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Questioning the Central Concept of Reification and Ontology of Human Dignity

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ABSTRACT

Reification designates a form of social consciousness. Here human relations as noted by Marx are identified with the idea behind the physical properties of material things. Hence, is regarded as natural and thus inevitable. This article centers on the systematic reconstruction of Marx's theory of reification in relation with the ontology of human dignity by so doing one attends to the value of significance, where the human person as an end itself is respected and valued even without material attachment. In this article, Marx's concept of reification is seen as the model for a more general theory of ideology

Keywords: *Reification, Ontology and Human Dignity*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of reification often appears in socio-political discourses, and the analysis that social and critical theorists often make about reification in relation to economic alienation or objectification. The idea of alienation or objectification is well-known, at least for those familiar with the socio-political philosophy of Karl Marx and Georg Lukacs. The notion of reification also appears in Heidegger's theory of technology, where the concept is explored in relations to the thingification of Dasein.

There is a sense in which the view of reification in the Heideggerian sense is linked to the Marxian understanding of the concept. (Lotz 2013,187). In sum, every analysis of reification is often discussed in relations to a generalized form of socio-economic interaction, where human beings now reduce themselves to objects of their labour or things, such that they now see their social interaction as the interaction of things. In order words, within the context of social interactions, human beings allow themselves to be controlled by the objects of their labor rather than them being in control.

It is indisputable that the idea of reification as explored in the Marxian political economy is an attempt to examine real human conditions that arise as a result of the interaction of commodities within social relations. It won't be out of place to argue that reification, within the Marxian context, 'is used to characterize the totality of social relations' (Lotz 2013, 185). However, the task of this paper is not to continue in the Marxian pattern of examining how human beings relates with themselves vis-à-vis of their labours, but rather to take a completely different perspective to evaluating the notion of reification, that is, within the context of the ontology of human dignity.

By ontology of human dignity, I am looking at dignity in relation to human nature and humanity. Drawing from Jeff Malpas-Kantian description of dignity, I view dignity as a notion that is inseparable from the ontological question of the nature of humanness-that is, what makes an individual a human being – "to attend to human dignity is to attend to the value or significance that belongs to human being" (Malpas 2007, 19).

Talking about dignity implies talking about our human nature. This is quite different from the idea of dignity "associated with aristocracy and social hierarchy, "dignified behavior" being an index of the conscious self-possession and social elevation of an individual" (Riley 2010, 143). In this paper, I will attempt to show that degradation or dehumanizing actions, like the Nazi holocaust or the sales of migrants in Libya, which are part of violation of human dignity, are all forms of reification.

The idea of reification, as used in this paper, thus, suggests – (1) the instrumentalization of humans as objects of use; (2) an ontological

disconnection of human beings from inter subjective nexus of humanity. In other to set up this argument in a more profound way, I will first briefly explore the notion of reification. This would give us an insight to the concept of reification, at least, for historical convenience. I will examine the Marxian, Heidegerian, Lukacsian, and Honnethian accounts. Each of these accounts would illuminate my account of reification, especially, Honneth's theory of recognition. It is pertinent to note that each of these accounts seem to agree that reification is a negatively construed concept, and it relates to how human beings treat themselves and others. But my account will look at a more ontological impact of dehumanization and degradation through the act of reification. To start, I will explore Marx and Lukacs' economic theory of reification.

Reification

The term Reification is from the Latin res "thing" and facere "make". Literarily the word concerns itself with the ability of making a thing, bringing something into being and or constructing a material force. It has a relation with the German Verdinglichung of making into a thing. In Philosophy scholars see the term as referring to the process of reconceptualization of the spiritual or more technically the immaterial and the abstract. This concept was adopted by Karl Marx to mean the process of social relation. Here, objects are transformed into subjects and vice versa. The resultant effect remains the passivity of subjects, and on the other hand objects are rendered as the active. Reification leads to epistemological fallacy of Hypostatization which is a term referring to results that exist from a supposition that whatever can be named, or conceived abstractly, must actually exist.

According to Gajo Petrovic in his A Dictionary of Marxist Thought defined reification as:

- The act (or result of the act) of transforming human properties, relations and actions into properties, relations and actions of man produced things which have become independent (and which are imagined as originally independent) of man and govern his life. Also transformation of human beings into thing like beings which do not behave in a human way but according to the laws of the thing world. Reification is a 'special' case of alienation, its most radical and widespread form characteristic of modern capitalist society.
- Hence, the concept tends to occur when specifically there are definite misconception of human creations hence are referred to "facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will". (Berger, Peter, & Luckmann, Thomas, 1966). Ideas on Lukács's adoption of the term in his History and Class Consciousness challenged this interpretation of the concept. Hence, reification implies for him that a pre-existing subject creates an objective social world which is then alienated from it.

Ontology

The etymology is the fusion of two the Greek words ontos, "Being" and logia "discourse" or "study" meaning logical discourse on the nature of being. Ontology hence is the philosophical study of being. It also includes within its realm not only being as being but also the concerns of being as an ontic reality. Questions as what does it mean to become? What is existence and what does it mean to exist? What constitutes reality? How can reality be categorized? Are considered by ontology as being the foundation of the truth of human analogies. The Concept is listed as foundational aspect of philosophy which exists within the framework of metaphysics.

Human Dignity

Human dignity refers to the inherent recognition of persons in relation to the respect that accrues to them in their nature as beings with body and soul. In this light it affirms the rights that human beings possess in themselves special values that are very intrinsic to their humanity and as such are worthy of respect simply because they are human beings. It is an inherent quality in all human beings as image of God. The implication of this inalienable quality is thus enshrined in the principle that every human being, regardless of age, ability, status, gender, ethnicity, etc., is to be treated with unreserved respect.

Economic Approach to Reification: Karl Marx and Georg Lukacs

The concept of reification has emerged mostly from social philosophical writings and underlies most critical social discourses, especially, those drawn from the Marxian philosophical orientation. In the Marxian philosophical discourse, the notion of reification is employed in relation to the idea of fetishism of commodity. The idea of Fetishism of commodity stems from the Marxian claim that human beings seem to attach themselves to the products of their labour, such

that they are from the commodities they have produced (1887, 48). In other words, human social interaction, which occurs as a result of economic transaction, is now perceived as a systemic interconnectedness of things (Berger and Pullberg1965, 199). This ontological mental alteration of human social consciousness results in reification because rather than seeing themselves as human beings, whose labours are the realization of their rational faculty, they rather perceive themselves as objects of labour.

Reification, in the Marxian sense, is the definitive characterization of a capitalist system, and it is the objective form of thought that drive the bourgeois economy. Helmut Reichelt explains that 'the objective form of thought' is not an inter subjective form of thought that arise as a result of transactional interaction or commodity exchange, rather, it is a form of thought that objectively exists in the form of the commodity (2002, 145). This is, thus, a kind of thought abstracted from economic exchange as depicted by a bourgeois economy (Marx 1887, 49). In the Capitalists system, thus, the value that is derived from all socio-economic interactions, are universal, social, practical and pure, but such value only appears as the existential properties of objects of labour, or of things, which now define social relations – relations of things.

Marx calls this thingification of social relations as a kind of fetishism of commodity, technically referred to as reification. To be reified, in Marx's view, is to be reduced to a 'thing'. A more extended interpretation of this Marxian view of reification is to express it as an act in which "…agents split off a part of their agency and convert it into a process with an independent dynamic…" (Sensat 1997,368). This reified process flows in such a way that it engulfs the agent.

Georg Lukacs explores the idea of reification in relation to social interaction from a more essentialist perspective. Marx views the commodification of human interaction as a kind of social interaction of things, Lukacs, however, believes8 that this thingification of social interaction is not just limited to the commodity and the thingified or reified object, but rather, it also permeates every facets of the society, and it is also reflected in 'every expression of life'. Reification is not just a quantitative reduction on the value of human beings as a result of interaction of their labour as Marx has suggested. Every objective and subjective facets of the society, in so far as they exist in a capitalist system, are objectified or reified in a qualitative way (1971, 84). Capitalism, according to Lukacs, thus, is perceived as a totality of existential expression with a reified essence. In the bourgeois economy, as Lukacs avers, "reification functions as a "universal structuring principle" which "penetrates society in all its aspects," including human subjectivity itself" (Burris 1988, 12).

Lukacs further notes that since reification takes the essence of the capitalist system, commodity, therefore, is very crucial in the subjugation of human consciousness. It is through this subjugation that reification expresses itself, in which human beings allow themselves to be enslaved by the products of their labour (1971, 86), but through false consciousness, they believe that they are in control of the outcome of their social relations. The tendency of the bourgeois economy is to continuously reproduce itself, and the more this economic reproduction persists, the more "…the structure of reification progressively sinks … deeply, more fatefully and more definitively into the consciousness of man" (1971, 93).

In Lukacs' account, Capitalism creates a sense of false consciousness, whereby, our perception of ourselves and our surroundings are distorted (Rock more 2018, 169). This sort of false consciousness caused by the capitalist economic structure of reification can only be reversed through the self-consciousness of the proletariats. The moment they are conscious of who they are, they can change their society through a revolutionary means.

In the Marxian-Lukacsian stance, reification is an economic concept that describes the nature of capitalist society, where individuals in such society perceive themselves as interacting things. Reification is thus a specific configuration of consciousness as well as a sociological phenomenon. It entails …the contemplative stance toward mechanical, rule-governed process, which functions independently of consciousness and beyond the influence of human activity, which appears as a completely enclosed system, alters the basic categories of the immediate stance of men to the world (Westerman 2010, 115).This implies that through reification, the human consciousness is distorted such that human activities become merely a kind of mechanistic, instinctual kind of activity, devoid of rational regulation.

Reification and Technology: Martin Heidegger

Heidegger uses the concept of reification to describe the relationship that exists between human beings (dasein) and technology, but not without reference to Karl Marx. Heidegger believes that the Marxian idea that in a capitalist system, everything, including human beings is construed as objects of labour, should not be viewed as a sort of discourteous assertation, but rather as a metaphysical deterministic expression, in which all existential entities take the form of things or objects of labour (2008, 243). This kind of materialism is fundamental aspect of the metaphysics of subjectivity. Materialism has its essence in the essence of technology. What is not clear at this point is whether reification is the outcome of technology (Lotz 2013, 193).

The concept of reification, which appeared in Heidegger's seminal work, Being and Time only four times, performs a very fundamental semantic role that permeates this masterpiece."Heidegger's central project in the… Being and Time is to set out in positive terms a view of ourselves qua minded beings that avoids a reification of the one or the other sort…"(Esfeld 2001, 48-9). Heidegger views reification as a sort of alienation of Dasein from its beingness and its transfiguration into a thing hood. To reify a being is to transform Dasein (human being) into a thing. But, this transformative act into a reified thing "…must have its ontological origin demonstrated if we are to be able to ask what we are to understand positively when we think of the unreified being of the subject or the person (Heidegger 1962, 42). In other words, it is worthwhile to discuss how human beings are estranged from their existential self, it is also pertinent to explore the ontological nature of an unreified being.

The task of this section is not to focus on what counts as an unreified nature of being, but to give a Heideggerian account of reification, in relation to his idea of being and technology. This would help us to make sense of what happens to our being in connection to humanity, through the dehumanization or the disrespect of the humanness of the other through persistent social pathologies like terrorism, racism, xenophobia (Oliveira2012, 41), and other acts that violates human dignity.

Heidegger's view of reification stems from the distinction between the being of the Dasein and the being of other existential entities, which do not possess the ontological features of Dasein. And, Heidegger explains that this distinction is very fundamental and illuminating because "It has long been known that ancient ontology works with 'Thing-concepts' and that there is a danger of 'reifying consciousness'" (Heidegger 1962, 437). But, what does this idea of reification entails? What is its source? What is the positive structure of a conscious being if its reified nature is unfitting to its nature? An understanding of the nature of Dasein helps to expose ontological contradiction that occurs through the reification of the Dasein.

Heidegger defines Dasein as "existent Being-in-the-world" (1962, 488). The beingness of Dasein enables it to conduct itself a harmonious co-existent way towards other existential entities, also towards itself. This comportment role of Dasein resonates a Kantian duty towards oneself and non-human nature. We ought to recognize ourselves as beings - rational and conscious, autonomous beings, whose task it is to treat ourselves and the nature around us with respect and care. The duty of comportment is also extended towards those we meet, because the Dasein isn't just a being-in-the-world but also a being-with-others. When Dasein begins to act not as an existent being, but as beings that are – material entities, Dasein makes itself into a thing. The issue of reification, in the Hedeggerian sense, is expressed, therefore, in the problematic ways which Dasein interacts with other existential entities, other beings and with itself as well as their shared mode of being (Oliveira2012, 42).

A more succinct analysis of Heideggerian view of reification could be made obvious when we assess Dasein's being in relation to technology. In his Letter on Humanism and The Question Concerning Technology, Heidegger does not mention reification, but his description of Dasein's interaction with technology clearly suggests a basic reference to the term. In his Letter on Humanism, for instance, Heidegger argues that the role of technology was meant to reveal the nature of being, because, as he argues, "Technology is in its essence a destiny within the history of Being and of the truth of Being" (Letter on Humanism: Basic Writings 1993, 244). The essence of technology is to express human rationality and capacity through the concretization of their consciousness and thoughts. But, as it is, "the technological man is delivered over to mass society, [and] kept … only by gathering and ordering all his plans and activities in a way that corresponds to technology" (Heidegger Letter on Humanism:

Basic Writings,1993, 255). So, rather than think of itself as the aletheia of being, or the essential nexus of humanity manifested through its technological advancement, Dasein reveals itself mere materiality or a material cause, and loses itself in the world of modern technology, and as object of its own labour (Lotz 2013, 194).

Reification as Non-Recognition: Axel Honneth

Honneth draws much inspiration from Heidegger, in recounting the interaction that exist between Human beings their subjective self, the existential entities external to them and to other persons. According to Heidegger, human beings ought to comport themselves vis-à-vis these three aspects of interactions. Honneth, in the same vein, argues that there is an ontological connection that exists between our subjective world, other humans and the objective world. He argues, however, that Heidegger's view of reification excludes social theoretical considerations, such that "…he never even made the slightest attempt to question the social roots of the ontological tradition he so thoroughly criticized" (2008, 31). These social theoretical considerations, which seem to consist of empathetic engagement and recognition, which, also form the nexus of this account of reification.

Honneth argues that recognition is very fundamental in developmental psychology, the absence of which new born babies won't be able to develop an attachment with their parents or their siblings, or even relatives. "For developmental psychology, emotional identification with a concrete second person is regarded as a prerequisite of all thought, without its being necessary, however, that we take a specific stance toward objects" (2008, 53). But how does this psychological manifestation or lack of it account for the notion of reification? According to Honneth, reification occurs when human beings loses their ability to empathetically engage with other individuals and social occurrences – "reification consists solely of a socially compelled neutralization of our antecedent stance of empathetic engagement" (2008, 55).

Reification also implies a sort of 'forgetfulness of recognition', which for Honneth, is very central in the act of reification, such that "…our social surroundings appear here, very much as in the autistic child's world of perception, as a totality of merely observable objects lacking all psychic impulse or emotion" (2008, 59). A practical way to forgetting to recognize others or the existential objects around us is to disregard the existential meaning other human beings accord to objects, in which they share some basic connection with. In the case of human beings, we reify others when we fail to recognize them or when we turn blind eyes to their circumstances. In order words, lack of empathy towards others implies reification. Honneth also believe that we can also reify ourselves; this is what I refer to as subjective reification. This occurs when we allow ourselves to be controlled by our psyche and emotional instincts, without being self-reflective. To substantiate this instance of self-reification is "…to think back to Aristotle's much too neglected discussions of "self-friendship" or "self-love" in the Nicomachean Ethics. His regard for the affirmative, benevolent mastering of one's own instincts and affects as a prerequisite of a successful self-relationship might also serve to illustrate the kind of relationship characterized by a recognitional stance toward our mental life" (2008, 67). Self-reification, therefore, suggests a loss of cognition towards once psychological disposition or well-being, in which case, such person allows them to be overwhelmed by their temperaments.

With Adorno, we could add that this antecedent recognition also means respecting those aspects of meaning in an object that human beings accord that object. If it is indeed the case that in recognizing other persons, we must at the same time recognize their subjective conceptions and feelings about nonhuman objects, then we could also speak without hesitation of a potential "reification" of nature. It would consist in our failing to be attentive in the course of our cognition of objects to all the additional aspects of meaning accorded to them by other persons. Just as is the case with the reification of other persons, a "certain blindness"80 is here at hand. We then perceive animals, plants, or things in a merely objectively identifying way, without being aware that these objects possess a multiplicity of existential meanings for the people around us.

Lotz argues that "Honneth's turn toward a psychologistic and normative grounding of the concept makes it unfortunately impossible to find a materialist basis for reification" (2013, 185). But I think that Honneth's psychological and normative approach to reification offers a rich framework through which we can explain another neglected aspect of reificationary discourse, which has to do with human dignity.

While Honneth seems to argue that the ill treatment experienced by some individuals suggest a kind of loss of recognition and lack of empathy attachment towards them, I wish to argue that a deeper understanding of these two important elements for social relations would helps us to account for the act of dehumanization or enslavement, or even oppressive tendencies, which Honneth's explanations seems to neglect.

Reification and Human Dignity

In the previous account, I explored Marx, Lukacs, Heidegger and Honneth's accounts of reification. While Marx and Lukacs views reification as a sort of economic objectification, Heidegger explains it as a kind of Dasein's attempt to loss its identity in its relationship with itself, the world and others. This idea seems connected to the view of Honneth, but Honneth believes that rather than limiting reification to a loss of Dasein's identity or the hiddenness of the Being of Dasein, reification ought to be understood within the framework of recognition and expression of empathy towards ourselves, others and objects of experience. Honneth's view of reification seems to suggest a kind of passive attitude of neglecting an individual in terms of needs.

In addition to this idea of reification, there is also another kind of social relation in which human beings are threated in a dehumanized form. For example, in the case of the new trade in Libya, where migrants are sold off for willing buyers, and most cases, their vital organs (mostly their kidneys) are harvested and sold off; this does not suggest just mere lack of recognition or expression of apathy but a deliberate infliction of pain and instrumentalization of these individuals for monetary gains. This view of reification leads us into understanding the relationship between human dignity and humanness.

The Ontology of Dignity and Our Humanness

An adequate exploration of the relationship between reification and human dignity would warrant understanding what implies by dignity and how it is linked to our human nature. Traditionally, there are different ways in which dignity has been construed. In the Thomistic sense, dignity has been construed as an attribute that underlies human nature drawn from a divine nature. To say that human beings have dignity, in Aquinas' thinking, is to claim that human beings are only sharing in the transcendental dignity of God (Q.29, Article 3). Karol Wojtyla corroborates this Thomistic description as follows: "to acknowledge the dignity of the human being means to place people higher than anything derived from them in the visible world" (1993, 178). The notion of placing implies treating human beings with utmost respect, and not as a kind of object, brutes. All human beings, thus, share in a common dignity in an equal basis, notwithstanding individual capacities, social status or gender. But the challenge with the Thomistic view of dignity is that it could be lost or gained depending on our spiritual relationship with God.

Dignity has also been viewed as The Aristocratic description of dignity refers to social stratification where people are distinguished based on social status. There is a kind of honour or prestige that goes with individuals who occupy certain ranks in the society. Dignity, in its aristocratic definition, is equivalent to honour and respect. "The German word Würdenträger [carrier of dignity] is a clear indication of such traditions" (Schroeder 2008, 233). Würdenträger does not suggest that dignity is something inherent; rather it is an indication that the position one occupies in the society goes with certain kind of honour or dignity, and that the carrier of the dignity is also expected to act in certain ways befitting the social status occupied. The problem the aristocratic interpretation of dignity is that it is a sort of title that is ascribed to human beings and could also be retrieved. One can lose one's in this sense defending on one's social status. In this sense, a slave, a prisoner, or even an economically disadvantaged person may not have dignity whereas Nobles or the affluent are ascribed with the title of dignity. This simply implies that not everyone has dignity.

The above analyses of dignity are inadequate because they seem to exclude some individuals as non-possessors of dignity. The account of dignity that is very relevant to this paper is one that is not grounded in social status or by the virtue of our spiritual link with the divine, but one grounded in the fact of our humanity. This view of dignity is expressed in the Kantian Humanity Thesis, which holds that we should not use ourselves or anyone else as means to an end, but as ends in themselves.

This Kantian sense of dignity points to an ontological nature of human beings, in which the notion of dignity is constitutive of human nature. It is not a feature that is derived as a result of our social status, neither is it a quality

that can be taken away. Because, to talk about the loss of dignity is to talk about the loss of our humanity, which is an absurd thing to say.

According to Jeff Malpas, "the question of human dignity is surely inseparable from the question of what it is to be human. This seems to be most obviously … as the concept of human dignity is closely related to the idea of human worth" (2007, 19). To speak about human dignity is to refer to a value that belongs to the human nature – the being of humans as such. The connection between dignity and human nature is an ontological link in that it is what defines being human. So, whereas all existential things like animals, plants or inanimate objects could be addressed as being valuable or useful, only human being are regarded as beings with dignity. This is not a kind of entitlement but an expression of what makes us human beings.

There is often a controversy about what makes us human? This question may seem trivial, but it is a metaphysical question because it looks beyond the physiological or biological description of the individual and explores the essential aspect of being human. There is a claim that what makes us humans is our capacity to reason and to make autonomous moral decision. This kind of reason is plausible at the first instance, because, it essentially distinguishes us from every other existential entity.

At least, a human being can be distinguished from dogs because dogs cannot reason neither can they make moral decision (Riley 2010, 144-145). But, grounding dignity on rational capacity to think and to make informed decision suggests an exclusion of those who are unable to express this capacity. According to Gloria Zuniga, "the rationality criterion of dignity does not recognize the dignity of infants, children, the elderly suffering from dementia, and the mentally ill, since no person by this description is either fully rational or autonomous and they are… (2004,120). Another implication of a rationality construed dignity implies that if someone loses her capacity to reason, like in the case of a demented patient, such person may be having lost his dignity.

Just as Kant asserts, dignity is an intrinsic moral worth, and every human being irrespective of social status, physiological development and mental state, possess dignity. This view of dignity could be deepened through the exploration of the noumenal and phenomenal distinction. It is, therefore, necessary to say that while dignity is a necessary phenomenon in our understanding the notion of morality, it is not restricted to … concrete deeds of moral action and the actual capacity to carry them out—be it biological, social or psychological—but instead in the fundamental (prinzipiell) capacity to act morally, which, according to Kant every human being possesses as a transcendental quality (Rothhaar 2010, 254).

You are not respecting someone just because he will reciprocate but because he is a person. This respect is not restricted to only rationally capable human beings, but everyone classified as a person, including demented patients, embryos and new born babies. Kant corroborates this fact as follows: "The offspring is a person, and … from a practical point of view it is a quite correct and even necessary Idea to regard the act of procreation as one by which we have brought a person into the world without his consent and on our own initiative…"(The Metaphysics of Morals 1991, 98-99). Assuming that Mr Pee is a rationally capable person and Mr Tee is a demented patient, Mr Pee is morally obliged to respect Mr Tee and treat him empathetically and also ensure that he is not treated like an object, even though Mr Tee may not be mentally capable to reciprocate. The same applies to embryos and new born babies.

Markus Rothhaar makes a plausible justification of this claim by analyzing Kant's distinction between homo noumenon (noumenal being) and homo phenomenon (phenomenal being). As homo phenomenon, human beings are subject to natural causality, and are not distinct from other existential entities. For instance, human beings, giving their sensual features shared by other animals, have instinct for sex, aggression, hunger, and so on. Within this frame of beingness, human beings lack the capacity to express free-will and rationality, as all their actions are regulated by causal laws (2010, 253). Human dignity belongs to human beings, only as they exist as homo noumenon. Kant defines homonoumen on as free persons who are subject to the universal legislation of reason. This does not imply that Homo noumenon exists independent of empirical properties, because the realm of the noumen on is a realm of rational determination shared by all human beings as such. Kant adds that the idea of an end-in-itself, which for him is the principle of humanity, is not derived from experience but from the noumenal realm, a realm which inhabits freedom, objectively conforms to the moral laws

derived through practical reason. Since it is derived from the realm of intelligibility, it is universal, that is, it is applied to all rational beings; and the end, which humanity represents, is not a subjective end, limited to individual persons and determined by inclination, but an objective end, which arises from pure reason.

DEHUMANIZATION AS REIFICATION

In the preceding section, I x-rayed the notion of dignity that is grounded in our humanity. I argued that the notion of dignity is grounded in the fact of our human nature. To possess dignity is to be human. How does reification affect our nature as humans? Or, how does reification affect human dignity? Given that dignity defines human nature, it means that treating human beings as objects of use, or in a way that is despicable (for instance- racial abuse or xenophobic or terrorist attack, or even enslavement, or articles for commercialization), implies dehumanizing or violating the dignity of such person. This sort of treatment suggests a kind of reification because the victim is treated no more as a human being but as something that could be manipulated or utilized for some benefits, or that could be abused.

Reification, therefore, touching the core of the human nature, that is, it touches our dignity. This is not to say that when someone reified through dehumanization (for instance, the Nazi experimentation), that the person is merely being disrespected, or the reifier does not express the moral duty of being empathetic or that she lacks the capacity to recognize the person as human. What happens when an individual is reified is that the reifier first refuses to acknowledge the reified individual as being part the inter subjective nexus of humanity. Such person is ontologically reduced to something other hand human. When someone is sold, and his organs are harvested for commercial purposes, Both the one who sales and the buyer do not see the sold individual as human but only an article for commercial transaction. That is why such individuals are often referred to as slaves. The notion of slave depicts a status accorded to those perceived as less humans.

This act of enslavement and dehumanization is a kind of Honnethian forget fullness of recognition, that is failure to see the reified individual as an individual that ought to be respected, or a disconnect from the ontological inter connectedness of humanity- an ontological exclusion. And, as Stephen Riley rightly points out, reification points to the "…admixture of anthropology and metaphysics that dignity brings to bear on politics and law" (2010,158). In order words, the essence of dignity is to connect human rights with the conscious inclination to resist, or to be aware of one's vulnerability.

However, when an individual is reified, such individual is ontologically split, such that her Anthropos nature is severed from his metaphysical or essential nature, from which his dignity is grounded. This is not to say that dehumanization entail loss of dignity. One does not lose dignity but only experience a violation of dignity, even though such violation impugns her humanness. In order words, reification, apart from depicting a lack of care and recognition, it also depicts a kind of privation or negation of our human essence as morally worthy beings.

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