

THE INCEPTION AND EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF STRUGGLE AND EXISTENTIALISM

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Abstract

An itemized and assiduous study of the inception of the concept of Darwinism highlights the premise of existentialism. Darwin propagated the idea of struggle for existence, majorly physical existence. The existentialists like Blaise Pascal, Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Jean Paul Sartre expounded existentialism to be a quest for free existence, free will, freedom to choose and freedom to face the repercussions of the decisions. The crusade of an existing human is not only for 'being' but for ostentation of 'intent being'. Literary existentialists enforce the idea of existence for individuality, identity, morality, ethics and solidarity. The bottom line of the fact remains that existentialism is the merchandise of struggle. Each individual is subjected to the erudite realm of struggle and none escape the eternity of the truth. The multifarious struggles present myriad opportunities for endurance which diversifies the theory of Social Darwinism – the survival of the fittest. The concept also promotes the idea that struggle for survival spurs self – improvement as life has an innate tendency to change in a linear fashion, towards ever greater perfection.

Key words : Existentialism, intent being, struggle, concept, survival, freedom, identity, morality, ethics

Introduction

The inception and evolution of the concept of struggle can be traced back to the Darwinian theory of Evolution. Natural History of struggle of organisms majorly interested Darwin as a young man. He considered that the concept of struggle for existence is of competition or battle for resources needed to live. It can refer to human society, or to organisms in nature. Thoughtful proclamations of literature added a new dimension to the idea suggesting that the struggle for existence is not only for the resources needed to live but also to establish one's own individuality, identity and solidarity. The term struggle for existence was in use by the end of the 18th century. Charles Darwin used the phrase "Struggle for existence" in a broader sense, he used

the phrase to title the third chapter of *On the Origin of Species* published in 1859. In addition, struggle for existence was used by Alfred Wallace to help conclude the theory of evolution. The concept of the struggle for existence goes back to the antiquity. Heraclitus of Ephesus considered struggle to be the father of everything. The 19th century Arabic scholar Al Tahiz apparently commented that God has disposed some human beings as a cause of life for others, and likewise, he has disposed the latter as a cause of the death of the former. Child is the father of the man.

Discussion

Charles Darwin's remark suggests that struggle is the crux and kernel of all existence. It is today the most epigrammatic expression of human edgies concerning apocalyptic spatial shrinkage brought about by globalisation project. The sea change in the information and communication technology has led to a worldwide materialistic view bridging the gap hastily towards Mc Luhan's model of global village. This will lead to a cardinal rerun of societal bondings, competitions, religious beliefs, associations, struggle for identity and individuality by which not only physical distance but emotional and empathetic impediments would be rampant. The situation has converged to a point where struggle for existence has become inevitability. It has been rightly expressed by Albert Camus through his line in the Myth of Sisyphus and other essays on existentialism that there is scarcely any passion without any struggle. Hemingway stands for his opinion that man can be destroyed but cannot be defeated. The truth of struggle in life is that from the moment the seed of inception, the ovum is fertilized by a bedlam of emulating sperms, the idea of struggle for Life and Existence is initiated. In the process of struggle each sperm androits the other to glorify Darwin's idea of survival of the fittest. Life and birth thereon shapes our first perception of identity. This identity plays a pivotal role around which the subsequent struggles of our life follow. The bottom line of the fact remains that all are subjected to the erudite realm of struggle and none escape this eternal truth. Endurance and perseverance are the only keys to this lock. The multifarious struggle presents myriad opportunities for endurance and survival of the fittest. Darwin's theory deals with struggle for life/living whereas struggle can be for identity, independence, sexual performance, survival, safeguarding boundaries of a territory, to preserve country against constant threat of cultural invasion, religious impositions etc. Social Darwinism leads to policies designed to make the weak perish and it is a logical consequence of 'Darwinism'. This concept also promotes the idea that struggle for survival spurs self-improvement as life innately changes in a single direction, towards ever greater perfection.

It won't be out of context to accept that there has never been a general agreement on the definition of existentialism. The years following World War II is the period which testifies the popularity of existentialism mainly through the prominence of French writers Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, who wrote best seller novels, plays and widely read journalism as well as theoretical texts. Despite circumventing philosophical, religious, and political ideologies, the underlying concepts of existentialism remain undisputed. English literary field endorsed the idea of existentialism as the freedom to choose and predicaments that follow a choice. All living beings are under immense compulsion to struggle to make a choice and then endure the predicaments that follow. Existentialists propose the concept of authenticity in existentialism, but it is believed that truth is not only evident by reason, but also by one's inner voices. Authenticity in existentialism gives importance to authentic existence. It portrays the idea of creating oneself and then lives in compliance with this self.

Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, the first existentialist writer added that he must find a truth that is true for him the idea for which he could live or die. On the note, it is apt to emphasize that the idea of struggle is unavoidable which ends in either a glorious win or a shattering loss. Here the line from another existentialist Ernest Hemmingway is befitting “Winners take nothing”. Many existentialists acknowledge that the fight alone pleases us, not the victory.

The 19th century German philosopher cited that every living being should decide upon the moral situations they would like to fall back upon, while Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky has raised questions against the unpredictable nature of these experiences that could also prove to be self destructive. French Writer Jean Paul Sartre presented the absurdity of the purpose or motive in life. The notion of Absurdism in Externalism is that there is scarcely any meaning to the word beyond the meaning we give it by living the life of experiences. Absurdity suggests that whatever happens to a being at a point in time is unpredictable. Soren Kierkegaard, Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Eugene Heller and Albert Camus have described in details the experiences of people who come face to face with the absurdity. Albert Camus claimed in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that there is only one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Quietism succeeds the collapse of meaningful existence, which is the existentialist’s philosophy. It has been said that the possibility of suicide makes all human existentialists. Struggle for achieving a dignified death is the answer to the physical problem of suicide.

Sartre posits the idea in *Existentialism is Humanism* that what all existentialists have in common is the fundamental doctrine that existence precedes essence. Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards. The restorative aspect of the above is that as a person one can choose to act differently, to ensure prolong survival as a good person instead of unkind crook. Thus it clears the fact that humans are not essentially good or bad.

Soren Kierkegaard, the first existentialist philosopher proposed that each individual devoid of society or religion is responsible for leading an authentic life. Each individual is thus responsible for the endurance of predicaments thereafter. Struggle is the idea that is not only prerequisite and binding, but also succedere of existence and essence.

Facticity is the concept defined by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. It is both a condition of limitation and freedom. Facticity explores the dual realm of concept. One part of the concept is constant while the other is flexible and keeps on changing. The constant part could be the place of birth, which cannot be chosen while the other part like values is ascertained by the individuals on their free will.

Existentialism also propagates the theory of responsibility which subordinates freedom. These two further angst and dread which arises due to experience of freedom and responsibility. Despair, in existentialism, is generally defined as a loss of hope due to the sublimation of attributes that define a person’s identity.

An individual who is experiencing the above concepts of existentialism finds refuge in the idea of struggle. Human experience thus traverses from angst to happiness, dread to pleasure and despair to hope.

Existentialism concretizes the inception of morality as preached by religion. The human body when subjected to preaching and techniques of a religion or educational nature follows the preaching only when it is imbibed in him and thereon guides his soul. The external force has little influence on the learner.

The Other (when written with a capital "O") is a concept more properly belonging to philosophy and its account of personalisation and interpretation of the experiences. However, the concept has been widely used in existentialist writings, and the conclusions drawn from it differ slightly from the philosophical grounds. Look is defined as the state when others pose a look. The experience of the Other is the experience of another free subject who inhabits the same world as a person does. In its most basic form, it is this experience of the Other that constitutes subjectivity and objectivity.

Rationality as expressed by existentialists projects the idea of reason behind an action. Angst and Dread are stressed upon by the existentialists as we feel them in our own fundamental freedom and our negotiations with the idea of death. Kierkegaard advocated rationality as means to interact with the objective world, but in lieu of answer to the existential problems, reason is insufficient as human reasons have limitations. The ontology of existentialism manifests that the only rationale of prolonging one's state of being, whether purely physical, moral or ethical is the idea of struggle.

Conclusion

The philosophers claim existentialism to be a cultural movement which flourished in the post World War situations. They claim it to be belonging to the past, but contemporary thought in both the continental and analytical traditions has provided continuity to the philosophical interpretations. Existentialism is often forced to confront with the recent movements such as structuralism, deconstruction and feminism.

Existentialism is seeking revival through the work of Judith Butler, Lewis Gordon in the area of race theory and Matthew Radcliffe, who has developed an existential approach to psychopathology. The narrative conception of self identity in the work of Charles Taylor has its root in existential revision while John Haugeland has explored existentialism in scientific practices. Michael Gelvin has reflected upon epistemological or logical dimensions of the same. In the present time existentialism is prominent in the work of leading thinkers, where existentialism has been explored in contrast to religion, freedom, choice, responsibility. In different ways the philosophers and writers like Cooper Reynolds, Alan Scrift Derrida, Deleuze and Foucault suggest that a re-appraisal of the legacy of existentialism is an important area that commands the resurrection of contemporary philosophy and other fields like health care, psychiatry, cognitive science and environmental philosophy. The legacy and saga of existentialism is evolving to explore new dimensions. Struggle as a concept that encompasses all concepts of existentialism is a thought that commands obligatory research in order to instil hope in a stressed generation and inspire each living being, who encounters the hurdles, to struggle and succeed.

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