

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN: STRUCTURE OF AN APATHETIC INDIVIDUAL

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ABSTRACT

You can find various prescriptions to deal with anxiety in education, art, life or in many of the success and growth oriented opinions. Anxiety may seem as a black plague which slows, scares, and obstructs us, and it may even lead one to depression.

However, is it like that in reality? Can we ignore the positive power anxiety has in human life, its impact and driving force in our character development?

This research paper aims to discuss the reasons of apathy, the issue of humans' relation with technology, their choices as free men and their behaviour and thought patterns. It also tries to understand free men's question of existence from an apathetic perspective.

Keywords: Apathism, anxiety, freedom, techno-culture

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2000s, some fine day, in Statistics 155 class Prof. Dr. Ali Uzun asked to his students “*during our pupilage, we had dreams; we were enlightened by the light of these dreams, I wonder whether you have dreams.*” One student-one of the bests in the class- raised his finger and said “*we may not have dreams like yours, but we have goals that we look forward to actualize!*” This message may seem passionless and pragmatic to the professor who lived his youth with ideals and dreams about the future of his country. After 15 years, it is obvious that goals do not have a place in students’ minds as like dreams. These two future ideals, physics and metaphysics, were replaced with subjects who do not care about “self” and are generally uncurious in the sense of actual reflections of their nonchalange. This example is remarkable to indicate the transition of students’ vital/existential values in the last 40 years.

In this day and age, we are in the position of asking the question “What kinds of motivations are needed to live for this aimless and dreamless person?” If we evaluate this case with the theological^{iv} approach, it is not difficult to guess that the way of his life would be ambiguous and inexplicable as a result of incuriousness, weakness of questioning and interest, absence of desire and unwillingness of cumulating.

DISSOLUTION OF OBJECTIVES

Some main features of apathetic person are ignorance, neglection and unquestioning of existential objectives in the plane of consciousness, unconsidering taking responsibilities or the tendency to evade responsibility. With regard to the loss of the objective of human beings, the American philosopher, Richard Rorty, points the disappearance of purposeful human and replacing of it with ironic human in his book “Contingency, Irony and

^{iv} General for caring of aims, objectives and ambitions (Cevizci, 2002, p. 1014)

Solidarity”. Rorty defines irony as “being unable to take self-serious because of constantly changing of adjectives that humanbeing uses to describe him, as well as always being aware of fragility of words that he uses to describe himself.” Someone thinks that he failed within life if he is not self-serious and lost his purposes, doubting his reality, and do not perceive himself as something valuable (Sennet, 1998, p. 68). Therefore, the clarity of purpose in life is very important to determine the course of his life All kinds of activity create inevitably a variety of pressures and tensions on people if they take active responsibility for them. Nevertheless, to confront with tension centers can cause to the power of free choice and can create the self which can not be given by anyone except himself. The action of confrontation is a preview of a quitepainful process. This confrontation could be called a sort of asceticism^v. In Sufism, it is expected that dervishes enter the “çilehane”^{vi} for 40 days to reach spiritual perfection, self-understanding and to find themselves by deprivation. Contrary to the ascetic Sufi, the subject flees to face challenges feels despair to take the decision to grow and self-actualize himself. Despite his desperation, to remain apathetic is possible only when being indifferent works as a spiritual shield for anxieties. However, worries and anxieties are the base images of being human. Human can be free if and only if he concerns his existence.

UNDERSTANDING OF APATHEISM IN THE CONTEXT OF ANXIETY

To understand the concept of apatheism, it can be useful to consider what anxiety is and its impact on people. Turkish origin of the word “anxiety” is “kadhgu” that means contributed. It can be said that it is contribution to human being. In Latin, anxiety is “ango”. It means to press firmly into the throat, strangling and drowning (Inam, 1999, p. 80).

The concept of anxiety has been used in various words and meanings of fear, dread, sadness, fright, irritability, panic etc. in the sense of the possibilities of language, the determination of feelings and thoughts by language^{vii} and sometimes because of the necessities within different cultures.

Freud mentions three types of anxiety and terms them as simple anxieties: (1) Anxieties affiliated to reasons, (2) Uncertain anxiety (3) Unconscious anxiety. In addition, periodic neurotic anxiety, chronic neurotic anxiety, psychic anxiety and phobic neurotic anxiety are the subject of investigation by psychoanalysts (Le Gall, 2012, p. 9-21). In this study, our goal is to examine the role of the anxieties in the context of apatheism, its relation with freedom, its consisted descriptions and associated mechanisms.

Heidegger's corresponding word in German for anxiety is "angst" which means realizing "nothingness" that human beings are faced with and losing a reference point for the correction of choices (Çitak, 2008, p. 1).

Anxiety separates human beings from interests, and it isolates him. That isolation causes to decide whether he can be himself. By making decision, anxiety shows his reality. It ruptures human being from relations that he sinks into and isolates him from environment with creating awareness. After that period, he can either continue this

^v The notion of asceticism asserts that knowledge, personal development and to become competent can be attained by the denial of confort, good and foods (Cevizci, 2002, p. 237).

^{vi} The place in which a dervish undergoes a period of trial and suffering

^{vii} According to Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the structure of language indicates the ability of understanding reality and the way of thinking, thus, meanings and feelings change in agreement with concepts (Perlovsky, 2009, p. 518-526).

impersonally determined inauthentic existence or by heroic effort takes personal charge of his own existence. Anxiety is the structure of the mode of existence of one who exists by anticipating what he will be in a world in which he is found and to which he is bound (Blackham, 2002, p.94-95).

If we define anxiety as a sensation of prospective asphyxiation, then, because of its subjectless nothingness, it is physically impossible to control it. The possibility of the realization of the possibilities that exist in the future consists of the possibility of their nonexistence. Therefore, the variety of possibilities increases anxiety arithmetically. The past that I suppose I had the feeling of anxiety has to be possibility relation with me. If I have anxiety for a past event, this does not derive from thinking it as past, but from thinking it as? also possible in the future (Kierkegaard, 2003, p.103).

It can be easily said that the free decisions or the possible potentials of free choice in the future are anxiety factors in their own. According to Kierkegaard, anxiety is an opportunity for being free only if it is obtained from faith because the faith uses up all finite ways and reveals the deceptiveness of these ways (Kierkegaard, 2003, p.165). Such an anxiety is the anxiety for goodness or evilness of committed actions because it is in the view of god. In other words, human being has anxiety in as much as he has sin. However, for Heidegger, anxiety has a different meaning. “Daesin^{viii} as on the way of death has anxiety for his foundationless, nothingness within foundation” (Aşar, 2014, p.91).

Although human being is anxious opposed to nothingness, his concerns are never-ending because one of the necessities of being free is to suit himself. Concerns about the results of choosing have the power of ambiguating of ability to decide.

In the context of freedom, Kierkegaard explains the responsibility of choosing as follows.

An individual has no choice other than to choose. Human being has to live with the results of his choices in the sense that he exists with his choices. As a free being, human being has at the responsibility to choose?, but sometimes he is responsible even when he is not aware of being free. So freedom is a two-pronged concept. He is free and he makes selections as well as he is disturbed due to the necessity of selections. Therefore, freedom is something people endure to the extent that people enjoy. The dual aspect of freedom is related to anxiety. Anxiety, which has nothingness as object, is actually the weight carried by the individual's responsibility. Anxiety is also the possibility of freedom, and therefore it may be characterized as the mental state before freedom. The possibility of freedom of the people increases correspondingly with the mental world. A person is free as much as his consciousness and his awareness. When the mental power is not active, person is on the condition of not free. Therefore, freedom is the foundation of human self-creation or undertaking missions that have self (West, 2008, p. 200-201).

Every consciously wish gives a fillip to anxiety mechanisms. The most practical way of being away from anxiety is to decrease wishes and choices. The least wish we have the least thought we think, and the least thought we think, the least anxiety we feel. Non-free one or the one who does not want to be free has a sheltered situation. In fact, the option to take risk of living with anxiety promotes the new ways of livings for the one that lives within the situation of nothingness. A stimulated human being recognizes his own power and understands the value of him. Then, self-awareness opens the ways of giving new meanings to life. Although this period includes anxiety, it has also structural substantiality.

^{viii} Dasein is a being in society, someone can take his place. specifically, it describes a human being that church and parties try to make equal instead of free and transform his inner life to exterior institutions and exterior thoughts.

Based upon my personal experiences, I can say that in painting studio classes, the most agitative projects are mostly the least (teorically and practically) restrictive and obligative ones in which students are almost free about developing their works. When students feel/realize freedom in such projects, they feel also anxious?. Then, what do we understand from being free? What is its function in our lives? Our desire to be free never decreases, but increases; minorities want autonomy, prisoners want to break free, societies want to have equal rights, students want less authority and imposition. On the base of the disbelief for the impossibility of the actualization of these wishes, there is the continiquity of conformity and apatheism. To live without reclining to an institution, a person and a system is to take responsibility of living. It is an active life instead of inactive one. It is to disturb conformism.^{ix} What does the taking responsibility of free acts mean? To want to be free can be a noble statement, but it is nothing more than a gripy obligation for adolescent minds. Emil Michel Cioran, Romanian philosopher and essayist, explains destroyingly the unwilling of consciously being free as following:

[W]e are afraid; we are afraid of the enormity of the possible... What shall we do—accustomed to chains and laws—in the face of an infinity of initiatives, of a debauch of decisions? The seduction of the arbitrary alarms us. If we can begin any action, if there are no limits to inspiration and to our whims, how can we avoid our ruin in the intoxication of so much power? (Cioran, 2012, p. 35-36)

According to Michel Foucault, we need to approach anxiety guardedly in the sense that he emphasizes the practice of freedom instead of processes of freedom (Foucault, 2005, p. 223). He brings practices to forefront. Human being can be free as long as he gets rid of addictions. The free human being can decide, stand by his decisions, insist upon them, make new ones and reform them. He is strong-willed.

Human being, who lives between past and future, establishes the world with acts-his main operation- by which the world becomes meaningful for him. It is not possible that he establishes a world for him without acts (and speech-acts) (Kılıç, 2012, p. 82).

In that respect, how and for what does an apathetic human live? He can survive with vital needs. However, what can this kind of existence offer to him and humanity? Then, what is the valuable life? How can such a life be attainable? It is possible to enhance these kinds of questions. It is to observe symptoms of modern-day apathetic human that gives some clues about answers of such questions. It would not be surprising to see that such an individual is disconnected from questions on his enviourment, daunted, frightened, chronically embarrassed, disregardful, impatient, unfocused, dull and lazy. He remains embedded to old-fashioned values, so he does not produce new values.

My aim is neither to make hierarchical order -low values, high values- nor to classify them . On the contrary, my aim is to make visible every element which contributes to human being's way of life and gives opportunity to be sensed. It is specifically our purpose here to evaluate the relationship of an apathetic human with techno-culture and to try to reveal the atmosphere by which an apathetic human has his own existence.

^{ix} As we can see in John Carpenter's film, "They Live" 1988, we do not desire to think freely. We know that being free can hurt us.

TECHNO-CULTURE

In the fractal habitat of twenty-first century, digital human being has remained incapable of understanding that he turned into agile zombies. In this life, the hunger for aimless movement evaporates largely the importance of slowness, recognition and digestion process. Socio-technological stimulative fetishism has created the society of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). (In a sense, everyone became “fomo sapiens” during Gezi park resistance^x) Who did poke/click me? How many likes did my page receive? Is there any new friend request? Are there any new posts? We transformed to the cyber sense operators in the sense of yearning for 24 hours connection to system, taking notes with technology, becoming social and falling love in internet, producing and expending with technology. Our bodies become frozen: our cyber copies surf on the internet and our real profiles are as if they were extras for cyber copies. Our expectations have digitalized. We desire silently the artificial world of the film, Surrogates. The minds, for which meaning and reality reversed, identified daily life rhythm with vegetative state. The technological conversion of individualism has been assimilated to the shelter for escaping from real life and as if everything was possible in it. Humanitarian anxieties have turned to expressions of little concerns by undergoing structural degeneration. These changes in the medium of anxiety opened the way for thoughtlessness since the organic structure does not satisfy the representative expectation. The subject that is widely followed, admired and who exists in the artificial world has his own customs, organization and the structure/knowledge of language. Artificial networking is sterile, and the individual is dispersed in it, so he begins to think whether daily life is really necessary on the grounds that the outside of artificial life seems as the cause of deadlock and despair. While techno-culture dulls the consciousness of mass, it introduces a deceptive satisfaction. In other words, techno-culture has a deep relationship with apathicism because the promise for a little happiness causes to desiring the deception in the sense that it says if people are away from artificial medium although it does not introduce a real satisfaction, the life becomes unbearable. If we quote Adorno’s words, the culture industry tempts individuals to addictions that give them peace. And, it offers the denial of expectations. Everything that seems as developing and constantly glorified in the culture industry hides endless sameness (Adorno, 2002). Techno-culture inferred shortcuts of everything that belongs to our life and brings together the eternalness of practical life. We learned to use intellectual, mechanical and sensitive actions economically. We systematically interiorized to the reductive logic within that culture. Copy-Paste and summarizing have been considered equal to development within the educational institutions. Therefore, educational institutions have become resembling to the “innovative” procedures than ever before. Distance education has become widespread day by day, synthetic relations have increased and developed. Passing from public space to social media has accelerated.

Human beings have been separated from public environment as a result of synthetic-advice. This separation was interpreted as disengagement of personality from public space. In 17th century and the beginning of 18th century, coffeehouses were the information centers especially in London and Paris. They were public spaces in which people had opportunity for free, direct, real information interchange. This environment had hindered monetary positions. In public space, human beings actively participate and act as a witness to his age and environment. The power of social media transformed human beings into the viewer. In other words, they became dissocial, do not express themselves freely and they are more

^x On 27 May 2013, although there is no zoning permit, 61. The Republic of Turkey tried to rebuild Taksim Gezi Park and then oppose to that attempt, the social resistance movements started and spreaded all over the country.

afraid, so they can be easily controlled and guided (Sennet, 2002, p. 11). Contrary to public space, social media has constructed an artificial structure in which nobody judges/discusses others' wishes and feelings. In this setting, it has been inevitable that people who do not know what they want, feel empty, feel empathy and invoke to fill this emptiness, fall into social media's clutches. After global human beings were structured with artificial possibilities, their concentration for cultural and vital acts were suspended.

If human beings abdicate the roots allowing them to hold on to life, the unforeseen future waits them.

The rootlessness obscures the moment and the future. Therefore, it deprives people of humanistic meanings. While deterritorialization and rootlessness take away the glue that holds human beings together, they also lead to the disintegration of humanity (Kılıç, 2012, p. 81).

CONCLUSION

Having an existential purpose for living contributes to happiness. Activation is the prior condition to recognizing vitality. Which structures do entail us to sluggishness and/or regardlessness? If the belief to dilemma of conditions contributes to weakening the power of struggle, if you are pleased with present conditions and you do not have future expectations, if you do not have motivation plans that lead you to refresh, if you ignore stimulus, if your tastes are inhibited, if you are not self-regarding under no circumstances, then who would you ask for help?

Your feelings, thoughts and actions wait in the wings to activate and to make you powerful. It is enough to imagine what you want, to go toward it for getting rid of apatheism. It is very important to diagnose problems and to stand face to face them! The effort you put out to overcome them and the pleasure of effort will move you to the skies of satisfaction and worthwhile life.

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