



The Educational Philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard: The Origin Of Existentialism”

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ABSTRACT

Soren Kierkegaard is the first pioneer of “existentialist”. In addition to being dubbed “the father of existentialism” Kierkegaard is best known as a sarcastic critic of Hegel and Hegelian-ism and for his invention of an array of philosophical, theological, psychological, and literary categories, including: anxiety, despair, melancholy, repetition, acquaintance, irony, existential stages, Christian enigma, the ludicrous, forgery, universal/exception, sacrifice, love as a duty, seduction, and indirect communication. Do we have a value? Do we pursue personal happiness in life? These are the questions from existentialism. The dictionary defines existentialism as an individual’s experience filled with isolation in an inimical universe where a human being attempts to find true self and the meaning of life through personal responsibility, free will, and choice. Existentialism deals with genuineness of experience; personal concern; commitment and uniqueness of the individual. Existentialism is an important theory to consider in achieving the Good Life.

KEYWORDS

Existentialism, Essence, Existence, Subjectivity, Aesthetic

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the renowned philosopher, was many things: journalist, psychologist, religious writer, satirist, literary critic and categorized as the ‘father’ of existentialism. He described the dilemma of the individual man with fervent psychological insight. The best aim in life is “to be that which one truly is”, according to him. He is taken as the main founder of existentialism .He was a profoundly religious man holding out that man must accept the existence of God by faith even it is difficult to uphold by reason. Kierkegaard believed in a Creator, and in Christianity. He criticized the aspects of philosophical systems that were brought by Hegel, Wilhelm. He measured himself along with the model of philosophy which he identified in Socrates, which aims to draw one’s attention not to explanatory systems, but rather to the issues of how one exists.

Themes in Kierkegaard’s Thought: The Three Stages

Kierkegaard’s laudable question was always “What ought I do?” His most famous answer to the question turns on a three-fold distinction of stages on life’s way:

- THE AESTHETIC the quest for sensual and intellectual pleasure. This eventually leads to apathy and then suicide, however, so there is an impulse to move to a form of life in which there is a conception of oughtness.
- The MORAL in which we freely align ourselves with the moral law, determined to be good. Hegel tried to symphonize the ethical life and the esthetic life but this is actually the highest form of aestheticism. Kierkegaard wrangled that a leap is involved in moving from one to the other and that we must simply choose.
- The RELIGIOUS in which we must be open to a purposeful latency of the ethical. In the religious life, divine command is paramount and ardor for God is revealed in the compliance to set aside moral habits and respond to the divine command.

EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism commenced with the 19th Century philosophers Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. Existentialism is more a reaction against traditional philosophies. Existentialism is a philosophy that encompasses the worth of individual existence being the ultimate, a freedom and choice. It is of the view that humans define their own meaning in life, and

try to make rational and logic decisions despite existing in an irrational universe. It focuses on the question of human endurance, and the feeling that there is no ambition or explanation at the core of existence. It holds that, as there is no God or any other uncanny force, the only way to counter this nothingness (and hence to find meaning in life) is by embracing existence. The meaning of human existence is that it is man’s nature to exist, to stand out in reality. Thus, Existentialism believes that individuals are entirely free and must take personal responsibility for themselves.

ETYMOLOGICAL MEANING:

The term ‘existence’ derives its lexical meaning from two German words -: ‘ex-sis tent’ meaning which stands out, and ‘emerges’ suggests that existentialism is a philosophy that emerges out of problems of life.

EXISTENTIALISM DEFINED:

Various definitions of existentialism have been proposed by different authors.

Blackham (1952) has described existentialism as a philosophy of being “a philosophy of attestation and acceptance, and a refusal of the attempt to rationalize and to think Being.”

The peculiarity of existentialism, according to Blackham is that, “it deals with the separation of man from himself and from the world, which raises the question of philosophy not by attempting to establish some universal form of justification which will enable man to readjust himself but by permanently enlarging and lining the separation itself as primordial and constitutive for personal existence.”

Harries and Levey’s (1975) defined existentialism as “any of several philosophic systems, all centered on the individual and his relationship the universe or to God.”

Tiryakian (1962) defines it as “an attempt to reaffirm the importance of the individual by rigorous and in many respects radically new analysis of the nature of man.”

In the opinion presented here, existentialism is a humanistic perspective on the individual situation, a philosophy of existence, of being, of authenticity and of universal freedom. It is a quest, beyond despair, for creative identity. It is the philoso-

phy that is a counselor in crisis, "a crisis in the individual's life, which calls upon him to make a 'choice' regarding his subsequent existence."

FUNDAMENTALS OF EXISTENTIALISM:

1. For the existentialist Reality is 'Being' or 'existence' of an individual'.
2. Existentialism wants man to be without metaphysics.
3. They wish to reinstate the status of man which he has lost in this advanced technological and mechanized society.
4. Man is not man but humanity. It means that each man's actions are subjectively inspired and influenced by other people.
5. The existentialists assert that the person's mind is the source and entity of all knowledge.
6. Valuable knowledge is of importance for individuals.
7. They do not believe in unabridged values. They argue that as long as the pragmatic vigor remains alive, it must remain open to rectifications and hence it cannot stand by the fixed values.
8. Values should be initiated by our free decisions.
9. Freedom is the begetter of eventual values.
10. The prominence on 'personal existence' and perspicacity in existentialism has led stress on man's freedom, choice and action.
11. Freedom is the crude matter of 'his being'. Man has an accountability of 'his being' to freedom, which is the basis of all human activity.
12. The idea of death should be accepted gracefully.
13. A person lives before he dies. Until a person dies he can always modify his character by doing good things and then he will die a noble death. Thus, it is said existence precedes essence.
14. Even if God exists, there would be no adaptation for a man who needs to know that nothing can save him from himself, not even the reliable evidence of the existence of God.
15. Human development act as independent variable among all the external forces, escorted by the innovative forces of the indispensable self. It is the enlargement that is a self-directed amalgam of self-doomed ardor, potential, craving and needs.
16. The individual has liberty of choice, which makes him dynamic in nature. This freedom helps with the self-emerging process.
17. Identification and aegis gained at the cost of freedom comprise bad faith. Likewise, to question the dynamic nature of the personality is an act of bad faith.
18. The individual relates to others and to the processes of being and becoming by the unique subjective style of development.
19. "The individuality of man is of supreme value. It is very close to the individual life of man.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF EXISTENTIALISM

1. Education is the means by which an individual realizes the best that he is capable of. The most important aim in education is to become a human being who lives and makes decisions about what he will do and be.
2. The aim of education is to help students comprehend and acknowledge themselves as unique individuals who accept complete responsibility of their thoughts, feelings and actions.
3. The institution should provide an atmosphere where the individuals develop in a healthy way. In such an atmosphere the young people become active, trustworthy and responsible. Encouragement and acceptance by teachers, fosters sense of security and faith.
4. Any subject in the curriculum can present existential situations for the growth and teaching of human beings. Students are afforded with great latitude in their choice of subject matter.
5. The humanities are given emphasis to provide students with vicarious experiences that will help unleash their own creativity and self-expression.

6. The existentialism curriculum is composed of fine arts, drama, creative expression, literature and philosophy.
7. The teacher holds a pivotal place here. He cultivates individual growth. He can expedite development of originality and creativity by providing an atmosphere to make skills and tools explorable. The teacher plays the role of a questioner; poser of alternatives; identifier of choices who challenges learners to become fully existent.
8. Democracy must be in the soil in which an individual grows. Self-governance, pupil participation and encouragement of liberal climate should characterize educational institute. Teachers should stop labeling the students

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