# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND POSTHUMANISM: HOW TO DELIMIT

# THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN HUMANS AND NON-HUMANS

## AJITH. K

Research Scholar, Amrita Institute of Arts and Science, Kochi, Kerala, India

## ABSTRACT

The latest commercial outing from Tamil cinema – '2.0' has pronounced something that was quoted several times – *The world is not just for humans*. Well, what makes this movie distinct from other similar formulaic projects that have graced Indian cinema is because of the fact that, this Shankar directorial has incorporated something that is futuristic – a world dominated by artificial intelligence. Now, how can human beings combat such a situation? Can we start communicating with non-human beings in a more efficient manner? Human language is quite messy and gives multiple meanings in different instances. So far, we were unable/reluctant to accommodate new means of communication. How about adding new signs, just like the Oxford dictionary adding new words to its voluminous pages! So, rather than incorporating just new words, or equivalently meaningful words of other languages, how good is it to incorporate non-human communication aspects.

**KEYWORDS:** Artificial Intelligence, Cyborgs, Robots, 2.0. Posthumanism, Human Language & Non-Human Language

## INTRODUCTION

Tamil movie '2.0' is a sequel to the 2010 movie 'Enthiran'. The 2018 outing from the combo of Rajnikanth – Shankar, features an ongoing battle in the cultural studies realm – posthumanities. Though we are still in the initial stages of reaching in on a consensus with the term, it poses a serious question: Where to place human beings in this wide world? One of the most striking comments made by posthumanists is that of questioning humanities. In the book, 'New Cultural Studies – Adventures in Theory', Richard Badminton says,

There is, though, a curious irony in the fact that much posthumanist scholarship has been produced within the humanities, within the space that marks and makes 'Man'. It is time, I think, to iron out this irony.

That is, viewing the world through a different lens, which is being used by humanists. Now, that requires a strenuous effort from everyone's side. Because we are actually shedding a habit that had been the most important organ of the society – Putting an end to 'humanism'! Does that mean that it will put an end to 'humanity' – the race which controlled the world (at least in its perspective) for a reasonably long duration of time? Before looking for answers, let us place our attention on the movie.

## CONTENT

The creation of scientist Dr. Vaseegaran – Chitti, the Robo can be viewed in different angles. Let's wear the lens of a psychoanalyst. Here, Chitti is the alter ego of Dr. Vaseegaran. Someone, who looks strikingly similar to its creator, Chitti can be equated with the status of the superego in psychoanalytic terms. Going in with the Freudian theories,

superego is someone that absolutely sticks to the societal rules and regulations. Similarly, there is someone that goes in the opposite direction – Id – to which, we have an equivalent image in the movie as '2.0'. Sticking to the very definition of Freud, '2.0' is someone, who just doesn't care about anything. The sole aim of '2.0' is achieving the final result. It is Dr. Vaseegaran – the ego – who comes in between these extremes.

Now, there is an extended version of robots in the movie – '3.0'. The character, which self proclaims to be the grandson of Dr. Vaseegaran – is a miniature of '2.0'. It evidently addresses '2.0' to be its master. Though not gifted with the natural reproductive mechanisms, robots here in the movie, have made into successive generations. Now, how the movie fits into the 'posthumanist' realm, which we are discussing now? While the four characters aforementioned were represented as protagonist forces, the antagonist character here in the movie is Dr. Pakshirajan. An ornithologist, it is his unquenchable love for birds, that made him an anti-humanist. Death has turned Pakshirajan a powerful force that could perform supernatural activities. He takes control of mobile phones of people and started a journey to massacre the race. The film follows all the routine cinematic vistas of a commercial movie. But, our area of interest lies in some absorbing questions.

While combating with each other, the soul of Pakshirajan was seen asking Chitti/2.0 about the futility of fighting for human beings, which the former termed as ungrateful. There is some sort of communication going between these two agents, without the presence of a human force to bridge the gap. As Haraway in the author's 'Cyborg Manifesto' (1991), argues that,

Technology can no longer be separated from everyday life; its influence is so powerful, its integration so seamless, that it no longer makes sense to think of ourselves as human beings.

This is an interesting viewpoint, which pronounced the leaning boundaries between human and non-human. Robots with Artificial Intelligence, or Cyborgs, can perform functions  several times better than that of human beings. As was shown in the movie, if AI (Artificial Intelligence) gets out of the control of its creator, then it might put the very existence of human beings at stake. Looking at that radar, posthumanism would then mean something postdates humanity.

However, there remains one big question that needs to be answered. How, robots and cyborgs treat all those, whom we now term as 'non-human'? Certainly, they might not be going to create a further division amongst 'non-humans'. Another question that pops up in mind is that, how do human beings position themselves in this changed course of world order. Having built all those structures/remnants which are thought to be the epitome of its race – including culture – how human beings then come into terms with the change? This marks the beginning of a crumble of the definition that Rene Descartes's 'Discourse on the Method' offered to humanism – The origin of meaning and the sovereign subject of history. It seems, then safe to glide away from the focal point of 'anti-humanism' and rather give a new direction to humanism. As was stated by Badminton in 'New Cultural Studies – Adventures in Theory',

In my writings on posthumanism, I have always been cautious about my use of the 'post', and that caution needs to be remembered here. As I have argued at length (Badmington 2004: 109–22), I do not take the 'post' of posthumanism to mark a clean and clear break. In my account, posthumanism is never that which simply follows – chronologically, apocalyptically – humanism. Taking my inspiration from Jean-François Lyotard's work on the postmodern, I have instead preferred to read the 'post' as the sign of a 'working-through' (in the Freudian sense of Durcharbeitung), a paced and patient reckoning with what is at stake. With this in mind, I see the 'post' of 'posthumanities' not as the announcement of

the end of the humanities, but as the mark of a critical and gradual engagement with the relationship between the humanities and the figure of 'Man'.

If one is to take into consideration, the flow of information in the cases of robots, it easily accommodates all the external pathways – even to the extent of incorporating the lively – non human participants. History has its share of stories regarding human beings utilizing the services of non-human entities. However, the interaction between robots and non-human are more engaging. Because, owing to the luxury of friendliness in appearance and that of an even better communication flow system, robots would easily outperform human beings as more animal-friendly. In Bruce Sterling's 1996 story "ManekiNeko." The main character, Tsuyoshi, asserts "I really believe computers help human beings to relate in a much more human way" (Sterling 1996: 9)

Even noticeable is the knowledge that robots or cyborgs would find more appeal amongst the networks of human beings itself. Again taking a cue from Delany's work, let's infer that the Korga – Marq family employs a redefinition of the traditional family model. Here, we can't really find heterosexual intercourse or what we call the "direct egg – and – sperm relations". A sizeable chunk of humanity would find this a better option than the existing state of the world. The alternate model employed in the work also projects children as a connecting link between family and society. Now, it is the hybrid species and kinship mostly produced artificially, which determines the world order then. As is the case with the previous installment of '2.0' – 'Enthiran', the movie has featured some overt statements regarding reproducing heirs out from the communion between human and robots. No doubt that this would definitely find takers in human beings, a large section of whom, are dissatisfied with the hegemonic – patriarchal way with which the society functions.

That said, all these points to one big question – is posthumanism an end to humanism? Or will the robots/cyborgs go for an extension of humanistic perception of the world, by introducing a robotic/cyborgic perception of the world. If that is the order of the world, then human beings would then be placed in an uncertain position. While the statement is pronounced in the western world umpteen times, this is something that is relatively a new narrative in the Indian scenario.

From Darwin to Marx and Freud, what is visibly projected in the history, is that of decoupling the position of humans from other animals. Again, posthumanism is not deviating from this work, but, is actually repositioning the placement of humans. Where do we actually belong to? Now, what kinds of techniques can be adopted in order to envision posthumanities, which is essentially not antihuman? For this to materialize, we need to shun many of the antics of humanism, which defined humanities. Take for instance the human-animal distinction. Riding on humanities, human has worked so hard to curate the boundary that defines the distinction. Just have a glance through the tools, with which humans have achieved this. Language and culture are, by far the two immensely powerful tools that shaped humanity.

Speaking about culture, which essentially is the 'human culture', the famous definition given by Clifford Geertz goes like this:

The concept of culture I espouse... is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental one in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz 1973: 5)

The problem with cultural studies is that it is essentially *anthropological.* Can we then accommodate the non-human into this web; or is it so fragile that the web cannot accommodate the weight of all those innumerably vast numbers of nonhuman species.

How did human become human? This is a question probed by Francesca Ferrando in his research thesis 'The Posthuman: Philosophical Posthumanism and Its Others'. He maintained that,

When and how did human become "human"? As we have seen, the historical outcomes of such a notion have not been inclusive for all the beings who should count as humans, and thus I am wondering if the historical exclusion which has characterized the humanizing process is interconnected to the linguistic, semantic and etymological mechanisms which have sustained the notion of the "human".

As far as the case of languages is concerned with, they serve two purposes – for public communication the facilitation of private thought. This points out to the establishment of language as a means of conveying the meanings of the human world. Though we have a corpora that include non-human entities as well, it is all based on how we, humans perceive them. In a sense, it is human language that was a defining moment in the division of human and non-human. Can posthumanism bring about a change in this situation? That is, can we change our language pattern to incorporate those that are non-human as well? If yes, still it is not  clear as for whether humans have to learn non-human language or teach non-human the human language.

Episodic memory is rather a more complex type of memory than the one which accommodates objects and their properties. The human-centered studies have given episodic memory to be an exclusive property of humans. In accordance with what science has discovered till now, humans boast a far greater capacity than other animals in wielding the gap between present and past memory. Animals too occupy a similar kind of ability, but theirs is been limited to remember for a comparatively shorter duration of time. However, animals are not seen to be confused about the faculty of the planning of future actions, out from the memories, left by past actions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Studies suggest that non-human beings too are endowed with a rich mental representation of the world. The presence of communication in non -human ecosystem is not something we are unaware of. The studies, however, assert one thing that the kind of communication that takes place there is not that much a complex one in comparison to those of humans'. Human language mainly relies on sounds, with various degrees of complex stress and accent patterns. If we can incorporate the ideas of non-human communication pattern to our language, then that would bring an entire ecosystem under the purview of human languages. This sounds weird and illogical, but still, if there is a definite mode of communication between human and non-human beings, then it will definitely wield the gap, which demarcates them.

## REFERENCES

1. Badminton, Richard, *New Cultural Studies: Adventures in Theory*, Edinburgh University Press

2. Wolfe, Cary, *What is Posthumanism,* The University of Chicago Press

3. Dougherty, Stephen, *Culture in the Disk Drive: Computationalism, Memetics, and the Rise of Posthumanism*, The Johns Hopkins University Press

4. Barad, Karen, *Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter*, The University of Chicago Press

5. Ferrando, Francesca, *The Posthuman: Philosophical Posthumanism and Its Others,* Università di Roma Tre

6. Schmeink, Lars, *Dystopia, Science Fiction, Posthumanism, and Liquid Modernity*. Liverpool University Press.

7. Haraway, Donna, *A Cyborg Manifesto*, University of Warwick*2.0 (2018)*, Dir. Shankar, S.