

Meaning or absurdity of suffering

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Introduction

An exhaustive and unique answer about the meaning – or absurdity of suffering does not exist (1).

According to a German philosopher Max Scheler (1874-1928) it is possible to face suffering by the following ways:

- 1) by the objectivity of suffering and resignation (negation of needs, internal technique of replacing of requests, pain and suffering, which is preferred especially by Buddhism
- 2) by active tolerance of suffering (antique heroism, will self-overcome)
- 3) by hedonistic escape from suffering (an experiment to create a surplus of pleasure over sorrow
- 4) by way of bluntness of perception for suffering, suppressing of suffering by illusive negation (stoicism)
- 5) by excusing of suffering as a punishment (Jewish traditions)
- 6) “by royal way of a cross” – in suffering itself, realizing by liberation from suffering, that is by redemption (by faith, that an evil is defeated by Jesus’s death and a resurrection and that God’s love

is greater than human evil – Christianity (2).

The suffering is an evil and it is necessary to delete or at least to reduce it. They offer various accessing ways to it.

1. Boundary

The first fact, which a man states in suffering is his own limitation. In illness he is forced to think about his own humanity. Time stops. However everything surrounding him is in motion suffering man is chosen from it. While a healthy man lives in a naive feeling of invincibility, a sick man realises his vulnerability. A healthy man sees his own body as matter of course.

When he is ill he feels that he cannot do whatever he likes with his body. This experience brings many pains.

Psychologist L. Dembicki writes: „In suffering we feel we are pulled out from normal life and our mind stops being normal. We know we are different from the others from course of common day and our mind stops be common.

Because we do not often understand ourselves, we feel lonely and as if given voluntarily to foreign powers. We have fear. But it frees us from stereotype, in which healthy man moves” (3).

2. Hierarchy of values

During suffering and illness various questions come to mind.

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The man is thinking about life in a new light. He can see suddenly, that he spent a lot of energy

with things, which were not important and underestimated that, what was absolutely important and useful. He saw value in success and forgot to see success in the right values. He is going through a process of re-estimation and a new arrangement of the hierarchy of values. Because things lose their character, man discovers new depths and is forced to accept known facts. In this sense suffering has also a creative character. K. Lorenz compares man to a crab, which must lose its armour in order to grow up. That armour is for example adolescent safety, that the family gives him, but also dependence on it and a measure of subordination. At the same time he happens to be much more vulnerable. Accordingly we can understand suffering man startled with serious illness. Changes in manner and quality of life, connected with a loss or endanger of common relations, life safeties, personal values, perspectives and aims make him more vulnerable and more dependent.

3. Maturing

The maturing is anchored in the rhythm of life as I. Stur says: „Every day also comes a while of twilight, seriousness and sadness. Approaching darkness wakes up in man anxiety and threat of loneliness develops fear. So as in the natural order

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light changes with darkness, so in the life of each individual pleasure changes with sorrow”(4).

Each period of life has its sorrow. In childhood it is sorrow for a lost toy, sorrow for a friend who moves away, pain of missing mother, this all is a substance of personality and serves to understand the limits of desires and wishes.

Also through tears character is becoming stronger. The meaning of crying and pain is not in itself, but in that it moves man further. It helps to go out from oneself and break the narrow view (5).

By these words we do not want to say that suffering and sorrow must be sought for. It comes with inexorably and, maybe, more of the than is needed. It is useless to live with a feeling a regret [self-reproach?] and fatal injustice. The right attitude to life is not based on avoiding its painful parts or on suppressing everything that does not belong in our dreams.

4. Religious faith

The Chinese compare illness to a key, which opens an important door of cognition and experiences. Good health does not allow man to understand everything. But illness uncovers new truths for him.

Comfortable life causes, that he is not interested in these truths. However, he has a spiritual dimension (he is open for the Absolute), earthly things are important for him. He builds a nest on land and

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he would like to not mature in it, so that his happiness has been ideal. The illness throws to his nest a burning torch, which awakes him from lethargy

and shows the true goal of life and other attributes, which nobody takes (6). In this meaning Andre Gide, French writer wrote in his diary in 1930: "The first thing, which good God inserted into bloody claws of pain, is the reversion, new stream of heavenly light for illumination of man" (7).

Conclusion

This implies that suffering, illness, death and every evil are matters, which are covered with strange mystery. Man, who asks and looks for something very slowly opens their meaning and sense for life. He suspects that suffering can have a positive and creative character.

References

1. The term is used here in the broadest sense of word it is any evil, which hint at a person. It thinks problem of illness, growing old and death as suffering as issue from disappointment, solitude and grief, so any pain, spiritual or physical
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