

Analyzing the Nature of Extropianism in Ted Hughes' Poetry

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Abstract: *This article explores the extropianism in Ted Hughes' poetry which challenges the limits of human critical, creative and rational thinking. Extropianism enhances the intellectual abilities, physical capacities, and emotional development of human beings. The main concern of extropianism is humanity and it offers a basic framework for thinking about human condition and human advancement. In modern era of science and technology, the quest to investigate realism and negation of dogmas and authoritarianism, not only in external world but also to find satisfaction in the self, and in the human of the technological wasteland is of great concern to Hughes. Ted Hughes presents the dark side of the human psyche by comparing it with animals like Hawk. He is a revolutionary poet and wants change for the betterment of human.*

Key Words: *Extropianism; Transhumanism; Dark Side of Human Psyche*

Introduction

According to Lexicon Dictionary, extropianism is derived from the word 'extropy'. Extropy is a theory which tells that the cultural and technological advancement will expand in progressive manners throughout the world. The main philosophy is based on Max Moore's "The Extropian Principles: A Transhumanist Declaration" (1999) which affirms perpetual progress, self-transformation, practical optimism, intelligent technology, open society, rational thinking and self-direction. Moore advocates dynamism, and negates religion. It pioneers psychological realism and rejects idealism. Extropianism affirms gritty realism and avoids surrealism.

Ted Hughes saw the 2nd World War and its impacts on humans both psychologically and physically. He also saw the industrial revolution from close quarters and its consequences which changed the entire human psyche. This was the era in which science and technology was taking new directions and the ideas of evolution were rising to the peak. The quest for the material

success was reached to an alarming degree and modern man was spiritually hollow. Deism aroused, and the debates on miracles, revelations and scriptures were confined only to churches and priest. Civilization took a new turn and traditions were also changed. Lawlessness, unfairness, brutality and violence fettered the modern man and his mind was a wasteland where, instead of rational and critical thinking to improve and guide humanity, herbs and shrubs were growing. Material success was everything for them and they were enslaved by it psychologically. Brutality and wildness, according to Binda Shah (2013), were replacing human values and rationality in the era after World War 2nd which Hughes depicts in his poetry.

Mostly the poetry of Ted Hughes sheds light on the above mentioned ideas and wants a change in it. Hughes tries to break the constraints and searches the physical, intellectual and psychological continual improvement of the human to withdraw them from the swamp of the wasteland. Modern man is inert mentally and Hughes message is to rub their opaque mind to become translucent and wake their power of conscience from the torpor with the help of his poetry in many of his poem like Hawk Roosting and The Pike. He favors truth based on sound and reasoned arguments, and negates authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Istiaq (2016) claims that in the poetry of Hughes, the animals are free and have no social restraints like human which is the superior creation.

Hughes and his family were living in Yorkshire in the Calder Valley, so from his childhood, he was near to nature and accustomed with animals. He had minutely observed the animals and it was the main reason that he drew out the imagery of animals in his poetry. He compares and contrasts the lawless world of the forests with the modern society of the wasteland. Animals get their food and shelter by snatching from other or by killing other and the modern man does the same thing having no concern for morality, social justice, law, rational thinking and humanity. His "Hawk Roosting The pike, Hawk in the Rain, Crow, Chaucer and many other poems depict the dark side of human mind and psyche. No one can challenge the power and freedom of the Hawk. He does what he wants and nature also favors the hawk because the creation of the hawk is for the purpose of tearing and killing the weak and feeble. The Pike is a type of fish that kills each other only to get food and in their society, only fittest survives. In the Chaucer, the speaker speaks to the cows, looks hilarious but have deep message about contemporary scholars and is a clue to the human mind. Jaguar imprisons in the cage but, unlike the visitors, he sees some

abstract thing far away. Visitors mesmerize him and they only take interest in his wilderness. Ted Hughes compares these animals with human mind and thoughts and highlights such animal instincts in them. As vigilant observers of the society, poets are always considered like the eyes of the society and depict what others cannot imagine.

Analysis

Triggered by shrewd observation of the society, Hughes' prolific depiction of the nature prophesies towards a deep and stagnant issues prevailed from the very past to the modern era of science and technology. Like a reformer, he wants peace, tranquility, progress and prosperity, perpetual and continuous change in the environment from which he and his contemporary men are shackled. He is a transhumanist and wants to change the condition of the human being through reasoned and concrete arguments and withdraw them from the quagmire of superstitions and dogmas. Human understanding of transhumanism has emerged from the development of modern science and technology and they cannot accept a belief which is based on something one cannot even realize. Hughes affirms empiricism and favors the knowledge based on observation and experimentation. His endeavor is to sharpen rational, critical and creative thinking of the people in modern era which are spiritually hollow and irrational. He is a modern poet and portrays realities as an exact copy which happens around him. He does not depict the idealized, unreal, often nostalgic and mystic world; where commonly like the pastoral poet, conceals dark side of nature. Gifford(2012) contends that Hughes presents disorder, harshness and inequality of nature; he does not romanticize and idealize the nature. Hughes peruses knowledge and understanding which is beyond the limits of human perception. Like the extropian, he searches new ways for the improvement of culture and environment. Istiak observes that Hughes uses twenty eight different animals in his poems, as metaphors which represent indirectly the identity of human beings. Freud (1923) states that elevating the life of animal, is a kind of satire on rigid and shackled life of human. Freud argues that human have to veil their basic instinct

“Hawk Roasting” is a best example of the dark side of human psyche. Written in the first person, Hawk Roasting is an internal monologue which presents internal feelings and turbulence of mind. Hawk is a metaphor of the modern man, so fierce and vigorous but hollow and have no conscience, rational and creative thoughts. Hawk has his own kingdom and law according to his

will. He has not concerned with the law of the forest because all these things and animals which are present around him are created for him and he is not created for them. In this poem like mirror, humans can see their mind and the dark side of their psyche. As a metaphor it has been used for the human, for their past and future thinking. Like superior beings as humans consider themselves, and for their material success they are lunately rushing towards to get, whatever they need even cross the limits of brutality especially in the capitalist society, what the bourgeoisies class does.

"It took the whole of creation

To produce my foot, my each feather:

Now I hold creation in my foot....."

There is a severe satire on human nature in this poem. In the disguise of the Hawk Roosting, Hughes directs the modern man to change. He is a pacifist in this poem and not violent and vehement as has been charged. His message is that modern man must be aware of the fact that nothing is in his control. Modern man is not so much advanced and, therefore, must think to make progress. The lines "Now I hold creation in my foot" and "the top on the wood" is lucidly conveys the message of totalitarian and authoritarian society where very few can enjoy and lead a better life while many suffer. Because few have enslaved the whole environment and many have been deprived. To Ted Hughes development means that common men also have the facilities and privileges as the special man have. The society of the human should not be like the wild society where powerful one like hawk tears the others and enjoys but a society based on justice and fairness. Gifford observes that hawk depicts the dark side of the human psyche. Hughes wants these psychopathic changes in modern man to change their wild nature.

Extropian stresses on self-transformation of human to become better ethically, psychologically and intellectually (Moore, 1999 2nd principle). Eugene Thacker (2013) confirms as "*technological progress will necessarily mean a progress in "the human" as a species and as a society; that is, just as the human will be transformed through these technologies*". Like them, Hughes also wants a permanent change for better and comfortable future. He prefers evolutions in place of sticking to the blind faith and dogmas. The idea of self-transformation favors respect

for others and deals with others honestly. The two World Wars disturbed the man's attitude towards life. Shah claims that brutality was replacing the human values and Hughes was greatly influenced by these circumstances. Self-transformation is mainly focuses on self and not stresses to change others. Slowly and gradually, in the process of evolution, man changes intellectually and rationally. Man wants freedom and independence and once will break the shackles of law, morality and religion which confined him from crossing the limits and demarcations. The view of the Hughes is that darkness spreads instead of light and the people are loving power .Shah confirms that they prefer devil in place of God. Hughes uses these animals for inspirations. This idea is comprehensively find in the poem "The Pike" of Ted Hughes.

"Killers from the egg: the malevolent aged grin.

Three we kept behind glass,

...

Suddenly there were two.

Finally one"

It is a natural phenomenon that human cannot remain in one state because they prefer to change for finding a better chance to make their lives smooth and comfortable. The Pike is a species of fish that is greedy and brutal. When Pikes are hungry, they attack each other to eat, until and unless the strongest and the only one remain. Pike represents the microcosm of the human nature. In such a society where lawlessness prevails and the surrounding becomes jungle, the stronger one always subdues the weaker one. Hughes' The Pike represents not only human psyche but also the civilization to change. His address is for the whole society to change individually each and every one. Others cannot be changed until we change ourselves. According to Istiaq (2016), it is very common in the modern capitalist society where the poor and helpless is dominated by the rich and powerful and only powerful survives.

- Extropian prefers practical optimism and rejects negativism, defeatism and skepticism (Moor, 1999). They hope man for the better future. They reject something which is beyond from the human observation. Modern man is going away from religion because science and technology cannot prove

God's existence. They believe only those things which can be proved through observations and experimentations. This leads man to deism which means they do not believe the Holy Scripture, miracles and revelations. They are hollow, lacking spirituality and affirm only gritty realism. Extropian considers what and how it is and do not complain on life that it is not fair. Hughes' practical optimism teaches to act immediately for solving the problem or to point out easy way to solve it on the basis of concert and sound grounds. The industrial revolution brought the changes and carved great impacts on human psyche. The poem entitled as "Crow" reveals the same ideas:

"God tried to teach Crow how to talk.

"Love," said God. "Say,

...

Bulbed out onto the earth, with swiveling eyes,

Jabbering protest"

The "Crow" of Hughes' idea is anti-Biblical and anti-traditional. She is ugly but clever and optimistic. The Crow that is a small and invaluable creature, challenges the God as a partner as well as a rival. Yudi (2007) believes that modern man is the combination of these two aspects. In this modern world, man is alienated and disillusioned. Hughes points to these very important issues that make the modern man pessimist. Walder (1987) states that, about God Hughes himself argues that it is man-created and corrupts religion which bears the same relationship to the creator as common English does to the reality He wants practical optimism and hope for the better future and an immediate solvation to draw out modern man from this unfathomable quagmire of skepticism and negativism. He wants psychological refinement of the modern man. Istiaq comments that Hughes presents crow as a new soul comes with new mission and this soul represents the poet himself who has new ideas to led human life.

Extropian encourages man to accept new ideas but neither to be gullible nor cynic. No source of knowledge has limit, no book, no institution and no authority (Moor, 1999). Hughes has a dialectic approach towards truth and reality. He rejects rhetoric and debates. He does not

persuade people through pathos and ethos, rather, man, like a judge, will decide the arguments of the poet. Hughes proclaims the above mentioned idea in the poem “Chaucer”:

“Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote

The droghte of March hath perced to the roote...’

...

Found my attention too full

And had to go back into oblivion.”

Chaucer is considered as the inventor of poetry in the history of English literature. He provides a realistic approach to the modern poetry by using meter, rhyme and poetic art in its basic structure. He has brought universality and revolution in the poetic world. The poem seems to be hilarious but it deeply attacks the less knowledgeable modern man. The speaker is Ted Hughes himself and the cows are metaphor for the modern man. The cows are irrational and the speaker is the rational human being. Cows attentively listen to the speaker and he delivers his lecture on Chaucer. It seems quite nonsense. The setting is amazing and the tone is very rare. Ted Hughes wants change in social institutions and literary writing as there is no standard for Chaucer. He invents and adds new things to poetry which takes a new direction what extropian wants.

Extropian prefers science to mysticism .They reject prayers to God for success and believe in struggle (Moor, 1999).Sikora (2013) states that technology can solve any problem regarding waste. They prefer those technologies which are good for human’s welfare and hate the technological instruments which are bad for human. From the creation till now human beings use their minds and natural resources to create something new which facilitate life. They invented small tools and then simple machines through which they were doing their work easily. Slowly, they got excellence in technology and invented electricity. They settled the industry and invented complicated machines. They invented airplanes, space rockets and stepped on the surface of Mars and Moon. They used chemical technology and created explosive powders which became the basic reason of human exploitation. Man invented nuclear technology to fulfill the shortage of energy but slowly and gradually he got excellence in it and invented atomic bomb. Atomic bomb and missile technology got importance and men started competition with each other to go

ahead during war. Wars broken between nation and many precious souls lost. Extropian satirizes the bad aspects of technology in the form of sword, harpoon, arrows and crossbow. Extropian wants immediate banishment and exile of this type from the domain of science and technology. Ted Hughes rejects this technology which becomes the cause of human destruction. His poem "Hawk in the Rain" is a sever satire on the technology. In this poem, he says:

"I" walking across a ploughed field in the rain:

"I drown in the drumming plough land,

"...but the hawk

Effortlessly at height hangs his still eye."

Hughes, in this poem, asserts that man has created the problem for himself. Man has ploughed the land and after rain, it is very tough for him to walk in, in the field. Hughes points out very important issues concerned to modern man. To Hughes, modern man is confused as the speaker in the poem "Hawk in the Rain". Sharma (2016) considers that the speaker is at once attracted and repelled by the eye and imagines himself as the terrified and mesmerized victim of the hawk. He stresses that man must use technology and mind in an easy and right way to reach the destination. She further asserts that as the words like "dogged grave" "drag up", "clutches", "each step" and "habit" indicate a very tense situation. The plough land where crops and vegetables grow, man has made a grave for him.

Conclusion

Ted Hughes is a modern poet and the spirit of modernity sparks in his poetry. He advocates for a change which have positive impacts on society and on the coming generation. He is a practical extropian and wants to eradicate the evil of materialism from the modern man's mind. To him nothing has a value but valuable are all those things from which human take advantage and uses these things only for his own welfare. He clearly favors science and technology which have brought revolution but satirizes its use for the destruction of humanity. He values observation and continuous experimentation and rejects superstitions and fantasies. He rejects utopianism and dystopianism and favors extropianism. He advocates for social, cultural and traditional

advancement. He rejects blind faith and its rational and ethical appeal. He brings the dark side of human psyche but also guides them to the right destination. He appreciates new saturated ideas based on truth and reality which have freshness and the fragrance of prosperity and peace. Transhumanism reflects from his thoughts and ideas. He appeals to the entire world, not to a specific segment of land and country. He considers development in a sense that each and every person can afford facility in the society and must not be confined to few persons or a specific group. He rejects the entire atmosphere and control of capitalism.

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