

**PHILOSOPHICAL
ROOTS OF
EDUCATION:
EXISTENTIALISM**

a lecture by Emely D. Dicolon, Ph.D.



Basic Tenets of Existentialism

- **reality is subjective and lies within the individual**
- **physical world has no inherent meaning outside of human existence**
- **Individual choice/standards are central not external standards**
- **we must take responsibility for deciding who we are**
- **focus is on freedom, the development of authentic individuals, as we make meaning of our lives**



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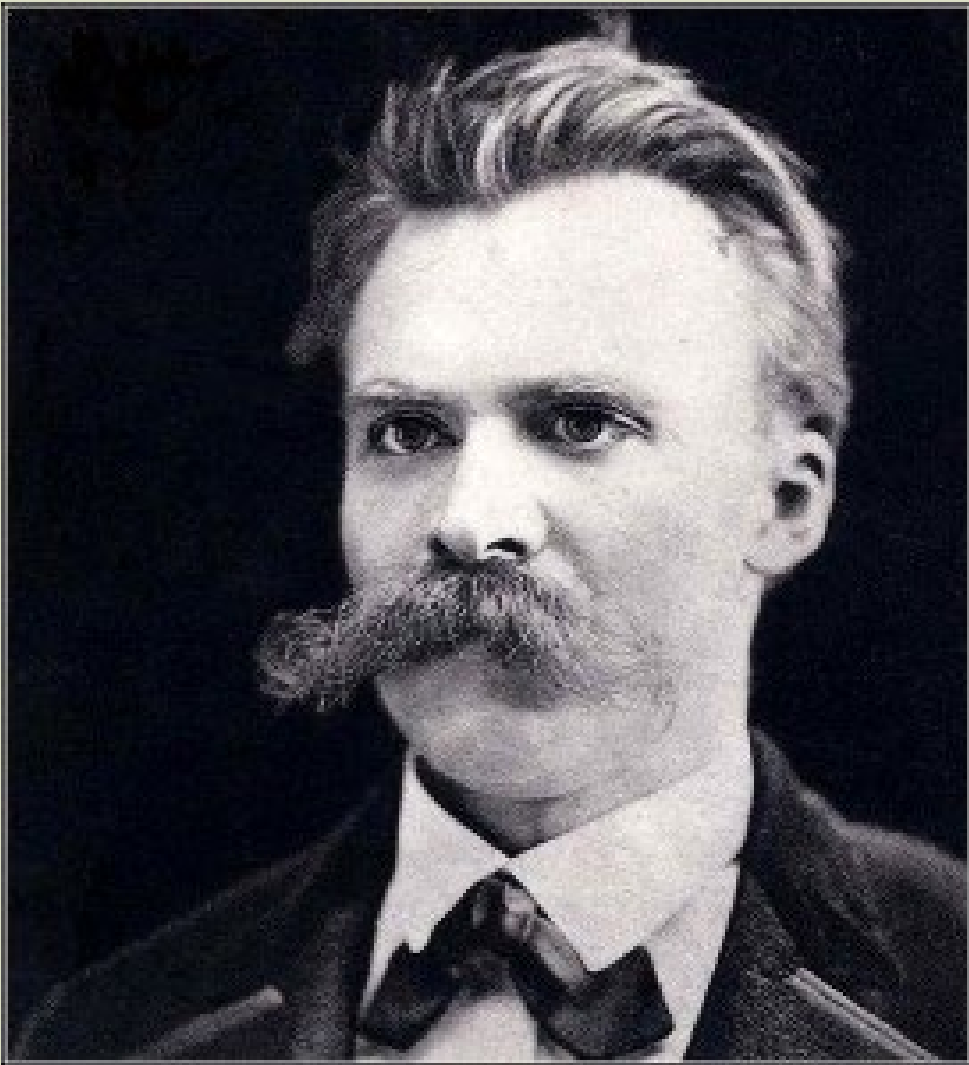
Soren Kierkegaard
1813 – 1855

- the father of modern existentialism
- subjectivity is the criteria of truth and genuineness
- We touch reality in intense moments of existence especially moments of painful decision. These moments are characterized by deep anxiety, and life is known in such moments and cannot be reduced to just system of ideas.

CHIEF

EXPONENTS OF

EXISTENTIALISM



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Friedrich Nietzsche
1844 – 1900

- is regarded as a key figure in the rise of existentialism
- Christianity is to be overcome by putting in its place the doctrine of Superman, that is, man surpassing himself.

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Martin Heidegger
1889 – 1976

- in his book *Being and Time*, gave a very impressive analysis of human existence, the prominence of the important themes of existentialism like care, anxiety, guilt and above all death.

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Jean – Paul Sartre
1905-1980

- stressed that man's existence precedes his essence
- Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is

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EXISTENTIALISM

Existence Precedes Essence

Man exists first, and
then
determines his
nature through his
choices.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF EXISTENTIALISM

Aim

the becoming of a human person as one who lives and makes decisions about what he will do and will be, self-direction, and self-actualization

Curriculum

subject matter is a personal choice, start with the student rather than the curriculum content, develops freedom not fear

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF EXISTENTIALISM

Methods of Teaching

**self-evaluation, use of literature and the
arts, the teacher as model**

Character

**emphasizes individual responsibility for
decisions**

Existentialism and Aims of Education

- **develop the authentic self of the child**
- **assist in the development of self-realization in the child**
- **Prepare child to tragic situations in life**
- **Inculcate decision making power in students**
- **Prepare child for social adjustment**
- **Develop unique personality of the child**
- **Develop sense of responsibility in the child**

Existentialism and Curriculum

- recognizes individual difference – diverse curricula suiting the needs, abilities and aptitude of the individual
- Self examination and not social obedience is part of curriculum
- Students choose their own curriculum/subject matter to learn
- great importance to the learning of humanities i.e. history, literature, philosophy and art
- Moral education must be based on moral principles
- Religious education is an academic matter

Existentialism and Methods of Teaching

- Encouragement and acceptance of individual differences to foster learning
- School grades, rewards, and punishments do not foster growth
- Mass teaching/testing, standardized tests are not advocated
- Schedule must be flexible and open, personal contact is important, individualized instruction
- Mechanization is a hazard to individual growth and development
- Instructional techniques which appeal to feeling, emotion, creativity and deeper meaning of life

Existentialism and The Teacher

- to awaken in students the freedom and responsibility
- build a positive relationship with students= humanness
- should avoid applying labels to children
- should help students to be 'original' and 'authentic'
- grow as he guides students in their self realization
- encourage students to work hard and make the best of life and accept death as something certain
- encourage creativity, discovery, inventiveness, but should not impose his will on them
- produce men and women who stand apart from him even more distinctly than when he first met them

“A **man**, who as a physical being, is always turned toward the outside, thinking that his happiness lies outside him, finally turns inward and **discovers that the source is within him.**”

Soren Kierkegaard

Other Philosophies of Education

Perennialism

Progressivism

Essentialism

Perennial



lasting for
many years
(evergreen
ideas)

Perennialism

(rooted in Realism)



- **Education is universal and authentic at every period, place, and culture**
- Human beings possess a potentiality to know and a desire to know the truth
- **Great Books and the classic works in art, music, and literature and must be passed on to future generation**
- **Aim is to transmit the enduring truth and values of the culture**

**School curricula
should focus on
what is everlasting.**

Perennialism

(rooted in Realism)



- **Classical writers, like Homer, Shakespeare and Locke**
- **See schools as environments for students' intellectual growth (Idealists and Realists)**
- **Study Liberal Arts and Sciences, Reading and discussing the Great Books, history, literature, philosophy**
- **Teachers as intellectual mentors and models**

Progressivism

(rooted in Pragmatism)



**Aim is to
educate the
learner
according to
his/her interest**

- a reform movement in American society during the late 19th century and early 20th century
- Opposed to traditional schooling
- Oppose Essentialism and Perennialism
- Prolonging childhood (child-centered progressive education)

Progressivism

(rooted in Pragmatism)



**Teachers must
create an
engaging
classroom
environment.**

- **Activity-based curriculum (physical exercise, nature study, music, crafts, field geography, story telling, dramatization, games, dancing, drawing, singing, etc.)**
- **Teachers must develop sincere affection and interest on learners, knowledge of child psychology, interest in social welfare.**

Progressivism

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Essentialism

(rooted in Idealism and Realism)



**Provide the
knowledge
learners' need to
function in a
democratic
society**

- Schools maintain basic elements of human culture and transmit as skills and subjects in a curriculum
- Reading and writing, arithmetic, history, science, math, languages, and literature
- Curriculum must be carefully structured and teaching must be efficient for so much to learn with so short a time
- Curriculum must be sequential and cumulative

Essentialism

(rooted in Idealism and Realism)



**Promote
students based
on academic
achievement
and NOT social
promotion**

- **Basic education is very important**
- **Teacher education program from pre-service to professional practice is crucial**
- **Teachers must adhere to a well-defined curriculum of basic skills and subjects**
- **Inculcate patriotism, hard work, effort, punctuality, respect for authority, and civility**
- **Manage classrooms efficiently and effectively as spheres of discipline and order**