

**FAITH AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE PHILOSOPHY
OF KIERKEGAARD**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Anita Kumari



**Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi – 110067
India
2010**

Declaration

Date: 29 July 2010

This Dissertation titled FAITH AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF KIERKEGAARD submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full for any other degree or diploma of any university.



(Anita Kumari)

Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067
India



**CENTRE FOR PHILOSOPHY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067**

Date: 29 July 2010

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled FAITH AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF KIERKEGAARD submitted by Anita Kumari in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is to the best of my knowledge an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or full for any other degree or diploma of any university and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Dr. Bhagat Oinam

(Chairperson)
Chairperson
Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-67

Dr. Bhagat Oinam

(Supervisor)
SUPERVISOR
Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

Acknowledgement

It is difficult to find a proper word of appreciation to acknowledge those who gave a helping hand, and their word of encouragement, which was a source of inspiration while carrying out this task. These words are only a fraction in return of actually what I was rendered. I hope they know my indebtedness to them.

At the outset, I wish to express my immense sense of gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Bhagat Oinam for his constant supervision, endless patience and generosity with time and his meticulous and incisive comments on my drafts. I owe him the completion of my dissertation.

I offer my sincere thanks to my respected teachers Prof. S. P. Gautam, Prof. R. P. Singh, Dr. Manideepa Sen and the teachers of Department of Philosophy from Panjab University for their guidance which helped me in shaping my thoughts.

I want to take this opportunity to convey my deepest feeling of indebtedness to the very special people in my life, my parents, for their unconditional love, support and encouragement.

I am also very grateful to my siblings, Vikram and Sunil for their love, care and support.

I owe my special thanks to my senior Pawan Kumar and my classmates Rahul, Saurabh, and Kabita who has been there for me throughout, motivating me during the difficult times and providing insightful comments to better my work.

My special thanks to my dearest friends Anuradha, Rukmani, Priyanka and Deepa whose immense confidence in whatever I do, pushed me to work harder.

I also extend my thanks to my very special friends Rupesh, Indu and Sweeti Di, who were not always there with me physically but who have been the greatest and the most constant force of inspiration in every sphere of life.

I am thankful to entire library staff of JNU and the Panjab University for their kind cooperation and help.

Last but not least, I wish to thank to all those whose names have not been mentioned here, who have helped me during my dissertation work.

Anita Kumari

Dedicated
to
My Parents

CONTENT

Acknowledgements

Introduction..... 1 – 7

Chapter One **Protesting the Absolute to Embrace the Self..... 8 – 34**

- I. Critique of abstract theorization and system building
- II. Anxiety and despair: willing to be true self

Chapter Two **Aspects of Subjectivity.....35 – 63**

- I. Subjectivity as the locus of development of consciousness
- II. Subjectivity and the spheres of existence

Chapter Three **Nature of Faith.....64 – 86**

- I. Faith and voluntariness
- II. Paradoxical faith: the mark of Christianity

Conclusion.....87 – 93

Bibliography.....94 – 99

Introduction

Since the time of antiquity human being has been trying to give meaning to his own existence by committing himself to certain goals and purposes. How one ought to live one's life, is not, an objective question rather It is one of the most subjective and passionate issue one can have. If one tries to answer the question in objective manner, then such an effort is unable to, touch the existence of the subject to affect any transformation. Objective approach cannot do justice to the uniqueness, particularity and interest of an individual.

The modern era we live in is of information and scientific knowledge, which enable us to access any information in fractions of seconds. Scientific inventions have made the life both very complex and easy at the same time. An individual is now left with sufficient leisure which he enjoys with all the meaningless ways of entertainment rather than giving a pause to examine one's life style. Perhaps being conscious of one's existence is the most courageous task one can undertake as it may compel one to go out of one's comfort zone of doing things mechanically and make one listen to the voice of one's conscience. This may extract a person from the security of a group or institution leaving him no more than an isolated individual struggling to find meaning in his life.

The relevance of Kierkegaard is still found when we raise the above questions today. Kierkegaard saw in his time that human beings have forgotten, what it means to exist. By raising this question he wanted one to become aware of one's existence as a particular, unique individual and not to get lost in "crowd." According to him, the only way to become an authentic self is to become a full fledged individual. Only an individual can strive to become an "entire man," a united self by exercising one's "true freedom" by taking responsibility of one's actions. Scientific and historical facts do not appeal to one's inwardness as such and, therefore, cannot move one into action. Such objective facts cannot give

meaning to one's life rather one's subjectivity gives values to them. Comparing our time to that of Socrates, he says,

Once man understood little, but that little moved him profoundly. Now he understands much, but it does not move him, or it moves him only superficially, like a grimace.¹

Existence does not differentiate between a highly sophisticated thinking being and a simple man of little understanding. Existence is accentuated by one's passion in living rather than one's capacity of speculation.

Philosophy is said to have started with wonder and has today reached a point of sophistication driven by reason. Unfortunately, however, the expressions of our faculty of emotions get very little attention in terms of getting a place in the act of philosophising. In addition to emotion, the role of passion also calls for special attention in the act of philosophising. Emotions are different from passion. Passion seems to have the component of will besides emotions. The effect of scientific attitude and objectivity on philosophy is really immense as is evident from the fact that modern philosophy in order to remain significant is trying to compete with science. Today, the role of emotion and passion are losing ground as much as reason. In modern age, even the sphere of religion does not remain unaffected. It has become spiritless and just an institution to exercise authority. Religion is not anymore the personal relationship with the eternal Self or Being But engaging with religion today has been reduced merely to a mean to be the part of a so called religious "crowd" and secure their false admiration, fame, status and various political goals, in the name of God.

What has been mentioned above is not merely an experience of today. It seems to carry a long history. Soren A. Kierkegaard in the early nineteenth century

¹Jonathan Ree and Jane Chamberlin (eds.), *Kierkegaard: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell Publication, 1998, p. 25.

dared to raise his voice, not to instruct what to do, rather to make people aware of their mode of existence. Born in 1813, in Denmark, Soren A. Kierkegaard is one of the pioneers of existential ways of thought. It is apt to call the philosophy after him only a way of thought as he would have never liked to call it a system. He was against all sorts of system building.

It is evident from his various works like *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* and *Philosophical Fragments*, that he did not believe that philosophy in the objective and indifferent spirit of science can affect one's way of existing in the world. He said that human being is always in the process of becoming, so cannot be contained in any system.

Kierkegaard's thought in his various psychological, philosophical, and religious works, stresses on the categories of individuality, subjectivity, passion against the categories of "crowd", objectivity and reason. Through his works, he tries to address the problem of being a true Christian. But this problem cannot be addressed without questioning the very existence of human being. This is the question to which the objective disciplines of knowledge are most indifferent.

In spite of being critical of Hegelian philosophy, Kierkegaard seems to be influenced by Hegel, especially in presenting three systematic modes of existence. It seems that Kierkegaard has criticised the philosophy of Hegel while adapting much of his dialectical method and concepts.

Kierkegaard is not much averse of thinking as such but the lack of subjective appropriation in it, the only means to give significance to thinking itself. The process of appropriation emphasised by him against the approximation process of objectivity is the only meaning giver to one's existence. Unfortunately, the modern age of scientific knowledge has completely ignored the aspects of existence. According to Kierkegaard, we cannot just stop at knowing or understanding things; one has to go further and take action. He was not unaware of

the traditions in philosophy especially that of the Greek philosophy. He himself drew much inspiration from Socrates, thereby, secured the title of the “Socrates of Copenhagen” for himself. He owes his way of philosophy much to the meiotic method of Socrates.

Most of his works bear pseudonyms, which seem to be one of his strategies of communicating especially the subjective truth and that of Christianity. So instead of instructing directly, he believed in initiating or stimulating people so that they can become inward and examine their own mode of living. This very attitude towards life emphasized the philosophical aspect of his works. Though he himself seems to show the significance of living in religious sphere but he did not go straight into explaining the religious mode of existence, which is for him, the Christian mode of existence. He starts with the most common mode, that is, aesthetic mode. Aesthetic mode and religious mode is mediated by the ethical. For Kierkegaard, the ethical is “the task of becoming subjective.”²

While exploring the ethical mode, his ideas many a times seems to converge with that of Hegel. Kierkegaard insists that one’s ethical reality is the only reality for an existing being.

Kierkegaard uses various categories which may belong more to one sphere than the other. So we cannot understand various concepts such as sorrow, pain, innocence, guilt, etc, by confining them to one particular mode of life or sphere of existence. Moreover, Kierkegaard’s spheres of existence are not mutually exclusive as a higher sphere simply subordinates the lower one without rejecting or overthrowing it.

We need to follow the concepts and categories used by Kierkegaard from their first appearance in the spheres to the point where they are potentiated to

²Soren A. Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard’s Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 142.

maximum degree or into a contrasting concept. It is also interesting to look for the transitional points at which the qualitative change occurs. The transitional point from aesthetic level to that of ethical is irony, and ethical to that of religious is humour. These qualitative transitions can also be called as leaps. Kierkegaard is better known for his concept of "leap of faith." He contrasts the modes of existence which is based on the uncertain objectivity to that of subjective certitude or faith.

The dissertation contains three main chapters. In the first chapter of my dissertation, I have tried to explore, how the philosophy of Kierkegaard emerges as a reaction to that of the prevalent philosophy of the day, especially that of Hegelianism. Kierkegaard was against the absolutisation of "reason," which reduces existence to the confinements of thinking. The attempt of speculative thinkers to contain existence into a presupposition less, neat and tidy, whole invokes the much of apprehensions of Kierkegaard. An existential being always has a lack, as he is in the process of becoming. This lack is manifested in the form of anxiety and despair. The negativity of anxiety and despairs becomes positive when these moods bring an individual to the point of decisiveness.

The first half of the first chapter, explicates the Kierkegaardian critique of abstract theorisation and system building. According to Kierkegaard, objective knowledge alienates the subjects not only from his own self but also from the mode of reaching it, i.e., the process of appropriation. Such knowledge has no bearing on the existence of human being and can never transform it.

Kierkegaard is against subordinating the religion to speculative philosophy. He tries to revive the spirit of religion by stressing the importance of being concerned and passionately interested in private relation to the eternal or God. He gives a critique of Christendom, which is a kind of official religion and one of the means for securing the more of worldly goods, in order to make room for true Christianity.

Kierkegaard uses the dialectic between objectivity and subjectivity to criticise the abstract system building and theorisation. For Kierkegaard a speculative thinker aptly belongs to aesthetic sphere where the despair is the most common mood. The way to overcome it is to become conscious of it and be willing to be true self. So in the second half of the chapter I have tried to find out how the concepts of anxiety and despair are rooted in the very existence of human being. It is also interesting to see how these moods are potentiated at various level of existence. Their potentiating may lead one to become interested in subjectivity .

In the second chapter, the attempt has been made out to mapout the various aspects of subjectivity. The idea of subjectivity cuts across all his works. He says objective truth gains value through subjectivity only. It is interesting to explore how subjectivity gets potentiated through various spheres of existence while ascending from lower to higher level. I have tried to see into ideas of authority, finitude and incommunicability of subjective truth and interconnection among them. Subjectivity is one of the dialectical concepts used by Kierkegaard, thus, to grasp meaning of subjectivity, it is imperative to consider the concept of contrast, which in this case is objectivity. Kierkegaard emphasizes again and again, "the objective accent falls on WHAT is said, the subjective on HOW it is said."³ Thus, the objective approach of that of a speculative thinker stresses only the "content" of an idea and the subjective approach, which is that of a subjective thinker, is to do with the way he relates to the idea. By mere appropriating the idea, he transforms it into something which is true for him and also gets transformed in the process. But true transformation takes place only in the religious sphere which is that of the "faith."

The third chapter contains Kierkegaard's idea of faith. Here the effort has been made to investigate that to which extent reason is conducive to or antagonistic to faith and what is the role of volition in acquiring it. Though our understanding of

³ibid., p. 181.

existence has become much abstract in nature but with regard to existence, there have not been any changes. The condition of an existing being in the present age is not different from that of early age; one always has to live as a particular human being only for whom existing is essential. Kierkegaard sheds a new light on the concept of faith by bringing the concept of “absurdity” which seems to represent a kind of negativity. How he distinguishes the religion of that of Christianity seems illuminative. I have also tried to investigate, how Kierkegaard defend the paradoxical religion from being rendered as nonsense. While going further in exploring Kierkegaardian idea of faith and subjectivity one has to bear in mind that faith is not just an idea for Kierkegaard rather a way of being culminating in highest manifestation of subjectivity.

Chapter 1

Protesting the Absolute to Embrace the Self

Though Kierkegaard is better known as a subjective thinker, his philosophy is not isolated from the real world around. His philosophy was very much the product of an age, place and family in which he was born and the various ways of life styles he lived through in his short life span. One of the main ideas, which his philosophy deals with, is inwardness or subjectivity which is the source of one's "inner self – determination"⁴ and one's decision making as an individual. It enables an individual to find a truth which is true for him rather than accepting a readymade truth prevalent in society in the form of rational laws and social customs. Kierkegaard found that such general norms and laws leave no place for the uniqueness and particularity of an individual and reduce him to something "general" or "crowd."

In such a scenario, recognizing the significance of 'the individual', the Kierkegaardian philosophy emerges as a rebel against the then prevalent Christendom and Rationalism. The common factor in these two establishments was influence of Hegelian philosophy which precisely became the target of Kierkegaardian critique.

Thus, the philosophy of Kierkegaard took form as a reaction towards the Hegelian philosophy which was very much in vogue at that time. Though, Kierkegaard refutes the speculative philosophy of Hegel but he takes many of Hegel's ideas, i.e., the idea of dialectic and stages, and adapted them to as per the requirement of his philosophy. Kierkegaard refutes the speculative dialectic of

⁴ Johannes slok, , *A Kierkegaard Critique: An international selection of essays interpreting Kierkegaard*, Howard A. Johnson, Niels Thulstrup(eds.), RPER & Brothers Publishers, 1962, p. 96.

Hegel and replaces it with existential dialectic. Similarly, he recognizes the impossibility of merging opposites into a higher unity (that Hegel propounded) and says that one has to hold them together in tension while maintaining their polarity.

Kierkegaard criticizes the absent mindedness of objective thinkers, who in the process of speculation, forget themselves as existing beings but claim to understand the 'whole' of truth through objectivity. Hegel wanted to raise the philosophy to the level of science by making it presuppositionless but Kierkegaard rendered such a daring attempt, just a comic. According to Him, such a project presupposes, at least, a "resolve" to do so, which cannot be given any rational justification. Moreover, such a "resolve" presupposes an existential human being whose truth cannot be exhausted in objectivity, who is more than mere reason. Thus, Kierkegaard finds that such a project is bound to meet failure resulting in anxiety and despair.

According to Kierkegaard, speculative thinker lives in the aesthetic mode of existence. An aesthetic person is not aware of one's existence or mode of existence, thus does not care to find how he ought to live. Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom. One ought to actualize one's freedom by being decisive, to overcome the anxiety. But an aesthetic person busies himself in various futile activities or speculative possibilities that one cannot actualize. To consider finitude as absolute (as an objective thinker does by making the human reason as absolute) is in itself contradictory and results in despair.

Kierkegaard suggests only one way out of anxiety and despair that is to adopt a subjective approach towards world and choose the very decisiveness to attain the highest potential of self. But the first requisite of becoming decisive is to confront oneself and become aware of the anxiety and despair in one's way of living. Kierkegaard's philosophy seems to have double aspects, one is to criticize the objectivity approach and establish subjectivity as the new approach to attain the truth, in its place.

1. Critique of Abstract Theorisation and System Building

The philosophy of Soren A. Kierkegaard can be better comprehended by understanding his critique of abstract theorisation of traditional and modern philosophy. Here, traditional philosophy refers to the various rational and metaphysical theories where the reason plays the significant role of bringing parts together in such a way that they fit neatly in order to make the whole system. Human mind has the tendency to understand things in “part and whole” relationship. So it is no wonder that most of the philosophers have tried to grasp the whole by understanding the parts. In natural world human being tries to understand the whole universe merely by grasping certain natural laws. The same practice is repeated in the realm of the human world, which tries to grasp certain rational and universal principles in order to explain the whole of the knowable and ethical world. We try to understand the future by understanding the world-historical system based on past. We not only project the outer world in such a systematic light rather want to systematize our lives also in the same manner. We form habits or so called discipline of thinking in a systematic way, thus end up in rationalising the emotional and aesthetical aspects of our lives. We hardly bother to go beyond secure confining of the knowledge which is the result of the exercise of the abstract reason. Such knowledge has been diagnosed as the “disease of the age” by Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard’s aim was not only to attack objective theories but to question the very modes of living which do not let human beings feel the need of knowing themselves. He wanted people to choose their own ways over which they can exercise their responsibility. Contrary to rationalism, he establishes that existence is prerequisite of any kind of understanding. The task before rationalism was to find such a foundation which is presuppositionless and certain. Such a foundation could not afford any doubt, though the task started the search for the same by employing doubt adequately. Before Hegel it was Descartes who started the search for a

presuppositionless base for building his philosophical system. For Descartes the search ends in “thinking self,” and for Hegel it ends in the concept of “pure being.”

Descartes, the founder of the Modern philosophy, wanted to find a structure of knowledge on some indubitable foundation in the “thinking self,” which is better represented by his maxim, “I think, therefore I am.” From the thinking self he proceeds to make the entire world or system of knowledge. Descartes’ metaphysics distinguishes between mind and body by arguing that the former has the “thought” as its essence while the latter has “extension” as the essence. He says that these two substances are distinct and independent of each other but dependent on the ultimate substance, that is, God. Descartes gives the idea of God as something so perfect that it could not have been caused in us by anything with less perfection than God himself. Thus, he concludes that God exists. The other reason that he gives to support the idea of existence of God is ultimately to support the reason itself. According to him, reason is guaranteed against deception and is reliable owing to the existence of God only. Here we can clearly see that he brings the idea of God in order to support the reason on which the structure of his philosophy is built.

Once again, Descartes brings the idea of existence of God when he finds himself unable to explain the interaction between the distinct substances, i.e., body and mind. Though he does not deny various volitional and affective aspects such as desire, love, hatred, joy, wonder, etc., but he subordinates all these aspects to the cognitive aspect of the subject. It seems that he does not hesitate to bring the irrational idea of God in order to keep his rational system intact.

Kierkegaard’s attack is on the entire tradition of the western institution of Christianity (Christendom) besides various other institutions, as they exercise authority over people in order to make their religious doctrines acceptable. If anyone does not accept the authority, then they try to give rational basis to the doctrines that they want to propagate. Such an effort results in a system of

Christianity which tries to prove the existence of God by giving various logical arguments based on the very conceptions of God.

Kierkegaard is not interested in the speculation, whether God exists or not? God is not a matter of debate for him, but of faith. Faith in God is not based on the amount of evidence or number of proofs. Arguing against the Descartes' reduction of human being into a thinking self, Kierkegaard says that in order to think, one should exist first. As David F. Swenson says,

Every proof of the existence of God reduces itself in the last analysis to a conceptual development of the consequences which flow from having initially assumed His existence. If God does not exist, we cannot prove that He does exist; and if God does exist, the attempt to prove it is an egregious bit of folly, as if one were to propose, in the presence of another person, to prove that this person exists.⁵

Existence is not a predicate, rather it is the "is – ness" which is presupposed by all the predicates. Existence is essential in a concrete sense and predicates are merely accidental.

Kierkegaard thinks that in the present age of science and culture, most of the human beings do not exist as individuals. Modern age has reduced the concrete existence merely into an "idea" or an instant of the universal. As Kierkegaard says,

For an existing spirit, the question of the truth will again exist. The abstract answer has significance only for the abstraction into which an existing spirit is transformed when he abstracts from himself qua existing individual. This can be done only momentarily, and even in such moments of abstraction the abstract thinker pays his debt to existence by existing in spite of all abstraction. It is therefore an

⁵David F. Swenson, *Something about Kierkegaard*, ed. Lillian Marvin Swenson, Augsburg Publishing House, 1956, p. 56.

existing spirit who is now conceived as raising the question of truth, presumably in order that he may exist in it; but in any case the question is raised by someone who is conscious of being particular existing human beings.⁶

Thus for an existing human being, truth will also be existential rather than mere abstraction. Only an existing human being can involve himself/herself in the process of making momentary abstractions.

Kierkegaardian philosophy can be understood better by comprehending the philosophy of Hegel, of which it is a critique. Kierkegaard's protest was against making "reason" as absolute which can grasp the whole of universe; thereby God also. But Kierkegaard asserts that reason has its own limits, one cannot reason incessantly. He does not deny the utility of reason in various dimensions of life, rather he is critical of the reason which does not recognize its limits and reduces an existential being into an abstract entity. G.W.F Hegel was one of the main propounders of such a pure reason. He wanted to raise the philosophy to the level of a science by making it presuppositionless. Perhaps, the reason to eulogise science more than it deserve, is rendered to its being the most objective, therefore, devoid of any sort of arbitrariness. But according to Kierkegaard, the ideal chased by Hegel in it is not more than approximation. So the science which itself lacks the certitude is not better than any other stream of knowledge.

Kierkegaard was not so critical of Hegel from the very beginning rather being a student of him; initially he was receiving it positively. But the relations between the two did not remain static rather had its own stages of development throughout. As a student, Kierkegaard was influenced with the philosophy of Hegel but later on attacked the central idea of it, i.e., real is rational and rational is real.

⁶Soren A. Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1968. p. 170.

Kierkegaard was not particularly critical of Hegel but also of his Danish contemporaries. Danish Hegelians were not uncritical of Hegel's philosophy rather they were debating many issues of the philosophy and thus ending up either in critiquing some of its issues or agreeing on them. One of the main exponents of Hegelian philosophy in Denmark was Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Following Hegel, Heiberg says that religion grasps the truth of the world only in terms of concrete particulars, while philosophy does the same in terms of universal or essence. Thus he ends up by subordinating the religion to philosophy.

Another important Hegelian in Denmark was the theologian Hans Martensen. Like Hegel, he emphasizes the conceptual necessity of religious thought. Like Heiberg, he also defended Hegel's critique of the law of excluded middle against Bishop Mynster's criticism. He argued that the principle of mediation was the principle of Christianity since the doctrine of the incarnation could not be understood. Kierkegaard's critique of Martensen, in particular, began with the eulogy attributed to his predecessor Mynster by the latter. Martensen said that the deceased bishop had been a witness to the truth. Kierkegaard criticized the principle of mediation which makes the concrete existence merely an entity of thought.

Kierkegaard's sole aim was to abstract the individual from the crowd and humanity at large and stimulate him to choose oneself. In doing so, the whole of one's being is involved, and then he cannot remain as a detached spectator rather becomes a subject engaged in existing. Being subjective means living one's life passionately. Subjectivity is the prerequisite of being ethical as well as being religious. Only the ethical subject has the possibility of being the knight of faith. Faith, for Kierkegaard, is not a speculative idea rather the highest passion. He emphasizes the subjectivity, faith, passion, objective uncertainty in contrast to the categories, or concepts of objectivity, knowledge, objective certitude of rationalism. While using these categories he criticizes the propaganda of detached, objective contemplation expounded by rationalists and system builders such as

Descartes and Hegel. Kierkegaard has given existential critique of “Hegelianism.”⁷ Hegel believed that merely by grasping rational principles of logic, one can grasp the logical structure of the universe.

Kierkegaard brings his philosophy in contrast to that of Hegel through the debate of objective and subjective truth. Traditional philosophy has treated objective knowledge of utmost importance. Objective knowledge includes logic, metaphysics, mathematics, historical disciplines, and natural science. These disciplines are taken to be associated with truth which is real and concrete. Such knowledge has its own method and criterion to arrive at truth which may involve experiments, demonstration, finding proofs, accumulation of facts, logical method and metaphysical enquiry. Objective knowledge is objective in the sense that it is not affected by the presence of knower. It emphasises solely on the object of knowledge or so called reality. Thus such kind of knowledge will be nothing but dispassionate, disinterested, standing, cold, unrelated to the subject.

Kierkegaard has criticized this very conception of knowledge which has no bearings on the existence of human being thus unable to transform it. Scientific knowledge begins with certain hypothesis and arrives at truth by following finite number of experiments. Scientific truths are not certain, with new findings they may change. So the objectivity of scientific knowledge is qualified with uncertainty. Logic is something which is immanent, i.e., always “is” in past, present and future. So it is the case with mathematics. Metaphysics is merely speculation far removed from reality. Historical knowledge is nothing but an approximation. It can never reach reality or truth. The being or reality of all these disciplines of knowledge is not identical with the reality of factual existence. If objective knowledge has any reality at all, it is at the moment when it is understood as the part of relationship that subject has with the world.

⁷ Soren A. Kierkegaard, *Soren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, Vol. 2, ed., trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Indiana University Press, p. 207.

There is dialectic between approximation and appropriation, that is, objectivity and subjectivity. When subject uses and appropriates the objective knowledge, only then it gains value. Natural sciences which are considered as the most objective streams of all are full of probabilities and approximations. A higher measure of probability is enough in science to render something as a fact. Quantity matters in objective knowledge while subjective knowledge is qualitative. Objective knowledge has its object given outside independent of the knower while subjective knowledge does not account the object as independent from the subject. Object of subjective knowledge is present only in the inwardness and the subject tries to appropriate or apprehend it in the very model of existing. The object so appropriated, renders a corresponding qualitative tinge to the very model of the existence of the subject who tries to apprehend it.

Objective knowledge alienates the subject not only from himself but also from the very mode of reaching at it. The subject becomes a fictional objective subject or merely an observer in the process of gaining knowledge. Michael Watts has put it through an example that how objective truth completely ignores the essence of living things. He says,

An objective observation or 'truth' about a 'dog' will be based entirely upon objectively intelligible general information such as its breed, size, weight or colour, physical composition and history, descriptions of its behaviour and potentials and its similarities or differences to other entities. In the meantime, however, the dog's actual existence, its existing 'is ness' or 'essence', the living, primordial 'source' of all its attributes, is completely ignored.⁸

Thus the reality of the dog is the truth of its existence that how he experiences the world through its consciousness but objective knowledge reduces the reality of dog merely into a bundle of ideas.

⁸ Michael Watts, *Kierkegaard*, Oneworld Publications, 2007, p. 80.

Objective knowledge is factual or theoretical. Being factual does not imply being certain as the facts themselves are derived from historical information or by systematizing the data received from the senses according to the laws of thoughts, i.e., logic. Facts are treated as final truth for certain period of time but with the changing historical information and sensory perceptions, they also change. Therefore, the objective, however precise or accurate it may seem to be at the current moment of time, but it cannot remain the same in future. Kierkegaard asserts that such knowledge does not pertain to existence. He says,

All essential knowledge relates to existence or only such knowledge as has an essential relationship to existence is essential knowledge. All knowledge which does not inwardly relate itself to existence, in the reflection of inwardness, is, essentially viewed, accidental knowledge; its degree and scope is essentially indifferent. That essential knowledge is essentially related to existence does not mean that knowledge has a relationship to the knower, who is essentially an existing individual and that for this reason all essential knowledge is essentially related to existence. Only ethical and ethico-religious knowledge has an essential relationship to the existence of the knower.⁹

He further says that such (existential – essential) knowledge has a relationship to the knower, who is essentially an existing individual and that for this reason all essential knowledge is essentially related to existence. Only ethical or ethico-religious knowledge has an essential relationship to the existence of the knower. “Modern philosophy has tried anything and everything in the effort to help the individual to transcend himself objectively, which is a wholly impossible feat...”¹⁰ All objects are also interpreted by modern philosophy by applying the

⁹ Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 176.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

categories of the general and universal. Universal is the result of the contemplation which highlights the invariant within the variants, thereby discovers human being in general, in its biological or social or economic character. In such an effort the uniqueness and subjectivity of human being is lost in the crowd of universals.

Hegel regards the “reason” as the only invariant or universal thus available to all. Therefore, he believes in the absoluteness of the reason. Hegel thought that it was the business of the philosophy to explore the rational. His effort was to understand the world without intervening in it. Contrary to it, subjective knowledge requires a self involvement on the part of the knower.

The act of abstraction can be infinite like the act of reflection.¹¹ Hegelians think that such a reflection comes to an end by itself. Referring to the Hegelians, Kierkegaard says in an ironical tone,

It is strange that Hegelians, who know in logic that reflection comes to an end of itself, and that a universal doubt changes over into its opposite by itself (a true sailor’s yarn, i.e. truly a sailor’s yarn), in daily life, on the other hand, when they are pleasant people, when they are like all of us (except, as I m always willing and ready to admit, that they are more talented and more learned and so forth) know that reflection can be halted only by a leap.¹²

Thus Kierkegaard seems to indicate the inefficiency of reason to stop its own activity which again refutes the self sufficiency claim of it. Reflection needs something other than itself to begin as well as to stop and that something is faculty of “will.” Thus infinite reflection cannot be stopped objectively rather it is the subject who stops it by choosing the very necessity to choose with passion.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 105.

According to Kierkegaard, the passion is the culmination of existence for an existing individual. As he puts it, "Faith is the highest passion in the sphere of human subjectivity."¹³ He displaces the absolute reason with the highest passion and brings the "faith" to the centre of his existential enquiry. He says that faith is available to all human beings as a possibility. Thus it is not "reason" but "faith" which is the invariant or the essential to all human beings. Existence cannot be concluded by an act of demonstration. Demonstration involves essences, universals which do not have any objective existence. Thus existence cannot be derived from an idea. At the most only the idea of existence can be derived from an idea. Idea and existence are not at par existentially though it can be so in the realm of speculation. According to Kierkegaard, one can never demonstrate the existence of a stone or a star, but only that some existing thing is a stone or a star.

In order to emphasize the precedence of existence over thought Kierkegaard gives the example of the knowledge of God and says,

Objectively, reflection is directed to the problem of whether this object is the true God; subjectively, reflection is directed to the question of whether the individual is related to a something in such a manner that his relationship is in truth a God-relationship.¹⁴

Thus on the one side there is objective truth and on the other, there is subjective truth and there is no place for mediation. Mediation is always in degrees but existence is simply "is" and non-existence is "is-not." According to Kierkegaard,

For to be in a state of mediation is to be finished, while to exist is to become. An existing individual cannot be in two places at the same time. He cannot be an identity of subject and object. When he is nearest to being in two places at the same time he is in passion; but

¹³ Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 178.

passion is momentary, and passion is also the higher expression of subjectivity.¹⁵

Mediation as such is possible only in idealistic philosophy, where subject changes into fictional objective subject, i.e., existence into some universals. Hegel's dialectical triad is characterised by a movement that involves first "immediacy," second "mediation" and third "mediated immediacy." Hegel starts with the category of pure being which is the immediate. Then it is mediated by the opposite which is nothing. Finally, the dialectical movement between these two give rise to a dialectical unity, "becoming." Mediation abstracts the real from its existential roots and converts it into an abstraction, thereby treating reality and thought as identical. Thus various rational proofs for the existence of God are nothing but full of profound tautology, based on the identification of reality or existence, i.e., various conceptions about God. Ideal and actual becomes identical only in the realm of the possible. But in faith the ideal and the actual come quite near particularly in the realm of existence.

Reality, for Kierkegaard, means the ethical reality which consists in actualising an idea or an ideal. The category of transition does not belong to logic, the fundamental principle of logic is that everything is and nothing comes into being. Thus transitions cannot be treated as necessary. David F. Swenson avers,

But the fact that the concept does not belong in logic makes it impossible to treat transitions as necessary; they obey the principle of cause and effect, but not the principle of ground and consequent. They come to pass by a leap; and wherever the ideal and the actual, the rational and the empirical, the laws or principle on the one hand, and

¹⁵ Ibid.

the observed facts on the other, are brought into relation, there we have a transition of thought, identical or analogous with the inductive leap.¹⁶

Such a leap is possible in a certain universe of discourse; a logically immanent system of presuppositions which do not correspond to reality. Thus we not only start with presuppositions but also end with them. We end up in building a system of logic which cannot assimilate any actual change. Whatever is actuality in such a system is just actuality in thought.

A system is possible in the domain of ideal. Therefore, an existential system is impossible. Kierkegaard insists,

Reality itself is a system-for God; but it cannot be a system for any existing spirit. System and finality correspond to one another, but existence is precisely the opposite of finality. It may be seen, from a purely abstract point of view, that system and existence are incapable of being thought together; because in order to think existence at all, systematic thought must think it as abrogated and hence as not existing.¹⁷

Hegel's philosophy aims at becoming a whole which can hold all the possible things in it in a logical order. In logical system, all development is immanent. It means there is no development at all. In it the whole is implicit in each part. Hence logical relations are that of necessity which means the expression for self-identity, self-relatedness and for the eternal sameness of the relation which each logical concept bears to itself. Existence means persistent striving, where finality is always postponed. Kierkegaard affirms, "The systematic Idea is the identity of subject and object, the unity of thought and being. Existence, on the

¹⁶ David F Swenson, *Something about Kierkegaard*, p. 54.

¹⁷ *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 107.



TH-18975

other hand is their separation."¹⁸ It does not mean that existence is thoughtless. It simply means that thought belongs to something other than itself, i.e., existence. A thought cannot belong to thought itself. So, the knower should be separated from the knowledge, which belongs to him. Thus being a particular, unique individual engaged in existing is much more significant than playing the society game of humanity.

Objective uncertainty gives way to subjective certainty. When one finds that all objective knowledge is a system or an approximation then one tries to find the truth, which is truth for him. Thus, in modern era, we possess only conflicting opinions. As Richard H. Popkin puts it, "Scepticism aids us in the search for truth by destroying our illusions, our confidence in our rational abilities."¹⁹ Human being can transcend sceptical despair only with the act of will. One can either will to doubt everything or will to believe everything. If one chooses to believe, he believes in spite of the absence of any rational proof. According to Kierkegaard, to believe and to know are two separate and opposite acts. If adequate evidence existed for a proposition, one would know it, and hence have no need to believe it. Richard H. Popkin asserts that, "The need for the act of belief is inversely proportional to the evidence at hand. And pure belief occurs when there is no evidence for what is believed."²⁰ The proposition, "God has existed, or does exist in time," asserts a logical impossibility. Since the event is impossible, so there is no question of evidence. If one believes the proposition, then it would be the pure belief which is possible by sheer will of the subject. There is no one to assure him whether he is right or wrong, so one is left with one's own faith.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁹ Richard H. Popkin, "Kierkegaard and Scepticism," in Josiah Thompson(ed.), *Kierkegaard: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972, p. 345.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

Objective view which is abstract and disinterested can be conducive for system building, but it can never become the foundation of eternal happiness, which, according to the Kierkegaard, is ethico – religious good. An objective enquirer is interested in eternal happiness but at the same time holds passion in contempt. He fails to realize that passionate interest is needed for the eternal happiness rather than speculation. Objective certainty cannot give way to eternal happiness. According to Abraham H. Khan,

When it comes to ethical matters, an epistemology that does not make room for a subjective mode of knowing, or that insists that human motivation is maximized by enlarging an objective knowledge base, cannot warrant the moral obligations that are consistent with the demand of *salighed*.²¹

Thus the morality which withdraws its validity from universal, objective principles of reason cannot be conducive for the attainment of *salighed*, that is, eternal happiness. One can realise the eternal good by making a personal and passionate act, i.e., the infinite exercise of his will. The eternal happiness in turn transforms the entire existence of the individual who is truly related to it.

Kierkegaard refutes the dialectics of Hegel which resolves the opposing forces into a higher unity, i.e., harmonious state of self. He says that these contradictory tendencies cannot be overcome; rather existence requires the opposing forces, to be held together in balance. Thus, the maintenance of true selfhood requires a continuous effort to ‘hold together’ the various opposing tendencies that exist within the personal self. Such an effort results in anxiety which is unavoidable part of being one’s true self. For Kierkegaard, reality consists in the fact that human being cannot avoid the necessity of choosing. Here the

²¹ Abraham H. Khan, *Salighed As Happiness? Kierkegaard On The Concept Salighed*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1985, p. 100.

choice is not between this and that particular alternative rather between the ethical choices of to be oneself or not to be oneself.

2. Anxiety and Despair: Willing to be True self

The aim of much of Kierkegaard's philosophical and religious works was to instigate people to find the meaning of their lives. A person should orient his life after such an ultimate end which may render that the person be a unified self rather than a fragmented self. Kierkegaard finds that reason as "absolute" fails to render such meaning to one's life. Until one become conscious of one's personal mode of living, one will never come to know how one ought to live. The journey of the transformation of one's mode of living into the highest mode of living is full of anxiety and despair.

In Kierkegaard's philosophy, the concept of "anxiety" can be traced back to the "original sin" of the Genesis. Anxiety can simply mean objectless fear. Anxiety is the fear of something unknown or indeterminate. Kierkegaard cites the traditional story of *Garden of Eden* or *Paradise Lost*. According to the story, God created the first man and the woman, Adam and Eve. They started living happily in the state of innocence, in the Eden, garden of paradise. The state of innocence is the state of ignorance. God imposed one prohibition over Adam and Eve, of eating the fruit of knowledge. Thus, the very prohibition made them conscious of their freedom, the infinite realm of possibility. Now they were open to the very possibility of choosing, whether they obey or defy God's command. The freedom was there as a possibility before even Adam and Eve could have realized it. The very possibility of freedom arises in the mode of anxiety. Then Adam and Eve actualized their freedom by defying God's command and became more anxious, as this time anxiety enters with sin.

Anxiety means two things: the anxiety in which individual posits sin by the qualitative leap, and the anxiety in which that entered in and enters in with sin, and that also, accordingly, enters qualitatively into the world every time individual posits sin.²²

Here the differentiation between qualitative transition and quantitative transition is of utmost significance. In case of Adam and Eve, the transition from the state of innocence to that of sin is qualitative, and the transition is possible only through qualitative transition. Unlike quantitative transition, qualitative transition does not take place in continuity over a long span of time. Qualitative transition takes place in the act of leaping, in the decisive moment. The state of innocence and that of sin does not vary in any quantity rather in quality or in mode of existence, quantitative change is accumulative, thereby only the quality or the mode of existence in which it takes place, changes quantitatively in a continuous manner.

The very qualitative leap from the state of ignorance to that of sin opens the possibility of both the quantitative as well as qualitative leaps including the leap of faith which finally enables one to get rid of the anxiety for the good. Anxiety does not necessarily lead to sin but discloses the possibility of sin which, in turn, discloses all the possible possibilities. If we relates to anxiety in right manner, we will neither succumb to it nor become indifferent towards it, only it can lead us to the possibility of the leap of faith.

What remains of the notion of inherited sin is that there is a way in which our location in history makes a difference in how we face the possibility of sin. There is a distinction between actual sin and the “qualitative approximation” of “sinfulness.” Sin is all-or-nothing qualitative act done in freedom and bringing with it guilt, the “qualitative approximation” of “sinfulness” is the additional anxiety

²² M. Jamie Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, Wiley-Blackwell publication, 2009, p. 83.

brought by sin into the world and the effects of sin on the world (the “objective anxiety”) which we inherit.²³

Thus, we do not inherit the original sin but we surely are not ignorant of the historical knowledge of sin, which only adds up, generations after generations. This increases our guilt and anxiety. Like Adam and Eve, we all take the leap from the state of immediacy, i.e., of ignorance to that of sin. Thus we sin individually and are responsible for the same.

Initially, Adam and Eve did not have any knowledge of good, though; anxiety was present in this state as nothingness. But this anxiety was qualified by the characteristics of the ignorant state, i.e., innocence, peace and guiltlessness. Thus freedom was lying in this state in the form of possibility. As soon as God warns Adam and Eve against eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the freedom which was only the possibility till now, becomes actuality. “Although he realizes that he is free – that he has the freedom to act – he does not yet have any idea what he can do.”²⁴ If Adam was not sure what he can do, and then the question arises why did he “will” to defy God. One possible answer may be driven from Sartre’s philosophy. He says that by saying “No” one can truly assert one’s freedom. So Adam could realize his freedom in defiance to God. Suppose if he would have done otherwise, i.e., obeyed God’s command, then he would have remained in the same state where he was originally is. By being in the same state would not have given him the adventurous feeling of freedom which could assert his freedom expressively. If freedom does not make any change in the present state, then it is equivalent to not using it.

Anxiety means to be anxious about the future. We remain anxious of the past as it has the possibility of becoming future through repetition. To remain

²³ Ibid., p. 84.

²⁴ Michael Watts, *Kierkegaard*, Oneworld Publications, 2007, p. 159.

anxious of a past offence means to be unable to relate essentially to it due to some or other deceitful way which prevents it from being past. We repent over rather than being anxious about the past. We ourselves make our relation to the past offense dialectical and by this act, offense do not become something past rather a possibility. Possibility always belongs to future which is not yet actuality, not yet known. It is yet to be created, whose responsibility also makes us anxious. Thus it is our future projects that make us anxious.²⁵

Anxiety is very common in day to day activities. Though, most of the time, people try to remain ignorant of the anxiety but in certain situations anxiety is too grave to ignore. Michael Watts cites an example:

Most people standing at the verge of a tall cliff or building and looking over the edge have experienced a perfectly normal instinctive fear of falling, but this is sometimes accompanied by the terrifying impulse to throw oneself intentionally off the edge – this strange feeling, usually felt in the pit of one's stomach, simultaneously draws us towards and repels us from the edge.²⁶

Thus, in such a situation, humans cannot afford to avoid anxiety as they try to do most of the time, people try many strategies in order to avoid anxiety. Some people try to lose the anxiety in various activities which are not the result of the reflection over any future project rather that of immediacy. They like to absorb themselves in shallow talks and gossips. Such characteristics are also the marks of an aesthetic life. To run after temporal or finite things in order to get rid of anxiety is a total failure and leads to hopelessness.

There is anxiety unto death, if one is not saved in faith. Anxiety is prior to sin; therefore, it forms the condition of sin. Sin, further potentiates the anxiety.

²⁵ Shelly O' Hara, *Kierkegaard within Your Grasp*, Wiley Publishing, 2004, p. 58.

²⁶ Michael Watts, *Kierkegaard*, p. 161.

Thus, anxiety is the condition as well as the consequence of sin. Thus everybody is in anxiety, except the knight of faith.

The actual sin and the anxiety of the sin are two different things. Sin is a qualitative act while the anxiety accompanying it results from the guilt of sin. Here the concept of “original sin” becomes important. We are not sinner due to Adam’s sin rather the historical knowledge of it as well as of the generations till date, make us more anxious which makes us more vulnerable to sin. We differ from Adam in having more burden of anxiety due to “quantitative approximation” of it.²⁷ Each sin individually, and therefore, one cannot blame Adam for it, rather one is personally responsible.

Sin is looking at the infinite possibilities and choosing to grasp the finite. Sin is a lack of courage in the face of the infinite. We are not purely passive observers of the abyss- we climb up and look down and we are responsible if our freedom succumbs, if we sink in anxiety.²⁸

It is obvious from the above lines that Kierkegaard does not owe sin to ignorance as Socrates does. According to Kierkegaard sin consists in not willing to choose the eternal in spite of being aware of it. He further asserts that, it is only by willing one thing, i.e., the relation to eternal; one can get rid of anxiety.

We are completely free to choose from all pleasant and not so pleasant, finite and infinite choices. If we are anxious there is not any situation in which we are not free. To be anxious means to become aware of one’s freedom. So the concept of anxiety is not totally loaded with negative connotations, if worked out well it can make one realize one’s true self.

²⁷I M. Jamie Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, p. 85.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

Only he who passes through the anxiety of the possible is educated to have no anxiety, not because he can escape the terrible things of life because these always become weak by comparison with those of possibility.²⁹

Human life is full of anxiety and what follows after is despair. Anxiety and despair cut across all the three spheres, i.e., aesthetical, ethical and to a large extent, the religious as well. According to Kierkegaard, it is only in the religiousness B, that human being can reconcile with his true eternal spirit.

Kierkegaard has discussed the concept of despair in his work *The Sickness Unto Death*, under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus. The sickness which he calls despair is the key concept in the work which according to him, “constitutes the Christian’s advantage over the natural man,”³⁰ as the healing which follows is Christian bliss. According to him to be able to despair is the advantage but to be in it is disadvantage. In the work, he invokes the need of personal commitment and responsibility in order to achieve true selfhood (of that of a true Christian) through the description of the concept of sin and despair. It is clear from the subtitle of his book, i.e., *A Christian Psychological Exposition for Edification and Awakening*, that it is psychological exposition regarding edification and awakening of those who are not conscious of their sickness. As he says,

All Christian knowledge, however strict its form, ought to be anxiously concerned; but this concern is precisely the note of the edifying. Concern implies relationship a synthesis is o life, to the reality of personal existence and thus in a Christian sense it is seriousness; the high aloofness of indifferent learning is from the Christian point of

²⁹ Ibid., p. 89.

³⁰ Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1974, p. 148.

view, far from being seriousness, it is, from the Christian point of view, jest and vanity. But seriousness again is the edifying.³¹

Kierkegaard starts the description of despair by trying to answer the question “what is spirit?” He says,

The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self or it is that in the relation [which accounts for it] that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation relates itself to its own self”. “Man is a synthesis of infinite and the finite of the temporal and the eternal of freedom and necessity; in short it is a relation between two factors. So regarded, man is not yet a self.³²

When the relation of the body soul relates to itself then it becomes spirit. After being a spirit it should be able to relate itself to God who established the whole relation, in order to be a true self. If body soul synthesis is not able to relate to the third then, it is nothing more than the aesthetical self. To relate to something or somebody means to be committed towards that. When the self relates itself to other selves of society as well as social norms, the self becomes “an ethical self.” It is only through relating itself to the absolute other or God one becomes the true self, i.e., spirit. Until the synthesis of body and soul relates to God, by transcending the ethical and leaping into the faith, it remains in despair. Here, the relation to the third is that of commitment, which comes forth from subjectivity rather than objectivity. Objective speculation or objectivity involves “reason” while subjectivity inheres in “will” which enables one to engage in the act of commitment and become responsible.

Self is the synthesis of two opposite constituents, i.e., finite and infinite, possibility and necessity, so one has to struggle constantly to hold them together in

³¹ Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1974, p. 142.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 146.

a balance; such a balance cannot last forever after achieving it once. So one has to constantly will. In doing so, the self undergoes a constant and intense anxiety which can tempt it to give up and escape through self-deception, insanity or death. One wants to go further than mere, the synthesis and wants to become a true self, then one has to undergo the same anxiety. When a person tries to escape the anxiety involved in becoming a true self, then the relationship between body and soul becomes imbalanced and unhealthy which results in despair.

The dis – relationship of despair is not a simple dis – relationship but a dis – relationship in a relationship in a relation which relates itself to its own self and is constituted by another, so that the dis – relationship in that self – relationship reflects itself infinitely in the relation to the power which constituted it.³³

The imbalanced and unhealthy relationship between the body and soul, i.e., finite and infinite, possibility and necessity, according to Kierkegaard, is dis – relationship. The obvious outcome of this is nothing but despair.

There are varieties of despairs, according to Kierkegaard, and an aesthetic person has most of the forms of despair. In contrast to it, the positive form of despair is that of person who lives in that mode of existence which Kierkegaard called Religiousness A. There is a continuity in despair in one or the other forms, which cuts across all the spheres of existence, i.e., aesthetical, ethical and religiousness A. Only at the level of religiousness B, one may get rid of it, i.e., in the highest passion of faith.

An aesthetic person lives the life of immediacy, always seeking pleasure and avoiding pain by one or the other temporal worldly goals. The life of an aesthetic person is dependent on the outer situations, contingencies of nature which take him to frustrations and feelings of hopelessness. Thus, his whole life is in

³³ Ibid., p. 147.

despair. He is not conscious of the despair. This is the unconscious despair and is the most common. Such a person remains in the unconscious despair until he realizes the finitude of every outer thing, then his quest of the self turns inward from outward and starts despairing over “oneself.” His despair over oneself consists in his wish to live his life, according to the principle, i.e., of pleasure and pain, upon which one currently bases one’s life, such a life is bound to remain unfulfilled.³⁴

Despite being in despair an aesthetic person may be happy with his way of life and never tries to reflect over it. When one starts despairing over oneself, then one becomes conscious of it though one may not become fully conscious of it. In such a situation, one wants to get rid of oneself. There are two kinds of “conscious despair,” one is that of “weakness” and the other is that of “defiance”. In the despair of weakness one is not willing to be oneself. Either one wants to get rid of oneself by becoming no – self or wants to become somebody else. The despair of defiance is formulated as, willing to be oneself.

The despair of a defiant is accompanied with the highest consciousness, thus it is the most intense. He does not want to establish the relation with eternal rather wants to prove himself to the world without taking any help. According to Kierkegaard, one can get help from a teacher or an apostle in the worldly sense. God helps by forgiving one’s sins and giving his grace. Defiant is the person who despairs over the forgiveness of the sin and rejects His grace as he has too much of an ego to accept any help and to say “yes” to the grace. Such a despair does not seem to be of courage but in reality it is weakness as one is in passion with the world and his talents. Such a person is too proud or stubborn to get rid of oneself and to seek his true – self.

³⁴Alastair Hannay and Gordon D.Marino, *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard* , Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 336.

Kierkegaard, citing physician example, tries to make a point that there is no one in the world who is not suffering from despair, an unknown of something, as physician employing certain medical conditions can announce that there is no man in the world who is suffering to the some extent with sickness. Everyone is living with some sort of sickness or despair of soul. This continued despair gives evidence of the spirit, something immortal in the being who is looking for his peace and calmness something beyond him. Kierkegaard says,

At any rate there has lived no one and there lives no one outside of Christendom, who is not in despair, and no one in Christendom, unless he be a true Christian, and if he is not quite that, he is somewhat in despair after all.³⁵

He further says, "It is not a rare exception that one is in despair; no, the rare, the very rare exception is that one is not in despair."³⁶ No matter whether one thinks he is or not in despair, he is in despair. Kierkegaard believes that subjectivity is truth and also recommends that "... every man must know by himself better than anyone else whether he is in despair or not."³⁷ Taking this view into consideration one may ask how to distinguish between those people who have reached their true selves by actualizing their possibility of the same and claim that they are no longer in despair and who unknowingly say that they are not in despair. If subjectivity is truth then Kierkegaard offers no reason how to make distinction between both kinds of people.

Kierkegaard explicates mainly two qualitative transitions or leaps, i.e., the qualitative leap, from the state of innocence to that of sin and that of faith which seems a kind of leaping back into the initial state of purity, peacefulness and

³⁵ *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, p. 155.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

repose. There is one more qualitative transition that takes place between these two leaps, i.e., from aesthetic sphere into the ethical, but it does not seem as radical as the qualitative the other two. The first leap is the necessity for everyone, one cannot do away with this instantly rather one has to go through anxiety and various varieties and phrases of despair until the despair become so intense that one is motivated to will, either to succumb to it or overcome it. There is no other way than working through all the despair and anxiety till the threshold point is reached after which one can leap out of the anxiety and despair or sin. One cannot get rid of despair by speculation rather it requires decisiveness which lies in subjectivity. In Hegelian sense, we can say that the thought needs to be mediated by "will" in order to become real. Speculative thinker, in spite of being able to conceive possibilities, does not have "will" to actualize them; therefore he keeps on postponing the task of acquiring his true self. But one cannot ignore one's existence for long as one cannot speculate incessantly for eternity. Here anxiety and despair themselves being negative categories, seems to play a positive role of reminding a thinker of his reality as an existing being and motivate him to further to strive to embrace one's true self.

Chapter 2

Aspects of Subjectivity

Kierkegaard began his philosophical work with the *Concept of Irony*, which was inspired by the Greek philosopher Socrates. Kierkegaard is rightly called as Socrates of Copenhagen; he not only referred to Socrates in his work, but also put his method of acting as a facilitator to bring the truth, into practice. Kierkegaard thinks that one has to find truth for oneself; others at the most can just become facilitator in bringing out the truth from within. He believes only in truth of subjectivity which cannot be communicated directly. As one can have direct relation to truth in one's subjectivity only. Communication is meant to convey objective truths but one can be stimulated or instigated to find the subjective truth, only through indirect communication. Thus, he refutes any sort of authority, i.e., of institutions as well as any other person over an individual. One has to appeal to one's inwardness to find truth and to live authentically. Throughout the philosophy of Kierkegaard, inwardness and/or subjectivity remains the central idea without which his philosophy is bound to collapse.

Most of the concepts in the philosophy of Kierkegaard are well elaborated and explicated but not in a systematic way, perhaps it was one of his ways to refute system building. But when he evaluates and describes the various modes of existence of human being then he seems to be very systematic. He delineates various modes of living by emphasizing their respective psychological characteristics.

The philosophy of Kierkegaard is just an unfolding of different levels of subjectivity which qualifies various other ideas or notions of his philosophy in such a manner that they acquire or correspond to a particular level of it. Some of such

ideas are passion, inwardness, consciousness, despair, guilt and sin. Thus, it is of utmost importance to grasp his notion of subjectivity to understand the content and aim of his philosophy. Most of the categories or concepts that Kierkegaard uses are dialectical and thus can be grasped better by understanding them against the concepts of contrast. The notion of subjectivity calls for the notion of objectivity in order to understand it.

We live in the era of objectivity, knowledge and information, which gives emphasis on knowing more and more things than to move one into making an ethical choice. Human being is the synthesis of finite and infinite aspects. Each of these elements has their own sets of requirements. The requirements of finite part can be fulfilled at aesthetical level and to some extent at ethical level. But it is the requirement of the infinite which keeps us seeking for some of eternal value which, according to Kierkegaard, can be gained (only in the paradoxical religious stage of that of Christianity) by becoming subjective in one's approach.

Kierkegaard is critical of the passionless and cold objectivity which does not seem to bear any mark of life in it. Thus, merely to know the world is not enough, one ought to "will" to be decisive and transform one's own self. Thus he emphasizes on taking responsibility of one's deeds, character or whatever one becomes. How one ought to live one's life, is not an objective question, therefore cannot be answered objectively rather answer lies in living passionately.

1. Subjectivity as the Locus of Development of Consciousness

An existing self is a particular, unique individual having attributes which together coordinate to make it an existential whole. The self in its "concreteness" is something more than the mere sum of the components like, passion, reason and will. It cannot be a more or less self but simply a self or no self. The various faculties of soul are not hierarchical for existence. Existence is the convergence

point where the opposites like thought and action, reason and emotion, and rationality and irrationality join together. The only binding thread which cut across all these components is the existing subject, who lives through all these contrasting existential categories. An individual can try hard to become more and more speculative but cannot avoid the claims that existence stamps on him. One can only deceive oneself by being utmost objective but ultimately one can find that objectivity is for the sake of the subject. As long as an existing self retains its consciousness, it cannot be passed on as an object to "world – history." A speculative thinker is as much a subject as an existential thinker. But how one involves oneself in knowing and experiencing is significant as it makes all the difference. Subjective approach gives more importance to the relationship between the subject and the object of truth rather than the truth content or the object. In the following lines, Kierkegaard brings about the difference between the two approaches.

When the question of truth is raised in the objective manner, reflection is directed objectively to the truth, as an object to which the knower is related. Reflection is not focused upon the relationship, however, but upon the question of whether it is the truth to which knower is related. If only the object to which he is related is the truth, the subject is accounted to be in the truth. When the question of the truth is raised subjectively, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship; if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true. Let us take an example - the knowledge of God. Objectively, the reflection is directed to the problem of whether this object is true God; subjectively, reflection is directed to the question whether the individual is related to

a something in such a manner that his relationship is in truth a God-relationship.³⁸

Thus, we can say that subjective truth lies in the relationship between the subject and the object. It is only subject which relates to object by the process of appropriation. Objective way of knowing truth involves approximation – process and to know God objectively is never possible. Kierkegaard further explicates it and says, “God is a subject, and therefore, exists only for subjectivity in inwardness.”³⁹ Contrary to the subjective truth, the objective truth, i.e., of science, and history are merely approximation as it is liable to change with time. Whatever is required to regard these approximations as truths is supplied by subject through his will to believe. This requirement is a kind of faith, a belief, to hold against uncertainty, which enables one to consider probability or approximation as truth.

According to C. Stephen Evans, Kierkegaard argues that the objective uncertainty must be negated and the task is accomplished by faith or belief. It requires an “intensity of inwardness” to hold the belief against the uncertainty. According to the *Historical Dictionary of Kierkegaard's Philosophy*, “inwardness” is the word Kierkegaard uses to indicate the spiritual potentiality of the human soul. It is the existential quality which can be quantified variously throughout the different stages of the development of soul. How much inward is the inwardness depends upon how much of the opposite, i.e., outwardness it includes. In the state of immediacy, it has inwardness in dormant form or at the most it can be a momentary inwardness which is as good as nothing. Pathos is immediate inwardness when expressed either through a language or through an art. A devotee has a “feminine inwardness”⁴⁰ which is also a lesser degree of inwardness

³⁸Soren A. Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson, Walter Lorie, Princeton University Press, 1974, p. 178.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.258.

but higher than that of momentary inwardness. Kierkegaard attributes the highest possible inwardness to the paradoxical state of Christianity, where subjectivity is truth. Though, the words “inwardness” and “subjectivity” can be used interchangeably but there seems a minor difference in their connotations. “Inwardness” seems more like a source of which the subjectivity is the outcome.

Inwardness or subjectivity qualifies the existence in all the stages according to its intensity. In the aesthetical stage it is in dormant form, i.e., in the form of mere possibility. In ethical sphere one despairs and decides to reveal oneself in it. So he becomes an individual, for whom the truth is inwardness, the “existential inwardness.”⁴¹ The word “inwardness” itself connotes the task of turning inward, to one’s self who is always engaged in existing. For Kierkegaard, “inwardness” is a vantage point from where he tries to grasp the development of self through various modes of existence, to become a true Christian. Moreover, “inwardness” is the significant point of departure between speculative philosophy and Christianity.

For Kierkegaard, inwardness does not involve being detached spectator or observer of one’s own mental states, rather to be involved, have concern or particular interest in, whatever one thinks or does. Inwardness is the locus of one’s core commitments, resolutions, passions and values. Thus, it shapes our responses to events or whatever happens to us, which in turn determine our attitude, and in long run, our character as well. So the potentiality of inwardness manifests in our behaviour and personality. In short, we can say Inwardness accentuates the intensity of existence.

Inwardness or subjectivity is one of the dialectical concepts, used by Kierkegaard, thus, to grasp meaning of subjectivity, it is imperative to consider the concept of contrast, which in this case is objectivity. Kierkegaard emphasizes again

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

and again, “the objective accent falls on WHAT is said, the subjective on How it is said.”⁴² “Objectively the interest is focused mere on the thought-content, subjectivity on the inwardness.”⁴³ Thus, the objective approach of that of a speculative thinker deals only with the “content” of an idea and the subjective approach, which is that of a subjective thinker, is to do with the way he relates to the idea. By merely appropriating the idea, he transforms it into something which is true for him and also gets transformed in the process.

Inwardness or/and subjectivity is the locus of decisiveness. Kierkegaard does not emphasize on doing only good actions rather he gives importance to decisiveness. He wants to initiate people to the point where they cannot do without choosing the very option of choosing the ethical self. Such a decisiveness is rooted in one’s being inward, means one’s being highly aware and concerned about one’s innermost ethical and religious commitment and values. The choice which springs forth from such inwardness can bring about the transformation in one’s mode of living. If some external compulsion, such as, forced discipline is used in order to bring change in one’s life style, then it can make a person to retaliate or be defensive, thereby not allowing any change that can bring transformation. A mere change in one’s life style does not ensure a true and stable transformation, as it can only be an outwardly imposition. But to bring a real transformation one should appeal to one’s inwardness, means it should become adapted to one’s inner ethical commitments, interests and values. Therefore, Kierkegaard affirms,

Only in subjectivity is there decisiveness, to seek objectivity is to be in error. It is the passion of the infinite that is the decisive factor and not

⁴² Ibid., p. 181

⁴³ Ibid.

its content, for its content is precisely itself. In this manner subjectivity and the subjective “how” constitute the truth?⁴⁴

The truth so constituted does not reject the objective truth, which is only an approximation and never certain. It lies in the very holding it fast “in an approximation process of the most passionate inwardness.”⁴⁵ Such a truth, according to Kierkegaard, is the “highest truth”⁴⁶ possible for an individual. In asserting it, he is not denying the possibility of an absolute objective truth as such but he insists only isolated, indifferent and absolute objective truth has nothing to do with the life of an existing subject. The more is the uncertainty, the more will be the passion needed to hold it in tension. The thoughts or doctrines about God are most unbelievable, so to appropriate such thoughts the highest degree of passion is needed which can be nothing less than faith. Thus, Kierkegaard avers,

If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith.⁴⁷

What we can know cannot be believed, though we can believe something contrary to what we know. We can never know God objectively, as he can never be objectified, he exists only for highest degree of subjectivity which that of a “knight of faith” or a true Christian. Thus, the central idea of Kierkegaardian philosophy is appositely represented by his maxim, “subjectivity is truth.”

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.181.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 182.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Kierkegaard says, "It is subjectivity that Christianity is concerned with and it is only in subjectivity that its truth exists, if it exists at all; objectively, Christianity has absolutely no existence."⁴⁸ Only subjectivity or inwardness of an individual can appropriate the good, i.e., "eternal happiness" which "Christianity proposes to endow the individual with". It requires the highest degree of passion to appropriate an eternal good and such passion is nothing but "faith." Thus, says Kierkegaard, "Faith is the highest passion in the scope of human subjectivity."⁴⁹

Subjective truth, being rooted in inwardness cannot be communicated directly like objective truth. According to Kierkegaard, truth having the maximum degree of inwardness is that of the paradoxical religion which Christianity is for him. Thus, he calls such a truth the "troubled truth."⁵⁰ While explicating the difficulty of communication with subjective truth, he says,

The truth that is troubled is the truth which while itself eternally certain of being the truth is essentially concerned with communicating it to others, concerned that they should accept it for their own good in spite of the fact that the truth does not force itself upon them.⁵¹

Thus, such a "troubled truth" cannot be communicated directly like objective truth. It needs efforts on the part of receiver also, in trying to appropriate it inwardly. When the language, (which is always public and universal and apposite to convey finished, given results directly to others) is to be used, then to convey the subjective truth better, one can use it in an indirect manner. Kierkegaard himself used the indirect communication by using various metaphors, analogies, and expressions full of irony and humour. The sole aim of indirect communication is to make

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 116.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 118.

⁵⁰ Alexander Dru (ed.), *The Soul Of Kierkegaard; Selections from His Journals*, Dover Publications, Mineola, 2003, p. 169.

⁵¹ Ibid.

receiver or listener get engaged inwardly in the communication, so that he can find the truth for himself.

Communication of existential truth requires double reflection. In the first reflection one reflects over the universal, i.e., language, and in the second reflection, one reflects over the relation between such a universal and the subject (oneself). To understand the form of word, embedded in public language, is the first reflection. The second reflection communicates the relation of idea with the communicator. Direct communication “dispenses with the dialectic of the infinite.” When a man tries to communicate or teach some existential truth to another man, then “all instructions are transformed into divine jest, because every human being is taught essentially by God.”⁵² Existential truth cannot be communicated directly, even if one tries to convey it indirectly, one cannot assure that other will “grasp” it.

The indirect method of communication seems similar to the method of Socrates which just facilitates the subject in bringing the truth in light. The aim of indirect communication is not simply to remove illusions, and make absurdity and paradoxes understandable, but to accentuate one’s subjectivity so that one can inwardly examine one’s life style. By emphasizing indirect communication, Kierkegaard is not trying to undermine the importance of direct communication. Truth about world-history, mathematics, logic and scientific objective knowledge is conveyed directly but not the existential truth. As Kierkegaard says,

Since the existing subject is occupied in existing (and this is the common to lots of men, except those who are objective and have pure being to be in), it follows that he is in process of becoming. And just as the form of his communication ought to be in essential conformity with

⁵² Kierkegaard’s *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. p. 92.

his mode of existence, so his thought must correspond to the structure of existence.⁵³

Thus direct communication is suitable for completed, finished results or final truths which are fixed once and for all, but the existence is always in becoming, so cannot be communicated directly. A human being owes the “becoming” to the eternal aspect of the self as the structure of existence is the synthesis of temporal and eternal, finite and infinite or negative and positive aspects of an existential thinker. Kierkegaard says,

When it is the case that he actually reflects existentially, the structure of existence in his own existence, he will always be precisely as negative as positive; for his positiveness consists in the continuous realization of the inwardness through which he becomes conscious of negative.⁵⁴

Here the positiveness is the process of inwardly relating to the negative, that is, an object. Thus, an effort to communicate such a structure of existence in direct utterance will make it untrue. Thus, the communication used by subjective thinker “has style that never has anything finished, but moves the water of the language every time he begins, so that the most common expression comes into being for him with the freshness of a new birth.”⁵⁵ Such a style can be achieved only in indirect communication.

Being the synthesis of finite and infinite, human being is in a constant striving of holding the opposites, passionately in tension. It is not, as speculative thinker says, that the opposites can be merged into some higher unity once and for all. The existential striving takes the whole life span and whole being of an

⁵³Ibid., p. 74.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.78.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 79.

individual. The very striving gives meaning to the life of human being and enables him to realize his potentiality for spiritual existence as a spiritual self. A self undergoes different stages of development till it reaches at its “telos” of acquiring spiritual self. So various existential categories, as Kierkegaard calls them, also undergo corresponding stages of development which corresponds directly to the development of self. Such categories are inwardness, guilt, sin, despair, anxiety, etc.

According to Kierkegaard what sustains the striving is the desirability of eternal happiness. Eternal happiness, being dialectical, can be understood better by understanding the momentary worldly pleasure, which is its opposite. The eternal happiness is not confined to heaven only but has bearings on worldly life as well. It gives hope to one who is undergoing hardships and suffering in the temporal and worldly life. It does not exclude anyone as each self has a potentiality to attain the eternal good. When a person relates subjectively to the idea of eternal happiness, it transforms his life into ethico – religious mode of existence. The conception and desirability of eternal happiness can help a person in becoming detached to the worldly pleasure and goods, thereby helping him in choosing infinite over finite.

Eternal happiness requires single mindedness and constant willing. Kierkegaard says that eternal happiness is not something like, wholesale good rather accessible only to an individual. The word “individual” refers to something which is not divisible, thus, united and whole. The “individual” is the category of utmost importance to Kierkegaard in his own life. It is obvious from his statement,

Yet had I to crave an inscription on my grave I would ask for none other than “the individual” – and even if it is not understood now, then in truth it will be. It was with that category that I worked at a time when everything in Denmark was directed towards the system; now it

is no longer so much as mentioned. My possible importance is undoubtedly linked to that category.⁵⁶

Kierkegaard emphasizes that Christianity belongs to the category of “individual” than to that of “crowd.” The path of Christianity is narrow; it cannot afford crowd but an individual. Kierkegaard complains that in our age an individual which is a substantial whole, has been reduced either to an abstract entity or to something universal or general. An individual is a particular, unique existing human being who himself shapes his life, by making decisions, as a free agent. What distinguishes one individual from another is “self,” to which subjectivity belongs.

Subjectivity is the locus of freedom and responsibility. An individual is free to make choices and is responsible for his mode of life. Kierkegaardian philosophy focuses on the task of transformation of individual rather than society. Kierkegaard contrasts the “individual” with “crowd” on one hand, and with “God” on the other. When an individual is part of a crowd, it loses its character and conscience, thereby its freedom and sense of responsibility as well.

Once the conscience is lost, one cannot overcome “immediacy” in oneself as conscience is needed to examine one’s mode of living and to relate to some higher idea or ideal inwardly. Subjectivity is merged in the “general” or “objective” of the crowd, thus, individual becomes a “pure being” rather than “becoming,” which can be grasped in thinking where being and thought are identical. When an individual stands in relation to God, then he is in absolute relation to the absolute *telos*, i.e., eternal happiness which according to Kierkegaard, only Christianity can endow on individual. Unlike Christianity in Christendom, an individual seems to be in relation with both “God” and “crowd” simultaneously. Thus, one seems related to both “God” as well as “world” equally. But in order to stand in true relation to the eternal, one has to renounce temporal, worldly joy and ambitions. When one is related to absolute then all other relative ends have only relative significance, but

⁵⁶ Alexander Dru (ed.), *The Soul Of Kierkegaard*, p. 133.

Christendom brings both the absolute and the relative on par. Thus, Christendom is a kind of Hegelian mediation only, where all differences are abrogated and nothing substantial remains. Kierkegaard has severely criticized such kinds of Christianity where lifelong task of striving for becoming a true Christianity becomes the easiest, as one can become Christian merely by taking birth in a Christian community. By becoming a number in a crowd, an individual may feel secure and relieved from the responsibility but his life becomes unstable and with full of pretensions, falsehood that ends in despair only. Thus, according to Kierkegaard, to be an individual is a task of utmost significance for Christianity, as only an individual can strive to acquire his true self.

Christianity is interested only in the individual's becoming himself and the self, here is the self contrasted as a synthesis of opposites which is mediated by spirit.⁵⁷

But to become oneself is to become concrete. An individual can become concrete by actualizing its possibilities through making choices as a free agent. Kierkegaard reiterates that self has both possibility as well as necessity.

... the self is a synthesis of the finite and the infinite of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity. The self is the conscious unity of these factors which relates to itself, whose task is to become itself. This, of course, can only be done in relationship to God, who holds the synthesis together.⁵⁸

When an individual relates with only one of the aspects, then he becomes inauthentic and ends up in despair.

⁵⁷ John W. Elrod, "Feuerbach and Kierkegaard on the Self," *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 56 , No. 4 ,(Oct., 1976), p. 360, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20010995>. Accessed on: 23/04/2010.

⁵⁸ Charles E. Moore (ed.), *Provocations: Spiritual writings of Kierkegaard*, the Bruderhof Foundation, Inc. 2002. P.136.

If one focuses mainly on possibility while neglecting the necessity, then the self turns into an abstract or fantastic self. Similarly, if one recognizes only the other part of the self, i.e., necessity while neglecting the self, then such an individual will become determinist or fatalist. As necessity we have our past and bodily self, and as possibility we have our future projects, so to concretize oneself one needs to relate to the both the aspects, i.e., our past and future in a right manner while existing in the present. The “fantastic self” needs to gain “the power to obey, to submit to the necessary in oneself while the fatalist needs to possess enough imagination to become aware of one’s ethico-religious self and potential to relate to the ideal of ‘absolute’.”⁵⁹

According to Kierkegaard, an ethical person is not one, who always does good actions rather who chooses to be decisive and actualizes the choice. The decisiveness is rooted in one’s being inward, in other words, being highly interested and concerned. Being subjective or inward does not mean being arbitrary and whimsical. The choice, which springs forth from such an inwardness, can never be wrong in eternal validity.

When one of the two aspects either possibility or necessity is ignored, and then self becomes undialectical, which is the mark of an aesthetic person. The infinite aspect of the self gives movement to existence, so an individual does not give up striving for eternal happiness in the time of trials. Throughout the journey of the development of self, individual undergoes various moods like anxiety, dread, melancholy, etc. these moods have much to with inwardness than any external factor. These moods heighten one’s consciousness which in turn accentuates the intensity of the subjectivity. The despair of a defiant is more intense than that of an innocent person who does not even know about it, as the “degree of

⁵⁹ Soren A. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1974, p. 169.

consciousness⁶⁰ of the former is more as compare to the later. The higher degree of inwardness or subjectivity implies that the individual is more earnest in being decisive, owing to one's potentiated consciousness (awareness.)

Kierkegaard says that a dying person will always do, what is right. This may be due to higher degree of inwardness and awareness at the time of death, as worldly event cannot make our consciousness so intense. According to Kierkegaard,

...experiencing the subjective truth of one's own death is an essential prerequisite to experiencing one's true self. A genuine understanding of our own morality helps us to see what is truly important in our existence.⁶¹

The constant remembrance of one's death keeps one from giving importance to trivial things and gives courage to venture everything for the sake of infinite and spiritual self that is one's true self. Death makes an individual realize the temporality, fragility and finitude of worldly life, thus, cautions him/her not to waste time in being indecisive. It motivates one to fulfil the requirements of the eternal while living in the highest mode of existence, i.e., religious sphere.

Thus all the negativity that one has to meet in life such as anxiety, despair, suffering, guilt, sin consciousness, etc., has something positive to contribute in an individual's life. Self is always in the process of becoming; thereby undergoes a kind of evolution of consciousness. Self is free to choose and make its own fate.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 175

⁶¹ Michal Watts, *Kierkegaard*, One World Publications, 2007, p. 207.

2. Subjectivity and the Spheres of Existence

“Boredom to enjoyment,” seems to be the only motto which sums up the whole attitude towards life for an aesthetic person. An aesthetic person does not seem to believe in immediacy. There are various stages within the aesthetical stage, viz. from the earliest immediate aesthetic stage to refined speculative one. Here, the comic that arises due to the incongruent situation lies outside the person. His way of living is marked by accidents, events, that is to say, determined by the external factors. In such a situation the dialectical is present only in outside situations and the person himself is undialectical. Thus “... the two principles in accordance with which aesthetic existence is determined are those of aesthetic immediacy and intellectual doubt.”⁶² Despair is one of the characteristics of the aesthetical stage or sphere and intellectual doubt is also a kind of despair. But the despair at this level is not as intense as that of higher level of existence but can be intense enough to move one to bring to the point of choosing oneself by choosing one’s mode of existence. It is only the ability of despair that keeps an aesthetic person apart from the animal world; otherwise he is driven by the pleasure and pain principle.

Human being is a synthesis of possibility and necessity. An aesthetic person always ignores one of the aspects thereby avoids taking risks by taking any decision which is required to realize one’s self concretely. If an aesthetic person ignores the aspect of possibility, then he becomes merely a fatalist governed by fate through the categories of fortunes and misfortunes. He takes life as it comes and never has the courage to create it for himself. A fatalist lacks the faculty of imagination, which one needs to have the aspect of possibility, therefore is unable to recognize the possibility of acquiring a self. Kierkegaard says

⁶² A. G. George, *The First Sphere; A Study in Kierkegaardian Aesthetics*, Asia Publishing House, 1965, p. 62.

The determinist or fatalist is in despair and in despair he has lost his self because for him everything is necessary.⁶³

If one ignores the aspect of necessity, then one becomes a self, living in fantasy world or in a fairy land. For him, all the possibilities are conceivable within the limitations of one's end of getting maximum pleasure and avoiding pain. He keeps on moving from one possibility to another by using his faculty of imagination and never has the courage to be decisive or commit oneself to some meaningful action of realizing any of the possibilities. He will immerse oneself in all sorts of imaginations and senses, such as, poetry, music, gossiping, eating delicacies, etc. and so forth.

Kierkegaard says that one can be lost in the possibilities in two forms, viz. "wishful, yearning form" and "melancholy fantastic form." The first form is that of hope and the second form is that of anguished dread. In the "wishful" form one goes after possibilities without "summoning back possibility into necessity" and in the case of melancholy possibility, one imagines the future possibilities with the negative attitude, thereby becomes melancholic and fears the undesirable outcome. In such a condition one cannot relate to one's necessity as per requirement.⁶⁴ The lack of either necessity or possibility leaves one in despair. When possibility does not go beyond the limits of necessity, only then the actuality can be realized. In aesthetic sphere subjectivity lies dormant as possibility, thus it is not yet awakened. Kierkegaard says, "the awakening of subjectivity"⁶⁵ is brought out by irony and facilitate one to ascend to the next sphere, i.e., ethical.

The aesthetic sphere of life accommodates the maximum number of people. When one is born, he finds himself in this sphere only. An aesthetic person is either

⁶³ *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, p. 173.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁶⁵ Michael Watts, *Kierkegaard*, p. 69.

not aware of his mode of living or not willing to modify or change it in spite of being aware. The most immediate or unrefined aesthetic person lacks the critical thinking or reflection needed to ponder over one's mode of living. Thus, he desires to get the permanent joy in the worldly things. But such a life – style of immediacy always ends up in despair. An aesthetic person can be highly speculative thinker or can be sufficiently gifted intellectual to see the possibility of the higher sphere viz. ethical. According to Kierkegaard such persons are rare in this sphere. He asserts,

The majority of people live entirely without ideas; then there are the few who have a poetic relation to the ideal, but deny it in their personal life.⁶⁶

Thus, such a person does not live his idea or ideal and always falls prey to the temptation of deferring decisiveness. He exercises his intellectual faculty to devise the ways of getting intellectual pleasure by playing with ideas and making castles in the air. Even a genius is the member of the aesthetic sphere as one is genius by birth. He remains there unless he decides himself to leap into the ethical sphere by committing oneself to it. Thus such kind of refined aesthetic persons keep on looking at the opportunity, to make it to the utmost to get the maximum pleasures and can cultivate the pleasure out of the trivial things.

An aesthetic person wants to satisfy his desires to get pleasure and thus keeps on chasing objects of his desires and keeps on switching from one object to other endlessly. In this way, he tries to get the pleasure eternally. How hard one may try to live forever in the moments of pleasures, but one gets or may get frustration only as to desire the finite or temporal things, in an absolute manner is not possible. Thus one either succumbs to the meaninglessness and boredom of aesthetic life or decides to choose the ethical. No other alternative is possible. If it would have been possible to get the endless pleasure, merely by adding the quantity

⁶⁶ Alexander Dru (ed.), *The Soul Of Kierkegaard*, p. 153.

of objects, even then one would have never got true happiness, viz. eternal happiness. According to Kierkegaard eternal happiness is that with which one can relate continuously to the highest possible realm, i.e., the paradoxical religion. Such a happiness is qualitatively different from that of immediate happiness or pleasure, thus merely by changing quantity of pleasure will not lead to the “eternal happiness.” All the strivings in human’s life is for the state of happiness in the ultimate and the aesthete takes the moments of pleasure as the only happiness possible. Thus there seems to be the definite pattern in the unorganized life of an aesthetic person, i.e., of boredom, pleasure and finally despair.

Despair is the definite outcome of the life of immediacy, however, refined or hedonistic it may be. In life’s journey of acquiring the higher self, aesthetic sphere of existence is not contingent but necessary. It is necessary in the sense, it is inevitable. Even “knight of faith,” has to cross this stage as by being born (in sin) one commences the journey from the aesthetic stage. What is lacking in the aesthetic person is inwardness and subjectivity which is the hallmark of an ethical person. Inwardness requires one to be courageous and to take risks in order to be decisive. Thus inwardness and decisiveness make all the difference in one’s way of living. Decisiveness or inward action brings about the inner transformation which is of utmost significance. It facilitates one in transcending the limitations and temptations of the lower kinds of existence to embrace the higher one.

An aesthetic person does not want to put himself under eternal determination and he refuses to acknowledge himself as spirit. Though a refined aesthetic person may conceive the possibility of higher self as spirit but do not have the required inwardness and decisiveness.⁶⁷ Such a person can, according to Kierkegaard, “... follow passion so long as passion yields pleasure.”⁶⁸ He does

⁶⁷ Howard A. Johnson, Niels Thulstrup, *A Kierkegaard Critique; An international selection of essays interpreting Kierkegaard*, RPER & Brothers Publishers, 1962, p. 135.

⁶⁸ A. G. George, *The First Sphere; A Study in Kierkegaardian Aesthetics*, p. 64.

things arbitrarily in immediate moments of passion which sum up to nothing meaningful. Thus an aesthete is spontaneous but not free in true sense. He remains victim of the various mood swings, like anxiety, melancholy and despair and is unable to transcend them or relate to them in the manner conducive to acquire higher self that is ethical.

Ethical sphere requires one to become inward and take the responsibility of one's actions. Ethical self is a social self, which has the sense of duty and responsibility towards others and is ready to sacrifice its selfish ends of getting pleasure for the good of society. Kierkegaard calls the task of becoming ethical as choosing the very necessity to choose. The journey of becoming inward and acquiring a higher self in true sense starts in ethical sphere. An ethical person does not reject the aesthetical aspect rather subordinates it by making the ethical choice of choosing one self. An aesthetic speculative thinker is different from an ethical or subjective thinker as the former remains immersed in the world of ideas and is contented with mere understanding things but a subjective thinker goes beyond that and takes action which affects the substantial self.

The ethical sphere is all the more important due to its significance for the religious sphere of existence. At ethical stage, a person undergoes the various trials and gains the much required experience for the religious self. Thus ethical sphere is all about taking actions in order to create a better self, that is, aesthetical self, to make the transformation into a religious self possible.

Ethical sphere is a normative sphere which aims at attaining certain ethical ends or *telos*. Ethical realm bears claim on an existing individual, who is the synthesis of necessity and possibility. Regarding the claim Kierkegaard says, "This claim is not that he should abstract from existence, but rather that he should exist and this is at the same time his highest interest."⁶⁹ An abstract thinker nullifies the existential reality by absorbing it into the realm of possibility and remains

⁶⁹ Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 279.

contended as he does away with all the contradictions by merging them into a higher unity of system of knowledge. He says,

All knowledge about reality is possibility. The only reality to which an existing individual may have a relation that is more than cognitive, is his own reality, the fact that he exists; this reality constitute his absolute interest.⁷⁰

Thus, knowledge and reality are not at par. Knowledge is just a representation of reality which is existential and particular, in the form of universal, that is, public language. An ethical self is passionately engaged in existing and always strives to become oneself while holding the contrary aspects of itself, i.e., necessity and possibility, temporality and eternity in tension with utmost passion. The aspect of possibility involves the faculty of imagination which enables the self to become more than what it is, only if it remains anchored in its necessity rather than going astray in fantasy. Thus ethical sphere is all about actuality where possibility and necessity meet, as Kierkegaard affirms that “the only reality that exists for an existing individual is his own ethical reality.”⁷¹ It is the category of “individual” to which ethics belong, not to that of “crowd.” Thus, Kierkegaard emphasizes,

Ethics concentrate upon the individual, and ethically it is the task of every individual to become an entire man; just as it is the ethical presupposition that every man is born in such a condition that he can become one.⁷²

It means every human being has the potential to attain the ethical self only if he decides to recognize himself as an individual rather than getting lost in a crowd. An individual encompasses various dimensions in oneself, as one cannot strive to

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 280.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 280.

⁷² Ibid., p. 309.

acquire higher self at the cost of ignoring even one of them. Thus the various aspects of self such as thought imagination, feeling and volition, etc., without making any hierarchy, coordinate to create an “entire man” out of the “given” self.

Kierkegaard insists, “... there is required for a subjective thinker imagination and feeling, dialectics in existential inwardness, together with passion.”⁷³ Thus, Kierkegaard acknowledges that the various aspects of an existing man are required to form the “dialectics in existential inwardness, together with passion.”⁷⁴ But he emphasizes particularly passion as the “first and last”⁷⁵ requirement. Thus it requires self-involvement on the part of existing being not mere passionless, disinterested contemplation. It is easy to understand the ethical but difficulty lies in realizing it in actuality. Thus, the task is to act than to know, as Kierkegaard affirms, “...What I really lack is to be clear in my mind *what I am to do, not* what I am to know, except in so far as a certain understanding must precede every action.”⁷⁶

The process of transforming possibility into actuality is denoted by the term “reduplication” by Kierkegaard. Reduplication is significant for an existing being. In the ethical, to live the idea or ideal is important than mere speculating it. Whatever one believes should be manifested in one’s behaviour and character. How a person believes or relates to an idea is of utmost significance in the ethical sphere. If one contemplates an idea, merely to avoid boredom and just to seek the mental pleasure of playing with it, then that person is not able to relate to idea in a right manner. The right way is to appropriate the idea inwardly, and reduplicate it. Actualization of a possibility requires decisiveness in which the idea corresponds to

⁷³ Ibid., p. 312.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 313.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Robert Bretell, *A Kierkegaard Anthology*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1946, p. 4.

reality. The source of such decisiveness is the subjectivity of the person itself. Thus it will not be an anomaly if one says that subjectivity creates truth.

Kierkegaard's dictum, "truth is subjectivity" seems compatible with his emphasis on the category of individual and his rejection of authoritarianism. He is critical of all sorts of authoritarianism, whether it is of Christendom, rationalism, positivism or fascism. Kierkegaard expresses his apprehension regarding authoritarianism exercised by one person over other as,

For while no human was ever truly an authority for another or ever helped anyone by posing as such, or was ever able to take his client with him in truth, there is another sort of success that may by such methods be won; for it has never yet been known to fail that one fool, when he goes astray, takes several others with him.⁷⁷

Thus, it is clear from the above statement that no human being can become authority for others owing to his finitude. No man is perfect as from ethical point of view, he is in error; and from religious standpoint, he is in sin. At the most, a person is an occasion for another person of getting reminded of the truth which lies potentially in every human being.

The only authority that Kierkegaard accepts is that of God. Citing the role of a teacher for a learner, he further says, "What the teacher can give him occasion to remember is, that he is in error."⁷⁸ The learner has to discover his error himself. No one else's knowledge of his error is of any importance to him. But "to acquire the truth, the teacher must bring it to him, and not only so, but he must also give him the condition necessary for understanding it."⁷⁹ According to Kierkegaard,

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 156.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 158.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

such teacher is none other than God. In the light of above argument, it seems as if only error is subjective, not the truth.

How a self ought to be related to others comes within the realm of the ethical. Generally, the ethical is understood as driven by rational, universal principles which are represented by laws, customs and norms of a society. Such an ethical realm has no place for exceptions as it requires everyone to follow the rules and laws alike, irrespective of one's condition or situation. A rational law or norm can become universal in abstraction only but when it is applied by compulsion to unique, diverse concrete units such as individual, society, nation etc., it takes various form such as customs, social values, laws, etc. which vary with space and time. How a person appropriates these customs and laws, further particularizes them.

Kierkegaard does not believe in any objective criteria of moral value. For Kierkegaard, ethical sustained by social norms and by legal laws is of lower order as it emphasizes on the objectivity. The ethical norms though universal are rooted in subjectivity whether of some historical tragic hero or of a person who has attained the maximum of inwardness i.e., the knight of faith. By becoming inward a person gets related to one's inner conscience which guides the person in ethical matters. Thus, one's subjectivity creates the values which are compatible with the universal ethical laws. Here the Kierkegaard's approach seems to be, from inward to outward, contrary to that of social customs and laws not appropriated. In this matter Kierkegaard aptly gives the analogy:

There are many people who reach their conclusions about life like schoolboy; they cheat their master by copying the answer out of a book without having worked out the sum for themselves.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Alexander Dru (ed.), *The Soul Of Kierkegaard*, p. 53.

Thus, unless a person works out the values and laws passionately for himself and stops trying to imitate others in the name of universal, he cannot become an authentic self.

There is no absolute authority other than God. Kierkegaard reserves authority in the limited sense to human beings; to teach what he has mastered exercising one's "will," after going through existential trial or struggle. Thus, Kierkegaard says,

The existential authority to teach corresponds to "the voluntary." Who is to teach poverty? The person who is himself struggling for money or has it can talk about it, but without authority; only the "voluntary" poor, the person who has freely given up riches and is poor, has authority.⁸¹

In this statement, Kierkegaard is indirectly referring to the bishops, parsons and clergymen of the church who pretend to have authority by ordination and thus preach what they themselves do not know subjectively. Though the thrust of Kierkegaardian philosophy itself is that of the problem of becoming a true Christian, but he himself acknowledges that he has no authority over it, his effort is only that of Socrates, that is, to facilitate in bringing the truth by "meiotic method."

The use of indirect communication than the direct one further supports his argument that he has no authority. One ought to admit that no one has access to the inwardness of the other person. In such a scenario, direct communication is bound to fail as the uniqueness of one's inwardness cannot be grasped by the universal. Moreover the indirect communication is also not apposite to communicate the truth of Christianity. Thus the only authority is God, in whose revelation, lies the truth. Kierkegaard says,

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 174.

The communication of Christianity must ultimately end in “bearing witness,” The maieutic form can never be final. For truth, from the Christian point of view, does not lie in the subject (as Socrates understood it) but in a revelation which must be proclaimed.⁸²

According to Kierkegaard the maieutic method, i.e., indirect method is still within the realm of “human intelligence.” Thus the highest truth needs to be revealed to human beings by the authority, i.e., God. By acknowledging the truth and by not being authoritative a subjective thinker potentiates his authenticity. The above discussion also seems to imply that only a person who has suspended the ethical (only after attaining the religious stage, here it will be only religiousness A as the suspension of ethical is prior to religiousness B as it is the one of the prerequisite of relation B), or attained the state of faith, has the authority over the ethical. This is the reason Kierkegaard does not approve of any “crowd” either in the name “public” in the political sphere or in the religious sphere. When an individual becomes lost in the “abstract” named “crowd,” he loses his capacity of acquiring a higher self, i.e., an ethical or religious self.

Kierkegaard insists that most of the people by being the part of Christendom think themselves as Christian. But they, in reality, belong to the aesthetical or at the most to “aesthetical-ethical categories.”⁸³ So we can clearly see that there are stages within the sphere of ethical. The two main stages can be clearly delineated, the first is the ethical which is determined objectively and the second stage is that which is determined subjectively. The first can be called as “aesthetical-ethical stage” and second can be called as “ethical-religious stage.” Kierkegaard attaches much significance to the second approach that is the subjective approach of ethical, which goes well with his central idea that subjectivity is truth. The second approach of the ethical requires the passion and

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁸³ Robert Bretell (ed.), *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, p. 332.

commitment towards other individuals. Without making ethical commitments one cannot imagine to acquire the higher spiritual self which demands absolute commitment. Only an ethical self can leap to the religious mode of experience.

In religious sphere, the worldly commitment of the ethical is transformed into the absolute commitment. But absolute commitment needs something eternal or absolute as its object unlike the ethical sphere. Immanuel Kant tried to base the morality on some universal principles which he found in “good will.” According to him, it is not necessary that an action alone with good intention will bear good results. So, instead of actions, the universal criterion of defining the ethical can be good intention or will. Kierkegaard also emphasizes on making a choice with good will. But Kantian “good will” seems devoid of content while Kierkegaard’s “good will” has the eternal happiness or the “highest good” as the ultimate end. Thus, according to Kierkegaard, to will the eternal good makes a will a “good will.” One cannot will it once and for all rather it has to be willed constantly, every moment. All the ethical actions are ultimately related to the highest good by goodwill. The highest good belongs to the religious sphere which presupposes the ethical but an ethical person may not necessarily end up leaping into the religious sphere.

Sometimes an ethical life may also become impediment on the way of acquiring the highest good, if one does not relate to it in right manner. The ethical life is a disciplined life, which demands an ordered and routine life driven by universal values and faith in “general.” One may lose one’s enthusiasm to break out the routine and go further. One may undergo suffering in the ethical sphere but suffering will be of tragic hero, which can secure the sympathy of fellow men. He can make himself understandable to others and thus gets admiration for his mode of existence. So he may not dare to transcend the worldly stable and admirable life and may avoid venturing forth on the way of becoming a true Christian. (The one, who keeps the aspiration of becoming religious alive in his heart, can be facilitated by humour in the transition from ethical to religious. Similarly, irony is conducive for the transition from aesthetical to religious.)

An objective ethical self is a “self” before his fellow beings. So he measures himself on the basis of other’s opinion, praise and blames. There is a hidden fear of losing one’s ethical self before others. Kierkegaard explicates it as following: “The measure for the self always is that in the face of which it is a self; but this does not define what ‘measure’ is.”⁸⁴ Kierkegaard gives an example of a herdsman who is a self before cows and of a king who is a self before his subjects. The herdsman owns a lower self than the king, as the herdsman’s measure, i.e., herd of cows is lower than king’s measure which consists of human beings. Similarly, one can acquire the self which is higher than all selves by standing before the highest measure, i.e., God.

A self who is in direct sight of God becomes infinitely potentiated. Then if such a self sins, it also gets potentiated; therefore the selfishness of Christianity is more qualified than that of paganism. Thus, sin that belongs to Christianity is the sin in “strict” sense.⁸⁵ So, if a person does not become aware of the eternal, then the transition to the religious becomes more difficult.

The consistency of one’s character can also defer the transition where it is from aesthetical to ethical or from ethical to religious. One’s character is based on the consistency of a definite kind of pattern in one’s mode/s of existence. It is very different for a demoniac person to become a believer, as the former has the consistency of evil and the latter has the consistency of good. The consistency of evil leads one to sin while that of good to faith. Thus to do something against the consistency of character is like vanishing oneself and become nothing. This is one reason that the transitory stages store in a good amount of anxiety and despair. Decisiveness helps one overcome the despair and go to the higher level of existence.

⁸⁴ *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, p. 210.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

To sum up, we can say that there are mainly three spheres as stages of existence which are not homogenous in themselves, rather have sub stages. Though the main stages are delineated by leaps, which are categories of decisiveness but they are overlapping. Kierkegaard explicates this by saying that a higher mode of existence retains the best part of lower and subordinates it to itself therefore transforms it for better. Aesthetic person tries to satisfy the desire by pursuing momentary pleasure while the ethical person tries to satisfy it by pursuing ethical values such as love, peace and justice. In similar manner, a religious person also desires happiness but he does not pursue it in pleasure or social values rather in eternity. Similarly, passion is there, present in aesthetical sphere but is misplaced in pursuing sensory enjoyment. The same passion is potentiated in the ethical sphere when it is involved in commitments towards others. But the highest manifestation of passion is focused only in the religious sphere in the form of faith. One strives to leap from lower mode of existence to higher mode of existence. In the process, an individual purges one's given self and acquires a highly potentiated self which is able to realize the highest degree of freedom in committing oneself towards the absolute Subject in the state of highest degree of inwardness or/and subjectivity.

Chapter 3

Nature of Faith

Kierkegaard through his works, whether philosophical, psychological or theological, deals mainly with the question of becoming a true Christian which is further related to the problem of existing as a human being. To find the answer to the question, he deeply investigates the existence of human being and its various modes. According to him, in order to be a true Christian one is required to know what Christianity is. But the anomaly is that one cannot know it without becoming a Christian himself. Thus, for Kierkegaard, the existential import of religiousness, in a broader sense and Christianity in particular, is much more important than its epistemology.

Kierkegaard condemns Christendom saying that it has converted the religion of suffering into something of mirth or merriment. According to Kierkegaard, consciousness of suffering, guilt and sin is one of the essential requirements of the religious mode of existence. In the higher mode of existence passionate commitments subsume reason. Kierkegaard's emphasis on paradox in the highest mode of life seems one of his attempts to overthrow the Hegel's system of knowledge. The development of spirit is culminated in "abstract knowledge" for Hegel and that for Kierkegaard in "absolute paradox" of religion.

Kierkegaard reiterates the complain that while living in the age of information and knowledge we have become oblivious of our own existence, so the religious mode of existence has become all the more difficult or almost impossible. Kierkegaard says that an individual forgets to live religiously if he does not know what it means to be. Many profound thinkers relate the existing with knowing. So, they try to rationalize existence by making it a system where all the differences

between inner and outer, thought and being, singularity and generality, and faith and knowledge are abrogated in order to do away with the paradox that existence has. But the most profound paradox, that is, of faith can be comprehended only as absurd. The motto of a speculative thinker is, "to know is to be,"⁸⁶ and for Christianity it is, "to believe is to be."⁸⁷

1. Faith and Voluntariness

The idea of faith is of utmost importance in the philosophy of Kierkegaard. Even the idea of subjectivity that cut across all other ideas or categories finds its highest expression in his idea of faith. He himself being a Christian tries to base his idea of faith upon that of Biblical faith. His idea of faith is not simply about believing certain doctrines of scriptures rather he believes in lived faith which is far removed from traditional idea of faith that consists merely in contemplating the eternal. Such a faith has an idea, as apprehended by the subject, as its object. On the other hand, Kierkegaardian idea of faith has God-man, a paradox, the absolute ontological being as its object. His notion of faith therefore is, related to the paradoxical religion. He considers only paradoxical religion as religion in strict sense which is nothing but Christianity for him.

Faith is a kind of belief which is different from any ordinary belief. An ordinary belief derives its validity as belief from external evidences. Thus, it is nearer to truth in proportion to the available proofs or evidences. But faith derives its validity from one's inwardness in spite of having it is object without as an independent Being. An ordinary belief can be shared but faith being incommunicable remains unique to the possessor. The inwardness is the seat of

⁸⁶ Soren Kierkegaard. *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1974, p. 224.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

voluntariness which is required in order to be decisive and venture forth in the realm of faith. An ordinary belief may be logically certain, but may lack passion. On the other hand faith is irrational but has certitude which again emanates from passion of inwardness. A belief can be doubted by the believer himself at one or the other instant of time but faith is such a belief which does not entertain any iota of doubt, if once established.

Kierkegaard reproaches the Hegelian attempt of the clergy and priests to provide rational proofs to support the doctrines especially to prove God's existence as reason being finite cannot contain the infinite. Moreover the object that one can know need not be believed. Kierkegaard renders even the facts of objective sciences as beliefs, as they may be highly probable but lacks certitude that has to be supplied by the subject. The certitude cannot be the outcome of sufficient number of evidences and number being infinite; we can never know what constitute the sufficient number. He asserts that being in sin; human beings cannot even recognize the truth in spite of being in front of it. Thus, his idea of faith can be understood by exploring his larger project of introducing true Christianity while annihilating the falsehood of Christendom. Here, we need to investigate the role of reason and that of voluntariness in constituting faith.

For Kierkegaard, the opposite of faith is sin. In case of an ordinary belief the opposite can be an intellectual doubt, never sin. This assertion regarding faith brings out the uniqueness of faith as, according to Kierkegaard, it also means that whatever is not faith is sin. Thus the number of human beings in sin is such that it can be generalized to most of the human beings, only a few being the exceptions. Those who have attained the state of faith are often called "chosen few" or elected ones, which seems to imply that the state of faith has been bestowed on them from the heaven above but this is not as simple as that, as one of the prerequisite of the faith is willingness on the part of an individual. According to Kierkegaard, man is born in sin and can get out of it only by becoming conscious of it. As the first step

in curing a disease is to recognize it, in the same manner one needs to become conscious of sin, a disease everyone suffering with.

Kierkegaardian notion of sin is different from that of Socrates. According to Socrates, sin is ignorance and the opposite of it is virtue which lies in knowledge. Kierkegaard states it like this,

The opposite of sin is faith .And this is one of the most decisive definitions of all Christianity—that the opposite of sin is not virtue but faith.⁸⁸

Socratic idea of sin does not comply with that of Kierkegaard as the former confines sin within the limits of reason reducing it merely to the rightness and wrongness, which is not the case with the latter. Thus Socrates' assertion that sin lies in ignorance implies that an individual cannot do wrong knowingly. In other words, if a man does wrong, then it simply means he has not understood what is right. But for Kierkegaard, if it is so, then sin does not exist at all, as he says, "For if sin is indeed ignorance, then sin properly does not exist, since sin is definitely consciousness."⁸⁹ Thus if one does an act in ignorance, then the doer cannot be held responsible for that, so is not liable to be in sin. Kierkegaard agrees with Socrates to some extent when he says, ". . . in a Christian sense, sin doubtless is ignorance; it is ignorance of what sin is."⁹⁰ According to him, man himself being in the sin cannot explain what exactly the sin is, so one has to rely on the revelation from God to get the instruction regarding it. Thus, sin consists in not "willing" to do

⁸⁸ Charles E. Moore, *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*, The Bruderhof Foundation, 2002, p. 378.

⁸⁹ *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, p. 220.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

right, in spite of knowing it. "So then sin lies in the will, not in the intellect; and this corruption of the will goes well beyond the consciousness of the individual."⁹¹

Conceptually ignorance can either be total or partial. In reality there is no man totally ignorant or totally devoid of it, that is, omniscient, owing to his finitude. It seems that, one can never come out of sin completely. This further implies that even so called virtue, that is, knowledge of human beings is not perfect. This argument seems to fall in line of that of Kierkegaard, for whom knowledge can never be absolute or perfect for a human being. According to Kierkegaard, absolute knowledge is possible only for an absolute, omniscient being, that is, God.

According to Kierkegaard, being a sinner, an individual can never come to know, what sin is. It is only through revelation he can get the instruction about sin, as he says,

Christianity begins in another way, by declaring that there must be a revelation from God in order to instruct man as to what sin is, that sin does not do the right, but in the fact that he will not understand it, and in the fact that he will not do it.⁹²

Here the "freedom of will" also become significant, which according to Kierkegaard is given to us by God. Moreover, instructions become meaningful only when one is free either to obey or defy them. The statement once again emphasizes that sin lies in one's will, therefore being less or more ignorant does not affect one's state of being in sin which is a totality.

For Kierkegaard freedom is mainly of two kinds, that is, "freedom of choice" and "true freedom." Augustine calls the former as *liberum arbitrium*, and

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 226.

⁹² Ibid.

the latter as *libertas*.⁹³ Freedom of choice is “the personal ability to do otherwise.”⁹⁴ True freedom, “. . . is the moral concreteness one acquires in and through choosing a specific alternative and subsequently binding oneself to it.”⁹⁵ Freedom of choice is a baffling kind of freedom, in the sense that one does anything arbitrarily at least to the extent one’s facticity allows. Its arbitrariness is such that one is free even to do suicide out of boredom for no particular reason. Such a freedom seems to be present in an aesthetic person but even he will not be able to afford such nasty freedom for long as it will lead him to nowhere but despair. Then the person will be left with only two options: either succumb to the despair or overcome it by choosing the true freedom. Thus it seems that freedom of choice can be entertained incessantly, only at conceptual level. Kierkegaard, also refers, the freedom of choice as “unconditional freedom.” He says,

Unconditional freedom, freedom which equally well chooses the good or the evil, is nothing but an abrogation of freedom and a despair of any explanation of it. Freedom means to be capable.⁹⁶

Kierkegaard does not acknowledge freedom which is unconstraint. He asserts, “Freedom is always an interested, contextualize freedom.”⁹⁷ The freedom of choice and true freedom seems to be mutually exclusive of each other. The former kind of freedom is the source of “nausea” for Sartre, while true freedom is the source of creation of higher self. For Kierkegaard, the true freedom gives one the capacity to actualize one’s higher possibilities. True freedom includes inner necessity which is imposed willingly and decisively upon an action, thereby excluding the possibility

⁹³ Alastair Hanny, Gorden D. Marino, *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 247.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Charles E. Moore (ed.), *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*, p. 289.

⁹⁷ Alastair Hanny, Gorden D. Marino. *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, p. 219.

of doing otherwise. Such kind of freedom brings a sense of responsibility and well being and abrogates the freedom of choice.

An individual can conceive more number of possibilities than he can actualize. Actualisation takes place in the real time which is always limited for a finite being. Thus the temporality of existence compels an individual to choose the possibilities which are more relevant for him than others. So the meaningfulness of a possibility is all the more important than their number. Kierkegaard says,

Shall a man in truth will one thing, then this one thing that he wills must be such that it remains unaltered in all changes, so that by willing it he can win immutability.⁹⁸

One wills many things for the sake of one or the other end. But there always remains the possibility of such an end which is willed for its own sake. For Aristotle, such an end is eudemonia or happiness. For Kierkegaard, such an end is "the good (faith);"⁹⁹ where all the despairs end and one gets related to the eternal happiness. Thus one ought ultimately to choose the Good over the multitude of things, that is, the world. Kierkegaard asserts,

For the Good without condition and without qualification, without preface and without compromise, is absolutely the only thing that a man may and should will, and is only one thing.¹⁰⁰

An individual cannot will one thing which is other than Good. Only in religious sphere one is able to choose one thing but it cannot be chosen once for all, rather one has to will it every moment. To choose anything other than Good is double-mindedness which implies the impurity of will and results in despair which is the

⁹⁸ Robert Bretell, *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, Princeton University Press, 1946, p. 276.

⁹⁹ Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, p. 232.

¹⁰⁰, Robert Bretell, *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, Princeton University Press, 1946, p. 272.

manifestation of sin. This further supports the Kierkegaardian assertion that sin lies in will.

One of the prerequisites of willing totally, i. e., willing one thing, is to become a whole self instead of a fragmented self. This is possible in religious sphere only. One can relate to the eternal or absolute good through willing only as it is an act which can be done absolutely or eternally. The other faculty of self which can complement in willing infinitely is the passion as one can become infinitely passionate in willing the absolute. Besides volition and passion, we have reason as one of the faculties but according to Kierkegaard it cannot be qualified by infinity or absoluteness. A speculative thinker can reason to certain limit as after that limit it collapses on its own. For Kierkegaard the paradoxical religion is such that reason cannot grasp at all. It requires voluntariness which lies in inwardness to actualize the possibility of the highest mode of existence. Thus it is only in the mode of religiousness B, one can have maximum of freedom.

To realize true freedom, one has to choose a specific alternative which is impressed upon him by his inwardness or passion which consists in obeying God's command. Kierkegaard says that it requires becoming an individual. As an individual one is "alone, alone in the whole world, alone—before God: then it will be easy to obey."¹⁰¹ Thus to choose something with passion requires voluntariness. The more passion in the act of choosing means the more freedom is realized in the choice. When one chooses with highest passion, then all other choices become negligible for him. Choosing one's true self by choosing God is the choice of such kind. Thus to take the leap of faith, one has to choose voluntarily the infinite with the highest degree of passion.

¹⁰¹ Alexander Dru (ed.), *The Soul Of Kierkegaard; Selections from His Journals*, Dover Publications, Mineola, 2003, p. 134.

2. Paradoxical Faith: the Mark of Christianity

Traditional philosophy has never given emotions or passions such a place in human life, as being able to transform one's self for better. Kierkegaard can be aptly designated as the pioneer in giving apt significance to passionate aspect of self. Passionate emotion has always been considered as corresponding to one's lower nature. Emotions, being flicker, according to classical philosophy, are unable to give stability to one's character. The decisions taken in emotional moments are regarded liable to be wrong. Passion has always been given the lower or the lowest place among various faculties that an individual has, that is, faculties of reason and that of will etc. Most of the traditional philosophy, being the footnotes of Platonian philosophy and the philosophy after Descartes and Hegel, give reason the highest place from where it subsumes all other aspects of human being. In such a scenario Kierkegaard's idea of "faith" as the "highest passion" seems to counterbalance the (undue) emphasis especially given on "reason." It will not be wrong to say that, according to Kierkegaard, the road to eternal good is paved with the highest degree of passion.

An individual becomes "general" and Christianity becomes "Christendom," when reason becomes absolute. The Christianity is diluted to such an extent, that it becomes Christendom, a mediocrity full of complacency (where no individual can stand before God). As Kierkegaard says,

The result of the Christianity of "Christendom" is that everything, absolutely everything, has remained as it was, only everything has assumed the name of "Christian" and so (musicians strike up the tune) we live a life of Paganism...¹⁰²

¹⁰² Thomas C. Oden (ed.), *The Humour of Kierkegaard; An Anthology*, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 138.

So nothing substantial of the true Christianity is left in the modern age of reason and science, except the name "Christian" which is used as predicate anything like any other predicate. On this way Christianity has become turned into pretence, falsehood and simply a means to secure worldly goods.

The transition of Christianity to Christendom, according to Kierkegaard, is due to the lack of "inwardness." It tries to make up for the deficit by invoking various rational theological arguments for its support. The more the number of the rational proofs, the more will be the degree of certainty in Christianity; such a speculation reduces Christianity into something probable. As Kierkegaard says, "There has been said much that is strange, much that is deplorable, much that is revolting about Christianity; but the most stupid thing ever said about it is, that it is to certain degree true."¹⁰³ Kierkegaard is apprehensive of this attitude of mediocrity to a certain degree. Such an attitude can never let one become decisive; thereby diminish one's possibility of acquiring a state of faith. The existence of God cannot be proved. The very need to prove God's existence implies doubt and the very effort to do so, in his presence, will surely offend him. For Kierkegaard, God's existence is not something to be proved but to be worshipped. To grasp the truth of Christianity is beyond any sort of speculation as finite cannot contain or grasp infinite.

One can truly relate to Christianity only in a "spiritual relationship." A rational thinker grasps only its objective truth in an objective manner and thus never gets into the relationship. One can enter into such a relation only through subjective appropriation. If the truth of Christianity is understood objectively then it does not remain more than a hypothesis.

Kierkegaard says that eighteenth centuries have no greater demonstrative force than a single day, in relation to an eternal truth. Thus a speculative philosopher can only speculate about faith and turns it into something objective

¹⁰³ *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, p. 205.

which is nothing but “a sum of doctrinal prepositions.”¹⁰⁴ Thus speculative philosophy has simply “maltreated Christianity”¹⁰⁵ through its objective reasoning. If one starts believing in God after reasoning well, then it would be a “quasi faith.”¹⁰⁶ Such reasoning will question miracles involved in Christianity and will exclude them. But according to true Christianity, faith starts by believing miracles but after that it believes in spite of there being no miracles and the later stage is the highest kind of faith.

Kierkegaard accuses Christendom of teaching complacency regarding one’s striving of becoming a true Christian. The task of becoming a true Christian is full of suffering, and risks, thus cannot afford comfort and complacency. Christendom makes the task of becoming a Christian merely into a means to gain worldly goods and to make one’s life secure enough to enjoy finite things and pleasures of life. Thus it is an impediment on the way of becoming a true Christian. According to Kierkegaard, a true Christian should imbibe the qualities of the New Testament. He attacks the orthodox Christianity which is nothing more than pretence, official thing. He supports the Christianity (of New Testament) which involves the entire man; being exposed to danger, sin-consciousness, authenticity and decisiveness. Thus he undertakes the double task, firstly of negating the prevalent Christendom and introducing true Christianity in its place. By Christendom he means official Christianity or priest’s Christianity which tries to fool God by paying lip service as well as people by spreading falsehood.

Kierkegaard warns humanity against “all is right” attitude of Christendom. According to him, the pretension and falsehood of such Christianity can end up only in adding up a new sin, every time one takes part in it. He rejects all sorts of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 194.

¹⁰⁶ Soren A. Kierkegaard, *Soren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, vol. 2, ed., trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Indiana University Press, 1970, p. 12.

paltriness and mediocrity in being a true Christian. Mediocrity cannot be conducive for decision making. It is indifference that goes well with the mediocrity than the intensity of passion, which is the prerequisite of decisiveness. Only passion is the cure for mediocrity. The way to be an authentic and religious self is through passion only.

Passion, in Kierkegaardian philosophy, seems to have two connotations, negative as well as positive. When the object of one's passion is finite, temporal worldly objects then it acquires the negative connotation. Such a passion is simply misplaced one. But the same passion becomes means to relate to infinite and eternal, and then it also becomes infinitive positive sense. Passion lies in the abode of subjectivity and inwardness, which is contrary to objectivity. Objectivity involves indifference; therefore it turns an existing being into a spectator. In this sense Christianity has no place for objectivity. Subjectivity is required to appropriate any ethical and spiritual truth. Kierkegaard says,

In relation to Christianity, on the other hand, objectivity is a most unfortunate category; he who has an objective Christianity and none other, is *eo ipso* a pagan, for Christianity is precisely an affair of spirit, and so of subjectivity, and of inwardness.¹⁰⁷

In Christendom, the subjective element has been abolished with the help of objective approach of speculation. So Christianity now depends mainly on either historical analysis or the authority of church instead of subjectivity. The attempt that historical analysis makes is to prove that the Christ, who was born as an average, rather lowly human being, was God or not.

Regarding this matter, Kierkegaard says that history cannot prove that Christ was God, in all eternity. History can analyze the consequence of his life and the results it left in the historical span of 1800 years. Kierkegaard argues that an

¹⁰⁷ *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, p. 42.

individual cannot derive or deduce an entirely different category from the one, he began with. One has either to assume that Jesus Christ was man or that he was God. The later assumption cannot lead one any further. The former assumption can never lead to result that the man Jesus Christ was God. For Kierkegaard, man and God do not belong to the same category. They are entirely different. At the most, history can prove that he was a great man but never God.

If one will rely on church authority in order to enter into the realm of Christianity, then one will end up in a sort of Christendom. Kierkegaard does not accept any authority (except that of God), especially that of an institution which represents only collective. God is the only authority, who can give an individual an occasion as well as a condition to know the truth. A person, teacher or church at the most can provide or become an occasion for the manifestation of the truth. Thus, according to Kierkegaard, Jesus Christ is the object of faith. There are only two possibilities regarding the assertion, that Christ is God, which he himself affirms, i.e., either one believes him or get offended by him. But such a possibility in the form of either/ or does not arise till one becomes contemporary with Jesus Christ. But how one can become contemporary with Christ, has not been much elaborated by Kierkegaard. It seems that he invokes the faculty of imagination which can help one to feel as one of his contemporaries. But one cannot imagine himself so, until he has a historical knowledge of the life of Christ.

Jesus Christ was born in a family of low class; his father was a carpenter. He was an illiterate person. He had a few followers, who were also poor, and lowly men, sinners, lepers, beggars and madmen. And above all he gave invitations to all that he will unburden them and will give rest. He claims to cure human beings from the disease of "sin" with which they are suffering. It is easier to get offended, when one recognizes one as sinner, though to cure him. One can get more offended on seeing a person, who claims to help, while he himself needs to be helped. Even a beggar will think twice before joining his company, as he may get punished for doing so by respectable state person. To a rational person Jesus may seem no better

than fool, who has no purpose in life, who condemns worldly goods but claims to be God. In spite of being so, he becomes the object of the persecutions of mighty ones and he is put to death, thus invoking the emotions of either pity or hatred. He was just the opposite of the messiah of people's expectation thus easily to be offended by.¹⁰⁸

Thus says Kierkegaard, if one does not get offended in him (after becoming, i.e., feeling contemporary with him), is a believer. So to be a true Christian means to be contemporaneous with Christ. Thousands years of history does not matter as in being contemporaneous with Christ, one is always in the present. Thus Christ is contemporary with every generation, if faith is there. Being contemporaneous involves one's inwardness, one cannot become so merely by analyzing the history as a spectator and thus by remaining indifferent.

It is easier to embrace God, if he comes in all his glory as there is no doubt about his being God.¹⁰⁹ But faith finds expressions, when doubt becomes most certain. Then one has to behold it in tension through passionate commitment of subjectivity. Therefore, says Kierkegaard, "Faith is the highest passion in the sphere of human subjectivity."¹¹⁰

Kierkegaard puts forth the significance of subjectivity or inwardness in the religious sphere through an example and says,

If one who lives in the midst of Christendom goes up to the house of God, the house of the true God, with the true conception of God in his knowledge, and prays, but prays in a false spirit; and one who lives in an idolatrous community prays with the entire passion of the infinite,

¹⁰⁸ Soren A. Kierkegaard, *Preparation for a Christian Life*.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 118.

although his eyes rest upon the image of an idol: where is there most truth?¹¹¹

Through this example, he tries to imply that the person who prays passionately to an idol is nearer to truth than a person who knows all the doctrines of Christianity but pretends to pray. He further argues, “The objective accent falls on WHAT is said, the subjective accent on HOW it is said.”¹¹² One thing we can make out from this is that objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive. Subjectivity has something objective in it as its content. Similarly, objectivity has subjective element in it in the sense objectivity is objectivity always in reference to a subject. It is simply that in an objective approach the emphasis lies on the truth content while in the subjective approach the emphasis lies on the process of appropriation. Thus, the process of appropriation and the content both have their own part to play in consisting truth. But we can clearly make out that Kierkegaardian accent falls mostly on the subjective process comprising “HOW.”

When Kierkegaard says, “The truth is precisely the venture which chooses an objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite,”¹¹³ then the “objective uncertainty” is the very truth content which needs to be appropriated subjectively. Even the state of faith is not pure subjectivity in spite of being the highest degree of passion and inwardness. It has “Christian paradox” as its objective element. A Christian and a non-Christian or pagan can be at par in their depth of inwardness as both of them are praying in true spirit, then what makes the difference is the objective content. Thus it may be one of the reasons that Kierkegaard divides the sphere of religion into two stages, i.e., religiousness A and religiousness B. Former is the religious sphere of paganism while the latter is that of Christianity.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 179.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 181.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 182.

According to Socrates, truth lies hidden within an individual, which needs to be facilitated in being manifested.

When the truth be found on the principle: that subjectivity is untruth, then the truth as subjectivity can find a higher expression and is on the way of becoming more and more intensive. Speculative philosophy also begins with the expressions: that subjectivity is untruth but only to motivate one towards objectivity. Socrates is similar to a speculative thinker as he desires to become objective with respect to the truth which lies within, i.e., subjective truth, by using the method of recollection.¹¹⁴ Kierkegaard says,

Here, on the other hand, subjectivity in beginning upon the task of becoming the truth through a subjectifying process is in the difficulty that it is already untruth. Thus the labour of the task is thrust backward, backward, that is inwardness¹¹⁵

If the direction of inwardness is backward then the opposite of it, that is, outwardness or objectivity should tend towards forward in existence. But we know it is subjectivity that tends forward in existence. Therefore, the highest expression of truth (subjective) begins with the assertion; Subjectivity is untruth, towards acquiring higher and higher inwardness. "But the subject cannot be untruth eternally."¹¹⁶ He has been brought to untruth in time by "Original sin." This is the category, i.e., the category of sin which differentiate Socrates from a true Christian. Though Socrates tries to relate to eternal by the method of recollection but cannot overcome the alienation (from eternal) which is the outcome of sin. As sin is not simply opposite of recollection but existential in the sense, as Kierkegaard says,

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 185.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 185.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 186.

“By coming into existence he becomes a sinner.” “Forward he must, backward he cannot go.” Sin prevents one from going back into the eternal.

The paradox, facing which Socrates acquires inwardness, is of objective uncertainty. But for a Christian paradox is accentuated to the level of absurdity as:

1. The eternal truth, in case of Christianity is, in itself a paradox, i.e., “God has come into being.”¹¹⁷
2. The paradoxical truth in spite of being eternal and infinite relates to finite individuals.
3. Individual to whom the paradoxical truth relates, are sinners, which further accentuates the paradox.

Such a paradoxical absurdity is bound to repel one with “sufficient intensive inwardness.”¹¹⁸ Thus, paradox of Christianity can have two responses; faith and offence. Thus, the possibility of offence is present in religiousness B only. In case of religiousness A the truth content or object is “objective uncertainty” while in case of religiousness B it is “absurdity.” Thus, from the above discussion it becomes evident that the object of faith does matter besides the subjectifying process of subjectivity.

When Climacus further differentiates the religiousness A from that of B, he finds it is not possible to acquire the state of religiousness B without going through the state of religiousness A. He refers the religiousness A as the “pathetic” while religiousness as the “dialectic.” The former also involves dialectic of inward transformation but in latter case the dialectic is more accentuated.

Religiousness A involves the relation to an eternal happiness according to the individual’s apprehension. On the other hand, in religiousness B the relation to eternal happiness involves a definite something which defines eternal happiness

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 188.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

besides the way one apprehends one's relation to it. Religiousness A involves the resignation which "leaves the individual facing or makes him face an eternal happiness as the absolute *telos*."¹¹⁹

Harry S. Broudy avers,

Concretely, however, we cannot renounce all relative goods, unless we renounce life altogether, so that the demand for the existential exemplification of a relation to the highest good involves a double relation, viz., an absolute relation to the highest good and a relative relation to relative goods.¹²⁰

A person, who is in absolute relation to absolute, will also be in the truth in the relation to relative ends.¹²¹ This is possible in the movement of resignation. The movement of resignation is the first movement of faith which is an act of double movement. The second movement is that of leap which springs forth from the decisiveness which is the mark of paradoxical religion. The act of renouncing worldly, relative goods is equivalent to dying to the world (immediacy). The process of dying to the world involves suffering, the essential existential pathos. Suffering helps an immediate individual to become ethical by despairing over one's dependency over the external events of fortune and misfortune. Ethical and ethico – religious regard suffering as something essential. But suffering to the religious is indeed essential not momentarily rather persistently. The suffering is limited in the religious sphere to the religiousness A.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 358.

¹²⁰ Harry S. Broudy, "Kierkegaard's Levels of Existence," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Mar., 1941, p. 307, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2102760>. Accessed on: 23/04/2010.

¹²¹ *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 347.

If a person is not able to relate to an external happiness properly, then he may blame “the one who has placed him into existence or upon existence itself.”¹²² Though he himself is guilty for his condition but may not find it. This does not make him guiltless. The consciousness of guilt further accentuates one’s existential pathos regarding eternal happiness, in a decisive manner. Guilt needs to be accepted as a total rather than the guilt of this or that. Kierkegaard argues as following, “He who totally or essentially is guiltless cannot be guilty in the particular instance.”¹²³ This argument clearly indicates that maximum numbers of individuals are (totally) guilty. An individual can become conscious of the total guilt only by relating himself to eternal happiness. But “the consciousness of guilt still lies essentially in immanence, in distinction from the consciousness of sin.”¹²⁴ Therefore, the consciousness of guilt belongs to the religion of immanence, i.e., religiousness A. According to Kierkegaard, “guilt consciousness is the repelling relationship and would constantly take this *telos* away from him.”¹²⁵ But such a situation arouses the higher pathos in an individual.

Kierkegaard comments, “...the totality of guilt-consciousness is the most edifying factor in religiousness A.” While commenting on religiousness B or the “dialectical,” he further says,

In religiousness B the edifying is a something outside the individual, the individual does not find edification by finding the God relationship within himself but relates himself to something outside himself to find edification.¹²⁶

¹²² Ibid., p. 470.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 471.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 474.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 497.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 498.

This “something outside” in the religiousness B consists in the paradox of God-man. Thus, religiousness B, according to Kierkegaard, belongs to Christianity only, which is the religion of paradox. Such a paradox is not within the logical limits rather it is paradox in being beyond reason. Such a paradox remains incomprehensible even to high level, sophisticated level of understanding.

So the believing Christian not only possesses but uses his understanding, rather he believes against the understanding as Kierkegaard says, “he believes against the understanding and in this case also uses understanding ... to make sure that he believes against the understanding.”¹²⁷ Kierkegaard tries to differentiate the absurdity of Christian paradox from such nonsense. He says,

Nonsense therefore he cannot believe against the understanding, for precisely the understanding will discern that it is nonsense and will prevent him from believing it.¹²⁸

Nonsense cannot be believed as it is not able to invoke voluntariness which is prerequisite of a belief (in Kierkegaardian sense). Moreover nonsense cannot transform the very mode of existence in a definite manner to acquire the highest potentiality of self in relation to eternal, that is, faith.

The leap of faith as a possibility is accessible to all, but according to Kierkegaard only a few chosen one can make it actuality. Being the sinner or being in despair a human being cannot turn the leap of faith into actuality, on his own, he needs grace of God. Despite it, Humans have the freedom to say either “yes” or “no” to the grace of God. The need of the grace, has been expressed by Kierkegaard in the following statement,

When I despair, I use myself to despair and therefore I can indeed by myself despair of everything, but when I do this, I cannot by myself

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 503.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 504.

come back. In this moment of decision it is that the individual needs divine assistance.¹²⁹

He further says, “Grace pertains to a receiving, not to my worthiness but rather to my unworthiness”¹³⁰ Being a sinner an individual is not able to attain the state of faith on his own. The forgiveness of sins by God is one of His ways to endow the grace. Revelation of truth by God is also a kind of grace as through it one becomes conscious of one’s sin and thus longs the forgiveness of sins. But grace is not attained once for all rather “one needs grace again in relation to grace.”¹³¹ This seems to lead to an infinite regress and one can hardly come to know how the grace at the first place is determined. According to Kierkegaard, grace, like various other existential categories which comes under the realm of Christianity, is a paradox. Grace is grace with respect to eternal but suffering with respect to the temporal life. If one takes the grace in an immediate sense then one is sure to get offended. “Grace means to be saved from eternal perdition,”¹³² thus, grace is infinite as compare to the temporal suffering. Still a person can despair over it and turns into a defiant by rejecting it. But the possibility of defiance presupposes the freedom. Facing the paradox of grace one becomes humble and surrender to the will of God. But it does not imply that one has nothing to contribute to attain the state of faith. It is one’s decisiveness only with which the subjectivity progresses towards its climax, i.e., faith. “Subjectivity culminates in passion: Christianity culminates in paradox.”¹³³ The paradoxical faith involves two

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 230.

¹³⁰ Soren A. Kierkegaard, *Soren Kierkegaard’s Journals and Papers*, p. 164.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 164.

¹³² Ibid., p. 183.

¹³³ Charles E. Moore, *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*, p 71.

movements. One can make the first movement, i.e., of resignation on one's own merit but to go beyond that one needs the grace.

Faith, according to Kierkegaard, presupposes the movement of resignation as the first movement. In the movement of faith, one rises above the ethical. The double movement of faith is explicated by Kierkegaard through the biblical story of Abraham and his son Isaac. Abraham goes through the trial of faith when God told him to sacrifice his only son, Issac. Abraham did not doubt rather was ready to obey God's command. He arrived at the place of sacrifice with his son and laid him on the altar. When he was about to sacrifice his son he was stopped by God. Kierkegaard says that Abraham faith did not constitute in the act of renouncing his claim upon Issac, but in believing that he will get his son back by the virtue of absurd. Abraham is a murderer from ethical point of view but his act is that of sacrifice from religious point of view. He is not an ethical hero as an ethical hero can sacrifice but cannot hope to get back what he sacrificed, against absurdity. Thus faith for Kierkegaard lies in the movement of hope. It was not an easy act for Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son, in spite of fear and trembling he obeys God thus rises above the ethical. Thus says Kierkegaard,

Faith therefore is not an aesthetic emotion but something far higher, precisely because it has resignation as its presupposition; it is not an immediate instinct of heart but is the paradox of life and existence.¹³⁴

Thus, faith is the state which is beyond the movement of resignation. The resignation here implies to die to the finite, temporal world but a person of faith by relating to the absolute gets the world back. Ultimately nothing is lost in faith rather one gains infinitely in relating to the eternal good besides getting the world back. The second movement, i.e., the leap of faith takes one out of the state of sin to again that of innocence or childlike immediacy. Faith is the second immediacy,

¹³⁴ Robert Bretell(ed.), *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, p. 126.

as “faith is immediateness after reflection.”¹³⁵ Thus faith transforms one entirely from “sinner” into “knight of faith.” In the state of faith the subjectivity is potentiated to the highest degrees. God being the absolute Subject can be related through one’s subjectivity. It is again through inwardness one derives the courage to venture forth into the unknown realm of faith while taking the responsibility of the same. Faith is not mere an idea for Kierkegaard rather a lived faith, a way of existing as a true human being.

¹³⁵ Alexander Dru (ed.), *The Soul Of Kierkegaard; Selections from His Journals*, P. 140.

Conclusion

A truth becomes relevant, only with respect to a subject who engages himself in appropriating it. Such a notion of truth distinguishes Kierkegaard from idealist, positivist and rationalist philosophers of the traditional and modern age. Kierkegaard gives a jolt to the high ambitious project of purging philosophy by making it more and more objective by eliminating subjective elements. Kierkegaard affirms truth as subjectivity is not like a cold, indifferent objective truth. He seems to emphasise subjectivity to such an extent as to counterbalance the much emphasises given to the objectivity by speculative thinkers of all ages. He does not dismiss the objectivity altogether but shifts the accent to subjectivity. He is not against thinking as such but abstract, objective thinking. The term subjectivity implies an activity which can be understood as a subjectifying process. With this process a subject appropriates an object and gives meaning and value to it.

Kierkegaard rejects paltriness and mediocrity of Christendom and revolts against the tendency of modern rationalist thinkers such as Descartes, Spinoza etc., who attempted to build a system of knowledge on some indubitable foundation by exercising reason. Such an effort either results in solipsism or in contradiction of deriving existence from an idea. Hegel goes far from merely finding a foundation to build a whole system of knowledge by exercising pure reason. Such a speculative philosophy becomes the main target of Kierkegaardian critique. Speculative thinker like Hegel wants to contain everything including God and universe in a system. For Kierkegaard, one can never know God through reason. It is only through passionate commitment, one can relate to one's higher self and ultimately to God.

The journey towards acquiring one's higher potential starts with subjectivity or inwardness. Inwardness is the abode of decisiveness which is required to realize

one's higher potential as free being. Thus, subjectivity or inwardness is the locus of freedom and responsibility. Subjectivity is not a kind of arbitrariness for Kierkegaard, rather is always informed or validated by one's core ethical and religious commitments. His idea of subjectivity is not a kind of subjectivism based on shared beliefs or on essence of human species. He does not glorify subjectivity by eliminating all the objective elements but affirms that it gives meaning to the object appropriated. By the very appropriation process subjectivity creates truth as at the beginning of the process, subjectivity is untruth. When subjectivity is potentiated to the highest degree in the religious stage, there it is not without content rather it has the absolute Being as something definite preventing it from becoming arbitrariness.

Subjective approach means to be decisive and act rather than mere contemplating. Thus Kierkegaard has not given any metaphysical theory which is confined only to the realm of thinking. He believes in doing action, living the truth and taking the responsibility, which is required by a person to become an individual. When an individual turns inward then he confronts oneself and become aware of the despair of one's existence for the first time.

In aesthetical sphere one lives in despair in spite of not being conscious of it. Kierkegaard says that the journey of realizing one's highest potentialities start with becoming aware of one's state of being in despair. It can motivate one to be decisive and to leave the one's "given self," i.e., aesthetical self behind by choosing the very necessity to choose. Being decisive, for Kierkegaard, means an inward action which is followed by an outward action. This process is aptly called "reduplication" by Kierkegaard. When one becomes decisive about something, then he not merely contemplates it but wills it earnestly by taking action. So he stresses on voluntariness rather than one's being driven by one's animal nature, whims, external stimuli, events and categories of fortune and misfortune. Thus, Kierkegaard is not a fatalist or a determinist. He emphasizes on being aware, in order to consciously and voluntarily choose higher self.

Doing something voluntarily presupposes freedom. According to Kierkegaard, “will” is also required for speculation as it is something we do. Only “will” can stop one from going into solipsism as only “will” can stop the doubt. He says that freedom is the greatest gift given to us by God. Whether one believes in this assertion or not but one does have freedom, though not of utmost degree. Still it begs the question, about the determination of the content of will.

The use of various “existential categories” by Kierkegaard seems to defy any kind of finality with regard to their meaning. The horizon of meaning of these remains elusive in such a way that one may come up with a fresh meaning every time one tries to appropriate them. Precisely this seems what he aimed through his various pseudonymous works, i.e., not to give final results, but to initiate people to work out the meaning which is true for them. This must be one of the reasons that philosophy after Kierkegaard was adopted by various thinkers in such a way that it bears a stamp of the subjectivity of respective philosophers. The use of pseudonymous for his works is one of his ways of communicating indirectly to give space to the readers, to become aware and examine their own mode of existence.

Most of the concepts in the philosophy of Kierkegaard are well elaborated and explicated but not in a systematic way, perhaps it was one of his ways to refute system building. But when he evaluates and describes the various modes of existence of human being then he seems to be very systematic. He delineates various modes of living by emphasizing their respective psychological characteristics.

He divides existence mainly into three spheres which also have sub spheres or stages within. There are well defined boundaries bordering the spheres. There is also a hierarchy in the sense of lower and higher sphere on the basis of variation in the degrees of subjectivity culminating in the highest degree of subjectivity at the moment of faith. The three spheres or modes of existence are not exclusive rather

overlapping. To ascend to higher sphere of existence one does not need to reject lower one but to subordinate so that the best of the lower sphere is retained in the higher. He is also critical of the negative elements of the aesthetical. By critiquing the aesthetic mode of existence Kierkegaard seems to critique the Romanticism indirectly and by giving constructive critique of ethical sphere he criticize Rationalism.

He stresses the spiritual aspect of human being by making it an end. An ethical is not an end in itself. Though he does not deny ethical but do not accept its absoluteness. Ethical is driven by universal rational laws, social customs and norms which are external and may compel one to be ethical. But a religious person does not require external compulsions to be ethical. He derives the necessity to do action or “reduplicate” from his inwardness.

The concept of reduplication implies his stress on living the truth rather than knowing by transforming thought into action. It means to do good works after conceiving them. One may conceive a lot more ideas than one can reduplicate. Hence, one cannot do the act of reduplication in absolute manner. So it is only passion, inwardness which can bring the absolute quality or eternal validity to whatever little one does. Subjectivity is truth, may not be the absolute truth, but for an existing person it is the truth. The process of reduplication leads ultimately to “redoubling”, i.e., ontological transformation of the deeper self in ethico – religious terms. This is required to relate to the eternal.

One has to go through ethical sphere to attain the highest self or spiritual self. In ethical sphere one learns to sacrifice or to commit oneself for the good of others or society which enables one to become absolutely committed towards the absolute being. It is not possible for everyone to follow the ideal of “knight of faith.” So the social customs and norms have their own relevance. One cannot wait till one reach the religious level to become an authentic person.

When a person takes decision then he also owns the responsibility of the consequences. In this way he asserts integration of his self. A splitted self strives to become a whole, one, united self by choosing the ethical. A fragmented and double minded person cannot actualize his higher possibilities.

Kierkegaard,s notion of actuality which is different from reality seems novel. For him reality is something like “given.” Actuality is what one creates by virtue of freedom of actualizing possibility. Thus one is the creator of one’s own destiny. Kierkegaard does not accept the idea of predestination as it cannot give any place to subjectivity. Predestination simply indicates that human beings are not responsible for the consequences of their deeds.

Kierkegaard emphasises that one should try to be a whole or an integrated self rather than making a system of knowledge or the knowledge as a whole. The former is the requirement of the ethical and of the religious and is very much feasible but latter is the just a fantasy project which can never become actuality.

For Kierkegaard, sin does not lie in ignorance rather in “will”. Sin consists in not willing to do right, in spite of knowing it. Therefore, sin lies in the “will” not in the intellect. The category of sin implies that one has the freedom of will.

Human beings have a tendency to desire something absolutely. One’s confrontation of oneself in being anxious of one’s temporality and finitude compels one to overcome these and go beyond. This longing for eternal is manifested at all the stages of existence. At aesthetical stage one desires pleasure or enjoyment of senses as something absolute, at ethical level one desire the rational principles in the form of laws and norms of society, as absolute. At religious stage one desires the spiritual self absolutely. But at aesthetic and ethical stage the objects of absolute desire are not absolute in themselves, so such a desire can never become absolute. It is a contradiction to desire something temporal and finite as absolute.

Religious sphere is presented by Kierkegaard with the highest requirements which can be met with highest level of consciousness that lies in the kind of highest subjectivity. Kierkegaard not only propounds the faith in God but also in oneself. According to him, one has to become an individual until one has faith in one's decisiveness.

Our consciousness is in the process of development while ascending the spheres of existence. At aesthetical level consciousness is too low to be self conscious therefore one lacks inwardness. Such a person is easy to be driven by external factors. He remains dependent on the categories of fortune or misfortune and never has the consistency (other than of the immediacy) like that of an ethical person, therefore, has a fragmented self. He cannot commit to one goal for long time. Such a person either lives in the world of fantasy like that of a speculative thinker or turns out to be a fatalist. Such a person ends up in despair which can make him to be decisive and to choose the ethical. An ethical person not only conceives a possibility but also actualize it. But ethical is not an end in itself as one still has despair and suffering. According to Kierkegaard the only way out of all kinds of despair is to relate to the eternal good. Therefore he affirms that only Christianity can endow one with the eternal good.

For Kierkegaard, the religion of paradox is an "affair of subjectivity". Therefore the only approach to Christianity is that of subjectivity. The Christianity is based on the historical document of "New Testament." It may tempt one to "treat it objectively." Here, Kierkegaard comes up with a concept of "contemporary with Christ". According to him, there is no difference between the contemporary disciple and a disciple of any other age. Being contemporary with Christ with passion seems to require firstly the knowledge of history about the life of Christ and secondly, the faculty of imagination. So the time lost in history since Christ was born does not affect an individual's relation to God. Neither one's temporality nor one's economical and physical conditions can affect the relation.

In an effort to criticize the “absoluteness of reason,” Kierkegaard may seem to promote the “irrational” by bringing the concept of “paradox” and “absurdity” while illustrating the idea of faith. According to him, though the absurdity of faith is irrational but reason cannot render it as non sense as it does not come within the realm of reason rather it is above reason. Kierkegaard is not against reason as such but its claim of superiority over faith. Faith subsumes reason but reason can never grasp faith. Faith is confined to the religious sphere but we know the religious sphere pre supposes the ethical which mostly drives its validity from rational principles. It simply means that one is supposed to live at first, in the mode of ethical, to actualize the possibility of faith. Each ethicist may not become the “knight of faith” but each “knight of faith” is ethical in true sense as he does not depend on external laws and customs to fulfil the requirement of the ethical but his own inwardness or subjectivity.

Kierkegaardian presentation of choice in the form of Either /Or is like choosing either all or nothing, in the ultimate sense. When one is presented with option of choosing God then all other options are equivalent to nothing in comparison, whether it be worldly goods, status of a rich person or fame of an ideal ethical person. Existence is always in becoming, not yet complete but passion of inwardness can give it the completeness at each moment.

Bibliography

Books

Primary Sources

Kierkegaard, Soren A., *Either / Or*, Vol. I, trans. D.F. Swenson and L. M. Swenson, Vol. II, trans. Walter Lowrie, (New York: Princeton University, 1944).

Kierkegaard, Soren A., *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1941).

Kierkegaard, Soren A., *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. D.F Swenson and Walter Lowrie, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941).

Secondary Sources

Lowrie, Walter, *A Short Life of Kierkegaard*, (New York: Princeton University Press, 1942).

Hawton, Hector, *The Feast of Unreason*, (London: Watts and Co., 1952)

Auden, W, H., *The Living Thoughts of Kierkegaard*, (Bloomington, Indiana: University Press, 1964).

Barrett, William, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy*, (London: Mercury Books, 1964).

Barth, Karl, *The World of God and The World of Man*, trans. D. Horton, (New York, Harper, 1957).

Bhadra, Mrinal Kanti, *A Critical Survey of Phenomenology and Existentialism*, (India: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1990).

- Blackma, H. J., *Six Existential Thinkers*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1967).
- Bretall, Robert (ed.), *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, (New York: Princeton University Press, 1973).
- Chamberline, Jane and Ree, Johnathen, *The Kierkegaard Reader*, (Oxford, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).
- Collins, James, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, (London: Seckar and Warburg, 1934).
- Cooper, David. E., *Existentialism*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).
- Fabro, Cornelio., *Faith and Reason in Kierkegaard's Dialectic: A Kierkegaard Critique*, Howard Johnson and Niels Thulstrup, (Chicago: Gateway Books, 1967).
- Hubert, L., Dreyfus and Mark, A., Wrathall (eds.), *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existential*, (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006).
- Johnson, A. Howard and Thulstrup, Niels, *A Kierkegaard Critique*, (New York: Rper & Brothers, Publishers, 1962).
- Lescoe, Francis, J., *Existentialism: With or Without God*, (New York: Alba House, 1973).
- MacDonald, Paul, S., *The Existential Reader: An Anthology of key Texts*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).
- Ree, Jonathen and Chamberlin, Jane., *Kierkegaard: A Critical Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998).
- Rosen, Michael, *Hegel's Dialectic and Its Criticisms*, (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Rosen, Stanley, *G.W.F. Hegel: An Introduction to The Science of Wisdom*, (New Heaven & London: Yale University Press, Ltd, 1974).

Roubieze, P., *Existentialism For and Against*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

Sheldon, P., Peter Freund and Theodore, C, Denise., *Contemporary Philosophy and Its Origins*, (New Jersey, New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc, 1967), pp. 182-231

Shukla, Dipti, *Subjectivity in Kierkegaard's Philosophy*, (Kailashpw: Mansi Prakashan, 1987).

Sinari, Ramakant, *Reason in Existentialism*, (Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1996).

Stack, George, J., *Kierkegaard's Existential Ethics*, (University of Alabama; The University of Alabama Press, 1977).

Swinburne, Richard., *Faith and Reason*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

Thompson, Josiah., (ed), *Kierkegaard: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (New York: Double day and Company, 1972).

Lowrie, Walter., *A short Life of Kierkegaard*, (New York: Princeton University Press, 1942).

Gardiner, Patrick., *Kierkegaard*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Watts, Michael, *Kierkegaard*, (England: Oneworld Publication, 2007).

Salaatte, Howard, A., *The Paradox of Existentialist Theology: The Dialectics of a Faith- Subsumed Reason –in-Existence*, (New York: Humanities Press, 1971).

- Weston, Michael, *Kierkegaard and Modern Continental Philosophy*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1994).
- Khan, Abraham, H., *Salighed as Happiness? : Kierkegaard on the Concept Salighed*, (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid University Press, 1985).
- Swenson, David, F., *Something about Kierkegaard*, (USA: Augsburg Publishing House, 1956).
- Dru, Alaxander (ed.), *The Soul of Kierkegaard: Selections from His Journals*, (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003).
- Natkin Julia, *Historical Dictionary OF Kierkegaard's Philosophy*, (Maryland, Toronto, Oxford: Te Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2001).
- Thomte, Reidar, *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1948).
- Hanney, Alastair and Marino, Gordon, D. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- McCarthy, Vincent, A., *The Phenomenology of Moods in Kierkegaard*, (The Hagul, Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 2008).
- Bhadra, Mrinal Kanti., *A Critical Survey of Phenomenology and Existentialism*, (India: ICPR, 2004).
- Ferriera, M, Jamie, *Kierkegaard*, (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).
- George, A,G., *The First Sphere: A Study of Kierkegaardian Aesthetics*, (India: Asia Publishing House, 1965).
- Harper, Rlaph, *The Existential Experience*, (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).

Hong, V, Howard and Hong, Edna, H., (eds.), *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990).

Hong, V, Howard and Hong, Edna, H. (eds.), *Soren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, Vol. 2, F-K (Bloomington, London: Indiana University Press, 1970).

Ree, Jonathan and Chamberlin, Jane, (eds.), *Kierkegaard: A Critical Reader*, (UK: Blackwell Publishers., Inc., 1998).

Pattison, George and Shakespeare, Steven (eds.), *Kierkegaard: The Self in Society*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998).

Kierkegaard, Soren, *The Humour of Kierkegaard: An Anthology*, trans. Thomas C. Oden, (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Kierkegaard, Soren, *Stages on Life's Way*, trans. Walter Lowrie, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945).

Kierkegaard, Soren, *Preparation for a Christian Life*.

Hawton, Hector, *The Feast of Unreason*, (London: Watts & Co., 1952).

Lowrie, Walter, *A Short Life of Kierkegaard*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press).

Moore, Charles E., *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*, (USA: The Bruderhof Foundation, Inc., 2002).

Articles

Farrira, M, Jamie, "Leaps and Circles: Kierkegaard and Newman of Faith and Reason," *Religious Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4, (Dec. 1994), pp. 379-397, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20000109>. Accessed on 13/07/2010

Broudy, Harry S., "Kierkegaard's Levels of Existence," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Mar., 1941), pp. 294-312,

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2102760>. Accessed on 23/04/2010

Lillegard, Norman, "Passion and Reason: Aristotelian Strategies in Kierkegaard's Ethics," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 30 No. 2 (Summer, 2002), pp. 251-273, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40018082>. Accessed on 23/04/2010

Fitzpatrick, Mallry, Jr., "Kierkegaard and the Church," *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Oct., 1947), pp 255-262, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1198867>

Accessed on 13/04/2010

Elrod, John W., "Feuerbach and Kierkegaard on the Self," *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (Oct., 1976), pp. 348-365, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1201994>, Accessed on 23/ 04/ 2010