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A General Account of Philosophical Anthropocentrism (with special emphasis on Political Anthropocentrism) in the Anthropocene

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Abstract

This paper attempts to present a description of the meta-ideology of anthropocentrism, which is at the genesis of all the human-centric philosophies. It encompasses the set of ideas that advocates the centrality and domination of the human subject (especially privileged ones), at the detriment of other ecological entities, which the former considers of being merely of instrumental value.

The paper identifies the major global challenges like climate change, overpopulation among humans with excruciation and extinction of other species, various forms of pollution, other political and social problems, as locating their ideational roots in anthropocentric thinking.

It identifies the Anthropocene as the historical and geological epoch where anthropocentrism predominates and attains its highest manifestation. It recognizes the role of "cognitive revolution", the "agricultural revolution", and the scientific and industrial revolution as being the major stages that provided a fillip to such a historical development. Thereafter, it goes on to explain the meta-ideology and the inherent Majoritarianism, Identities-driven bias, Elitism, Intersectionalities, Social Darwinism, contained within anthropocentrism.

Admitting a certain academic bias of the author towards the ideology of ecologism, the paper highlights the issues of unsustainability, inequalities, cruelty (over sentient beings), and so on, as being the practical outcomes of anthropocentrism.

Finally, it attempts to study its impacts on and partial origins in political thought and discourses. It identifies newer developments in transhumanism as being the logical next step in applied anthropocentrism. It concludes by highlighting the alternative ideologies that could desirably complement or replace anthropocentrism, for instance- ecologism and the emerging paradigm(s) of posthumanism(s).

Keywords: Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism, Ecologism, Posthumanism, Transhumanism.



Introduction

Bhasmasura, in ancient Indian mythology, was a demon and an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva (the God of constructive destruction and transformation). Shiva, on request, and after arduous penance by the asura, granted him the power of turning anything into ashes (*bhasma*), just with a touch, after rejecting the impossible request for granting him immortality. The *asura*, lacking the virtue of putting to ethical use the newly attained powers, became keen on experimenting it on Shiva, in order to attain the God's wife-Parvati (Jha, 2015). It was only after he was tricked by another God, Vishnu (the administrator or preserver), who assumed the incarnation of Mohini (an enchantress) to entice the demon to fall in love with his female avatar, effectively distracting him from his obsession over Parvati and Shiva's head, tricking Bhasmasura to touch his own head – thus destroying himself with his self-acquired powers.

Humanity (especially privileged sections of it), today, in its quest for attaining immortality and God-like powers, unable to temper its obsessions, collectively, has been casting a similarly destructive spell over its creator- the nature, by producing its own modern avatar of Bhasmasura- in the form of anthropocentrism or the ideology of human-centeredness, rooted in human ego, its perpetual insecurity, its insatiable wants for power and for material possession (that tends to increase with increasing power and security), and the tendency of treating everything else-including the non-human nature and also many sections of itself as mere instruments towards that end. The modern Bhasmasura is making his presence felt in the form of numerous threats- overpopulation, climate change, endangerment, extinction and exploitation of most other species, gross inequities within humanity, exploitation of non-living nature (natural 'resources'), numerous forms of pollution, violent conflicts, instabilities and wars (with their underlying reasons being any or many of the former challenges), and so on.

Climate Change

Climate change has been a regular feature of natural Earth. Temperatures have sharply risen and fallen several times in the history of the planet, having heralded colossal changes to the ecosystems (with their flora, fauna, chemical compositions, and physical attributes). However the nature of the ecological beast, this time though, is not 'natural'. Although, what constitutes natural or otherwise, and whether everything 'natural' is morally good or is justifiable, are again matters of debate, which have no easy answer. The peculiarity of the climate change at this gigantic level, this time, is attributed to one animal species- the *Homo sapiens* (today's humans), and that's the peculiarity of the beast. It has been scientifically proven beyond the doubt expressed by cornucopians and other skeptics on the issue that, in addition to the natural climate change the Earth undergoes periodically, the impact of human activities has been of overwhelming proportions, which is responsible for the rapidity of the advancement of the predicament (which, would otherwise have been much gradual in speed and milder in magnitude, allowing the earth and its various inhabitants sufficient time to adjust and maintain 'homeostasis'- an equilibrium). It is unprecedented in the known history of the earth that one



single specie has been responsible for such massive changes, forcing the weaker inhabitants (humans and otherwise) to action or extinction. Welcome to the Anthropocene!

Population Explosion

“Population explosion” is real and is happening, as Dr. Paul R. Ehrlich in his controversial yet fabled book, *The Population Bomb*, had predicted way back in 1968, that a worldwide systemic collapse was impending, being just a matter of when and not whether, owing to “too many people”, “too little food”, and “a dying planet” (Ehrlich, 1968).

Much earlier, Thomas Robert Malthus had published an equally controversial work anonymously, in which he had warned of the possible consequences of unchecked population growth and the helplessness of Earth to cope up with subsequent sky-rocketing human wants (Malthus, 1798). It is not only that snowballing human wants are a consequence of swelling human population but also vice versa- infinite wants and needs-both real and imaginary- to acquire and to amass- called for ever larger and more diverse populations.

As outcomes today show, the authors’ works and predictions were both exaggerations in some respects (although being true), as well as understatements of even greater ensuing catastrophes, as they were unaware of both the technological innovations that helped humans become more resilient, as well as novel challenges that came with and without the same package. One notable way in which humans have augmented their resilience, even at the face of burgeoning demands of an escalating population, has been by assuming mastery over the rest of nature, putting the non-human earth into the business of producing, by being transformed into, food and other ‘resources’.

The underlying assumption here is that the human population can never grow so big that the Earth would seem insufficient, or even if that happens to be the case, human ingenuity will always find a solution to any such problem. Such assumptions have dominated the thinking of Enlightenment, of classical liberalism, of industrialism, of cornucopianism, and so on. The author would compare such an attitude to Ostrich’s Syndrome, which is- hiding one’s head in the sand or to live in the state of cherished denial when encountering a crisis.

Tremors of the “*The Coming Anarchy*”, as had Robert D. Kaplan in an article (and later a book) with the quoted name had predicted, in the form of scarcity, crime, overpopulation, ‘tribalism’, diseases, breakdown of social structures, riots, coup d’états, insurgencies, genocides, refugee crises, wars, and so on, are being witnessed at different places and different times, the geneses of most of which are far deeper than what commonsensical reasons of political instability, economic downturns and inequity, ethnic rivalries, underdevelopment, incapacity, and so on are emphasized (Kaplan, 1994). As the underground and more fundamental cleavages widen further, the occurrences of such chaotic events would assume greater resonance and will occur with greater spatial and temporal synchronization.



For the layperson, in a nutshell, a much smaller, economically more homogenized, and more stable human population, with controlled material wants, in sync with its ecosystem, the food web, and the biogeochemical cycles, would automatically eliminate the causal foundations of climate change, resource scarcity, international, inter-ethnic, and inter-class conflicts, and so on, and push most such problems to the sphere of imagination. In other words, for example, the energy and food crises and the politics that take place in their names are not just because there are too little resources, but there is a huge and too rapidly expanding pool of consumers (being gigantically avaricious ones, causing bad distribution).

The Sixth Mass Extinction of Wildlife

On the other hand, “biological annihilation” of wildlife in the form of “sixth mass extinction” in Earth’s history that corresponds to a “frightening assault on the foundations of human civilisation” is presently making naturally irreversible changes to the constitution of life on earth (Carrington, 2017; Ceballos, Ehrlich, & Dirzo, 2017).

However, just as a reminder, one major animal (the human) with a select few other species that the former holds dear, for consumption, exploitation, entertainment, aesthetics, and so on, are only expected to survive and thrive, in terms of genetic success (and not necessarily in terms of hedonist calculi). Humanity today comprises only 0.01% of all living things but is responsible for the loss of 83% of all wild mammals (which are just 4% of today’s total mammal biomass, humans comprising 36%), 80% of all marine mammals, 15 % of all fish and half of all plants, while livestock (60% of all mammals) and poultry (70% of all birds) bred by humans for their consumption and other purposes bloom (all in terms of biomass) (Carrington, 2018) (Bar-On, Milo, & Phillips, 2018).

When it comes to the extermination of historical megafauna (the relatively larger animals that populated various continents like the present-day Americas and Australia before the advent of sapiens), the arrival of humans (in their quest for colonizing the planet, followed by rapid destruction of habitats and annihilation of animals), much more than any other reason like natural climate change and accompanying changes in vegetation, is held responsible for such sudden disappearances. The ‘overkill hypothesis’, first proposed by Paul Martin (who associated the events with "Blitzkrieg" or "lightning war", which refer to the offensive techniques adopted by German forces during the World Wars, for making military gains by means of concentrated and rapid firepower attacks), and later confirmed by various studies, argues that humans were responsible for or were a major causal factor behind the large-scale extinction of megafauna species, possibly, largely by consuming them for their meat or their smaller herbivorous prey and rapidly changing the vegetation and biodiversity (which partially explains the continuous rise in human population) especially in the American continents, in the context of the Late Pleistocene period (about 10,000-12,000 years ago, in the hunter-gatherers age) (AMND, 2018; Surovell, Pelton, Anderson-Sprecher, & Myers, 2016). One group of archeological sites to confirm this hypothesis is the Clovis complex, situated in North America, having been witness of the so-called Clovis culture (Johnson, 2018).



There used to be a type of elephant called Palaeoloxodon that could have rested its chin on the head of a modern African elephant. There was a hornless rhino called Paraceratherium, which was at least 10 times heavier than living rhinos. There was once a giant wombat that could have looked you level in the eye, a ground sloth the size of an elephant, a short-faced bear that would have loomed over a grizzly, and car-sized armadillos with maces on their tails. After most of the dinosaurs went extinct at the end of the Cretaceous period, 66 million years ago, mammals took over as the largest creatures on land—and they became really big.

(Yong, 2018)

Today we have less than half of the species known as megafauna—an exclusive club whose members weigh at least 97 pounds when fully grown—on all continents but Africa. Where did these giants all go? In the past 50 years, archaeologists have started to come to a damning conclusion: Perhaps they would still be here if humans hadn't arrived on the scene.

(Boissoneault, 2017)

Advait Jukar from George Mason University explains that- “It doesn't take a lot to make a species go extinct”, and that “Humans didn't need to go out and kill every last individual; all you need is a stressed population and just enough hunting pressure to keep the fertility rate [below replacement levels]. Eventually, the population will collapse” (Yong, 2018).

The Anthropocene

The hegemonization by humans (as a species) of the biotic and abiotic world has been so profound, comprehensive and all-pervading that scientists, for the first time are arguing over whether to identify and recognize a break (at some point in the recent past) in the Holocene (the name of the period comprising the last 11,700 years of Earth's history) or even to recognize the whole period as unprecedentedly being dominated by one single species of animals-the humans, by naming the human-driven epoch as- the Anthropocene (Waggoner, 1996; Agerbroad & Fairbridge, 2018).

The term Anthropocene was coined by American biologist Eugene Stoermer in the 1980s and received worldwide popularity in the 21st Century, thanks to efforts by Dutch chemist and Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen, following which in 2008, British geologist Jan Zalasiewicz with his colleagues proposed for the first time to recognize Anthropocene formally as a geological interval (Rafferty, 2018). The Anthropocene Working Group of the International Union of Geologic Sciences (IUGS) has voted in 2016 to endorse the change at the 35th International Geological Congress, wherein, it must be adopted along with by the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ibid.).

Anthropocene has become an environmental buzzword ever since the atmospheric chemist and Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen popularized it in 2000. This year, the word has picked up velocity in elite science circles: It appeared in nearly 200 peer-reviewed articles, the publisher Elsevier has launched a new academic journal titled Anthropocene and the IUGS



convened a group of scholars to decide by 2016 whether to officially declare that the Holocene is over and the Anthropocene has begun.

(Stromberg, 2013)

Getting a geologic epoch named after one's species may not be supposed to be a matter of celebration for humans, as humans are not immune to the repercussions of the damage they have caused- whether inadvertently or through intelligent design, and, even if they were immune in a hypothetical world, ideals of morality, justice, and equity would toss serious questions.

For instance, the special report of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, published in October 2018 called policymakers and people worldwide to adopt "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society" to limit global warming to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, if catastrophic natural occurrences (of an overwhelmingly human creation) are to be avoided (IPCC, Global Warming of 1.5°C, 2018). Such consensual alarm by the panel is despite the fact that the IPCC report is authored by scientists who represent their respective countries and may be subject to political, diplomatic, and bureaucratic constraints.

However, this article is not about those more commonsensical constraints that cause or prevent individuals from preventing and mitigating global catastrophes, but something that arguably lies at the root of them all the ideology of anthropocentrism or literally and vaguely- human-centeredness. This article claims that the excesses of anthropocentrism must be overcome, at an ideational level, and a move must be made to an appropriate post-anthropocentric or posthuman paradigm to actually achieve any such "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society" as the IPCC calls for. Such an effort would be far from easy and convenient. Ready-to-serve answers may be the most elusive commodity in such an enterprise. Human-generated ideas and institutions (like religions, legal systems, education systems, and other epistemic communities), which are part of the problem, may not offer readymade solutions-but, maybe, inspirations, methods, or starting points, at most. However, since most of those institutions have historically been modeled around anthropocentric ideas, those may emerge as the most formidable fetters. It may take some gargantuan level of curiosity, patience, experimentation, skepticism, as well as optimism to arrive at paradigms that are both forward-looking as well as practically relevant.

However, when in history the Anthropocene started, has been a matter of debate among various experts. Yuval Noah Harari, in *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, makes an ambitious attempt to map the causes and events that led to the expansion and supremacy of the human species, identifying the "Cognitive Revolution" (that started some 70,000 years ago), the "Agricultural Revolution" (about 12,000 years ago), and the more recent and ongoing Scientific (and Industrial Revolution) as the revolutionizing stages that led to such an unprecedented historical development (Harari, 2014).

Here is another account of the development of humanity, from meek to the mighty-



For millions of years all humans, early and modern alike, had to find their own food. They spent a large part of each day gathering plants and hunting or scavenging animals. By 164,000 years ago modern humans were collecting and cooking shellfish and by 90,000 years ago modern humans had begun making special fishing tools. Then, within just the past 12,000 years, our species, *Homo sapiens*, made the transition to producing food and changing our surroundings. Humans found they could control the growth and breeding of certain plants and animals. This discovery led to farming and herding animals, activities that transformed Earth's natural landscapes—first locally, then globally. As humans invested more time in producing food, they settled down. Villages became towns, and towns became cities. With more food available, the human population began to increase dramatically. Our species had been so successful that it has inadvertently created a turning point in the history of life on Earth.

(Smithsonian Institution, 2019)

However, the Industrial Revolution (18th – 19th Century), along with the Enlightenment is credited with or blamed for the bringing about the most significant turning point in the growth of humanity and its implicit ideology of anthropocentrism. It not only led to unprecedented growth of population, but was, to great extent, responsible in legitimizing the attitude of nature's subservience to the *anthropos*, to the extent that an industrial and economic 'growth' became ends in themselves, and even large sections of humans became treated literally as human 'resources'. It led to stability in human population in terms of quantity (life expectancy) and not necessarily the quality of life, and did lead to the invention of a lot of amazing things, but with no concern for sustainability, costing the most significant but neglected exchequer- the nature, an unrealizable fortune.

The sudden spike in world population especially after the Industrial Revolution, could be attributed to a massive increase in production, better access to healthcare facilities, new ideology of industrialism which was seen to be an emancipatory and progressive force (the daunting aftereffects of which were felt in the Western Hemisphere only a century later). The massive production of machines created huge cities, consumerist economies that converted nature (including *sapiens*) into consumer goods or intermediate capital at an unprecedented scale and magnitude, led to complex and sharply divided communities (that ultimately resulted in social dissensions, politics, and conflicts based on various identities, especially class), capitalist scramble for markets, resulting in colonialism, imperialism, and ultimately the world wars and, yes- the sixth mass extinction of non-human species. Here is an account of the sudden burst of the population after the industrial revolution.

(After the first millennium) world human population growth rate would be about .1 percent (.001) per year for the next seven to eight centuries. At the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-1700s, the world's human population grew by about 57 percent to 700 million ... During the 20th century, the world population would take on exponential proportions, growing to six billion people just before the start of the 21st century. That's a 400 percent population increase in a single century.



Although most geologic experts consider the Industrial Revolution as the greatest turning point leading to the inception of the Anthropocene, there are divergent views that date it back to from the beginning of the Holocene epoch (which corresponds to gigantic changes in intra-human, inter-species, and ecological relations, and started building the foundations of human civilizations), or even an earlier period, to as late as the 20th Century.

Anthropocentrism- the ideology

Anthropocentrism is defined as “considering human beings as the most significant entity of the universe” and the tendency of “interpreting or regarding the world in terms of human values and experiences” (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

It is the philosophical standpoint or belief that considers privileged human beings (as against lesser powerful ones) as the principal units of analysis in the world, being different from and superior to nature with its other entities (including other animals, plants, mineral resources, other humans, and so on, all of which may rightly be seen in terms of the extent of being of instrumental benefit to the privileged subject)- an idea whose foundations are well entrenched in various Western religions and philosophies (Boslaugh, 2018). Collective and coercive power becomes the organizing principle of such a hierarchical structure. Although such an organizing principle is not entirely peculiar to humans and remains a natural phenomenon, it acquires its most potent and most destructive *avatar* only in the hands of humans, by virtue of their preponderance in the great chain of being or in the evolutionary ecology. In a globalized world, when the idea of a global human fraternity, at least at an ideological level, is gaining greater currency, anthropocentrism is becoming synonymous with the tool for exploitation of the rest of nature by unified humanity. Humanity, after overcoming various identity-based parochialisms at an intra-species level, takes identity-based distinction and ensuing abuse to an inter-species stage.

The innate genesis of anthropocentrism can be attributable to animalistic tendency of individualistic as well as communitarian living beings (that reaches its zenith in humans) to yearn for survival, by the maximization of capability-based security and of coercive power, often at the cost of another (group). This analysis serves as the basic assumption among classical political realists who paint a very gloomy picture of the human nature as being genetically hardwired to compete, outsmart, annihilate, amass, strategically cooperate (to achieve limited objectives), and so on.

The Western literary origins of the term can be found in the Judeo-Christian Bible, particularly in the story of Creation narrated in the book of Genesis, which considers humans to have been created in God's image and ordered to “subdue Earth and to have dominion over all other living creatures” (Boslaugh, 2018). Whereas, non-human entities were also created by the intelligent design by an omnipotent, in the traditional Biblical cosmology, it was only humans who were created in the image of the God, and thus entitled to greater privileges on earth and beyond (afterlife) (Philosophy, 2016).



Bertrand Russell once wrote, “I am unable to believe that, in the world as known, there is anything that I can value outside human beings, and, to a much lesser extent, animals,” (Butchvarov, 2015, p. 1). Anthropocentrism arguably dominates the philosophical components associated with human thinking as-

Ethics is commonly understood as concerned with human well-being, even happiness, and epistemology with human knowledge, especially perception... Ethics and epistemology remain anthropocentric even when concerned only with language because the language in question is surely human and investigated properly in linguistics and lexicography. In metaphysics, anthropocentrism takes the form of antirealism, the orientation that has dominated philosophy since Berkeley and especially Kant... it claims that the world depends, at least insofar as it is knowable, on our cognitive capacities.

(Butchvarov, 2015, p.

1)

Majoritarianism, Identities, Elitism, Intersectionalities, Darwinism in Anthropocentrism

The attitude of anthropocentrism is based on the attitude of a speciesist- and perverted form of Majoritarianism (Capaldi, 2016). If Jeremy Bentham's utility is to be the metric of distribution of social goods, other sentient animals, ethically, would have a similar claim on matters that affect sentience, and since they are in overwhelming majority vis. a vis. the humans, their concerns deserve extensive moral regards (Crimmins, 2017).

However, anthropocentric Majoritarianism is based, not on numerical superiority, but of a power superiority of collective groups. Thus the identity-based group, with the greatest ability to survive and emerge victorious in a possible clash, is, in most practical cases, the real majority. Therefore, anthropocentrism is geared to the service of such power majorities of humans, who, in most cases, are numerical minorities. Therefore, in anthropocentrism, it is common to experience the phenomena of “majority tyranny”, by a numerical minority of humans over a majority, in political and social practices (Dahl, et al., 2018).

Such a tendency follows the assumption of Hans J. Morgenthau's *animus dominandi* or the insatiable lust to control and expand one's power (Korab-Karpowicz, 2017). It implies that since *animus dominandi* of one to acquire unlimited power is constrained by a similar desire of another, given generally no single grouping or individual in a modern political setup is able to exercise preponderance, that innate will to preponderance manifests itself, at best, in the form of majoritarianism, elitism, and so on. Since, no other species or group of species is able to provide a check (and balance), at the inter-specie level, collective humanity attains preponderant powers to set the rules of the game. There, a majority's tyranny is apparent with humans being the power majority, ruling over and freely exploiting the entities of non-human nature, which are an overwhelming majority in terms of number, biomass, and so on.



Identities are created to identify the members of one group from the members of another. Such identities are sometimes based on perceptible differences of species, colour, sex, physical and cognitive abilities, etc., and often, those identities are a purely social artifact, like that of caste, religions, nations, and so on. Thus the power majorities often impose subjugation or discrimination on others on the basis of such identities.

Even within the major and minor groupings, everyone does not get automatically entitled to an equal or even a fair share. There, elitism kicks in to prove the consistency of *animus dominandi*. It holds that, explains, and even sometimes defends as desirable that “a community’s affairs are best handled by a small subset of its members”, and, that “in modern societies such an arrangement is in fact inevitable”, with proponents or commentators including Plato (and his ‘Guardian Class’), Thomas Aquinas, the Calvinists, Machiavelli, John Milton (in his advocacy of Regicide), Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, Gaetano Mosca, Vifredo Pareto, Robert Michels (his ‘Iron Law of Oligarchy’), and so on (Maloy, 2016).

Sometimes, an actor may be liable to face exploitation from a number of different sources, by virtue of it belonging to multiple groups of power-minorities, and therefore is subject to greater threat than another actor which faces a lesser number of discrimination, leading to the phenomenon called-Intersectionality. It is a term more widely used in feminist studies to study the multiple deprivations women are subjected to (Vidal, 2014).

Intersectionality can also be extended to non-human beings, for instance being a cow or a bull, being born in a cowshed in India or in an animal factory in the USA, owned by a human of a so-called higher or lower caste, being sent to a slaughterer professing a certain puritanical faith, of it belonging to a certain breed, and so on can be the parameters based on which the entity may be given starkly different kinds of treatments.

Such organizing principle (or the lack of it) among animals (including humans) that compete and try to outsmart the other for a greater share of a pool of limited resources in their struggle for existence, follows the Darwinian theory. Social Darwinism is a broad set of ideologies that seeks to apply Darwinian principles of natural selection (in which might is right) to analyze and even justify various social, economic, and political views, starting with Herbert Spencer (who related the thought of ‘survival of the fittest’ with the *laissez-faire* capitalist economic system prevalent during the Industrial Revolution) and William Graham Sumner (an American economist who opposed welfare measures, holding that individual competition for possession of property and prestige would help eliminate the weak and the immoral) (Editors, 2018). Therefore, the ideas of social Darwinism have been historically used to promote crude meritocracy as well as misused to provide scientific justification for far-right politics, massacres of masses, racial segregation, discrimination, and so on (Underdown, 2009).



Anthropocentrism in Political Thought

“All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others“ (Orwell, 1945).

-George Orwell (Eric

Arthur Blair)

Political thought since its inception is arguably largely anthropocentric- an inherent tendency of political reality that has tended to deepen in intensity every successive generation. Anthropocentrism dominated ancient Greek thought (Renahan, 1981). As compared to Plato, Aristotle is considered even more anthropocentric (Woods, 1993). David Sedley argues that Aristotle's teleological approach is highly anthropocentric in nature, placing human elites at the center of the natural universe (only below God) and as the end of his teleological progression (Sedley, 1991).

Jonathan Padwe through the article titled *Anthropocentrism*, at the website of Oxford Bibliographies, identifies a large amount of secondary literature that would help a student identify the major themes associated with anthropocentrism in political thought (Padwe, 2016).

Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* identifies the three principles as—plenitude, continuity, and graduation, and studies their geneses in the anthropocentric ideas of Plato, Aristotle, and the Neoplatonists and “traces the most important of their diverse ramifications in subsequent religious thought, in metaphysics, in ethics, and aesthetics, and in astronomical and biological theories” (Lovejoy, 1971).

John Arthur Passmore, in *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions*, claims that “it is not only Christian theology but also classical philosophy (and Aquinas's reliance on Aristotelian orderings of the world) that forms the intellectual basis for modern anthropocentrism” (Padwe, 2016; Passmore, 1974).

I. Bernard Cohen in the interdisciplinary classic *Revolution in Science*, analyses how revolutions in science like the so-called Copernican revolution, as well as the political revolutions like the French, American, Bolshevik, along with the ideational movements like that of Darwinism, affect human relations (including that with the nature- a vital feature of anthropocentrism) (Cohen, 1987; Padwe, 2016). *The Domination of Nature* by William Leiss undertakes the study of the human control over and exploitation of ecology and nature (and the triumph of anthropocentrism), analyzing the anthropocentrism in thinking from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, including an analysis of Francis Bacon, and how extremely biased ideas, with the help of optimism towards the then emergent technological revolution paved way for such a preponderance (Leiss, 1972).

Gary Steiner does one of the most comprehensive studies on the role of Western thought in promoting anthropocentrism continuously leading to the increased marginalization of non-human sentient beings in the classic- *Anthropocentrism and its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy* (Steiner, 2005). He analyses the roles of many Greek philosophers notably pre-Socratic philosopher Xenophanes, Aristotle, and the Stoics; Plutarch and Porphyry; the



thinking advocated by Medieval Christianity (that “not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.... By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference”); Descartes (infamous among ecologists for his dualist ideas); the Empiricists, the Utilitarians, and Kant; Darwin; the Romantics (Schopenhauer and Schweitzer); the Postmodernists (Heidegger, Levinas, Jonas, Derrida) and so on (Steiner, 2005; Serpell, 2006).

Anthropocentrism is so rampant and deeply entrenched in Western thought that it has become commonsensical and established normally. Aristotle's contempt towards other so-called lesser intelligent animals (from anthropocentric standpoints) is well known. The Christian Medieval thinking was a bridge between restrained god- and nature-fearing anthropocentrism of the ancient world and unbridled, reckless, exploitative anthropocentrism of the modern world.

Libertarianism and Liberalism of the modern world, having emerged at the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution were arguably the most significant outcomes in the evolution of anthropocentrism. The assumption of the individual is as an end in itself with the non-human nature being considered a source of unlimited wealth to plunder, like a cornucopia. The alternative that emerged in the form of socialism was no different when it came to the core anthropocentric ideas, as it was mainly a reaction against the elitist and concentrating tendencies of liberalism. Most of the politics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries fall somewhere in this left-right continuum.

Conclusion

Humanity, though wants to overcome the challenges, but tends simultaneously to attempt to realize the primordial desire of immortality (in the technical and bodily sense) that had plagued the demon Bhasmasura (through advances in medical sciences, biotechnology, the health department and its populist policies and so on), along with attempting to maximize the possession of pleasure-driven and mostly ecologically unsustainable material wants, all of which come at the cost of destroying and exploiting its creator (the nature and other animals). At a genetic level (of the DNA), species, generally do their best to achieve immortality, in the form of acquiring, diversifying, and augmenting genetic information (till they most naturally face extinction, after whether or not passing genetic information to other species), with the body (with its two broad instruments and sometimes masters-pleasure and pain), merely being the means to a more successful DNA and survivable species. However, the practical possibility among humans to achieve bodily immortality and create a pleasurable planet is unprecedented in the Anthropocene!

The newer material developments in terms of newer technologies and developed implements, along with their corresponding ideational developments like that of newer faiths, religions, nations, monetary currencies, developmental agendas, and so on, have been the catalysts in the predominance of anthropocentrism. Transformations through stages of ideational and material evolution often come at the cost of conflicts between the conservatives and avant-gardists, which has been a regular feature in human history. However, hardly ever such a macro-level dialectical



struggle transcended the anthropocentric paradigm. It has ensured humanity's incessant occupation with problems of a very parochial nature, and its attempt to fight those with the very tools that were responsible for the creation of the vicious anthropocentric trap.

Humanity's greater fixation in addressing its microscopic problems, mostly of an imagined nature-like problems of race, caste, religion, gender, or other social hierarchies, and so on, while denying the more real and fundamental problems that afflict the non-human nature, any substantial concern, which will have overbearing impact over humans too, proves the point that any approach within anthropocentrism (however egalitarian) is least qualified to address the mega macro-level issues. The majority of policymakers and intellectuals, whether because of ignorance and myopia or out of several personal, social, and political compulsions do not seem intent to address these issues with the seriousness they tend to address the subordinate and dependent ones.

Transhumanism, or the ideology that supports further enhancements of the human mental and bodily construction by the application of developments in science and technology, is again rooted in the meta-ideology of anthropocentrism. Ecologism, however, which is the view that believes in withdrawing the centrality accorded traditionally to humans, and giving it to the ecology, advocating holism, sustainability, ecocentrism, and so on, is a significant shift away from anthropocentrism. But, it remains far from being widely practically accepted. Rather, humans have given more significance to environmentalism (as opposed to ecologism), which advocates concern for the environment only insofar as to improve the living conditions for humans, thus having an inherent anthropocentric bias. However, the posthuman turn in social sciences, influenced to a large extent by the culmination of critical theories in poststructuralism and postmodernism, of which ecologism may arguably be a variant, may offer some relevant paradigmatic alternatives to philosophical anthropocentrism. Posthumanism is a post-anthropocentric meta-ideology that involves a critical de-centering of the human subject and is ready to experiment with a range of different viewpoints.

The 21st Century globalization, although has elevated anthropocentrism to its most potent *avatar* yet, has also made the unfavorable fallouts of its excesses more competent and widespread in causing distress to the stakeholders, especially the sentient ones, making the distressing outcomes more apparent than ever before. A reactionary and conservative approach could make one seek solutions in environmentalism and ecologism, by going back to nature. A more optimistic and progressive approach may incite one to seek answers in transhumanism and posthumanism, by leveraging developments in science and technology. Eventually, nothing less than a combination of synthetic and analytically eclectic approaches, compounded with literal as well as metaphorical paradigmatic changes can offer some pertinent solutions.



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