

The Doctrine of Ultimate Pointlessness (with thoughts pertaining to Colin Wilson).

The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless, Stephen Weinberg (1993).

Following on from the quotation above, which suggests a vast place in which no evidence of a point for ourselves as human beings can be discerned, I suggest to you the Doctrine of Ultimate Pointlessness. The Doctrine that says, that if there is any meaning whatsoever to our human existence – indeed to existence per se - the meaning ascribed can always be countered with the phrase: “so what? Or ‘what is the point’?” I here conflate Logos (meaning) with Telos (purpose). The former is the intention or reason for doing something, while the latter is the fulfilment of the former.

POINT VS MEANING and PURPOSE

What is the point of anything/everything? Existence of anything/everything per se is ultimately pointless. Being as such is pointless. Is ultimately absurd. Even if we ‘answer’ the question: “Why this particular design?” the eternal response will be: “So what?” Or like the four-year old’s decisive refrains: “Why?” or “Prove It” to any ‘answer’. What is the point of any meaning? There is a series of regressions here, Chinese boxes if you will. Although that image conveys finitude. When we peel back the layers of the infinite meaning onion we can always say, “So what?” The paradigm expands exponentially, rather like Godel’s Incompleteness Theorem.



So what?

Let me be a little more specific:

1. If for every event, every creation, everything, there is no ultimate purpose, the Doctrine is self-explanatory. Post-modernists everywhere stand and salute, a ‘told-you-so smile’ encrusted on their faces. For them, any meaning we claim for ourselves is a man-made construct, a fiction: everything is ‘already written’ and open to any interpretation, including

ourselves, viz Barthes and The Death of the Author.

2. If, however, the very definition of meaning implies that there has to be an agreed meaning for this meaning and so on, otherwise the word Meaning is meaningless, then:

If there is a prescribed meaning for any event, creation, anything, what is the ultimate point of this meaning? There can never be an ultimate point, but only an infinity of ultimate pointlessnesses. Infinity poses no problems for the Doctrine, for one can always state: "So what?" to it. Welcome to a verbal version of Sisyphus and Eternal Recurrence.

3. But if there is somehow a 'finite' meaning, this would seem to be pointless too, for one can still ask: "So what?" That is, if there is a cogency to any given 'final' meaning, we continue with our refrain of Ultimate Pointlessness; whether any such 'meaning' is ours' to impose – (thus a humanistic approach) or is as imposed on us perhaps via some theocratic super being qua God/Divine Entity of some sort.

I can imagine that the hackles have already arisen on the necks of 'true believers' who are ready to spit vituperatively. "What of God you say, you fool? What of the Creator who knows all, beyond our possible ken? Trust in the Creator".

My response is thus. Given that there is indeed – somehow - some form of Creator – incorporating or aside from strict religious tenets of whatever creed – 'So what?' The Creator may indeed have some agenda beyond human comprehension, but this in itself presupposes some sort of meaning. What is the point of this meaning? The Creator may have a perfectly rational or even completely irrational explanation for human existence, but – even so - what is the point of this existence? More, what is the purpose – if you will – of this Creator's existence?

Another possible rationale. What if there are UFOs out there who originally engineered humanity and visit us now and again? Why them? They also may have their own schema; but whatever it is – 'So what?' What does it matter that they may have visited us thousands of years ago and still intermittently do so with some secret agenda? Any agenda has a purpose, but what is the final point? There can never be one, even given the increasingly likely fact that such UFO sightings and their potential inhabitants are being given more credence by recent American government statements and disclosures.

Or, granted, as just one further instance, that Speculative Realists are 'correct' and that mankind is no centrifugal repository of an 'ultimate meaning', the objective and antediluvian existence of objects – whether as cold, barren realities or as swathed in a sort of material vitalism – is also

ultimately pointless. If anything, an ultimate and somewhat flat meaninglessness is reified here. Just ask Ray Brassier or Quentin Meillassoux who postulate the possibly endless black void 'out there' which parallels what the 90-year-old William Shatner viewed when he recently went into space. He admitted his mood of glee soon turned to despair and depression.

More, we may develop some previously unknown mind-stage that irradiates us into meanings previously beyond ken, which is the consistent position Colin Wilson, for example, held via his New Existentialism and the phenomenological and indeed linguistic steps to explore and extend the consciousness of humankind. Why? Just as there may well be some rationale behind the composition of this very Doctrine, we can never eschew ultimately responding to it via a shrug of the shoulders and a resounding 'So what?' For nothing behoves us to believe that there is any Final Point except that of an Ultimate Pointlessness. There can never be anything else.

Relatedly, just as we can never seem to know our own minds completely – given that we utilize our minds to understand our minds – it would seem also we can never know an ultimate meaning anyway. And if we do in some magical, unknown way formulate what seems an ultimate meaning, then what is the point of that? 'Rational' thought might perhaps penetrate to some final ultimate truth, given massive advances in neurophysiological understanding and via an exponential augmentation in physics per se; but it might just as well never do so.

For, what did another leading physicist, Richard Feynman, once muse? This - *the great accumulation of understanding as to how the physical world behaves only convinces one that this behavior has a kind of meaninglessness about it.*

So, 'so what' anyway to any rationale, any pattern? There may well, somehow indeed, be a Meaning of Life, but what is the point of this meaning? 'What is the point of it all?' The twin horns of the beast impale us. For as long as there is Existence, there is the Ultimate Pointlessness of it. This is the truth of all meanings.

But there is no need for Depression. Facing the reality of Ultimate Pointlessness does not mean giving up the ghost, so to speak. We are here, why not relax and enjoy it. We may go to 'Heaven'. We may stay there for infinity. So what? We may come back as reptiles or as new-born human babies in some sort of reincarnation process. We may even be transported to planet Xarxis. But, 'Why'? Accordingly, the very absurdity of our position frees us. In pointlessness lies our existential freedom. We are obliged to be free. Such emancipation creates momentum and this in its own sweet way creates purpose. Thus, in the refulgent epiphany of our totally pointless existence: we perceive/generate our own purpose and are free, untrammelled, to forever strive to attain it. *Each*

man is the author of himself, Ortega y Gasset once wrote, and he is there. Because there is Being as opposed to non-being, let us seize our Being. Let us manufacture ourselves. Ad infinitum. Why not?

As Weinberg himself believes, we can and probably should give ourselves a sense of purpose through the way we live. We can be authentic to our chosen purpose, even if ultimately it is pointless – which it is! Importantly, in this fashion, I am not disparaging individual or collective choice of meaning(s) and a purposeful pursuit of it/them. Go for it, I say.

I am stating, however, that ultimately, universally there will be no ultimate point, which will make such Logos and Telos nugatory.

And there is one other thing that must be said at this juncture, my friends. And it is this: sometimes, indeed, we are transported/we transport ourselves, into states of munificent bliss, whereby we don't give even a brass razoo about questions of 'meaning' and 'purpose' or 'point' for that matter. We become self-drunk on our own endorphins/dopamine/testosterone. These proto-mystical states are where there is a Colin Wilson redux, given that in his serial depiction of such states he completely contradicts his careful build up of a Transcendental Ego - sometimes in the very same book - by an obliteration of it. In this sense Wilson oddly enough parallels the very postmodernist tribe, including Derrida for example, that he vehemently rails against. For they sought a thorough deconstruction of the self, a fundamental breakdown of the subject/object dichotomy, so complete as to destroy it completely. Wilson's heroic logocentric heroes often segue into oppositely visionary mystic souls whose concentric self is swept completely away during the pages of his novels. A complete contradiction.

In such rapture, the Doctrine of Ultimate Pointlessness is there and then in abeyance, even though there is no escaping its ramifications. In this mystic panoptic state, beyond selfish individuality; in the seeming merging with some anonymous ubiquitous meta-being, the Doctrine of Ultimate Pointlessness – despite its iron-clad veracity – will be the last thing on our ...well we won't call them... minds. Because there is Being, we are duty bound to be parts of it. Because there IS, why not delight in it!

Swim into this coruscating abyss if you can. C'est magnifique.

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