

The topic:-

“Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards”.

Soren Kierkegaard

Who was Kierkegaard?

He was a Danish philosopher and writer who lived from 1813 to 1855. He was influenced by Hegel and Nietzsche and is considered to be a founder of the existential movement. He was followed by Heidegger and Sartre. Kierkegaard was a devoutly religious Christian who lived a life of seclusion. He died young and unmarried, having broken off an engagement to a younger woman, believing that domestic responsibility would hinder his work.

Full quote

“It is quite true what philosophy says; that life must be understood backwards. But then one forgets the other principle: that it must be lived forwards. Which principle, the more one thinks it through, ends exactly with the thought that temporal life can never properly be understood precisely because I can at no instant find complete rest in which to adopt a position: backwards.” Journals IV A 164 (1843)

Other quotes from Søren Kierkegaard

“One must learn to know oneself before knowing anything else (gnothi seauton). Not until a person has inwardly understood himself and then sees the course he is to take does his life gain peace and meaning.What matters is to find a purpose, to see what it really is that God wills that I shall do; the crucial thing is to find a truth which is truth for me, to find the idea for which I am willing to live and die.” Journal entry, August 1, 1835

My brief and simple opinion is that woman is certainly as good as man-period. Any more discursive elaboration of the difference between the sexes or deliberation on which sex is superior is an idle intellectual occupation for loafers and bachelors. Stages on Life's Way (1845)

Other Quotes and References Raised in Discussion

Epictetus was a Greek Stoic philosopher. To Epictetus, all external events are determined by fate, and are thus beyond our control, but we can accept whatever happens calmly and dispassionately. Individuals, however, are responsible for their own actions which they can examine and control through rigorous self-discipline. Suffering arises from trying to control what is uncontrollable, or from neglecting what is within our power. Human beings have a duty of care to all fellow humans. The person who followed these precepts would achieve happiness.

"The unexamined life is not worth living." (Apology 38a) **Socrates**

“If you are depressed you are living in the past. If you are anxious you are living in the future. If you are at peace you are living in the present.” Lao Tzu

“Know your enemy and know yourself, find naught in fear for 100 battles.” Sun Tzu

“How someone fares in life is largely a matter of luck or grace, and to a comparatively small degree perhaps also of competence, diligence, and other virtues. The most we can say of democracy or freedom is that they give our personal abilities a little more influence on our well-being.” **Karl Popper**). All Life is Problem Solving. 1958.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” **Mark Twain**

Socratic Dialectic is a means of inquiring into the truth by rational reflection and argument

Man proposes, God disposes. **Proverb**

“If you want to make God laugh, tell him about your plans.” **Woody Allen**

“Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans.” **John Lennon**

According to **Thomas Hobbes**, society is a population beneath a sovereign authority, to whom all individuals in that society cede some rights for the sake of protection. ...The individuals are thereby the authors of all decisions made by the sovereign

Empiricism is a theory which states that knowledge comes only or primarily from sensory experience.

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. Attributed to **Lao Tzu, Maimonides or Anne Isabella Ritchie**

The Mind is like a parachute it works best when opened. **Frank Zappa or Lord Thomas Dewar**

The third telling of the modern adaptation of a proverb “Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way when you criticize them, you are a mile away from them and you have their shoes.”

Recommended Read

Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot by James B. Stockdale - Thoughts on issues of character, leadership, integrity, personal and public virtue, and ethics from the author's Vietnam experience.

Points raised in discussion

It is about hindsight.

We can only live in the moment.

We go forward because of our experiences; we need to pass them on.

We need to use insight on the way forwards.

We have to have some sort of plan for the future.

You have got to be flexible, things knock you off course.

Regretting the past can lead to depression.

There are cycles of nature and of mankind.

The passion of mankind never changes because man refuses to face his past.

Some grow old, others grow wiser. A few young people are wise.

People who have discovered the meaning and purpose of life tend to be happier.

The Middle East

We need proper debate to change the situation in the Middle East.

Should we look after our own interests and let them get on with it?

In the 6th century the Middle East was incredibly advanced in science.

Middle Eastern problems were largely caused by the way it was artificially divided by the West.

Whoever controls the knowledge controls the minds.

With the information revolution we have access to news from many sources.

Our Society

We have to have equilibrium; the West has had its time.

We are changing from a collective society to a society of individuals.

We get the government we deserve. In a democracy we have the opportunity to alter what happens.

General

We move forward when religion and science come together

We are attracted to things that give us pleasure and avoid those that cause us pain.

We fear the unknown.

If you believe something, it is true for you.

Teach them to know themselves and find their passions.