

Ah my dear Antaganus, how are you?

*Antaganus: I am well thank you, all things considered, at least I can think of nothing to complain about.*

*And how are you Sisideas, no doubt vexing over some philosophical conundrum?*

Well it is funny you should ask that Antaganus; as you know my slightly morbid outlook on life has taken me down some rather perplexing paths recently.

*Antaganus: Slightly morbid? Oh well nothing new there then (smirk) so are you going to tell me about your, "morbid perplexing paths"?*

Well, I can if you insist.

*Antaganus: Oh, believe me there is no insistence on my part but I suspect I will not get away without hearing it.*

Well, it is very apposite that you claim that you have "Considered all things" and still have nothing to complain about.

*Antaganus: Well it is a figure of speech but yes it is true.*

Well it is just that I was considering that we should be under no illusion that the lot of man is quite the most pitiful of existences. But mark well, that in claiming such, it in no way detract from what I believe life to be: an amazing wonderment.

*Antaganus: mmmm... no oxymoronic contradiction there then. Why on earth would you say that? Surely at least for some life has a lot of pleasures, admittedly for the less fortunate there is a degree of struggle but in balance that struggle would not equate with a "pitiful existence".*

No! I am talking about everyone, although it is true that for some the experience of life will have at least some very good *bits* and for a few a very enjoyable fulfilling life, but there ability to enjoy life is perhaps more the fact of their fortunate good circumstances, which makes them blind to the true reality of humanities existence as a whole.

*Antaganus: Well I can see that for the very poor life could be seen as a load of crock, with some of the justification but if you are agreeing that the lucky **are** having a good time, what is it that these people are missing as I feel that you are claiming that in reality they are not, is their a "good time" just an illusion?*

Well yes I suppose you could say that, might it not be true that much of what we call a "good time" is set by comparison, a good time relative to those that are not having a good time?

*Antaganus: So you are saying that a "good time" is only there by virtue of seeing others having a bad time? Just a tad cynical don't you think? Anyway what is it in our lives; universal to all mankind, that we should be piteous of?*

Well I suppose I have taken you off on the wrong track as it were, talking about good and bad times as such, I merely brought it up as an adjunct as to what we should consider having by way of attitudinal concept towards our selves and that the most fundamental element in forming the same, would be in whatever the nature of our existence is.

*Antaganus: (makes Noise whilst waving hand over his head) eeeaaannnnawwwwww*

Sorry?

*Antaganus: That was the sound of that one flying right over my head. What on earth are you talking about?*

How and what should we feel about ourselves in life and existence?

*Antaganus: I knew it, I knew it, (faintly jubilant) this is about you and your depressive insecurity.*

Well yes I have never denied that my personal ... issues have driven me to look for answers.....

*Antaganus: Look I've told you before, do like everyone else does when a bit depressed; see a shrink and take a pill, stop delving into ..... your like a dog rolling about in your own mess.*

That's offensive and seriously uncalled for..... you're just scared to look at reality.

*Antaganus:.... OK I'm sorry ... it was a bit uncalled for .... but I'm not scared to look...Anyway you were about to explain what is it in our lives that is universal to all mankind that we should be piteous of?*

Alright..... Tell me, as a historical observer of the Roman gladiatorial games what would be your emotional attitude towards the participants?

*Antaganus: What? Errr well I would, do feel very sympathetic to what must have been a terrible situation.....*

And from an empathic point of view, being one of them, it would be very reasonable to feel very sorry for oneself?

*Antaganus: .... OK ( I hope this isn't going where I think it's going)....*

No I'm not entirely suggesting the gladiatorial games as being an analogy of mankind's existence .... (although.....) No my point is more in that you recognise through your empathic understanding a principle: that the situation of one's existence will have a direct bearing on the attitudinal perception we have about ourselves in that existence.

*Antaganus: mmmm yes I can see that logic I guess. But I still get back to what is it in our lives that we should be piteous of?*

The very thing that makes us us

*Antaganus: Now are you are just being obtuse.*

Okay I apologise it was just that in considering what made us, us, I saw that it could be seen that we were the “product/recipient” of three “gifts”. I hasten to make clear that when I use the word gift, I do so not so much in the obvious connotation of there being a donator and a recipient but more in the fact that man has had no part in the orchestration of this existence. Furthermore the three gifts, as separate things would appear to be of great blessing in themselves but that collectively they make for our piteous existence.

*Antaganus: oh do you get on with it I feel you are just teasing me.*

Well the first gift is that of life of sentient life we are alive, The very stuff of stars or for that matter a brick made animate, sentient; made with abilities to perceive its surroundings and react. Truly, to my mind a wonderment.

*Antaganus: yes I can well see that this could be perceived as a gift, I fail to see how this can be perceived as something piteous. So what is the second gift*

Of itself I would agree that life is neither piteous or not, but the second gift is that of motivation. In common with all other animals, a driving force with the singularity of purpose; that of, to survive/procreate. Without such a motivational force a brick would remain just a brick and have no thoughts of building itself into a wall.

*Antaganus: Mmmm... well I suspect one could drive a horse and cart through the notion that these two elements of life are separate but to run with it for the moment what is the third gift?*

The third gift, unique to man, is knowledge. Knowledge of the first two gifts. He knows that he is life, that he exists, that he is driven and motivated with the singularity of purpose. He knows of his impotence, that he appears to have no control over any aspects of these gifts. This is the gift that binds the three gifts together to make an ego, set to struggle for survival and yet with the knowledge of inevitability of death which he can do nothing about. Does such a paradox not set a piteous existence? And just for the record does not sound too dislike the analogy of the Roman arena?

*Antaganus: Oh God cheer me up Why don't you! Why do you insist on making life sound so black. You philosophers are all the same, you delve into things to satisfy your morbid curiosity for no greater purpose than to fulfil an appetite of morose self-indulgence. What ever happened to optimism, looking on the bright side of life? OK lets say life is shit, now what?*

Well it is the truth.

*Antaganus: As you see it. What is the point in all this?*

Tell me Antaganus looking at mankind throughout history what proportion of those that have died would you claim to have had an enjoyable life, a life which was not full of struggle. I am not talking comparatively but in actuality have been able to say that the balance of that which was good against that which was bad equated. Man has always had to toil, work at times very hard to sustain his living, he's fought wars, over throne oppressive tyrants, been enslaved to varying degrees and even today, when one might suppose that through the passage of time things would've got better, but far from it, things are as bad today as they have ever been for the majority in the world. *(the arena analogy is looking pretty good to me)*

*Antaganus: That may very well be true but at least they do not indulge in obsequious self pity. People have made the most of what they have and derived enjoyment from the same. Sane people do not go around measuring the misgivings of their fortune but look to placate their woes with positive consolations that allows them to go on, lest too realistic picture decent to .....suicide. So I ask again what is the point in this exploration?*

Well if you remember I was asking how and what we should feel about ourselves in life and existence; to set an attitudinal perception towards our selves: how I should feel about me. As it stands at the moment it would appear that much of how we feel towards ourselves is set meritocratically; by the abilities we have or can learn *(how good, or otherwise we are in the arena?)*. However I was considering a more universal perspective set by a more fundamental elements that exists for all humanity hence my example of the Roman arena. From this analogy I felt that you had agreed that the nature of ones existence will have a direct bearing on the attitudinal perception we have about ourselves in existence. And further more as you did not disagree with my suggestion that empathetical "it would be very reasonable to feel very sorry for ones lot" in regard to the victims of of the Roman arena, I therefore claimed that our circumstances of a piteous existence was the truth, to which you have just tacitly agreed in saying the words "too realistic picture". Surely your reticence at looking at this is partly your fear of what you will see, a fear born of our instincts that demonstrates the mark of our controlledness that we, enslaved to living, being too fearful to look, seek not the realism of our life but rather a placater to keep us going.

*Antaganus: I don't know where you're going with this, are you suggesting that half the world should commit suicide just because in your perverse view of the world, the balance of enjoyment and drudgery does not equate? If that be true I can still find no point to do your argument.*

No that is not my suggestion at all. We live with fundamental unresolved issues: Death and impotence, truly the stuff of my piteous existence, The point of my assertion, far from being a perverse indulgence, is to recognise the truth of our existence for surely this must be the one aspect that unifies us all. We are the victims of the Roman arena, my analogy is, in many ways apposite; certainly to illustrate our circumstances. As such, no matter who ones

is or what our situation; the lucky with their good time or the poor with their struggle to survive, of country or culture of race or creed, we humans share a commonality in the nature of our existence. *(we are all in that same boat)* Not just being part of the struggle to survive that it is unquestionable but also the psychologically perplexing conundrum of being motivationally driven to survive whilst confronted with inevitable death and impotent to do anything about it.

*Antaganus: Well so what! Truth or not how does any of this help us?*

I told you I was looking for answerer to “How and what should we feel about ourselves in life and existence?” I have asserted that it can be seen as a “piteous existence” for the reasons I have asserted. Can this be seen to be true?

*Antaganus: .....Well.... I suppose.....It has some credibility ... ok yes life can be described as such.... satisfied?*

You said (in regard to the Roman arena) that empathetical “one should feel very sorry for ones lot” as you put it, You do so because you have the ability to intellectually see and understand such circumstances, in such a manner, as to evoke an emotional response. All emotions **save one** ultimately emanate from fear, the fear of not surviving be it: guilt shame, envy, or greed they are the motivational coercive manipulators of our instincts.. all but one....

And that my dear Antaganus is the Forth gift

The gift of Love, no not specifically, but perhaps born of the nurturing “love” of parent and child but transposed to something more from the intellectually ability to be empathic. To love anyone, our enemies indeed, is not an emotion from our instincts to survive, it would be completely contradictory. It is the the emotion of nurturing love intellectuality abstracted to that which transcends the instinctual. It is applicable to ourselves; to be empathic to the reality of the circumstances we find ourselves in. So what should we feel about ourselves relative to our circumstances? = LOVING, caring compassionate forgiving; all the attributes that go to make up love.

To have a positive emotional attitude towards our selves is quite the most important of psychological issues. In seeing the reality of our circumstances we have “real cause” to feel empathic tenderness towards ourselves and perhaps also find an emotional resolution to the conundrum of being programmed to survive yet live with inevitable death. It is only from a realisation and acceptance of the truth that we can really see beyond our fears to that which can help us. you can not be empathic to something you do not look at or believe.

This truth is the one thing that brings all peoples together: in the true nature of our existence ... yes the platitudes of thought can ameliorate feelings and wealth can distract but to live the truth shows not the differences between us but unites us in a common perspective. In seeing the corollary that makes to loving ourselves in this situation we can but do nothings else but love those that share the same existence. Life without love **is** a piteous existence but in looking honestly we can see, through an empathic reasoning a justification and necessity for love .... the fourth gift that makes life our life truly wonderful.