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Jahrgangsstufe 13

Topic 1 : "Wenn man zu denken anfängt beginnt man untergraben zu werden." (Albert Camus: Der Mythos von Sisyphos)

„By starting to think one commences to get undermined.“ At first sight Albert Camus' reference does not seem to be definite, but as soon as it is faced more closely the serious consequence of committing suicide becomes obvious.

In his text "Absurdity and Suicide" Camus raises a fundamental question of philosophy whether life is worth living or not whose negative answer often leads to life's ending. To confirm his idea the French philosopher alleges an example of a father who has changed since his beloved daughter died five years ago. This incident "undermined" him which caused his suicide. In this case society was not responsible for the human tragedy, but his consistent thoughts of his broken heart and the lost meaning of his life induced his death. This example emphasizes that by the time people deem their lives unworthy, they feel undermined and try to escape from the purposeless world. To these people it seems necessary to follow stereotypes in order to reach their goals. Hence, they lose the sense for minor things in life, banish the verb "appreciate" from their thesaurus and take everything for granted. But is it natural to have all close family members alive? Is it natural to give birth to a child? Is it natural to have friends who care about you? Is it natural to own a place where you feel home? I disagree and would like to praise Socrates at this point because he declared that "Life without inquiries is not worth living." The majority of people does not pay attention to details of their everyday lives, but by preferring death to a life without any inquiries Socrates highly values life concerning a small matter – just like Sisyphus who accepts his destiny and is confident with his life, although his severe punishment is infinite, permanent and pointless. He is entirely aware of his hopeless situation, accepts the fact that there is no preferable alternative and is even more able to enjoy certain moments in his life which really is commendable. Camus employs the story of his utterly worthless work to enhance the idea of absurdity which plays the central role in his philosophy. Happiness and sadness, life and death, light and shadow, courage and despair – everything is fleeting, everything changes. Even certain meanings of life can change just by growing older. What were you striving for when being a child? What is your desire now?

Yes, people usually seek for a meaning and a purpose in life.

Yes, people usually do not get anything out of misery or distress.

Yes, the world seems to be meaningless and therefore contradictory to people, but simultaneously the world receives a meaning through people living there!

This discrepancy between people and the world does not necessarily be absurd because they can collaborate due to the individuals who fulfill the planet, create their environment and establish all forms of community, for instance rural-, business-, tribal- as well as religious communities. The belief in God, whether including the church or not, offers

mental support and stability. By the time this faith is questioned one loses the assistance and begins to feel undermined or does not feel a change. Everyone is allowed to believe in God as well as not to deem God's subsistence to be true since neither God's existence nor his non-existence can be proven as Kant has stated. Hence, each point of view no matter how different it seems to be is possible. However, many people feel forced to concur with the majority's opinion - but not Nietzsche. The nihilist's statement "God is dead" and the deliberate modification of the originally quote in Catholic requiem mass "requiem aeternam dona eis" into "requiem aeternam deo", which means eternal rest for God emphasizes his total rejection of Christianity. To his mind every human being lives in solitude and confusion, but I personally feel not only related and connected to different people but also to various parts of life without believing in God. Furthermore I know people who fear the state of being alone and others who are even afraid of God. Especially in the Middle Ages people over-interpreted the respect of God and therefore even started to be frightened of him. The concern they cared most about was going to heaven post mortem which led to the gullibility of received absolutions. As soon as those people felt certain about going to be condemned in hell, they claimed that their lives lost their meanings.

Sigmund Freud once asserted that "At the moment, in which a person doubts the sense and the value of the life, he is ill." Camus concluded that this deep-hearted and often subconscious illness or depression leads to a suicidal tendency. An apparent reason is usually not the ultimate and real cause. He visualizes this idea with a worm which is sitting in the human heart and induces a crisis when getting beyond control. In some cases just the indifferent sounding voice of a close friend or family member suffices to cause an unbridled movement. In other instances a person starts scrutinizing everything due to his or her dissatisfaction. Living all life in a certain rhythm its habits suddenly seem to be absurd so that the person begins to question everything he or she does which the French Algerian philosopher depicts as "the feeling of tedium". Most people fail to return to their old daily routine in which they have not asked for the "why" before. The inability of answering every question causes the feeling of absurdity due to the missing of meanings in life. As a result the way for committing suicide is paved which those people view as the only way to escape from their lives. I can imagine some periods of life to be burdensome and depressive, but in my opinion suicide cannot be classified as a disengagement of absurdity. The way of giving up life, abandoning all life experiences and moreover leaving the people who still care about you, love you as well as grieve for you, seem coward to me. I admit that life can sometimes be dreary but if you endure those times, these gained experiences will strengthen you.

Besides, several songwriters create songs which are supposed to encourage their listeners not to "throw life in the towel". This example reveals that life itself is too precious in order to relinquish it. If we acknowledged that life can sometimes be meaningless, two opportunities would be left. We can either feel persuaded by those songs which try to convey hope. However, their lyrics usually deny the fact that life can be purposeless. Or we can escape by committing suicide which seems to me even more pointless. So why can we not confess that life includes hopeless times, but at the same time begin to value it? In appreciating lifetime we would be able to prevent ourselves from getting undermined.

Sources:

Albert Camus: Der Mythos des Sisyphos - Das Absurde und der Selbstmord
z.B. <http://www.selbstmordforum.de/wbboard/thread.php?postid=272283>

Friedrich Nietzsche: Der tolle Mensch

Sigmund Freud: Zitate
z.B. <http://www.raffiniert.ch/sfreud.html>

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