

General / Opening - Comments on Existentialism / Nihilism

Post by "Mike Anyayahan" of January 3, 2020 at 4:05 AM

I guess there are some considerations we should take when comparing Epicureanism and existentialism in order to avoid confusion as existentialism is not a philosophical system but a movement - movement not in the "organizational sense" but "in the sense that there is a revolution of thought against something". The latter is what I refer to being in comparison with Epicureanism.

Existentialism does not necessarily mean nihilism. However, there are nihilists that are existentialists. There are also nihilists that are not existentialists.. Example of them is Michel Foucault. He is not an existentialist as he doesn't believe that we have a freedom of choice. However, he is a nihilist as he rejects not only the value of history but also the role of science along with morality and knowledge. The known existentialist-nihilist is Albert Camus whose presentation of the Myth of Sisyphus tells us that everything is nothing and we can't do anything about it.

Contrary to what many believe, Nietzsche is not a nihilist. He only rejects slave morality and the superstition of Christianity, yet he clearly expresses the importance of will.

Nihilism is the rejection of will. Existentialism emphasizes it.

Among the existentialists, Nietzsche, Sartre, Simone De Beauvoir are the ones that give emphasis on free will. De Beauvoir said that we are condemned to make choices.

In the case of Epicureanism, free will is expressed in the theory of the Swerve and in the rejection of the fear of God and worries about death. Hadn't Epicurus believed in free will, he wouldn't have probably introduced the importance of prudence.

The core philosophy of existentialism is that "existence precedes essence". I don't think Epicurus would reject such statement. In fact (whether we like it or not) Epicurus was the first to have told the world about that idea.