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Humanism Vs Homicide: Philosophical Perspective on the World Scenario Today

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Introduction

The current state of global conflict has led to significant loss of life, driven mainly by wars, international disputes, and other violent incidents. According to recent data, the death toll from conflicts surged notably in 2022, almost doubling compared to the previous year. This rise was primarily influenced by the ongoing war in Ukraine, which saw around 83,000 fatalities. Meanwhile, Ethiopia experienced the deadliest conflict, with 100,000 lives lost due to the civil war in the Tigray region.

Globally, conflicts have become more internationalized, involving more countries either directly or indirectly. According to the Global Peace Index (GPI) from the Institute for Economics and Peace, 91 countries are now engaged in some form of conflict, a significant increase from 58 in 2008. The overall peacefulness worldwide has been on a decline for the ninth consecutive year, with economic costs from wars reaching \$17.5 trillion, accounting for 12.9% of global GDP.

The trend of enduring conflicts, particularly in regions like Yemen, Syria, and South Sudan, shows no signs of immediate resolution. Even with advancements in peacekeeping, many regions continue to face long-standing internal and cross-border disputes. For instance, conflicts have persisted in countries such as Afghanistan, which has remained the least peaceful nation for eight years in a row.

While these figures provide a grim outlook, there are also signs of positive change. Certain regions, particularly parts of the Middle East and North Africa, have seen improvements in peacefulness, reflecting successful peace agreements and reductions in violent incidents in some areas. The complexity of modern conflicts, often characterized by international involvement, the use of sophisticated weaponry, and the economic stakes tied to militarization, makes the landscape of global violence a persistent and challenging issue.

The humanistic view had its philosophical beginning with the declaration of Protagoras's dictum that 'man is the measure of all things. Humanism is an articulated means of thinking that can be traced to certain socio-politico-religious developments in post-medieval times. Humanism is an attitude towards and approaches man's life and values. It is characterized by an interest in man, concern for man, faith in reason and conscience, etc. The meaning, origin, forms, cruel faces of Humanism, and the concept through different perspectives are discussed here.

Meaning of Humanism

"Humanism, from the Latin word 'humanitas,' implies ontological individualism and the quest for the perfection of the human spirit through the consummation of man's inherent potentialities." "Man is not only the measure but the master and the creator of reality to an indefinable extent." The word 'humanitos,' which Cicero first used to describe the values related to liberal education, is similar to present art, philosophy, history, and literature. The doctrine of Humanism presumes the centrality of man.

The vital goal of Humanism is human flourishing, making life better for all humans, and promoting concern for the welfare of other beings and the whole. We see that the term 'humanism' does not stand for a single, well-defined concept. It has meant different things in different periods of man's cultural history. Humanism signifies a cluster of more or less vaguely defined attitudes and intellectual prejudices that characterized the European mind during the period called the Renaissance. The Oxford dictionary of philosophy tells us that Humanism in the Renaissance sense "was quite consistent with religious belief; it being supposed that God had put us here precisely to further those things the humanists found more important; later, the term tended to become appropriated for anti-religious, social and political movements." However it tells us that as a movement, Humanism is "distinctive of

¹ VISHWANATH PRASAD VARMA, *Philosophical Humanism and Contemporary India*, New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1979, 6. (Here after referred to as VARMA, *Philosophical Humanism and Contemporary India*)

² A.H. DAKIN, Man is the Measure, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1939, 24. (Here after referred to as DAKIN, Man is the Measure)

³ ASHOK VOHRA, "Humanism in Indian Thought" in *Facets of Humanism*, eds., P.K. Mohapatra, New Delhi, Decent book, 1999, 8. (Here after referred

the Renaissance and allied to the renewed study of Greek and Roman literature: a rediscovery of the unity of human beings with nature and a renewed celebration of the pleasure of life, all supposedly lost in the medieval world." In the twentieth Century, postmodernists and some feminists writers have used the term 'humanism' as a disapproving term to be applied to philosophies "that rely upon the possibility of the autonomous, self-conscious, rational, single self and that are supposedly insensitive to the inevitable fragmentary, splintered historically conditioned nature of personality and motivation." In its current usage; the term implies "any philosophy concerned to emphasize human welfare and dignity, and optimistic about the powers of unaided human understanding." 5

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the philosophical meaning of Humanism is; "A belief or outlook emphasizing common human needs and seeking solely rational ways of solving human problems, and concerned with humankind as responsible and progressive intellectual beings." In other words, we can say that valuing what it is to be human is the minimal definition of Humanism. Humanist values in western societies are about the complex ideas of personhood, which is primarily concerned with including beliefs in the individual rights, freedom, moral standing, and dignity of each human subject in virtue. However, Humanism is any philosophy that recognizes the value or dignity of man and makes him the measure of things or somehow takes human nature its limits or interests as its theme.

Humanism gained a new aspect in the 20th Century, beginning with Schiller, who took it as the unique name of his version of Pragmatism. His position was that all philosophical understanding stems from human activity. In this frame of mind, he reaffirms the Pythagoras' content that "man is the measure of all things" against what he called intellectualist philosophers, whether represented by Plato, by Hume, or by the idealists of his own time. Hence Humanism is a philosophical and literary movement. Humanism does also mean, most of all, is that the world has become a human world, determined by human aspirations. Robert C.S. remarks that "the world may have been created by God, but it was now in the hands for better or worse of humanity. The world was a human stage, with human values, emotions, hopes, and fears, and this humanity was defined in turn by a universal human."⁷ The exponents of Humanism assert that Humanism is the tenacious attempt of reasoning men to think through the most fundamental issues of life, to reach reasonable conclusions on first and last things. They say that Humanism is a philosophy in which the top end of human life is to work for the happiness of man upon this earth and within the confines of the nature that is his home.

Humanism as a spread-out Disease

The printing press helped spread humanist ideas from Italy to the north of Europe. Italian Humanism spread northward to France, Germany, the Low Countries, Poland-Lithuania, Hungary, and England with the adoption of large-scale printing after 1500, and it became associated with the Reformation. In France, pre-eminent humanist Guillaume Budé (1467–1540) applied the philological methods of Italian Humanism to the study of antique coinage and legal history, composing a detailed commentary on Justinian's Code.

New Horizons of Humanism

From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, we find a grand revival of humanistic tradition in European countries. Erasmus initiated a new wave of self-esteem and self-fulfillment in man and encouraged them to free themselves from all barriers of theological despotism and medieval orthodoxy. Montaigne laid great emphasis on the mutability of man and the world. He preached that a man could attain perfection by properly enjoying his being.⁸ This renaissance movement made man end as the center and creator of all values. It opened a new humanistic horizon for the modern world.

But in the mid-18th Century, different use of the term began to emerge. In 1765, the author of an anonymous article in a French Enlightenment periodical spoke of "The general love of humanity ... a virtue quite nameless among us, and which we will venture to call 'humanism', for the time has come to create a word for such a beautiful and necessary thing." The later part of the 18th and the early 19th centuries saw the creation of numerous grass-roots 'philanthropic' and benevolent societies dedicated to human betterment and the spreading of knowledge.

Now Humanism began to acquire a negative sense. The Oxford English Dictionary records the use of the word 'humanism' by an English clergyman in 1812 to indicate those who believe in the 'mere humanity'- as opposed to the divine nature - of Christ. In this polarized atmosphere, liberal reformers and radicals embraced the idea of Humanism as an alternative religion of humanity. Ernest Renan in 'The Future of Knowledge'': Thoughts on 1848 states: "It is my deep conviction that pure humanism will be the religion of the future, that is, the cult of all that pertains to man — all of life, sanctified and raised to the level of a moral value." In 1933, Humanism, as a point of view, was proclaimed by a galaxy of thirty-three intellectuals hailing from western society. It was laid down as a new philosophy, not as a new creed, and was said to be about matters of final concern developed out of the materials

to as VOHRA, "Humanism in Indian Thought")

⁴ VOHRA, "Humanism in Indian Thought", 8.

⁵ VOHRA, "Humanism in Indian Thought", 8-9.

⁶ MARK VERNON, Humanism, Uk, Teach Yourself Publication, 2008, 13. (Here after referred to as VERNON, Humanism)

⁷ ROBERT C.S., A History of Western Philosophy 7, Oxford University Press, 66. (Here after referred to as ROBERT C.S., A History of Western Philosophy 7)

⁸ PAT. J. GEHRKE, "The Ethical Importance of Being Human: God and Humanism in Philosophy" in *Philosophy Today*, 50/5, winter, 2006, 430. (Here after referred to as GEHRKE, "The Ethical Importance of Being Human")

⁹ "Humanism", City Vision University, https://library.cityvision.edu/humanism [accessed on December 18, 2021]. (Here after referred to as

[&]quot;Humanism", https://library.cityvision.edu/humanism

^{10 &}quot;Humanism", https://library.cityvision.edu/humanism [accessed on December 18, 2021].

of the modern world. Religion and spirituality were not wholly decried. Religion was recognized as a means for realizing the highest value of life, and spiritual values were sought to be inculcated as the spirit comes at the apex in order of existence.

Humanism, in 20th and 21st Century

In the 20th and 21st centuries, members of humanist organizations have disagreed on whether Humanism is a religion. Modern Humanists, such as Corliss Lamont or Carl Sagan, hold that humanity must seek truth through reason and the best observable evidence and endorse scientific scepticism and the scientific method. However, they stipulate those decisions about right and wrong must be based on the individual and common good. "Humanism does not consider metaphysical issues such as the existence or non-existence of supernatural beings as an ethical process. Humanism is engaged with what is human."¹¹

Contemporary Humanism entails a qualified optimism about people's capacity, but it does not involve believing that human nature is purely good or that all people can live up to the humanist ideals without help. If anything, there is recognition that living up to one's potential is hard work and requires the support of others. The ultimate goal is human flourishing, making life better for all humans and as the most conscious species, and promoting concern for the welfare of other sentient beings and the planet. The focus is on doing good and living well here and now and leaving the world a better place for those who come after.¹²

The Different Definitions of Humanism

"Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good without theism or other supernatural beliefs." ¹³

- American Humanist Association

"Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance that affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape their own lives. It stands for building a more humane society through ethics based on human and other natural values in a spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality." ¹⁴

- Humanists International

Forms of Humanism

If one can understand Humanism in universal as a concern that man becomes free for his humanity and finds his significance in it, then Humanism differs according to one's notion of "freedom" and "nature" of man. So too, are there various paths towards the realization of such conceptions? The Humanism of Marx does not need to return to antiquity any more than the Humanism which Sartre conceives existentialism to be. In this broad sense of Christianity, too, is Humanism. However, different forms of Humanism may be in purpose and principle, in the mode and means of their respective realizations, and the structure of their teaching, they nonetheless all agree in this, that "the humanitas of homo humanus" is determined about an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole." 15

Marxist Humanism

The term 'Marxist humanism' has its foundation from Marx's conception of the 'alienation of the labourer' as he advanced it in his' Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844' - and alienation that is born of a capitalist system in which the worker no longer functions as a free being involved with free and associated labour. It is concerned more with the structural conception of a capitalist society. The dominant feature of Marxian Humanism is its unalterable hope for a better future. As a result of the revolution, the new order will usher in by giving rise to a new type of man. Karl Löwith calls this "a secularized biblical eschatology in which the proletariat has assumed the broad features of the Servant of the Lord, whose vicarious suffering for the whole creation inaugurates the new age." ¹⁶ But Marx is farthest from the gospel where his Humanism is highly pronounced. His central claim is that integrated, spontaneous, and then autonomous man will be a historical society member.

Christian Humanism

Christian Humanism is an attempt that develops a human-centered philosophy of ethics and social action within a framework of Christian principles. It is an expression of the religious rather than the secular aspects. It is the position that universal human dignity and individual freedom are essential and principal components of or are compatible with Christian doctrine and practice. It is a philosophical union of Christian and humanist principles. One common complaint about Christian humanism is that in attempting to place humans as the central focus, "it contradicts the fundamental

¹¹ V. TIRUPATHI RAO, "Secular Humanism" in *Global Journal for Research Analysis*, IC Value 80.26/6 (Accessed on December 18, 2021). (Here after referred to as RAO, "Secular Humanism")

¹² "Humanism", https://library.cityvision.edu/humanism [accessed on December 18, 2021].

¹³ "Definition of Humanism", American Humanist Association, https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/definition-of-humanism/ [accessed on December 16, 2021]. (Here after referred to as "Definition of Humanism", https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/definition-of-humanism/ [accessed on December 16, 2021].

¹⁵ LAWRENCE E. CAHOONE, "Letter on humanism" in *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, ed., Martin Heidegger, USA, Blackwell Publishers, 1996, 280. (Here after referred to as CAHOONE, "Letter on humanism")

¹⁶ ABRAHAM C. KURUVILLA, "Marx's Promethean Humanism" in *Journal of Dharma*, Vol. XIV, no. 2 (April-June 1989), 156-157. (Here after referred to as KURUVILLA, "Marx's Promethean Humanism")

Christian principle that God must be at the center of one's thoughts and attitudes. However, Christian humanists continue to hold their view of the human being as the image of God."17

Enlightenment Humanism

Enlightenment humanism gives importance to reason expounding its infinite potentialities and unfettered employment. Our reason and imagination set the goal of humanity. This goal is not the adoration of God, nor is it our self-realization in the heavenly city, but the welfare of the individual and society for which no supernatural faith and grace is required. Its result is criticism and scepticism. Everything is held as falsifiable. No authority is accepted. No person or institution can claim infallibility. Everything is publicly examined. "Reason liberates all from every type of tutelage through the instruments of truth, morality, and political systems. Nominalism, Humanism, and the growth of the empirical sciences contributed to its emergence."18

Pragmatic Humanism

If overconfidence in the power of reason marked Enlightenment humanism, pragmatics like S. Peirce and J. Dewey rejected such an approach as it focused too much on the cognitive rather than the practical. "The human is what he does. He is a doer, not a knower. Hence, meaning or truth resides inconceivable practical effects, i.e., something is true if useful. Accordingly, belief in God is good if it is helpful and can be held as true."19

Implication of Atheistic Humanism

Several philosophical traditions shape contemporary Humanism. Today, most obviously, the point of contention is whether Humanism is explicitly antireligious. We can go through the history of Humanism and survey the content of its philosophies at some length. The 20th Century witnessed many horrors meted out by human beings. We can figure out three individuals who were particularly successful at filling the world with their monstrous terrors. They are Mao, Stalin, Hitler.

"The biography of Mao by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday reveals that he is responsible for 70 million deaths, and all in so-called peacetime, too. The trials and purges that killed tens of millions of his political opponents, Stalin's industrial policies led to famines in which 10 million peasants also perished. And there is something uniquely disturbing in the genocidal policies of Hitler. He reached in the 'Final Solution' of Reinhard Heydrich to 'cleanse Europe, from West to East, of its Jews. And he wiped away around 11 million Jews. They came forward by advocating Humanism and freedom. And their regime shows the plenty of evidence that both Stalin and Hitler were inspired by the atheistic humanism."20

Homicide

According to the Cambridge dictionary, the Homicide meaning is, "the crime of killing a person; murder." Homicide is the act of killing another person, whether intentionally or unintentionally. It addresses a variety of legal distinctions, including murder (deliberate, unlawful killing, typically with premeditated intent), manslaughter (unintentional killing caused by reckless behaviour or incompetence), and justifiable homicide (legally justified killing, such as in self-defence). The legal system classifies homicide depending on the killer's intent, the nature of the act, and the surrounding circumstances, which decide whether the conduct is unlawful and the severity of punishment.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), approximately 464,000 homicides occur globally each year, with the highest rates typically in regions with socio-economic challenges, such as parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. Contributing factors to homicide rates include income inequality, weak law enforcement, lack of educational and mental health resources, and gang-related conflicts. Countries with comprehensive violence-prevention strategies, including community policing and mental health support, often see lower homicide rates (UNODC, 2019) .22 The World Health Organization (WHO) also highlights homicide as a significant public health issue, pointing out that rates are often exacerbated by poverty and lack of opportunity, which can increase stress and conflict within communities. The WHO suggests that addressing homicide requires multifaceted approaches, including policy reform, community programs, and improved healthcare resources (WHO, 2019).²³

Different Types of Homicide

Homicide, the intentional killing of another human being, is a profound violation of human rights and a complex phenomenon that has plagued societies throughout history. It is a multifaceted issue, influenced by various factors such as cultural norms, socioeconomic conditions, and psychological

¹⁷ ALEX THARAMANGALAM, "Humanism" in ACPI Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Vol.1, ed., Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, Bangalore, Asia Trading Corporation, 2010, 632.(Hereafter referred to as THARAMANGALAM, "Humanism")

¹⁸ THARAMANGALAM, "Humanism", 631. ¹⁹ THARAMANGALAM, "Humanism", 631.

²⁰ VERNON, Humanism, 152.

²¹ https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/homicide

²² https://academic.oup.com/book/36581/chapter-abstract/321546320?redirectedFrom=fulltext

²³https://eajournals.org/ijhphr/vol-7-issue-1-february-2019/philosophy-of-authentic-humanism-the-only-way-of-curbing-conflict-and-violence/

motivations. There are several types of homicide, each with distinct characteristics and motivations. First-degree murder, also known as premeditated murder, involves deliberate planning and intention to kill. This type of homicide is often driven by malice, revenge, or financial gain.

Second-degree murder, or impulsive homicide, occurs in the heat of the moment, often fueled by emotions such as anger or passion. This type of homicide may result from domestic disputes, bar fights, or other intense confrontations.

Felony murder, another category, involves an unintentional killing during the commission of a felony, such as robbery or burglary. In these cases, the perpetrator's primary intention is not to kill but to commit the underlying crime.

Manslaughter, a lesser offense, encompasses reckless or negligent killings, often resulting from reckless behavior or culpable negligence.

Infanticide, the killing of an infant within the first year of life, is often motivated by mental health issues, economic hardship, or social pressures.

Assisted suicide, or euthanasia, raises complex ethical debates surrounding the right to die and the role of medical professionals.

Serial homicide, involving multiple victims over time, is typically driven by psychological gratification, control, or attention-seeking.

Mass homicide, such as school shootings or terrorist attacks, involves multiple victims in a single event, often fueled by ideological or political motivations. Cultural and socioeconomic factors significantly contribute to homicide rates. For instance, areas with high poverty, unemployment, and social inequality tend to experience higher homicide rates.

Effective prevention and intervention strategies require a comprehensive understanding of these factors and types of homicide. Law enforcement, mental health services, and community programs can work together to address underlying causes and reduce homicide rates. Homicide is a complex issue with various forms and motivations. Understanding these differences is crucial for developing targeted solutions to prevent and mitigate the devastating impact of homicide on individuals, families, and communities.

Prometheus Fire versus Pandora's Box

The ancient Greek myths of Prometheus' fire and Pandora's box serve as cautionary tales, warning humanity of the dangers of unchecked power and the unforeseen consequences of our actions. These timeless narratives early parallel the complexities of modern warfare and the devastating repercussions that follow.

Prometheus, a titan, defied Zeus by stealing fire from the gods, symbolizing the pursuit of knowledge and power. This audacious act of defiance echoes the nuclear arms race, where nations relentlessly pursue military supremacy, fueling global tensions. Just as Prometheus' fire illuminated human existence, nuclear capabilities have empowered nations, granting them unparalleled destructive potential. However, this newfound power also introduces catastrophic consequences, threatening humanity's very survival.

Similarly, Pandora's box, opened out of curiosity, unleashed evil spirits, symbolizing the unforeseen consequences of human actions. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Arab Spring uprisings demonstrate how well-intentioned interventions can escalate into chaos. The rise of extremist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda has spread terror, much like Pandora's unleashed evils. These conflicts have spawned humanitarian crises, displaced millions, and destabilized entire regions.

The ongoing Ukraine-Russia war and the Israel-Palestine dispute exemplify the unending struggle for power and control. The fire of knowledge and power, once liberated, cannot be contained. Like Pandora's box, the consequences of war and violence continue to haunt humanity. The proliferation of nuclear weapons, cyber warfare, and drone technology has transformed the nature of conflict, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between combatants and civilians. The myths of Prometheus and Pandora serve as stark reminders of the dangers of unchecked ambition and the importance of considering the consequences of our actions. As we navigate the complex landscape of modern warfare, it is crucial that we learn from these ancient tales and strive for diplomacy, cooperation, and restraint.

Allegory of Cave: A Prison of Misconception

The Allegory of the Cave, a timeless philosophical metaphor by Plato, offers profound insights into the human condition, particularly in the context of war and conflict. This essay explores how the allegory underscores the importance of humanism, emphasizing our shared humanity and the need for unity in the face of division.

The Cave: A Symbol of Ignorance and Division

In the allegory, prisoners chained within a cave face shadows, believing them to be reality. Similarly, in times of war and conflict, we're often trapped by misconceptions, misinformation, and biases. These shadows represent the distorted narratives and enemy images that fuel hatred and violence. Nationalism, ideology, and fear are the chains that bind us, preventing us from recognizing our shared humanity.

The Escape: Realization of Shared Humanity

A prisoner breaks free, discovering the world outside the cave. This journey symbolizes the awakening to humanism, where individuals recognize their shared experiences, struggles, and aspirations. We realize that, despite differences, we're one blood, brothers, and sisters. Empathy and compassion

dissolve enemy images, and critical thinking challenges assumptions. This newfound understanding fosters a sense of global citizenship, transcending nationalistic and ideological boundaries.

Humanism: The Light of Unity

Humanism, the philosophical stance emphasizing human dignity, compassion, and shared values, is the light that guides us out of the cave. It reminds us that our differences are superficial, while our shared humanity is profound. By embracing humanism, we can:

- 1. Transcend nationalistic and ideological boundaries.
- 2. Recognize our shared struggles and aspirations.
- 3. Foster a global community, built on empathy and cooperation.

The Importance of Empathy and Compassion

Empathy and compassion are essential components of humanism, allowing us to understand and relate to others' experiences. In times of war and conflict, these qualities are crucial in:

- 1. Bridging divides and fostering dialogue.
- 2. Challenging enemy images and stereotypes.
- 3. Promoting peaceful resolution and reconciliation.

The Role of Education and Critical Thinking

Education and critical thinking are vital in escaping the cave of ignorance. By questioning assumptions and challenging misconceptions, we can:

- 1. Develop nuanced perspectives on complex issues.
- 2. Recognize propaganda and misinformation.
- 3. Foster a culture of empathy and understanding.

The Allegory of the Cave serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of humanism in times of war and conflict. By recognizing our shared humanity, empathy, and compassion, we can transcend division and strive for unity. As Plato aptly stated, "The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men." Let us break free from the cave, uphold humanism, and work towards a world where our shared humanity is the guiding light.

Conclusion

The Allegory of the Cave underscores the transformative power of humanism in overcoming war and conflict, illuminating a path to unity and understanding. By escaping the cave's shadows of ignorance and misconception, we recognize our shared humanity, foster empathy and compassion, and bridge divides. Critical thinking and education empower us to challenge assumptions and promote informed global citizenship. Ultimately, embracing humanism enables us to transcend nationalistic and ideological boundaries, addressing global challenges through collective action and cooperation, and forging a harmonious future where our shared humanity is the guiding force for peace, justice, and prosperity. Every human has one colour of blood, we are one to be brothers and sisters. I am not against the Israel, Russia, Gaza, Ukraine or any nations. But I am against human annihilation.