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I WALKED THE ROAD WALKER PERCY DID!

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Abstract Walker Percy's literature, probe human emotions in great detail. What may seem obvious or taken for granted to a normal person is brought out under the microscope to make the reader realise that it is a clear and present danger. Percy's writings are not just for proving a point, but a methodology for enlightening his readers, and to make them sit back and accept the complete big picture. The most intriguing aspect of his work is that it prompts immediate responses since it recreates a familiar environment – only the real world without misconceptions. And the truth is it happened to each one of us and me. I got sucked into the Walker Percy world and saw each point crystal clear. Hence, I, ASD, walked the same road as Walker Percy did!

Keywords Walker Percy's Influence that work - Movies, Memories, Religion, Depression, Suicide and the End.

Introduction

Literary education in recent times is less of an art and more of a science concerned with comprehending the human conditions. Novels portray a desirable orderly living in which the pleasant etiquette of a middle-class family is broken by only a not-too-serious money problem, romantic subplots that go awry, and the entrance of self-centred idiocy. The good do not suffer any long-term wrong. In a narrative, the interesting actors end up happy and the bad characters end up unhappily: "that is why it is called fiction," says Miss Prism in Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). The ultimate achievement of any Literature would be making the reader do a self-discovery. This inward journey into one's own self while reading Literature arrives at the final destination "self-realization." This journey has the following steps

1. Inner exploration of who we are. "Being"
2. Identification of one's true potential to achieve life goals.
3. Clarify purpose of life.
4. Journey of transformation. "Becoming"
5. Rationale thinking and living attracting others towards this journey using any mode of communication.

So, we see that the ultimate end is disrupting others and moving them to a similar journey of self-discovery with just a publication of a "Book". Self-discovery literature transparently puts out moral and monetary discipline. The physical and psychological dilemmas interplaying between the head and heart of humanity is put out in crisp combination of words. From times immemorial till this present generation "Gen Z" "every single human being has been in search of identity. We should attribute it to the power of reasoning which has revolutionized both the real and the literary world.

After reading the works of Walker Percy, I as a researcher experienced the effect of a diagnostic novel. I could use his works to run a self-diagnosis by introspecting inward and I could find a solution to the very question of my own existence. They say music could have medicinal value. The researcher felt that literature equally can work as a medical diagnostic tool and also a powerful cure. I personally went through the above mentioned five steps on the path to self-realization. While doing this PhD work, it turned into my personal journey of self-awareness: I explored inward and collated data of my very existence of nearly 40 years as far as memory could recall. So, this literature review and outward data collection and collation kept working on my

subconscious mind. On this journey I did doubt my capacity on common sense and knowledge, on communication and networking and even my self-worth. I went through a sea of emotions of fear and inadequacy. That is when I realised all the books I read and digested triggered my inner self to practice mindfulness. I don't know if I have achieved self-actualization as per Maslow's Hierarchy but I seem to have identified a continuous and habitual practice of mindfulness for reaching self-awareness. Here is a documentation of the impacts book by book of Walker Percy on me – ASD.



Movies - The Moviegoer for Walker Percy & Miracle on 34th Street for ASD

The book, "The Moviegoers" makes the reader spend so much time inside the brain of Binx. We keep seeing not only the writer Walker Percy in Binx but we also see our own selves sometimes in Binx's shoes. The story of everydayness, despair, the search, and its abandonment all start on Binx's thirtieth birthday. Four moviegoing events take place within the one-week documented in the novel. The movie that Binx sees immediately after he completes his vertical search was "It Happened One Night". Because of this movie Binx concluded that the material world was all and everything that he was nothing".

It was year 1990 I happened to watch the old black and white movie "Miracle on 34th Street". The story details an old man who walks into a supermarket and claims he is Santa Claus. It took a whole world of events to prove and make people accept that he was Santa. Santa Claus is a belief that is ingrained into us. People want proof of everything. Trust begets trust we say but how do we build trust.

In the movie they show a \$1 bill, with the words "In God We Trust". The judge stays if the United States Department of Treasury can declare their religion and trust and official faith in God and put it up for display on United States currency with no hard evidence, then the public can believe in Santa Claus in the same way. Left with no choice, the elated judge dismisses the case and declares that Santa is real, existing in person.

I have been since then trying to prove myself. I don't know what will prove who I am -an ID card an address or my education, my experience, my work my donation or my grave.

Somewhere down the line while reading the book The Moviegoer by Walker Percy and while watching movies now, I am very clear what came first. The real life came first. The movies got derived from these real-life experiences. Walker Percy is right as I experienced that feel.

Memories - Lancelot

The root cause for this novel of confession by a mental asylum patient Lance Lamar, is his furiously violent and destructive reaction to his wife's persistent adultery. Walker Percy explores a number of themes in Lancelot's speech, ranging from purity in gender orientation to the ethical dilemmas surrounding human sexuality. He has written this whole book as a narration of memory recall. Memories bring back everything that have been buried.

Memory refers to the psychological processes of acquiring, storing, retaining, and then retrieve at an ordained time. Our brain encodes, stores, and retrieves subconsciously. Repetition is what Walker Percy discusses from book one The Moviegoers till the last piece of his work. There are somethings which trigger a thought an action and the related memory train. Please see memory is not just one silo incident. It has a list of connected incidents and it is a train.

I, ASD carry memories in the form of still photo frames and moving video reels. There are so many special scents, effervescences, fragrances and countless triggers. There are a never forgettable set of tastes that can be so easily imagined without even putting that food in mouth. There are immeasurable layers of pain which are from extremely sad to extremely happy pains. There are so many sounds ranging from music to noise which are audible and can play as earworms on their own without my permission. In fact, this whole paper

has come down from my technicolour memory which I have put it juxtapose the works of Walker Percy and have penned each of these narrations.

Memories are countless flowered garland connecting us to our past and informing us who we are and how we ended up being who we are. We use our brains and very easily dim-bright visuals, low-high gustatory, mild-strong olfactory, feeble-loud auditory and light-sharp tactile memories embedded and retrieve them in our own new permutation and combination which may turn out finally as happy or sad. We run five different remote buttons in parallel internally.



So, Walker Percy taught me that, we store memories as we feel like and we retrieve applying all filters. Hence memories always carry pain and sad things much stronger than actual and recall happy moments as very fleeting and short and less impactful. Memory is being ourselves but as a in third person's shoes their touch, their smell, and their taste and bringing out the format which is currently most impactful.

Religion - Love in the Ruins

From religion to sexuality to medical ethics to race relations to racism, Love in the Ruins examines and satirises many aspects of American life. The protagonist Thomas More, unashamed and in fact proudly describes himself as a potential suicide, alcoholic, extramarital lust affairs, cuckold, widower and wanderer. Dr More's self- caricature is to mirror the hyper-fragmented society and its ills, their detachment from the universe and departure from ethics and morals.

Religion is an off shoot of human life. Every religion is close to human life and restricted to it. There is no religion for plants or the animals. Sadly, religious beliefs have been one of the major divisive forces in human history. Walker Percy states that any religion and in particular Christianity aims to build one's character. It shapes one's beliefs, attitudes, and actions by giving importance to the adherence of rules. This unites people who share a religion, as they share character traits and outlooks on life. The lesson I learnt from the book Love in the Ruins is that we should all take to the path of Spirituality as this focuses on each person's individual soul. If there exist a collective of so many spiritual souls then they form a religion.

So, I am a Christian, a Jew, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Jain, a Parsi, a Confucians and the list is unending as long as I am spiritual. I just have to look inwards. I have to work on my own soul. I, me and myself have to uphold my own self morally and ethically correct. I have been working to walk the spiritual path and hence I am automatically walking on the same road as Walker Percy did!

Depression - Lost in the Cosmos

Lot of unsaid but pointed dialogues with one's own self and or with people we encounter happens during our lifetime. Like Walker Percy almost all of us tend to think, that life – is worse than death". The heady concoction of our own personal life added with the influence of the society and the movies lead to a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest called as depression. Feeling worthless and undervaluing our skills and capabilities all need a helping hand. Walker Percy says, "often now a days people do not know what to do and so live out their lives as if they were awaiting some sign or the other." Hence, he has even written a reference manual titled "Lost in Cosmos". Once every three years each major failure, death, loss, sickness anything and everything has plagued me and I am here as a phoenix reborn out of the ashes created by my own depression.



Suicide - Second Coming

Walker Percy's grandfather, father and mother all took their lives hence we see that thought line of suicide being discussed in this book and his other works too. Suicide planning in this book was to make God come and give our protagonist proof that God exists. Will Barrett makes up his mind to test God. Will plans to go into a cave, without telling anyone, what he is up to. He leaves a note, as a safety, just in case he does not return. Allison a refugee lady from an insane asylum finds, him saves him and takes care of him and also loves him, or he then later he dies, thus demonstrating God does not exist.



Let me detail my suicide plan. I had an ancestral gold ring with a diamond very miniscule in size set on it. I neatly loosened the four golden grips holding the diamond. I then took my bike and drove to the church at seashore. I neatly parked my scooter in the most common parking lot and locked everything my purse phone and all and sundry under the bike seat. A went into the Church and went around the routine as normal as any evening to Church. Then I started a small walk into the sea and it was deep enough.

Here I carefully went in to the water and slowly took my left hand to my mouth and bit the diamond stone out of the stone and it almost touched my tongue and that fatal slip between tongue and lip did happen. And my plan of biting and swallowing the diamond and then to hold my breath and sit under water since I don't know how to swim was a complete wash out. I was wet just up to my chin and standing straight deep in the water. When the diamond slipped out of my mouth, when I looked up and saw it was a full moon night and the stars all were up and sparkling in the sky. The “*gumusservi*” is that word for the moonlight shining in water and making a pathway. It shone like floodlights lighting up a stadium and I felt as if I was at centre stage waiting to make my speech. I looked around expecting a few 1000 eyes on me and it was eerie silence and long sheet of water and the church with its light up the spire and just me and the moon. The Church bell rang to tell the hour and I counted 1-2-3 --7-8 and then felt so insulted and defeated in my attempt and started slowly wading towards the sea shore and came out dripping wet and even shivering. There were many shops with lights and they were all busy with winding up their shops. Just no one, just no one noticed me. I maintained a very cool stride as if I was a tourist who went to enjoy the sea water in the night. I was blank that night and then the next day complete. Of the course I went to the same spot and then waited for the moon to come and looked at the sea and on a sly, almost thought I will wade in again to search! well for the diamond stone!



I go with Walker Percy the writer and not the protagonist Will Barrett. I say God exists. First, I did not challenge or pin any wager on my suicide with anybody or God. That night the diamond piece reached my mouth and hence I completed my attempt. It rolled out because of a sudden jerk that I experienced in my neck from behind. It was a log of wood of a meter in length and a foot long in diameter floating and it came and it hit me.

There was no one, no human presence but the log which actually never seemed was around when I was wading into the deep waters, suddenly appeared. It was a full moon night and I could be easily spotted. I was feeling defeated on my attempt and felt like a runner up in some sports event. When I slowly turned around and spotted the light up the Church spire and the bell started tolling as if it was calling me out. I therefore concur with Walker Percy and accept that there exists a powerful force beyond us and it runs your life and action. That super power is called GOD.

Preparing for the End of the World - Thanatos Syndrome

Walker Percy in an interview to Zoltán Abadi-Nagy, In Paris Review, issue 103, 1987, had said and the quote goes “*I wouldn't mind a visit in the year 2050—a short visit, not more than half an hour—say, to a park bench at the southeast corner of Central Park in New York, with a portable radio. Just to have a look around, just to see whether we made it and if so, in what style. One could tell in half an hour. By “we” of course, I do not mean just Americans, but the species. Homo sapiens*”.

His works of non- fiction are mostly trying to establish the end of the world and the existence of the religious contemporary man. This book Thanatos Syndrome was his last piece of work and it had a very different style of writing. We assume that human beings have to be prepared for the end of the world. But the reality is that it is the self and our own soul which reaches the end of the world.

Walking the road with Walker Percy he leads us through a dark tunnel and we keep seeing a small dot of light at the end of the tunnel and with that hope we somehow reach there and then it is just us. We are alone there and we just turn around and say good bye to the world.

Conclusion

We love those who know the worst of us and don't turn their face away. They simply accept us. What do humans do - we keep searching that person in each and every one we meet. That one person who will accept us completely. And Walker Percy walks holding our hands and just holds out a mirror to us and says that one person who accepts you head to toe shoulder to shoulder is and will be only your own self. Your own left hand can alone hold your right hand. The search begins where we are and ends within us. **Thus, I ASD walked the road that Walker Percy did and I have completed my search. I found God in my own self.**

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