

The Purpose of Philosophical Absurdism

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ABSTRACT

ABSURDISM is a literary school or we may refer to it as a significant movement which caught attention of the majority and seemed to be effortfully exerting to discover a genuine meaning of human existence. In the past as well as present, there is a visible control of the unrevised religious scriptures on the societal norms. This is chiefly because they have been almost unanimously and sentimentally sanctioned eternity. This does apply to all religions without exception. The human tragedy witnessed by all owing to Nature-calamities and personal shortcomings are never given any importance, to challenge the reverential governing authority or agency, that is held in high esteem. Leading a life without understanding its continual vagaries and unpredictable pattern, automatically forces Pessimism to creep in. It is unintelligible for a common man to know the paradigm of life designed by the intelligent higher power. Therefore, an offshoot of Pessimism which got energized to become vocal, appeared first through Existentialism and then Absurdism. All these have the sole purpose of surfacing the Truth with no prejudiced notion against the established schools of thought. The visibly clear inability of human beings to discover a method to seek inherent value and meaning of life, naturally creates a chaos. The helplessness is systematically covered or deliberately masked, with pretensions of intellectualism and adherence to religiosity. The technique has repeatedly failed to provide a lasting effect owing to which the sensitive minds are facing more conflict within. That is why Universe itself seems to be settling on irrational and meaningless pursuits. Ultimately anyone who

involves himself in the futile efforts to set an orderliness meets more of opposition or conflict. Scientifically this has been predicted through the concept of an entropic world. Therefore, it would always be a matter of commonsense to reserve a separate field for emotionalism and another arena which would demand empirical proofs. On a strict perusal it would be realized that much of the hype sanctioned to the traditional claims over methodicity in living life collapses in practical life. This paper attempts to bring out the meaningful judgements of the Philosophical Absurdism.

Keywords: Human Existence, Religiosity, Prejudiced Notions and Philosophical Absurdism.

INTRODUCTION

Past two centuries, in particular, witnessed scores of behavioural sciences comprising of protest or adherence to those in vogue. It is but natural that with the upcoming generations, interrogation is expected. That is why it would be a big folly to imagine or grant eternity to any thought just because it is nurtured from past centuries. It is sad that a revision is stoutly denied because of the religious background or sentiment. Much owing to this from an axiological point of view, the mass regales in ignorance and much damage is done. Coming to human nature whether Western or Eastern it remains quite enigmatic. Certain percentage of our society is definitely learned due to a proper academic exposure and scholarship too. But then riding over a single rigid axis may not create any worthy pathway. It could even smother the very source of knowledge.

Accumulation of knowledge is indeed appreciable but the usage of the same needs a special or different brain faculty. Getting stuck up, that too sentimentally, is not only hazardous but it permanently stunts the possible growth. It is, in fact, a moral duty of the preceding generation to strictly edit the ongoing processes before presenting or handing over to the next generation. Unfortunately, the very act of pruning is ignored and rather detested for the sake of personal social security, causing an irreparable damage. No doubt every art has its own recognized field but then one must remember it is encompassed in a limited sphere. Expecting a Universal appeal is not in the least an intelligent move. At any rate but for Nature-phenomena it is highly improbable to seek genuine appreciation from all and that too consistently. In the present, modern-day scenario, one of the major problems which humanity in general faces is missing complacency in a continual manner. In spite of umpteen number of sources of specialized fields of knowledge available, yet there is a sort of uneasiness in all the rungs of the society. Therefore, it would be sane to combat with the problems on daily basis but first understanding the very mechanism and demands of different phases of life.

Usually the term 'Absurdism' when studied from a philosophical point of view may be looked upon as a sort of natural response or reaction though slightly in an unusual manner. Concluding the mart of the world in a hasty manner as absolutely irrational and meaningless, might also pose some problems. However, when this approach is taken up in context to the existing reality from the past there seems to be a genuine sense in its outcry. Without placing blame on any agency, it would be convincing to us that this paradigm of the world is not at all very intelligently designed. However, as a contrast to this viewpoint most of the theories do run in support and there is not even a minimal tolerance to consider other opinions. Philosophically many times we do have many times either a thorough

pessimistic view or an effortfully built optimistic outlook or an admixture resulting into a melioristic consideration. However, handing over or crediting everything to some enthusiastically built supreme-image, at any rate, does not seem to be any intelligent proposition. Apparently, it seems there are certain similarities between philosophical Absurdism, Existentialism and Nihilism. Sometimes we may feel these tendencies wantonly accommodate atheistic and agnostic viewpoints. However, ultimately, we can draw the conclusion that there is a common aim with them and that is chiefly to dispel human ignorance on many counts. Somehow just to silence the mind which tries to explore the Universe and its working through a systematic 'Inquiry', a select few powerful images are deliberately created. These images like personal and Nature Gods are entrusted with the duty of deciding human fate. But then when questioned for the validity there are no satisfying answers and that is where frustration surfaces, particularly for the sensitive minds.

Albert Camus thinks it is all rather a waste of time and energy when these are fully employed to research out the meaning of life in a Universe which is incomprehensible. It is a meaningless effort. Further he reiterates that there is no God. It is always a tussle going on between our idealized Universe filled with orderliness while exactly the contrast is experienced by all. Our strong desire to evolve an orderliness, meaning and happiness meets a heavy blow when the reality in practice is closely scrutinized. Nature itself openly opposes such an idealized scheme of discipline. Everything seems to be unpredictable. It is the problem of the existing evil that thoroughly discourages Camus to invest faith in God or encourages him to disallow image of any Controller. Aldous Huxley wrote, "It is man's intelligence that makes him so often behave more stupidly than the beasts. Man is impelled to invent theories to account for what happens in the world. Unfortunately,

he is not quite intelligent enough, in most cases, to find correct explanations. So that when he acts on his theories, he behaves very often like a lunatic. Thus no animal is clever enough when there is a drought, to imagine that the rain is being withheld by evil spirits, or as punishment for its transgressions. Therefore, you never see animals going through the absurd and often horrible fooleries of magic and religion. No horse, for example would kill one of its foals to make the wind change direction. Dogs do not ritually urinate in the hope of persuading heaven to do the same and send down rain. Asses do not bray a liturgy to cloudless skies. Nor do cats attempt by abstinence from cat's meat to wheedle the feline spirits into benevolence. Only man behaves with such gratuitous folly. It is the price he has to pay for being intelligent but not as yet intelligent enough."¹

PRINCIPLES OF PHILOSOPHICAL ABSURDISM

A general trait observed in most of the descriptions given about the world we live in is either a lopsided argument or spiritedly presented as the best possible model. Ignoring certain visible facts has become a fashion. A balanced viewpoint is ever needed and in addition to it, remedial measures must be proposed. Failing this approach, it would seem to be an incomplete effort. Probably the very birth of Absurdism was much owing to this as a reaction against the practices that were indirectly encouraged. It is totally an unjust act, as most of the times truth is deliberately disallowed to surface. Regaling with faulty ideas and promoting some more natural offshoots therefrom has been detrimental to the progress of metaphysical isms. Therefore, it would be wise to take on the existing Reality as it is and then propose deserving remedial measures. It is in this light that the postulates of Philosophical Absurdism are discussed.

1) Motivation for Living: Living in a conventional manner is surely a social security. However, it may not produce

the desirable complacency in all phases of life. Conventional thinking or approach towards life is unarguably a preferred shield by most of the people but it would lack youthful enthusiasm and sense of achievement. Therefore, a little pragmatic outlook filled with avidity to know something beyond the commonalities is required. Any scheme, aim, wish, research or analysis etc. which can enthuse us would prove to be a motivation in its genuine sense. At times, even treading on the footsteps of the proven successful personalities can also be highly beneficial. On the other hand leading a life with lukewarm enthusiasm may keep us safe but with nothing worth appreciably achieved. Albert Camus wrote, 'In order to understand the world, one has to turn away from it on occasion.'²

2) Individualistic at all times: As already discussed following the principles of successful people may also take us for some miles but that practice should not be on a permanent basis. In history we have umpteen examples showing some of the famous students/disciples at some stage differed with their masters or mentors, in an academic sense and as a result did not hesitate to announce the same openly. Setting up even different schools of thought was their priority chiefly because they had tremendous trust in own convictions and serving individualism was their main priority and motto. There is indeed a sense of achievement when efforts are directed without anyone's influence. Progress of a subject also takes place when various aspects are covered or explored. That is why Camus says, "There is scarcely any passion without struggle."³

3) Living Intensely: Holding on to the age-old principles would mean the growth possibly getting stunted/stranded. Nothing is gained without investing wholeheartedly our zeal. There is no sense in brooding over the past or non-sensically speculating the future.

Accepting own limitations on all planes but without trying fully, is a crime and none can be held responsible for the meagre percentage of the resulting success. Caring a lot for the world around us is in a way indicating no confidence in self. Therefore it is only the intense activity which can bring about positive results. Just toying with ideas theoretically is nothing else than keeping desires and aims in a smothered fashion. 'Seeking what is true is not seeking what is desirable.'⁴

4) **Rebellious Outlook:** Accepting the societal norms only because they have been conventionally recognized and traditionally devotedly followed is nothing other than subordination. Demanding empirical proofs is in no way showing disregard to a tradition. If the efficacy of a renowned principle is doubted or challenged it does not mean prejudiced or a sign of a rude act. Since the majority follows certain postulate in particular, it cannot be automatically accredited or thrust upon the society. Therefore, taking on the ruling norms as they are would sum up to a cowardly act than clearly nothing. At any rate going against the stream needs more energy, perseverance, determination and steady nature. There is no sense in getting labeled as 'Loyal' or 'Obedient' by serving timidity. One has to be of a rebellious character than going down meekly. 'Man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world.'⁵

5) **Focusing Mainly On Practical Things:** Certain concepts are indeed impressive in the theoretical sense. Life as such would never be steady for anyone unless inaction is elected. Centuries have rolled down but we still don't have a set of principles which can guaranteedly provide solace in its genuine sense. Silencing the mind with some fake

solutions is not appreciable. It is quite unfortunate that generally tender minded people are so easily impressed by certain religiously based old ideas, aphorisms, or abruptly presented novel idea that they don't bother to check its actual working in practice. There are scores of such theories mostly in the non-scientific approaches which can instantly provide a lasting soothing effect but fail miserably when validity is tested in practice. In case the practical aspect is picked up as the correct and only parameter for efficiency then most of the much-adored theories would collapse. That is why drawing inference only after observation can prove to be the right method to test the publicized credentials. 'The evil that is in the world almost always comes of ignorance and good intentions may do as much harm as malevolence if they lack understanding.'⁶

6) **Seeking Happiness In Every Phase Of Life.**

Phases in life are always broadly classified. Technically speaking no phase is static or has a fixed duration. Phases in life have to undergo modifications compulsorily and the challenges are different for everyone. Every change which takes place is actually a sort of response to the demand of our body and psyche. Set principles which are regarded as ethically clean remain as ideals. For a uniform growth many factors are responsible. However, ultimately the gap between life and death is filled by desires, cravings and mostly disappointments. Therefore, what we refer to as maturity is nothing other than the tendency to accept without much protest. The Stoic outlook gives here a hint that majority events are beyond our control and the world designed is not at all suitable to be happy on a permanent basis, in a true sense. However, philosophically it becomes mandatory for us to overcome the hurdles and maintain happiness as

the aim of life. No phase is free from adverse forces trying to push us backwards. Despite this it is our duty to take full charge or control to seek and acquire happiness. In Bertrand Russell's view, 'Unhappiness is a condition not based only on things that happen to you. It is rather, the result of mistakes in thinking and outlook, Russell says, "Mistaken views of the world, mistaken ethics, mistaken habits of life, leading to destruction of that natural zest and appetite for possible things upon which all happiness, whether of men or animals ultimately depends."⁷

- 7) **Unpredictability Of Life:** Whether you are a theist or a hardcore atheist, life would never show a proper co-ordination with your expectations. Our theoretical calculations clearly fail in the unjust mart of life. Predicting even Nature-events seems to be extremely difficult. At the most a general guess can be done. It is sad that we have a rosey picture of the future before the events occur. A recurring experience shows it could be at the most a coincidence that what was desirably predicted could emerge. It would be sportive and extremely wise to accept the unpredictability of life because there are numerous factors influencing, to cause an event to take place. 'What we take to be so real, Arthur Schopenhauer argues, is in fact merely a representation or projection of the mind. In a total inversion of common sense, the world that we barely intimate does have a permanent reality and, logically, the phenomenal, conditional, or representational world lacks any permanent reality or substance, for everything in it either dies or changes form.'⁸
- 8) **Experience Better Than Reading:** This principle should not be taken as any discouraging note to the very habit of reading. The point emphasized here is to take a leap beyond the bookish or theoretical knowledge or assumptions so

as to respect the practical experience. Reading definitely makes a man learned but then philosophy serves wisdom and therefore, one has to look at the practical experience with more reverence than taking theoretical information as the ultimate. Each decade, roughly speaking, indicates a different or strange deviation from our conventional ideas or presumptions. There is an ageing process even to ideas though we vehemently stick to them. Nothing can remain same and that is why firsthand experience is bound to be more of utility than the knowledge gathered by surmising.

CONCLUSION

It is but natural to rely on some source which can convincingly provide us true meaning of life. Generally, Religion is looked upon as a common and reliable source although more learned people would go with various philosophies to draw any conclusion. There are different religions and a large number of philosophies available to answer the questions posed regarding the true meaning of life. We have a select few which have earned a mass appeal particularly in the modern times, like Existentialism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, Aristotle's Eudaimonia, Philosophical Absurdism, Schopenhauer's Pessimism, William James' Pragmatism, Kant's Critiques etc. All these philosophies and a few more have a common aim and that is to guide the humanity or see that humanity is free from the shackles of unhappiness and the misery caused from it. One of the common solutions provided is to getting acquainted to Nature-phenomena and whatever criteria adopted by Nature. Some of the philosophers have even arrived at the conclusion that everything is absolutely meaningless and it is a futile effort to go on searching for any meaning. Camus thinks, 'Absurdism like methodical doubt, has wiped the slate clean. It leaves us in a blind alley. But like methodical doubt, it can, by returning upon itself, open up a new field of

investigation and the process of reasoning then pursues the same course. I proclaim that I believe in nothing and that everything is absurd, but I cannot doubt the validity of my proclamation and I must at least believe in my protest.⁹

Strictly on an impartial perusal we realize that a balanced view is required. We can always uphold our views only after confirming the ground reality. It is rather a self-inflicted pain when we toss up our imagination and build castles in air to wantonly experience illusory satisfaction. Even if a critical study of the historical facts is made in an unprejudiced way, we easily understand that the vices had been and even in the present scenario, continue to have an upper hand over virtues. This naturally disappoints a common man but he avoids being vocal about this fact. Only those who are seekers of Truth dare to question and until satisfactory explanation is obtained, they remain restless. It is in this light that Philosophical absurdism comes to the conclusion that there is Philosophical Suicide taking place in a continual manner. They feel it is humanly impossible to find an objective meaning and therefore the very idea is bracketed in Absurdism. Investing total faith in an unseen higher power might provide a psychological comfort on a temporary basis. But then when reality strikes, these assumptions and the wishful thinking collapse instantly. The philosophical answers presently at least have gone ahead by justly exposing the severe limitations of the sentimental theories that are in vogue. Until a concrete theory emerges with empirical proofs the

critical thinking has to be acknowledged as the need of the hour. Camus feels, 'There is but one truly philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental questions of philosophy. All the rest-whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories- comes afterward. These are games; one must first answer.'¹⁰

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