Cosmic Humanism: A Vision of Humanism from Big History

Hirofumi Katayama
J.F. Oberlin University, Tokyo, Japan

Correspondence | **Hirofumi Katayama** katayama@obirin.ac.jp
Citation | Katayama, H. (2023) Cosmic Humanism: A Vision of Humanism from Big History.
Journal of Big History, VI(3); 84–93.
DOI | https://doi.org/10.22339/jbh.v6i3.6307

Keywords: Big History, humanism, Antropocene, Enlightenment, Huxley's evolutionary humanism, cosmic humanism

1. Introduction

In this paper I pick up humanism, and try to show a vision of humanism based on Big History. Of course, the concept of humanism has its own long history, and it has various meanings. To examine them in detail is out of my scope. American Humanist Association defines humanism as: "Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism or other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good." [1] Here, for the time being, I simply define it as an idea to admit human dignity and oppose those which oppress human beings, and discuss how Big History deals with this idea.

What vision of humanism can Big History show us? Due to the nature of Big History, its humanism must have several characteristics. First of all, it should be integrative rather than divisive. As David Christian pointed out, Big History is not a story of a tribe or nation, but for the whole humankind. So, humanism of Big History should be also at least for all human beings on the Earth as global citizens. In this respect, the humanisms of the past were not necessarily the humanism of humanity as a whole. The root of humanism is "humanitas" in the Ancient Roma, which was used for making distinction between Romans (homo humanus) and their surrounding peoples (homo barbarous). Since then, humanism seems to have had a divisive character. Big Historian's humanism should overcome it and show the integrative vision of humanity.

In addition, humanism of Big History should be suitable for the era of the Anthropocene. In the first place, the idea of humanism arose against the overwhelming powers of God, Nature, and feudalistic institutions. Humanists have tried to deny the control of God or nature, and show human beings have the ability to recognize, deny, alter, and control nature's powers in the process of modernity. In this sense, humanism is a world-view which has a very anthropocentric character. In the era of the Anthropocene when scientific technologies and industrial power of humankind have grown to the point that we can alter the geologic structure of the Earth and as a result we are now confronting many global problems such as climate change and biodiversity loss, we have to reconsider modernity and to re-examine its anthropocentric attitude towards nature. However, this should not lead to a total denial of humanity. We must reflect on the anthropocentrism of humanism, and at the same time, must continue to preserve the spirit of respect for human beings and the individual that it originally had. Therefore, paradoxically speaking, humanism in the Anthropocene is both anthropocentric and anti-anthropocentric.[2] I will examine three possible humanisms that might be suitable for Big History: Enlightenment humanism, evolutionary humanism, and cosmic humanism.

2. Enlightenment Humanism

The most important proponent of Enlightenment humanism in recent years is Steven Pinker. In *Enlightenment Now* he stressed that we should refocus on the ideas and principles of Enlightenment at the situation where irrational and inhuman political trends such as populism, extreme right, and Islamic fundamentalism have arisen in Europe, the US, and all over the world. He said he hopes Enlightenment ideas will become more deeply entrenched in the public at large. In his view, Enlightenment consists of four ideas: reason, science, progress, and humanism, and he referred to Enlightenment humanism as an indispensable component of Enlightenment. Pinker defined Enlightenment humanism in two ways. Firstly, it is a secular foundation for morality "which promotes a non-supernatural basis for meaning and ethics." It puts more stress on individual than groups or God. The humanism "privileges the well-being of individual men, women, and children over the glory of tribe, race, nation, or religion." Secondly, it is a movement to achieve prosperity of humankind. "The goal of maximizing human flourishing—life, health, happiness, freedom, knowledge, love, richness of experience—may be called humanism." (Pinker, 2018)

Humanism is in its origin closely related with the Enlightenment. The components of the Enlightenment Pinker raised are in common with Big History, and we can learn a lot from his discussion. There are at least three features that can be incorporated into our humanism. First is a leading role of humanism in Enlightenment. As mentioned above, the Enlightenment has four ideas or components (reason, science, humanism, and progress) and Pinker considers that humanism plays a guiding role among them. For example, he said "progress" unguided by humanism is not progress (Pinker, 2018:12). This means that humanism is the only bearer of value, whereas reason, science, and progress are value-neutral. "It is humanism that identifies *what* we should try to achieve with our knowledge. It provides the *ought* that supplements the *is*" (Pinker, 2018, 410, italics as in original). This clear role-sharing among the components enables us to avoid falling into anti-rationalism, anti-science, and anti-progress, when we examine the problems of modernity such as environmental degradation. Whether we can overcome the problems of modernity and the Anthropocene depends on the guide of humanism which determines how we use reason and science, and to what direction we make progress.

Second, Pinker's humanism is based on human beings' universal and natural feelings. He argued that human nature prepares us a universal capacity that calls on our moral concern, that is, the sentiment of sympathy, which are also called benevolence, pity, and commiseration (Pinker, 2018:11). What is important in his discussion, in my view, is his emphasis on the simplicity of the idea. He stressed that the philosophical system of human rights should be "thin" and said, "A viable moral philosophy for a cosmopolitan world cannot be constructed from layers of intricate argumentation or rest on deep metaphysical or religious convictions. It must draw on simple, transparent principles that everyone can understand and agree upon. The idea of human flourishing—that it's good for people to lead long, healthy, happy, rich, and stimulating lives—is just such a principle. Since it is based on nothing more (and nothing less) than our common humanity" (Pinker, 2018:418). By stressing that cosmopolitan morals should be simple, he avoids falling into intellectual elitism.[3]

Third, Pinker established the foundation of humanism with two scientific concepts, entropy and evolution. In the entropic point of view, we are "incarnate beings" which struggle with the Law of Entropy. This fact requires us to avoid violence. "We are all catastrophically vulnerable to violence—but at the same time we can enjoy a fantastic benefit if we agree to refrain from violence." Even egoistic sociopaths, he argued, eventually re-enter the roundtable of morality because of their impossibility of eternal invulnerability. Evolution can explain another foundation of secular morality: our capacity for sympathy. Evolutionary psychology explains how it comes from the emotions that make us social animals. It developed from kinship of animals who shared the same genetic makeup. Our moral sentiments such as sympathy, trust, gratitude, guilt, shame, forgiveness, and righteous anger developed in evolution (Pinker, 2018, 414-415). This evolutionary viewpoint is in common with the approach of Big History.

As discussed above, Enlightenment humanism has excellent advantages which we can incorporate into our humanism. However, it also has some disadvantages from the viewpoint of our humanist vision. First is its rejection of religion. Pinker argued that religion clashes with humanism because religion elevates some moral good above the well-being of humans, and because religion values souls above lives. (Pinker, 2018:30) He pointed out theistic morality has two fatal flaws. The first is that there is no good reason to believe that God exists. Theistic beliefs have been replaced by science. And even if there were a God, his divine decrees cannot be the source of morality because there are many moral codes in the Bible which are not compatible with today's morality. As evidence of this, people today reinterpret the Bible from a humanistic point of view, ignoring its outdated descriptions. People "read the Bible through the lens of Enlightenment humanism" (Pinker, 2018:421-429).

European modern humanism emerged from the struggle with God, so it is no wonder humanism is critical of religion. However, Pinker's argument is overly critical and one-sidedly emphasizes the flaws of religion. For example, he severely criticized Islam, but Islamic doctrines are relatively more rational and tolerant than Christianity (Iwaki, 2022, 316-317). On the other hand, he paid little attention to non-monotheistic religions such as Hindu and Buddhism. In addition, religions have functioned as bearers of humanistic morals and values, and they continue to function today. As Pinker himself admitted, "positive contributions of religions in education, charity, medical care, counseling, conflict resolution, and other social services…Religious organizations also provide a sense of communal solidarity and mutual support" (Pinker, 2018:431).

Thus, Pinker's Enlightenment humanism is inappropriate for humanism of all humankind. Pinker's attitude is so critical of religion that it brings more division than unity to humanity. Enlightenment humanism should be more tolerant, respectful, and dialogical to "non-enlightened" people in the world.

The second disadvantage of Enlightenment humanism is its excessive optimism on global environmental problems. Pinker evaluated that existing environmentalism is anti-humanistic, defining it as "movement that subordinates human interests to a transcendent entity, the ecosystem," and called it various calumnious names such as Romantic reverence for nature, quasi-religious ideology, and "misanthropic environmentalism" (Pinker, 2018:154). On the contrary, he considered ecomodernism or ecopragmatism as humanistic and Enlightenment-oriented environmentalism. He summarized the trails of ecomodernism: 1) the realization that some degree of pollution is an inescapable consequence of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, 2) industrialization has been good for humanity, and 3) the tradeoff that pits human well-being against environmental damage can be renegotiated by technology. (Pinker, 2018, 123-124) In addition, he offered opposition against degrowth or climate justice movement and insisted on the necessity of continuing economic growth.

As ecological economist Herman Daly pointed out, the problem of "scale" is important in the era of global ecological crisis, but ecomodernists wouldn't admit the problem, and try to shift attention away from the problem of scale (for example, total emission amount) by focusing upon efficiency (emission per GDP). Why does Enlightenment environmentalism stick to economic growth, industrialization, or technology? The reason is that the Enlightenment has been built on the foundation of economic growth, and admitting the limit to growth leads to the limit to Enlightenment. In *an Essay on the Principle of Population*, Thomas Malthus criticized the optimism of the Enlightenment thinker such as William Godwin and Nicolas de Condorcet over endless production and population growth, and argued that the slower growth rate of food production over population growth sets limitation to the Enlightenment of humanity. He said, "This natural inequality of the two powers of population and of production in the earth, and the great law of our nature which must constantly keep their efforts equal, form the great difficulty that to me appears insurmountable in the way to the perfectibility of society" (Malthus, 1798, 5). That is to say, for Enlightenment environmentalism to admit planetary boundaries means the denial of the Enlightenment itself. Although Pinker referred to Malthus, he carefully avoided mentioning the problem of planetary boundary. Enlightenment environmentalism calumniates that ecology movements' criticism against anthropocentrism of the Enlightenment is "misanthropy" (Pinker, 2018, 122). However, if we admit the limits of growth and the existence of planetary boundaries, we have no choice but to question the Enlightenment's optimistic and anthropocentric view of humanity.

3. Evolutionary Humanism

Evolutionary Humanism was advocated by famous biologist Julian Huxley. He is de facto Big Historian who argued the evolutionary vision of the universe in the earlier stage. He proposed to view the universe *sub specie evolutionis*, and generalized the evolutionary concept in the fullest measure. He recognized that the expansion of evolution theory provides a new vision of the cosmos and of our human destiny, and that evolution is a natural process of irreversible change, which generates novelty, variety, and increase of organization. According to him, the evolution of the universe has three phases: inorganic or cosmic phase, biological phase, and psychosocial phase. Each phase has its own characteristic method of operation. As for the mechanism of change, that of inorganic phase is random interaction, that of biological phase is natural selection, and that of psychosocial phase is "psychosocial selection." In psychosocial selection, the evolution process is mainly cultural, and changes occur not in human bodies or gene-complexes but in human cultures. This process has very different features from that of biological evolution. He pointed out, "man's truly unique and most important characteristic—cumulative tradition, the capacity for transmitting experience and the fruits of experience from one generation to the next." This was achieved through the development of symbolic language (Huxley, 1992, 27-33, 49). As described, Huxley's understanding of cosmic evolution is almost identical to that of Big History, sharing many ideas such as complexity, emergence, threshold or regime, and collective learning.

Huxley's uniqueness is shown in his idea on the evolution of mind. He considered the universe has evolved from "world stuff," which has both material and mental aspects. Human beings are both matter and mind

because we are organizations of the universal world stuff. In addition, not only human beings but also other lives have a potentially mental aspect. He called this source of subjective awareness "mentoid." He said, "There must be at least a potentiality of mind in the fertilized ovum…In both ovum and amoeba we must postulate some mind-like quality, a mentoid…some dim beginnings of subjectivity." Brains are "mechanisms for intensifying, amplifying, and organizing life's original dim subjectivity to a point where it can properly be called *mind*, and becomes significant in the animal's life" (Huxley, 1992, 40-41, 55, italics as in original). From this unique idea, he derived an integrative vision, evolutionary humanism, which unifying mind and body, science and religion, human beings and other living things, and all humankind. "Such an Evolutionary Humanism is necessarily unitary instead of dualistic, affirming the unity of mind and body; universal instead of particularist, affirming the continuity of man with rest of life, and of life with the rest of the universe; naturalistic instead of supernaturalist, affirming the unity of the spiritual and the material; and global instead of divisive, affirming the unity of all mankind" (Huxley, 1992, 73).

This is the outline of Huxley's evolutionary humanism. It has many excellent advantages for Big History's humanism. First, evolutionary humanism tried to provide a universal framework for humankind as a whole. We can see it in his efforts to establish UNESCO. As you know, UNESCO is a specialized agency of the United Nations aimed at promoting world peace through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences and cultures. Huxley engaged in establishing UNESCO to realize his idea of evolutionary humanism, and became its first director.

In his pamphlet on UNESCO issued in 1947, Huxley examined what philosophy is appropriate for UNESCO. He argued as below. Any philosophy which is sectarian is contrary to UNESCO's aims, because it pursues the values for humanity as a whole. UNESCO cannot lay a foundation on a particular religion, social ideology, race, nation, or ethnic groups. UNESCO also cannot adopt the view that the State is a higher end than the individual because it stresses on democracy and the principle of human dignity, equality and mutual respect. So, it's general philosophy should be a kind of humanism. And that humanism must be a world humanism, treating all peoples and all individuals as equals in terms of human dignity and mutual respect. It must also be a scientific humanism; however, it cannot be materialistic. It must embrace the spiritual and mental as well as the material aspects of existence, and must attempt to do so on a truly monistic, unitary philosophic basis. In addition, it must be an evolutionary, instead of a static or ideal humanism. Recently a general theory of evolution has developed. It not only shows us man's place in nature, but allows us to demonstrate the existence of progress in the cosmos. In this respect, he proposed the concept of evolutionary humanism as the basic philosophy of UNESCO. He said, "Thus the general philosophy of UNESCO should, it seems, be a scientific world humanism, global in extent and evolutionary in background" (Huxley, 2010, 6-8). Based on the philosophy, he proposed that UNESCO should construct a unified pool of tradition for the human species as a whole, which must include "the unity-in-variety" of the world's art and culture as well as the promotion of one single pool of scientific knowledge (Huxley, 2010:17). The time was the beginning of the cold war. In a situation where the world was divided by ideologies, Huxley hoped that evolutionary humanism would contribute to overcome the divisions.

The second advantage is, evolutionary humanism has some kind of cosmology. It was shown his unique philosophical concept of world stuff. Although it is speculative, the concept enabled him to grasp mind and body, human beings and other living things, and humanity as a whole in a unified way. We could say his concept was handed down by Carl Sagan's famous phrase, "we are made of star-stuff." His cosmology is related to his evaluation of religion. Unlike the case of Pinker, Huxley admitted the significance of religion for humans to enjoy "divinity" of the universe. He defined divinity as "what man finds worth of adoration, that which compels his awe" (Huxley, 1992, 223). He said: "Science have removed the obscuring veil of mystery from many phenomena…but it confronts us with a basic and universal mystery—the mystery of existence in general, and of the existence of mind in particular. Why does the world exist? Why is the world stuff what it is? Why does it have mental or subjective aspects as well as material or objective ones? We do not know. All we can do is to admit the facts" (Huxley, 1992, 107). He also called religion as "applied spiritual ecology," which deals with the relations of humankind with the rest of the external nature, the relation of an individual with the rest of their internal nature, and the relation of an individual with other individuals and with their community (Huxley, 1992, 108).

Third advantage of evolutionary humanism is its anti-anthropocentric nature. It is derived from the unitary nature

of evolutionary humanism. Human beings have a kinship with other lives. He said, "Animals, plants and micro-organisms, they are all his cousins or remoter kin, all parts of one single branching and evolving flow of metabolizing protoplasm" (Huxley 1992, 79). Evolutionary humanism helps to restore our unity with nature and tells us that we have the collective duty of preserving nature (Huxley, 1960, 272-273). He protested against human's overexploitation of nature. He said, "man must remember that he is a part of nature, and must learn to live in harmonious symbiosis with the environment provided by his planet, relations of responsible partnership instead of irresponsible exploitation. If he is to make a success of his job as guiding agent for evolution, he must abandon the arrogant idea of conquering and exploiting nature; he must co-operate and conserve" (Huxley, 1992, 121-122). In addition, he criticized human being's population increase. It is already destroying and eroding the world's resources, so we have to realize an immediate decrease in the rate of population growth, and in the long run, decrease the absolute number of people in the world (Huxley, 1992, 85-86).

These are the main advantages of evolutionary humanism. When compared with Pinker's Enlightenment humanism, Huxley's evolutionary humanism is more universal and non-anthropocentric. Evolutionary humanism overcomes the shortcomings of Pinker's Enlightenment humanism as Big History humanism. We can say evolutionary humanism is the best achievement of "applying Big History" in the era of cold war.

However, Huxley's evolutionary humanism also has a serious problem. He actively advocated eugenics as a consequence of evolutionary humanism. Huxley stresses human's responsibility to nature because of human's leading position in evolution. On the one hand, this is reflected in his anti-anthropocentric standpoint. He didn't advocate the control or mastery of nature which Bacon had proposed in the scientific revolution. However, on the other hand, he directed the power of modern technologies to humans themselves—eugenics and transhumanism. This stems from his idea on human being's special position in the planet's evolution. "Man's true destiny…is to be the chief agent for the future of evolution on this planet" (Huxley, 1992, 32). Human beings are the latest dominant type produced by the evolution, and its sole active agent on the Earth. So, humankind is responsible for the whole future of the evolutionary process on the planet. Human's duty is to understand its mechanism and direct it in the right direction and along the best possible course (Huxley, 1992,121). He coined the term "transhumanism," which he defined "man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature" (Huxley, 1960, 17). He proposed to plan a society which will favor the increase of human's desirable genetic capacities for intelligence and imagination, empathy and cooperation, and a sense of discipline and duty. And he argued that the construction of his ideal society requires negative and positive eugenics. Negative eugenics aims at preventing the spread and increase of defective or undesirable human genes, and positive eugenics aims at securing the reproduction and the increase of favorable and desirable ones (Huxley, 1992, 268).[4]

Eugenics and transhumanism aim at transcending or overcoming the constraints of nature and believe in the scientific ability of human beings to do it. How did Huxley justify these ideas? The logic he relied on is the difference of time-scale among three evolutionary phases of the universe. He argued that the tempo of the inorganic phase is measured by 1000-million-year periods. The tempo of the biological phase is measured by 100-million-year periods. On the contrary, the tempo of psychosocial phase is much faster than that of biological phase, and in addition, it manifests a marked acceleration (Huxley, 1992, 30-31).[5] He claimed that the time-scale of stellar evolution is 10,000 times as extensive as that of the evolution of life, and this is 100,000 times as extensive as that of human civilization. From this point of view, he argued that artificial selection is superior to natural selection. "To be effective, such 'non-natural' selection must be conscious, purposeful and planned. And since the tempo of cultural evolution is many thousands of times faster than that of biological transformation, it must operate at a far higher speed than natural selection" (Huxley, 1964: 263)

Thus, Huxley's transhumanism rests on a kind of accelerationist thinking. In recent years, an idea called accelerationism has emerged. Behind this idea is the development of an acceleration phenomenon called "great acceleration." Accelerationism is a series of ideas that positively view this phenomenon. In accelerationism there are two currents, the left and the right. Left accelerationism tries to find a way to liberate from capitalism through the acceleration of capitalist technology development, putting them under collective self-control and use them for liberating humans from labor with social institution such as basic income.[6] Right Accelerationism, which is

more problematic, has the orientation of libertarianism and transhumanism. They try to realize new evolution beyond singularity through technologies brought about by capitalism, such as artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, genetic engineering.

Accelerationism is one of the most important ideological currents in the Anthropocene, and the attitude of Big Historians to this is being questioned. I take acceleration negatively as a human crisis caused by modernism; therefore, I am also against accelerationism. Cosmic Humanism is what I believe is necessary to deal with the crisis.

4. Cosmic Humanism

Acceleration causes two negative effects on us. First is, it makes our scope very narrow. In general, modernity's space-time consciousness has a tendency to become very narrow and shallow because of its short-termism.[7] David Hervey called it "time space compression" in his book *the Condition of Postmodernity*. Paul Virilio considered how the modern narrow perspective shows itself under acceleration phenomena. He calls his study dromology. The name was coined by him from the Greek word dromos, which means race or speed. According to him, acceleration has deprived us of our sense of proper distance, so we have fallen into a state of "gray ecology" due to "distance pollution." Virilio's image of the Anthropocene is a bunker. A bunker is an enclosed space covered with concrete, which has manifested itself concretely as an air-raid shelter, the Auschwitz gas chamber, or a nuclear shelter. And we fall into "claustrophobia," as if we were trapped in a "time bunker." He said: "We are confronted with the phenomenon of confinement…People will suffer from claustrophobia on the Earth, in the immensity of the planet." "I feel like saying that the world, the planet, is becoming a blockhouse, a closed house, foreclosed" (Virilio & Lotringer, 2002: 64, 88). Virilio depicted the dangers of modern accelerated society through impressive military metaphors. Today we are attacked by three bombs: the atomic bomb, the cyber bomb, and the genetic bomb. He pointed out "the definitive crime against humanity is the possibility that the genetic bomb would take us beyond humanity, that is, snuff it out" (Virilio & Lotringer, 2002: 135, 144).

The second problem of acceleration is the loss of our identity, which was pointed out by Hartmut Rosa (2013). He made very detailed analysis of modern acceleration phenomena. arguing that social acceleration has three dimensions: technical, social change, and the pace of life. These three reinforce each other to form what he calls the circle of acceleration. The most serious impact of the accelerated process, he believes, is the transformation of our identity. He calls this "situational identity." That is, identity becomes ephemeral, and any definition of identity is no longer stable in itself. This ephemeralization of identity is brought about by a rapid increase in choice and contingency due to "the temporalization of complexity." People lose autonomy and direction, and long-term thinking becomes impossible. The result is the experience of detemporalization, or "frenetic standstill," such as depression, stagnant time, and futurelessness. Rosa shows five brakes or decelerators. 1) Human's natural or biological limit to follow the speed of acceleration, 2) islands or oasis of deceleration, such as a religious group that keeps a distance from modern society, 3) Slowdown as dysfunctional side effect, for example traffic jam or depression, 4) Intentional deceleration, such as deep ecology, slow food or voluntary simplicity movement, and 5) structural and cultural rigidity, frenetic standstill. But, according to him, all of these are consequences or complements of accelerationism (Rosa, 2013: chap.3, 11).

Claustrophobia and the loss of identity are two main pathological phenomena in humans caused by acceleration. The point is that these are the results anthropocentrism. Trying to fit the world into the narrow framework of modernity creates claustrophobia. Also, trying to deal with the resulting loss of identity has brought about an orientation towards eugenics. In his book *the Dark Enlightenment*, Nick Land discussed how to overcome race problem. He believes that race problems stem from human beings' biodiversity, so he proposes realizing unified biological human identity through biotechnology. It means that we redefine ourselves as technoplastic beings. We go towards formation of new species. He said also it is "euvolution." This is a coined word combining "evolution" with prefix "eu" which means "good" or "excellent." It will enable us to emerge as Homo Autocatalyticus, that is, production of humans by humans through technology.

Accelerationism is a prominent ideology of anthropocentrism in the Anthropocene. Perhaps the history of "centrism" begins at the emergence of life 3.8 billion years ago. From a Buddhist point of view, the history of life is "the karma of centrism" in the universe. Anthropocentrism is considered to be the continuation and evolutionary development of this life-centrism. The

history of centrism in humankind has followed: Laurasian Mythology (Witzel) in the hunter-gatherer era, the Axial Age in agricultural civilization, the scientific revolution in the early modernity, and the accelerationism in the late modernity or the Anthropocene. These correspond, respectively, to the increase and qualitative change in man's productivity and power over nature. Accelerationism is the latest form of anthropocentrism.

I believe Big History is useful in such a case. Big History's perspective is the broadest in terms of space and time that humankind has ever obtained. I call this widest scope "cosmic perspective." Cosmic perspective consists of deep space and deep time, that is, astronomical and geological space-time scales which are almost infinite for human beings. Big History is a special way to recognize the world in the broadest space and time scope.[8] I specifically call this approach of Big History "Buddhist Big History." The central concept of mainstream Big History is evolution and complexity, whereas Buddhist Big History focuses on cosmic perspective and anthropocentrism. Buddhist Big History is an approach that recognizes modern anthropocentrism as the root cause of various problems in the Anthropocene, and tries to overcome it through a cosmic perspective and "cosmic humanism."

Buddhist Big History believes humans already have abilities to solve problems. As we saw in our analysis on Enlightenment/evolutionary humanism, they have many advantages for us to realize world peace and ecological symbiosis. However, it is hindered to demonstrate such abilities by a modern anthropocentric narrow perspective. We limit our own abilities by ourselves. At first, we must break this narrow anthropocentric thinking by the infinity of the cosmic perspective—deep space and deep time. Then you will realize that we have such capabilities or possibilities of humanity.

Hartmut Rosa pointed out two layers of identity, situational and social/historical. The loss of identity means that our social/historical identity has been destroyed by the social acceleration. So, he desperately managed to reconstruct the 'oasis of deceleration' in the accelerated world as a resistance. However, Rosa doesn't notice that there is a deeper layer of identity because he doesn't know Big History. Big History considers that a human being has four identities, that is, situational, social/historical, biological, and cosmic. Cosmic humanism reconstructs "deep time identity" based on the deeper layers, the cosmic/biological.

We can point out two approaches to ethics from the perspective of big history: evolutionary approach and complexity approach. Evolutionary approach considers that ethics have evolved and developed according to the psychological and social stages of human development. Representative examples include C. W. Graves/E. Beck's color spiral dynamics theory and Ken Wilber's Integral theory. Complexity approaches find intrinsic value of a thing in its complexity, such as Ken Solis's complex-information ethics theory (Solis, 2022) and C. Vidal/J.-P. Delahaye's organizing complexity (Vidal & Delahaye, 2019). Although these approaches overlap each other, we could hypothetically divide them into two such approaches, depending on whether they emphasize evolution or complexity. However, cosmic humanism's approach differs from them. Cosmic humanism also pays attention to evolution and complexity, but they are not the most important values. This is because emphasizing evolution and complexity brings hierarchy and order into the world of existence, and it is easy to fall into the trap of anthropocentrism. Instead, the strategy of cosmic humanism is to create a symbiotic network from the deep, shared identity of all things.

Perhaps the closest to the vision of cosmic humanism is Mircea Eliade's "homo religiosis." The existential situation of homo religiosis is "open existence with an additional dimension." He said: "Clearly, his life has an additional dimension: it is not merely human, it is at the same time cosmic, since it has a transhuman structure. It could be termed an open existence, for it is not strictly confined to man's mode of being" (Eliade, 1957:166). Of course, the word "transhuman" in the sentence is not the same as transhumanism of right accelerationism. It means that, in our context, the identity of homo religiosis is not restricted in that of narrow modernity. We are open to the world as a relational and mutualized existence. It is deep time identity that gives us the additional dimension.

In the following, I would like to describe the attitudes of cosmic humanism toward reality based on the examples of the practices of two Japanese persons. Firstly, cosmic humanism seeks to find something in common rather than difference between the self and everything. It is an attitude that tries to find the same humanity in humans, the same life in other living things, and the same roots as 'star-stuff' in other substances.

中村哲Tetsu Nakamura (1946-2019) was a Japanese physician who headed Peace Japan Medical Services

(PMS), an aid group known as Peshawar-kai in Japan. In 1984, he was posted to Peshawar, Pakistan, as a doctor, and was involved in the treatment of the poor, with a focus on leprosy. In 1986, he started a medical service for Afghan refugees. Since 2000, Nakamura has been engaged in a project to secure water sources as a countermeasure against the severe drought that hit Afghanistan. In addition, in 2002, he started the long-term reconstruction plan 'Afghanistan Green Land Plan' in a mountain village in eastern Afghanistan, and an irrigation water use plan. In 2019, unfortunately he was killed in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

Although he was a Christian, he actively continued his medical and environmental activities in the oldest Islamic society. He spent his efforts on "how to find common ground as a human being in everyday life in the midst of different religions and cultures." He said that his beliefs were reflected in his quest for "something in common as humans" rather than criticizing the beliefs and customs of other peoples. He argued that what is required of all religions is an effort to find common ground in their practices beyond their cultural husks. People in Afghanistan put their faith only in what appears as a result of actions. He therefore confidently said: "The discovery of common God is the discovery of common human." Its universality connects all people at the deepest of their existence (Nakamura, 2003:113). Although I cannot precisely understand what he meant by "common human," perhaps it is something like the sentiment of sympathy of Enlightenment humanism and deep time identity of cosmic humanism (And in addition, it is never something transhuman!)

Secondly, cosmic humanism aims at 'deepening' rather than 'evolving.' What is "human"? As long as we consider evolution and complexity to be the sole foundation of humanity, we cannot counteract their anti-humanistic effects, that is, acceleration phenomena as a result of the temporalization of complexity. I believe Big History is not futurism but 'originism.' It means that we acquire our identity, or vision, not by accelerating into the future, but by going back to our origins in the past.

We can regard washoku (Japanese cuisine) as an example of originism in Japanese culture. Culinary researcher 土井善晴Yoshiharu Doi (1957-) describes the importance of Ichiju-issai. Ichiju-issai literary means "one soup, one dish," or simple meal. He pointed out that French cuisine was born out of anthropocentrism. In French cuisine chef's creativity is emphasized, because the foundation of the French philosophy is anthropocentrism, which believes that human beings have meanings only when they continue to create something. Because it is based on a human-centered philosophy that humans make imperfect nature perfect, cooking has become an art and has also developed scientifically (Doi 2022:76). On the contrary, washoku is based on the idea that 'the best thing is to do nothing.' It means making the most of the materials and eating what you have now in season. That's why it's important not to devise in cooking Japanese meals. He said: "We have always been told to 'evolve' by trying new things and doing things that no one else has done… So, what is 'evolution'? It is the value of human existence born from the Western view of nature. In Japanese cuisine, the creation of human existence is 'deepening.' 'Evolution' is based on religions and philosophies that tell people to live that way. What we Japanese are good at is deepening" (Seikyo Shimbun, May 13, 2023). I see here the potential of Big History based not on evolution and complexity but on cosmic perspective and deep time identity.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined the vision of humanism based on Big History, starting with the two concepts of humanism, Enlightenment humanism and evolutionary humanism. The most basic reason I consider these humanisms to be big historical is that they seek the grounds of their humanism in human deep time identities. That is, Enlightenment humanism seeks a human moral basis in the feeling of empathy, which perhaps can be traced back at least to the human being as a mammal. Evolutionary humanism went further, trying to derive the equivalence of human beings and their cultures from the identity of human origins, and the symbiosis between humans and other life from the identity of origins of life.

Therefore, both of the concepts have excellent features that serve as Big History's humanism, but it has also become clear that they also have anthropocentric problems stemming from modernity. Enlightenment humanism has anti-religious and anti-ecological characters, and evolutionary humanism has accelerationist and transhumanist characters. In this sense, it should be noted that Pinker's Enlightenment humanism has no transhumanistic factors at all. So, it is not easy to summarize these approaches in the form of periodization. However, according to the periodization of "anthropocentrism" which I mentioned above, Enlightenment humanism has the traits of early modernity, and evolutionary humanism has the

traits of late modernity or the Anthropocene. Humanism itself is a product of modernity, so we can distinguish them according to what characteristics of modernity they possess. Of course, these characteristics of modernity (anti-religion and productivism in Enlightenment humanism and accelerationism in evolutionary humanism) are considered to be overcome from the viewpoint of Buddhist Big History.

Then, what is the periodization of cosmic humanism? It is humanism in the coming "altermodern" future. It is a humanism that inherits the modern achievements of Enlightenment/evolutionary humanism, but overcomes the shortcomings of modern anthropocentrism. Cosmic Humanism enables true human dignity, independence, and coexistence with other living things. Although I was not able to clearly discuss the concrete vision, I think I showed its outline and direction. Cosmic perspective of Big History is important now to break the narrow framework of modernity.

References

Bruno, G. (2014). *On the infinite, the universe, and the worlds,* translated by Scott Gosnell. Huginn, Munnin & Co.

Darwin, C. (1859). *On the origin of species.* Project Gutenberg. www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1228/pg1228-images.html

Doi, Y. (2022). *Up to the idea that ichiju-issai is enough.* Shinchosha. (In Japanese)

Eliade, M. (1957). *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion*. Harcourt, Inc.

Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity.* Blackwell.

Heidegger, M. (1977). *Letter on humanism.* In D. F. Krell (Ed), *Basic writings* (pp. 189-242), Harper & Row. timothyquigley.net/cont/heidegger-lh.pdf

Huxley, J. (1960). *Knowledge, morality and destiny.* New American Library.

Huxley, J. (1992). *Evolutionary humanism*. Prometheus Books.

Huxley, J. (2010). *UNESCO: Its purpose and philosophy.* Euston Grove Press.

Iwaki, H. (2022). *Islam and big history: A new creation myth for peace and coexistence.* In L. Gustafson, B. H. Rodrigue, & D. Blanks (Eds), *Science, religion, and deep time* (pp. 315-322), Routledge.

Komatsu, S. (1990). *Discovery of the soul of nature*. Innertrip-sha. (In Japanese)

Krznaric, R. (2020). *The good ancestor: How to think long term in a short-term world.* Penguin Random House.

Land, N. (2012). *The dark enlightenment*. www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/.

Malthus, T. (1789). *An essay on the principle of population.* The Electronic Scholarly Publishing Project. www.esp.org/books/malthus/population/malthus.pdf.

Nakamura, T. (2003). *Diagnose in and view from outlying regions.* Sekifusha. (In Japanese)

Pinker, S. (2018). *Enlightenment now: The case for reason, science, humanism and progress.* Penguin Books.

Rosa, H. (2013). *Social acceleration: A new theory of modernity,* Translated by Jonathan Trejo-Mathys. Columbia University Press.

Solis, K. (2022). *Complex-information ethics theory. Journal of Big History*, 5(1), 92-108.

Vidal, C., & Delahaye, J. P. (2019). *Universal ethics: Organized complexity as an intrinsic value.* In: G. Georgiev, J. Smart, C. Flores Martinez., & M. Price, M. (Eds), *Evolution, development and complexity. Springer Proceedings in Complexity.*

Virilio, P., & Lotringer, S. (2002). *Crepuscular dawn,* Translated by Mike Taormina. Semiotext(e).

Williams, A., & Srnicek N. (2013). *#Accelerate: Manifesto for an accelerationist politics, Critical Legal Thinking.* criticallegalthinking.com/2013/05/14/accelerate-manifesto-for-an-accelerationist-politics/

Notes

1. American Humanist Association's website. See its "Definition of Humanism" (https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/definition-of-humanism/).
2. Heidegger expressed the dilemma of modern humanism in his *Letter on Humanism*: "Should we still keep the name 'humanism' for a 'humanism' that contradicts all previous humanism-although it in no way advocates the inhuman?" His answer to the dilemma was "Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being" or "Man is the neighbor of Being" (Heidegger, 1977, 221, 225). In my view, Heidegger properly raised the question, but his answer is not so good, because although he tried to alter the hierarchical/instrumental relationship between humans and other things, humans in his philosophical framework still are located outside of beings. Perhaps this alienating situation is related to the fact that Heidegger's beings, including humans, lack their own narrative of cosmic evolution.

3. Pinker's moral position, which focuses on human nature's possibility for the foundation of moral philosophy, is almost equal to that of Chinese Confucian philosopher 孟子 [Mencius]. Mencius is famous for his 性善説 [the theory of innate Goodness]. He argued that human beings are by nature good, and we can construct moral principles based on four human natural sentiments as 四端 [four starting points]: 仁 [benevolence] based on the feeling of 惻隠 [commiseration], 義 [righteousness] based on the feeling of 羞悪 [shame and dislike], 礼 [propriety] based on the feeling of 辞譲 [modesty and complaisance], and 智 [wisdom] based on the feeling of 是非 [approving and disapproving]. Pinker's practical common-sense approach to morality resonates with one of the ancient, original humanistic philosophies in the East. The translation is from the Chinese Text Project. (https://ctext.org/mengzi)
4. Perhaps his assertion of eugenics and transhumanism is related with his view on religion. As I mentioned above, he admitted the significance of religion for human beings to feel divinity, but he was critical of theism. He argued that all theistic religions based on the God hypothesis has a number of consequences which humanists find undesirable, such as petitionary prayer and all kinds of propitiatory practice, a lack of concern for life in this world and its possible improvement, the cruel doctrines of Original Sin and Damnation for unbelievers, a regrettable dogmatism and to the rejection on playing down of secular knowledge and scientific method. (Huxley, 1992:103-104) Instead, he proposed a new religion which he called 'religion without revelation.' It will be brought about through drastic reorganization of our pattern of religious thought "from a god-centered to an evolution-centered pattern." "A humanist evolution-centered religion too needs divinity, but divinity without God." (Huxley, 1992:220) We find two meanings in his evolution-centredness. One is a respect for nature which is a product of evolution, and the other is transhumanism which relies on the ability of human beings to reform their own living organism.
5. Huxley demonstrated that natural selection operates blindly without conscious purpose or aim, whereas psychosocial selection involves awareness of an aim, purpose and goal-selecting mechanism. (Huxley, 1992:33) However, Darwin took an opposite viewpoint. Darwin knew deep time, which he got from Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*. Getting a hint from artificial selection, Darwin constructed the theory of natural selection. However, he considered that natural selection is more creative than artificial selection because natural selection is based on deep time. He argued in *On the Origin of Species*: "How fleeting are the wishes and efforts of man! how short his time! and consequently how poor will his products be, compared with those accumulated by nature during whole geological periods. Can we wonder, then, that nature's productions should be far "truer" in character than man's productions; that they should be infinitely better adapted to the most complex conditions of life, and should plainly bear the stamp of far higher workmanship?" (Darwin, 1859: Chapter 4)
6. Important writings of left accelerationism include Williams and Srnicek (2013), Mackay and Avanessian (2014).
7. Short-termism is also the characteristic of Christianity. We can see it in the description of the Bible: the world began 6000 years ago, and the lifetime of Adam is 930 years, that of Noah is 950 years. I advocate Buddhist Big History—a type of Big History whose most essential feature is its cosmic perspective. Buddhism has its original notions of deep space and deep time, trichiliocosm (三千大三世界) and particle kalpa (塵点劫). Trichilocosm is a world system which includes one billion worlds. Particle kalpa is a timespan in grounding trichiliocosm into particles, and setting down one particle when passing through a thousand land until the particles are depleted. Thus, Buddhist Big History's cosmic perspective see the world 'sub species infinitatis,' which provides us an entirely different space-time recognition from that of modernity and Christianity. Japanese famous SF writer, Sakyo Komatsu, once said: "Space-time scale of Christian cosmology is desperately small…Buddhism built an image of space-time enormousness long ago, and in addition has explored the way for human beings to endure and overcome the nihility it delivers." (Komatsu, 1990:125)
8. Giordano Bruno's *on the Infinite, the Universe, and the Worlds* shows us a good example of cosmic perspective. He was inspired by the Copernican theory, but broadened his horizon beyond the theory. Copernicus put the sun in the center of the solar system. But his universe still has the celestial sphere. By contrast, Bruno broke the narrow wall of the universe and seized it as the infinite, and by doing so, he got a worldview which is completely free from centrism, not only geocentrism, but also heliocen-

trism. He wrote: “We recall that there is no difference to be found in flight to heaven, or from heaven to here; no difference ascending from here to there, or from there to here; no difference in descending from one place to the other. We are not more circumferential to any other place than they are to us, neither are we more central to them than they are to us: just as we walk upon our own star in our own heaven, so too do they.” (Bruno, 2014, 26) His free viewpoint is like that of astronauts in outer space. Thus, Bruno’s cosmic perspective enabled him to break narrow cosmic images of Christianity of the age, and get away from anthropocentric attitudes toward other human beings and living things on the Earth. The fact that he was burnt alive indicates how his concept of the infinite universe was not compatible with the anthropocentrism of Christianity.