

IMPLICATION OF DENIAL OF GLOBAL HUMANISM IN THE MODERN WORLD: A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION

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Abstract

Global humanness primarily showcases in the human interconnectedness, inter-relationship and togetherness irrespective of geographical location, gender, race, religious affiliation, and culture. The disruption of this humanness over the ages has culminated in COVID-19 era. This is as there have been strong evidences of human discrimination, marginalization, exclusion, domination, racism and discrepancies in the world and especially in COVID-19 period. This has led to greater tension, unrest, terrorism and conflict in various parts of the world. Based on these, global development has been direly affected economically, politically and otherwise. This paper therefore investigates the foundation of the denial of global humanness in the modern world. It analytically investigates the implication of this denial in COVID-19 and post COVID-19 epoch. The study however finds that denial of global humanness has disrupted global stability, unity, peace and development. This is based on the causal chain of existence visible in the fact that what affects one affects all irrespective of place or geographical location. The paper therefore concludes that until the issues affecting global humanness are addressed, global effort to salvage the world from COVID-19 may end in futility.

Keywords: COVID-19; Critical investigation; Global Humanness; Implication; Modern world

Introduction

Most challenges we are experiencing in the world today are due to denial of global humanness (GH). Often times, people are treated either as animals or machines thereby depriving them their dignity, freedom and rights. With this,

inequality, social injustices and other forms of crime against humanity are being perpetuated and promoted across the world. On 25 May, 2020, an African-American, George Floyd was killed by an American police, Derek Chauvin, a racist (Haworth, Torres and Pereira, 2020). This action was due to years of negative feelings against African-Americans. It is one out of the million cases of denial of humanness in contemporary time. Floyd's killing, as seen, triggered "I can't breathe" and "Black lives Matter" protest against police brutality and police racism in America and beyond. These protests (and demonstrations) across the world have proven the fact that the black people all over the world are having the same racial experience. This experience is not only peculiar to the African-Americans but to black people in general and other nationals across the world.

The truth is that humans across the world have invented ways of dividing and attacking themselves. In South Africa, one is faced with xenophobic attack or what I may call 'Xenophobia'; the apartheid experience as a result of the white and the black dichotomy has been a long time challenge facing different nationals in South Africa. In India, it is the problem of caste system; while in Europe and America, it is racism, discrimination and segregation. All these practices bring division among people of diverse background. Based on this, the call to promote global humanness across the globe remains imperative. Herein is to find out if the claim for global humanness (human sameness) as advocated by United Nations and other International Organizations is globally accepted, respected, practiced, or not.

Moreover, the underlying principles for promoting global humanness has been predicated on respect for human rights, freedom, equality, dignity, and above all, acceptance of human reason (rationality) as a universal natural endowment. Based on the ontological structure of human beings, one can simply say that human beings over the entire universe are capable of reasoning. Well, some people may disagree with this position; those who would like to maintain the romanticists' *status quo* may still argue contrarily to this position. Romanticism is an ideology that originated around 18th and 19th centuries, and was championed by the Germans and the English (Onyewuenyi, 2015). The proponents believe in the novelty of Europe, or Eurocentric over other nations, especially Africa. They denied reason to Africans. Yet, human beings all over the world are naturally endowed with the capacity of reasoning or rationalizing, thinking or reflecting. In congruence with this, Boethius cited in Copleston (2010:103) defines human person as *rationalis naturae individual substantia* (an individual substance of a rational nature). For Aristotle, human person is a rational animal (Stumph, 1994). Hence, global humanness implies that humans across the globe are the same irrespective of their historical, biological, intellectual and structural constituents. This is the notable foundation for global humanness.

Freedom, equality, dignity and reason as the underlying principles of global humanness are conceptualized in the 1779 American Independent Declaration as well as in the United Nations' Charter of 1948 on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman and Robert Livingston, the well-known founding fathers of the United State of America, declared thus: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"(Wikipedia, 2020).The United Nations reflects the fundamental human rights as the basic rights for every human person irrespective of religion, race, gender, age, tribal affiliation, etc. These rights are attached to every human being due to his inherent nature and ontological origin, and as well inalienable rights (United Nations, UDHR Article 1,1948). The member states of the United Nations across the globe are expected to work together in promoting these fundamental human rights without bias and prejudice.

In this era of Covid-19, Omicron, and other global challenges, one may begin to doubt if these principles are respected, promoted and sustained around the world today. This is really doubtful. The denial or rejection of these inherent qualities or characteristics such as equality, freedom, dignity and rationality, so to speak, is the basis of the denial of global humanness. Denial of global humanness is therefore the rejection of commonness of humanity, equality of all men as well as the degradation of human dignity and all other forms of dehumanization of human person as seen in some places around the globe.

Understanding the Concept of Humanness

The earlier term *human* reads thus: *humain(e)*; *the Middle English humayn(e)*; *Middle French humain*; and *Latin hūmānus* which is similar to *homō* human being. This spelling of *human* is predominant from early 18th century. Human or humane may refer to that which is, or should be, characteristic of human beings. In describing characteristics, human may refer to good and bad traits of a person alike (human kindness; human weakness). When emphasis is placed upon the latter, human is thought of as contrasted to divine. We often say "to err is human, to forgive is divine". Humane considers only the nobler or gentler aspects of people and is often contrasted to their more ignoble or brutish aspect. A humane person is benevolent, or loving in treating fellow humans or helpless animals.

The word "humane" also had connotations of courtesy and refinement (hence, the application of humane to those branches of learning intended to refine the mind (Collins Dictionary, 2020). British Dictionary however defines "humanness" or "human" ('hju:mən) as "of characterizing, or relating to man and mankind, human nature consisting of people, the human race; a human chain having the attributes of man as opposed to animals, divine beings, or

machines” (Explore Dictionary.com, 2020). The scientific definitions for humanness/human [hyōō’mən] therefore “is a member of the species *Homo sapiens*; a human being”(The Science Dictionary, 2011). Human: of, pertaining to, characteristic of, or having the nature of people; human frailty; consisting of people: the human race; of or relating to the social aspect of people; human affairs; sympathetic; humane; a warmly human understanding (Thesaurus.com, 2020).

From the foregoing, the term *human* implies “the characteristics of people when contrasted with God, animals or machines”. “Humanness” is a characteristic of human person or human beings that differentiated them from animals or machines (robots). Social psychological research into laypeople’s conceptions of humanness has focused on three related categories of human attributes such as emotions, personality traits and mental capacities (Wilson and Haslam, 2013). Wilson and Haslam (2013) note that the striking about this body of research is that, despite reflecting distinct theoretical perspectives, broadly comparable results have emerged about lay conceptions of humanness and how our specific sense of humanness separate humans from animals and machines, respectively.

Wilson and Haslam (2013) in Demouli et al. (2004) note that in emotional expression, humans share some emotions with animals which is described as non-uniquely human emotions (anger, surprise); and emotions that are considered as uniquely human (that is, uniquely human emotions like love, guilt). Accordingly, nonuniquely human emotions are judged as innate, visible to outside observers, caused by external events, and of short duration. By contrast, uniquely human emotion are judged as invisible to observers, generated internally via thinking, experienced over a long duration, morally informative and acquired through socialization (Demoulin et al. 2004; Rodriguez et al. 2005). Wilson and Haslam (2013) conclude that the focus on emotions that are shared with animals (nonuniquely human emotions and uniquely human emotions) indicates that humanness is conceptualized in a way that emphasizes the human-animal boundary. Obviously, there are some emotions that when human beings exhibit reduces them to animals, especially emotions or actions that debase human persons such as racism and slavery.

In considering the conceptions of humanness in the ambience of personality traits, Haslam et al. (2005) suggests that there two distinct senses of humanness namely; a species-typical sense termed *human nature*, and a species-unique known as *human uniqueness*. Human uniqueness, according to Haslam et al. (2005) refers to those traits that differentiated humans from animals such as refinement, moral sensibility, self-control, and rationality. Buttressing this further, Haslam (2005) asserts that uniquely human traits are judged as acquired through learning, as requiring maturity for their expression, not prevalent in the population, and culturally specific.

Contrarily, human nature reflects the biologically-based human essence – the fundamental or essential attributes of the human species. Such essential attributes like emotional responsiveness, prosocial warmth, cognitive openness and individuality are often shared with animals (Haslam et al., 2005). Dehumanization research conducted by Loughan and Haslam (2007) gives insight into how the two senses of humanness differentiated humans from nonhumans. They show that human nature traits are associated explicitly and implicitly, with animals more than with machines and uniquely human traits are associated with the machines more than animals. Loughan et al., (2009) note that the denial to people of traits that reflect human nature leads them to be likened to machine, whereas the denial to people traits that reflect human uniqueness leads them to be likened to animals. The approach is applicable in studying the humanness belief in mental capacity of humans. Indeed, Gray et al (2007) research into laypeople’s beliefs about mental capacities suggesting two dimensions of mind’s perception known as agency and experience. Accordingly, agency is exemplified by the capacity for language, reason, self-control, and morality. These traits are parallel to the findings obtained for uniquely human emotions and traits. On the other hand, experience dimension has to do with capacities for consciousness, primary emotions and basic appetites. These traits as well are parallel to the findings obtained for personality traits that reflect human nature. Agentic capacities show the human-animal boundary, while experience capacities show human-machine boundary (Gray et al., 2007).

From these social psychological researchers and emotion scientists, it is clear that human person is barricaded and divided. At present, directly or indirectly, this division is applied in human relationships and interactions. Humanness has been judged in relation to animals and in relation to machines. This specific sense of humanness is what makes us human and this specific sense as well is what has been denied globally. At present, it has been constituted and still constituting global inconsistencies in human relationships and interconnectedness.

Humanness, as used here implies also the “quality of being human” or “the state of being human” as distinguished from animals. Fernandez Armesto (2004) cited in Wilson and Haslam (2012) note that “the longest debated frontier of human identity in Western culture has been between humans and animals”, and it is this frontier that has historically informed Western conceptions of what it means to be human. Wilson and Haslam (2013) citing Hampshire, (1991) and Turkle (1991) assert that the boundary between humans and animals is not, however, the only boundary to inform our understanding of what it is to be human. That another salient boundary is that between humans and machines. For them, therefore, there are other things to consider and amongst them such as “emotion, personality traits and mental capacities.” Wilson & Haslam (2013)

note that other things to consider as we think of humanness are humans' ability or willingness either to help or harm others.

In the ideology of global humanness, the nobler actions are considered. Humans are neither seen as animals nor as machines. Rather, they are seen as an entity with a holistic uniqueness and humanistic qualities and being guided by moral responsibilities. Obviously, the idea of global humanness encourages the principle of brotherhood and sisterhood of all humankind. The concept of global humanness, as said earlier, predicated on the uniqueness of human nature, on the global interconnectedness, interrelationship and togetherness of all human beings.

Foundation of the denial of global humanness in the modern world

The denial of global humanness has historical, biological, intellectual and structural bases. Despite these, one cannot completely rule out global divisions among the factors that instigated, initiated or influenced denial of global humanness. The term *globe* is simply the "world" or "universe". The globe and world will be interchangeably used here. Currently, the "world" is divided into seven continents namely; Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Antarctica and Australia/Oceania. These continents make up what is known today as the world or globe. One of the ancient scholars Herodotus once asked: Why should a single large landmass be divided into separate continents? (Wikipedia, 2020). This was not only the case, the habitants or people of the world are divided along the colour of their skins or body pigments, physiological features, biological traits, and geographical locations. Such divisions include the Caucasoid (Europeans), Negroid (Africans), Mongoloid (Asians), Americanus (American Indians), and the Australoid (Australian Aborigines) (Oyebola, 2002). One cannot doubt the current political, economic, social and cultural attachments to this global division.

The current classification of the world into the First World, Second World and Third World, developing and developed world, civilized and uncivilized world, global south and global north and so many other divisions all over the globe has been the root of the problem. All these involve in separating one country from the other; and separating individuals from the others. All these divisions also have their implications which will be examine later. Some of the factors that orchestrated the denial of global humanness include extreme nationalism, racism, colonialism, imperialism and slave trade (Onyewuenyi (2015). This led to the division of humans into rationality and irrationality, human and less humans, slaves and free-born, superiority and inferiority, civilized and uncivilized world, and so on. In fact, some sections of the world like Africa were over time considered less human, irrational and slaves to others. Among those that propagated this ideology include Aristotle, Georg W. F. Hegel, John Locke, David Hume, George Henry Lewes and some others who came after

them. These philosophers denied the humanness of Africans just to exclude Africa's contribution to global civilization and development. In fact, Georg W.F Hegel, in his first lecture on the Philosophy of History delivered in 1822-23 described Africans in a humiliated form; as slaves to Europe and America (Turner, 1903); Bentley, 1900). Indeed, denial of global humanness became more visible when some sections of the world began to describe other sections as slaves, non-humans and irrational. Based on this, Jamela Dunbar writes:

If all men are born equal why change the subject matter?
Are slave humans, or humans slaves? When did we know that humans are slaves? When did man decide to call humans slaves? Man and woman, created, as man and woman, not slaves. The slave was never man and woman's name at birth. Why should any human be called a slave by another human like himself? Why, because of his own selfish reasons, greed, and corruption, or fame? Man is not a slave. All men are human without a question. And no human should thus be a slave by its own kind. It is an abomination to the human creation. If a man is called a slave the man that said this word is a slave to himself. He is shooting himself down with no respect for his humanness as a man. For a man cannot call another human like himself a slave, to himself. It is an abomination to our spirituality, humanness, and our creator by far. Humans are not slaves. All humans are born equal and if any man calls a human a slave, he is calling himself a slave too because he himself is human (Definitions.net, 2020).

Exacerbating this notion in the world is global inequality, restriction of human freedom of movement, dehumanization and exploitation of the human person. This attitude has questioned human dignity and values. However, denial of humanness in global context varies in degrees. Hence, the way Africa was excluded or separated from the rest of the world is not the way Asians or other nations of the world are separated from the rest.

In German, during the time of Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) about six million Jews were exterminated on the ground of German superiority and purity amongst other nations. Hitler saw the Jews as the enemy of the German people. In his desire to expand Germany, he focused on Eastern Europe but promoted racially motivated ideology. Indeed, his Nazi regime was responsible for the genocide of about 6 million Jews and millions of other victims whom he and his followers deemed *Untermenschen* (sub-humans) or socially undesirable. Nazi regime was also responsible for the killing of an estimated 19.3 million civilians and prisoners of war (Wikipedia, 2020). Kershaw (2000b) noted of Hitler's

ideology stating that “never in history has such ruination – physical and moral – been associated with the name of one man” (841)

The Implication of Denial of Global Humanness in COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 Era

Currently, the entire world is battling with Covid-19 which till date has its origin still unknown. However, we cannot ignore what denial of global humanness implies to the modern human population in pre and post COVID-19 era

Till date, emergence of covid-19 is still controversial. Obijekwu (2020), in their paper titled “Impact of Covid-19 on Global Humanness: A Philosophical-Based Lesson”, notes that the emergence of Covid-19 has been a controversial one. There were allegations and counter-allegations amongst nations, especially among the economic competitive nations like US and China on the origin and cause of corona virus.

As such, denial of global humanness will continue to pave unhealthy divisions in the world. This is a division that will enable the COVID-19 virus to be more pandemic. The reality of this has been visible in emanation of another faction of COVID19 referred to as omicron variant. This aspect of COVID-19 like its mother virus has today infected the sizeable population of the world. The Aljazeera news of December 13, 2021 has it that as COVID-19 is still pandemic, its aspect called omicron variant has infected more than 50 million people in South Africa, England and other places. From all these, it stands that denial of global humanness kills global unity and will even render post COVID-19 era frail to annihilation. With this deepening division and poor human co-operation brought by denial of humanness, the survival of the modern world and future human generation is bleak.

If every sections of the world acknowledged the universality or global humanness, I wonder if there would be proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, biological weapons, war, political, economic, social, cultural and religious motivated conflicts. This is the reason the global humanness should be promoted by global agencies like the United Nations. The United Nations can achieve this task when it becomes more proactive in promoting the fundamental principles of global humanness like freedom, equality of all men, and respect for human dignity. Along this lane, UN has to denounce colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, human slavery, human exploitation and racism among its member states and in the global world.

Conclusion

Denial of humanness has been an age-long global phenomenon. This is visible in people looking considering others as less-humans and treating them as such.

Denial of global humanness is also glaring in people's deprivation of others' rights and entitlements, as well as the intent to annihilate others considered as obstacles, less important or less human. This global attitude has great implications in the modern world. These implications are visible in the fact that it is creating an unhealthy division that makes it hard for humankind to confront global adversities like COVID-19 pandemic, other diseases and the unfriendly environmental factors. This situation therefore calls for a better world where humankind have to acknowledge the humanness in everybody, and with the spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood work for global development and common good. Until denial of global humanness is adequately addressed, the desire for global peace and eradication of global terrorism will remain a wishful-thinking.

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