

## Human Predicament – A Conviction of Isolation and Randomness

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### Abstract

The potential meaninglessness of human existence has corroded human life from various quarters. The existential encounter with nothingness and the tenuousness of the human existence are prototypical of modern life. The hiatus between what individual aspires for and the hard reality of what he achieves between what he professes and practices, and between what he really is and what he would like to appear his mercilessly crumpled his life leaving insidious effect on his inner being. The injuries inflicted and the scars left on his psyche generate cynical attitudes towards the established social norms and values and make him grope for life's relevance. Life has grown today "indefinitely vast" without any proper "interlink age" to hold it together from falling apart. Painfully aware of his precarious position, man experiences severe limitations in today's set-up and an acute terror of the world augmented by its randomness.

**Keywords:** insidious, randomness, precarious, crumpled, tenuousness, hiatus etc.

### Introduction

The pervasive sense of meaninglessness is thus the most dominant feature of the human condition in the cotemporary epoch. It is the realization of what Frank Johnson calls "fractionated functions"<sup>1</sup> that is responsible for one's felt insignificance of the life and its affairs. The plight of the modern man has been discussed by Seaman under a set of five inter-related operation conditions, viz powerlessness, namelessness, isolation, self estrangement and meaninglessness which he considers to be different manifestations of alienation. He analyses "the search for meaning" in terms of the increase of "functional rationality" and the concomitant decline of "substantial rationality"<sup>2</sup>. As functional rationality increases. There is a parallel decline in the individual's capacity, which is called:

*The capacity to act intelligently in a given situation on the basis of one's own insight into the interrelations of the events*<sup>3</sup>

The state of affairs is most likely to generate feelings of inauthenticity and meaninglessness.

There is something that attracts one's attention and then grips. The individual's principal conflict is not with the group but with his inner self. Man and his judging self or say, his conscience, are the conflict with each other. As a result:

*The western man becomes an introspective, soul searching being, isolated even from his own family confronting reality with a critical, hyper-intellectual view, and morally responsible for his feelings to an inner deity, his conscience*<sup>4</sup>

The common need of a man to belong somewhere, to have contact, to participate with others to form a living community is solved in a more direct way by Orientals than by accidentals. For this social and moral isolation of the individual, the western society has paid heavily with neurotic development like inner psychic tension provoked by repression and frustration enforced by the western society:

*Emptiness and silence are hard to bear.*<sup>5</sup>

### The problem of meaninglessness .As Edmund Fuller remarks

*In our age man suffers now only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problem-a conviction of isolation, randomness, meaninglessness in his way of existence*<sup>6</sup>

The problem of meaninglessness is so pervasive that it threatens to corrode every sphere of human life. It has been treated in considerable detail in American and European literature. Man fails to perceive today the very purpose behind life and the relevance of his existence in a hostile world. Notwithstanding unprecedented scientific and technological advancements, which have added immensely to his physical pleasures and comforts, the contemporary man is doomed to find himself in a tragic mess. The prevailing economic conditions culminating in the abject poverty of the masses and the economic squeeze of the middle class on the one hand, and the ever-growing affluence of the newly rich on the other. The drag of social conventions and the traditions, fast changing value system consequent upon the impact of rapid modernization accruing from industrialization and urbanization, the intergenerational tensions engendered with changing ethos—all these makes increasing and often disturbing demands on the individual and contribute in their own ways to his sense of meaninglessness of life.

As it is the contemporary man finds himself participating in a 'rat race' and is estranged not only from his fellowmen but also from his innermost nature, having nothing within or without him to fall back upon in moments of crisis. The present century has seen the dissolution of old certainties and dogmas and, as Paul Brunton observes:

*Never before were so many people plunged in so much perplexity and unsettlement.*<sup>7</sup>

Deprived of the succor of ancient wisdom, which provided the much-needed basis for value and meaningfulness in life, the modern man has no substitute for faith and religion except science and information. Thinkers like Aldous Huxley have aptly pointed out:

*Ours is a world in which knowledge accumulates and wisdom decays.*<sup>8</sup>

The malaise of the contemporary man has been considerably aggravated by the crisis of the present.

The twentieth century—especially the post-War period has been an age of great spiritual stress and strain, and has rightly been regarded as:

*The age of alienation.*<sup>9</sup>

It has shrunk in spirit languishing in confusion, frustration, disintegration, and disillusionment and meaninglessness. As Rilke bewails in his first Duino Elegy:

We are not very reliably at home in the interpreted world. Our very notion of reality has been profoundly changed by Bergson's theory of durée, Freud's theory about subconscious, Einstein's concept of relativity and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. We suffer from a gnawing sense of meaninglessness, which may be manifest in man's behavior:

*The alienation from one's fellow men and from nature; the awareness that life runs out one's hand like sand, and that one will die without having lived; that one lives in the midst of plenty and joyless.*<sup>10</sup>

The potential meaninglessness of human existence has corroded human life from various quarters. The existential encounter with Nothingness and the tenuousness of human existence are prototypical of modern life. The hiatus between what the individual aspires for and the hard reality of what he achieves, between what he professes and practices, and between what he really is and what he would like to appear, has mercilessly crumpled his life leaving an insidious effect on his inner being. The injuries inflicted and the scars left on his psyche generate a cynical attitude towards the established social norms and values and make him grope for life's relevance.

Man is shocked to find that he is no longer the master of his destiny and that there are forces, which threaten to write his destiny, and there are forces, which threaten to wither his life and all its joys and hopes. He is rendered helpless:

*He comes to feel helpless in the fundamental series that he cannot control what he is able to foresee.*<sup>11</sup>

Anxiety ridden and utterly hopeless, he finds quite a few mechanisms and proceeds beyond his understanding and consequently, suffers from deep sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness. Life has grown today indefinitely vast without any proper "interlinkage"<sup>12</sup> to hold it together from falling apart.

Painfully aware of his precarious position, man Experiences severe limitations in today's set-up and an acute terror of the world augmented by its randomness. Paul Tillich says:

*Man is dawn into the world of objects and has lost or is continuously losing.*<sup>13</sup>

The modern man's problem have been discussed variously But as Erich Fromm points out:

*In the nineteenth century, the problem was that God is dead; in the twentieth century, the problem is that man is dead. The danger of the past was that men become slaves. The danger of the future is that men may become robots (who) will destroy their world and themselves because they cannot stand a meaningless life.*<sup>14</sup>

In fact, the absence of meaningful relations is the greatest curse of this age.

The pervasive sense of meaninglessness is thus the most dominant feature of the human condition.

The unprecedented growth of science and technology has unleashed the dark forces of mutual distrust, violence and apathy. Materialistic culture, self-delusion, up rootedness, cynicism, crisis of identity has become the guiding factors of human developments in all its dimensions. The modern man is pitted against a background of indecision, incertitude, futility and boredom. Devoid of faith and enlightenment, discontented and disenchanting he continues to live in a self –created vacuum unable to have even a glimpse of liberating truth.

To summarize the human predicament, we first discuss aspects that remain generally unappreciated but must be understood if the predicament is to be resolved. Clearly, there is no single magic bullet that can save civilization. We then propose series of behavioral changes that in combination could lead to real solutions to the interconnected challenges that society faces today.<sup>14</sup>

*I distinguish between existential resentment (what Nietzsche calls ressentiment) and resentment. The latter is often an indispensable ingredient in a political movement. It expresses a grievance against exploitation or suffering. The former is a more durable disposition, inserted into moods and dispositions, of profound disaffection from existence itself. It can, when it is powerful, turn a desirable movement into something nasty in its turn. Of course, resentment can also become transfigured into ressentiment over time, if it is too pervasive. That is one of the dangers to negotiate in the human predicament.*<sup>15</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In modern times the power of human impression and sensibility are at their sharpest. The loosening of social and moral bonds has triggered off a process off a process of alienated thinking. It is this sensibility to alienation set in emotional and moral aloofness that has made possible innumerable insights into the microscopic estrangements that are to be found in the even the durable relationships of love faithfulness and gratitude. The psychological basis of intese individualism consists in the intensification of the nervous stimulation, which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and innet stimuli. The modern mind has therefore become even more calculating precise and regimented. The study finds that system of society dedicated ostensibly to the individual ends by diminishing its stature and latitude. The individual is lost or overwhelmed by the conflicting streams of opposing ideologies. Thus man freed from traditional has become isolated powerless and instrument of purpose outside himself alienated from himself and others .This state undermines his self weakness and frightens him and makes him ready for submission to new kind of bondage.

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