

A Comparative Study and Analysis of Death and Its Relationship with the Meaning of Life in Rumi and Heidegger

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Abstract:

Thinking of death and the meaning of life and their relationship has always been with man throughout the history of human thought. This question which is counted today among the major concerns of contemporary man has been discussed, analyzed and excavated more in the theories and works of western philosophers. Western thinkers' ideas in this regard represent two camps in general: 1- naturalists: these theorists believe that meaning can be meaningful even without the existence of God and soul and that particular types of life could be enough for a meaningfulness in material world; 2- meta-naturalists: this group of thinkers hold that the meaning or purpose and value of life lie in spiritual domain comprising God and soul and the criterion of meaningfulness of someone's life is the quality of his/her relationship with this domain. Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi (604-672 A. H.) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) are among those thinkers who have propounded the issue of "death and the meaning of life" in their works in an outstanding fashion. Rumi's ideas in this regard are applications of "meta-naturalism"; since he has considered the love in God and movement toward him the major factor in meaningfulness of life and described death as part of life and what makes the evolution of soul possible. But Heidegger does not regard meta-naturalism (theism and spiritualism) among the constituents of meaningfulness of life rather he analyzes the fundamental reality and meaningfulness of life and the influence of death on it without relying on the problem of God and soul. Then one can say that Heidegger's doctrine belongs to the naturalist camp not because of the denial of the problem of God and soul but rather due to turning a blind eye to it.

Death in Rumi's view is not the "breaking off or end of life" rather it is the naissance and inception of "eternal life". According to Rumi, "death's encounter with man" is "proportionate to one's way of life" and "human encounter with death" is also "proportionate to one's way of life". Rumi's ideas in this regard belong to meta-naturalist camp; since he has regarded the love in God and moving toward him the underlying factor in meaningfulness of

life and seen death as essential part of life and factor of spiritual evolution. But according to Heidegger, death is a kind of "compulsory and frightening choice" and a "decisive and internal possibility" of human existence which stands for the "finish line" of his/her life; it is only through death that human "inauthentic existence" turns "authentic" and death is the final border of his/her life. He believes that death is not an event to be expected to happen in future, but rather it is a fundamental and inseparable structure of our "being-in-the-world". Thus an honest encounter with death and accepting her is the key to "autonomy", "concentration" and "authentic life". Heidegger's analysis of death and meaningfulness of life is an extension of naturalism; since contrary to Rumi he does not include meta-nature (God and soul) among the constituents of meaningfulness of life rather he analyzes the issue of meaningfulness of life and the influence of death on this meaning without referring to the problem of God and soul. This essay tries to offer a new analysis of one of the most fundamental needs of contemporary man via propounding the ideas of two renowned thinkers from East and West. Thus the basic questions of this essay are as follows:

- 1- What are the basic constituents of meaningfulness of life according to Rumi and Martin Heidegger?
- 2- How do Heidegger and Rumi approach the problem of death, meaning of life and their interrelationship?
- 3- What are the differences and similarities of Heidegger and Rumi's views on death, meaning of life and their relationship?
- 4- How can one distinguish between meaningful death and life and meaningless death and life?
- 5- Whether in their view death makes life meaningless? Or it transfuses meaning into life? Or there is no relationship (niether positive nor negative) between meaning and death?
- 6- Could these thinkers' views of death and meaningfulness of life be understood in terms of modern schools and theories?

This essay is an analytico-descriptive research which proceeds based on the principles of comparative philosophy. The key works of Rumi - *Spiritual Couplets* and *Shams Oeuvre* – and Heidegger – *Sein und Zeit* – and the renowned commentaries written on them have been the basis of the current research.

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