

Life, its Meaning, its Value

By Benjamin Wagener, on Monday March 31, 2014.

The value of Life... Many would say that as there is nothing more important, its value is incomparable but it seems rightly why value enters the question. That's exactly where "Value" takes place with reference to the relative benefits we can get during our Lives.

The meaning of Life... A serious question... All Philosophy is concerned by it somehow however this meaning, not necessarily so intellectually deepened, is something natural that we are all naturally involved in from our birth.

If I would like to raise those kinds of questions here it is from a Medical point of view and with respect to the place they take in Medicine.

Psychoanalysis opposed (Life) erotic pulses to (death) morbid pulses but in any mind both enter in a complex arrangement. Therefore we can imagine a more elaborate conception where both would manifest as the most obvious consequent products of the complex functioning of the Mind. Our Lives may be driven by the suggestive role of its meaning, of the value thus granted and a lot of our behaviors depend on this.

By suggestive role I mean the way the Subconscious acts by both a primary inner interpretation and by a secondary contextual one in suggesting to the conscious Mind various significations. It is not clear at all that the two opposed pulses above are so central, this kind of polarization may be really a consequent production of an elaborate functioning whose result may be therefore oriented that way, and those pulses actually appear differently with time in anybody.

Anyone of us has the strong feeling of the importance of his/her Life and has an inherited concern about his/her health. This is something mainly inherited that can be understood easily from an Evolutionism point of view by which only those with a strong concern about their health and safety, either physical or psychological, can have survived till nowadays.

It seems indeed that there is in our elaborate Minds a very complex organization with respect to what has got some value and about the relative meaning of events with respect to us. By "meaning" it is to be understood the interpretation of events for which there is at first no clear signification but for which our Mind and Cognition grant some personal sense. This is really something not easy at all even if many of us just use it every day and accept it naturally whereas it has required millions of years for the evolution to give us the possibility

to have a proper interpretation of the contextual reality relatively to the presence of our own Life.

As such, I think the reader will now observe that the question here risen about the “value” and “meaning” of Life are not at all simple questions and are not at all easy to answer. There should be a deep questioning about this that would go as far as asking key questions about Mind, about Psychology, Cognition and there relative relations with our biological reality. This questioning enters the core of our functioning.

It is very curious to see all the symbolism that goes with those Value and Meaning, how much everything acquire some interpretation and some suggestive signification, how much everything means for us in an interpretative sense that we grant to it. This is something I can only cite the Poet Charles Baudelaire in the great poem Correspondances that I let to a proper understanding from the reader because there may be nothing better to express it :

Correspondances

La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
- Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.

Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal (1840).

English Translation :

Nature is a temple in which living pillars
Sometimes give voice to confused words;
Man passes there through forests of symbols
Which look at him with understanding eyes.

Like prolonged echoes mingling in the distance
In a deep and tenebrous unity,
Vast as the dark of night and as the light of day,
Perfumes, sounds, and colors correspond.

There are perfumes as cool as the flesh of children,
Sweet as oboes, green as meadows
— And others are corrupt, and rich, triumphant,

With power to expand into infinity,
Like amber and incense, musk, benzoin,
That sing the ecstasy of the soul and senses.

Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*.

Translated by William Aggeler (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954)

On the other hand, in Medicine, the life and its meaning are certainly central. They found almost all the purpose of Medicine from the profession of doctors through the importance of Health and Life to the management of patients.

There is nevertheless something not easy to realize from an Ethical point of view for Doctors themselves, their role and the way they practice. Moreover Medicine itself is almost always confronted to this question of Ethic for which no clear answer is known and that always required some decision with respect to the relative consequences of such or such management.

This is a central question in Medicine and even if we cannot expect any definitive answer to it anyone can nevertheless expect a clarification and a serious medical concern about it. Doctors are all to various extents concern by this problem which has no clear answer but that only depend of the precise medical context and for which at end some decisions will have to be taken with all the consequences known and unknown.

Nevertheless, from what have been said in the first part of this text, we can really imagine a better understanding of those questions thanks to their actual state and to a better understanding that as was suggested can be done. For this one will have to re-center about the real questions that was raised in the first part and study them in a comprehensive manner. Actually those Ethical questions that all Medicine knows more or less about have never been ask carefully for what they are Scientifically.

This possible scientific expertise could make Medicine evolve a lot especially because the problem is so central but has never been asked reasonably with the proper efficient tools: Sciences.