

THE AIMS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE – PART 2 OF 3

by

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We are still human beings, and we cannot be regarded as anything more than that. Whatever be the form that we give to our impulsions from within which rush forth in the name of the ideals of life, religion, or spirituality, man cannot cease to be man. Whatever grows from man is also of the characteristics of man. The thoughts that arise from the mind of man cannot be other than what they are. A divine thought cannot arise from a human base.

Suffice it to say that we need not be too enthusiastic and be carried away with the idea that we are anywhere near God or spirituality or religion, in spite of the noises that people make in the name of God Himself - because God is not afraid of noises, and He may not be afraid of even our religions, much less of our spiritualities. He has managed to maintain His position secure and will not brook any shaking of His position by the thundering of our voices. This is the crux of the position I tried to pose before you so that it is perhaps wisdom on our part to realise our incapacities, if we are really incapacitated.

Wisdom is the acceptance of a position which is really there, and not the assumption of a different position

altogether. Thus, if we plumb deeper into the positions that we found ourselves in as a conclusion of the analysis we conducted earlier, we seem to be nowhere near any satisfactory solution to our problems.

But I also sounded a note that there is something in us which would not accept a total defeat, in spite of the circumstances which will pour only rains of defeat and nothing else down on our heads. We have an enigmatic personality. Nothing can be more inexplicable than the personality of man. This is because both heaven and earth, paradise and hell, are blended together in this admixture called human personality. While the roars of hell are heard by us in the form of the lives that we live here, there is also, at the same time, the perfume of heaven which is wafting its glory in an unsuspected and imperceptible manner, coming before us as the idea of perfection and infinitude.

Philosophical disquisitions often have the tendency to hold the opinion that the idea of God is, after all, an idea, and an idea need not be a reality. This is a very critical point which one has to face in deeper analysis of human situation. Can an idea be identified with existence, or does an idea merely remain an idea isolated from what we can regard as true existence? There is a peculiar mystery behind the very idea of perfection arising in our minds. The mystery is this, which we have to analyse further with a little bit of caution and subtlety of thought. The idea that the idea of God may be an idea is also an idea. So, we are not sure as to where we are standing.

I will explain to you how humorous this situation is by giving you an example which will make you laugh. There were two mountaineers. It appears they climbed to the top of the range of Alps in Switzerland, and somehow they lost themselves. They were on the peaks of a mountain, but they did not know where they were standing. They looked around, and everywhere there was ice and mountainous peaks. One of the mountaineers wanted to know the location in which they were standing. "On which particular spot on

the range of these mountains are standing?" His friend opened up a map, a geographical layout. He looked at the various points of space in the region of the Alps shown on the map. He looked at a point and said, "Friend, I have now found out where we are standing. Look at that mountain top over there. Do you see it? There we are standing." How can a man be standing at a place at a distance, to which he is pointing? This seems to be a very funny answer that he gave, which might have satisfied his friend. But while there is the satisfaction of having received an answer, there is a query which arises out of the very answer itself due to the peculiarity of the answer and the mystery that is hidden behind it.

The notion of God will be accepted to be a simple notion and, therefore, we need not acquiesce in the attribution of any reality or existence to this idea or notion of the existence of God or perfection. Accepted. But the refusal to accept the presence of any reality or the element of existence in the idea or notion of God is an idea which will not again agree that it also should be identified with a mere idea minus existence. This is a very great subtle point that is hidden behind the workings of our minds.

A denial of a thing does not wish to be denied itself. If that denial is denied, its value goes, and it ceases to be a denial. So the idea that the idea of God cannot be equated with existence cannot be an idea merely, minus existence. It has to have some existence, some reality. Otherwise, we run into an infinite regress of arguments where we do not come to any conclusion at all. And this inconclusive way of arguing is called logical fallacy. It is not logic at all. It is not argument. It is not any acceptable statement. The insistence on the preceding idea, namely the idea of the refusal to accept the idea of God as identical with reality or existence, is a proof that the idea of God is identical with the existence of God.

Here we are in a very satisfactory position. We seem to have won a victory over this battle of philosophical controversies and theological disquisitions and religious

warfare. Somehow we seem to have won the battle because, in the midst of this conglomeration of inconclusive arguments and positions assumed in religion, theology and philosophy, we seem to have a stand of our own, a status which cannot be rooted out from its position - namely, the impossibility of isolating thought from reality, idea from existence. And, therefore, an idea of perfection has somehow, perforce, to have a relation to the existence of this perfection. Therefore, such a perfection has to be.

Yesterday we were contemplating the implications of the answer to the questions as to the aims of human existence. We seem to be somewhere near the answer to this question when we go further around the line of approach we have taken today - namely, the idea of perfection - which is another way of putting the same thing when we say the idea of infinity. The conception of the infinite is the same as the idea of perfection. The recognition of the finitude of an individual or the limitation of any particular object in the world is, at the same time, an acceptance of the presence of a larger than the finite. In philosophical parlance, this is called the argument of the contingency of things. The contingency of what is mundane proves the non-contingency of what is not mundane.

The Buddha seems to have given his final message when he was departing from this world: "Ananda, how could there be a thing compounded, made of parts, and limited in its nature unless there is something which is uncompounded, unlimited in its nature, and not finite in its structure? How could there be contingency of the performances of nature and the movements of the world if a non-contingent explanation is not there? How could there be any movement unless there is a point towards which the movement is directed?" Every movement is perhaps a direction taken by things towards an unmoved Mover or a causeless Cause, a point where every directing motion has to find its conclusion.

So with the movement of the world in the form of the transiency and the contingency of things in the finitude of

structure we, included in this performance of nature, seem to be moving towards this utter perfection. So we have the answer to the question of what is the aim of human existence. The aim of human existence is the aim of anything, for the matter of that. If man is supposed to be made in the image of God, the Perfect Being, everything else also seems to have been made in the very same image. The image of perfection can be discovered as the root and the heart of any little thing or particle of nature. As man speaks and no one else seems to speak, he speaks only about himself and he has little to say about anybody else.

All religion is manmade, and all the notions of spirituality and the pursuit of God, etc., are the productions of the workings of the human mind. Therefore, man always speaks about man only and to us the world is nothing but a world of mankind, humanity; there is nothing else for us. This is as it has to be, and there cannot be any other shape that our thoughts can take – because, as I began by saying, man can think only as man and he cannot think like a frog or any other thing that can be there in the world.

This shows that our ideas cannot be regarded as complete ideas because there are other aspects which are required to complete the ideas that are human - though in this incomplete idea that is human, there is the presence of an implication or a suggestiveness which takes it to a perfection beyond itself. Every individual finitude is a suggestion to the existence of that which is beyond itself. Therefore, we are only suggestions of what is beyond us and we are not complete in ourselves.

An indication, or a point, is present in every one of us. A pointer to a destination that is beyond us seems to be a light that we are enshrining within ourselves. We are vehicles carrying a meaning that escapes the notice of the eyes but persists and is recognised by an urge within ourselves. It is more than what the reports of the senses can give us. Far superior to the indications given by our mind and reason, it is present as a suggestion beyond reason itself. Man is more

than man, though he cannot be anything else but man. This is the double indication, the significance of man's personality which is earth and heaven at the same time.

That is why man has been a failure and is also a great success. He has been an utter defeat in his pursuits of the values of life, yet he is a great success as a masterpiece in the creation of God. This is because this utterly defeated puny brain of the frail individuality of man is carrying in its bosom the suggestion of the presence of a tremendous immortal infinitude. Whether God exists or not is a different matter; that man should be able to feel the necessity for the existence of such perfection as God is a great certificate that can be given to the capacity of the human mind. That man seems to be such a puny dust particle, as it were, in this tremendous fearsome astronomical universe is one aspect of the matter. But that this little dust of man should be able to conceive the magnitude of the fearsome expanse of the astronomical cosmos is the greatness of man. That which crushes, unconscious of the fact that it is crushing something, is not superior to that little thing which knows that it is being crushed. A man who may be pounded to dust by a huge mountain falling on his head is greater than the mountain, because the magnitude of the mountain is unconscious that it is falling on man but the man is aware that he is crushed under the weight of a huge mountain. The awareness of defeat is superior to the unawareness of success. So even a defeat carries within itself a superiority because of the presence of a light in the form of an awareness of the presence of defeat. There is no point in having success without having an awareness of it. An unconscious king is not in any way superior to a conscious beggar.

Here is again a point which raises itself as a luminosity in the mind of man. Again, to reiterate the point, man is a mystery, and he is not an equation of mathematics. With this mystery that man is, man can know his destination. Man is supposed to be superior to the animal merely because of this peculiar aptitude and endowment that he knows the purposiveness of his activities, while the automaton of an

animal is divested of this principle of the awareness of a purpose.

A bulldozer moves and a man also moves, but there is a difference. The bulldozer does not know why it moves and where it moves, but the man knows why he moves. This is the difference between a helpless little man and a terrific bulldozer that can crush anything.

Thus, the might of the magnitude of the universe need not terrify man's finitude, because the consciousness of finitude is more important than the unconsciousness of the expanse of the astronomical cosmos. Here is the crucial point we must contemplate and find time to meditate upon to suggest the nature of the final aim of our little activities.

I feel confident that these few words will stimulate your further imaginations and philosophical enquiries in the direction of this great problem of human existence. And it appears that in our little limited finitudes of our little personalities in this little audience, we carry within each one of us a cosmic meaning. These little nobodies that we are, these small insignificant nothings that we appear to be are moving about carrying within our bosoms an uplifted light and treasure in the form of a cosmic significance.

We do not seem to be the little mortals that we are. We are putting on a mask of finitude and mortality and bodily being, but we do not seem to be that. This is our hope and this is our satisfaction. This is our ultimate aim, if at all we can call it an aim or a purpose of life. We do not seem to be men sitting here; we are not women; we are not particularities. We are little bodies or caskets in which is treasured the value of the whole of creation. The might and the omnipresence of the Almighty Creator is speaking through every little individuality of ours. In this sense we may say that each one of us is made in the image of God; the Bible is right. Thus there is a great, glorious future before us. We have not been defeated, and nobody can defeat us. Our heritage and our future is a final success. The bell rings, and we shall succeed.