
The Human Image in the Global Age: Homo Non-Clausus

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1. Two Approaches to Human Beings

The question “what is a human being?” can be explored in two ways. One is to ask what is the nature of a human being beyond time and space, and the other is to ask what is the nature of a human being in given circumstances in a special time and space.

Many philosophers have talked about the nature of being human from an eternal point of view. For example, Plato in ancient Greece defined human nature as an “idea” based on dualism, while Karl Marx viewed man as a “working being,” and Ludwig Wittgenstein defined man as a “linguistic animal.” For Immanuel Kant, the question “what is human?” should be asked last, covering all philosophical inquiries: “what can humans know?”, “what should humans do?”, and “what may humans hope for?”

However, the metaphysical pursuit to define human nature is too abstract and so is unrealistic in view of the fact that human nature itself has been formed and transformed over the course of history. Against this context, Kant also separately envisioned anthropology from a practical point of view. “Practical” here means “useful in reality” or “useful to humans.” Therefore, “practical anthropology” is not a supersensible or metaphysical inquiry into the nature of human beings, but a search to understand human beings living in specific social-cultural relationships. In this empirical inquiry, the concrete situation discussed has crucial significance. The human image I present today belongs to this practical anthropology.

2. Information Revolution and a Global Village

We are in the midst of an information revolution that began about a generation ago. The information revolution is also referred to as the third revolution, after the agricultural and industrial revolutions. The development of information technology, which enabled the information revolution, has dramatically improved storage and processing capabilities related to information, primarily due to semiconductor technology representing the microelectronic revolution. With the addition of

telecommunication technology, information technology has become synonymous with technology for storage, processing, and transmission of information.

The information revolution has caused tremendous social transformation, and it has an overwhelming and inclusive influence on every aspect of people's lives. The most noticeable change due to the information revolution has been the de-emphasis of time and space. With the advent of the network society, the meaning of time and space has changed greatly. Long distances lose impact and long spans of time seem short. In a nutshell, the world has shrunk sharply. We are exposed to news from the "global village" all the time and communicate with people on the other side of the world as if they were close neighbors. As a result, the world has literally become a global village. We call this phenomenon globalization.

What does the phrase "global village" mean? It means humanity has become a neighborhood. Living together in one neighborhood means not only knowing and being close to each other, but also sharing ideas, collecting opinions, and cooperatively solving the problems of the village.

The greatest feature of globalization is the full-scale encounter and exchange between various civilizations. There have been encounters between civilizations in the past. However, these were intermittent and limited to adjacent civilizations. On the other hand, the encounter of civilizations in the era of globalization is an inevitable, holistic exchange that all civilizations are facing simultaneously. Approaches to understanding globalization can differ depending on how such an encounter is defined. Samuel Huntington advocated clashes between civilizations, and Harald Miller suggested the coexistence of civilizations, but I insist on the fusion of civilizations as a new paradigm to explain globalization. Clashes and coexistence theories not only fail to explain reality well, but also do not suggest any solution to the problem we face.

Just as we have become global citizens, the challenges humanity faces now should be considered global problems rather than local ones. Climate change, interception of infectious diseases, suppression of war risk, crime prevention, and economic growth are all problems that cannot be solved by one nation or one civilization. These issues cannot be solved easily, but a solution must nonetheless be found in any way possible. If these problems are not resolved, civilization may be at risk.

In order to solve these difficulties, all nations and all civilizations should share the knowledge and wisdom that human beings have accumulated so far, building a cooperative system together. Ultimately, we must establish a system to deal with these situations, but first we need to review our understanding of own consciousness and existence and change the image of humanity that we pursue.

3. Open Human Beings

Based on the logic of this situation, I would like to present homo non-clausus as a human image that we should pay attention to in our time. An "open" human being has three characteristics.

First, it takes an anti-dogmatic attitude. Dogma refers to a claim by authority that transcends logic. In the religious realm, this means the doctrines established by the Catholic church on the basis of supernatural revelation. Such doctrines does not permit criticism via reason. In the philosophical sphere, this indicates propositions claimed without justification by any philosopher or school. In other words, a proposition or argument that is uncritically and blindly believed by the authority of a dominant ideology constitutes dogma. Dogmatism refers to the attitude of claiming a particular doctrine as truth without a rational basis.

Religious or ideological fundamentalism is a typical form of dogmatism. In religious fundamentalism, only our own religion is believed to be right and good, while all other religions are false and evil. Ideological dogmatism not only promotes the ideology it advocates as truth but rejects critical discussion of the topic.

Second, an open human being takes an anti-exclusive attitude. In many cases, adopting dogma represents exclusion, and maintaining such a position is exclusivism. Why do we deny others? We think we are superior, and at the same time, view others as infringing on our own existence and interests.

The ideological roots of exclusivism can be traced back to the doctrine of “the chosen people.” The original meaning of “the chosen people” is based on the idea that God chose a particular people to rule the world. Today, this is reflected when people think of themselves as superior, even without reference to the religious root. Religious exclusivism and ethnocentrism are typical forms of exclusivism.

Ethnocentrism refers to the attitude of interpreting and evaluating the nationality or culture of other countries on the basis of their ethnicity or national culture. The term “ethnocentrism” first appeared as a term referring to a “personality that views his group as the center of everything, and measures and evaluates everything else on the basis of that group.” Ethnocentrism is used to distinguish between inner and outer groups and defined in a similar to a combination of patriotism and chauvinism. From a civilizational point of view, orientalism, which degrades and distorts oriental civilization, and occidentalism, which devalues western civilization, are representative examples of ethnocentrism.

The third hallmark of an open human being is an anti-fanatical attitude. A fanatic is someone with irrational, blind faith. The fanatical is similar to a crazy madness. If you are in a fanatical state, you will be indifferent to all but you own beliefs and willing to sacrifice any life, not to mention morality or social values, to accomplish what you believe. Losing reason and tolerance by being overconfident in beliefs is fanaticism.

Chauvinism and closed nationalism are kinds of fanaticism. Chauvinism maintains that the inherent traditions and cultures of one’s country are superior to other cultures, and closed nationalism devalues other nations with an emphasis on the excellence of one’s own nation. Today, chauvinism appears in various forms according to collective consciousness, expressing irrational aversion to opponents with extreme emphasis on the values of gender, race, and ethnicity.

4. Rediscovery of an Open Mind

I have defined the characteristics of an open human being as embracing anti-dogmatism, anti-exclusivism, and anti-fanaticism. These factors combine to form one personality trait. On the other hand, a closed human being is characterized by dogma, exclusion, and fanaticism. Since dogma, exclusion, and fanaticism are commonly referenced properties, I defined an open human image, using the negative attributes, anti-dogmatism, anti-exclusivism, and anti-fanaticism.

This distinction is very important because only an open human can create an open society and open civilization. Closed human can be said to have been necessary as a human image in the days when we lived in competition, divided as nations and civilizations. However, it cannot be stressed enough that the present situation is the opposite of this.

Also, I am not talking about open human beings on a purely categorical imperative level. Rather, I insist that we should rediscover such a potentiality for human beings.

Openness and closeness are original psychological terms used to describe the characteristics of an individual's mind or personality. If a person exhibits authoritarian, uncompromising, exclusive, and dogmatic characteristics in relation to others, we usually define him as having a closed personality. On the contrary, if he shows respect for equality, willingness to compromise, tolerance, and acceptance of criticism, he is defined as having an open personality. People with closed personalities tend to be more prone to impulse, lack logical consistency, and only evaluate others according to their own belief systems. On the other hand, people with open personalities are more rational, consistent in logical thinking, and positive despite differences in beliefs.

In this sense, open and closed minds represent two types of human mind that are incompatible with each other. Therefore, the struggle between open and closed minds began with the history of humanity. Open criticism and closed dogma have maintained a relationship of mutual confrontation and conflict from ancient to modern times.

Discussions on personal and psychological aspects of openness and closeness may be extended to socio-cultural dimensions. That is, open societies and civilizations are based on open minds, whereas closed societies are based on closed minds. Historically, whenever human beings encountered a crisis, dogmatism, exclusivism, and fanaticism stood out because they were thought to solve problems, as violence is sometimes thought of as a quick solution to a problem.

Nonetheless, it seems to be because open minds have triumphed over closed minds that human being has solved many problems and expanded from small local civilizations to a universal civilization. The difference between mankind and the apes is that we were able to create partnerships to solve problems. We won the competition against Neanderthals, who were better than us in some ways, by applying the ability to create larger communities. Now, we must apply this historical capability for the global community and create an open human image to overcome dogma, exclusion, and fanaticism.

Just as there is a well-known national mindset in the history of Korea called "Hongik," which

stands for and open human image, it is presumed that a basis for open mind and humanitarian thought is latent in each country and each civilization. I think finding, reinterpreting, and spreading these open minded images is one of the most important missions of humanists in our time.