

Personal attitude to religion in the novel night

Life



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The Utilization of Personal Resistance in Opposition Against Religion as a Subconscious

Survival Technique

The novel "Night", by Elie Weisel illustrates the suggestion that the personal resistance against religion serves as a subconscious method for individuals to combat their surrounding distressing situations. This primarily has to do with the logic that for the vast majority of individuals in desperate environments such as the concentration camp, religion appears to be an unreasonable conviction. The notion of religion has the ability to overshadow individual's perception as well as judgment which promotes the persistent lack of indignation. It is with this assumed aforementioned intuition that the notion of critiquing one's faith and previous beliefs impede the cynical attributes that attempt to penetrate their identities and basic humanness. These ideas are furthered in "Night" by inspecting research from the "American Journal of Psychological Research" paired with instances from the novel "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. It is with these references, the psychological ideas of whether the concepts of religious affiliation corresponding with internal and external religious coping appear to have a direct linkage to the occurrences that take place within "Night".

The scale at which a situation is undesirable is the principal correlator with the manner in which people will respond in terms of their internal and external reactions. The trend being that individuals who are consider themselves to be in situations of a lower cohort of tribulation typically maintain their religious ideologies without alterations. It is when people

begin to acknowledge the reality of their situation and the atrocities that they face that the notion of religion either begins to be diminished, questioned, or further leaned upon. The direction that individuals take in regards to the amount of religious fervor they possess is associated with their independent conditions as well as their state of mind. The independent conditions being what familial role they play, for instance if they are the father or the son, and if they have to take care of someone else or not. Having the responsibility of taking care of another individual makes it increasingly more difficult to abandon one's faith and hope, however that depends on the mindset and moral code the individual has. The diminishment of religion, the critique of religion, and the extension of religion each have the ability of serving as a survival technique in distressing situations, however it appears that the intermediate choice being that of the critique of religion is the most successful in terms of whether the individual will survive or not. The novel "Night" predominantly focuses on the critique of religion as emphasized by Eliezer.

Towards the beginning of "Night", the Jews in Sighet refuse to see the reality of their situation and this primarily pertains with how the overarching majority of people were still hopeful and faithful. It is the hope and faith that they clung onto that overshadowed the reality of what was to come. The people of Sighet are warned by Moishe to leave because death is coming their way, however they chose to ignore his message. Nobody chooses to listen primarily because the people have no desire to leave or modify their lives. They did not consider their situation to deem as substantial of a response as Moishe hankered after. This demonstrates the suggestion that

people who consider themselves to be in situations of a lower cohort of tribulation typically maintain their religious ideologies without alterations. The reality of the situation was essentially that “ The Germans were already in town, the Fascists were already in power, the verdict was already out—and the Jews of Sighet were still smiling” (Night 59). Owing to the fact that their situation at the time was not as atrocious as it would late become it is understandable that they would cling on to religion, however by placing too much reliance on the idea of hope, they wasted their opportunity to leave to safety. If they were to have placed aside all of the emotional aspects that obscured everyone’s judgment, then a more logical approach would have been taken. Fast forward to when the Jews of Sighet are in the concentration camps, they are now placed under substantially more abusive circumstances. It is with these circumstances that people begin to question the role religion plays in their lives. The individuals who have a reservation with the idea of God may either make the decision that this camp is no setting for religion or they may continue to critique God and question their existing situations. The individuals who choose to have a personal resistance against religion internally do so as a subconscious method to cope and combat their surroundings. The alternative direction, the one involving the rejection of religion both internally as well as externally is usually a path without any hope. Therefore, navigating their surrounding environment and distressing situation becomes increasingly more difficult. This is observed with Moishe, a deeply religious man, who no longer speaks of “ God or Kabbalah” after he witnesses the massacre of Jews by the German Gestapo. For him choosing to completely reject religion does not appear to be a survival tactic, rather he just completely loses faith in both himself and life,

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thus making survival in the camp more difficult. The manner in which individuals react to these oppressive situations significantly varies and depends on previous religious notions and the individual's state of mind, mental endurance, and the manner in which they choose to cope.

Coping is a construct that increasingly has become a popular topic in the study of psychology of religion. In examining religious faith, religious attitudes have been viewed from two varying orientations: intrinsic and extrinsic. Extrinsic religious orientation is a method of using religion to achieve non-religious goals, essentially viewing religion as a means to an end. It appears that people high in external religious orientation use religion, "to provide security and solace, sociability and distraction, status and self-justification". While as intrinsic religious orientation is "living one's religion". Reasons for being religious are within the person, faith is internalized and master motive for life, religion affects all aspects of life, internal motivation. Those with this orientation find their religion to be the most important aspect of their life and seek to contextualize other aspects of their life through their religion. The notion of allowing religion to serve as a sole defining factor of life can be detrimental when put to the test. The logic is analogous with individuals who have little to no regard to religion. This intuition may be observed when Moishe, a deeply religious man suddenly loses complete faith. For an individual to be considered as solely intrinsic or extrinsic, it is not a healthy or sustainable choice. A criticism of the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic coping is associated with how the most religiously developed people are not the most religious, rather they are people that have the capability of balancing utilizing and living one's religion. Consequently, it is

Eliezer, an individual whose religious fervor fluctuates who has the ability to make do with his environment and retain his set of moral guidelines while others usually do not have the ability to do so.

For Eliezer, the concentration camp experience destroys his innocence and his belief in a just and loving God. Eliezer suffers not only because he sees his fellow Jews murdered before his eyes, but also because he feels that his God was murdered. Eliezer states that " Some of the men spoke of God: His mysterious ways, the sins of the Jewish people, and the redemption to come. As for me, I had ceased to pray. I concurred with Job! I was not denying His existence, but I doubted His absolute justice"(Night 45). At the time that Eliezer says these words, he has been through enough horrors to conclude that the situation was not going to get any better for anyone. Yet, he gets gradually frustrated to hear those around him, who are also going through the same type of hellish situations, just sit there and presumably accept their situations without questioning anything. This demonstrates how he acknowledges that people should critique or establish a personal resistance against religion rather than completely rejecting it. Indeed, all throughout the novel the primary question Eliezer asks constantly, whether he voices it or not, is: " Why?" Why them? Why are they victims? Why is God allowing all of this to happen? As such, throughout the novel, there are multiple attempts by Eliezer to try and console himself with a possible answer. This is observed through the numerous comparisons that he makes, and in the observations of things that he correlates to what is going on. One of such situations is Elie's comparison of himself to Job. According to the Biblical story, Job was a rich man who was also kind and generous. He was also a believer in God.

When the devil wanted to test Job's faith by removing all of his material possessions (with God's permission), Job's faith still did not waver and in all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. Going back to how Eliezer concurs with Job, and this leads to the conclusion that, perhaps, Eliezer did a somewhat eschewed reading of Job. After all, Elie does blame God for what was going on and constantly critiques him, and his faith does waver, as opposed to Job's faith. Still, it could also be deduced that the aspect of Job that Eliezer means to compare to his own life, is the fact that both he and Job were tested. In that aspect, Eliezer is, indeed, similar to Job. After all, it must have definitely felt like an act of the devil to have the entire foundation of the lives of all Jews removed from underneath them. It must have felt like the devil himself came to attack all Jews in the worst ways possible. They were, like Job, disenfranchised, dispossessed, and abused by evil. In that, a similarity to Job would be definitely correct. Additionally, this quotation demonstrates that Eliezer had not become an atheist and completely lost faith, rather that he is in a time of turmoil. He considers God to have been murdered, however he is specifically referencing the God that he knew and praised before he witnessed these inconceivable atrocities. It does not appear that he is doubting the existence of God, be that as it may he still continues to question whether this God is indifferent to their suffering. It is with his rationale that he determines that it is valid for him to cease prayer. This is a sharp rotation from how he previously on no account would contemplate the existence of God and how he, unmotivated by anyone else, would initiate the study of the Zohar, and advanced Jewish text, by himself with the help of Moche the Beadle.

Wiesel believed that religion was a basic survival need, showing that he followed his religion instinctively; just as he would any other body function. Wiesel wished to spend his life focused around Judaism and devoted all his free time and energy on religious studies. With Moche's guidance, they would read the same pages of the Zohar over and over to "extract the divine essence from it" (Night 15). When Moche asked him why he prayed, Wiesel couldn't think of a proper answer and thought, "a strange question, why did I live, why did I breathe?" (Night 14). Wiesel maintained confidence in religion even though he had no answer for the existentialist questions that he proposed as the tribulations that the people of Sighet faced increased. Wiesel and his people gave thanks to God for survival, keeping hope that God was putting them through a test of hardships what would keep them alive if they kept their faith. When they had arrived at Auschwitz, they thanked God and were able to regain their confidence because, "Here was a sudden release from the terrors of the previous nights" (36). Since the reality of the camps were not clear to Eliezer yet, he thanked God for the minor things that helped him because he wanted a sense of protection and clung to the belief that God watched over them and helped them survive the challenges he faced. When Wiesel's new shoes get covered in mud and are not discovered by the SS Guards, he "thanked God, in an improvised prayer, for having created mud in His infinite and wonderful wisdom" (Night 47). Later on, Eliezer's attitude shifts dramatically when he hears someone begin to recite the Kaddish, prayer for the dead. He doesn't "know whether, during the history of the Jewish people, men have ever before recited Kaddish for themselves" (Night 63). It is with this moment that marks the beginning of the change in his perception. This situation demonstrates the beginning of

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the demise of his relationship with God. Towards the end of Eliezer's time within the concentration camp, he appears to completely lose his faith, however he manages to survive for so long and persist through the tribulations he faces, all while taking care of his father. It is his internal subconscious fight with religion that allowed him to survive for so long and maintain a sense of morality and humanness.

Survival is a highly mental undertaking that may be influenced by time, religion, as well as kinship. Time is a paradox, or a seeming contradiction principally due to how there can be too much or not enough time. For instance, the more time that is spent in the camps, the seemingly harder it gets to keep and maintain your faith and hope. This line of reasoning exemplifies how the internal and external critique of religion can serve as a survival method. By maintaining a sense of religion and not placing too much or too little confidence in religion, people have the ability to last longer within the camps. The utilization of criticism as a subconscious survival technique allows people to spend more time persevering rather than losing hope in life or being acquiescent.

Taking the novel, "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn into consideration, it can be observed that time has the capability to strengthen or diminish an individual's mindset. Shukhov, the protagonist has a strong and accurate sense of the passage of time. This serves as a method for him to fight and resist against the camp that attempts to control and steal his time and life. He is able to remain strong and resilient as he is due to the manner in which he is able to have some sort of control over time and how he does not have the responsibility of <https://assignbuster.com/personal-attitude-to-religion-in-the-novel-night/>

having to take care of someone else within the camp like Eliezer does. Additionally, belief and faith are another means through which characters survive the horrors of camp life, find meaning, and maintain a sense of identity. The prison camp that Shukhov works at promotes atheism, seeing as how organized religion was viewed as a threat to the Soviet project. As time passes within the camp, belief and faith are elements that are systematically stripped away from the prisoners. However, some people within the camps manage to maintain a sense of religion and hope, and it is those characters that seemingly appear to do better in the camps than the others. The manner in which individuals hold onto their faith becomes a discrete way to resist the pressure of the Soviet power, which seeks to strip the prisoners of their identities.

Eliezer's reservation with religion diminishes as he appears to lose his faith as demonstrated when he acknowledges that he still needs to retain a sense of morality and humanness. Eliezer asserts that "and in spite of [himself], a prayer formed inside him, a prayer to this God whom I no longer believed" (Night 68). Though Eliezer appears to lose his faith, he still prays for strength to maintain himself from abandoning his father. It is with this, that it may be deduced that for Eliezer, hope and humanity are directly related with religion. He is saying a prayer to both ask for strength and preserve his humanity. In the camps, the majority of the people are reduced to their most basic, inhumane instincts which place self-preservation as their goal. It is the intrinsic and extrinsic coping mechanisms in relation to faith that dictate whether individuals will retain their morality and pull through the indignities of the camp alive and with a bit of remaining humanity left.

Depending on what circumstances an individual is placed under and the scale at which a situation is undesirable are be the principal correlators with the manner in which people will respond in terms of their internal and external reactions. It is when people begin to acknowledge the reality of their situation and the atrocities that they face that the notion of religion either begins to be diminished, questioned, or further leaned upon. Religion is a part of an individuals identity, so to remove it is to remove a sense of selfhood and hope. It appears that the intermediate choice being that of the critique of religion is the most successful in terms of whether the individual will survive or not. Wiesel, being a forthright author, surfeits many examples of the mental and physical effects of people in the Holocaust and the manner in which the individuals respond. For this reason, Night provides a deeper understanding of the Holocaust so that with a better understanding of such a horrific event, history does not repeat itself.