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THE ANTHROPOCENE AND THE PROBLEM OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONSTANTS

Abstract. In the humanities and social sciences, the concept of the Anthropocene has become the starting point for theoretical analyses of the immediate relationship between the environmental preconditions for the existence of civilization and the human actions whose consequences threaten these preconditions. From the philosophical-anthropological point of view, reflections on the concepts of the Anthropocene focus not only on a critical analysis of the claims about human that originate in the natural sciences but also on an understanding of the overall role of humanity in the new geological-climatic regime of the Earth. The primary purpose of this paper is to highlight two-pronged problem areas, which include both the problem of anthropological constants as specific ways of making statements about humans and the problem of using them to reflect on the conceptual system of the Anthropocene. In particular, this paper emphasizes hypotheses and claims from the Anthropocene concept of Earth System Science that point to humans becoming a geobiophysical force in the Anthropocene. Three areas in which anthropological constants could be subsequently subjected to a deeper analysis are proposed.

Keywords: Anthropocene; anthropological constants; Homo faber; Homo oeconomicus; Homo industrialis

1. Introduction. 2. The Anthropocene. 3. The anthropological constants. 4. The anthropological constants in the Anthropocene. 5. Conclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human self-knowledge takes place primarily in terms of relations of difference or similarity to other living entities or relations to the transcendent. The Anthropocene brings humans back to Earth to their basic physicochemical and biological assumptions of life and introduces a new perspective in which human is equated with the inanimate forces of nature. In the Anthropocene, human self-understanding and efforts to define themselves must suddenly be

based on new relationships or a rethinking of existing relationships. In philosophical anthropology, we encounter the definition of man through anthropological constants that are also used outside this philosophical discipline. In this paper, I want to show how these constants are employed in the Anthropocene discourse. Further, I will point out the problematic nature of these constants, not only outside philosophical anthropology but also within it.

Given the controversies sparked by the concept of the Anthropocene, I will first clarify how we understand the Anthropocene and how we will work with the concept of the Anthropocene. I will address this issue in the first part of the paper, where I will also highlight hypotheses and claims from the concept of the Anthropocene that I consider important for the discourse on human beings carried out by philosophical anthropology. The second part of the paper focuses on the anthropological constants which capture specific human activity. Implicit in the constants is an assumption that captures Višňovský's claim "that if we explain agency, we will understand humans"¹ (Višňovský 2009, 77). If the Anthropocene is the result of human activity, then anthropological constants should help us better understand humans and the critical situation that is forcing humanity to adapt to new climatic and geological conditions on Earth. This can only be achieved if: (1) existing anthropological constants are re-examined, critiqued, and conceptually analyzed; (2) they fully accept the requirement of a sustainable use of natural resources and environmental responsibility.

2. THE ANTHROPOCENE

The concept of the Anthropocene has more than one level of meaning: "the concept of the Anthropocene has evolved in breadth and diversely

1 Original text in the Slovak language: "že ak vysvetlíme konanie, pochopíme človeka" (Višňovský 2009, 77). Translation by the writer.

since it was first proposed” (Brondizio *et al.* 2016, 318). The term was first used and associated with the idea and suggestion of changing the designation in the Earth’s chronostratigraphy from the present Holocene to the Anthropocene. This idea was published in 2000 by Paul Crutzen, an atmospheric chemist, and Eugene Stoermer, a biologist, in the IGBP Global Change Newsletter. Even though many authors dealing with the Anthropocene point to its polysemy (see Zalasiewicz *et al.* 2019; Zalasiewicz *et al.* 2021; Hamilton 2015a), many works lack such awareness. This is due to the term’s considerable popularity and the fact that “the definitions of the Anthropocene are ambiguous on multiple levels” (Nichols, Gogineni 2016, 5). The concept’s ambiguity and multiple meanings can be captured as follows. The term Anthropocene refers not only to a unit of human history; it is also a time interval in Earth’s history. It can be thought of as a term that points to ecological and environmental crises, but also to social inequalities and an outdated political apparatus of nation-states that does not correspond to the global interconnectedness of the world, resulting in increased armed conflicts. Moreover, it is also a concept that points to a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of humanity’s overall role in the drift or change of the Earth System. Therefore, it is only possible to consider any issue within such a complex topic as the Anthropocene when we acknowledge and realize which Anthropocene we are talking about, on which level of meaning we are moving, and why.

In this paper I accept the general distinction between two concepts of the Anthropocene: one belonging to the natural sciences; the other to the humanities and social sciences. Within this general breakdown, there are further levels. For example, within the natural sciences I favor the understanding of the concept of the Anthropocene of Earth System Science. To clarify, in the natural sciences, where the concept of the Anthropocene originated, we refer to the geological concept of the Anthropocene and the concept within Earth System Science.

The geological Anthropocene is dealt with by the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG). “The primary task of the AWG is to assess the Anthropocene as a potential geological time (chronostratigraphic) unit” (Zalasiewicz *et al.* 2021, 3), in which human intervention in Earth systems has become dominant. Olvitt suggests that the geological Anthropocene: “refers to the time interval in which Earth’s bio-geo-chemical processes are substantially influenced by human activities such that they leave a permanent record in the planet’s rock strata” (Olvitt 2017, 396). Scientists characterize human activities that are significant to the Anthropocene as anthropogenic impact, through which geologists focus on anthropogenic deposits created by human activity. Anthropogenic deposits contain new minerals and rocks that show the influence of humans. The rapid global expansion of new materials, including elemental aluminium, concrete, and plastics, is clearly identifiable, forming abundant, fast-growing technofossils. In addition to creating new layers of sediments, the impact of chemical and biological effects of human activity on the Earth’s atmosphere is of particular importance to the geological Anthropocene (Zalasiewicz *et al.* 2010, 2229–2230). The geological record also reflects the burning of fossil fuels, which has a significant impact on the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere. The overexploitation of fossil fuels has caused a worldwide proliferation of black carbon, inorganic ash spherules, and spherical carbon particles, which have shown a nearly synchronous global increase since 1950 (Waters *et al.* 2016). According to the synchronous Global Boundary Stratotype Sections and Points (GSSPs),² fossil fuel is important for dating the geological Anthropocene and allows the determination of geological periods also by way of comparing them with previous periods.

² Global Boundary Stratotype Sections and Points “are reference points on stratigraphic sections of rock which define the lower boundaries of stages on the International Chronostratigraphic Chart. Since 1977, the ICS has maintained the international GSSP register” (International Commission on Stratigraphy 2021).

The second perspective on the Anthropocene, which I mentioned earlier, is offered by a specific field of research called Earth System Science (ESS). In this field, as Hamilton says, it is “a systems science that deals with the whole Earth as a complex system that goes beyond the sum of its parts” (Hamilton 2015b, 102). In particular, this field is characterized by awareness and recognition that life has a strong influence on the Earth’s chemical and physical environment (Steffen *et al.* 2020). On the one hand, this view combines separate and isolated investigations of the different Earth systems (atmosphere, biosphere, cryosphere, geosphere, hydrosphere, pedosphere, climate, technosphere, and anthroposphere) in a way that would allow one to pinpoint the rupture created by the impact of human activity on the Earth System³ (Steffen *et al.* 2020; Zalasiewicz *et al.* 2021; Hamilton 2017). On the other hand, it brings together findings from a number of research areas and different scientific disciplines.

The Anthropocene within Earth System Science “has become an extremely powerful unifying concept, placing climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and other environmental problems, as well as social problems such as high consumption, growing inequality and urbanization, in the same framework” (Steffen *et al.* 2020, 59). According to this concept of the Anthropocene, human activities and so-called anthropogenic influences play a more complex role than in the geological Anthropocene. Human activities are linked to the activities of Earth System to such an extent that mankind is likened to the forces of nature.

3 “In the context of global change, the Earth System has come to mean the suite of interacting physical, chemical, and biological global-scale cycles (often called biogeochemical cycles) and energy fluxes which provide the conditions necessary for life” (Steffen *et al.* 2005, 7). “This definition emphasized two points: first, that forcings and feedbacks within the system, including biological processes, are as important to it functioning as external drivers and, second, that human activities are an integral part of system functioning” (Steffen *et al.* 2020, 57).

The following hypothesis, which comes from Earth System Science, is very important to the humanities. It is the proposition that mankind has become the driving force of the Earth System. In other words, humans are no longer just part of the biosphere and passive observers but have themselves become a geobiophysical force that qualitatively alters the regulatory capabilities of the Earth System (Steffen *et al.* 2020). In Rockström's words: "Humans are now the dominant force driving the trajectory of the Earth System: »we are no longer a small world on a big planet but have become«, »a big world on a small planet«" (Steffen *et al.* 2020, 62).

In light of the above, the concept of the Anthropocene in Earth System Science can be usefully employed in the humanities and social sciences, where the primary goal is to critically reflect on concepts of the Anthropocene from the natural sciences, in addition to analyzing the meaning of the concept of the Anthropocene itself. I agree with Hamilton that: "Anthropocene' is not a term invented to describe the continued spread of human influences on the landscape or the further modification of ecosystems; rather, it is a term describing a break in the functioning of the Earth system as a whole, to the extent that the Earth has now entered a new geological epoch" (Hamilton 2017, 17). As scientists from Earth System Science state, "the nature of the changes now occurring simultaneously in the Earth system, as well as the magnitude and rate of change, are unprecedented. The Earth System is currently operating in a non-analog state" (Steffen *et al.* 2020, 57).

In my view, Hamilton's claim offers an appropriate framework for philosophical reflection on the Anthropocene, while also pointing to a turning point. Many works on the Anthropocene literally ignore a crucial tipping point or shift. The Anthropocene thus loses boundaries and becomes merely a concept under which anything that qualifies as human-environment interaction can be subsumed. Such omission may lead one to claim that the Anthropocene is the result of human nature and that it is therefore a natural consequence

of human activity, or that it is the result of some characteristic feature (anthropological constant) of man which, in turn, does not reflect the complexity of human existence. However, if the Anthropocene is a natural occurrence then our epoch is not the result of human failure, but merely reflects our destructive nature (Hamilton 2017, 21). Furthermore, such claims downplay the impact of industrialism and large-scale burning of fossil fuels, and do not consider them anything new in the history of the human species (Hamilton 2017, 21).

If the requirement for a break or shift in the functioning of the Earth System is highlighted, the critical analysis and interpretation of the research outputs of natural scientists becomes more meaningful. When facts are interpreted in a broader context, problems that are hidden come to the surface. For example, as Ståhel points out, “the consequences of the massive use of fossil fuels are climatic changes that increase the risk of water and food shortage, flooding, intense tropical storms, heat waves, droughts, sea-level rise causing the loss of coastlines, and an increase in the speed of extinction of animal and plant species. All these phenomena influence also the form and intensity of social conflicts because for a majority of the population they become an existential risk threatening the basic requirements for life of individuals and communities” (Ståhel 2016, 480–481).

It should be clear from the above that the term Anthropocene, as used in the humanities and social sciences, has a broader content and scope. Its interpretation in these fields is more flexible and synthetic, less precise and aimed at understanding, for example, human responsibility, justice, values, and norms in the new climatic-geological regime of the Earth (Zalasiewicz *et al.* 2021). Ontological, epistemological, and ethical concepts of the Anthropocene are being developed to describe and provide a critical analysis of the non-analog state of the world that bears the name of Anthropocene. Trischler points out the variability of Anthropocene concepts when he argues that “while earth scientists discuss the hard facts of geological strata, humanities scholars have started a lively debate

about the philosophical, legal, aesthetic, pedagogical, and cultural implications of the Anthropocene” (Trischler 2013, 6). The changing state of geological and climatic conditions on Earth requires new ways of research in the natural sciences and, at the same time, new ways of thinking, or as Hamilton puts it “making the cognitive leap to Earth System thinking” (Hamilton 2017, 8), which will be characteristic of interdisciplinarity or even transdisciplinarity. Research on the Anthropocene in the humanities and social sciences complements the understanding of the Anthropocene in geology and Earth System Science. “While the scientific term is descriptive and analytical with regard to a given state of affairs, the humanities term is either normative (‘what should we do now?’) or narrative (‘how did we get here?’), or both (‘why did we get there?’)” (Zalasiewicz *et al.* 2021, 9). Critical analysis (critical theory, critical environmentalism), which is also strongly present in the discourse on the Anthropocene, can be added to this statement. In addition to the interpretation and critical analysis of the concept of the Anthropocene, in what follows I will stress the importance of philosophical investigation of two terms that are still not given due attention within the Anthropocene discourse.

The first is a term that is explicitly mentioned in the concept of Anthropocene – *Anthropos*, i.e. human. The second term is *life* itself, which is immanent in this context. Specifically, the hiddenness of life in the Anthropocene concept is that all life on planet Earth, human life and its qualitative preservation in particular, is what is actually at stake here. Thus, from my perspective, in the Anthropocene the concepts of a human being and life become inseparable. It is no longer possible to focus on the description of humans without also looking at life itself and the conditions that are necessary for its preservation.

3. THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONSTANTS

My interest in anthropological constants⁴ was aroused by the concept of the Anthropocene according to which humans are not merely passive observers of nature but change it through their physical and mental activity. Thus, it is not humans as such who cause the Anthropocene, but their activity. In other words, the active manifestations of the life form we call human are the cause of the break in the self-regulating capacity of the Earth System. Under such an assumption, several questions arise: Can we talk about human activity without having some pre-understanding of what a human being is? How to accentuate in this assumption the claim that the Anthropocene is a rather unintended result of human activity? Does this reasoning lead to a reduction of humans to their actions alone, which would be contrary to the efforts of philosophical anthropology to gain a comprehensive understanding of humans? My point of view in this paper is that anthropological constants are an opportunity to think philosophically about human agency in the context of the Anthropocene and the above questions. I start from the assumption that, first, anthropological constants contain a certain pre-understanding of human nature. Second, they are an attempt to describe how, through what humans do and through the results or products of their activity, they show themselves to be who they actually are. Anthropological constants, although part

4 By anthropological constant I mean a universal characteristic of human beings, derived from the principles of their thinking and acting. The main aim of anthropological constants is to capture the specificity and uniqueness of human beings. Traditionally, they are regarded as a manifestation of humanity or human nature. Among the best-known constants in philosophical anthropology are animal rationale, animal laborans, homo faber, homo migrans, homo climaticus, homo oecologicus, homo politicus, homo significans, homo pictor, animal symbolicus, homo ludens, homo oeconomicus, homo cogitans, homo absconditus and homo emotionalis.

of philosophical reflection since its inception are in many ways problematic.

The first problem is the term anthropological constant itself, which is more specific to philosophical anthropology than to other disciplines in the humanities. Even within philosophical anthropology is not often used. Authors lean more toward the term ‘essential definition,’ in which *essential* indicates a focus on human essence or nature. The understanding of anthropological constants within philosophical anthropology can be divided into substantial and existential. The first approach focuses on the perception of a substance. It is concerned with capturing its essential, characteristic, and fundamental properties, as well as the so-called attributes of human beings. As Malík states: “What is essential for the standpoint of substantialism is that it treats human individuals objectively, i.e. as certain objectively existing bearers or holders of the status of humanity”⁵ (Malík 2008, 37). In general, essentialist definitions of anthropological constants concern human agency in the world. They are primarily interested in addressing the “what” rather than the “is” of the key question: What is human?, but they do not offer an exhaustive answer to the question about human beings. The second approach is existential, the so-called non-substantial approach, which problematizes the substantive determination of being or rejects it altogether.

The second problem concerns the use of the term ‘constant’ itself. Etymologically, it derives from the Latin *constans*, which means something permanent, fixed, and lasting. A constant from an anthropological point of view should then express the fact that there is always something in the essence of human beings that is permanent or lasting and external influences should not cause it to change. Is it possible to say with certainty that there is something

5 Original text in the Slovak language: “Pre stanovisko substancializmu je podstatné to, že k ľudským individuám pristupuje predmetne, t. j. ako k určitým objektívne existujúcim nositeľom či držiteľom statusu ľudskosti” (Malík 2008, 37). Translation by the writer.

in every human being that is permanent and unchanging? This question leads us to the problem of human nature, which has not yet been settled. We still find, side by side, substantial and non-substantial anthropologies, and although we know more about human beings than ever before we still haven't found a definite answer. To complicate things further, a recent view suggests that there may not even be just one human nature. As Prinz puts it, "it might make sense to say that there are human natures, rather than one human nature" (Prinz 2012, ix).

The third problem is that anthropological constants, like the notion of a human nature, are often only operational terms that are not capable of an explanation. This point is important because in Anthropocene research often authors do not specify what an anthropological constant is and whether its use leads to a contradiction in his or her reasoning. We must also ask ourselves a question here: Is the use of the term constant legitimate?

I will use the term constants, provided that I admit certain reservations. The first reservation is that the introduction of a constant in philosophical anthropology has a different role than in physics or mathematics, which are strictly given and allow the world not only to be known and function within it, but also to be transformed by it. The second reservation is that the validity of the constant is admitted only with respect to a specific historical development of the concept of human nature.

The anthropological constant will then represent the backbone of our examination of humans, their self-knowledge, and self-understanding. Thus understood, the constant usually draws attention to one attribute of humanity that constitutes a unique concept of man from a particular perspective. The constant establishes the framework and scope of a reflection about man and allows for a detailed description and analysis. It represents an imaginary Archimedean point from which reflection on the human being begins and on which it is based. At the same time, it enables interdisciplinary connections.

This also allows anthropological constants to be assigned an auxiliary function in the development of theories in the humanities and social sciences. For example, when we introduce the anthropological constant of a rational animal, this may eventually lead to think about the different ways in which humans achieve their goals, different kinds of rationality, or even to think about irrationality. We can think about the rationality of the individual, as well as social or collective rationality.

Furthermore, anthropological constants are closely linked to the abstract and general concept of a human being. However, in the history of mankind, the concept of a human being has not always included all individuals of the human species. Thus, for example, Aristotle's anthropological constant *zoon politikon*, has a completely different meaning today, given the scope of the concept of human beings. Its permanence is attested by its use in the political and social sciences, rather than by its original meaning. A key question may be asked here: What is the scope of the notion of human beings required by the Anthropocene discourse, and what is its actual scope? As for the ongoing debate about the dating of the Anthropocene and human responsibility for it, the following questions arise: Which human activity plays the most significant role here? Is the activity itself or the motivation for the activity and goals more important? What was such human motivation in the past, what is it now, and what will it be in the future? Taking this into account, we can now say with confidence that the goal of humanity should be its qualitative survival in the future, sustainability, and the protection of natural resources. Humanity's survival depends not only on stable climatic and geological conditions but also on the survival of other forms of life. Can anthropological constants that have been established mainly by their difference from other life forms also take this requirement into account? Is it possible to include in the concept of human beings all past, present and future entities that have acted toward changing the geological-climatic conditions on Earth? How

are anthropological constants used in the Anthropocene? Are they used correctly? Are researchers aware of their connection to central issues concerning human nature?

4. THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONSTANTS IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

Attention to the actions and acting of human beings is reflected in the claim of scientists from Earth System Science that humans became a force of nature in the Anthropocene. Many key texts on the Anthropocene try to explain who *Anthropos* is, whose characteristic feature of action was dominant and is still relevant in the so-called “Age of Human.”

The most commonly anthropological constants in Anthropocene discourse include *Homo faber*, *Homo oeconomicus*, and *Homo industrialis*, which are related to reactions to the political implications of the Anthropocene, global power relations supported by technology, capitalism, the inclination toward technological solutions to the consequences of the Anthropocene, and the search for the root cause of the Anthropocene. Some authors suggest to supplement or even replace these anthropological constants.

Bruno Latour, for example, suggests replacing *Homo faber* with *Homo fabricatus*. “[I]n place of *Homo faber*, we would do better to speak of *Homo fabricatus*, daughters and sons of their products and their works” (Latour 2013, 228). He also speaks of *Homo fabulator*, associated with the concept of the human being as a storyteller (Latour 2013, 248). Latour also includes *Homo oeconomicus*, who “eventually succeeded in universalizing the whole surface of the Earth ... Under the name of globalization, the culture of this strange GMO – whose Latin name is *Homo oeconomicus* – has spread everywhere. At the very moment when we have a desperate need for other forms of homodiversity!” (Latour 2015, 115). According to Latour, “we ought to have as many definitions of humanity as there are ways of belonging to the world” (Latour 2015, 115).

Schwarz proposes to extend *Homo faber* to include *Homo hortensis*: “*Homo hortensis* is to some extent conceived of as a refinement of *Homo faber*, the skilled craftsman of our technosphere, the technological systems of the Anthropocene” (Schwarz 2019, 113). *Homo hortensis*, according to Schwarz, “means the gardening man, or, in a more straightforward translation, the one who belongs to the garden. Accordingly, the form of life of *Homo hortensis* is not just working or being in the garden, but organizing its life following the principles of gardening” (Schwarz 2019, 113).

As for the anthropological constant *Homo faber*, it is necessary to take into account the long history of the development of its meaning. It is first mentioned in a Latin quote attributed to the Roman statesman and writer Appius Claudius Caecus: “*Faber est quisque fortunae suae*” (Each human is the maker of their own fortune) and has been revitalized in the works of M. Scheler, H. Arendt and H. Bergson.

The anthropological constants *Homo faber* and *Homo oeconomicus* also appear in a recent article of Ch. Dries and M.H. Hägele. By pointing out the critique of these constants, they capture the struggle for humanity that takes place mainly against the backdrop of the Anthropocene discourse (Dries, Hägele 2020, 173). The dispute over whether it is possible to establish unequivocally what the humanity in human beings consists of is pushed into the background by facts about environmental and ecological catastrophes, the rise in the temperature of the atmosphere, the consequences of the sixth mass extinction, the melting of the glaciers, the scarcity of water and the social and political conflicts that are triggered by the climatic crisis. According to the authors, two camps are in opposition here. Transhumanists support *Homo faber*, appeal to amplified Promethean rhetoric, and seek planetary salvation in geoengineering and human-machine fusion. Opposing them, proponents of posthumanism suggest a different use of the anthropological constant *Homo faber*, even though

they, like posthumanists, reject traditional human concepts (Dries, Hägele 2020, 173).

The anthropological constant *Homo industrialis* can be found, for example, in an article of M. Northcott, without further explanation. The justification for its use probably lies in his understanding of time and eschatology in the Christian doctrine with reference to the dating of the Anthropocene. Northcott goes back to the first proposal for dating the Anthropocene, which was correlated with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution. In this context, he claims that: “*Homo industrialis* has become a geological force who is changing life on Earth through a range of Earth system-level interventions” (Northcott 2015, 105). In line with a religious worldview, Northcott argues, it is impossible to agree with such a claim because: “[t]he claim that the industrial revolution commenced a new geological epoch is closer to the literary genre of science fiction than of natural scientific writing” (Northcott 2015, 105).

Further, P. Sloterdijk also works with anthropological constants through J. Kersten’s demand for a new political anthropology for the Anthropocene. Kersten states that there has been “a paradigm change in political anthropology – from the *Homo sapiens pauper* of Hobbes to the *Homo sapiens luxus* of Sloterdijk” (Kersten 2013, 41). *Homo pauper*, according to Kersten, “use[s] natural resources in an egoistic way that threatens the balance of individual ecosystems and the ecological balance of the whole globe. But exactly for this reason – the egoistic consumption of nature – *Homo sapiens pauper*, who does not know anything but self-interest, cannot be the answer to the ecological challenge of the Anthropocene” (Kersten 2013, 51). The transition from *Homo pauper* to *Homo sapiens luxus* is made possible by a change in people’s self-understanding in all dimensions of their lives. The constant *Homo luxury* does not entail material wealth but points to the richness of the inner dimension of humans (Kersten 2013, 51).

Based on the problematic aspects of the anthropological constants considered above, I suggest that we can identify three main ways anthropological constants are used in the Anthropocene discourse.

The first way, which occurs most often, is that anthropological endings are merely an operational concept and are not explained by authors. Anthropological constants enable one to refer to existing theories or problematic areas. Sometimes they are mentioned only in passing. Latour, Northcott, Dries, and Hägele use anthropological constants in this way.

The second way is less popular. It focuses on the search for and explanation of the causes of the Anthropocene or the search for solutions through anthropological constants. The work of Schwarz and Kersten, and probably Sloterdijk, is representative of this second way.

A third way that plays an important role in the use of anthropological constants criticizes them and tries to overcome their use. Here I can again include Dries and Hägele, Latour, as well as forerunners of posthumanism such as Donna Haraway, who makes a significant contribution to the critique of the universal model of human nature in the Anthropocene.

As can be seen, it is not possible to clearly and strictly classify individual authors into one area. To do so would require a deeper analysis. My aim here is merely to point out that anthropological constants are frequently used in the Anthropocene discourse, without focusing on the importance of the concept of an anthropological constant or seeking a deeper understanding of it. Moreover, anthropological constants are often used without the author explaining whether he or she holds a substantial or a non-substantial approach to anthropological constants. At the same time, I have not yet found a clear analysis of the use of anthropological constants. I consider the exploration of the meaning of anthropological constants an important task of philosophical anthropology, whose significance goes well beyond the Anthropocene discourse.

Given the current state of research, it cannot be determined which anthropological constant is relevant to the Anthropocene. An answer to this question also depends on whether providing a definition of man through one general characteristic is still legitimate and sustainable in the conceptual system of the Anthropocene.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper suggested that the use of anthropological constants, not only in the Anthropocene discourse, is not straightforward and unambiguous. The complexity of their use has been captured through the levels meaning of the term anthropological constant itself or the ways in which it is used. Terms such as *Homo faber*, *Homo industrialis* or *Homo oeconomicus*, which are used most frequently in reflections on the conceptual system of the Anthropocene, have been subsumed under the substantial approach to the human being. Such an approach, however, assumes that human nature exhibits immutable qualities. The examination of substantive understandings of human essence carried out in this paper accentuated its problematic aspects through the complexity of anthropological constants.

I also argued that any reflection within the conceptual system of the Anthropocene must first clarify the position of its author. This is important because there are different concepts of the Anthropocene, and the concept itself has multiple levels of meaning. The preference for claims and hypotheses based on the concept of the Anthropocene from Earth System Science, particularly the claim that humans have become a geobiophysical force, has made it possible to focus mainly on the attributes of the human being that exhibit activity and action.

Since the emergence of the Anthropocene, anthropological constants have been frequently employed in Anthropocene discourse. Further, new constants are also emerging, not necessarily formulated within the framework of philosophical anthropology. By describing the most frequently used anthropological constants, this paper

has proposed three categories to classify the different approaches to anthropological constants.

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