Chapter 7

Purpose of Life as a Human Being: A Philosophical Critique

Introduction

“Life is something extraordinary.”723 Life in any form is precious and invaluable. The significance of life is living. Be it of human beings, animals, plants or any other species in the universe — life is nothing less than living. Many people live their lives without ever reflecting on life itself or its meaning for them. Their lives may be full of activities. They may marry, have children, run a business, or become professionals or artists, without ever obtaining any degree of understanding of why they do these things. Their lives have no overall purpose to give meaning to separate events, and they may have no clear idea of their own nature or identity, of who they really are. Human existence tops all other species with peculiar nature of reasoning.

But if plants are the organisms that feed and grow, and animals are the organisms that feel and sense, what functions has man in the scheme of things? Aristotle's answer was that reason alone distinguishes human beings, and the good for man must in some way involve our reasoning faculty.724 Descartes says, “Humans are the rational beings (‘thing that thinks’”).”725 Hence, he notes that human being's purpose in living must be connected with the proper use of this central and primary ability.

The meaning of life or purpose of life is a concept that provides an answer to the philosophical question concerning the significance of life or existence in general. It can be expressed through answering a variety of related questions, such as "Why are we here?" "What is life all about?" “What is the purpose of life” and "What is the meaning of life?" It has been the subject of much philosophical, scientific, and theological speculation throughout the history. There have been a large number of theories to these questions from many different cultural and ideological backgrounds.726

723 J. Krishnamurti, What are You Doing with Your Life: Teen Books on Living, (Krishnamurti Foundation of America, California, 2001), 60.
725 Ibid.
The meaning of life as a human being is deeply entrenched in the philosophical and religious concepts of existence, social ties, consciousness, and happiness etc… The value of the question pertaining to the purpose of life as a human being may coincide with the achievement of ultimate reality, or a feeling of oneness, or even a feeling of sacredness. Christianity postulates purpose of human life is to love God and thereby attain heaven. Similarly, Hinduism postulates the purpose of human life as realizing the fundamental truth about oneself — "Tat Tvam Asi." All religions and philosophers propagate spiritual or metaphysical ends of the purpose of human life. But, an existentialist point of view is to look where people find meaning in life because one's life arises only after one comes to existence (existence precedes essence). And to a pragmatist meaning of life is discoverable only via experience.

The question of the destiny of our lives is very serious, as it concerns the most important question for human being for what purpose are we here on earth? If human being takes a correct stance on this issue; if he finds his true destiny; then he will be able to take a correct viewpoint in relation to particular questions that arise in our daily life; in our relationships with our fellow men; in our studies, profession, marriage and the bearing and upbringing of children. If he does not relate correctly to this basic issue, then he will also fail in life’s particular purposes, for what meaning can a particular purpose have if human life as a whole has no meaning?

Interestingly in this research on CSR and its impact on society, purpose of human life plays a significant role in establishing the purpose of human existence. So this chapter will make an attempt to establish the purpose of human life from a commoner’s perspective delving into the nuances of responsibility to the self and to the society (to the other).

7.1 Life both as a Question and Answer
Life is a question, life is an answer. The question is hidden in the answer and vice-versa. I would undoubtedly, answer life. Life is the answer to life. Life is what happens between conception and death. A journey that starts in the womb and ends at the tomb. In the

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727 Ibid.
728 Famous Existential dictum of Jean-Paul Sartre’s lecture in 1946 on Existentialism Is a Humanism.
meantime whatever happens is nothing but, what we call as life.\textsuperscript{729} From the time of the ancient Greeks, scholars have debated the proper moment at which human life comes into existence.\textsuperscript{730} Many argue that human life begins at conception, which occurs when a human egg becomes fertilized with human sperm and becomes a zygote. Though, we all know it in black and white, the question of ‘what is life’ bothers us every moment. Here is what Robert Morison has to say about it:

Life is not a thing or a fluid any more than heat is. What we observe are some unusual sets of objects separated from the rest of the world by certain peculiar properties such as growth, reproduction, and special ways of handling energy. These objects we elect to call 'living things.'\textsuperscript{731}

What is life?, is surely one of the oldest questions. Richard Dawkins would describe life as genes. "They are inside you and me, they created us, body and soul; and their survival is the final reason for our existence."\textsuperscript{732} Some other biologists would describe it as diffusion of atoms. The history of philosophical approaches towards the concept of life confirms this conception that rational man, who is constantly confronted with life, cannot distance himself from life. It is always life that happens to him, with him, through him.\textsuperscript{733}

The experience of life, therefore, is neither pure recognition of self nor merely reaction to outside stimuli. Reality can be understood only in living, not in escape. When you seek purpose of life, you are really escaping and not understanding what life is.\textsuperscript{734} Philosophers like Husserl, Wittgenstein and Habermas prefer to use the terms 'living world' and 'living experience' rather than life.\textsuperscript{735} So I try to define life as an experience of living — living in the world; living with the world; living through the world. Life is a process, and the process is living. It is common to all organic beings. So life is \textit{LIVING}. Thus, Aristotle’s famous quote says it all — "It is better to be than not to be."\textsuperscript{736}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{729} Joji Valli, \textit{The Canvas of Life}, (CreatiVentures, Pune, 2011), 39.
\item \textsuperscript{731} Quoted in Lynn Margulis, Dorion Sagan, \textit{What is Life?}, (University of California Press, California, 2000), 1.
\item \textsuperscript{732} Richard Dawkins, \textit{The Selfish Gene}, 51.
\item \textsuperscript{733} Lynn Margulis, Dorion Sagan, \textit{What is Life?}, 26.
\item \textsuperscript{734} J. Krishnamurti, \textit{What are You Doing with Your Life: Teen Books on Living}, (Krishnamurti Foundation of America, California, 2001), 63.
\item \textsuperscript{735} Lynn Margulis, Dorion Sagan, \textit{What is Life?}, p.26.
\item \textsuperscript{736} Wendy Toliver, \textit{The Little Giant Encyclopedia of Inspirational Quotes}, (Sterling Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 2005), 323.
\end{itemize}
7.1.1 Life is LIVING

All organic beings have a peculiar nature of coming into existence — living the life. We are born, mature, age, and die — Life implies everyday actions, everyday thoughts, everyday feelings along with the struggles, the pains, the anxieties, the deceptions, the worries, the routine of the office, of business, of bureaucracy, and so on. So life goes for me, you, and just about everyone, allowing sort of small individual and cultural variations that affect the form but not the fact of routine. These activities constitute everyday life. Everyday life is, what life mostly is. Keeping it going, however, involves constant struggle. The struggle for existence or living life is inevitably common to all organic beings. J. Krishnamurthy notes that no one has escaped from this struggle without understanding it.

To understand the full significance of living, we must understand the daily tortures of our complex life; we cannot escape from them. The society in which we live has to be understood by each one of us — not by some philosopher, not by some teacher, not by a guru — our way of living has to be transformed, completely changed. I think that is the most important thing we have to do, and nothing else.

Though each being lives its life, everything in the universe is inter-connected. The entirety of organic and inorganic existence is interconnected that nothing escapes anything. The process of living entails cooperation between living and non-living.

Cooperation is the basis of life and of evolution — this already becomes clear on the lives of the simplest microbes. The American scientist James Shapiro found during his investigations that even bacteria form organized associations, go hunting for prey in teams, and are more similar to cells of an organism, than to autonomous loners. He came to the conclusion that most — if not practically all — bacteria live their lives in community.

There is cooperation within and among the species. The vicious cycle of life is nothing but living in cooperation with everything around. It is said that ants have a ‘social

stomach,” because all the members of the colony of ants share their nourishment and feed each other if necessary.\textsuperscript{740}

One species become food for the other. Organic beings, indeed, contain within themselves a special principle of dissolution.\textsuperscript{741} On the process of living life with its struggles and complexities all species irrespectively cooperate and undergo this evolutionary process — being the feed for each. This grand fact of grouping of all organic beings under what is called the Natural System, is utterly inexplicable on the theory of creation.\textsuperscript{742}

Perhaps, we humans who claim to be the top of all species with rationality are even subject to this evolutionary phenomenon. Though human beings claim to be the superior species in the organic plethora, we have no escape from admitting ourselves to the natural process and law of nature. Thus, having a close glimpse at human being would positively help this research to approximate the purpose of life as human being.

\subsection*{7.2 Human Being — a Being with a Purpose}

I think, it is appropriate to illustrate the following incident to understand what a human being is. During the Holocaust in France, in a tiny mountain Huguenot village called Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, 350 miles from Paris, 5000 Jews, mostly children, found shelter with 5000 Christians, almost the entire population of the village. Defying the Vichy government, which was collaborating with the Nazis, the villagers of Le Chambon hid Jews in their homes for years. They provided the refugees with forged identification and ration cards, as well as education for the children, and then sent them to safety in Switzerland.

The Chambonnais were descendants of the Huguenots, the first Protestants in Catholic France. Having endured persecution in France, they were able to understand the plight of the Jews. Under the leadership of a young French pastor, Andre Trocmé, the people of Le Chambon felt it was their duty to help people in need, never considering their actions

\textsuperscript{740} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{741} Martyn Paine, \textit{Medical and physiological commentaries, Volume 3.}, (Collins, Keese, New York, 1844), 30.
\textsuperscript{742} Charles Darwin, \textit{The Origin of Species}, 416.
heroic or dangerous. Trocmé told a Vichy official who had threatened him about sheltering the Jews: “We do not know what a Jew is… we only know humans.”  

It is important to understand what we are as human beings. It lies at the heart of the philosophical questions of human beings’ place and purpose in a world that is being discovered and transformed in the name of humanity, the highest of all values. The present state of knowledge of the human being is one which has been informed by the materialistic reductionist thinking of modern technological science. It is commonplace for people generally to think of the human body as being merely an elaborate machine, with all the non-material aspects of the human being — thinking, feeling, attitudes, emotions, mores, imagination, etc., as being merely the result of the physico-chemical activities which take place in the physical body. However, we should be aware that life is common to all living beings. Then what differentiates human beings from other living things and generally from the natural world in which they live?

7.2.1 Eastern Concept of Human Being

Now, I would like to give the nature of human beings from the perspective of Indian philosophers. Unlike Western philosophers, Indian philosophers do not define human beings in terms of reason or certain attitudes, such as caring, etc., or in terms of certain emotions, such as anxiety. This is due to the fact that these properties are present in higher animals, such as chimpanzees.

According to Indian philosophers, human beings exhibit not only rationality at the level of thought, or anxiety at the level of emotion, but also certain other characteristics which will distinguish them from other higher animals. The form of life of a human being can be described as some of their actions are guided by the concept of ought or ought not. In other words, human beings are guided by the concept of dharma (righteousness), or adharma (unrighteousness). The word ‘dharma’ has been used in a very wide sense by

Indian philosophers. The core meaning of the word ‘dharma’ is derived from the root ‘dhr’, meaning ‘to hold’, ‘to support’, etc.\textsuperscript{745} Hence x is a dharma means:

1. x supports the world (dharatilokan),
2. x supports the human society as well as the world (yo-lokan-dharayati, yena-manava-samajo-dhrtah-sa-dharmah),
3. x will help those who have fallen, are about to fall, or will fall (patitampatantam-patisyantam-dharayatiti-dharmah),
4. x is the foundation of the universe as well as the world (dharmo-visvasya-jagatah-pratistha),
5. x is real or truth (yo-dharmah-satyam-vaitat),
6. x also leads to something higher, such as peace and bliss (ya-eva-sreyaskarah-sa-evadharmasabdena-ucyate),
7. If you put an end to x (dharma), then it will put an end to you; if you restore x, then it will restore you (dharma evahatohanti, dharmoraksatiraksitah).\textsuperscript{746}

From these uses of the word dharma it follows that our total wellbeing is dependent on dharma. The laws of dharma are as real as the laws of nature. Hence any type of violence, which is a type of adharma, will cause our suffering and would ultimately lead to the elimination of living beings.

Human beings can realize metaphysical freedom or liberation (moksa or nirvana) in varying degrees. Systems of Indian philosophy have interpreted the term moksa or nirvana in different ways. The connotations may be classified as positive or negative. Negatively, it is a state of mind free from sorrows, suffering, craving, selfishness, or defilements.

The word ‘nirvana’ consists of the word ‘ni’ plus ‘vana’ or (‘nir’ plus ‘vana’).\textsuperscript{747} The negative particle ‘ni’ signifies absence, or cessation, and the word ‘vana’ signifies weaving or craving. Hence the word ‘nirvana’ means cessation or extinction of all types of craving, including physical, vocal, imaginary, or dispositional.\textsuperscript{748} If there is no craving then there is no transgression of ethical conduct. Therefore, the state of nirvana does not imply the extinction of the individual or the person, but only the cessation of one’s

\textsuperscript{745} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{747} Ben-Ami Scharfstein, A Comparative History of World Philosophy: From the Upanishads to Kant, (SUNY Press, Albany, 1998), 98.
\textsuperscript{748} Ibid.
craving or desires which are due to attachment, greed, aversion, or delusion. It implies the extinction of the life of illusion, passion, and craving.

Positively, *moksa* or *nirvana* is a blissful experience. The Advaita Vedanta characterizes it as realization of truth, knowledge and bliss. Dhammapada, a Buddhist text, has also emphasized its blissful nature. To quote: “Health is the highest gain; contentment is the greatest wealth; trustful are the best kinsmen; *nibbana* (derived from ‘*nirvana’*) is the highest bliss.” The life is also characterized by enlightenment as there is wisdom or higher knowledge. Hence, the mind of a liberated person is characterized by peace, bliss, compassionate feeling, or love for all beings or the entire creation. Even if these are ideals, human beings can realize these ideals in varying degrees in this life.

### 7.2.2 Western Concept of Human Being

Traditionally, human beings are defined as rational animals. Hence, x is a human being if and only if x has rationality and animality.

The distinctive features of human nature have to do with the mental functioning of human beings — more specifically, with their intellectual and mental powers... It has been widely agreed that if there is some respect in which human beings differ from even the higher animals, it must be their capacity for rational thought that makes the difference. It is claimed that the essence of a human being (*Dasein*) lies in its ‘to be.’ Heidegger postulates a ‘Being’ (*Dasein*) out of which man's being (*being in the world*) is created. ‘Being’ is the inner light through which we become aware of our meaning, of what is reality for us. There is always something outstanding in *Dasein* which has not yet become real, although it remains as a possibility of its being. “A constant unfinished quality thus lies in the essence of the constitution of *Dasein*.” In other words, we cannot give an account of a human being without reference to his or her projects, hopes, aspirations, intentions, etc. Hence, a human being is always in the process of becoming.

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750 Nārada (MahaThera), *The Dhammapada*, (Maha Bodhi Society of India, Calcutta, 1970), 57.
753 Ibid., 300.
The reference to the process of becoming, or striving for something, will define or describe a particular human being. Hence, an individual is necessarily unfinished or incomplete. According to Heidegger, we can never grasp the wholeness of Dasein. This is due to the fact that it reaches its wholeness in death, and when it happens, Dasein loses its being there. Hence this view emphasizes the becoming aspect of our being.

Becoming is an essential element of growth. Becoming reflects a process of significant change that occurs in the form and nature of human beings. In the words of Heidegger, "To be human means that one is not a static entity just ‘there’ among other things. Rather, being human is always a process of becoming oneself, living into possibilities, into one's future."754 For him, such becoming is not optional but necessary.

Man is radically unfinished in himself.755 Becoming human is a process that involves the cooperation with the other beings. To become Human is a call, a vocation, and an imperative coming from the other.756 Operating in the society and mingling with other human beings reveals the nature and shapes a personality for each one of us.

Thus man has to create a human personality accepting the responsibility for the Other and claim by the Other, ‘by choices that must fulfill, deepen and enrich him as a human person. It is a never-ending series of changes and struggles, striving to make use of even the most difficult situations in order to grow more fully into manhood.757

Emmanuel Lévinas criticizes the concept of man (human being) found in the Western and Eastern philosophy. He accuses them as ‘egology,’758 because they left out the important problem of the Other. According to Lévinas it negates the otherness of the other person, which is integral to human life.759 Because for the simple reason that it denies the face-to-face relationship with other. What makes each of us a human being is nothing but the otherness of the other and face-to-face relationship which is the basis of the society. I think, this is the basis of CSR too. Blindness towards the other, or not co-operating with the other eliminates the possibility of doing good to others or the so-called society. Lévinas concept of man clearly hints the importance of the Other. He says, if the Other is

755 George Therukattil, Becoming Human, 1.
756 Ibid., 3.
757 Ibid., 3.
758 Ibid., 43.
759 Ibid., 45.
not there, there is no philosophy, only partial philosophy, (only Egology) because philosophy is about the whole reality.\textsuperscript{760} So his starting point of philosophy is ethics. Ethics begins with the relationship with the other. It is my obligation to respond to the other. Ethical response is not at the conceptual level but happens in the very life itself. This opens the possibility for the human being to engage and entangle in the web of relationship.

7.3 Life is LIVING a Relationship

Man cannot live alone. He must satisfy certain natural basic needs in order to survive. He has to enter into relationships with his fellow beings for living a life. No man can break the shackles of mutual dependence. This begins perhaps between the embryo and the mother and continues till his last breath. The need of the embryo may be more physical than mental, but the mother's need is the other way round. “Society friendship and love/divinely bestow'd upon man,” sang William Cowper, portraying the pangs of solitude of Alexander Selkirk who had been marooned on an uninhabited island for years. The words of the great philosopher Aristotle would substantiate how important relationship is:

\begin{quote}
Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god.\textsuperscript{761}
\end{quote}

Thus, man is by nature a social animal. He is born in society lives in society and dies in society. Society is indispensable for man. Man cannot live as man, without society. Isolation from society is regarded as a punishment. Ignoring the existence or alienating a person in the society is considered to be the cruelest punishment. Similarly, when I think from a CSR point of view when people are deprived of the living conditions, they are being punished. Because their very life is simply ignored by the alienating conditions of their existence, as people are there to cooperate and collaborate in the everyday living.

\textsuperscript{760} Ibid., 51.

Solitary life is unbearable for him. Social life is necessary for man. The instinct for some form of social life is innate in human being where relationship plays an indispensable role. Life is a relationship within and between organisms. The reality of relationship happens in living.

    Reality can be understood only in living, not in escape. When you seek purpose of life, you are really escaping and not understanding what life is. Life is relationship, life is action in relationship; when I do not understand relationship, or when relationship is confused, then I seek a fuller meaning.762

Action is the crux of living a relationship. Everything happens in life, when we are able to take that extra step in life. When we bottle ourselves within us or in an island, the possibility of relationship to certain extend is shut. That does not eliminate us from relating to the environment and other beings around. Life is a relationship with things, people, and ideas, and if we do not meet these relationships rightly, fully, then conflicts arise from the impact of the challenge.763

Martin Buber speaks about ‘the Other’ in his famous ‘I-Thou’ relationship. For Buber, to be is to be in relation, in dialogue. "In the beginning," Buber writes, "is the relation."764 This beginning is also a saying. To be human being, for Buber is to hold oneself in an attitude of relation by saying a ‘basic word.’ There are Buber insists, two basic words, *I-Thou* and *I-It*.765 One cannot utter the word I without relating to the world outside the self. These two basic words mark two ways of being in relation to the world. *I-It* relations are characterized by experiencing and using objects. These are one-way relationships. The *I* or *I-It* relations understand and experience the world as one composed of objects locatable in space and time. This way of relation to the world makes no distinction between people and things.

*I-Thou* relationships, on the other hand, are two-way relationships based in dialogue, one being encounters another with mutual awareness. Mutual awareness about the needs of the other beings and empathy to the other beings are the pre-requisite for CSR. The

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762 J. Krishnamurti, *What are You Doing with Your Life: Teen Books on Living*, (Krishnamurti Foundation of America, California, 2001), 63-64.
763 Ibid. 194
765 Ibid., 20.
relations between the corporate and the society are also coming in the purview of *I-Thou* relationships. Thus, such an awareness is not only at the individual level but even at the corporate level *I-Thou* relationships are characterized by what Buber calls *presentness*. For Buber the present is not "the abstract point between past and future, but like the eternal now of the mystic, it is the present of intensity and wholeness" and "exists only insofar as meeting and relation exist."

*I-Thou* relationships live in what Buber calls ‘the between,’ the relational space created by the encounter. Even in the corporate framework, *I-Thou* relationships live in the ‘the between’ and that relation can be very well fostered through CSR. The nature of the *I-Thou* relationship is best depicted in Buber’s own poetic language:

> If I face a human being as my *Thou*, and say the primary word *I-Thou* to him, he is not a thing among things and does not consist of things. Thus human being is not He or She, bounded from every other He or She, a specific point in space and time within the net of the world: nor is he a nature able to be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. But with no neighbor, and whole in himself, he is Thou and fills the heavens. This does not mean that nothing exists except himself. But all else lives in his light.

The experience of *I-Thou* is so powerful that it is not sustainable. In Buber's words, "It is not possible to live in the bare present. Life would be quite consumed if precautions were not taken to subdue the present speedily and thoroughly." Therefore every *I-Thou* relationship must become an *I-It* relationship. In other words, once one experiences the *Thou* as a person with qualities that can be appreciated separately, the evanescent *I-Thou* relationship disappears. Once an *It* has been a *Thou*, however, *It* always has the potential to become a Thou again. Thus, when there has once been an *I-Thou* relationship with another, the ongoing relationship is characterized by a continuous alternation between *I-Thou* and *I-It*.

For Buber, to overemphasize our ability to use and experience comes at the expense of our power to enter into relation. It is *I-Thou* relationships which give meaning to our

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766 Ibid., 58.
769 Ibid., 34.
770 Ibid., 17.
771 Ibid., 39.
lives and make us fully human. Thus, I-Thou and I-It relationships give meaning to CSR and make it a fully human enterprise. Martin Buber's concepts of I-Thou and I-It provide a useful theoretical framework and a conceptual model of life as living relationships in the larger context of purpose of life as a human being where CSR plays a vital role for the progress of the society.

For Lévinas, the Other is always 'higher' than me. I must serve the Other because the Other needs me. Thus, the responsibility to relate and serve as an ongoing connection between the human beings and the world. However, J. Krishnamurthy would encourage us to take a deep dip in the ocean of relationship than running away from it. Thus he says:

> We never admit to ourselves that this life is all we know and that it should therefore be understood fully and completely. We prefer to run away from ourselves and that is why we seek the purpose of life away from relationship. If we begin to understand action, which is our relationship with people, with property, with beliefs and ideas, then we will find that relationship itself brings its own reward. You do not have to seek. It is like seeking love. Can you find love by seeking it? Love cannot be cultivated. You will find love only in relationship, not outside relationship, and it is because we have no love that we want a purpose of life.

Of all the people you will know in a lifetime, you are the only one you will never lose. This relationship with the ‘me’ inside is crucial; the better we know ourselves, the better we know others, since our perception of our own self provides us with our primary means of understanding all other humans.

C.H Cooley’s famous ‘looking-glass-self’ theory gives more clarity into the awareness of self and others. Cooley (1902), in his work *Human Nature and the Social Order*, his ‘looking-glass self’ involved three steps: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. According to him, “society and individual denote not separable phenomena but different aspects of the same thing, for a separate individual is

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772 Ibid., 34.
773 J. Krishnamurti, *What are You Doing with Your Life: Teen Books on Living*, (Krishnamurti Foundation of America, California, 2001), 64.
an abstraction unknown to experience, and so likewise is society when regarded as
something apart from individuals."\textsuperscript{775}

Cooley's theories were manifested in response to a threefold necessity that had developed
within the realm of society. The first of which was the necessity to create an
understanding of societal phenomena that highlighted the subjective mental processes of
individuals yet realized that these subjective processes were effects and causes of
society's processes. The second necessity examined the development of a social dynamic
conception that portrayed states of chaos as natural occurrences which could provide
opportunities for 'adaptive innovation. 'Finally, a need to manifest public that were
capable of exerting some form of 'informed moral control' over current problems and
future directions. Thus, for him there is no separate existence for individuals and society
or apart from the close-nit relationship with the other. It is very evident from his own
words, "just as there is no society or group that is not a collective view of persons, so
there is no individual who may not be regarded as a particular view of social groups."\textsuperscript{776}

He has no separate existence. A person is bound into the whole of which he is a member,
and to consider him apart from it is quite as artificial as to consider society apart from
individuals.\textsuperscript{777} The Looking-glass self is created through the imagination of how one's
self might be understood by another individual. This would later be termed 'Empathic
Introspection.' This theory applied not only to the individual but to the macro-level
economic issues of society and to those macro-sociological conditions which are created
over time. Thus, Cooley felt that each individual has to decide the boundaries for our
concern for the society. In his word, "we find on the frontier: for plain dealing, love of
caracter and force, kindness, hope, hospitality and courage."\textsuperscript{778} So the relationship with
'the Other’ or the society is a inseparable conjunct in the life of an individual as well as in
the CSR framework of the 21st century.

Similarly, when we have no relationship with the self, with the Other and the world, life
becomes purposeless. The essence of existence as a human being itself not accomplished

\begin{footnotes}
132.
\textsuperscript{776} Ibid., 133.
\textsuperscript{777} Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
and life becomes aimless. Hence the question of why it happens to human beings, arise in
our mind. Understanding ourselves probably aids self-acceptance, self-control, and good
relationships. But self-understanding only comes from interacting with others; we know
ourselves in comparison to others. So, the two — self-awareness and insight into
relationships — develop together. Indeed, we have a relationship with ourselves as well
as with others. This paradigm calls for responsibility towards oneself, Other and the
environment. According to Hans Jonas, Our fundamental responsibility is to that which
allowed us to come into being, nature herself, but this responsibility is exercised first of
all in our relationships to other human beings. It is said that ants have a ‘social
stomach,’ because all the members of the colony of ants share their nourishment and
feed each other, if necessary. If human beings forget the element of relationship and their
responsibility towards the other, I am sure there are enough reminders in the nature itself.
Life is living together. Living with each other, for each other, and from each other.
Because, life is based on life, life lives on life-and above all by one living thing feeding
on another living thing. We cannot live as an island and end our life. Instead, living
together is cooperation which requires responsibility and empathy.

A man can live his whole life without struggle or battle or war — but not a
minute without cooperation. Without the coordinated cooperation of its
cells his body would be a single cancerous tumor. Without the symbiosis
with the bacteria of his intestinal flora he would die of starvation.
Indeed, these words are the upheaval of responsibility to the Self, Other and Nature.

7.4 Human Being — A Responsible Being

Kant in his moral imperative assigns being responsible and being rational as qualities of a
human being. To live implies, encountering the other and being part of the society.

779 Hans Jonas, Lawrence Vogel, Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good After Auschwitz,
780 Hans-Peter Dürr, Fritz Albert Popp, Wolfram Schommers, What Is Life?: Scientific Approaches and
781 Ibid., 18.
782 Ibid., 18.
783 Robert B. Louden, Kant's Human Being: Essays on His Theory of Human Nature, (Oxford University
Thus, responsibility is woven into our createdness and precedes our subjectivity.\textsuperscript{784} Responsibility for the self; responsibility for the Other; responsibility for the environment; responsibility for the society or let us say in simple words as social responsibility in totality.

Responsibility can be defined as the desire of the person to respond to the other. It is the ability to respond to self, others, and environment. To be responsible is to be answerable. Now the question is answerable to whom? Answerable to myself. My ability to be answerable to myself before I answer anyone else in the world.\textsuperscript{785} I would even go to the extreme and say that the foundation of CSR is responsibility to the self with the intimate feeling that I am answerable to myself. Corporate who are not answerable to themselves do not care about the welfare of the society. They are neither answerable to themselves nor to the society because they live in the utopian world of cut-throat business and accumulating profits. Nevertheless, it is clear that responsibility lies in the agent who stays with his action, who accepts the consequences in the form of reactions and looks forward in a present deed to the continued interaction.\textsuperscript{786}

Responsibility for the other comes from encounter with the other and similarly for the self too. Not rules, regulations or order that directs me to respond to the need of the other, it is the face of the other that demands a response.\textsuperscript{787} The face of the other, that element of the other that is the ground of interpersonal contact, indicates an immediacy with the other person that Lévinas, calls ‘proximity.’\textsuperscript{788} Proximity is felt as immediate contact. Lévinas, writes:

\begin{quote}
... the proximity of the Other is not simply close to me in space, or close like a parent, but he approaches me essentially insofar as I feel myself — insofar as I am — responsible for him. It is a structure that in nowise resembles the intentional relation which in knowledge attaches us to the object — to no matter what object, be it a human object. Proximity does
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{784} Therukattil, Becoming Human, 66.
\textsuperscript{785} Joji Valli, Melody of the Heart, (CreatiVentures, Pune, 2010), 146.
\textsuperscript{786} Helmut Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, (John Knox Press, Westminster, 1999), 64.
\textsuperscript{787} Michael L. Morgan, Discovering Lévinas (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007), 85.
Responsibility is an inherent attitude in every human being. When I see the face of the other, I am moved to action as I have the feeling of being answerable to myself. The other’s vulnerability originates from our relationship — relationship with self, other and environment. The relationship with other gives me the freedom to make a choice of responsibility.\textsuperscript{790} The proximity of the other demands a response; thus, Lévinas, claims that proximity is responsibility, or the ability to respond.\textsuperscript{791} Though, I agree with Lévinas, I would go a step further and say, proximity to myself, makes me more responsible. The more I am related to myself, the more I am connected to myself, my ability to respond expands to the other. Gabriel Marcel argues that the ‘to whom’ of responsibility is both to oneself and everyone else.\textsuperscript{792}

Responsibility should not be understood in an exclusive manner as if one were responsible only for the other who stands before him but also to every other. Thus, all others come under my umbrella of responsibility who are near or far away. In other words, universal responsibility calls me away from myself unto the ends of the earth.\textsuperscript{793} The challenge of the CSR is the same. It reminds us to be responsible to the self, other and nature. In other words, it initiates us to an ongoing process of self to the universal responsibility.

Responsibility is inherent in every encounter that we have with the other. It is not reciprocal in nature. In view of CSR there is no reciprocal approach as the individuals and corporations undertake the responsibility for maintaining the well-being of the society. They are responsible for others not because of any statutory police of social structure. It is because their encounter with face that demands them to be responsible.\textsuperscript{794}

\textsuperscript{790} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{791} Emmanuel Lévinas, \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence}, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Boston, 1981), 139.
\textsuperscript{793} RoggerBurggraeve, ed. “No One Can Save Oneself without Others,” in \textit{The Awakening to the Other: A Provocative Dialogue with Emmanuel Lévinas} (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 20.
\textsuperscript{794} Emmanuel Lévinas, \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence}, translated by AlphonsoLingis (Kluwer Academic Publisher, Netherlands, 1991), 114.
Thus, taking responsibility for the self and others makes one a human. In the words of Lévinas, the very identity of human starts from responsibility.795 Hence, for him what makes life is nothing but responsibility. Corporate Social Responsibility is the extension of one’s life to the society and for the society.

7.5 Nature of Responsibility

People want to know who is responsible for certain actions and who is accountable for the consequences of those actions. In other words, to be responsible means to be answerable and to be accountable for one’s actions. Business historian Vincent E. Barry has defined the term responsibility, when used in business affairs, as referring to “a sphere of duty or obligation assigned to a person by the nature of that person’s position, function, or work.”796 Responsibility could thus be viewed as a bundle of obligations associated with a job or function. But Lévinas, argues that human being is invested with responsibility even when he does not want to be. It is not man’s choice to be responsible; he belongs to responsibility. It is an obligation of the person to respond to the need of the other. It is a responsibility to do something for the other.797 Human beings’ inherent desire to do something for the other or the society is the philosophical foundation in which the concept of CSR has been rooted. So the responsibility to do something for the other is more important than to know him. Responsibility begins as absolute heteronomy. Thus, I am made responsible, I get in touch with other as a reciprocal relation is established which becomes responsibility. Be it individual or corporate, the aspect of responsibility does not change as it is inherent in human nature.

When I respond to natural events I do so as a social being; on the other hand, when I respond to my companions I do so as one who is in response-relations to nature. I do not exist as responsive self in two separate spheres or in two distinct encounters — with the Thou on the one, with the It on the other; with society on the one hand, with nature on the other. I engage rather in a continuous dialogue in which there are at least these three partners — the self, the social companion, and natural events.798

Thus, it is natural phenomena that the self before nature remains a social self, responding to other selves in all responses to nature.\textsuperscript{799}

\subsection*{7.5.1 Responsibility for the Other — Sprouting of CSR from the Heart}
Responsibility is innate to human being. Responsibility for the other begins as an absolute heteronomy. Here the ‘I’ cannot be the yardstick of all things, but ‘I’ is there as a responsible person. Responsibility is not initiative of ‘I’; rather, it conditions the structure of the subject itself. Responsibility conditions the structure of my being. The face inspires the ‘I’ to responsibility. ‘I’ comes in touch with the other and the other becomes the center of my spirituality. So I realize my responsibility through the other.\textsuperscript{800} Hence, it is not the legal responsibility, rather the responsibility by and for the other should be understood in a wider perspective, especially when many corporations are working in transnational or multi-national scenarios. Thus, the responsibility what should not be limited to nation, culture, religion etc… I, as a human being cannot eliminate anyone from my responsibility. The whole humanity is in need of my service. Universal responsibility calls me away from my selfishness and leads me to the freedom of worldwide responsibility.\textsuperscript{801} Nothing evades my responsibility because as Indian philosophy very well puts it categorically, \textit{aham brahmashmi} — I am Brahman. When this seed of responsibility sprouts in my heart, I become responsible to ‘everything’ around entrusting me with universal responsibility for the well-being and welfare of the society or the world. It also asserts the view of \textit{tatvamasi} (That you are!) from the deep rootedness of perceiving everything around as the ‘That,’ in terms of a deeply rooted spiritual invitation to partake in the universal responsibility that we are endowed with as human beings and spiritual being in the phenomenon called \textit{living}.

\subsection*{7.5.2 Universal Responsibility}
CSR can happen only when one feels responsibility for the self and the other. Hence the fundamental duty of myself becomes universal responsibility. We live in a society where

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{799} Ibid., 81.
\item \textsuperscript{800} Arokiam Stalin Dhanaraj, Lévinas on the Vulnerability of Face.” \textit{Journal of Philosophy and Education}, 71.
\item \textsuperscript{801} Burggraeve, \textit{The Awakening to the Other}, 20.
\end{itemize}
the involvement with others takes place. We are always in relation with the other. A closed relation with the other always leads me to neglect the others. Indian philosophy speaks about *dharma* which can be translated here as causative responsibility. *Dharma* is at two levels, the individual level and the Cosmic level. At Cosmic level, it is ‘*Sanatana Dharma*,’ eternal and common to all individuals at all places and all times.\(^{802}\) No one can get away from universal responsibility. Though, all others are not directly present to us, our universal responsibility demands that we become accountable for others. Beyond the individual level, through corporate mediation, I can reach out to all others. It is our duty and challenge to construct an economic, social, political structure for the welfare of the people. I am sure, the historical legend Chanakya who grasped the universal responsibility in its length and breadth for all generations. It all reminds every human being that each of us has a major role to play as a responsible human being and a member of the society.

The face of the other calls us to be responsible socially even when we become part of corporations. Thus, Lévinas urges us to go beyond corporation’s mere concept of profit making and plundering the society form a universal society, encompassing all of humanity. According to Lévinas, if we are not forming a universal global society, encompassing all of humanity, we are being irresponsible, both for the immediate other and for all others.\(^{803}\) Thus, responsibility brings accountability to life which fulfills the purpose of living.

### 7.6 Responsibility becomes Accountability to Self

Responsibility becomes the expression of the self. “My responsibility is untransferable, no one can replace me.”\(^{804}\) This is the accountability I have towards myself. It cannot be transferred to anyone else. I am answerable to none but myself. I express myself before the other in terms of responsibility for which I am accountable to myself. Responsibility, for the other is rooted in our subjective constitution.\(^{805}\) This accountability is what the

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\(^{804}\) Lévinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, 100.

\(^{805}\) Roger Burggraeve, *Proximity with the Other* (Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 2009), 11.
Gita talks about as \textit{niskama karma}; Bible speaks about “love your neighbor as yourself;” Tilak speaks about \textit{lokasamgraha}; Buddha talks about \textit{damma}.

Accountability applies only to individuals, and is both a personal promise and obligation, to yourself and to others, to deliver specific, defined results. Being accountable within an organization means you agree to be operationally defined as the sole agent for an outcome, regardless of the often-inadequate level of authority or control that you have been formally assigned by the organization.\footnote{Bruce Klatt and Shaun Murphy, Accountability: Getting a Grip on Results, Retrieved on 25-07-2012.}

Corporations and individuals must transcend beyond the ‘I’ concept by understanding it dynamically as the responsibility. This ‘responsibility to others’ and the ‘holding others responsible’ is grounded on a radical and universal ‘self-responsibility.’ On the ground of self-responsibility a communicative ethic flourishes. It absorbs every form of being responsible to others and for others.\footnote{Bernhard Walden Fels, “Response and Responsibility in Lévinas,” Rutledge Encyclopedia, Vol.8, 39.} This understanding will make us realize that there is a definite purpose for our life here on earth. It is not just living but that understanding will make us live that purpose responsibly. Thus, CSR becomes the responsibility of every human being because I am accountable to myself and it is my responsibility to be responsible for the other. So development of the society becomes my priority irrespective of whether I am individual or corporate. When each human being takes responsibility for the self and for the other, earth becomes the happiest place to live. Thereby, each of us fulfills the very purpose of life as living in this paradise called earth. \textit{“Loka samasta sukhino bhavantu,”} let the entire world be happy.\footnote{Quoted in R. S. Nathan, Hinduism That Is Sanatana Dharma, 23.}

\section*{7.7 Responsibility and Naturalism}

In 1980s Economists such as Milton Friedman argued that business has no social responsibility, and people should practice the work ethics rather than expect handouts.\footnote{Burton Frederick Porter, The Good Life: Alternatives in Ethics, (Rowman & Littlefield, Maryland, 2001), 174.} But his statement was against the nature and principles of naturalism. Naturalism is an upheaval of living one with the nature where we respect and be responsible for the whole universe and existence. That is the universal responsibility naturalism endows with, each
of us. Kant formulated the categorical imperative in another way that seems to be quite different from the concept of universalizability, although Kant regarded it as essentially the same. He stated that we should "treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, always as an end and never as a means only." Kant was here emphasizing respect for persons or, more specifically, rational beings, and affirming that people should not be used just as instruments or objects. Notice that Kant said "as a means only," thereby acknowledging the fact that people must regard each other as means to some extent, whether as employers, employees, contract, strangers; but human relationships ought to be more than that. We should, Kant asserted, have regard for people as worthy of respect in and of themselves, and, insofar as possible, treat them as the purpose of our actions, not as a means for achieving our ends. But a selfless finding of the other leads me to transcendence. In my economic relation with the other, the other functions for the establishment of me. Hence, my interest for the other in me is selfish — when we relate to each other for the sake of meeting my needs. Here the otherness of the other cannot be replaced and other is reduced to a means. Thus, like Kant, Lévinas also emphasizes the need for looking at the integral growth of the other, only then I can find radical otherness of the other.

In this research I would like to uphold naturalism as the theory for proving my hypothesis as right. If human beings live a life in equilibrium with the natural laws, I am sure CSR becomes the responsibility of not the corporate only instead it becomes the responsibility of each human being. I am accountable to myself, I am the subject and object of life. Laws of nature are natural and everyone is governed by it. Then, why not live with it. For Aquinas, Natural law is the human ‘participation’ in the eternal law and is discovered by reason. Thus, in this research I would like to emphasize that as a responsible human being I do have responsibility to myself and to the society. Each human being has to contribute positively towards the progress of the society as responsible being who has the accountability to the very self. Thus, understanding the responsibility will envisage the

societal welfare and progress in the world. Whatev er may be the name that we give for this responsibility, like whatever may be the color of the cow, the milk has the same white color as it is said in the Amritabindu Upanishad:

\[ GavaamanekaVarnaanaam \]
\[ Ksheerasypakevakarnata \]
\[ Ksheeravadpasyatejnanam \]
\[ Linginastugavaamyadha. ^{814} \]

— (Amritabindu Upanishad – 19)

Following the path of naturalism, opens a new era of the ultimate completion of every human being which Marx had foreseen long back, "the consummated essential oneness of nature and man, the true resurrection of nature, the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfillment. ^{815} And this will ensure CSR activities to bring about welfare and well-being in the society where we live. So we must listen to the inherent responsibility to cement the naturalistic principles that are inherent in each of us for the progress of the society, as the purpose of human life — Purpose of life as living responsibly for the self and for the Other. Indeed, there is no doubt that the Hellenistic philosopher Zeno envisioned the goal of life rightly by saying, “The goal of life is living in agreement with nature.” ^{816}

**Conclusion**

The purpose of human life is nothing but *living*. It is not simply living but *living responsibly* as each of us is responsible for the self, others and nature. The responsibility that is inherent in us calls for a personal accountability to oneself. Thus responsible living becomes the nature of human life. It opens up a new paradigm for altruism where one helps another person for no reward, perhaps at some cost to oneself which Indian sages in their great wisdom called as *nishkamakarma*. This calls for the dawn of a new era which already Marx had foreseen. Living a life as per the Law of Nature reminds us to be responsible to Self and to the Other. CSR is an invitation to encounter the face of the other, responsibility for both as individuals and corporate. Thus, maintaining the

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equilibrium of nature, abiding the Laws of Nature as unwritten laws that help to sustain progress and well-being of all. In the words of J.S. Mill, “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” The Stoic way of living was in keeping with considering happiness to be the goal of life.\textsuperscript{817} In short, life is living happily in agreement with nature.

Hellenistic philosophers consider the purpose of life as living a life of Virtue that agrees with Nature. For Plato, the meaning of life was to attain the highest form of knowledge. For Aristotle, life’s objective was to attain the ‘highest good.’ Epicureans and Charvakas defined it as a seeking of modest pleasure and freedom from fear. For pragmatic philosophers, a practical understanding is far more important than seeking abstract truths of life. Existentialists opine that each of us creates the essence of our lives. Confucianism suggests that we can realize the ultimate meaning of life in ordinary human experience. The Enlightenment philosophy stresses the need for relationship between individuals and their society. Buddhism does not speak clearly much about the purpose of life, but about the potential of human life to end suffering. Hinduism bottoms the goal of life as to realize the fundamental truth about oneself — \textit{Tat TvamAsi} and \textit{Aham Brahmasmi}. So this chapter already prompts us for self-examination about the CSR awareness in each of us. Do we pause to think about the purpose of living? Are we ascribing any meaning to it? Does CSR awareness compliment to fulfill the purpose of life through the ordinary human experience? Is life really LIVING? And the crucial and relevant question research would be Can CSR enhance LIVING?

\textsuperscript{817} Ibid.