

Reflections on Schopenhauer (1788–1860): The Wisdom of Life – A Philosophical Discourse on the Realization of Selfhood and Social Perception

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Abstract: *The article explores Schopenhauer philosophical essay. The Wisdom of Life, focusing on his tripartite model of happiness personality possessions and social reputation drawing on classical thinkers such as Aristotle and Epicurus, the price reflects on Schopenhauer core argument that a person's internal constitution outweighs external circumstances in determining wellbeing. This reflective summary aims to unpack how these timeless ideas continue to resonate with contemporary life, offering insight into the perennial human pursuit of fulfillment. The subject reasonably aligns with this journal's focus as long as the philosophical interpretation is critically evaluated, scholarly annotated and academically structured. As it currently stands the paper reads more like an editorialized book review than an academic article.*

Key Methods: Philosophical Framework and provide a short explanation of how classical texts are referenced to constrict the commentary.

Keywords: Schopenhauer, happiness, personality, social perception, philosophical reflection

1. Division of the Subject

¹ Aristotle divides his blessings of life into three classes those which comes to us from without, those of the soul, and those of the body. Keeping nothing of this division but the number, the writer observes that the different fundamental differences in human lot may be reduced to three distinct classes.

- 1) What a man is that is to say, personality in the widest sense of the word; under which are included health, strength, beauty temperament, moral character intelligence and education.
- 2) What a man has, that is property and possessions of every kind.
- 3) How a man stands in the estimation of others, by which is to be understood, as everybody knows, what a man is in the eyes of his fellowmen, or more strictly, the light in which they regard him. This is shown by their opinion of him, and their opinion is in its turn manifested by the honour in which he is held, and by his rank and reputation.

The differences which come under the first head are those which nature herself has set between man and man from this fact alone who may at once infer that their influence the happiness or unhappiness of mankind in a much more vital and radical way than those contained under the two following heads, which are mentally the effect of human arrangements compared with genuine advantage, such as a great mind of a great heart, all the privileges of rank and birth, even of royal birth, are but as kings of to kings in real life. The same thing was said long ago by Metro Doris, the earliest disciple of Epicurus who "wrote the title of one his chapters. The happiness we receive from ourselves is greater than that which we obtain from our surroundings" ² And it is an obvious fact which can be called in question that the principal element in a man's well - being - indeed, in the whole tenor of his existence, is what is made of his inner constitution. For this is the immediate source of that inward satisfaction or dissatisfaction resulting from the sum total of

his sensations, desires and thoughts, whilst his surroundings on the other hand, exert only a mediate or indirect influence affect me two people alike, even with perfectly, similar surroundings every one lives in a world of his own. For a man his immediate apprehension only of his own ideas, feelings and volitions, the outer world can influence him only so far, as it brings these to life. The world in which a man lives shapes itself chiefly by the way in which he looks at it, and so it proves different to different men, to one is barren, dull, and superficial to another rich interesting, and full of meaning. On hearing of he interesting events which have happened in the course of a man's experience many people will wish that similar things had happened in their lives too completely forgetting that they should be envious rather of the mental aptitude which lent those events the significance they possess when he describes them to a man a man of genius they were interesting adventures but to the dull perceptions of an ordinary individual they would have been stale, everyday occurrences. This is in the highest degree the case with many Goethe's and Byron poems, which are obviously founded upon actual facts, where it is open to a foolish reader to envy the poet because so many delightful things happened to him instead of envying that that mighty power of phantasy which was capable of turning a fairly common experience into something so great and beautiful in the same way, a person of melancholy temperament will make a scene in tragedy out of what appears to the sanguine man only in the light of an interesting conflict, and to a phlegmatic soul as something without any meaning all of which rests upon the fact that every event, in order to be realized and appreciated, requires the co - operation of two factors, namely a subject and an object, off hose, these are as basely and necessarily, connected as oxygen and hydrogen in water.

Hence the life of every man is stamped with the same character throughout, however much his external circumstances may alter; it is like a series of variations on a single theme. Nobody can get beyond his own personality/individuality. An animal, under whatever

circumstances it is placed, remains within the narrow limits to which nature has irrevocably consigned it, so that our endeavours to make a pet happy must always keep within the compass of its nature, and be restricted to what it can feel. So it is with man, the measure of the happiness he can attain is determined beforehand by his individuality. More especially is this the case with the mental powers which fix once for all the capacity for the higher kinds of pleasure of these powers are small, no efforts from without, nothing that his fellowmen or that fortune can do for him will suffice to raise him above the ordinary degree of human happiness and pleasure, half animal though it be his only resources and his sensual appetite a copy of and cheerful family life at the most low company and vulgar pastime, even education, on the whole can avail little, if anything, for the enlargement of the horizon.

Everything, confirms the fact that the subjective element in life is incomparably more important for our happiness and pleasure than the objective, from such sayings as Hunger is the best sauce.

Hunger is the best sauce

And youth and Age cannot live together, upto the life of the Genius and the saint. Health outweighs all other blessings so much that they may see that a healthy beggar is happier than an ailing king. A quiet and cheerful temperament, happy in the enjoyment of a perfectly sound physique an intellect clear, lively, penetrating and seeing things as they are, a moderate and gentle will, and therefore a good consequence these are privileges which no rank or wealth can make up for or replace. For what a man is in himself, what accompanies him when he is alone, what no one can give or take away, is obviously more essential to him that everything he has in the way of possessions, or what he may be in the eyes of the world. An intellectual man in complete solitude has excellent entertainment in his own thoughts and fancies, while no amount of diversity or social pleasure, theatres, excursions and amusements, can ward off boredom from a dullard.

Horace says of himself that, however many are derived for the fancy goods of life there is one at least who can live without them: -

German, marmor, ebur, tyrrhena, sigilla, tabellas, argentums, vestes, Gactula murice tinctus sant quiron habitant estquicurat habere and when Socrates saw various articles of Luxaary spread out for sale, he claimed. How much there is in the world I do not want.

So, the first and most element in our life's happiness is what we are our personality if for no other reason than that it is a constant factor coming into play under all our circumstances besides, unlike the blessings which are described under the two other heads, it is not the sport of destiny and cannot be rested from us and so far it is endowed with an absolute value in contrast to the motive relative worth of the other two.

Personality, or What a Man is

We have already seen in general, what a man contributes much more to the happiness than what a man is contributes

much more than what he has, or how he is regarded by others. What a man is and so what he has in his own person is always the chief thing to consider for his individuality accompanies him everywhere and gives its colour to all his experiences. In every kind of enjoyment, for instance, the pleasure depends principally upon the man himself. Every one admits this in regard to physical and how much truer it is of intellectual, pleasure. When we use the English expression "to enjoy oneself", we are employing a very striking and appropriate phrase for observe one says, not "he enjoys Paris", but "he enjoys himself in Paris".

Who is Genius?

A Genius is one whose nervous power of sensitiveness is largely in excess, as Aristotle ³ has correctly observed, Man distinguished in philosophy, politics, poetry or art appears be all of a melancholy temperament. This is doubt less the passage which Cicero has in mind when he as he often does, Aristotle sit amnes ingenious is melancholies esse ⁴ Shakespeare has very neatly expressed this radical and innate diversity of temperament in those lines in The Merchant of Venice: -

Nature has framed strange fellows in her time;
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes,
And laugh, like parrots at a bag piper,
And others of such vinegar aspects,
That they will not show their teeth in way of sonle,
Though Nestor severe the just be laughable.

This is the difference which Plato draws between (Greek eukolos and Greek dyskolos) the man of easy, and he man of difficult disposition in proof of which he refers to the varying degrees of susceptibility which different people show to pleasurable and painful impressions, so that one would laugh at what other makes another despair. As a rule, the stronger the susceptibility to unpleasant impressions, the weaker is the susceptibility to pleasant ones and vice - versa.

Property or What a Man Has

Epicurus divided the needs of mankind into three classes and the division made by the great professor of happiness is a true and fine one. First come natural and necessary needs, such as when not satisfied produce pain food and clothing, victus etc amictus, needs which can be easily satisfied. Secondly there are those needs which though natural are not necessary such as the gratification of certain of the senses. I may add, that however in the report given by Diogenes Laeritus, Epicurus does not mention which of the senses he means so that on this point my account of his doctrine is somewhat more definite and exact than the original. These are the needs more difficult to satisfy. The third class consists of needs which are neither natural nor necessary, the need of luxury and prodigality, show and splendor, which never come to an end, and are very to satisfy ⁵. It is difficult, if not impossible; to define the limits which reason should impose on the desire for wealth, which will satisfy a man. The amount is always relative that is to say, just as much as will maintain the proportion between what he wants and what he gets, for to measure a man's happiness only by what he expects to get as a futile as to try and express as a fraction for which shall have a numeration, but no denomination. A man never feels the loss of things which he never occurs to him to ask for, he is just as happy without them, whilst

another who may have a hundred times as much, feels miserable because he has not got the one thing he wants. In fact here for every man his horizon is his own, and he will expect as much as he thinks it is possible for him to get. If an object within his horizon looks as though he could confidently reckon on getting it, he is happy but if difficulties come in the way he is miserable. What lies beyond his horizon has no effect at all upon him. So, it is that the vast possessions of the rich do not agitate the poor, and conversely that a wealthy man is not consoled by all the wealth for the failure of his hopes. Riches one may say, are like sea water the more you drink the thirstier you become and the name is true of fame.

Position or a Man's Place in the Estimation of others

Reputation

By a peculiar weakness of human nature, people generally think too much about the opinion which others form of them, although the slightest reflection will show that this opinion, whatever it may be, is not in itself essential to happiness. Therefore it is hard to understand why everybody feels so very pleased when he sees that other people have a good opinion of him, or say anything flattering to his vanity. If you stroke a cat, it will purr, and is, inevitably if you praise a man a sweet expression of delight will appear on his face and even though the praise is a palpable lie, it will be welcome. If the matter is one which he prides himself. If only people will applaud him, a man may console himself for downright misfortune or for the pittance he gets from two sources of human happiness already discussed and conversely, it is astonishing how infallibly a man will be annoyed and in some cases annoyed or deeply pained by any wrong doing done to his feeling of self importance, where ever he by the nature degrees or circumstances of the injury or by any depreciation, slight or disregard.

Pride

The folly of our nature which we are discussing puts forth three shoots, ambition, vanity and pride. The difference between the last two is this pride is an established conviction of one's own paramount worth in some peculiar respect, while vanity is the desire of rousing such a conviction in others, and it is generally accompanied by the secret hope of ultimately coming to the same conviction itself. Pride works from within it is the direct appropriation of oneself. Vanity is the desire to arrive at the appreciation indirectly, from without. So we find that vain people are talkative pride, and taciturn, But the vain person ought to be aware that the good opinion of others and it is generally obtained much more easily and certainly by persistent silence than by speech, even though he has a very good things to say. Anyone who wishes to affect pride is not therefore a proud man, but he will soon have to drop this, as every other, assumed character. The Germans have no national pride, which shows they are, as everybody knows! And how dishonest are those who, by a piece of ridiculous affectation, pretend that they are proud of their country.

Rank

Let us take rank first, as it may be dismissed in a few words, although it plays an important part in the eyes of the masses and philistines, and is a more useful wheel in the machinery

of the state. It has a purely conventional value. Strictly speaking, it is a sham, its method is to exact an artificial respect, and as a matter of fact, the whole thing is a mere force. Orders, it may be said, are bills of exchange drawn on public opinion, and the measure of their value is the credit of the drawer. Of course, as a substitute for pensions, they save the state a good deal of money, and besides they serve a very useful purpose, if they are distributed with discrimination and judgment. For people in general have eyes and ears too, but not much else very little judgment indeed, or even memory. There are many services of the State beyond the range of their understanding, others again are appreciated and made much of a time, and then soon forgotten.

Honor

Honor is a much larger question than rank and more difficult to discuss. Let us begin by trying to define it. If I were to say Honor is external conscience and conscience is inward honour, no doubt a good many people would assent, but there would be more reality shown than reality about such a definition and it would hardly go to the root of the matter. I would prefer to say, Honour, is on its objective side, other peoples opinion of what we are worth, on its subjective view, it is the respect we pay to this opinion. From the latter point of view, to be a man of honour is to exercise what is often a very wholesome, but by no means a purely moral, influence. The feelings of honour and shame existing every man who is not utterly depraved and honour is everywhere recognized as something particularly valuable. The reason is this as follows. By and himself a man can accomplish very little, he is like Robinson Crusoe on a desert island. It is only in society that a man's powers can be called into full activity. His very son finds this out when his consciousness begins to develop, and there arises in him the desire to be looked upon as a useful member of society, as one, that is who is capable of playing his part as a man - *proparte visilli* therapy acquiring a right to the benefits of social life. Now to be a useful member of society one must do two things firstly what everyone is expected to do everywhere and secondly what one's own particular position in the world demands and requires. But a man soon discovers that everything depends upon his being useful, not in his opinion but in the opinion of others and so he tries his best to make that favourable impression upon the world to which he attaches such a high value. Hence this primitive and characteristic of human nature, which is called the feeling of honour, or under another aspect, the feeling of shame *verecundia*. Civic honour has the widest sphere of all. It consists in the assumption that we shall pay unconditional respect to the rights of others, and therefore, never use any unjust or unlawful means of getting what we want. It is the condition of all peaceable intercourse between man and man, and it is destroyed by anything that openly and manifestly militates against this peaceable intercourse, anything, according, which entails punishment at the hands of the law, always supposing that the punishment is a just one. The ultimate foundation of honour is the conviction that moral character is unalterable, a single bad action implies that future actions of the same kind will, under similar circumstances also be bad. Hence honour, once lost, can never be recovered, unless the loss rested on some mistake, such as may occur if a man is standard or his action viewed in a false light. So the law provides remedies against slander,

libel and even insult, though it amounts to no more than mere abuse it is a kind of summary slander with a suppression of the reasons.

Purpose of the Article

This article aims to explore and interpret Arthur Schopenhauer essay. The Wisdom of Life through a contemporary lens, analyzing the philosophical underpinnings of happiness and how individual attributes shape human experiences. Location insert offer the introductory paragraph in the Title section.

Clear and concise

The article offer digresses into poetic or ambiguous language. Examples of under phrasing include even of royal birth, are but kings of to kings in real life. Life of the Genius and the saints. The article would benefit from shortening complex sentences. Removing redundant clauses. Fixing out dated vocabulary and ask word metaphors. Remaining untranslated Latin Greek text unless absolutely necessary

Article citations done throughout the article content

The citations within the main body are inconsistent and in many places unreferenced. For example, citations like "Aristotle 3" or Horace are not properly tied to bibliographic references.

List of references provided at the author of Epist I & II is Arthur Schopenhauer published by General Press at 4805/24 Fourth Flo Krishna House Assam Road Dariyaganj, New Delhi and is the First Edition.

2. Summary

In the summary we can broadly say that Anstotle divides the blessings into three class those which come to us from without, those of the soul, and those of the body. Thus the fundamental differences in the human lot may be reduced to three distinct classes.

- 1) Personality in the widest sense of the words, under which are included health, strength, beauty, temperament, moral character, intelligence and education.
- 2) What a man has that is, property and possessions of every kind.
- 3) Everybody knows what a man is in the eyes of his fellowmen or more strictly, the light in which they regard him.

3. Conclusion

In sum, Schopenhauer's reflections in the Wisdom of Life provide a compelling framework to assess human happiness by emphasizing internal traits over external validations. His distinction between what a man is, has and how he remains perceived remains remarkably relevant. A well - balanced self sufficiency and emotional clarity continues to offer a blue print for navigating modern complexities.

Language and Style

I have always used the language of common man. It is all as per word worth language of common man as mentioned in

his famous poem "The Solitary Reaper the language should be the language of common man".

References

- [1] Aristotle Eth Nichom 1.8
- [2] Cf elements Alex, Strom II 21
- [3] Problem XXX, ep I
- [4] Melancolicos essa Tusc 1.33
- [5] Satisfy Cf Diogenes Lacrtius BK X Chapter XXVII PP/20 and 649, also Cicero definibus 1, 13
- [6] Epist I. II