[54]   Yılmaz, *İnsan Nedir?*, 53.

The existence, nature, and relationship of the soul with the body were discussed in classical theology, and these discussions were not based on divine knowledge. Considering its nature, purposes, and consequences, an ontological approach that can help present the fundamental components from which reality, matter, body, mind, and consciousness originate and can be reprogrammed necessitates a clearer understanding of the future of humanity and the universe.[55] Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the basic parameters of philosophy and classical theologies on the soul and on physiological and anatomical components.[56] The concept of the soul, which is at the foundation of classical theology, should be determined in light of modern science and technology. To do this, the definition and function of the soul must be revealed. The fact that a person does not have a soul separate from the visible body should not devalue him or her.[57]

If a definition is made without considering scientific data, a conflict between religion and science will be inevitable. It is predicted that two different scenarios may occur if transhumanist thought and the spiritual understanding of classical theology are handled in harmony. The first approach sees the soul as an energy that gives human beings vitality. The second is the mind or consciousness, which expresses human character and orientation as the competence produced by the biological process.[58] Looking at these two approaches, we can say that the definition of the soul in classical theology can correspond to the energy that provides the primary principle of vitality. If it is used in a sense that refers to the process of human evolution, it will correspond to consciousness or mind.

Humans as Perfect Beings or as Unfinished Projects

Transhumanists regard the biological structure of human beings as flawed engineering. They advocate morphological freedom and believe that the flawed structure of the human body and brain should

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[55] Ojochogwu Abdul, "Advancing Neutral Monism in Big History and Transhumanist Philosophy", in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 737.

[56] Aydeniz, "Geleneksel Değerler Üzerinden Bir Transhümanizm Eleştirisi", 358.

[57] Yılmaz, *İnsan Nedir?*, 18.

[58] Dalkılıç, *İslam Mezheplerinde Ruh*, 57-69; Erkan Yar, *Ruh-Beden İlişkisi Açısından İnsanın Bütünlüğü Sorunu* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2000), 25-30, 37-40.

be replaced and strengthened by modern science and technology.[59] According to transhumanists, with the responsible use of science, technology, and other rational tools, we can ultimately achieve beings with much greater capacities than current humans.[60] Transhumanists even accept that the way for humans to reach eternity is to eliminate the body because of their incomplete view of the body.[61] Transhumanists' claim that human beings are incomplete, imperfect, and not created beautiful enough to obtain the status they deserve contradicts traditional religious teachings that God created them as valuable, honorable, and perfect. In theistic beliefs, the human being is seen as the work of God in every aspect. God creates people from the earth and then gives them souls (breathes life into humans, according to the Qurʾān), carefully shaping the person in the body and spirit. Therefore, the body is never seen as incomplete, imperfect, and unfinished as it is in a materialistic worldview.[62] When we look specifically at Islam, we see that both humans and the universe were created perfectly, and at the core of this perfection lies God's absolute power and will. Therefore, changing our creation to make humans better is not an idea that can be accepted from the perspective of Islam's conception of humans:[63] "*Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); then, We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then, We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot, We made a (fetus) lump; then we made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then we developed out of it another creature. So blessed be Allah, the best to create!*" (Q 21:12-14). It is therefore clear that the transhumanist view

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[59] More, "The Philosophy of Transhumanism", 15; Nick Bostrom, "Transhumanist Values", *Nick Bostrom* (Accessed February 22, 2022); Ardeniz Özenç, "Eski Bilim Yeni Bilime Karşı: Simyacılık ve Transhümanizm", in *Transhümanizm ve Karşılaştırmalı İzdüşümü*, ed. Timuçin Buğra Edman (İstanbul: Kastaş Yayınevi, 2019), 89.

[60] Talip Demir, "Transhümanizm ve Sekülerleşme: Bildiğimiz Dinin Sonu mu?", in *Din ve Transhümanizm*, ed. Talip Demir (Ankara: Eskiyeni Yayınları, 2021), 23-24.

[61] Büşra Kılıç Ahmedi, "İslam ve Transhümanizm Bağlamında Süper Müslüman Kavramının Analizi", *Kocatepe İslami İlimler Dergisi* 4/2 (2021), 244.

[62] Cory Andrew Labrecque, "Morphological Freedom and the Rebellion against Human Bodiliness: Notes from the Roman Catholic Tradition", in *Religion and Transhumanism: The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement*, ed. Calvin Mercer - Tracy J. Trothen (California: Praeger, 2015), 307.

[63] Dağ, *İnsansız Dünya*, 206.

of the creation of human beings based on random evolution is unacceptable.

In Islam, since God values human beings, He made them the most honorable of all creatures and arranged everything in the universe following their needs. This conformity is the result of God's grace to humans.[64] Furthermore, the verse in the Qurʾān, "*Surely We have created man in the most beautiful form.*" (Q 95:4), clearly emphasizes that humans are created in the most beautiful form. From this perspective, the human being is seen as sacred and therefore untouchable. In this respect, the technological intervention that transhumanists will make into human nature can be interpreted as a factor that discredits human beings.[65] Furthermore, this idea has been criticized because it poses potential dangers to the belief in God's absolute power and creativity as well as to the belief in fate.[66] Although some scholars accept that the concept of *aḥsan taqwīm* mentioned in the verse refers to characteristics such as a person's erect body structure, ability to walk on two feet, proportionality and harmony of organs, physical beauty, vitality, and physical strength, other living beings are physically stronger than humans and can survive for longer periods.[67] Therefore, the physical design and superiority of other living beings cannot be proposed as good evidence for making them more or less valuable than human beings. Because transhumanism accepts the physical structure of humans as incomplete, we can say that it is weaker than some other living things. If we consider only people with congenital disabilities, the body's fragility and suffering become clear. Therefore, it is not realistic or convincing to accept the concept of *aḥsan taqwīm* as the best form in terms of physical characteristics. From the perspective of transhumanists, it is clear that they would not accept such a rejection of their conception of human nature. The recognition of humans as the best creature should be sought in their

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[64] Şaban Ali Düzgün, *Aydınlanmanın Keşif Araçları Varlık ve Bilgi* (İstanbul: OTTO Yayınları, 2020), 31-32.

[65] Kılıç Ahmedi, "İslam ve Transhümanizm Bağlamında Süper Müslüman Kavramının Analizi", 246.

[66] İshak Doğan, "Transhümanizm: 'Allah'ın Yarattığını Değiştirme' veya İnsana Karşı Şeytan 2.0", *Marife Dini Araştırmalar Dergisi* 21/1 (2021), 12.

[67] Hasan Ocak, "İslâm Düşüncesinde Üstün İnsan Tasavvuru ve Transhümanizm & Posthümanizm", in *Transhümanizm & Posthümanizm: Disiplinlerarası Bir Çalışma*, ed. Mustafa Tekin - Muhammet Özdemir (Ankara: Eskiyeni Yayınları, 2021), 86.

being intelligent beings. Although humans are physically deficient and weak, it is obvious that they are unique beings with intelligence and the ability to think, analyze, and draw conclusions. With these qualities, humans can overcome and dominate all other beings that are physically stronger. In fact, through the tools, equipment, and technology they have created, humans have also managed to establish dominion over nature. Aesthetics, empathy, piety, and morality are other aspects that may indicate that humans are at the top of creation.[68] Islam has focused on people's piety rather than their physical characteristics and has based superiority on piety. Therefore, the Islamic religion provides an understanding within moral evolution as opposed to transhumanism's understanding of physical perfection through an emphasis on the physical weakness of human beings.[69]

It has been said that the ontological interference with "humans" by developing technology can be accepted as a claim to break humans from the codes of creation and to create a more perfect human being than God's creation.[70] However, it must be emphasized that such an intervention is not deemed against divine intervention. If intervention in human ontology is considered a divine intervention, the absolute power and might of God become debatable. Many people start life with congenital disabilities. Theology that does not align with the reality of life and can only be formed as a defense of God will not find any response in humans because it is unrealistic. Today, many diseases can be prevented by intervention starting from the mother's womb. It is clear that doing these things does not and will not mean attempting divine intervention. This is because it would be impossible to make sense of the efforts of millions of people born with disabilities and then seek ways to become healthy. In such a case, if we act with the perception that God created everything perfectly, it would not be possible for many people who are born with disabilities and have imperfect bodies to establish a positive relationship with God. It is clear that the creation of these people is imperfect and complete. The corrective interventions to be made for them should not be seen as doing better than what God has done. After God created the universe

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[68] Ocak, "İslâm Düşüncesinde Üstün İnsan Tasavvuru ve Transhümanizm & Posthümanizm", 84.

[69] Dağ, *İnsansız Dünya*, 89.

[70] Aydeniz, "Geleneksel Değerler Üzerinden Bir Transhümanizm Eleştirisi", 365.

and human beings out of nothing, he established laws for the functioning of the universe and human beings. These laws should be accepted as unchanging rules as long as humanity continues in line with God's will. Therefore, it can be considered a more reasonable view that the deficiencies inherent in human beings are addressed within the framework of the laws set by God without being associated with perfect creation. Otherwise, all improvements concerning humans would be accepted as divinity, which would lead to a breaking point in the relationship between humans and God.

Conclusion

Transhumanism, which builds its understanding of human beings on the concepts of transhuman and posthuman, seems to be a technology-based movement that will make its religious, philosophical, economic, cultural, sociological, and psychological effects felt even more in the future. As a continuation of humanism, this movement puts human beings at the center and brings humans to the highest possible level they can reach with the support of technology. It presents a worldview that emphasizes human beings and tries to achieve this goal by using technology. Although it is accepted as human-centered, the conception of human beings in transhumanism cannot be said to be parallel to the understanding of humans in Abrahamic religions. The process of human existence based on evolution does not accept any divine influence in this process. We can see that this is very clearly differentiated from Abrahamic religions. This understanding, which has become ideological and may cause conflict between religion and science, should be handled with modern scientific data. In this context, there should be no problem for Abrahamic religions to accept the evolutionary process as a model of God's creation. In discussions of the essence of human beings, the soul-body dualism accepted by classical theologies is incompatible with scientific data. Although there is general acceptance that the essence of human beings is the soul, modern scientific data show that the essence that makes humans human is the mind, which is achieved through bodily functionality. Therefore, classical theologies must reconsider the human nature they have constructed over the understanding of the soul.

The transhumanist claim that humans are imperfectly created directly contradicts Abrahamic religions' concept of a perfect creation. In this context, while transhumanists base human centrality on the body, Abrahamic religions have based the concept of human excellence on the ability and capacity to contemplate. Humans are inevitably deficient beings if they are to be accepted only as bodies. When considering the large number of people born with disabilities, become ill, or wish to modify themselves, it is evident that human beings experience physiological limitations. Note that Abrahamic religions focus on morality, which is one of the most essential points that transhumanism ignores. The physiological characteristics of human beings are not seen as a means of competence in Abrahamic religions. Whether a person is disabled or healthy, what makes him or her valuable and perfect is the will to think together with the person's moral personality. The transhumanists' view of human perfection in terms of only bodily perfection stands out as a major shortcoming.

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