

The Perseverance of Life: Exploring the Struggle for Existence in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*

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ABSTRACT

Ernest Hemingway's classic novel, "*The Old Man and the Sea*," is a powerful exploration of the human spirit's unyielding determination to find purpose and meaning in a seemingly indifferent and absurd world. The protagonist, Santiago, emerges as a symbol of hope and resilience in the face of existential challenges. This abstract delves into Santiago's unwavering courage and enduring patience, which guide him towards a triumphant victory in his life. Santiago's journey is a rebellion against the inherent absurdity and meaninglessness of existence, a struggle to carve out his own purpose in an indifferent universe. His character epitomizes the heroism, stoicism, and humanism necessary for preserving one's existence amidst the chaos of life. Through Santiago's relentless battle with the marlin and the elements of the sea, Hemingway artfully crafts an allegory for the broader human experience. Santiago's struggle symbolizes the fundamental themes of heroism, as he confronts insurmountable odds; stoicism, as he endures relentless hardship and loss with unshakable composure; and humanism, as he forms a deep connection with the natural world and ultimately emerges as a triumphant figure in the face of life's existential challenges. "*The Old Man and the Sea*" remains a timeless literary work, offering profound insights into the human condition and the enduring quest for meaning in a world that often appears absurd and indifferent. Santiago's indomitable spirit serves as an inspiration to all who face the struggle for existence against the backdrop of the universe's inherent ambiguity and meaninglessness.

Keywords: Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*, Human spirit, Santiago, Triumph, Absurdity, Heroism

Introduction

Ernest Hemingway, a celebrated American novelist, emerged onto the literary scene during a period marked by the turbulence of two World Wars. Renowned for his distinctive writing style and a life filled with daring adventures, his legacy in American literature remains enduring. Hemingway's journey commenced in 1899 when he was born into a modest family in Illinois. He embarked on his career as a journalist and soon

found himself thrust into the harrowing landscape of World War I. As a volunteer ambulance driver, he witnessed the horrors of war and, in an unfortunate turn of events, suffered a wound that would forever shape his perspective on life.

The impact of war on Hemingway was profound, and he channeled his experiences into his writing. His works are a reflection of the disillusionment and existential struggles that pervaded his generation. Hemingway's writing was characterized by its

simplicity and authenticity, which allowed his themes to shine through. He often explored the human struggle for existence, heroism, and the profound influence of war on individuals. Among his notable works, "The Old Man and the Sea" stands as a testament to his ability to capture the essence of human struggle. The novel tells the story of an elderly fisherman who engages in an epic battle with a colossal marlin. Through the character of Santiago, Hemingway brings to life the idea of unyielding human determination in the face of adversity.

Critics have lauded Hemingway's unique approach to literature. His works often depict a world devoid of divine intervention, where characters must grapple with suffering and death. This emphasis on navigating existential challenges without reliance on a higher power has been a hallmark of his storytelling.

Ernest Hemingway's literary contributions did not go unnoticed. In 1954, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, a testament to the profound impact of his writing on the world of modern literature. Hemingway's characters, in their struggles and quests for existence, rarely exhibit a strong belief in God or the afterlife. Instead, they rely on their own actions, resolve, and courage to confront the challenges life throws their way. Hemingway's world, as depicted in his works, is one where individuals must find meaning and purpose within themselves and the world they inhabit.

Problem Statement

Ernest Hemingway's life and works provide a captivating lens through which to explore the intersection of literature, historical context, and the human condition. His writing, characterized by its simplicity and authenticity, delves into profound themes such as human struggle, heroism, and the profound impact of war on the human spirit. "The Old Man and the Sea," one of his most celebrated works, serves as a rich source for investigating the resilience and determination required to navigate a world rife with suffering and existential challenges.

Hemingway's unique approach to literature, marked by its minimalistic yet evocative style, presents an intriguing avenue for scholarly exploration. Additionally, his portrayal of a world often portrayed as devoid of divine intervention prompts critical inquiries into the role of faith, or the lack thereof, in the face of adversity. Hemingway's enduring place in the pantheon of great American authors underscores the enduring relevance of his themes and the capacity of the human spirit to exhibit courage and endurance in trying circumstances.

Research Objective

This research aims to delve deeper into the thematic and stylistic elements in Hemingway's works, particularly "The Old Man and the Sea," to shed light on how he captures the human experience during tumultuous times. By analyzing his unique literary approach and its impact on readers, this study seeks to uncover the enduring resonance of his writings and their ability to provoke contemplation and discussion surrounding the human condition, courage, and resilience.

Theoretical Modality

Existentialism

Existentialism, a literary theory that emerged in the modern age, delves into the essence of human existence, proposing that in a world devoid of inherent meaning, individuals are both free and responsible for their actions. This philosophical approach took root in the aftermath of the devastating World Wars, questioning the rationality that once defined human existence. Faced with the grim aftermath of global conflicts, Western societies grappled with the seemingly irrational roles and actions of individuals. This period ushered in a sense of anxiety, absurdity, and uncertainty, as the certainties and coherences that once underpinned human life were shattered, leading to despair and frustration.

Existentialism, with its exploration of human choice, subjectivity, and responsibility, found its earliest roots in the works of philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre. The term

"existentialism" itself is etymologically derived from "existence," emphasizing an individual's unique experience rather than abstract concepts. Existentialism centers on the human condition, asserting that the responsibility for one's choices and the freedom to make them rest solely with the individual.

Kierkegaard, considered one of the precursors of existentialism, believed that God was synonymous with truth, emphasizing that individual experiences and understanding of existence were subjective and unique. Existentialism, however, reached its zenith during the 1940s and 1950s, notably championed by Jean-Paul Sartre. He divided existentialist thinkers into two groups: theistic existentialists, who believed in Christian faith, and atheistic existentialists, who rejected the existence of God. Atheistic existentialists contended that the world provided no evidence of God's existence and that human beings were essentially alone, free, and responsible for their choices.

Existentialism recognizes two forms of existence: authentic and inauthentic. Authentic existence is rarely achieved but represents the ideal, while inauthentic existence characterizes those who fail to act as free agents, giving in to societal norms and constraints. Existentialists explore the concept of anxiety as central to decision-making and commitment, acknowledging that the future remains uncertain and boundless. Thus, the philosophy of existentialism addresses both personal and moral aspects of human existence.

Simone de Beauvoir, a close associate of Sartre, expanded existentialism's application to feminism, highlighting the historical attitudes of men toward women. She argued that women, like men, had the potential for transcendence and should not be confined to societal roles. Albert Camus, while not identifying as an existentialist, is often associated with the philosophy due to his exploration of existential themes, such as the absurdity and futility of life. He urged individuals to rebel against life's absurdities, finding meaning through defiance.

Existentialism's roots can be traced to ancient philosophical traditions, including Socratic

wisdom and the writings of Montaigne and Pascal. However, the existentialist movement emerged as a revolt against traditional European philosophy, which aimed to be objective and universally true. Existentialists sought to understand what it means to be an individual in the world, focusing on the essence of human existence rather than abstract systems of thought.

Existentialist Writers

Existentialist writers are a diverse group who, despite their differences, share a focus on the essence of being and an aversion to conventionality. They often identify themselves through their sense of isolation in an absurd world. Existentialist writers can be broadly classified into two groups: theistic, who believe in Christian faith, and atheistic, who reject religious dogma and God's existence.

Theistic Existentialists

Theistic existentialist writers, such as Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber, and Gabriel Marcel, find solace in religious mysticism, particularly Christian doctrines. They believe that modern individuals can ease their anxiety by submitting themselves to the will of God. They see God as an authentic shelter, rejecting superstitions and religious dogmas in favor of a more personal relationship with God. They maintain that God exists before human existence and that human existence is made possible by God.

Soren Kierkegaard, a 19th-century Danish philosopher and religious thinker, was the first existentialist to challenge tradition. He emphasized the importance of finding one's unique vocation in the modern world, rejecting Hegelian dialectical systems and Danish Lutheranism, both of which prioritize rationality and collective spirit. Kierkegaard believed in personal choices and responsibilities over mere rationality, advocating for a leap of faith in God. He argued that individuals face two choices: they can choose God and find relief from anxiety or reject God, leading to atheistic despair. Kierkegaard's concept is paradoxical, encompassing both finite and infinite aspects of God. He finds the world filled

with ambiguities and paradoxes, highlighting the difficulty of human existence.

Karl Jaspers, like Kierkegaard, contends that philosophy and science cannot provide certainty in life. He maintains that death brings awareness of our finite existence, leading to anxiety. Jaspers emphasizes individual power to choose and the awareness of freedom and essence as a human being. He underscores the importance of self-being's communication with other self-beings in a locality, as well as the interconnectedness of human existence. Jaspers believes that communication is the path to truth and that it can manifest even in despair, suicide, and passion for darkness. He rejects the self-sufficiency of science and the isolation of individuals from meaningful communication.

Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher and religious thinker, rejected the notion of separate human existence. He argued that our existence is inherently intertwined with other humans, nature, and God. Buber focused on the significance of the "I-Thou" relationship, characterized by concrete and immediate connections, as opposed to the "I-It" relationship, which is abstract and objective. He believed that the world is twofold, reflecting our twofold attitude. Buber's philosophy suggests that the "I-It" relationship pertains to the past, rooted in objective knowledge, whereas the "I-Thou" relationship exists in the present, offering the potential for genuine connection. The "I-It" relationship lacks depth, leaving individuals isolated, while the "I-Thou" relationship keeps people open to every possible response. Buber argues that our relationship with God should be considered an "I-Thou" connection, as God is always present and absolute.

Atheistic Existentialists

Atheistic existentialist thinkers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Albert Camus, represent a group of intellectuals who, while rejecting the existence of God, share a common emphasis on the rejection of traditional religious concepts and the pursuit of individual freedom and authentic existence. This critique

will delve into the key philosophical ideas of these atheistic existentialists.

Friedrich Nietzsche, a renowned German philosopher, was critical of conventional religious and philosophical systems, particularly Christianity. He advocated for an individualistic form of Christianity that emphasized the importance of the physical world over abstract ideas. Nietzsche's critique of Christianity was pointed, focusing on the concept of God as the deity of the sick and the corrupting influence of religious dogma. He famously declared the "death of God" and rejected the moral tradition rooted in Judeo-Christian beliefs. Nietzsche argued that Christianity provided no ultimate truth and had become a refuge for the weak and those he despised. His ideas centered on the concept that belief in God went against life and the will to power. Nietzsche's philosophy celebrated supermen who transcended conventional moralities and declared war on those he considered inferior.

Nietzsche's philosophy highlights the necessity of balancing the Apollonian intellect with the Dionysian passion, representing two opposing aspects of human impulse. He focused on the irrational individual who confronts existence authentically and without hypocrisy, giving life its own meaning. Nietzsche's ideas laid the foundation for many 20th-century existentialists.

Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher, distinguished between "being" and "Being," arguing that humans had lost their authentic individuality and fallen into a kind of collective existence. He urged individuals to reconnect with their true being by returning to the metaphysical roots of their existence. Heidegger contended that viewing the individual as merely a representation of a collective was a recurring mistake of metaphysics. He emphasized that humans must confront their existence, make choices, and commit to a particular path. In his view, individuals are responsible for shaping themselves.

Heidegger believed that human existence was inherently bound by time, which he referred to as existential time. He also maintained that no

one could escape the influence of their historical context, as individuals were shaped by inherited conditions and worldviews from past eras.

Jean-Paul Sartre, a prominent French existentialist, rejected the idea of a fixed human nature and fixed essence. He argued that individuals had the freedom to make their own choices and take full responsibility for them. Sartre's atheistic existentialism rejected the existence of God and saw existentialism as a means of confronting the problems that arise in a world lacking the absolute power of a deity. According to Sartre, human existence precedes essence, meaning that humans exist before they can be defined by any preconceived concept. Sartre emphasized the subjectivity of individual experience but underscored the importance of others in an individual's existence. He stated that one's consciousness is intertwined with the consciousness of others, leading to a world of inter-subjectivity.

Sartre advocated for a total commitment to an individual's own potential and knowledge to lead an authentic life. He rejected pre-established social values as forms of self-deception and encouraged individuals to exercise their freedom and commitment within society. He acknowledged the complex nature of freedom and commitment in an individual's life, as they must navigate the competing desires of self-liberation and respect for the liberty of others.

Albert Camus viewed the condition of modern humans as inherently absurd. He recognized the suffering and absurdity of existence but believed that individuals could still find meaning and happiness by rebelling against these conditions. Camus's philosophy focused on the notion that the universe, now without a master, is neither sterile nor futile. He rejected the idea of relying on past systems to navigate life, instead advocating for a conscious confrontation with the absurdity of existence. Camus encouraged individuals to revolt against this absurdity, finding purpose and pride in their defiance. He contended that suicide was not a solution, and that consciousness of absurdity was a reliable guide to living authentically.

Camus was a proponent of humanism and optimism, highlighting the importance of struggling against absurdity and working for justice. His philosophy celebrated the value of human life and the capacity to confront the inherent challenges of existence with resilience.

Summary

Existentialism is a complex and multifaceted philosophy that emphasizes the individual's freedom, responsibility, and the inherent absurdity of human existence. It provides a unique perspective on the human condition, challenging traditional beliefs and values, and encouraging individuals to create their own meaning in a world that appears devoid of inherent purpose. Existentialism's exploration of choice, subjectivity, and responsibility continues to be a significant and thought-provoking aspect of modern philosophy and literature.

Theistic existentialist writers such as Kierkegaard, Jaspers, and Buber share a common belief in God and reject religious dogma in favor of personal, authentic relationships with the divine. They emphasize the importance of individual choices and personal responsibility, advocating for a profound connection between the self and others. The "I-Thou" relationship, characterized by immediacy and authenticity, is central to their philosophy and understanding of human existence.

Atheistic existentialist thinkers represent a diverse group of intellectuals who share a rejection of traditional religious concepts and an emphasis on individual freedom and authentic existence. Their philosophies offer various perspectives on how individuals can confront the challenges of existence and find meaning in a world devoid of traditional religious certainties.

Results and Discussion

Santiago's Struggle for Existence

In Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea," the central theme revolves around the relentless struggle of the protagonist, Santiago, against the powerful natural forces of the sharks, marlin, and

the indifferent sea. Santiago's battle represents not only a fight for survival but also a quest for pride and a reaffirmation of his humanity. Despite facing numerous obstacles and enduring repeated defeats, he remains resolute, refusing to yield to these natural adversaries. The story masterfully portrays the conflict as a man pitted against the unyielding forces of nature, ultimately resolving the narrative into a profound struggle for existence.

Throughout the novel, Hemingway's characters are portrayed as unwaveringly courageous and patient in their constant confrontation with life's challenges. Their struggles are not merely for their individual survival, self-gratification, or personal desires; rather, they reflect the profound need for existence itself. The novel opens by emphasizing the perpetual effort that Santiago dedicates to his profession, despite the series of failures, losses, and the apparent futility that accompanies it. Santiago's persistence in fishing is driven by a desire for genuine existence, rather than mere survival or financial gain. He declares that he does not fish merely to stay alive or for sustenance; instead, it is a matter of pride and identity for him. His attitude towards the marlin he seeks to catch reflects his belief that loving the fish while it's alive and after killing it is not a contradiction, but rather an affirmation of his identity as a fisherman.

Santiago finds profound meaning and fulfillment in his struggle, transcending the emptiness and absurdity that life often presents. For him, life is defined by the enduring battle against adversity, with both life and death holding secondary importance. His pride and sense of self-worth are deeply tied to his profession, as he endeavors to prove what a man can achieve and endure. His enthusiasm for his craft and his unyielding determination in the face of physical injury underscore his resilience.

Santiago's struggle mirrors the existential themes of absurdity, meaninglessness, and the human need to find purpose. He refuses to accept the passive roles of religion or fate, instead embracing his relentless fight for existence. His inner spirit finds solace in the turmoil of the struggle, as it is through these trials that he imbues life with profound significance.

Santiago's commitment to his profession is unwavering, and he remains indifferent to the troubles and suffering he endures. Fishing, marlin, and the battle with sharks are not merely practical tasks but enthusiastic and adventurous components of his life. Santiago rejects the despair associated with a meaningless existence and boldly asserts that man is made for struggle and endurance. He fervently expresses, "Man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated."

The ceaseless nature of Santiago's struggle transcends the confines of mere survival or material success. He embodies the philosophical principles of Sisyphusian despair and Promethean defiance. Santiago challenges theological authority and sacrifices himself for humanity, akin to the Greek mythological figures who defied gods to serve humanity. His struggle is not limited by physical inadequacies but is marked by an unwavering spirit. The novel paints a portrait of Santiago as a man who, despite physical scars and eighty-four days of failure, remains cheerful and undefeated, emphasizing the importance of endurance and determination.

Santiago's resilience in the face of suffering and pain signifies his exceptional dignity and embodiment of the human spirit. He acknowledges that physical pain is a trivial concern compared to the pursuit of meaningful existence. Hemingway's novel applauds Santiago's heroism in his struggle, and despite the meager results of his labor, he is hailed by tourists for his extraordinary patience and courage. Santiago, while recognizing the inevitability of death and the mocking of human and moral values, perseveres with actions that are not entirely futile. Every action holds significance in the existential context, as it is through conscious effort and unwavering struggle that humanity derives meaning from existence. The characters' focus remains on the relentless struggle against formidable natural forces, even though the rewards may be uncertain.

Santiago's Relation with Nature

In "The Old Man and the Sea," the intricate relationship between man and nature can be

characterized as a delicate balance of both brotherhood and enmity. Santiago's connection with natural forces is evident throughout the novella, showcasing how he forges a unique kinship with the marlin he is determined to capture. Santiago's words, "The fish is my friend too. I have never seen or heard of such a fish. But I must kill him," exemplify this bond (74). Santiago regards the marlin and even the sharks as friends, yet he recognizes his duty to overcome them. Killing the fish becomes a source of pride and delight for him, a matter of honor rather than mere survival: "I am glad. We do not have to kill stars" (74). At times, Santiago exhibits compassion for nature, but by the story's end, he curses and spits upon the sea, consumed by hatred. This shift in his perspective is a direct result of the brutality of nature, as symbolized by the vicious shark attack on his prized marlin. This devastating event shatters his dream and leaves him isolated, ultimately concluding his journey in a state of nothingness.

Ernest Hemingway's profound understanding of nature is skillfully conveyed through Santiago, a heroic character whose relationship with the natural world is central to the novella. Santiago's profound connection with the sea, the birds, the clouds, and even the marlin is a testament to his deep appreciation of nature. He finds solace in the natural elements and delights in their presence. Santiago's deep affection for nature serves as a reflection of Hemingway's own love for the natural world. Amidst the friendly and kinship Santiago shares with nature, there is also an acknowledgment of the harsh and unforgiving aspects of the natural world. His struggle with the marlin is testament to his determination and resilience. Santiago's experiences demonstrate that the characters in Hemingway's world encounter both harmonious and hostile facets of nature in the pursuit of their livelihood.

Santiago's unwavering resolve shines as he confronts unfavorable natural forces, such as the sharks threatening his prized marlin. His eighty-four-day streak without a catch does not deter him; he insists on going farther out to sea, driven by confidence and luck. After a lengthy and seemingly

futile struggle, Santiago successfully captures a magnificent marlin, greater and nobler than any he has encountered. He reveres the marlin's greatness, nobility, and beauty while expressing his deep affection: "Fish, I love you and respect you very much" (52). Santiago's love for the fish is akin to that for a brother, yet he remains steadfast in his mission to kill it. His unwavering determination reflects his commitment to enduring hardship and his unwavering pursuit of his goal.

Sartre's philosophy, which emphasizes the freedom to choose, is evident in Santiago's unwavering commitment to his profession. Santiago demonstrates a deep sense of responsibility and an unwavering commitment to his chosen path. He rejects becoming a victim of existential time, choosing to continue his occupation despite the challenges. While Santiago initially grapples with uncertainties regarding his luck and fate, he maintains absolute dedication and hope in his profession. Santiago stands as an optimistic hero who refuses to surrender, remaining confident in his struggle. His dedication to his duty reflects a belief in the importance of acting in the present moment. Santiago's philosophy emphasizes that individuals must be prepared to make the most of their opportunities when luck presents itself.

Santiago's resilience is on full display as he grapples with the enormous marlin. Despite recognizing the daunting task before him, he refuses to admit defeat, declaring, "Fish, he said softly, aloud, 'I'll stay with you until I am dead'" (50). His unwavering commitment to his mission is unwavering, and he believes in the value of preparation over luck. Santiago's philosophy underscores that being ready is more critical than relying on luck: "Then when luck comes you are ready" (29). Santiago's struggle signifies his unwavering dedication to his profession and a rejection of being governed by fate.

Santiago's experiences and knowledge transcend the limitations of time and being. His journey takes him to a realm beyond human reach, a quest for unity with the transcendent. Santiago's pursuit of this transcendent realm brings him to a point of

unity with the marlin, which he acknowledges, saying, "You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater or more beautiful or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who." In this moment, Santiago and the marlin find unity. Santiago's acceptance of his fate, a product of his own choices, illustrates the suffering inherent in the human condition. His self-recognition and his acknowledgment of the inevitable reflection of the natural law on his life highlight the deep philosophical dimensions within the novella.

Santiago, the emblematic Hemingway code hero, may not always bring his most prized possessions home, but he takes pride in the satisfaction of having tried his best. Santiago's journey reflects that while he may lose materially, he never loses spiritually. He boldly asserts, "Man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated." He emerges as the quintessential embodiment of human dignity, refusing to accept defeat, whether material or spiritual.

Santiago's extended efforts represent an acknowledgment of his intrinsic relationship with nature, even as he navigates its formidable challenges. He recognizes the inevitability of conflict between man and the immanent laws of the universe. Through his journey, Santiago encounters moments of triumph and moments of apparent futility. He exemplifies the human spirit's dedication to battling adversity and enduring suffering, ultimately finding meaning even in the face of destruction and death.

Santiago, an Alienated Character

Santiago, the protagonist in Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea," embodies a character steeped in alienation and absurdity, a theme recurrent in Hemingway's works. Santiago's alienation is evident in his behaviors, which often stand in stark contrast to the societal norms and expectations of his community. He is estranged from his society as he chooses to venture into the sea, despite being physically aged. In a religious context, he defies the prevailing faith, expressing a lack of religious

belief, despite the common reliance on religion for support during times of crisis: "I am not religious... This is a promise" (63).

Santiago's deviation from religious norms alienates him further, as he questions the morality of his actions. While others perceive killing as a sinful act, Santiago rationalizes it differently: "You did not kill the fish only to keep alive... If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him" (105). His perspective is at odds with the beliefs of his community, underscoring his sense of alienation.

Furthermore, Santiago's apparent joy and enthusiasm in his profession, even as he performs routine tasks, further set him apart from the societal norm. His excitement when discussing his work, such as his enjoyment of "killing the dentuso" (105), portrays an unconventional attitude.

Santiago's thoughts and feelings contribute to his portrayal as an alienated character. He chooses to venture into an area of the sea where other fishermen of his age typically do not go, acknowledging that his age might be a hindrance. He reflects on this unusual choice: "I shouldn't have gone out so far, fish... I am sorry fish" (110).

Santiago's separation from his home, society, and friends is evident from the beginning of his sea voyage. He longs for the companionship of his friend, Manolin, whom he was forced to leave behind. His constant thoughts of Manolin and the desire to prove his strength, courage, and endurance reflect his alienation: "If the boy was here... If the boy were here" (82). Santiago's struggle against his enemies, driven by his existential dilemma, showcases the absurdity and vacuity he perceives in his existence.

Santiago's philosophy diverges from the conventional interpretation of life and death. Unlike the prevailing views that attribute profound significance to life and death, Santiago posits that the real essence lies in the struggle of life. His perspective sets him apart from others, as he emphasizes that life and death gain meaning through the struggle (94).

Santiago's unique response to pain and injuries further underscores his alienation. He faces them

stoically, considering his pain as less significant and exerting control over it: "Mine doesn't matter. I can control mine" (87).

Despite facing his targeted enemy, the marlin, Santiago displays uncommon courage and patience, addressing the fish as a brother. His empathy for the marlin signifies his alienation from the prevailing animosity of individuals toward their enemies. He perceives a sense of brotherhood with his enemy, which arises from his inherent alienation: "I am a tired old man... work" (94).

In his moments of loneliness, Santiago personifies an inanimate object, his bed, as his friend. This act reflects his profound alienation, as he grapples with solitude and the loss of his prized catch to the sharks. He seeks companionship and connection but finds himself entirely alone, a poignant manifestation of his isolation: "Bed is my friend" (121).

Santiago's alienation and unique outlook on life and struggle make him a distinctive character, one who stands apart from the societal norms and expectations of his community. His journey serves as an exploration of the human condition, absurdity, and the pursuit of meaning in an indifferent universe.

Nothingness and Meaninglessness in Santiago's Struggle

In "The Old Man and the Sea," Hemingway delves into the themes of nothingness and meaninglessness, which are often considered as ultimate concerns for existentialist writers. Through his protagonist Santiago, he vividly portrays the existential anxiety of grappling with nothingness. This is poignantly expressed when the narrator notes, "But by midnight he fought and this time he knew the fight was useless" (121). Santiago's struggle for nothingness is prefigured early in the novel when Hemingway describes his eighty-four days without catching a fish, emphasizing the sense of futility and emptiness in his endeavors.

Nevertheless, Santiago's enduring hope throughout these challenging days stands as a defiant revolt against the prevailing nothingness and meaninglessness of his world. He embodies the

existentialist belief that individuals can confront the absurdity of existence with courage, hope, and patience, becoming authentic and sincere rebels against the void. In this regard, Hemingway's narrative aligns with existentialist thinkers like Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Camus, who assert that one's ability to grapple with absurdity defines their authenticity and significance.

Santiago's experiences in the novel mirror those of a modern individual contending with illusion, meaninglessness, and nothingness, particularly in the context of his fishing. He diligently engages in actions driven by purpose, yet he grapples with the inherent absurdity and pointlessness of these pursuits. Santiago operates in a world devoid of gods or supernatural aid during his struggles with the marlin and the sharks, thus highlighting the existential predicament in an empty and futile existence. He imparts a crucial lesson: one must commit themselves to a life imbued with purpose and meaning, acknowledging the inherent absurdities and obstacles they encounter. For Santiago, pain, suffering, and death are the common threads of existence, symbolizing the broader themes of nothingness, meaninglessness, and absurdity.

Choice, Commitment and Responsibility for Existence

Santiago's choices and the resulting commitment and responsibility for his own existence are central themes in "The Old Man and the Sea." Santiago acknowledges his choices and accepts the consequences, reflecting existentialist beliefs regarding free will and individual responsibility. Santiago's regret for venturing too far out to sea illustrates his awareness of his own choices, a sentiment in line with existentialist philosophy: "I am sorry that I went too far out" (116).

Existentialists assert that individuals are free to make choices, even though they are ultimately responsible for the outcomes. Santiago's choice to venture so far out for fishing, which results in an empty skiff after an eighty-four-day struggle, embodies this existential notion. Despite the existentialist belief that humans can choose freely,

they cannot escape the consequences of those choices, nor should they accept their own perdition. To avoid the absurd, one must acknowledge their choices and the responsibilities that come with them and, perhaps, seek transcendence through submission to a higher power, as suggested by Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard argues that individuals can make an absolute choice when they embrace "I myself in my internal Validity" (831). The notion of choosing God's name in moments of crisis is prevalent among atheistic existentialists, and Santiago exemplifies this in the novel. Despite not being religious, he resorts to prayer at moments of crisis, expressing his intent to make a pilgrimage to the Virgin de Cobre should he catch the fish. This choice demonstrates Santiago's complex relationship with faith and his selective reliance on God.

Santiago's primary commitment is to his role as a fisherman, allowing him to confront the indifferent and hostile forces of nature. His unwavering commitment to his profession is rooted in action rather than faith. This aligns with the Hemingway hero's ethos, which involves relying solely on oneself to assert one's manhood in the face of insurmountable obstacles, thus justifying one's existence.

Commitment and responsibility are shared qualities between Santiago and Manolin. Manolin's deep respect for Santiago, despite his parents' opposition to their companionship, showcases their shared commitment and mutual responsibility. Manolin's tears reflect his sorrow at being unable to assist Santiago, revealing the profound honor and respect he has for the old fisherman.

Santiago, isolated in the midst of indifferent natural forces, longs for the companionship of the boy, recognizing that no one should be alone in their old age. His desire to share his experiences highlights his commitment to meaningful connections and responsibility for the boy's well-being. Similarly, Santiago notes that he and the marlin are joined together by their respective choices—his to venture far out and the marlin's to stay in the deep, dark waters. Their individual choices bind them

together, resulting in a unique relationship defined by their respective commitments to survival and purpose.

Santiago's Pride in Profession

Santiago's unwavering dedication to his profession as a fisherman is a testament to his pride and the key to his success. He exhibits militancy, courage, and a strong code of existence that allows him to face any challenge. His commitment to his profession is evident throughout the novel, with his patience serving as a linchpin for his achievements. Santiago wholeheartedly devotes himself to his work, willingly enduring pain and suffering without impatience. He declares, "I could go without sleeping" (76), emphasizing his single-minded focus and commitment.

Santiago's profession provides him with a sense of identity and purpose, which he values deeply. He recognizes that true existence can be achieved through unwavering patience, indomitable willpower, and unflagging courage. Despite the losses he endures, he derives delight from his profession. His relentless pursuit of his trade stems from his deep pride in being a fisherman, a calling that allows him to find meaning and purpose.

Santiago's humility is one of his most exceptional qualities, preventing him from losing sight of the pride he takes in his profession. When Manolin refers to him as the "best fisherman," Santiago humbly replies, "No, I know others better" (19). His humility is rooted in a genuine understanding of his own abilities and his chosen path.

Despite his age and physical limitations, Santiago retains hope and confidence in his abilities, believing in the importance of skill and determination over sheer strength. He acknowledges his age but emphasizes the value of his experience and the wisdom he has gained. His belief in his own abilities is founded on his faith in his skills and determination.

Santiago's relentless commitment to fishing underscores his passion for his profession. He faces pain, injury, and loss without complaint, finding solace in the fact that he is fulfilling his

life's purpose. His incredible endurance reflects his unwavering dedication to his craft. He remains unfazed by losses, choosing to focus on the pride he takes in his work.

Santiago's daily struggle on the sea allows him to feel at one with the sea creatures and the natural world. He finds beauty in the various marine life and acknowledges their role in his existence. He recognizes that his own survival is intricately connected to the sea and its creatures, and he respects them for their part in his livelihood.

Inspired by DiMaggio, Santiago relates his own struggles in fishing to the challenges faced by the baseball legend. He finds solace in the fact that he, like DiMaggio, faces difficulties and pain while pursuing his passion. He recognizes the importance of having confidence, being worthy of his role model, and persisting through the hardships of life, just as DiMaggio did.

Santiago's existential awareness of his commitment and choice aligns with the beliefs of existentialist thinkers like Sartre. He recognizes that authentic living is only possible through action, choice, and commitment. His dedication to his profession has been his lifelong purpose, and he remains resolute in fulfilling his existential role in an often absurd world. Love and respect for his profession supersede all else, as Santiago understands that it is his duty and action that define him and give meaning to his existence.

Conclusion

this research delves into Santiago's relentless struggles for his existence as depicted in "The Old Man and the Sea." Santiago's confrontations with the marlin, the sharks, the indifferent sea, and the bleak hand of fate serve as the central themes of the novel, focusing our attention on his existential journey. Santiago's unwavering determination and courage in the face of excruciating pain within the vast, unforgiving sea emphasize his existential crisis. While his pursuit of his chosen goal ultimately leads to a sense of nothingness and meaninglessness, Santiago manages to attain a moral victory, if not a material one.

The existential condition of humanity is characterized by the looming specters of anguish, nothingness, absurdity, and isolation. Santiago, however, rises above these existential burdens. His valor in the face of adversity, stoic resilience in the wake of defeat, and profound commitment to his profession prevent him from succumbing to nihilism. Santiago's struggles highlight that human existence is indeed absurd, futile, and often devoid of apparent meaning. Despite these existential challenges, he exhibits an unwavering commitment to his profession, believing that experience and craftiness can eventually lead to success.

Although Santiago is not overtly religious, his actions speak louder than his words. He places his faith in actions and personal responsibility, emphasizing that defeat may befall a person, but they are only truly defeated if they give up. His outlook embodies an existential ethos, showing that nihilism is not the answer to the profound realities of human existence.

Santiago serves as a remarkable embodiment of an existential hero, defying an indifferent universe. His determination and optimism illustrate that one must grapple with this hostile and indifferent world actively. Santiago exemplifies a superhuman quality, akin to Nietzsche's *Übermensch* (Overman). His fearless approach to living in the face of adversity reflects the essence of Nietzsche's superman, characterized by a love of danger and disdain for weakness.

Santiago's profound pride in his profession, his fearless struggle against the marlin and the sharks, and his declaration that he kills fish to maintain his self-identity and dignity rather than mere survival are all aligned with Sartrean philosophy. He aims to showcase what a person can endure and achieve, reflecting a humanitarian spirit.

Hemingway's portrayal of Santiago's fishing endeavors underscores that, for both Santiago and the author himself, fishing was not merely a form of entertainment, but a fundamental necessity for existence. Just as Santiago had to confront the inevitability of war, the novel carries a message that individuals must confront fate, be it external

or internal, as part of their existence in the family and society. Santiago's story is a testament to the existential journey of humanity, marked by a ceaseless struggle for existence, even in the face of failure, frustration, absurdity, meaninglessness, and nothingness.

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