

Philosophical Loneliness: A Meaningful Silence

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Abstract: An unpleasant emotional response is commonly concluded as a sign of loneliness which, at any rate, cannot easily be understood nor appreciated. It is totally under the custody of a person, who in general, is nearing a health disorder. Apart from this sort of clinical depression, it visibly progresses through mood swings which an onlooker can grasp without any difficulty. In the modern age much owing to the abruptly changing social order and the value system, it has become quite common and therefore is looked upon as a seasonal affective disorder. There are numerous symptoms and factors varying in intensity. However, the most common symptom which can even clinically be diagnosed is from the behaviour of the victim who only adopts a sort of social withdrawal. As a result, he creates his own defined world permitting entry to none. The sad condition pervades unabated and prevails over all the mental activities of the subject. Furthermore, the damaging part is its gaining rigidity and dismantling the whole personality as such. When it comes to this kind of disorder it is always considered as a habit of nurturing false ideals and goals thereof. However, with proper enrichment of knowledge one may find a comfort zone in their own choice nest for a typical psychological security. Although, not in all cases, we have examples of a few globally recognized philosophers who chose the path of isolation and pretended to be very comfortable. In fact, such famous philosophers indeed enjoyed their privacy though filled with terrible loneliness. This paper attempts to present the psychological factors and philosophical outlooks as yardsticks in shaping such personalities who voluntarily clinged to an unusual behavioural science. In this context only a chosen few philosophers would be referred, whose names have been synonymously connected to an extreme format of an 'ism', like Pessimism, Optimism, Existentialism, Hedonism, Stoicism etc. Each has his own perception of life and needless to say a systematic response to the same might have forced to coin a new workable and usable idea or philosophy. Some of them had a lukewarm desire owing to which their ideas could not find a proper growth but those with a steaming and energetic wishful thinking succeeded in establishing a concrete philosophy and so got meaningfully isolated.

Keywords: Philosophical loneliness, Psychological factors, Behavioural science.

1. Introduction

In any society the subdued faction is always in majority. All that they have is a non-workable cornucopia of ideas. There is always a missing link to Pragmatism. Those who progress very well know the application and also limitations of the much publicised moral, ethical and religiously concocted ideas. The minority class in this regard voluntarily exerts and suffers

because it has very little scope to make the world understand what it is pursuing. The only probable fortune is the response which such thinkers or philosophers get from the society in terms of at least a partial acceptance would or may appear in the last phase of life or posthumously! Sticking on to the traditions without a protest is indeed common and a wise move for leading life in a secured fashion. Trying to restructure or effortfully working to achieve even a minimal improvisation is an uncalculated risk finally dragging to unwanted social brushings. Despite this fact, sometimes in the interest of the society or merely for self-satisfaction, philosophers vehemently pursue their goals. Any novel idea is rarely welcome by the society unless it indicates even superficially a larger percentage of benefit or a clear advantage over the existing approach. It is and had been a consumer society culture although it is a common habit with many to think that the past was very ethical and justifying. That is why presenting a different route or model is an act of heroism. Past centuries decade wise have given ample examples not only in social sciences but in pure and applied sciences too. There is ever a greater clash in the world of metaphysics when an unconventional theory or 'ism' is put forward. This obviously leads the propounder to a self-approved nook which he rejoices. However, this also gives a sufficient room to a typical philosophically manipulated loneliness or discomfort. This may be reckoned as an academic aloofness. It could even be an act of over-elongating an idea which forcibly drags the self to a no man's land or a barren field. It is quite possible that our expectations of others' disposition was not intelligently gauged or all the reins have been wantonly handed over to a potentially strong Pessimistic outlook. Finding none parallel or equal to us in the thinking pattern definitely creates frustration and a desolated personality within. Handling social, intellectual and philosophically oriented loneliness is a daresome act but can be carried out only by a few select prudent personalities only. Much owing to this all those active or enthusiastic suggestions proposed for leading a happy and joyous life seems to be merely a display of ignorance.

On an average philosophers are found to be lonely and oversensitive. But then this is much because of their own elected path and its demands. There have been various types of loneliness like the one caused by new circumstances, finding self to be different/exclusive, falling short of companionship, managing no time for self, having no worthy friends or society

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around and so on. However, most of these are due to certain psychological factors depending on one's own incapacity to adjust with the surroundings. But then these are all counted under personal loneliness. When it comes to the philosophical loneliness, that is much because of the philosophical aims which are wantonly nurtured. Intellectual loneliness which is the true base of philosophical loneliness culminates out of rigid idealism that steadily grows within the mind about the society we live in. Despite this the fact that many of the philosophers right from Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and many more were flocked by admirers also remains true as recorded in history. It is only when they found it necessary to get socially disconnected as people around them in their view as no proper match, loneliness automatically crept in. Even then such philosophers had been pretty close to their choice friends with whom they could vibe well. From this viewpoint many became intellectually lonesome. In addition to this, there was another strong factor to cause this specific loneliness, i.e. the poignant memory of childhood days which had been constantly distressing to their mind and feelings. Craving for some special and big or unusual idea, demanded the accommodation of loneliness in their own stride.

2. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

Frustration in the childhood, losing a weak-willed father at an early phase of life, overstraining the relation with an overly ambitious mother and experiencing a stiff competition at the academic level, particularly with Hegel, were the reasons potent enough to isolate this philosopher. Voluntarily choosing to remain alone as a bachelor and constantly combating his own decorated fears became some of the psychological factors to shape his personality. When the society you live in does not agree with your philosophical excursions or even sketchy writings just because they sound unconventional, leaving the routine traditional track, obviously nothing else than Pessimism is bound to ooze out. Arthur Schopenhauer was a proven pessimist but fortunately was strong enough to spin it out for own advantage and draw a philosophy out of it. Embracing reality is a costly hobby for anyone which he did it consistently and consciously with no remorse anytime. It took him out of the dark tunnel and further he could manage to present his philosophy in the interest of the society. He showed the world how to effortfully train our mind to accept the facts of life and live with them.

The "WILL" factor

Most of the time it is a common practice with the majority to deny facts and responsibilities of life by squarely blaming the circumstances or someone or some of the social factors for the failures that we meet. In addition, there is the most delicious 'Self Pity' factor that stands tall and has been proved beyond doubt, to be the result of ignorance but very soothing. However, it is only the select few as brave hearts, who magnanimously take on the prevailing truth and then impartially explore the details. Schopenhauer had the courage to propose the single "WILL" factor as the one which causes all the scenarios. That is why he clearly mentions in one of his famous quotes that "Life swings like a Pendulum backward and forward between

pain and boredom." According to him, the very paradigm of human life, cannot assure our idealized happiness on a permanent basis and the root cause of it is our own "WILL". Is there not any escape from it? Well, Schopenhauer does come out confidently to shape Pessimism itself as an outlook cum philosophy to embrace, so that nothing eventually could surprise or disturb us. Who could appreciate such an aspect or solution when there is a continuous race to acquire, at any cost, by any means the materialistic happiness? Naturally his philosophy for a fairly long span got sidelined and received hardly any attention on time. To understand Schopenhauer's Will one has to extend its arena a little beyond the usual meaning. Will should not be considered as a purposeful activity. There is a separate existence both to individuals and the surroundings. Therefore, there are instincts, temptations, inclinations etc. related to human existence. Same is found with regard to the animal world and plant kingdom. This means will be an incessant activity in all organic parts of the Universe. It must be acknowledged as an active agent working in every sphere of Nature. Furthermore, it is the Will which is completely responsible for the desire to live and continue to live. It is in this context that Will is taken for a force which includes our instinctual tendency and impulsiveness. Schopenhauer's Will firstly adheres to pantheism and then finally finds a refuge in Buddhism. In fact, much of it seems to have been derived from Vedanta. On the whole Schopenhauer concluded Will as the root cause of everything and therefore it is, according to him, without dispute, the primary and efficient cause. While defending the position of Will at a personal level, for him, there cannot be any second opinion over the existence of misery, injustice, hatredness, insufficiency and so on. On all planes it is the personal Will which is always dominating. It is the Master ever at work. Schopenhauer clarifies this regarding Will and its connection with our routine life as follows.

"All willing arises therefore from deficiency and therefore from suffering. The satisfaction of a wish ends it; yet for one wish that is satisfied there remain at least ten which are denied. Further the desire lasts long, the demands are infinite; the satisfaction is short and scantily measured out. But even the final satisfaction is itself only apparent; every satisfied wish at once makes room for new one; both are illusions; the one is known to be so, the other not yet. No attained object can give a lasting satisfaction, but merely a fleeting gratification; it is like the alms thrown to the beggar, that keeps him alive today that his misery may be prolonged till the morrow. Therefore, so long as our consciousness is filled by our Will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with their constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we can never have lasting happiness nor peace." [1]

3. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

Getting charges or blames for no obvious fault was fate and so naturally life had been full of events for Nietzsche. He is always referred to be the proponent of voluntarism or even the founder of irrationalism and more effectively the propounder of the "WILL TO POWER". Very few have the courage to explore untiringly to know the 'Reality' and later studying the same

without any prejudice all its aspects to understand every shade of it. Nietzsche not only grasped the Truth but also dared to present it before the world without any manipulation. The society, as ever, is never easily prepared to accept changes and so no novel idea could receive an enthusiastic welcome. Nietzsche minutely studied the root cause of the human sufferings and much of it he related to the 'Will' factor which had taken a back seat. That is why the theory of 'Superman' is credited to him. He openly condemned the 'Slave Morality' and strongly suggested to dislodge the same by 'Master Morality'. Belonging to a die-hard Aristocratic lineage, his thinking was influenced by an Aristocratic hardline temperament.

Nietzsche led an unconventional life. It was only his dearest sister Elizabeth who tolerated his whims and lived with him, taking all care. Nietzsche began with Schopenhauer's 'Will to Live' but made many radical changes. It was against his instinctual nature to go down to such a level of submission and totally lose interest in life fervently clinging to Pessimism. On the other hand he voluntarily took on the criticisms leveled against him for violating with the religious sentiments then prevalent. He had a deep rooted feeling that the religions instead of strengthening human Will-Power have sufficiently damaged it. The attempts of religions had been more towards subordinating the human freewill to the much publicised imaginative higher force. This could have been due to Nietzsche's complete support to the Aristocratic ideals and criticism against the democratic principles in general then in vogue. His main contention was to combat with this Will to gain power or control over life. "...Nietzsche has rarely been considered an important philosopher. Instead, he is still popularly seen as, at best, an impressive aphorist whose psychological aperçus partly participated the theories of Freud, and, at worst, as one of the latest and perhaps the most inflammatory of a long line of German opponents of the ideals of liberal enlightenment." [2]. Therefore, in brief all Nietzsche's efforts were directed towards his envisaging human personality with character that could make life worth systematically living. Often, he insisted more on the righteous path with proper ideals which could promise power. Not all theoretically impressive virtues can be useful. He felt these are the ones which might even weaken our souls because many a time, they themselves collapse significantly in the practical world. For him much of the common man's grief is owing to the inactivity nurtured within with no regrets. He thinks yet the greater danger is because of embracing the popularized virtues which take the followers into a dreamy land with fairy tales. To Nietzsche this is a systematically erected trap to ensnare the gullible minds. It easily attracts the weak and fearful persons. Anyone who dares to rise above this is declared as "Evil doer". Those who are floating with complacency considering adherence to these virtues as an honourable act finally end up with drudgery. "To be good in a word, is to be stupid. Virtues such as modesty, industry, benevolence, chastity are exalted. All of them just so many obstacles in the way of a heroic purpose and a noble existence for oneself; everything well constituted proud, high spirited and beautiful is offensive to the 'moral' man. In religion the weakling has created the greatest

of his instruments for bringing into subjection those nobler natures which, since he cannot emulate them, he envies and hates." [3]. It is in the interest of the society for a proper and multidimensional upliftment that Nietzsche insisted on the Master morality. It is in this context that he had been a little critical about Socrates and Plato. Knowledge within limits is workable but when it crosses the limits it proves to be dangerous without any utility. It may create a hurdle for a proper living. Therefore, he even condemns the Slave morality values such as Love, Friendship, Peace, Happiness and Humility.

4. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

The gift of the nineteenth century to humanity was giving birth to the Era of Confidence which ran for about three decades from 1880. Unfortunately, it could not sustain the over-stretched metaphysical pressures and therefore steadily gave away to the Era of Doubt. This too had to come to a halt after riding for a quarter of a century but somehow got merged into an unbearable Era of Melancholy. With this the sensitive minds found some truth but were incapable of properly expressing the summarized form to place Reality before the society. Needless to say at this juncture Age of Reason became the need of the hour which with the progressive scientific backing could swiftly dismiss many of the traditional viewpoints that were purposefully concocted with religious sentiments. Age of Reason could really gallop without any hurdle gaining popularity particularly from the educated class of the society. This had been almost bereft of human emotions and feelings.

A sensitive mind is always plagued with questions related to the very existence of self and later surroundings. Such fundamental questions were noticed earlier but partly ignored. When the questions like Life Cycle and Life after Death arose, even the rationalists were shaken. It was impossible to deal with such problems single handedly by Science or Philosophy. The feeling of meaninglessness in life as one advances in life spares none. For many centuries these questions were overlooked with the pretension of optimistic outlook based on religious sentiments. It was at this stage that Existentialism arrived on the scene to dismiss the excesses made in the past. Kierkegaard felt that philosophy takes a long and tedious path, owing to which it becomes very abstract. It somehow fails to take into account the historical facts and man's practical experiences. Therefore, even many philosophers could not grasp the Reality in toto. A common man gets great relief when someone speaks of Reality on his behalf. Philosophy, according to the recognized existentialists, is supposed to solve human problems and not deviate attention from the Reality creating a placebo effect using abstract ideas. In this vein, meekly accepting the religious beliefs may also pose intricate problems. Although Kierkegaard's attack was mainly on Christianity it is surely applicable to all religions. The very species, Faith, itself sounds to be stuffed with complexities when put to the test of validity in practical life. Kierkegaard on one side assumes misery for us because no choice is ever given to us right from the birth and at the same time he holds none responsible for the actual circumstances around us. If God is to be held responsible, then

all his attributes with so much of publicity would collapse miserably and instantly. This naturally leads to confusion. Existence itself becomes meaningless for us when we are given no choice/alternative and liberty at all. Then comes the question, what is the solution to this? Delearning a certain part of our hurriedly accumulated knowledge and consciously vacating the mind would be highly beneficial. Without this our mind would be stocked with a lot of meaningless and function less but decorated information. For Kierkegaard, the very existence itself is a mystery and fundamental cause of it is beyond our imagination. A sensitive soul will be driven to an utter despair mainly because of a standing disparity between what has been written so confidently or promised in theory and the existing reality to which we are all exposed and roughened. Though ultimately Kierkegaard too uses the language of surrender, he proposes it with the sense of helplessness and hopelessness. In connecting man with God, Kierkegaard thinks human reasoning is situation based and therefore we need to disregard this reasoning as a temporary one because it turns out to be the worst hitch in the path leading to God. The gulf created between man and God is due to the dominance of the superficial reasoning presented commonly and subsequently that promotes only a shaky trust in God. At the same time, he doesn't totally disregard the faculty of reasoning which is in fact an intellectual gift bestowed by Nature to humanity, although used sparingly by the majority. He argues that reason as such has a defined matrix and beyond which if it is stretched can lead to an irreparable loss. Similarly, he cautions regarding "Intellect" also as a weapon having limitations and so to be used with extra care. A total reliance on these faculties might prove to be a very damaging practice and fatal to life. There are two common schools in philosophical thinking. The one which places the objects at the primary level and then subordinates human beings relatively to judge it. The other one begins with human beings as a primary source and then with regard to it searches for the objectivity of the subject. Commonly except for the existentialists schools many have fallen prey to the first category. That is where the common man gets frustrated and thinks philosophy, as such, never an ultimate answer for the practical difficulties of life. Philosophy for him, seems to be merely an academic exercise. This is found more in case of religious philosophies which are more engaged in speaking on behalf of the ideals than man and his genuine difficulties in day today life. Kierkegaard shows greater concern for humanity before approaching divinity. He thinks, rather, cautions by insisting on the fact that our personal subjective experience cannot be worked out for general. It cannot be translated into a final form to make it suitable for all. Certain values, however, are universal and therefore need not change their parameters. "When we look at Existentialism as a natural reaction against the 'reason' dominated society and man's inability in the war-studded period, we may come to the conclusion that Kierkegaard and his followers, extreme or moderate existentialists, all gave a serious thought to the incapacity of

man and his psyche. The excesses which were introduced through different routes were no doubt in the interest of humanity to disallow the possible pessimism and likely frustration. But as a matter of fact they blinded human intelligence and caused sufficient damage. This is because despite knowing the reality it was overlooked and an attempt was made to introduce transcendental realities at an early stage." [4]

5. Conclusion

There have been many more philosophers who experienced the typical philosophical loneliness mainly due to their own exclusive choice of the chosen pathway. Aristotle, the legendary Greek philosopher said, "Man by nature a social animal." There is a sort of interdependence, a fact cannot be ignored. It is a basic requirement for well-being. Philosophers who indulge in an unusual outlook, though academically, automatically get isolated. The world they live in does not immediately certify a theory or philosophy as truly valuable. This is a natural process. It needs a certain duration for a generation to perceive. However, as a result during this span the philosophers get isolated and consequently experience loneliness. Kierkegaard for example was a Protestant and very temperamental. George Santayana described his nature rather unjustly as "philosophic egotism raised to the highest power." In fact, if a broader outlook is entertained then one can deal with this problem of service to humanity by philosophy in a different way. Certain philosophies seem to go by the academic fervent only wherein sometimes it might delve into the details of a particular 'ism' irrespective of its application in practice. At times we find the religious philosophies go well with the sentiments of the followers presenting hopes for living than training them to live with the reality. Those philosophers who courageously expose the limitations often get isolated and subsequently become lonesome. At times, such philosophical adventures are totally mistaken. As Bertrand Russell opines, "Modern Philosophy begins with Descartes, whose fundamental certainty is the existence of himself and his thoughts, from which the extreme world is to be inferred. This was only the first stage of development, through Berkeley and Kant, to Fichte, for whom everything is only an emanation of the ego. This was insanity, and, from this extreme, philosophy has been attempting, ever since, to escape into the world of everyday common sense." [5]

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