

PHILOSOPHY AND MEANING OF LIFE: FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF BIOLOGY AND HUMANISTIC APPROACH

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Abstract:

Philosophy and Meaning of life are most important issues in the intellectual sphere as well as common sphere. Also philosophy and life are closely related and they cannot stay separately in true sense. Philosophy without life is barren and life without philosophy is dull and brute. Also it is an effort to raise and solve of some very influential and significant questions like, what is the meaning of philosophy. What is meaning of life in biology and humanistic approach? How does life relate to existence and consciousness? What is the origin of life? What is the nature of reality? What is the significance of life? What is meaningful and valuable in life? What is the reason to live? What are we living for? Philosophy is rationally critical thinking, of a more or less systematic kind about the general nature of the world (metaphysics or theory of existence), the justification of belief (epistemology or theory of knowledge), and the conduct of life (ethics or theory of value). Life is a characteristic that distinguishes objects that have signalling and self-sustaining processes from those that do not, either because such functions have ceased (death), or else because they lack such functions and are classified as inanimate. The meaning of life—its significance, origin, purpose, and ultimate fate—is a central concept and question in philosophy and religion.

Key words: Philosophy, Life, Value and Meaning of Life in Biology and Humanistic approach.

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The present paper is an effort to deal with the concept of philosophy and meaning of life from the viewpoint of biology and humanistic approach and also with the concept of value.

Meaning of Philosophy:

Now let us see the meaning of philosophy in various contexts. Philosophy is the study or investigation of general and fundamental problems, such as those connected with nature, causes or principles of reality, existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods^{[1],[2]} Philosophy is distinguished from other ways of addressing such problems by its critical, generally systematic approach and its reliance on rational argument.^[3] Also philosophy is the conclusions which men, in their search for a knowledge of truth, have drawn from the facts of Science. The word "philosophy" comes from the Greek (philosophia), which literally means "love of wisdom" ^{[4], [5], [6]}. In more casual speech the "philosophy" of a particular person can refer to the beliefs held by that person.

Philosophy is the academic discipline concerned with making explicit the nature and significance of ordinary and scientific beliefs and investigating the intelligibility of concepts by means of rational argument concerning their presuppositions, implications, and interrelationships; in particular, the rational investigation of the nature and structure of reality (metaphysics), the resources and limits of knowledge (epistemology), the principles and import of moral judgment (ethics), and the relationship between language and reality (semantics).

Philosophy means the particular doctrines relating to these issues of some specific individual or school according to the philosophy of Descartes. Philosophy means the critical study of the basic principles and concepts of a discipline according to the philosophy of law.

Meaning of Life in Biology:

Life is a characteristic that distinguishes objects that have signalling and self-sustaining processes from those that do not,^{[7],[8]} either because such functions have ceased (death), or else because they lack such functions and are classified as inanimate.^{[9],[10]} Biology is the science concerned with the study of life. Any contiguous living system is called an organism. Organisms undergo metabolism, maintain homeostasis, possess a capacity to grow, respond to stimuli, reproduce and, through natural selection, adapt to their environment in successive generations. More complex living organisms can communicate through various means.^[11] A diverse array of living organisms can be found in the biosphere of Earth, and the properties common to these

organisms—plants, animals, fungi, protists, archaea, and bacteria—are a carbon- and water-based cellular form with complex organization and heritable genetic information.

Scientific evidence suggests that life began on Earth approximately 3.5 billion years ago. (12) The mechanism by which life emerged is unknown and hypotheses are being formulated. Since then, life has evolved into a wide variety of forms, which biologists have classified into a hierarchy of taxa. Life can survive and thrive in a wide range of conditions.

Though the existence of life is only confirmed on Earth, many scientists believe extraterrestrial life is not only plausible, but probable. Other planets and moons in the Solar System have been examined for evidence of having once supported simple life, and projects such as SETI have attempted to detect transmissions from possible alien civilizations. According to the panspermia hypothesis, life on Earth may have originated from meteorites that spread organic molecules or simple life that first evolved elsewhere.

Meaning of Life in the Humanistic approach:

The meaning of life—its significance, origin, purpose, and ultimate fate—is a central concept and question in philosophy and religion. Both philosophy and religion have offered interpretations as to how life relates to existence and consciousness, and on related issues such as life stance, purpose, conception of a god or gods, a soul or an afterlife. Different cultures throughout history have had widely varying approaches to these issues. It can also be expressed in different forms, such as "Why are we here?". In reply of this question we can say that we are here (physical world) for serving others and for own self being a son of nature. "What is life all about?" and "What is the purpose of existence?" In answering of this question we can say purpose of our existence is live and let live by doing moral actions and spiritual actions. Doing work for the welfare of human society by the help of those actions is another purpose of human existence in this physical world. Making unity, looking forward for the peace of individual life and social life are also purpose of human existence. It has been the subject of much philosophical, scientific, and theological speculation throughout history.

The meaning of life is in the philosophical and religious conceptions of existence, social ties, consciousness, and happiness, and borders on many other issues, such as symbolic meaning, ontology, value, purpose, ethics, good and evil, free will, the existence of one or multiple Gods, conceptions of God, the soul, and the afterlife. Scientific contributions focus primarily on describing related empirical facts about the universe, exploring the context and parameters

concerning the 'how' of life. Science also studies and can provide recommendations for the pursuit of well-being and a related conception of morality. An alternative, humanistic approach poses the question "What is the meaning of my life?" What's it all about? Who are we? Why are we here? What are we here for? What is the origin of life? What is the nature of life? What is the nature of reality? What is the purpose of life? What is the purpose of one's life? What is the significance of life? What is meaningful and valuable in life? What is the value of life? What is the reason to live? What are we living for?

There may be a large number of proposed answers to these questions from many different cultural and ideological backgrounds which are following:

What is the meaning of our life?

It is not easy to give reply of the aforesaid question yet present writer try give reply as following: Meaning of our life is to live and let co-operate others to live anyhow or fulfilling the basic requirements for living of an individual after that we should look morality and others. Life is meaningful and death is meaningless. Though we must accept the death in a certain stage of our life yet we should try to live owing to life is meaningful and valuable. Desire of eternal or immortal life is also meaning of life. Here eternal or immortal life means whole span of an individual including his former generation and his later generation. If somehow one person can live smoothly in his whole span of life without suffering from physical, mental, economical, social and political problems, we can say he or she can enjoy eternal or immortal life. If we want to make our life meaningful then we must live and construct, not death and destruct. Fleeing from this world due to fear of poorness, poverty, anxiety, tension is a kind of stupidity. Relentlessly striving to relate ourselves to the ultimate and to the divine reality which are existed within us potentially may be meaning of life. Simply we can speak that "transforming ourselves to the others" is meaning of live in this physical world. More and more earning money is not meaning of live.

Who are we?

The present writer thinks that we may be the part of Brahman or subtle nature because we have come from parents; our parents come from their parents. In such way at the time of origination of our life persons were there. Who they are we do not know exactly but it has been described in many religious scriptures in various ways. We shall not go there. More vividly we may say, according to science there were Hydrogen, Carbon Dye oxide, Oxygen and Hydrogen etc. at the

time of origination of life. These gasses are part of the nature. Hence we are the part of the subtle nature. In the deep sense we are not separate from others we are all same irrespective of caste, creed, colour, religion and so on. Also our body is constituted with five elements which are Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether according to Indian philosophical thought. These are called “Pancamahābhūta”. These five basic elements are found in the nature. For this reason we may say we are part of the nature. Here may raise one question that if our body is constituted with five basic elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether), how is originated consciousness of body? In replying of this question we can say that consciousness origins from the nature of the basic five elements in our body naturally.

What are we here for?

We are here for the cause of preserving the diversities of the nature and relating ourselves to others. It may be either from animate or from the inanimate. Also we are here due to building and preserving morality, pollution less environment, unity in diversity, national and international integration, secularity, universal brotherhood, fraternity and equality for the betterment of the universe. Here may raise a question like why should we preserve morality and religious sense? If we do not maintain that, one cannot tolerate another man, man will not remain man and man will be converted in animal. In this situation peace will not be in the world. Moreover, we are here for living together in peace without fear and horror. We are here for the cause of doing welfare of individual and society.

The value of the question pertaining to the purpose of life may coincide with the achievement of ultimate reality, or a feeling of oneness, or even a feeling of sacredness.

Philosophy, Life and Value:

Philosophy, Life and Value are closely related to each other. Philosophy should be close to life. The quest of truth for its own sake has its importance in philosophy and its practical bearing need not be over-emphasised. But Sri Aurobindo aptly puts it, “Still the truth once discovered must be realisable in our inner being and our outer activities; if it is not, it may have an intellectual but not an integral importance; a truth for the intellect, for our life, it would be no more than the solution of a thought puzzle or an abstract reality or a deed letter.”^[13] Philosophy influences the life of men, individual as well as social. As Aldous Huxley said, “man live in accordance with their philosophy of life, their conception of the world.”^[14]

Now philosophy raises some question regarding animal rights and value of environments like whether animals should have rights or not and whether environment should have intrinsic value or not. Hence, we can say that in recent time philosophy influences the wild's life and plant's life and environment also. The existentialist revolt in our times characteristically expresses this demand. It is a revolt against logical naturalistic mechanism, analytical rationalism and fossilised thought, which tends to sap the vital sources philosophy, reducing it to a barren pursuit after theories which have nothing to do with our practical life. Similarly, pragmatism emphasises the pragmatic value of truth, Humanism revives the protegorian teaching of homo-mensure. Instrumentalism defines knowledge as a mere instrument for the successful action in life."^[15]

Now, it is a great merit of all these approaches that they emphasises the need for making philosophy serve some purpose, but they erring confining it to the narrow limits of human life. Philosophy as a science of value would lead us to the supreme value, God. Pragmatic value of truth should get its reasonable place in the system of values but it cannot be the highest, till less, the only value. To be a man fully, we should transcend man and hence not men but superman shall be the measure of things. Philosophy serves life but life serves spirit, and hence spirituality and not life is the summum bonum of Philosophy.

The value –philosopher Windelband truly defined philosophy is “...the critical science of universal value.”^[16] But, he entirely missed the fact that the kingdom of philosophy includes both, “Beurteilungen” (judgements of value) as well as “Urteile” (judgements of relation). To exalt value, in isolation from existence, ideal, without any connection with actual, as many of the philosophers of value did, is to render values impotent and to reduce philosophy to a mere idle dreaming. Values are not abstractions but concrete realities. The gulf between L. W. stern's “standpoint of things” and “standpoint of person” and Munsterberg's “world of values” and “world of facts”, is unwarranted. It is the one supreme; absolute which is the basis of both the standpoint of things and the standpoint of persons, which is equally the essence of the world of facts and the world of values. Fichte's world of moral values is only one side of the story, Rickert's “West on Sich” represents only one aspect of value, Philosophy deals not only with mental but also supermental and inframental values. Philosophy, as a conceptual approach to reality, includes all types of values and facts.

In the concluding part of this paper we can say philosophy, life and value are closely related and they cannot stay separately in the true sense. Philosophy without life is called barren and life

without philosophy is called dull and brute. Here may raise two questions that why philosophy without life is barren? And other question is why life without philosophy is brute and dull? In replying to the first question we can say that we do philosophy for gaining better and deeper knowledge of life and world. It is well known that life is the vital object of philosophy. Hence, without life philosophy would be vacuum or barren. We can give answer to the second question in the following way that life cannot continue smoothly without the help of philosophy. The term “philosophy” of course has used here in a very broad sense – beliefs of a particular person. Only philosophy can develop moral sense of life. Without philosophy life is like a boat without a boatman. With the help of philosophy as boatman a life can reach to a certain destination.

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