

Time of Covid. Fear, Weakness, Uncertainty in the African Experience.

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Abstract

The time of Covid is characterised not only by fear, weakness, and uncertainty but also by how different societies and individual persons in the world have faced these challenges, the lessons the people have learnt from past similar issues and lessons for future concerns and possibilities. The pandemic which erupted in Wuhan, China, was controlled by the Chinese people at a similar speed with which it had erupted. Two storied makeshift hospitals, one with 1,000 beds and the other with 1,500 beds were constructed in the record time the world will live to remember. The way the country is organised also helped, but the economic muscle and the technological advancement were vital in stopping the spread of the pandemic. These measures were reassuring (*Quod issti et istae, cur non ego?*). Thus, elsewhere, particularly in Europe, Asia, the Americas, and North Africa the virus spread like fire, but the quick response from American leadership, WHO, other world leaders and organisations gave hope to humanity. The spread of the virus was found to be through people's movements, mainly air traffic, thus leading to the border closures and countries' lockdowns. This phobophobia exacerbates the fear created by closedowns. People who could not travel home were left in fear and helpless in foreign locked down countries. Introduced measures of quarantining people for two weeks created more fear. Curtailing movements affected the people's comfort zones and means of livelihood, thus creating more uncertainty and fear. At individual level, fear, weakness, and uncertainty are increased by the non-performing institutions.

Keywords: Covid, Pandemic, Awareness, Psychological Disposition, Fear, Weakness, Uncertainty, Collective Memory, Quarantine, Phobophobia, Colonisation.

Introduction

The sudden appearance of COVID-19, its quick spread, strange attacks, and slow but sometimes quick deaths have locked the world under fear and exposed the world's weakness and uncertainty. In this paper, I examine these phenomena and the subsequent changes in the world, focusing on the fear that the pandemic has spread in Africa, including my four-fold personal direct experiences with the pandemic. Then, I delve into the reactions to the pandemic, mainly of governments, particularly the novelty of the enigmatic lockdowns. In certain countries, people's movements were stopped in order to manage the pandemic and its spread. Such and similar measures have affected people and societies. I take special interest in the fear that the sudden measures have brought to urban dwellers, who depend on markets for food. Similar fear is shared by the sick, many of whom have helplessly died in their houses. Some pregnant women have delivered without medical assistance. Others have lost their lives. The fear haunting the pregnant – awaiting their turn, and aware of little improvement in the facilities – is inconceivable. I examine the fear brought about by the uncertain future. Any society secures its future by educating the young. The pandemic has made the educational system totally confused, unpredictable, and unreliable. I look into the plight of the future society with people able to study abroad, others studying online, and the majority locked up in their houses where even listening to a radio is an unaffordable luxury. I focus on the predicament of the naturally free people now forced to look at each other's' face till hatred intervenes. I pay special attention to the families that depend on a bread earner, now locked up where they cannot reach him or her, and then the domestic violence that has ensued in many families due to the pandemic.

While these and more occurrences may be shared by all people all over the world, I single out Africa whose status in this world is special. The racism that grew in Europe, directed against Blacks, Jews, and Roma, or Gypsies, ended up being seriously suffered by Africans in America, Africa, and other parts of the world. Clear documentary evidence shows how Blacks have been lynched, hanged, shot, poisoned, sentenced to death, tortured to death and murdered in many other ways simply because of their skin color. In this paper, therefore, I look at how the bad relationships are made worse by COVID-19.

Regardless of the COVID-19 great scare, Africa is relatively calm. In order to explain this calmness, I discuss the African

quandary of the untold suffering through which people became traumatised and the extraordinary faith that keeps them afloat. I once listened to a misguided racist argue that Africans have nothing except God. I have listened to some similarly wrong views that Africans embrace modern religious life for material and monetary benefits, wondering why many are Franciscans, how many own merge churches, among other questions. The explanation for African religiosity is the transcendentalism that is far beyond material and monetary values. The complexity of the world views within which Africans understand life and live, the holistic approach to life, the belief systems that define human relations and life style, the unshakeable human values that defy temptations of material and monetary values, among other aspects of traditional life, and how they sustain people's hopes amidst challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic.

This leads me to the discussion of the erosion of the fundamentals of life, like values, at the hands of philosophers, like Nietzsche and non-philosophers, like Max Weber. Other philosophers, like Kant, regard Mind as the sole explanation of everything. This has led to Constructionism, according to which everything, including life itself, is a human construct. Existentialism and similar philosophical positions that reduce life to meaninglessness have thrown human beings into an unfathomable abyss where anxiety, fear and anguish have no solace. When COVID-19 attacks such people without hope in Divine intervention or life after death, sheer despair reigns.

The Pandemic Outbreak

The first outbreak of COVID-19 was reported in Hubei, China. The first case of the disease was reported in Wuhan on 31st December, 2019. COVID-19, therefore, means corona virus disease of 2019. On January 5, 2020 WHO issued a statement that 5 days earlier they had been informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan, Hubei province. On 23.01.2020 authorities sealed off Wuhan, a city of 11 million people. By then, transmission from person to person had been confirmed. On 30.01.2020, WHO declared a public health emergency of international concern. China had already reported 9,692 cases and 213 deaths. 20% of the patients were seriously ill. On 11. 2020, WHO announced the official name of the novel disease: COVID-19. The disease had been detected in 20 other countries, but majority patients were in China. By 27th March, 2020, the pandemic was reported to have spread to 177 countries, Europe being the

epicenter.¹⁴² The disease was compared to the previous severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-COVID-2), and speculations were that it would ebb with warm weather. This made people believe that hot countries, like Africa, would be spared. Data from COVID-19 Data Repository of the Johns Hopkins Center for Systems Science and Engineering, Biltmore, MD, USA, was used to plot the cumulative number of cases since the diagnosis of both the first patient and the first 5 patients by country, both in Europe and Africa. At the time of writing this paper, end of October, 2021, 05 million deaths have been reported, but it is widely believed that the real numbers could be thrice as many. Either way, this is the biggest number of deaths caused by a pandemic and it has not yet ended.

General Fear and Panic Due to COVID-19

COVID-19 is highly contagious. It is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome. Its symptoms included fever, cough, headache, fatigue, breathing difficulties, and loss of smell and taste. The symptoms begin from one to fourteen days after the exposure. The unable to breathe victims, reported through mass-media, left the world quaking. Respirators, too, and the patients' struggle for life underneath them looked dreadful. But, even more dreadful to majority people in the world was the idea of respirators' availability, let alone affordability, and the general treatment. The disease was everywhere, but not everywhere could it be managed. Many live at the mercy of nature, but COVID-19 had to be managed or else sure death was waiting around the corner. The best example of COVID-19 management was China which built 2 new hospitals within 10 days and isolated other places to deal with the pandemic. On 03.02.2020, a 1,000-bed hospital was ready, and yet another one, of 1,500 beds, was also ready on 08.03.2020, after only 5 days. 40 other hospitals and 16 make shifts were set apart to fight the virus war. On 10.03.2020 President Xi of China declared that the disease had been "basically curbed." While different medical measures throughout the world had been taken, the fear could not be conquered. The continued scary aspect of the disease was its being asymptomatic. In medicine, any disease is classified as asymptomatic if a patient tests as carrier of a disease or infection but experiences no symptoms. This clinical silence is very dangerous for the spread of the disease unknowingly. Its realisation

¹⁴² E. Dong, H. Du, and L. Gardner, "An Interactive web-based dashboard to track COVID-19 in real times," *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* 20, no. 5 (2020): 533-534, [https://www.doi.org/10.1016/51473-3099\(20\)30120-1](https://www.doi.org/10.1016/51473-3099(20)30120-1).

became a big source of fear of COVID-19. No one could be sure of anyone else. This was mainly true of travelers. Couples that had not met over a period were forced to quarantine before they reunited.

Central and Western Africa

In West Africa, the first confirmed case came later than the one in Europe, but once confirmed, numbers expanded fast. The particular concern was Burkina Faso and Senegal where the rates were similar to those in Italy and Spain. In Senegal, the first 3 cases of community transmission were confirmed on 21.03. By 27.03, they had shot up to 119.

West Africa, generally, was prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic by the 2014 Ebola pandemic, but the poverty factor is of special significance. Despite the rich natural resources, most West African countries have fewer than 05 hospital beds per 10,000 of the population and fewer than 02 medical doctors per 10,000 of the population.¹⁴³ Half of all the West African countries have per capita health expenditures of less than 50 USA dollars.¹⁴⁴ This may be contrasted to Italy and Spain with 34 and 35 hospital beds, respectively, per 10,000 of the population, 41 medical doctors per 10,000 of the population, and 2840 and 2506 US dollars, respectively, per capita expenditure.

West Africa has a young population assumed not to be susceptible to COVID-19. However, rates of other risk factors are similar to those in Europe, e.g., 27% of Gambians have hypertension and 06% have diabetes. Rather than the climate, the reason for COVID-19 starting later in West Africa is generally believed to be the limited international air traffic.

Northern Africa

The idea of international air traffic could be corroborated by Northern Africa. The Maghreb is more globally connected than Africa South of the Sahara. Besides being connected to Western and Asian countries, the Maghreb is part of the Arab world. There are also more intra-flights within the Maghreb than the rest of Africa. The COVID -19 cases in countries like Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco were, right from the beginning, comparable to those in Europe and the Middle East. There were stories of some North

¹⁴³ “Global Health Observatory,” WHO, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.who.int/data/gho>.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Africans working in China having returned for Christmas holidays already infected. However, the flights among them and between them and both the Middle East and Europe could be a more plausible explanation of the fast circulation of the pandemic. Reporters tend to combine Northern Africa and Middle East Countries in their Covid-19 reports. For example, on 17th March, 2021, new cases were reported to be 9,535 in Jordan, 766 in Tunisia, and 466 in Morocco.

Eastern and Southern Africa

When COVID-19 invaded the world, one of the quick reactions was searching for a vaccine. Jean-Paul Mira, a French researcher, made a racist statement: "If I can be provocative, shouldn't we be doing this study in Africa, where there are no masks, no treatments, no resuscitation?" He compared this to some AIDS studies, "In prostitutes, we try things because we know that they are highly exposed and that they do not protect themselves."

When a COVID-19 vaccine trial was based at the University of Witwatersrand, Shabir Madhi, Professor of Vaccinology, and leader of the New COVID-19 vaccine trial in South Africa stated, "It is important that vaccines be tested in Africa to see how they perform in the local context."¹⁴⁵ In reacting to this, and similar ideas and utterances, Phapano Rasha, the protest organiser against the University of Witwatersrand vaccine trials had this to say, "The narrative we get is that our continent is a dumping ground. First ensure it works elsewhere before bringing it to Africa."¹⁴⁶

Fear of COVID-19 in Africa

The protest organised by Phapano Rasha was, clearly, out of fear. Fear of COVID-19 in Africa, like anywhere else, is caused, mainly, by stories about the manner in which the virus kills. In the global village, the stories are corroborated by scary scenes in Bergamo, North Italy. They become real and tangible. One vividly sees hospitals full of the infected. Mortuaries teeming with dead bodies. Burials being replaced with burning bodies. In Brazil, bodies lie out there with no one to bury or burn them. In India they burn bodies till they run out of fire wood. Leading countries like USA, UK, and mainland Europe, this time, lead in infections and deaths.

¹⁴⁵ Cara Anna, "Protest against Africa's 1st Covid-19 vaccine test shows fear," accessed July 1, 2021, <https://pulitzercenter.org/people/cara-anna>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Then the idea sinks. What is going to happen to dry wood? Who will be there for me, when the time comes? The alarming speed of attack – you are with someone who is not complaining about anything – within no time he cannot breathe and dies. The invisibility of the virus scares most. How can you be sure it is not you, next? How can you be sure of whoever you meet? Unrealistic ideas, such as keeping a distance, become ridiculous. They sound like a rude joke in congested places where people squeeze together in tiny spaces, without an alternative. If they walk away from each other during the day, what happens at night? Where do they go to sleep? Washing hands and sanitising, too, sound strange. Water and soap are not available to all. What are sanitisers? And, if you clean your hands, who cleans the air? Wearing a mask is a farfetched luxury, too. No wonder many think COVID-19 is fake news till it catches up with them.

Fear in Africa is not only part of life but is also multi-dimensional. COVID-19 is an added item. Unlike the rest of the world, Africans, everywhere, endure untold suffering and brutality. They have cause to live in fear. The racism that started in Europe ended up turning whites into being worse than beasts against their fellow human beings simply because they were of a different color. Through lynching¹⁴⁷ alone, according to Tuskegee, 4,743 black people were killed between 1881 and 1968. Tuskegee, in Macon County, Alabama was founded in 1833 by General Thomas Simpson Woodward, a Greek war veteran under Andrew Jackson, and made the County seat that year. It was incorporated in 1843. In 1881 Tuskegee College for the Blacks was founded and on 4th July, Booker T. Washington became its first black Principle. Today, it is a university for 100% minority groups, mainly Blacks with some Asians. While statistics based there tell us about the past, today we see those shot on a daily basis, even knelt on the neck till they cannot breathe and die. Vivid Movements like Black Lives Matter are in vogue. When COVID-19 erupted, there were stories of neglected Africans, even in hospitals, till they died. There were also stories of deliberately smearing the virus on the door lock knobs to infect whoever opened the door. More heinous acts included abandoning black patients till they died, including a doctor who had saved other people's life. It was due to such open racist attitude that

¹⁴⁷ Lynchings were violent public acts that white people used to terrorize and control black people in the 19th and 20th centuries. They entailed hangings from trees, torture, mutilation, decapitation, desecration, burning alive in celebration of white supremacy.

many doubted the origin of COVID-19, questioned the genuineness of the vaccine, and feared both.

It is important to note that there was, and still is, a vigorous campaign against allegations to reduce the world population. Campaigns against the COVID-19 vaccination claim that the infusion is not intended to protect but to kill. Many thinkers, regardless of country of origin, faith, and any other differences have vehemently argued against the COVID-19 vaccination. They have also argued that COVID-19 itself is man-made. There is a master plan and hidden agenda, similar to HIV-AIDS. Naturally, these have instilled fear and delivered weakness, uncertainty, anxiety.

As a result, in Africa, the scare was not taken lightly. Rasha, who organised the protest against the vaccine trials at the University of Witwatersrand trials, could have demanded that those interested in the vaccine first ensure the vaccine works elsewhere before bringing it to Africa due to the Guinea pig idea. However, the protest could also have been out of fear that the whole exercise was intended to kill the innocent and unsuspecting people.

In Eastern Africa, the late President Magufuri of Tanzania, a Chemist, seriously doubted COVID-19. He went ahead to organise the testing of a variety of things, including animals, birds, and plants and, surprisingly, some were found to be positive and others negative. Yet others produced undecided results. How a fruit like a pawpaw could test positive with COVID-19 was a big puzzle. Tanzania rejected the virus saga. There have not been any statistics of the infected, the cured, and the dead from that country, although neighboring countries, like Uganda, claim to have had COVID-19 cases from the country. Some deaths also have been reported there, and protective measures are practiced, but not as rigorously as in neighboring countries like Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. Burundi, too, is relaxed.

These various national responses to COVID-19 remain at the level of ideology. An ideology is a belief system that underpins a political or economic theory. Ideologies form the operating principles for running a society. However, fear is personal. Whenever there is an alarming situation, people become anxious. Anxiety feelings are natural, but stress can exacerbate the feelings. Although one can feel anxious without anxiety, being anxious is different from the occasional worries and can lead to a mental illness. I narrowly escaped such anxiety when the epidemic erupted. We had successfully completed our international conference at Wuhan, where I had delivered a key-note speech. It had been a pleasure meeting academics from all over the world, and students, including three from home. I enjoyed the company and the

encouraging reactions to my presentation. Before flying back, a young Chinese, who was part of the organising team, offered to take some of us around Wuhan.

The original target was the great museum, but the lines were too long. He then took us to the famous market. I have not seen a bigger one elsewhere. Seeing streams of people alone is captivating enough. The shops and all manner of goods cannot be exhaustively toured in one visit. I admired the order all around, bought traditional tea and some souvenirs before returning to the hotel, where vehicles to take us to the airport were lining up. No sooner had I arrived home than the terrible news about COVID-19 in Wuhan went viral. This was the very place where I had just been. The market – the allegedly real source of the virus – was where I bought the things still parked in my bags. Was I safe? I reflected on the matter and decided not to share my anxiety with anyone. How could I be sure I would not be quarantined, if the scared people learnt about what I could have brought along? If I was scared of myself, what about them? But, hiding the ‘truth’ would not save me, anyway, let alone those I would infect. The wisest thing was to keep quiet, but keep a distance from others. The information I had carefully followed revealed that within two weeks one would know one’s fate. I followed mass-media daily reports and watched out for symptoms. Even when I saw none, I was not sure till I joined my family in Europe where the usual general examination revealed nothing to worry about. Before then, however, I had suffered the ordeal of a 14-day quarantine before I could greet my family. But this was nothing in comparison with a later experience that I regard as the worst. It has left an indissoluble mark on me. This was the closure of borders just after I had crossed from Uganda to neighboring Kenya. There was no money on my bank account and I could not return home.

I always use this personal experience to ponder the plight of helpless people. When we are overwhelmed by fear of the unknown, we feel as if we are groping in the dark where anything can happen anytime. We can easily fall in the pit we do not see, or bang something. Ironically, even when there is nothing at all, we do not know, and so remain tensed up. It is no wonder, therefore that the COVID-19 scare has resulted into mental health issues. People are not only anxious about falling sick and dying, but also about the future which is threatened by disruption of institutions, systems. In order to stop, or at least, control the spread of the pandemic, specific areas, or even whole countries have been shut down. This has affected important areas like the economy. In a society, people depend on one another. One’s work facilitates the work of the

others. This intertwinement can be exemplified by transport which facilitates all movements. But transport relies on stations for fuel and garages for mechanics. Schools and institutions of higher learning need transport. Employees need such transport to get to their places of work and back home. All these need materials for their work. Those who supply goods need transport. Tourism and other forms of tax base need transport. All these converge at eating and drinking places together with places of relaxing entertainment. COVID-19 has defied the traditional belief that no man is an island. Everyone is isolated from everyone else. Restrictions range from national boundaries to regions, districts, till families and social distances of mere meters.

The worst fear of COVID-19 is not only the mysterious nature of the virus, the strange way it attacks, and the speed at which it kills, but also its sudden appearance and quick spread. It is due to these factors that governments were forced to enforce the lockdowns that made all public activities shut down. These sudden changes are a real scare. Due to the changes, people's means of livelihood dwindle and slow down, slowly but steadily, till society tilts to a halt. The people, mainly in urban areas, who depend on market places as sources of food are bound to starve to death, unless special intervention takes place. The sick cannot access medical services. Pregnant women deliver without assistance. It is difficult to comprehend the fear experienced by such desperate people. The educational system becomes chaotic. The same society ends up being divided into the facilitated who continue studying either abroad or through online learning and those who forget all about school. Social relations change or even sour. Some families have one bread earner who moves from home to home with assistance. The pandemic imprisons such a person in one place, thus causing untold suffering and anxiety. But those who stick together are not free of conflicts. The African idea that *omujumbi gutasyaire gurugamu ninkwosya*, i.e., when heavy rains that curtail people's movements take long to stop, the huddled together peaceful people fight. Indeed, unexpected domestic violence, due to the pandemic, has been reported in many places.

The worst hit and the most scared, therefore, appear to be business people, particularly those who secured bank loans to construct buildings and run businesses that have shut down. Some constructed big malls with big bank loans and fully stocked them using more loans. They may not even know the fate of the buildings and their contents, as they are restricted in their homes. Others put up big hotels and expensively equipped them in anticipation of tourists and local revelers that are no longer available. Some, in the

tourism industry, invested in vehicles that can no longer move to take anyone anywhere. Many others invested in education by building schools and other institutions that have become closed and redundant. Recently, videos revealed how of them having been reclaimed by nature. Many of the redundant and unpaid teachers have changed profession, and will no longer go to class. After such a long time at home – without the strict control offered by schools – some students, particularly girls, have succumbed to misconduct. Many pregnancies have been reported, throwing society into panic about the future of these young girls and the baby boom. Certain experiences, or deep thinking can reveal fear, in advance, and lead to fear of this fear. When people attend funerals, or when they see what their neighbors are going through, or when they watch TV, listen to radios, read papers, or even hear rumors, they see their eventual turn and die a hundred times before their death. Some fear the mortuary coldness, forgetting bodies are cold. They fear the soil thrown into the grave. Forgetting the dead are dead. COVID-19 has exacerbated this fear of fear, or phobophobia.

The Most Affected Countries in Africa

The widely held view that COVID-19 was mainly spread through movements like air traffic appears to be true of Northern Africa. By October, 2021 Egypt had 881 new infections and 45 deaths per day, followed by Libya with 520 infections and 16 deaths, then Ethiopia with 480 infections and 19 deaths, South Africa with 408 infections and 45 deaths, and Morocco with 289 infections. The Republic of Congo and Somalia, too, have high rates of infections. Uganda is rated the most successful in controlling COVID-19, but there are complaints about the shutdown that has affected, education, business and the economy, general social life, among other things.

WHO Vaccination Set Target and Its Results

On 25th May, 2021, Jenny Lei Ravelo quoted WHO Director General, Tedros Adhanon Ghebreyesus address to the 74th World Health Assembly, calling upon countries to support a set vaccination push, “I am calling on member states to support a massive push to vaccinate at least 10% of the population of every country by September, and a drive to December to achieve our goal of vaccinating at least 30% by the end of the year.”

The WHO goal of vaccinating 250 million people on four months, 40% of the world population by the end of 2021, and 70% of

the same population by mid-2022 was tried by some countries, but became a problem for others. Part of the problem was Covax falling short of the targets. Only 311 million doses were delivered to about 140 countries. Successful ones included Portugal with 84% of the population vaccinated, followed by Canada with 71%, UK with 67%, and USA with 56%.

By 30th September, however, 50 countries, world-wide, had missed the target. Of these, the surprise was Taiwan, which is wealthy, the delayed delivery program placed the country among those who had not met the! 0% of the population vaccination. The others failed due to the prevailing wars. These include Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Myanmar. In Africa, only 15 out of the 54 countries, met the target. Worse still, half the Continent has less than 02% of its population vaccinated. Even big ones like are lagging behind. Egypt has only about 05% of the population vaccinated, and both Ethiopia and Nigeria have less than 03% of their population vaccinated. Worst of all, Burundi and Eritrea have not yet rolled out the vaccination program.

The 15 successful countries in Africa include Seychelles, 72%, Mauritius, 62%, Morocco, 48%, Tunisia, 28%, Cape Verde, 23%, Comoros, 20%, Eswatini, 18%, Lesotho, 15%, Zimbabwe, 14%, Botswana, 14%, South Africa, 14%, Rwanda, 13%, Mauritania, 12%, Equatorial Guinea, 11%, and Sao Tome and Principe, 11%.

Weakness and Uncertainty

Fear, weakness, and uncertainty are intertwined. One who is weak tends to be uncertain. One who is uncertain is prone to being scared. Weakness can be physical, intellectual, and spiritual. Weak species naturally shy away from strong ones. Once beaten, twice shy. An African saying brings out this very strongly, *okukira aita sho ahungura nyoko*, i.e., someone stronger can kill your father and get married to your mother. But this is not to celebrate brute force. The same African setting cautions the would-be brutes through revenge and avenge successes, such as when the bereaved and forced into marriage woman eventually eliminates the murderer. The woman's endurance and subsequent plotting demonstrate mental and spiritual strength. The eventual execution of the plot demonstrates the weakness of the perceived strong bully. Practically, the combination of fear, weakness and uncertainty can be demonstrated in the act of a coward killing a snake, using a heavy object and all his strength, even when poor reptile is tiny, with eyes closed, and missing the target, destroying objects, like expensive China, as he jumps and dances around, as if the snake is

about to bite him. This type of weakness, uncertainty and fear is a big problem in society. A coward who suspects a neighbor will do anything before the non-existent plot is executed. Coward leaders spare no perceived enemy.

Weakness, uncertainty, and the associated fear can, universally, be demonstrated by death - the equaliser. The African wisdom on this is that *tihabaho omereera*, i.e., no one can live forever. *Tihabaho otumayo ondiyo*, i.e., no one can send *their* someone else. True. Many kills. But when it is their turn to go, they simply go. The pandemic has shown many that this is true. Similar events, particularly WWI and WWII, destroyed life and property. Many were killed and others maimed. Strange diseases, destruction of economies, and other humiliations reduced big and small to desperation. There are life time lessons taught by such episodes as the Canossa Walk during the 1077 Investiture Controversy. If freely climbing those steep steps on one's feet is a scare, one can imagine the ordeal of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV (11.11.1050 – 07.08.1106) on his knees, seeking absolution and the revocation of his excommunication. What would one see if one were to look through the feelings of Pope Gregory VII (Ca. 1015 – 25.05.1085) and Pope Francis? There are also lessons from the humiliating and most fatal pandemic recorded in history, i.e., the Bubonic Plague, Pestilence, or Black Death that killed 75 – 200 million people (1346 – 1353). Like our COVID-19, Black Death affected all members of society. Near Canossa, there is a huge Cathedral with moving historical records like the vanity of an Italian painter who included himself in the Lust Super Painting, the tragic fall of a girl who released doves at Pentecost. Next to it is the place where whoever suffered from Black Death was thrown and locked, as there was no cure and no hope for survival. Food, drink, and the Holy Sacrament were served using a long shovel-like tool to avoid contact. There is a moving story of a member of the royal family contracted the deadly disease and was hidden, till she was surrendered as there was no royal cure.

Despite these life lessons, Nazism emerged in the 1930s, amidst similar fear, disease, uncertainty, suffering, and humiliation brought about by wars. Nazism created the racism that has bedeviled the world. This shows how weakness and uncertainty can lead to falsehoods for fortification, in the absence of true faith in God. I use the idea of fortification here, because I believe that such extremes would not have happened, if the European society still anchored itself in the Supernatural which it had dismissed as superstition. This, I argue, is the biggest source of human weakness and uncertainty. Great lessons include avoiding building on the

sand and investing where there is no moth (Job 4:19, 13:28; Isaiah 50:9, 51:8; Hosea 5:12). These have been neglected to the detriment of individual culprits and society as a whole. Greed for property soon shows anyone that however much you grab, you cannot own everything. Yet, it goes on unabated. Worst of all, you cannot be satisfied. Appearance deceives. The stronger we may appear, due to material things surrounding us, the weaker we really are. This weakness is demonstrated, almost on the daily basis, by multi-billionaires, and similar 'haves', who jump to their death, from the top of their own skyscrapers, while elsewhere, would be negligible riff-raffs happily make love in their, *apparently*, miserable huts. Conceptually, we can visualize the results if the strengths and weaknesses of these two were to be placed on a weighing machine, and if the certainty and the uncertainty, too, were to be weighed.

I have often referred to the case I witnessed at the University of Zurich, that could elaborate on this fortification. I had won a writing scholarship from that University. While I carried out research and wrote my subsequent publication, *African Underdevelopment Root Causes and Lasting Solutions*, part of my contractual duties was to give seminars. At one of these seminars, a participating lady challenged me on the meaning of life in Africa. She had seen many Africans suffer, and, to her surprise, continue living as if the situation were normal. In her own words, she would kill herself immediately, if she were subjected to such humiliation. This is, precisely, what I call weakness, in this argument. The lady went on to ask, what keeps the suffering people living? And the answer is what I call strength. The answer is given by a young girl – a victim of rape – in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The yet to be explained wars in Congo paint a negative picture, not only of the suffering Africa, but also of the silent world community, if at all it exists. There was no doubt that the Zurich lady referred to the rampant rape cases in this Congo televised to the whole world. The strangest part of these rapes is the shooting of the victim, right in the private parts, after the act. There is a general consolation that there is life after rape – which the Zurich lady would not buy – but the shooting, with a wrong gun, is incomprehensible. The relevant message to this discussion emerges from a video in which the doctor, specialised in operating and treating these victims, exposes the heinous acts. The message is delivered by a victim of the ordeal – a young lady – raped and shot but able to face the camera and talk. Her moving, but quite significant words are that the perpetrators of the hell on earth can only kill her body, but not her soul. Such life, built on a rock of faith, is unshakeable.

If death has no sting, nothing else has. This suggests to one a Christian attitude, reminding one of incidents when people have died for their faith, like the Uganda Martyrs. It is important to note, however, that some Christian ideas and tenets took root in Africa fast because of the already existing similar world views, human values, and mind-sets. There are stories of Western Missionaries who resigned and returned home after finding Africa more religious than their Europe that purported to take the true religion to other continents. As regards faith, there is a deep African belief that *akaahangire omutwe niko kagwata*, literally meaning that a head is broken by its creator, i.e., people exist under the Creator's protection. Faith is the real source of confidence of an African. Building on this, many see the hand of God in their continued existence, after so many attempts to wipe them off the earth. God who protected them yesterday cannot sleep, forget, or ignore them. Were they to be at the mercy of fellow human beings, not even one – *for medicine* – would be seen. Only recently, the only people one could see crying openly on TV and other forms of mass-media were Blacks. Today, every one, everywhere, man and woman, young and old cries, sharing his or her anguish with the rest of the world. No one can laugh or cry in the imaginary *black, red, white, or yellow* style. Suffering, just like joy, is felt by all. This rampant and universal fact can no longer be hidden from the public eye. The only thing yet to overwhelmingly go round is affluence.

Existentialism

Human beings, by nature, are inquisitive. They are not satisfied with the is. They ask *What. Who. When. How. Why.* They even get beyond the is to the ought. In the above discussion, life and its meaning are assumed to be settled issues. Elsewhere, however, there are other people who question these assumptions, and, therefore, approach life differently. One of these different approaches ensues from Existentialism. Existentialism is an outlook, or a perspective, on life that pursues the question of the meaning of life or the meaning of existence. One position arrived at through such an inquiry is the belief that through a combination of awareness, free will, and personality, one can construct their own meaning within a world that intrinsically has none of its own. Such constructionism undermines the foundation of the African and Christian meaning of life, i.e., religion, as argued above. Due to some differences among Christians, some Christians also reject religion. Such rejection of religion is nihilism. Nihilism rejects religious and moral principles, in the belief that life is meaningless.

Philosophically, nihilism is the belief that nothing in the world has a real existence. It rejects general or fundamental aspects of human existence, such as objective truth, knowledge, morality, values, or meaning. Historically, nihilism arises from nominalism, skepticism, and philosophical pessimism. It was the negation of specific hegemonies of social, moral, political, and aesthetic thought. Politically, nihilism was adopted by an extreme party in 19th century Russia which found nothing to approve of in the established social order.

One can observe that with the removal of the foundation of life, as it were, human beings enter a bottomless existence. The perceived pointlessness of existence or arbitrariness of human principles and social institutions leads to the general mood of despair. Thus, the modernism or scientism that negate religious principles and the subsequent postmodernism represent nihilism. Postmodernism is characterised, by some thinkers, as a nihilistic epoch.

Existential nihilism is the doctrine that life has no intrinsic value and meaning or purpose. Moral nihilism is the rejection of all normative and ethical views. Political nihilism is the rejection of social and political institutions. Epistemological nihilism is the stance that no knowledge can or does exist. Metaphysical nihilism comprises of a number of positions which assert that non-abstract objects do not exist. Mereological nihilism holds that composite objects do not exist, or even that life does not exist. The contemporary understanding of nihilism stems largely from the Nietzschean 'crisis of nihilism', from which is derived the two central aspects, i.e., the destruction of the higher values and the opposition to the affirmation of life.

Africans are realists. Such constructs simply remain in the academic realm and play little role in real life. The Bantu African philosophy has been narrowed down, by some thinkers, to social life. So, to some, it simply refers to communal life. Some others associate it with the wrong idea that we are, therefore, I am. Both views were propounded by non-philosophers, similar to Max Weber. The Western categorisation of Africans into *Bantu* speaking, *Kalenjin*, was based on their ear. For example, they heard a language dominated by 'ntu' and dubbed the speakers 'Bantu'. The reality is that *Bantu* simply means people. All the people in the world, you inclusive, are *Bantu*. But some express more *Buntu* than others. It is the plural of *Muntu*, a person. Buntu is the qualitative form of the two i.e., the value that makes a person a person, the quality of a human being or the 'whatness' of a human being. One can compare this with other terms, e.g., *Mwegyesa*, a teacher, and

Bwegyese, the quality of the teacher. There is a sense in which to be *muntu* does not simply mean to be a person, but to be humane. Having *Buntu* means having or showing compassion or benevolence. Having *Buntu* is interchangeably used as being *Muntu*. Both mean to be civilised. Currently, some people hide their crudeness in the 'doctored' meaning of civilisation as an advanced stage of social and cultural advancement. However, it is hard to detect 'civilisation', or *Buntu* in the mass-destruction-weapons, the broad-day robbery of other people's property, telling lies, and all manner of dishonesty for material and monetary gain.

Buntu has little to do with the misconception that 'I am, therefore, we are'. Africans know that 'I must be before we are'. This was a concoction to demonstrate the perceived difference between African and Western thought, mistaking the Cartesian 'Cogito, ergo sum' to be Western thought. The misconception that spread like fire was that while the Europeans say, 'I am', the Africans say, 'we are'.¹⁴⁸ The perusal of the book, '*African Religions and Philosophy*', reveals that 'philosophy' is in the title, but hardly in the content. The idea of 'African philosophy' to the uncritical is related to the stereotype of 'individualism' and 'communalism'. Otherwise, philosophers are aware that *Cogito, ergo sum* is a well-known specific philosopher's personal position, or conclusion, and not the Western or European idea of individualism. Actually, many have criticised Descartes for this personal conclusion. The conclusion is not cultural view. Non-philosopher Western people may have nothing to with Descartes and his 'I think, therefore, I am'. Philosophers know that '*I think, therefore, I am*' could also be '*I do not know... I dream... I am deceived.... therefore, I am*'. Descartes wanted proof that he 'was', or existed, and that he knew. Perhaps, the current view that life is a 'construct' could shed light on this philosophical argument that has nothing to do with the individualism generalisation that deceived, and still deceives, many. Similarly, the communal idea is not restricted to Africa but is a stage of social development. Everywhere in the world, including the capitalistic West, the communal stage was gone through or still exists. In Africa, today, many are more capitalistic than some Westerners. This leads to a major and loud call to Africa to jealously guard human values. Life in the West has radically changed. The traditionally highly valued elderly people in Africa are of little value, because 'value' is attached to material things. Either you are 'productive' or of no 'value'. Serving or living for things is strange

¹⁴⁸ John Samuel Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: Heinmann, 1969).

to Africa where, even God is conceived to be at the people's service. Sometimes you do not see the true 'value' of what you have till you have lost it. Africa, stand warned.

Collective Memory

Collective memory refers to how groups remember their past. Free groups are characterised by organising themselves and remembering certain striking events in their lives. For example, WWI and WWII atrocities are remembered by many countries. Similarly, China remembers the intervention and subjugation of the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China by Western powers and Japan from 1839 to 1949, and call this the Century of Humiliation or the Hundred Years of National Humiliation. Today, Americans remember 11.09. It is in this light that I consider COVID-19 whose occurrence and effects have created a collective memory for the whole world. People are united both either good or bad things. The bad tend to be more memorable due to the fear and uncertainty that strongly engage the mind. Imagination produces constructs that can be globally effective. The constructs concocted elsewhere easily spill over. Africa is connected with the rest of the world through colonial languages. English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish are still very strong on the continent. Science and technology help to globalise things, including the COVID-19 pandemic, making all share how it has affected the whole world: The mass-media communication has become a collective memory, characterised by fear, weakness, uncertainty. According to Susana Araújo,¹⁴⁹ in the globalised world natural, political, and economic disaster together with the words used, the ideas expressed, the images painted and their association with crisis and catastrophes shape a collective memory and imagination.

Similarly, David Leheny¹⁵⁰ shows how global norms are transmitted in Japan by officials in the law enforcement and security fields who seek expanded state powers to target national problems and offer credible solutions. He reveals how broadly accepted global norms against child prostitution and terrorism get transformed by anxiety-ridden Japanese policy makers into powerful weapons used to attack peripheral but vexing domestic demons. His analysis reveals the cultural politics through which

¹⁴⁹ Susana Araújo, Marta Pacheco Pinto and Sandra Bettencourt, eds., *Fear and Fantasy in a Global World* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

¹⁵⁰ David Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009).

solutions resonate with and amplify local constructions of threats, anxieties, villains, and scapegoats.

In the globalised world, Africa shares the collective memory of COVID-19 characterised by fear, weakness, uncertainty. However, given the special mistreatment that Africa has been subjected to, the collective memory means more, as certain messages may bear and transmit more or deeper meaning to the Africans than the rest of the world.

Collective Memory, Meaning of Life, and Fear

Collective memory, belief systems, and psychological disposition exist in different categories of people. We live in a world where narrow interests like individualism, selfishness, consumerism, prevail. At a higher level, semblance of unity is similarly narrow. We unite as families, ethnic groups, members of religions and even internal religious groups and sects, clubs, movements, and the like. Narrow personal united groups also include partnerships in businesses enterprises, law firms. At national level we live in ideological belief systems, or operating principles for running society. Thus, people mentalities and attitudes differ depending on ideologies like liberalism, conservatism, socialism, communism, theocracy, agrarianism, totalitarianism, democracy, colonialism, globalism. Furthermore, we live in intergovernmental organisations, or supranationalities whose successes or failures create legacies to be proud of or regret, whose policies and activities impact our lives positively or negatively, and whose behavior makes us feel confident or scared. Beyond regional integration is the international order, UN and International Organisations, one of which has guided our discussion on COVID-19, i.e., WHO. A problem that arises out of this complexity the overwhelming of individuals and their sovereign states. The innumerable international, global or multi-national organisations and groups make the economic system works for some, while others are condemned to poverty. The political system works for some while others grope in the dark. There is real concern, and the handling of the pandemic testify to it. There are calls for global governance, but who will be at the steering wheel, and where to?

These calls are also invited by threats such as infectious diseases –our concern right now, terrorism, new generation of global challenges including climate change, energy security, food and water security, international immigration flow, new technologies, among others. In the case of COVID-19, while many

have questioned the origin of the virus, and vehemently argue against the vaccine, asserting that there is a secret agenda to radically reduce the world population, many others are convinced that the pandemic is real and that vaccination is required to control and contain it. It is these positive thinking people that are of my interest, right now. Successful campaigns, like those of President Biden of USA and Dr. Anthony Fauci, among others, are well documented. Hard work leaders like the 34 member WHO Executive Board, directed by Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, from Eritrea, and chaired by Dr. Patrick Amoth from Kenya are admirable.

However, there are disconcerting issues raised by some African fighters against the pandemic. These include public complaints that concerned African governments raised enough money for the required vaccines but those in charge were not compliant. What is absurd about it all is that some countries produced more vaccines than they could use, and hooded them, while those who could have been saved continued to die. The world is not short of the sad stories about the expiry of the excess vaccines. Some countries have vaccinated their willing people twice and are readying themselves for a booster, while others are still waiting for vaccines to arrive. There were utterances by some world leaders that lack of vaccinations in Africa is a global shame. But mere words add insult to injury.

If, indeed, the virus is airborne, and if everyone is a candidate for its attack, how come some people are vaccinated and others left free to contract the virus and spread it? True, the virus cannot fly anywhere, but one carrying it can. At this juncture, collective memory comes in handy. According to what the world knows, and remembers, about disastrous COVID-19, all should join hands to defeat it. What sense does it make to finish it here, and keep it alive there? Does this contradict or confirm the claims that the virus is man-made for population reduction?

The idea of inconsistency takes us back to global issues. According to Joseph Nye, an American political scientist, and co-founder, along with Robert Keohane, of international relations theory of neoliberalism,¹⁵¹ globalism is used to describe attempts to understand all the interconnections of the modern world – and to highlight patterns that underlie and explain them. Globalism, therefore, refers to various systems with scope beyond the merely international. We have just seen such systems under global

¹⁵¹ Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977).

governance, *supra*. The issue is how people can 'understand all the interconnections of the modern world – and highlight patterns that underlie and explain them', if they are fundamentally divided about issues like 'collective memory, life issues, and the fear' engendered by COVID-19.

We began by looking at death as an equaliser, and, indeed, it is. However, it should not unite the people only with the realisation that no one can escape it, but also in the effort to keep it at bay, particularly in times like these, when COVID-19 has come for everyone. I hasten to add that what, actually, unites people is neither their physical, nor their intellectual life – both of which are widely diverse – but their spiritual life, which defines their true essence. Today, the world is concerned about the various ways of looking at things, the needs associated with these things, and the innumerable organisations that have mushroomed. The idea of world governance is mooted as a solution. The world easily forgets that the problem is not the uncontrivable differences – which are bound to ever increase. Neglecting 'Truth' and emphasising 'truths' is the real issue. The explosion of knowledge is bound to bear fruit. People must fail to meet because they face different directions in their new life of 'specialisation'. The only way they can meet is at 'Truth'. This does not, in any way, interfere with the necessary acquisition of 'truths'. There is a dire need for scientific and technological development. There is a dire need for trade and commerce. There is a dire need for material and monetary development. But, any of these without moral values, is total disaster. We may fail to meet at these variations, and we do not need to, but at human values we can and we must converge.

The global order is a human construct that cannot mean the same thing everywhere and to everyone. World governance is following suit. Democracy refers to people organising themselves. Yet, the disorganised call the organised undemocratic. Civility means being considerate of others. Yet the truly uncivilized rubbish the civilised and kick them around. Modernism or scientism has equipped them with means of doing a good job as they display their uncivility. They need to return to the past to pick threads from where they broke ties with civilisation. But their return to the past is sheer concoction – display of lack of material development. Yet, the people are not as polished as their posh structures. They are not as developed as the well-developed environment. They sing human rights, meaning the right to commit suicide. Those scared of sluiced dress-up and calmly go to their slaughter houses, as if going to church. What, to the civilised, is anathema, to them is a must do, the uncivilised people who live in materially developed places and affluence fail to enjoy

the affluence because they are ill-developed, as human beings. This is the tragedy of nihilism. The Western world threw away the treasure of values, thus plunging society into the misery of fear, weakness, and uncertainty. The denial of values by thinkers like F. W. Nietzsche who distinguished between Master and Slave morality, valuing pride, wealth, fame, prestige, and power at the expense of kindness, empathy, compassion, led to rejecting judging actions as good or bad and upholding classical virtues of a noble man against vices of mob. Slave morality is dismissed as judging by the standard of good or evil influence e.g., Christian virtues and vices, and Kant's Deontology. Nietzsche reduced morality to culture, arguing that Slave and Master morality shape language, codes, practices, narratives, and institutions. As all people abhor subjugation and submission. Nietzsche has had great influence on society.

So also has Kantian whose thought makes the human Mind source of everything, thus getting in the way to spirituality and dangerously limiting human beings. In the same vain, Max Weber who could have done better with more philosophical analysis, puts more emphasis on human constructs, like hierarchical order, almighty state, and social science. His uncritical presentation of the protestant ethic lacks the metaphysical muscle it needs to realise that the protestant materialistic attitude stems from their belief in predestination, according to which there is heaven and hell, not either one or the other. There is no choice. No alternative. The die is cast. You can only guess your determined position through God's favors in earthly successes. Material contribution is your only possibility. Personal effort or intercession are ridiculous. Weber's attempt to explain social phenomena in a similar manner that physical sciences had explained natural reality and other approaches undermine Idealism.

We need to note that lack of balanced thought leads to extremes that eventually reflect on society and individual life. This is also evident in the British Empiricism, continental Positivism, among other trends of thought that dismiss speculation as superstition and specialise in narrow methods of thought and practice e.g., systematic analysis and other limitations. Human experience has proved that extremes are dangerous, and need to be corrected. This was realised when the scientific method in vogue could not prove in a laboratory phenomenon like love. Cold water was thrown into the faces of the highly expectant when science and technology produced weapons of mass destruction, among other life-threatening tools. In daily life, people are left agape when medical doctors – experts in saving life – become expert agents of death instead. It is lawyers

who twist the law. Better ones do it better. This anomaly covers all specialisations where technical know-how overshadows human feelings, and obliterates the moral compass. The situation becomes ridiculously worse in areas where even man-made laws do not work. This leads us to the fear and uncertainty created when unscrupulous experts take advantage of the pandemic to cash in, among other types of disconcerting misconduct.

Scandals in the Time of COVID-19

The already referred to cases e.g., the powerful denying the weak access to vaccines, the racial discrimination of the COVID-19 victims, the huge commercial gains made by vaccine manufacturers, handlers, and other beneficiaries, Covax falling short of its targets and, worst of all the really feared alleged hidden agenda to target certain peoples and to reduce world populations are more than sinful and scandalous. This, of course, entails the different types of colonisation that have disabled and weakened certain people mainly, in Africa, and getting in the way of the people's shaping their own destiny, including developing their own vaccines. However, in this paper, I narrow down the scope to realistic and practical cases of the virus in everyday life, beginning with my own case. I was planning to travel when someone alerted me about where I could be tested for COVID-19, as the airlines would need a certificate. The contact had already been tested, alone and free of charge, at this government installed place. When I arrived, I was told how tests were carried out after enough people to be tested had registered. Samples could even be collected from my residence to the laboratory. Charges covered transport and laboratory work. This was in March, 2020, right at the beginning of the pandemic and the related panic. Given what eventually came to pass, everywhere in the world, I had seen nothing to be talked about. Subsequent stories indicate not only the rise of fees, but also uncertainty as one test showed negative and the other positive, leaving you wondering about your status – a real source of fear. One would also be forced to wonder whether those testing really knew what they were doing, or whether they had the right equipment. But the worst fear was contracting the virus through this confusion, which you entered when you were safe and sound.

This fear is extended to the places of quarantine, but is not limited to hygiene. These were hotels where one was forced to be accommodated, at an unnegotiated fee, for two weeks. Fear of contracting the virus and stigma was increased by that of expenses. This last bit became real when those who were admitted had to sell

property before they were released. Worst of all, bodies were detained till exorbitant prices were paid. Those who were still free looked for ways and means of skipping hotels and similar detection centers. While these mitigated their personal fear and anxiety, they unleashed the same on the communities that eventually discovered their behavior. But the most dramatic scenarios were the cases of those found sick, treated and released. It appeared as if looking at them alone was enough to inject you. People ran at their sight.

The biggest local scandals are connected with accountably. Many secured public funds under the pretext of buying and delivering – urgently – a variety of requirements for handling or keeping COVID-19 at bay, but found better and more urgent things to do with the money. There are also questions about activities such as testing the vaccinated, and at a fee. Other questions are about cases of the vaccinated dying of the virus, thus giving people sleepless nights by adding fear to fear. In the uncertain circumstances, the creative, the well-intentioned, and the unscrupulous have reason to continue activities.

Conclusion

Fear is natural and normal. Watchful people see it coming and prepare themselves. Failure to avoid or manage fear, when fear comes, is neither natural nor normal. Fear kills. The fact that the world is teeming with people who face fear and those who succumb under fear is cause for alarm and calls for scrutiny. Time of COVID-19 has exposed the reality of fear and its effects on people, the worst fear being of not disease, or natural catastrophe, but of fellow human beings. While a pandemic like COVID-19 attacks whoever is in its way, people plan. They plot. Thus, even those who would easily escape the pandemic perish. This is the key source of fear. So, since fear emanates from nature and fellow human beings, it is quite a force to reckon with. This is made even emphatic by the fear of fear itself - phobophobia. The reality of fear, therefore, is totally devastating, if no safety volves exist.

All over the world, today, COVID-19 has been a humbling, or even a humiliating experience. We who observe and write have no capacity to enter persons and feel what they go through. We can only guess, basing ourselves on what we see and how we feel about it. Cases of piling bodies outside full mortuaries in affluent Europe are only what we observe. What the people go through is imprisoned within themselves. Memorable scenes of the puzzled and confused faces of the 'Red Indians' sitting along the dead infectious bodies in their huts – face to face with the deadly virus can suggest the hell

these people went through, but it remains they who silently absorb the suffering. Bodies scuttered on the streets in Brazil must forever haunt the people. Resorting to burials in India, when there was no more firewood tampered with culture and world views. Blank faces in Africa where the virus slowly but steadily descends reveal helpless, and fear for the future. Inconsolable personal losses of loved ones, in all corners of mother earth, remain deeply buried in people's hearts.

Despite the untold suffering and sudden confusion into which the world has been thrown, frantic efforts to help here and there leave humanity with positive narratives and good lessons learnt from the pandemic. The suffering is not totally alone. There is a very big sense of relief when one's problem is shared with others, even when it is only at the level of feeling sorry and saying or showing it. It is also significant to note that the pandemic has aroused the philosophical man in people. People's philosophical views of life, suffering, fear, and related ideas reveal that fear is aggravated by helplessness and hopelessness. There is a big difference between a man of faith and a non-believer, when the two face death. The discussion of fear by Existentialists sheds light on this difference. The same thing applies to Africa, where faith has sustained the people who have faced all manner of suffering. In a nut-shell, the time of COVID-19 is characterised by great suffering, weakness, and uncertainty, but the different societies' world views and individual persons' psychological dispositions make a big difference in facing the pandemic.

We may conclude by wrapping up the characteristics of COVID-19 in phobophobia. This fear of fear emerged from China towards the end of October, 2021. China is well-known for having used massive lockdowns to control the spread of the pandemic, and has achieved plausible results. Out of the Chinese population of 1.3 billion, only 126,078 cases and 4636 deaths have been reported. This is in sharp contrast, for example, with tiny Switzerland with a population of 8.637m., 877, 095 cases, and 11,257 deaths. To the world great surprise and added fear, however, the Chinese leadership has stated it categorically that COVID-19 real crisis is yet to come. This revelation has prompted Bloomberg to comment that this 'Chinese fear that the COVID-19 real crisis is yet to come is something to fear'. Fear is positive, in many ways. We fear repercussions and, therefore, watch out for danger. We do not hurt others, well-knowing possible reactions. Careful life is healthy, peaceful and long. We do things properly as shoddy work boomerangs. All these are thanks to fear. Fear, therefore, is a positive control device in people's life. The problem is the cliché that

too much of anything is bad. Thus, fear created by COVID-19 is negative, to the extreme. The added phobophobia makes the bad situation even worse.

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