

## Seeing Education as Social Obligation: A Critical Analysis

Patrick Neil M. Santiago

**ABSTRACT:** Living is an opportunity endowed to every individual. However, life occurs to be futile and absurd if one does not become responsible in his/her once-in-a life-time opportunity to live. Most people have delved into education with a hope to ensure prosperous future. This paper investigates the origins of education, perspectives and accounts of some theories. It likewise presents how an individual thinks and his/her notion of success. It is found in this paper that the perspective of man on education is absurd when it centered on his selfish desires. The investigation falls on the conclusion that education is a key for a good purpose and not for selfish ambition. Life is an opportunity that is always associated with responsibility. Living is accompanied by great obligation.

**KEYWORD:** *absurdity, ambition, education, opportunity, responsibility, social obligation, will.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Considering the retrospection from the pre-historic civilization, no one could be above the law of God and no one had been given the right to examine and even question His way of creating all creatures. Man is basically created to only follow the will of his Creator but man grew widely and chose to make himself as the captain of his soul. Permissively, he followed his own will and even attempted to gain power greater than his Creator. Man is now the superior of his own desires, the dictator and creator of his being. He coveted the throne of the Supreme Being and placed himself as the one reigning above. This thick greediness exists in the deepest hunger of man to gain knowledge as his means to pursue his will. Knowledge is a beneficial faculty but also a very dangerous instrument that pushes man to the limits. Hence, his *will* engages him in the satisfaction of his desires but he must be cautious to where such desires could take him.

The absurdity of man's thoughts as reflected on the ideas of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) gave immense interconnection of today's present condition. The commonality of everyone's search for happiness, strive for excellence, sole contemplation and suffering regardless of race, creed, culture and religion reveal general sense and impression to every living soul. As the will exists, good and bad conscience permeates constant change that consequently affects man's life. Across the Western world, scholasticism is the first expression of the long intellectual stagnation of the Dark Ages that began to emerge during the eleventh century. Scholasticism serves as the philosophical foundation of school representing the growing spectrum of learning from the ancient philosophy.

The philosophy of Aristotle (384-322 BCE) came first to the Arabs through Syrians who supported him and brought him as the Greek philosopher for the Muslim world. The Jewish and Arabian's thoughts were more advanced and superior than that of the Christians [1]. This was attributed to the situation that during that time, Christian philosophers did not have access to the rich concepts of Greek philosophies [1]. One could be accounted to the great Spanish Jews, Moses Maimonides (1135-1204 AD) who helped transmit Aristotle to the West. Accordingly, Maimonides attempted to harmonize Greek philosophy with biblical thoughts [1]. On the other hand, St. Tomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD) tagged as "Angelic Doctor" was considered as the greatest thinker in Medieval world. He Christianized the philosophy of Aristotle and synthesized the classical philosophy and Christian theology [1]. From the beginning, the philosophy of Aristotle that was being utilized by Aquinas was condemned as *dark thoughts* and was also declined by the Franciscans. But later, religious groups realized the misconception and eventually Aquinas was canonized. The philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas was embraced as profound doctrine of the Roman Catholicism. To date, the Aristotelian philosophies have served as academic path for many intellectual institutions.

The development of education gradually evolved during the thirteenth centuries from cathedral schools to universities and from countries expanding to cities [2]. The rise of big universities was remarkably seen in the thirtieth century particularly observed in the University of Naples, University of Cologne and University of Paris [2].

The academe had risen and become the famous affiliation of intellectual acquisition which man called education. This highbrow impulse aimed to deplete confusion on man's existence. Education is perceived as man's tool to overcome his ignorance and so to live in existing world around him. A world where anguish to sufferings and afflictions, anxious to life and survival, apprehension to death and unfathomable mystery of God's existence required man to examine himself and his world.

While science attempted to provide factual revelation of such occurrence, man became more curious and impulsive to his growing discoveries until education came into place. The rise of science in the renaissance period could be traced back since the beginning of the most humanistic approach emancipating from the past religious eras. It was indeed a step closer to atheism because man attempted to extend his capabilities, limitations and desires as human. Man aimed at achieving universal will which is a thirst for autonomous desires elevating himself to become god. As man had permissively extended such limitations, he learned to center his will in his nature that is corrupt, fraudulent and crooked.

Taken into the above issues, it is imperative to discuss the following questions: What is the purpose of education? What is the capacity of account of present theories? How does an individual think in pursuit of his goals? How could he possibly achieve triumphs? How should individual deal with his opportunity as he lives?

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study uses critical analysis on education as social obligation of the particular individual. According to [3] "a critical analysis is subjective writing because it expresses the writer's opinion or evaluation of a text which was break down and study the parts".

## III. CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

### A. Issues and Perspective

The Filipino historian Santiago A. Pilar discussed in his lectures that majority of us are indeed a product of Western knowledge. He postulated that ninety percent of our knowledge came from the Western world and only ten percent from our own nativity. Western perspective is apparently concerned more on self-autonomous. At present, young minds raised by their immediate families must be sent to institutions of learning in order to be trained and educated by midwives of knowledge who are called teachers. The term midwife is metaphorical to a figure that reshapes the intellectual aspect of an individual which was also remarkably used by Socrates and was introduced by Plato in his dialogues [4]. The system of education took a long period of time in its continuous learning process. Indeed, pursuit of knowledge is unending process.

It may be extrapolated that this pursuit is considered absurd. Engaging oneself to life-long learning makes one to sacrifice a lot of things in his life just to secure his future. From primary through collegiate studies with consideration of the long number of years to be spent, man has to go through this process to make himself functionally literate citizen. The common aim of education is to provide man his needs for survival. This makes the system of this physical world absurd that after accomplishing and achieving certain degree of education, man enters into larger scope of obligations and ends his life working for something, achieving more and gaining riches and endless successes. The concept of work is absurd as it keeps human to become slave of labor. The point here is that human should work for himself, for his country, for others, and for his God. The reality remains the same – life has limited span of time and man spends his life searching for meaning and working for this meaning. He studies, learns, works and struggles, then he dies. According to Nietzsche, existence is an opportunity [5]; an opportunity that must be spent well to overcome sufferings of the physical world. In this world of uncertainties, an assurance of the life after death is seemingly hard to achieve. Why should everyone then lose this opportunity to enjoy the gift of life? Why should one give more importance to the notion of life after death and despise the physical body? Indeed, learning to live from this tormenting environment is a challenge that everyone must face and an opportunity that everyone must responsibly choose.

### B. Dilemmas on Theories

The American psychologist and philosopher William James (1842-1910) is notable for brain usage theory. In his book *The Energies of Men* which states that "we are making use of only a small part of our possible mental and physical resources" [6]. Others speculated that the average person develops only estimated ten percent of the brain's capacity. For instance, in listening to a discussion, only ten percent is captured well and retained in the memory. These theory remain as myth, unclear in present but it doesn't matter which one is correct and accurate. What is clear is that these explicitly exhibit latent mental capability of a human being. This seems to be very weak capacity to the possibility of achieving the heights of excellence. Through this capacity, things are possible to be perceived and done.

As to the faculty of the mind, various accounts on knowledge, discoveries and theories have been developed from the past civilizations and are transmitted to many generations. What everyone needs today is to go to institutions of learning with trained experts to gain immense knowledge, or exploit the huge benefits of technology by feeding himself of knowledge from the cyberspace.

Understanding of God's existence can be conclusively attained with utmost consideration of evidences felt by senses and surpassed far from their limitations. In this contemporary time, due to the swift development of technology, scientists are still skeptical in their discoveries of the past civilization that until today remains a mystery. How can one explain the structures of the past creations like the pyramids of Egypt, the Stonehenge of England and other structures which were built with exquisite beauty that even scientists were amazed of their sophisticated function. Due to this mysterious creation, scientists and scholars concluded about the existence of aliens who are responsible in this phenomenon. They could be wrong of their assumptions as man's brain is very limited to understand the marvelous things that happened around his environment. The wide imagination and limitless illusions shift the many ideas of man through media explosion. The perception on alien becomes more surrealistic as it is. The idea was confined on fantasy stories. The term alien does not only refer to subjective supernatural being, but it is also the term that has been used to describe advance being, unique, distinguished but not out of this physical world. Everyone must be reminded that each one belongs to a huge galaxy. Whatever it is, distance is not the quality that matters which can separate human identity. Therefore, alien is a being that is not of this physical qualities and is just a mere product of the limited capacity of the brain to define such mysterious structures and inventions.

How we say so? In support to this claim, one scientist stressed a *top secret* research that revealed the notion of aliens. He discussed that the Unidentified Flying Objects or UFO were indeed not a fiction but a mere invention from man-made objects. Since the earth had a natural gravitational force, scientist applied this magnetic principle to what we assume today as UFO which is consequently considered as alien. With respect to the principle of magnetism, positive and negative energies were combined and created an equal magnetic reaction. In retrospect to the law of motion explained by the great English physicist Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) postulating that in every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Thus we could deduce this occurrence as reasonable. In addition, the features of alienated species were mere products of artistic mind of scientists through cloning.

Innumerable theories and historical accounts on sciences and education have been documented and compiled to provide empirical evidences on the occurrence of certain phenomenon. However theories will not remain permanent and there is always probability of replacing them. As stated previously, the weak mental capability of man is the reason for this probability. Education is a tool to achieve the heights of knowledge that man has been acquiring. One can observe that each individual studies and learns theories that are not permanent and absolute [7]. Teachers impart knowledge to their students and eventually realize its inconsistency. However, the concept of this process reveals that every learner must follow the previous idea or theory and later replace or reject it in accordance to his personal interpretation. Moreover, knowledge does not fall into exact and universal definition but fall only to an assumption. The prior knowledge of an individual can be used as the foundation for one's learning progress. Theories often help to support existing knowledge and to set as pillar for more credible phenomenon. If one finds and discovers more evident and more consistent coherent and intense cogent explanation then, he can replace an existing knowledge or theory. For instance, in the theory of colors, it was found the most fascinating revelation of Andrew Parker through his writings on the seven deadly colors, he asserted that these colors are dangerous. Colors are the instrument of animals in order to catch predators by camouflaging, concealing themselves in different colors to protect themselves and sustain their lives [8]. Talking of different shades of colors, one of Parker's vibrant discoveries is his revelation beyond the color "indigo". Parker omitted the *indigo* because it is not really seen as a separate color. He introduced "ultraviolet" as a colorless pigment [8] which cannot be seen by man. Only animals have the gift of perceiving object in the dark. This is why they are still able to catch their prey even at night. The analogy above is pointing out what is common in science. This is to highlight that it only develops and provides theories, and predicts at some point but not totally assures and fully explains how and why things behave as they are at any given circumstance. Hence, the fact remains that any existing theories and findings can always be replaced by most accurate theory and recent occurrence.

Replacement of such theories can absolutely cause permanent rejection. Theories cannot be all fated to be obsolete. It is because majority of the old theories are still useful and significant nowadays than of the newly discovered phenomenon. This idea of purposiveness of old theories was deeply expressed by the English physicist Stephen Hawking (1942-2018). He stressed that the previous theory of gravity of Sir Isaac Newton has the great advantages that is much simpler to work for all practical purposes than the recent theory of relativity of the German physicist Albert Einstein (1879-1955) [7]. Moreover, this is why artists should always master first the classical tradition and later reject some classics and invent a new technique or *Form*. This practice shows that tradition remains as foundation of a new invention. That is called a process, a mere process of progress.

### C. Heidegger's Kinds of Thinking

It is essential to arrive at the issue why judgment regarding failure exists. This question leads to understand that mental apparatus exists in the self. The mental apparatus such as id, ego, and super ego dictate the *self* to commit it. The ego is embraced by the norms that push the will. This mental apparatus reflects and interacts in

the self of man based on his belief and behavior. It transcends to his attitude and will so it is connected to his utmost being. It is the repression that reigns in the self to commit subjectivity and this is why absurdity exists. In response to this dilemma on education, one should look first how people think. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) emphasized his concrete idea about man's kinds of thinking which was classified as meditative and calculative [9]. When one enters to an institution, he is guided by a certain set of motivation and dreams. In achieving such dreams, he has to thoroughly understand his way of thinking and to prevent confusion. Meditative thinkers are priest, monk, and artist who possess innate advocacy and devotion to their chosen field. Meditative thinking is usually concerned only to self, the people around them, and God. The calculative thinkers on the other hand are engineers, businessmen, and those who pursue luxurious lifestyle and prosperous living. Human has his own freedom and possesses his own will. He has the gift to control his fate. The choices of individual on the two classified ways of thinking bring him into either good or evil. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) asserts that the choice in the course of making oneself is a choice not only for own self but for all people [10]. Then, if the intent of a person will harm others and is solely focused on selfish desires and covetous gains, then absurdity comes into place. Hence, the existence of the absurdity depends on how people think, how they intend to think and how they engage their will as they spend their life in this physical world. Therefore, it is the ego that is responsible for the outcome of man's action over future.

#### D. Success as Chance or Choice

Education is grounded only in real world. It is derived on the existence of physical world. It is an analytical evaluation to knowledge, but its application is still empirically grounded of man's way of thinking capacity. The dilemma on education is the extreme desire to gain certain level of outcomes called success. To some extent, it is necessary to argue that while education is viewed as the key to success, it is not a complete assurance to provide a successful life. The term success gives confusion to the one who endeavors to achieve it. It raises questions such as "How success can be fully achieved?", "Where can success be derived?", and "What basis one can assume to be called successful?". Many successful people have testified their secrets to success. Most of them gave very inspiring note to achieve it, sound advice to pursue it, and intense challenge to maintain it. A sort of flowery justification sprouted from their utterances that may not be applicable and true to all and but some just envied people of their gained possessions.

The success of an individual cannot be merely exploited by such flowery testimonies. No one can ever predict nor assume the same situations what these successful people have gone through in order to gain the same success. This is to say that people have different roads to take in order to achieve the most-labored success. High degree of education is not plausible to ensure success though it serves as a stepping stone to achieve it. From this issue it is necessary for an individual aiming for a higher level of education to identify his capacity to pursue it and check his will for such pursuit. This leads to the distinction between what the existentialist and the essentialist have argued about, the difference between *chance* and *choice*. Some claim that the future of an individual depends on his own *choice* and some evoke that it is through its counterpart, his *chance*. This assumption is justified by what successful people have testified. They become successful through their purposive choice to earn it. Whether hereditary, natural or gained, success is something that has to be worked for. It may come in countless means and forms and one can argue that it provides both chance and choice. The only thing that matters when an opportunity comes is the man's capacity to exploit and extract that opportunity to achieve success. Sometimes, whatever strives is done to earn something, it still failed; whatever pursues is urged and initiated, it would give drawbacks; and whatever strategy is planned, it would still give inevitable drawbacks. This phenomenon is called choice. On the other hand, chance takes place when the one who does the labor expands his horizons to see the other means to pursuing and achieving it. However, if one waits for chances of success, it may possibly come but the choice to gain success will still be the tool to what he wishes for.

#### E. Success entails Essence

The pursuit of actions, ambitions or missions does not always require a reward to say that such pursuit is worth pursuing. In the general sense of the foregoing argument it can be logically simplified with a clear distinction of the two principles - to do for something and to die for nothing. To do for something has a probability of achieving while to do for nothing has a very small possibility of gaining something. For instance, Bruce Lee, the founder of Jeet Kune Do had numerous failures and frustrations before achieving what he had wished for. What he believed in was just to understand his crafts, to work for it and to accept the frustration with courage. Eventually he mastered his crafts and developed a new art form. Even Nietzsche failed to achieve his happiness in the physical world while he was living as he worked for something that could fulfill his missions, but through his endeavors he became one of the influential thinkers as his spirit echoed in the world he used to live.



For Sartre, essence is what has been done in man's past [11]. Since there is no pre-established pattern for human nature, every individual makes his essence as he lives [11]. If majority of us live by the principle of "Juan Tamad", nothing could be done meaningfully. Absurdity stays in the heart of the fool and sluggish. Nietzsche suggested that everyone must deepen his/her mind [5] with profound understanding of pursuing any dreams he/she aims for. Undoubtedly, education remains the key to concretize such dreams. This connotes that everyone should hound education in order to make sound choice and get a good chance.

By considering the question posed earlier, "where can success be derived" or "what basis one can assume to be called successful" allows everyone to limit the definition of success in this physical world because beyond this success remains the most universal and abstract idea, *essence*. People derive success from this physical world and the physical substance like wealth, fame and power are the natural necessities of human. It can be said that physical success or achievement of individual is centered on a singular desire. It is selfish in nature and deceiving to the eyes of the people who see it. On the contrary, the meaning of success goes beyond achievements. Considering the unsung heroes of this modern times that many have done their best and achieved certain level of accomplishments but have not been substantially recognized. Are they not considered successful? For instance, the carpenter who has built mansions and high rising building; the baker who has made a tasteful cake; and the potter who has crafted a well-polished and curved pot. Success then does not only relate on gains, it surpasses beyond trophies and monetary figures. It does also relate to fulfillment and essence. Therefore, success entails essence.

#### IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The first discussion dealt on the epoch of classical philosophy that had been transmitted to certain race, creed, culture, religion and regions, beginning one generation to present civilization. At first, it was developed from cathedral schools to universities, then spread and scattered to various countries. However, everything we adopt is explicitly from path of Aristotle. Since we are deeply influenced by the Western principle, we adopted the perspective of being self-autonomous. The perspective of the great majority is to acquire education that literates all. It is a long period of endurance to seek for meaning, gain for something and acquire for purpose. This process is chosen by many to sustain their needs for survival. It is absurd to think that spending much time and effort for education will eventually fall into larger scope of obligation that ends one's life working for something in order to secure his future. Man is a slave of labor and shortens his life by enslaving himself to work.

Another form of absurdity is the ever-changing concepts of theories and branches of knowledge. It shows that the knowledge being offered by schools seems uncertain, inexact and enigmatic. The essence of these theories is apparently vulnerable. Hence, it is on the capacity and prerogative of an individual where the piece of information he/she obtains is of great value to his/her being. Moreover, continuous learning process is an endless undertaking towards knowledge. Education is a long journey that one experiences and encounters. Countless struggles, sufferings and maybe unbearable sorrows may challenge every individual and to some extent fall into the vessel of absurdity but when all come into place and reach towards the common end, he comes to meet his tragic fate, death. On the other hand, man shows that education has two kinds of thinking. The one that concerns to an attachment between humanity and God that seeks for meaning and purpose. This is called *meditative thinking*. The other one is concerned with the continuous development through modernization and progress. This is called *calculative thinking*. Man's search for meaning and pursuit of education is revealed; through such forms of thinking, man achieves his essence.

In the notion of success, it is found that success is only valuable and worthy of achievement if obtained in moderation of rightful will and good desire. Man has both chance and choice and should regard success as unpredictable and contingent. On the other hand, success must satisfy both chance and choice to complement the equilibrium between the two forces. Since success is explicitly uncertain, it can be said that the testimonies of such successful persons are absurd. The outcomes of success provide inspirations, ideas and offers some feeling of prestige and honor, but this is also a product of filthy pride and evil intentions and will. Success lures people to become greedy and covetous.

It is true to say that success in this physical world entails significant achievements which prove essence. After all, the success of individuals is not only measured after achievements but rather gauged through its contribution to humanity and society. Thus, man is responsible for his essence. Absurdity occurs when man becomes selfish of his essence that is by being conceited of his success.

Finally, education is viewed as a key to success, but not an assurance of lasting triumphs. It is designed for virtue and for good purpose. Life is an opportunity that is associated with responsibility. Because man certainly meets death, he should face life with meaning and purpose. Hence, life entails an *obligation*. It becomes futile if one does not fulfill such social obligations and becomes completely absurd in the glory of success.

## V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In his prime gratitude the author expresses his deepest appreciation to his parents, Orestes L. Santiago and Cholita M. Santiago for providing quality education to the author whose inspiration to write and motivation to finish this undertaking has been founded on their unconditional love and support to him. To his wife, Nenita and to his daughters: Sophia and Athena who serve as the lighting torch of perseverance to the author's dark and thick times. The author also expresses his immeasurable appreciation to his colleagues, Dr. Ronaldo R. Larioque and Dr. Gener S. Subia for their substantial contribution, willingness in giving their time and effort, and for critiquing his work and offering insightful comments and suggestions.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Enoch Stumpf, Samuel. *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., USA: McGraw-Hill College, 1998.
- [2] Aguas, Jove Jim S., *St. Tomas and Critical Thinking*, Manila: UST Graduate School, 2005.
- [3] Critical Analysis.  
<https://www2.southeastern.edu/Academics/Faculty/elejeune/critique.htm>.
- [4] Cooper, John M., Edited, *Plato: Complete Works*, Indianapolis, IN Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1997.
- [5] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Translated with an Introduction by R. J. Hollingdale, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1961, 1969.
- [6] James, William. *Energies of Men*, New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1907.
- [7] Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief History of Time*, New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2011.
- [8] Parker, Andrew. *Seven Deadly Colours*, Great Britain: The Free Press, 2005.
- [9] Heidegger, Martin. *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund, New York: Harper & Row, publisher, Inc., 1966.
- [10] Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Existentialism and Humanism*, Translated and Introduction by Philip Mairet, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1966.
- [11] Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, Translated and with an Introduction by Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Pocket Books, 1978.