

Dark Philosophy and Ethical Values in the Modern Age

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Abstract

There is no formal date or period referring to the introduction of the terms, 'Dark Psychology' and 'Dark Philosophy'. However, when stretched back in history we find the concept/s underlying these two are indirectly presented. Some of the behavioral sciences express the negative ideas wherein the efficacy of the much publicized virtues and their effect/result are skeptically viewed. That is why certain 'isms' like Pessimism, Fatalism, Existentialism, Absurdism gained publicity. What had been looked upon as damaging tendencies have been proved as natural human tendency or temperament. Therefore, we may consider this portion of the subject as an antonym to the regular or brighter aspect/s of the thinking pattern we have. Accepting openly the pitfalls in human personality owing to temptations and limitations is a sane way to understand or tackle with but generally it is looked upon as a failure. One of the best contributions from psychology is placing the reality with regard to human temperament with the possible strengths and weaknesses. Eventually this has helped in knowing self than unnecessarily imagining and entertaining lofty wishful ideas. We have an inexhaustible literature, on the brighter side of life, holding Optimism as the best possible behavioral science in the interest of humanity. Despite this sincere intention, it is a fact that on the practical side this 'ism' and also the much publicized virtues lose their status and high sounding claims.

This paper attempts to present the existing reality with the other shades that are generally either overlooked or deliberately concealed. No doubt it is a vast canvas and ethics too differ in their reflecting capacity in the mart of the practical aspect of life.

Keywords: Dark Psychology, Dark Philosophy, Ethics and Human Temperament.

1. Introduction

The term 'Dark Psychology' gained popularity in the beginning of this century but does not seem to have any academic status. However, with time, particularly in the present generation it is frequently used just as the term 'Dark Philosophy'. Many times it is attributed to Dr. Michael Nuccitelli. In fact this term is used to indicate the darker side of the human psyche. That is why whenever there is a scope to describe the criminal attitude/temperament of human nature, this newly coined term is extensively used. Psy.D. Dr. Michael Nuccitelli in 2006, wrote,

“Dark Psychology is both a human consciousness construct and study of human condition as it relates to the psychological nature of people to prey upon others motivated by psychopathic, deviant or

psychological criminal drives, evolutionary biology and social sciences theory. All of humanity has the potentiality to victimize humans and other living creatures. While many restrain or sublimate this tendency; some act upon these impulses. Dark Psychology explores criminal, deviant and cybercriminal minds.”

This shows that there are certain uncontrollable factors which are usually beyond human control and therefore falling prey to them is quite obvious. The tendency to overpower others or dominate seems to be common to humanity, although there is a small percentage overcoming this weakness. It may be viewed as the uneasiness within that prompts the person to try to dominate over others using immoral or unethical means. People, in general, are motivated by the sense of domination in all fields and are incapable of controlling such a drive within. This obviously leads to a disaster and damages the expected balance in the society. However, a fact to be remembered here is that Dr. Michael Nucitelli mostly referred to this term to draw our attention to Cyber crimes and thefts. Much owing to the inner reckless drive many have been victimized and easily give away to the predatory behavior. This view may sound to be antithetical to our general and desirous human behavior held in high esteem. Most of the atrocities caused are owing to this tendency or temptations. Purposeless acts are committed and so yet another term ‘Dark Singularity’ is introduced to clarify the fact that not all fall into this category. In this context, Alfred Adler thinks, “It is the individual who is not interested in his fellow men who has the greatest difficulties in life and provides the greatest injury to others. It is from among such individuals that all human failures spring.” Many, according to Dark Psychology, commit such detrimental acts without any specific purpose or well-designed aim because they are directionless or lead life without any goal as such. Of course, this tendency is quite harmful and has no purpose; therefore it may be concluded as a sort of representation of dark ‘potential’. It is in this context that certain terms like iPredator, Cyberstealth, Arsonist, Necrophilia, Serial killer, Dark Continuum, Dark Factor, Dark Singularity, Cyberbullying etc. are used to substantiate the postulates of the theory behind Dark Psychology.

On the other hand Dark Philosophy is a term frequently used to describe the human plight in a world of suffering and there seems to be no respite. Many philosophers have concentrated on this living fact and further oriented through their writings more towards a sort of rigid pessimism. Even those who advocated for Stoicism, Existentialism, Fatalism, Philosophical Pessimism etc. seem to be more or less inclined to prove the world we live in as full of suffering and tragedy. Therefore, Dark Philosophy wantonly focuses more on the negative aspects of life although it is a realistic picture. In addition, the attempt is to show how weak and helpless the human personality is. No doubt, particularly those philosophers subscribing to Optimism have clearly rejected the wistful thinking, denying the other facet of reality as improbable. Having expressed an ardent support to a particular aspect of reality some of the philosophers have overlooked the other possibilities. Therefore, a balanced reviewing pattern is sadly missing and a thorough coverage does not seem to surface so as to prove beneficial to the humanity as a whole. In brief, perfection is to be attained while overlooking the negativities or denying their existence will lead to a disaster. It is in this context that many ‘isms’ were introduced with the sole intention to provide corrective factors to the age old theories and philosophies that carried excesses or exhibited exaggeration. C.G. Jung says, “How can I be substantial if I do not cast a shadow? I must have a dark side also, if I am to be whole.”¹

2. Contributions to Dark Philosophy

Harsh realities of life are generally camouflaged under the pretext of training the mind to gear up with optimism or enthusiasm. No doubt, particularly for the upcoming generation this is one of the appreciable remedial measures. However the realities of life surface, everyone cannot have the same resilient capacity. At the same time challenges have umpteen varieties whereas humanity as such is equipped with only traditional outlooks and solutions. It is but natural that human mind is tuned to anticipate results quickly and as promised theoretically. At this juncture human mind either succumbs or revolts. Dark philosophical propositions spring up only when one realizes the unbridgeable gulf between the theoretical assumptions which induce hope and the practically existing realities. Philosophers who have contributed to Dark Philosophy have highlighted negativity, absurdity of the very human existence and above all the ambiguity in the fields of Ethics and Morality. Usually a general remark or criticism is leveled against these philosophers for wantonly leading humanity to the depressive sites of life. It is also concluded that these philosophers are responsible for highlighting the negative values of life which are detrimental to the mental health and life as a whole. It is further stated that such a philosophical attitude or outlook damages the purpose and virtues of life. The main purpose of life according to the critics is completely defeated by the support to 'Dark Philosophy'. However, it is to be remembered is that there is no denial in the fact that life as such, at any rate, does not on own provide the desirable comfort, happiness and freedom from the worries. Philosophers who plead for 'Dark Philosophy' have the clear intention to caution the ignorant mass which presumes only positive aspects with optimism and ignore the existing realities of life. It is with reference to this intention of guiding the humanity that we shall check on the gist of the select few philosophers and their pertinent suggestions. At times, it is the Cognitive Distortion which plays a crucial role. 'In 1976, psychologist Aaron Beck was the first to propose the theory behind cognitive distortions. It wasn't until the 1980s that David Burns popularized it with common names and examples of the distortions. Cognitive distortions are ways in which your mind convinces you of something that isn't true. They are usually used to reinforce pessimistic thinking or negative emotions, and we often tell ourselves things that sound rational and accurate yet only serve to emphasize our self-doubt or lack of confidence. Cognitive distortions are at the core of what Cognitive-behavioral therapists try to teach a client to change in psychotherapy.'²

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER may be considered as the genuine philosopher of Pessimism although highly influenced by the rigorous idealism practiced by his predecessors. Generally most of the philosophers of his time rather avoided Pessimism as the topic of philosophical discussion because such a subject would dishearten the readers or followers. Arthur Schopenhauer who had been the most underrated philosopher of his time propagated his philosophy of Pessimism, which actually the idealistic and religious philosophers could not digest. There is nothing wrong in holding on to the Optimistic attitude but we need to check its workability. Fake philosophical postulates which theoretically impress us fail in an astonishingly miserable way when put to a rigorous test of validity in day today life. Concealing this fact and yet wantonly presenting a rosy picture to indicate or reflect only positive aspect/s of life, that too theoretically, had become a practice. There was nothing wrong with the intention to pull out humanity from the possible trap of despondency to emerge in an area of hope and subsequently optimism. However, discarding the existing reality or belittling it was definitely an erroneous act. Arthur Schopenhauer's main stake was on the "Blind Will" accompanying everyone. It is

for all absolutely irrational and ever insatiable. As a result we are all destined to suffering and despair remains as a lasting companion. Denying its presence cannot be a solution or deliberately ignoring its existence, at any rate, does not solve the problem. Therefore, for Arthur Schopenhauer, transcending over the 'Will' is the right approach. Denying its entry is a tough task and that can be one of the possible measures.

PHILIPP BATZ later changed his name to PHILIPP MAINLANDER was a German Poet Philosopher is very popularly known for his pessimistic philosophy. Needless to say, he was immensely influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer. He unfortunately died at a very young age of hardly 34 years and is reported to have been committed suicide by hanging. His main fields of interest were Aesthetics, Ethics and Metaphysics. His famous published work is 'Die Philosophie der Erlösung' (The Philosophy of redemption). Mainlander believed in a unified God but although described God as doubtlessly a Perfect Being, yet carried an inherent 'Will to Die'. Therefore the world created by him could not be erected out of power or love. What we describe generally a unified world actually is filled by multiplicity. Instead of an ideal creation God has submitted everything to a visibly Entropean world ultimately leading to a disaster. In the short course of his life having been inspired by Arthur Schopenhauer's principles he too came out with another format of Will as 'Will to Die' so as to return to peace. All our egoistic desires, according to him, finally drain us and we are bound to succumb to 'Death' which is our resort wherein peace resides. There is no sense in trying to recognize the things around us as they themselves are destined to lose their enthusiasm. That is why he often referred to the term 'Redemption'. In fact, he was quite successful in surfacing the possibility of bridging Theism, Atheism and Buddhism concept of "NIRVANA". In brief he often reiterated the world as a badly designed entity which is fundamentally wretched. There is no possibility of a repair and at any stage there is predictably the process of annihilation going on. Every desire ends in frustration only. There is a Divine Suicide underlying all the existence, individual or cosmic. Since, according to him, God is dead what remains is only the materialistic world and we have to as Buddhism proposes return to nothingness.

JULIUS BAHNSEN (1830-81) was a German philosopher more known for his immense contribution to the philosophical pessimism. He is also recognized as the originator of Characterology. Generally this term is viewed as an extension of the much popular Philosophical Pessimism but is also described as a more radical format. Usually Arthur Schopenhauer's Philosophical Pessimism is held as the real and rather the only milestone but Bahnsen's Philosophical Pessimism is held as a sort of elongation and a poignant treat for the same because of the advanced measure. Bahnsen laid more emphasis on Schopenhauer's idea of the irrational Will which accompanies all of us but also brought out a conjunction between this Will and Hegel's dialectic. Usually with Hegel's dialecticism we refer to Thesis, Antithesis and ultimately the Synthesis to show a sort of progress through contradictions. But then unlike Hegel's insistence on the progress emerging out of contradiction, Bahnsen thinks contradiction does not vanish. It continues to remain as it is, just as the opposing force which exhibits its potential at every stage. Similarly Bahnsen transcends over Schopenhauer's idea of a single Will. He felt there are innumerable Wills and that is why individual Will is shattered. Obviously this leads to a disaster and in the course of time our Individual Will easily becomes crippled. Having traversed over the negative axis Bahnsen at the end deviates from the remedial measure proposed by Arthur Schopenhauer through Art and Ascetic discipline. He even declares that there is no escape as life is essentially a tragedy and accompanied by

never ending contradictions. Therefore, there is no solution and consequently no respite. However, a fact is to be always remembered that Bahnsen did not go down to the extent to give up living or ending life. He had condemned the Optimism that was generated through illusions and religious sentiments, yet submitting before such adverse forces was never agreeable to him.

FRIEDRICH NIETSCHE's all round efforts did not restrict him to one particular philosophical school or subject. Therefore a variety of subjects like Aesthetics, Religion, History, Music, Culture and above all his famous "Pragmatism" were explored and researched. In fact this German philosopher of the 19th century began with classical philology. It was his weak health that often caused the problems for him and naturally affected his career. The neurological problems plagued him continually owing to which he had to pay a very heavy price. It was his mother and sister's assistance or care that really saved him considerably. He lived for barely 55 years. He was a genuine scholar who could diagnose the common illusions to expose them rather than giving the undeserved importance by using emotive language. Human suffering is common to all though they differ in intensity and pattern. Life as such for many had never been fair and the futile promises or consolations, rather conventional, drawn from religions have served no proper purpose. He was stamped with many nouns and adjectives like an advocate of Nihilism, Pessimism, Existentialism, Postmodernism and a few more. However, his contribution to Dark Philosophy had been more owing to his special quality of embracing the principle "Amor Fati". He first accepted life as it is despite the visible shortcomings, struggle and continuous suffering rather than stretching imagination for a life after death as possibly rewarding. Expecting salvation after the termination of life was not at all agreeable to him and felt totally devoid of any logic. Much owing to this he turned towards Nihilism which openly condemns life and its functioning as absolutely senseless and meaningless. That is why his famous dictum "God is Dead" though grossly mistaken has an appeal because in the present day turmoil, our belief system, owing to the results collapses miserably and further the objective moral foundations are questionable. Present day secular world cannot accept such presumptions. His main objection about the traditional religious sentiment was that it promoted more of the "Slave Morality" than liberation. In fact he reiterated that this kind of defense or the personality growth has damaged the human personality instead of erecting with manliness. That is why his Will Factor as a contrast to Schopenhauerean idea stood for "Power" than any meek subordination. He accepted the harsh realities of life like others but did not stop with it. He went on to suggest an avenue filled with the virtuous qualities which is devoted to the service to manhood. That is why he out rightly rejected the soothing or very comforting illusions. Nietzsche thinks, "Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you."3

3. Conclusion

It had been an attempt by most of the thinkers and philosophers to induce Optimism in our thinking pattern so as to avert the possible influence of the vices. No doubt, the intention deserved applause. There was more impetus on proving the triumph of virtues over vices so as to keep the hope kindling. Owing to this the majority of us prefer to trust the textual or scriptural promises creating a sort of psychological security. Since the scriptural writings seem to be a handiwork of an intelligent agency an iota of mysticism is deliberately created. One may as an onlooker feel, without any prejudice, that eventually there is a lot of pathway created for escapism. Not all the questions asked by even naïve

personalities could ever get satisfying answers. With the scientific temperament most of the sentimentally fixed belief systems got partially at least dislodged. The main danger which creeps in sizably had been putting the existing realities out of sight. In this context those who contributed to Dark Humor, Dark Psychology and Dark Philosophy made it a point to surface the actual realities than encouraging the bad habit of overlooking or conveniently evading. Dark Humor which is also known as Black Comedy or at times called Gallows Humor purposely tries to dilute the effect of certain universally recognized painful subjects like human suffering, violence, diseases and above all death. The main attempt or intention is to relieve humanity from the possible discomfort or bouts of depression experienced by almost all. It speaks of pointlessness or waywardness or absurdity of the life situations that are terrible and irreversible. It may be referred to as Mordant Humor.

Ultimately all attempts are directed to reduce the burden of the realities knowing well that we are all absolutely incapable of combating with them fully. Many times much owing to this we are forced to become introverts and feel that everything is meaningless at the end or we are on all counts miserable, helpless and weak. American psychologist Martin E.P. Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1960s and 1970s conceptualized and developed the theory of Learned Helplessness according to which ‘...A state that occurs after a person has experienced a stressful situation repeatedly. They come to believe that they are unable to control or change the situation, so they do not try-even when opportunities for change become available.’

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