# Humanism in the Digital Age:
## Risks and Opportunities for Science and Democracy

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The development of information technologies, especially under the impetuous digitalization of education and other spheres of social activity happened recently due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to many radical changes in our everyday life. The role of computers and other electronic devices has grown rapidly in the past couple of decades – and in turn it gave rise to questioning the very nature of human existence. The spirit of our days is surely different from the scientism of the 19th – 20th centuries with its univocal optimistic views of the ever-going progress in science and technologies, as the global crises are now evident threats to the very existence of the humankind civilization. Still, we can also hear today the ideas of 'transhumanism', its main goal being abandoning classical humanism in favor of the gradual replacement of human by machine as a more perfect and fruitful creation. And it is quite questionable if such a symbiosis could leave any place to human values, including faith and love, and human ability for having moral attitude towards the world.

In fact, I would argue that the said digitalization could and should result not in philosophical humanism being replaced by some ideology of human-computer hybrid, but on the contrary in the further all-round development of humans and humanism. What is humanism then and how is it possible in the age of digitalization? According to the definition by the International Humanist and Ethical Union, "Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance that affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives"[1]. In other words, humanism is the Weltanschauung that asserts the

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[1] https://web.archive.org/web/20130117101233/http://iheu.org/bylaws.

autonomy of a human being, his or her right and responsibility to be the subject of one's own life. In the Renaissance, this position was opposed to theistic views on human nature, stating the moral independence of humans from their creator, while today – paradoxically enough – it could be applied to freeing humans from their own creations.

Still, I think the main idea of humanism is that of democracy: it is the idea of general liberation of human from the power of external authorities, it is a natural consequence of the philosophical appeal expressed in the famous words of Kant about having the courage to use your own reason as the motto of the Enlightenment. And I would argue that today the development of the ICT sphere can but augment human person by empowering him or her with new possibilities. Computers are just tools and means for the development of human knowledge and human personality, and as the routine work could now be handled by machines instead of humans[2], giving humans a chance to become more humane – but also requiring from them more responsibilities for defining the future of the world itself.

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[2] Grier, David Alan (2005). *When Computers Were Human*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.