An Investigative study of 'Radical Passivity' in Philosophical and Literary Discourses

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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INTRODUCTION

0.1 Introduction: Death of Certain Properness

Adopting poststructuralist approach to language and literature, present study titled "**An Investigative study of Radical Passivity in Philosophical and Literary Discourses"** explores the idea of death with regard to literature through writing, within which language and literature is projected as the very locus of death that could never be irrevocable. Accordingly, the study tries to understand how the idea of death has been dealt with by French philosopher-thinker Maurice Blanchot, for his philosophy of death marks a rupture within the texture of language that has continued holding the traditional as well as popular idea of death which reads death as *the End* of life. Highlighting the idea of following any tradition as *the* tradition as a question of holding onto one particular language with which that tradition is built up, he asserts the necessity of violating that language, consequently which even the very tradition constructed in and through it, would collapse. So doing, not only does he break away from the traditional idea of death, but also he departs from the philosophical tradition that continues to view death as the irrevocable end of life. It is with this rupture and the departure from the *given* tradition of Western philosophy that Blanchot brings forth his thoughts on death through his writings, which are both literary and philosophical.

Idea of death presented by Blanchot is far beyond the physical death. For Blanchot, death is not that which ends life; instead, it pushes life beyond death in the sense that life does not seem to end. Hence, the present study addresses some of the questions, which problematize the idea of end on which the knowledge and understanding regarding death is grounded, and these questions are presented as follow: In what way death could be considered as the end of life? Should death be seen as the worst event that is to be experienced by being? If there is anything called death that is different from life, is it necessary to be considered as the opposite of life so that the binary opposition of life/death continues to reign in constructing any knowledge regarding life or death? Is there a death *as such*? Addressing such questions within which the significance of Blanchot's philosophy of death is put

forward, the study finds the necessity of touching upon some of the philosophical thoughts on death offered by Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas, as they are some of the milestones which bring traditional philosophy on death onto a crucial juncture.

Heideggerian philosophy of death, which majorly appears in *Being and Time*[1] draws a positive picture of death by projecting death as that through which being realizes its complete self — the Self. Accordingly, death becomes that which is awaited by being since it delivers being to Being by cutting off all the others from the self. Thus, presenting death as the possibility of the Self, Heidegger drives away fear, sorrow, and negativity that are added to death. However, the idea that suggests the ability of the self to detach from the other implies a sense of power and violence that is operative within the domain of the self for the very advantage of the self. On the other hand, though there is a difference in Heidegger's approach in casting the relation between being and death when compared to the traditional notion of death, he also shows it as the final end of everything — the End. Accordingly, there is nothing beyond death; death is the final destination where everything gets exhausted. In this complete exhaustion, not only does the life end, but also hope, pain, fear, language, meaning etc. come to a complete end. Thus, everything gets totalized within themselves as a whole, due to which the possibility for further movement is exhausted. Hence, there cannot be any hope, pain, fear, language, and meaning beyond death. Death thus becomes and marks the absolute end — end of everything; and, it makes Heidegger's philosophy of death as a philosophy of finitude.

However, Heidegger's assertion on a possible totality through the possibility of the Self through death becomes highly problematic when it is addressed in relation to the idea of politics of power and violence. Relating his philosophy of death to politics of power and violence would be debatable since there is hardly any reference to such notion of power in Heidegger's account of death in *Being and Time*. In that sense, *Being and Time* appears only as a testimony of pure-philosophy that offers only a pure thought on being and death which is devoid of any other thought. Nevertheless, the problem in this regard is whether there is any possibility for a philosophy that is *purely* philosophical in the sense that it is not affected or influenced by anything that

[1] Heidegger, 1962

is considered to be outside of the domain of philosophy. Idea of purity that legitimizes the possibility of pure philosophy could also be assured only by those who believe in a possible purity, and Heidegger and his philosophy of being is one of such projects that are operative as an agency of purification in order to maintain the very sense of purity that was within being before *the falling*. Heidegger's notion of purity that enables the absolute self, could be manifested as a possibility only through death. In explaining how the other becomes a hindrance in achieving the self, Heidegger emphasizes on *both* the necessity and the possibility of the exclusion of the other. But, who is this other from whom he tries to get away? How should we understand the otherness in Heidegger's thought? Whose otherness is it: is it the otherness of the self? If it is the otherness of the self, who could this self be?

Idea of self that is discussed in the philosophical domain cannot be reduced only to the self in terms of being or humans, because it has a wider implication; in that sense, even culture, community, religion, etc. could be seen in terms of self. Accordingly, the idea of being and time can also be discussed with reference to any community, which could be a nation, religion, culture, language, etc. Hence, in analyzing Heideggerian idea of the *ability* of the self *to be self* with regard to community, it is irresistible to dig into his own position on community to which he had belonged as a German; the community, which happened to be that of Nazi lead Germany. It is believed that Heidegger had been a strong supporter of the Nazi regime in Germany and has drawn severe criticism for his active participation in promoting and favoring the idea of German race while criticizing the Judaization of German universities.[2] The famous "Black Notebook" of Heidegger is considered to be his personal diary in which he expresses his anti-Judaic or anti-Semitic views. However, it is also undeniable that Heidegger himself had later admitted apologetically his "misadventure with Nazism."[3]

The question here is not whether Heidegger was apologetic regarding his previous political inclination and how he attempted to correct it through his later ethical and political insights. Rather, the present study explains how his philosophy which emerges in *Being and Time* influenced the project of promoting German race as

[2] In this regard please see Blanchot's essay "Intellectuals under Scrutiny (1984)". The essay that is referred to in the present study appears in *The Blanchot Reader*, 1995a, pp. 206 – 227.
[3] http://www.beyng.com/IainThomsonInterview.html (accessed on 01.03.2016)

a totalizable community, while excluding and resisting the others, who were non-Germans, and also those whose sexual inclination did not fit with the dominant heterosexual discourse. The study also explains that how his philosophy justifies any such ideology that believed in the purity of any community which could be formed upon race, nation, color, religion, caste, language and so on, within which the other is eliminated, suppressed, or excluded. In that sense, Heidegger's philosophy plays a major role in promoting discourses that assert the continuity of the self-sameness. Therefore, the idea of being and death that is offered by Heidegger cannot be justified when its position is questioned in terms of ethics, as the implication of practice of power can be contested and intervened only when it is brought into the domain of ethics. Hence, the absence of ethical dimension in the self-enabling power, projects Heideggerian philosophy of being and death as a self-oriented philosophy.

The danger in any such philosophy that upholds any kind of self-sameness is determined by certain aspect of violent aspect that is communicated through it. However, here, it is important to note that the idea of violence that is discussed here, is in relation to Heidegger's demand for cutting off the other from the self, which he explains as a necessity and a possibility of the Self for the self. Hence, the present study looks into problematic of Heidegger's philosophy while emphasizing the necessity of inventing a different way to read the same text, as suggested by Jacques Derrida, especially in *Aporias*.[4]

Nevertheless, since Heideggerian emphasis on the possibility of the absolute self raises some ethical problems, the present study brings forth Levinasian philosophy as it emphasizes the inexorable coming of the other to the domain of the self, disempowering its possibility to be self. This idea of Levinas disputes Heidegger's strong stance on the possibility of creating an absolute closure of the self. Explaining the idea of the other, Levinas, in *Totality & Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, presents his account on death drawing an analogy between the other and death, within which other is casted as that which comes from the "region" from where death comes. According to Levinas, both death and the other are unknowable, since

[4] There are several works in which Derrida discusses various dimensions of Heideggerian philosophy. However, the present study gives greater significance to *Aporias*, as it directly brings out both critique and suggestion particularly on Heidegger's idea of death and being. Here, Derrida emphasizes the necessity of re-reading Heidegger's famous phrase that describes death as the "possibility of the impossibility' in a *different* manner and it is here that Derrida suggests Blanchot's reading of the same.

they are not located within the region of the self, owing to which self cannot have any control over them. They are beyond the capacity, capability, and the knowledge of the self. Hence, both death and the other are strangers to self, and they come to self from outside. The *coming* of the other cannot be foreseen by the self, because the other comes only according to its *own* time. It is this unpredictable coming of the other that interrupts the continuity of the self-sameness, throwing the self into a powerless condition. This discontinuity of the self *disenables* the possibility of creating totality of the self.

However, it is to this inexorable presence of the powerless other who demands a response from the self, that the self is compelled to respond. Levinas describes it as ethical responsibility of the self toward the other.

Levinasian emphasis on the impossibility of creating a totality of the self even in the context of death paralyses the Heideggerian view on death and being. The major argument that he brings forth to counter Heideggerian idea of death is based on the notion of *remainder* that is explained in relation to the last minute of death which is passed by the self without any awareness. This passing onto death, while death which is the other, is passing through the self, has been explained as that which can never be experienced fully by the self. Hence, this significant remainder remains beyond the accessibility from the side of the self, making death, and also the *given* knowledge of death impossible. Consequently, death and the other continue to be strangers, on whom *no* totality can *ever* be constructed, also, who can *never* be accessed. Hence, according to Levinas, death can never be *the* end, since there is a *beyond* that continues to remain inaccessible and unknowable, hence, it is wholly other with infinite strangeness. The Levinasian idea of infinite otherness projects death as that which can never be known or experienced in its completeness; therefore, death becomes *absolutely infinite*.

However, though Levinasian philosophy of death plays a commendable role in offering a new approach to understand the idea of death by introducing the presence of the infinite other, on the other hand, it also establishes another version of self-same discourse. The absoluteness reflected in the context of the other makes every attempt futile that is taken by the self to know, to understand, to communicate, and to relate to the other, for the otherness of the other is absolutely infinite. Moreover, casting the

other as the absolutely infinite is yet another reading from the side of the self, and that incapacitates and annihilates any attempt of accessing the other. Thus, it rules out the possibility of constant opening up of the self to the other, since it remains perpetually open due to the coming of the absolutely infinite other. If the self thus remains open perpetually, there is no possibility *at all* to create any understanding, knowledge, language, or meaning of death; also, it discards all kinds of knowledge and understandings that have come up so far about death. Yet, how is that possible? Are we able to imagine that we do not imagine death anymore since death is unimaginable in its full form? Moreover, what is this full form or knowledge of death? What do we not know about death though we know that death is our destiny? Is there anything to know about death? What is destined to death? What is the destiny of death if death is our destiny? Does death have any destiny? How many deaths are there? Is death singular or plural in its number or what is the number of death?

Hence, philosophical positions held by Heidegger and Levinas on the idea of death create *two absolutes*, according to which death should be either understood as absolutely finite or absolutely infinite. The condition of either/or makes it obligatory for us to have a final definition of death, and, in each case, death emerges in the form of *as such*. Philosophical tradition of either/or that creates an opposition in the context of self and the other becomes an existential problem that is to be interrogated not just within the domain of philosophy but also with regard to life of beings, and, it is here that Derrida suggests the necessity of doing away with any absolute that leads to perpetual totalities, also perpetual oppositions. This invocation is not made due to some theoretical or conceptual error that is reflected within any philosophy; rather, it is demanded by the very impossibility of taking one side and maintaining the same continuity of life. According to Derrida, the problem with Western philosophy is that it is governed by metaphysics of presence, which affirms the presence of a thing *as such*[5]. Therefore, any understanding of being, life, and death, is founded on the assumption of *as suchness* of the thing. However, Derrida deconstructs this assumed *as suchness* assigned to being and death through his idea of *différance*. As Derrida

[5] In *Margins of Philosophy* (1982), Derrida discusses the problem of the idea of *as such*, which denotes the sense of properness that is proper to a thing. Moreover, this properness can be recognized only when the thing is viewed in the totalized form; hence, the idea of *as such* presupposes the *possibility* of recognizing thing as a whole — the thing *in itself*.

argues in *Aporias*, Maurice Blanchot eliminates this *as suchness* given to being through his suggestion of annihilating the as suchness of death.

Blanchot's deviation from traditional approach to death and being emerges through his philosophical and literary writings. Addressing the question of death, destabilizing the *as suchness* of death, he throws both life and death into infinity in a way that neither life nor death comes to an end *as such*. However, Blanchot's works show that he does not take death as the theme or the subject for his own philosophy. Also, there is no such philosophy with which he approaches the realm of death. For him, it is a question that continues to exist despite the willingness of philosophy to settle it by providing a final answer. In that sense, every settlement that is provided with regard to the question of being and death by the institution of philosophy, is projected as that which is unsettled. Subsequently, he also questions the robustness of any system of knowledge that is legitimized by philosophy *as such*. This interrogative nature reflected in Blanchot's ideas brings up many questions: What does Blanchot attempt to say through his writings? What is his philosophy all about? Is there a philosophy at all in Blanchot? If there is any, is it a philosophy that denies any philosophy? Does he deny philosophy? If he denies philosophy, what does he propose in the place of philosophy? On the other hand, does he suggest anything at all as philosophy? Can there be a place for philosophy in Blanchot's writings? If there is any place, where is that place? It could be argued that these questions have no significance as they question the very existence of philosophy and the system of knowledge manifested by it. Moreover, these questions suggest some madness or stupidity since they connote a certain doubt, disbelief, and disagreement regarding what is *given* and also taken as truth or knowledge — certainty.

Certainly, Blanchot's writings *murmur* madness, doubt, disbelief, disagreement, disappointment, and frustration with the *given* knowledge, system, language, tradition, and philosophy. He disavows; he doubts; he questions; he runs into madness. He and his writings are, in a way, madness themselves as everything is entangled in such a complicated manner that no clarity, meaning or a definition can be gained from anything that is said. This complicated situation that is common to each thought that unfolds in Blanchot becomes all the more complex and problematic when he subtracts the *as suchness* of death from death. When the *as suchness* is substracted, there is no room for a proper death in the sense that there is no particular way of dying

or a particular death which is ultimate and final. Hence, Blanchot eliminates the finality assigned to death; consequently, death becomes interminable in Blanchot. When death is viewed as endless, death becomes that which continues to remain despite death. Hence, in its continuity, death becomes living further and beyond. This strange and complex idea of Blanchot regarding death overturns the given understanding of death. It undoes the assumed binary opposition, which places death in opposition to life and vice versa. It problematizes the border that is assumed between life and death, separating one from the other assigning them their respective zones.

According to Blanchot's perspective, the assumed border between life and death goes blurred, as death does not wait to come only on the last day of life marking the end of living; instead, it comes not just once but many times — many times a day, also many days at times. In each coming, it comes to pass; in its passing it pierces life; it passes through only when it penetrates life, and, in each such passing of death through life, life is shattered into pieces; it just becomes a dead body alive or live body that is dead — certain numbness, coldness, and heaviness, with which a corpse is usually found to be familiar, could also be experienced with this living body of our everyday life. Thus, since there is no *one* last day that ends this whole life once and forever, every day, every minute and each second could be that decisive day, moment, or time of death. Therefore, there cannot be any thought of a life that gets completed with death. Death does not facilitate any totality *as such*. It also does not leave life in its absolute incompleteness. Blanchot does not go to any such extreme life or death. He does not believe in the idea of totality. For him, life exists in fragments; also, in each fragment, there is full of life. However, that fullness is anyway the fullness of a fragment. Similarly, life also does not come to any such complete halt. In each moment that life undergoes death when death passes through it, another life emerges. Thus, death and life are in hand-in-hand; they do not oppose each other; they pass through each other; while passing through each other, they miss each other; one escapes the other without having any encounter *as such*. They are in play.

Blanchot's idea of death is derived from his understanding of the relationship between self and the other. As Blanchot sees, the relationship between self and the other can never come to a complete halt even at death, since death is yet another relationship of the self with the other. It is so, since death is the very other, who does

not cease *to come*. This idea of Blanchot reflects Levinasian thought on the same problem. The Levinasian idea of ethical responsibility of the self to the other suggests a great sense of passivity from the side of the self. Moreover, Blanchot shares this idea of passivity presented by Levinas. However, compared to Levinas, Blanchot's view on the idea of the other slightly differs. And, this difference marks the very singularity of Blanchot's philosophy.

Blanchot presents the other as in-finite in the sense that there is no continuity of the other in terms of its sameness; instead, the other keeps becoming other ceaselessly. There is always outside even in the context of the other. Hence, there is no end to this otherness; moreover, it is an otherness with innumerable ruptures that introduces multiple othernesses in the very idea of the other. Every other is every other — multiple ends rather than one finite end or not having any end at all. What is more significant here is the plethora of innumerable breaks and ruptures that deliver only fragments. However, as Blanchot notes, this otherness is unavoidable since its coming cannot be foreseen. In the coming of the other, the self undergoes transformations, through which he is delivered onto death and life. Here, Blanchot demands a different thought on death, which is beyond the physical death; accordingly, the idea of death that is noted is the death of the self — the death of subject.

In Blanchot's view, death of the subject opens up to "crude" being, whose identity cannot be marked in terms of *I*. It is a condition, where being is no more identical to its own self; it thus disenables him from saying *I*, the first person singular pronoun in the domain of grammar. Moreover, if there is any possibility to say *I*, it is no more the grammatico-syntactic singular, since there are many *Is* that begin to appear with the very disappearance of the *I* subject. Taking this indefinable multiplicity that emerges just following the death of the Self, Blanchot approaches the question of being where he finds the very existence of being itself as an unsolvable, infinite, yet mandatory question. He addresses this question by making his entry from the side of death. Hence, it is an attempt at making an entry from outside. He does it through stepping out from the *given* world. So doing, he opens up to the outside — outside the self, where he sees the enormity of being with its innumerable and immeasurable possibilities.

Accordingly, it is the continuity of the self without sameness, where self begins to unfold as the other. Blanchot insists on the very impossibility of fixing being into any form *as such*. However, one of the significant aspects that Blanchot highlights is that the relationship between self and the other is not a one-sided relationship. It is a relationship that happens *between*, *across* and *via* self and the other. They pass onto each other secretly while passing through each other; yet, each passing, which is a most important process, can never be identical. Thus, it remains a secret.

With this account, Blanchot yearns to ask the following questions: how many times do we die before we encounter the real death? If death means a loss, how many times do we lose ourselves? In losing, how many times do we yearn for our death? How many times do we curse death for not coming to us when it is the most that we need? These are questions that are posed by Blanchot's philosophy which appears in his literary-philosophical works. Blanchot projects being as fragmented: being asserts its being in fragments since it is on fragments that the being is founded. It is here Blanchot emphasizes literature through writing showing writing as the very locus of being.

Blanchot's idea of literature undoes the traditional linear movement of being from life to death. So doing, it necessitates viewing life as that which is founded upon death. In this projection, literature becomes significant for Blanchot, since literature is nothing but death and its infinite economy. It begins and ends with death; it affirms death through coming into existence as literature. Thus, literature bears death as a certainty; yet, death could become certainty only when there is life. Hence, life is a necessity while death is a certainty. Life is necessary not to live but to die; one does not live to live; rather, one lives to die. This sentence – one lives to die – could bear two kinds of meaning: one is literal, which is also the general idea; the other, which is more significant concerning Blanchot, is the implied meaning. One lives to die. According to Blanchot, one lives to die not because death is certain; but because, despite its certainty of coming, death does not arrive; thus, one lives dying while waiting for death.

Here, there are two important ideas. One is the idea of certainty that is related to death since death is unavoidable, the other is the unpredictability of death as it is

bound to come at any point of time. Hence, it is the coming of death that is certain due to which one could await death. However, the problem, according to Blanchot, is that death is deceptive, since, regardless of its promise to come, it never comes. If it ever comes, it is a perfect rose — Blanchot says in his *Death Sentence*. Still, how could one assure that it would ever come, making it the perfect rose — the fulfilled promise? How long should one wait for death? According to Blanchot, no one knows when death comes. As he explains, there are many times when one feels the presence of death; coming of death; one prepares for death; one writes last will of one's own, since the presence of death is just near — almost there. One bids *farewell* — to one's family, friends, loved ones, and enemies, thinking death has arrived. Feeling the proximity of death, one's eyes close; breath becomes heavier and faster; the body becomes stiff; mouth opens; some strange noise come out from it, and it seems to get stuck in throat; everything goes blurred; sometimes, one feels dizzy and becomes unconscious. Thus, one is *near* death because death *seems to have come*. It *appears* to be so. Nonetheless, it is *not*; it is just another appearance, never present *fully* in its *presence*; it has been coming since a long time; but, while coming, it has *not yet* come: therefore, it always remains *to come*. Hence, death is always *to come*. Since it remains to come, one has to wait without knowing for how long to wait. One continues *to wait*; also, one continues *in* waiting. In this waiting, one suffers, and that suffering is not because he has to die, but he has to live — live dying. Having to live when one desires death is the suffering. Life is thus the punishment given by death.[6] Therefore, it is difficult to say whether it is life or death that continues as life. Blanchot's confusing and contradictory thoughts about life and death unfold through his literary works. It is through writing that he unravels the enigma of being, who cohabits both life and death at the same time.

[6] Blanchot's idea of death communicates the relationship between self and the other where self opens up to the other who comes from outside. This opening up of the self to the other is not a duty but ethical responsibility, and this certainly marks death of the self. However, when life of the self through the other is thus seen as a responsibility, projecting the same as a punishment seems to be problematic. The problem that can arise here is that whether Blanchot sees responsibility as a punishment. Can the responsibility be a punishment? Does it carry some negativity with it? Are we able to see responsibility in terms of positivity and negativity? The idea of responsibility cannot be seen as entirely in negative sense, nor can it be seen as that which is entirely positive. Rather, it is a condition which one is not able to escape or avoid, but accept it. In that sense, life is a compulsion and one cannot leave it at one's own will. One has to overcome one's own limits to live beyond the self in the name of the other. However, this idea is deeply discussed in the last two chapters of the thesis bringing examples from Blanchot's literary works.

In understanding being, Blanchot draws an analogy between language and being, within which he projects being as language. However, Blanchot's idea of language is not the language of speech, which is the language of Subject. His focus is on crude being. To think of the "crude" being is to think the *unconditional* being. Being is unconditional since it can never be totalized into being *as such*. It keeps overcoming its own self through opening up to outside. Considering the idea of outside in relation to language, it is writing that becomes the outside of the *given* language. In writing, language overcomes its own boundaries to become further language. Hence, literature is a space outside created through language. Moreover, that language of literature is to be invented through writing. Nonetheless, since literature is founded upon writing, Blanchot places writing as survival. Still, writing itself has to be founded upon something, and according to Blanchot, it is founded upon death — death of the self. Hence, Blanchot demands death, which is violent, disastrous and radical, for life, since death is life-giving.

In asserting the death of *the* self, Blanchot gives way for the other. However, Blanchot's demand for death of *the* self is radical and violent. Yet, this violence is a necessity, because it is a responsibility that is taken *in the name of the other*. It is through death of the self that being opens up to the *other*. This idea incapacitates the self in terms of power. It is a complete *withdrawal* from the self so that there is no more self *as such* within the self — which is the death of certain properness. In such a withdrawal, there is only a being that is powerless and passive. This passivity is silent and dark since it is devoid of any action including speech. Nonetheless, since silence grows in the very absence of speech, it is the silence that becomes louder, and it begins to murmur. For Blanchot, this murmur is writing, which is literature.

Thus, the present study explores Blanchot's philosophy of death with reference to some of his literary and philosophical works. At the same time, it attempts to understand how Blanchot undoes the assumed border that separates philosophy from literature and literature from philosophy. So doing, it discusses the relation between language and death with regard to the notion of passivity through writing.

However, there are many studies that have already dealt with Blanchot's works highlighting his idea of death, being, power, and passivity. Among such

studies, works by Roger Laporte, Rodolphe Gasché, Christopher Fynsk, Paul Davies, Simon Critchley, Michael Newman and Michael Holland are very significant since they open various entry points in Blanchot's world that is in abyssal darkness and silence.

0.2 Earlier Discussions on Blanchot's Idea of Passivity

0.2.1 Michael Newman: *The trace of trauma: blindness, testimony and the gaze in Blanchot and Derrida*

Bringing the last fragments of the *Writing of the Disaster* into discussion, in *The Trace of Trauma: Blindness, Testimony and the Gaze in Blanchot and Derrida*[7], Michael Newman deals with the idea of blindness that is presented by Blanchot. Here, Newman tries to understand how Blanchot's idea of vision differs from that which is discussed by Derrida. According to Newman, Blanchot, in *The Writing of the Disaster*, necessitates a reinterpretation of the myth of Narcissus, while suggesting 'that the aspect of the myth that Ovid forgets is that Narcissus does not recognize himself, but rather falls in love with the image which "exerts the attraction of the void, and of death in its falsity." It is not, for Blanchot, that Narcissus is closed up in his reflection, but rather that "he lacks, by decree (you shall not see yourself), that reflected presence — identity, the self-same — the basis upon which a living relation with life, which is other, can be ventured."[8] Therefore, according to Blanchot, as Newman shows, "Narcissus is not narcissistic, at least in the sense in which the term is understood in common parlance: it is not because he loves himself that Narcissus cannot love another, but rather that, not recognizing his image as his own, he cannot relate to the other, since he has no relation to himself."[9] Reading this idea of Blanchot regarding Narcissus in the myth as an "extraordinary remark", Newman attempts to look into its implied meaning, according to which he suggests that

> 'Narcissus has no self-relation because it is only through the other that he would have been able to recognize his image as his own. To have a direct —

[7] This essay appears in *Maurice Blanchot: The Demand of writing*, edited by Carolyn Bailey Gill, 2005, pp. 152 – 173
[8] Ibid, p. 152
[9] Ibid, p. 153

> that is to say, fascinated — relation to the image is to seek to by-pass mediation — time, space, the other — for the sake of an unlimited, instantaneous and fully present enjoyment, a vision without lack, without a blind spot. Forgetting his blind spot, the image for Narcissus becomes all.'[10]

Hence, Newman is concerned about this "blind spot", which is forgotten by Narcissus, relating it to the idea of vision and visibility. Moreover, this concern of Newman transforms into the question of truth and knowledge. Looking into the way in which this idea of "the blind spot" has been treated in the philosophical domain, as he argues, it has been viewed "in transcendental terms", in the sense that "the condition for the possibility of vision cannot itself be considered to fall within the visible."[11] However, drawing the attention on Blanchot's view on vision and blindness in comparison to that of Derrida, Newman notes that Blanchot's treatment of vision, *unlike* that of Derrida which shows blindness and vision as an "intertwinement of the transcendental-sacrificial and the ethical"[12], as that "which can be properly associated with neither the transcendental nor the ethical, even if it has implication for both."[13] Accordingly, Newman argues that the figure of blindness that unfolds in Blanchot could be understood "with one nuanced by the distinction between vision and the gaze."[14]

Newman explains this distinction between vision and the gaze with reference to *The Madness of the Day* and *Orpheus' Gaze*. According to him, in Blanchot's idea of vision carries a double character, in the sense that "it always wants at once to see and not to see." Moreover, this "duplicity of vision" results in nothingness; because, there, in the "double vision", "the visible becomes a screen revealing and concealing a non-visible alterity", due to which "vision is ready to tip into trauma."[15] Therefore, he argues that double vision in Blanchot delivers being onto "nothingness" in a way that it is nothingness that is revealed by the "double vision". Nonetheless, Newman says that, though there is this "duplicity" in Derridian idea of vision, it is different from that of Blanchot, because of the way that it functions. In Derrida, "this duplicity is at once echoed — in blindness and tears — yet turned in the direction of an affirmation

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid, p. 154
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid, p. 156

of the other". However, as he argues, Blanchot "does not seem to have allowed himself" such affirmation.[16]

The idea of revelation of nothingness under the double vision that is discussed by Newman with reference to Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster* and *The Madness of the Day* is taken further ahead in relation to the idea of gaze, for which he brings out *Orpheus' Gaze*. Here, Newman seeks to discuss the relation between nothingness and the work, where he asserts the "obscure point", on which the work is developed. However, on the other hand, work is the figure of vision, due to which it is also nothingness. However, withdrawal happens by losing the object, and it is this loss which binds Orpheus to Eurydice. Hence, Newman argues that "By losing the object (Eurydice, who is drawn back to Hades according to the law or contract) Orpheus is able to capture, or at lease intimate, the 'impossible' *relation* as one of loss or withdrawal, the experience of the absence which is in excess of any act of negation, the experience of the 'other night'."[17] Hence, as Newman explains, for Blanchot, Orpheus is going to succeed by failing, or more specifically by *forgetting*.[18] Moreover, in Newman's point of view, forgetting is "not really an *act* of transgression, but rather a kind of *passivity* or 'inspiration'."[19] Hence, through forgetting, Orpheus is able to bring the essence of desire to the work. "What Orpheus wants is not the appearance so much as the appearing 'itself', with the disappearing that conditions it. In effect, Orpheus wants to *see the blind spot*, or that point of withdrawal which makes manifestation possible."[20] Nevertheless, to produce a work is to develop a figure of vision for which, as he points out, there are three sightings that need to be involved, and they are "the object, the gaze-as-object, and that which the gaze covers up." Here, the point that he attempts to emphasize is that how active intentionality of the subject is undermined in and through work, which is writing. Then, he explains how writing becomes "the blinding" since "[B]eing blinded is related to writing."[21] Newman's philosophical discussion regarding Blanchot's works thus emphasizes how writing becomes traumatic by becoming everything, yet nothing at the same time.

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid, p. 158
[18] Ibid, p. 157
[19] Ibid, p. 158
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid, p. 167

0.2.2 Rodolphe Gasché: *The felicities of paradox: Blanchot on the null-space of literature*[22]

In his *The felicities of paradox: Blanchot on the null-space of literature*, Rodolphe Gasché explains the idea of contradiction that is presented by Blanchot and shows how it differs from Hegel's notion of contradiction. Keeping Blanchot's essay *Literature and the Right to Death* as the backdrop of his analysis, Gasché examines Blanchot's idea of contradiction, highlighting the question "what is literature?" posed by Blanchot at the beginning of the essay. As he argues, for Blanchot, it is this question, which elevates and "disparages" literature at the same time. Accordingly, the idea of literature, its existence, also its non-existence is brought out in and through this question. Therefore, Gasché seeks to justify Blanchot's remarks that "all answers to the question 'What is literature?' have proved to be meaningless."[23] However, as he explains, Blanchot does not attempt to undo the very question since it cannot be answered, for all the answers become meaningless. Instead, he places the question as that which is capable of calling for literature while questioning the same. Hence, Gasché asks: "Might it not be that literature offers itself to understanding only where it is radically put into question, seen as a nullity?"[24]

Hence, this question "what is literature?" marks both the beginning and the end of literature; yet, he asserts that the question "is not a self-reflexive question" because, at the beginning, "there is nothing yet to reflect upon in the hope of achieving self-identity. The question is addressed to Others — the writer, the reader, the common language."[25] It exists in its otherness, due to which it becomes that which exists "as the absence of itself, as the question of its possibility. In the absence of the reflective gesture and "'the form of the question', literature presents itself as a mere nullity."[26] Moreover, what is more significant in the context of nullity is that it results from "the opposite pull of paradox." Thus, literature comes to exist through this paradox. As Gasché notes, "Its *existence* coincides with the marvelous movement by which an absence, emptiness or nullity turns into everything."[27] Nullity is thus an

[22] This essay appears in *Maurice Blanchot*: *The Demand of Writing*, edited by Carolyn Bailey Gill, 2005, pp. 34 – 69
[23] Ibid, p. 34
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid, p. 36
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid, p. 38

extraordinary force of everything. Asserting the significance given to the idea of paradox with regard to literature by Blanchot, Gasché analyzes how the antinomy that unfolds in the context of paradox becomes "the fortunate condition" for Blanchot for the happening of literature. However, he insists on the necessity of differentiating Blanchot's idea of paradox or contradiction from that of Hegel; because, according to him, Blanchot is not a Hegelian, though there is dominating presence of Hegel in Blanchot's philosophy that presents the movement "from nullity to everything". If Blanchot's thought "from nullity to everything" is taken in terms of Hegel, it would become a "Hegelian dialectical inversion, and paradox as merely a speculative proposition and leap."[28] He opines that Blanchot's idea cannot be reduced "to a display of the contradictory moments of literature's dialectical self-manifestation."[29]

Laying out the difference between Hegel and Blanchot with regard to contradiction, Gasché analyzes how Blanchot's contradiction, unlike that of Hegel's, does not provide space for continuity or succession of same set of contradiction in the sense that there is no derivation. Instead, it is a "new set of contradiction."[30] Accordingly, the work can be seen only as that which "stands in no causal or dialectical relation to the contradictory conditions of its production."[31] Hence, Gasché suggests the necessity of a "deeper understanding of the conflictual nature" of the opposite pulls between which the writer and the work find themselves.[32] These pulls that are in a conflict are not capable of "reconciliation", due to which conflict continues to remain. Yet, the work, which is produced amidst the conflict, is "the *impossible solution* of that conflictual situation."[33] In that sense, though literature becomes a solution, "it must remain a solution that, even though it occurs, is impossible."[34] Then, there is no escape from the contradiction, hence, from the conflict. Therefore, Gasché asserts that Blanchot's idea of contradiction as that which is, in Blanchot's own terms, "rigorously contradictory."[35] On the basis of this contradiction, Gasché discusses the idea of death with regard to literature, according

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid, p. 40
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid, pp. 41 – 42
[33] Ibid, p. 42
[34] Ibid, p. 44
[35] Ibid.

to which death is understood "as affirmation—of the possibility of nothingness, of the chance for being to be."[36]

0.2.3 Christopher Fynsk: *Crossing the threshold: on 'Literature and the right to death'*

Examining the essay "Literature and the Right to Death" written by Blanchot, Christopher Fynsk, in his essay *Crossing the threshold: on 'Literature and the right to death'*[37], aims to discuss how ambiguity of literature constitutes an offering of the *il y a*. Moreover, he also attempts to read the relation that is marked by this offering of *il y a* as the encounter with *autrui*. As Fynsk shows, Blanchot's essay inhabits two dimensions: temptation and obsession. Fynsk's focus is on the latter one, which is obsession, "a 'torment'" for which he finds the approach through the first — temptation. Blanchot describes this temptation as "the temptation of the negative."[38]

Fynsk's analysis is based on Blanchot's idea of ambiguous nature of literature, according to which literature's origin is seen as that which is grounded on "an irreducible double meaning." As Fynsk explains, it is "not a movement between irreconcilable meanings, but between meaning and a 'meaning of meaning' that is itself irreducibly ambiguous, material and ideal, neither material nor ideal."[39] Accordingly, Fynsk explores the way in which literature is delivered through language keeping literature "entirely a product of language." It is language that which grabs the attention in Fynsk's essay since literature exists only through language. Then, literature begins and ends with language. Here, Fynsk's concern is if literature is a product of language, literature, as a work, falls back on language in the sense that its reality is nothing but language. However, is there a reality that is inherent in that language with which literature is constituted? Here, Fynsk underscores Blanchot's idea of negation in relation to language of literature, according to which negation becomes that which is inherent in language. Pertaining to this idea, he brings out the idea of image and the imaginary that is at work in language in and through which

[36] Ibid, p. 65
[37] This essay appears in *Maurice Blanchot*: *The Demand of Writing*, edited by Carolyn Bailey Gill, 2005, pp. 70 – 90
[38] Ibid, p. 70
[39] Ibid.

space of literature is created; because, as he argues, "the ambiguity of literature lies in the communication of the image and the imaginary."[40] Here, he attempts to understand the idea of communication that happens through literature, for which he asserts the necessity of looking into the meaning that is carried by words. He turns toward Blanchot's argument that "for a word to be a sign, it must signify beyond any concrete context in which it might appear. Signification presupposes the possible absence of a referent and the absence of the speaker who might initially claim this language as their own."[41] However, concerning this argument of Blanchot, Fynsk unearths another idea that Blanchot also appears to be saying in terms of "an ontological claim," and, that is "it is not only that language signifies in the possible absence of its speaker and its referent; it is that a 'real death' has occurred."[42] Then, he deals with the idea of death in relation to literature where he brings out the idea that speech is possible only when "all of being must be given over to death"[43] in the sense that "('I' speak from my power to distance myself from myself, to be other than my being—in other words, from my death.)"[44] It is here that he attempts to understand "why Blanchot figures the effort to return to what exists *before* language as the effort to recover corpse" highlighting the idea of the torment of literature.[45] Accordingly, he believes that for Blanchot, "literature's torment drives it actually beyond the threshold that is the opening of language", and the threshold is nothing but the image.[46] "The image is a threshold—a limit […] that marks an infinite abyssal relation and that is therefore already a crossing towards […] the 'other' night."[47] Though there is a consciousness that involves in this crossing, Fynsk projects it as the fatality of desire. He explains it as a movement of consciousness towards the other, and it is this consciousness which becomes the gaze of fascination in the sense that it becomes a "passivity or an opening" that proceeds from "the touch of *autrui*"[48] due to which it becomes the passion of the image.

[40] Ibid, p. 72
[41] Ibid, p. 73
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid, p. 72
[44] Ibid, p. 73
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid, p. 75
[47] Ibid, p. 82
[48] Ibid, p. 88

0.2.4 Simon Critchley: *Il y a—holding Levinas's hand to Blanchot's fire*

In his essay, *Il y a—Holding Levinas's Hand to Blanchot's Fire*[49], Simon Critchley tries to understand the idea of death and the other that is offered by Blanchot. Here, Critchley's attention is drawn towards Blanchot's philosophy of death that unfolds in his literary and philosophical works. Therefore, he does not highlight any specific work in the essay; rather, he refers to several works in support of his argument.

Emphasizing the impossibility of defining death since it is not an object or a success of an intentional act, Critchley, at first, grounds his idea that "there can thus be no phenomenology of dying, because it is a state of affairs about which one could neither have an adequate intention nor find intuitive fulfillment."[50] This impossibility is due to the impossibility of having a direct contact with death. In that sense, as he argues, the understanding that we have regarding death is derived from certain "representation" or through "an image" that is constructed through making some "indirect relation" with death. Since it is thus a "representation of death", it is "not the representation of presence," due to which representation of death becomes a "paradox".[51] In his view, this paradox can be "perhaps best conveyed by the figure of prosopopoeia."[52] It is concerning this notion of prosopopoeic figure that Critchley brings forth the idea of the "death mask", since it "indicates the failure of presence." Moreover, he sees that many of the "haunting images" that appear in Blanchot's works have a "prosopopoeic function: they are a face for that which has no face, and they show the necessary inadequacy of our relation to death."[53] In this context, he poses a question to Levinas: "*must the face of the Other always be a death mask?*"[54] Then, he attempts to highlight how Levinasian ideas on death and the other are reflected in that of Blanchot, following which he explores the notion of alterity that is presented by both Levinas and Blanchot. As far as the idea of alterity is considered, there is a difference between the way in which it is understood by both the philosophers, which, very often, leads to mark a distinction between the philosophies of Blanchot and Levinas. Accordingly, Blanchot sees alterity as "strictly impersonal",

[49] This essay appears in *Maurice Blanchot*: *The Demand of Writing*, edited by Carolyn Bailey Gill, 2005, pp. 108 – 122
[50] Ibid, p. 108
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid, p. 109
[54] Ibid.

whereas it is seen as "personal" by Levinas.[55] However, opposing this distinction, Critchley's attempt is "to muddy the distinction between Blanchot and Levinas by tracking an alternative destiny for the *il y a* in Levinas's work and indicating the direction that could be taken by a Blanchot-inspired re-reading of Levinas."[56]

In this attempt, at first, he explores how the idea of *il y a* has been projected by Levinas for which he brings examples from some of the major philosophical works by Levinas such as *Phenomenology of Eros*, *Time and the Other*, *Existence and Existents* and *Otherwise than Being Or Beyond Essence*. Nonetheless, the argument that he seeks to present concerning Levinasian idea of *il y a* is that "it stubbornly refuses to disappear and that Levinas keeps on reintroducing it at crucial moments in the analysis. It functions like a standing reserve of non-sense from which Levinas will repeatedly draw the possibility of ethical significance."[57] The zone of the *il y a* in Levinas is presented in his analysis on the relation between the self and the Other within which his notion of alterity and the ethical responsibility is discussed. Here, Critchley's argument is that there is some "ambivalence" that could be seen in the context of alterity of *il y a* discussed by Levinas, and this leads to certain "ambiguity of the relation between *il y a* and illeity."[58] Critchley opines that this ambiguity has been the fascination for Levinasian involvement with *il y a*. He presents this hypothesis in the form of a question:

> 'might not the fascination […] that Levinas's writing continues to exert […] be found in the way it keeps open the question of ambiguity, the ambiguity that defines the experience of language and literature itself for Blanchot, the ambiguity of the Saying and the Said, of scepticism and reason, of the *il y a* and illeity, that is also to say—perhaps—of evil and goodness?'[59]

As he argues, Levinas does not leave *il y a* behind since it could "possibly provoke confusion on the part of the Subject between the alterity of the *il y a* and the alterity of the illeity."[60] One of the results of such a confusion is the ambiguity that is felt between the transcendence of evil and goodness. However, in his view, the

[55] Ibid, p. 111
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid, p. 112
[58] Ibid, p. 113
[59] Ibid, p. 114
[60] Ibid.

problem with Levinasian account on radical alterity is that it is necessarily seen in terms of "goodness". He questions, why is the "radical Otherness goodness?"[61] "Why does radical Otherness have to be determined as good or evil in an absolute metaphysical sense?"[62] At the same time, he asserts, "Could one—and this is the question motivating this critique—accept Levinas's quasi-phenomenological descriptions of radical alterity whilst suspending or bracketing out their ethico-metaphysical consequences?"[63]

With regard to these questions, Critchley turns towards Blanchot in understanding or re-reading Levinasian idea of *il y a*, where he offers a comparison between Blanchot and Levinas with regard to the idea of alterity. As he argues, it is the "notion of an absolute relation" which is a "monstrous contradiction" that has been the fascination for Blanchot's inclination to Levinas. Accordingly, he explains that, in Blanchot's view, "absolute relation offers a *non-dialectical account of intersubjectivity* […] that is founded in the struggle for recognition where the Self is dependent on the other for its constitution as a Subject," whereas "for Levinas, the interhuman relation is an event of radical asymmetry."[64] In that sense, Blanchot sees how Levinas "restores the strangeness and terror of the interhuman relation" concerning the idea of "*autrui*", and it is this idea that is embraced by Blanchot. Yet, as Critchley shows, Blanchot "places brackets around the terms 'ethics' and 'God' and hence holds back from the metaphysical affirmation of the Good beyond Being."[65] So doing, he highlights that Blanchot's idea on "the relation to the Other is neither positive nor negative in any absolute metaphysical sense; it is rather neutral, an experience of neutrality which—importantly—is *not* impersonal and which opens in and as that ambiguous form of language."[66] And, that is literature, which Critchley terms as "atheist transcendence."[67]

[61] Ibid, p. 115
[62] Ibid, p. 116
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid, p. 117
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid, p. 118

0.2.5 Thomas Carl Wall: *Radical Passivity: Lévinas, Blanchot, and Agamben*

Apart from above discussed studies that have dealt with Blanchot's idea of death, language and literature, Thomas Carl Wall, in his work *Radical Passivity: Lévinas, Blanchot, and Agamben*, has examined the idea of radical passivity with reference to the philosophies of Blanchot, Levinas and Agamben. The work seeks to suggest that all the three philosophers have asserted an extreme passivity. In the forward to the work, William Flesch says that "[W]e bring together and overlap three thinkers here to the extent that each articulates an extreme passivity, expropriation, de-nucleation, or neutrality that is paradoxically constitutive of the self, the image, or the community."[68]

The work begins with Levinasian philosophy that gives greater significance to the notion of a rapport with the other in his discussion on the idea of self. Then, it moves onto explore Blanchot's idea of writing and the imaginary, in which it deals with Blanchot's depiction of literature. Thirdly, it brings forth a discussion on Agamben's work *La comunità che viene* [English translation: *The coming Community*] in which his idea of community is presented. Accordingly, community has been seen as "without any essence or any precondition of belonging."[69] This idea of Agamben is approached while drawing its affinity with Heideggerian reading of Kantian schematism and the Blanchot's idea of imaginary.

However, in this work, Wall examines Blanchot's idea of writing in relation to which he analyzes Blanchot's essay *Characteristics of the Work of Art*[70]. Here, he discusses how Blanchot differentiates sculptor from the road builder in relation to the way they "use"[71] the matter in their respective works. It is about this notion that Wall goes on to present his ideas on Blanchot's use of language in his writings, in which language becomes the very matter. He comes to this affirmation through his argument that is placed as follows:

> 'The work of art requires materials just like objects do. Plastic, ink, canvas, and marble are necessary to art, and matter can be used in such a way that it vanishes into its uses. But art uses matter such that it is unused, workless, idle,

[68] Wall, 1999, p. 7
[69] Ibid, p. 121
[70] Ibid, p. 67
[71] This is a term that is placed by Wall in his discussion on Blanchot's works.

useless. Art simply causes the marble to "appear", not to disappear into use. In poetry likewise, words, detached from referentiality, suddenly make a material appearance. It is the appearance of matter that *is*, eminently, what the work of art is made of. Not matter in its thingly reality, but in its appearing *as such*. Not thingliness, but the image of matter. Imaginary matter, if you prefer.'[72]

Then, he goes on to explain Blanchot's notion of materiality, according to which Wall analyzes "materiality (or aesthetic, or imaginary matter) is the name given to matter *itself*."[73] Moreover, since this matter or materiality does not serve any purpose, for it has no purpose, he suggests art as that which "affirms this namelessness."[74] So doing, Wall connects Blanchot's idea of namelessness as the very affirmation of art to Levinasian idea of *il y a*. Then, he moves onto discuss Blanchot's idea of the imaginary, by referring to Blanchot's essay *Two Versions of the Imaginary*.[75] In this discussion, Wall places Kantian schematism in explaining the idea of artist's inability of reaching materiality, for materiality excludes authority.[76]

Idea of proximity and of responsibility in the context of the relationship between self and the other emphasized in Levinasian philosophy is another aspect through which Wall has sought to draw a line connecting the philosophies of Blanchot and Levinas. Accordingly, he views that "the aesthetic distance or Orphic glance", which obsesses Blanchot's narrators, as an infinite responsibility or as "an uncontrollable compulsion to be for-the-other" —an idea that is placed by Levinas. This responsibility is that which "opens onto a time beyond "my death".[77] In relation to this notion, Wall discusses Blanchot's idea of death in relation to writing, where he reads his notion of death as that which "does not bring an end to dying." So doing, he shows how Blanchot's notion challenges the "facilely understood" idea of human finitude that makes "the equation of death with rest and peace", following which he discusses death and writing concerning the idea of incompleteness, since it is the incompletion that gets magnified in the very need to achieve death or writing. This incompleteness is determined by disruptions that disrupt the "continuity of time" that

[72] Wall, 1999, pp. 68 – 69
[73] Ibid, p. 70
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid, p. 72
[76] Ibid, p. 74
[77] Ibid, p. 77

is significant in both writing and dying. As Wall analyses, in Blanchot, "[T]he time of writing and the time of dying are the time of radical divergence of past from future. They are discontinuous time."[78] Along with these notions, he also tries to examine the idea of anteriority towards which the Blanchotian and Levinasian aesthetics are directed, where Wall asserts anteriority as "the subtlety of imaginary matter […] whose destiny is neither subjective nor objective."[79]

However, it is important to note that there are many such secondary works that deal with many aspects of Blanchot's philosophy. Moreover, since Blanchot himself does not insist the necessity of having any alliance with any particular philosophical tradition; in order to understand his philosophy, his works are open to be explored through various avenues and approaches. Consequently, it is not mandatory to follow any of the above discussed scholarly works to understand Blanchot's philosophical treatment of the question of death and being. Therefore, while highlighting the significant contribution made by the plethora of studies on Blanchot's works, the present study, in its own particular way, attempts to explore Blanchot's idea of death and literature in relaion to the notion of radical passivity.

0.3 Methodology

Keeping the poststructuralist approach to language, literature, and philosophy, the present study explores the question of death and being in relation to the notion of language and writing. The conceptual framework of the study is drawn upon ideas and thoughts offered by Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida on being, death, writing, and literature. Accordingly, based on primary data, the discussion is constructed upon philosophical ideas of the above mentioned thinker-philosophers.

The study contains four chapters, which explore the idea of death, being, and literature. Accordingly, the first chapter deals with the idea of death that is discussed by Heidegger and Levinas keeping their respective major philosophical works, *Being and Time*, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* as well as *Otherwise than*

[78] Ibid, p. 95
[79] Ibid, pp. 105 – 106

Being or Beyond Essence as the backdrop. Moreover, it also highlights certain problematic of their philosophies in addressing the question of self and the other in terms of ethical responsibility.

The second chapter discusses the notion of subject and discourse within which Lacanian and Foucaultian ideas are explored. Differentiating Foucaultian subject from that of Lacan, the chapter addresses the question of subject concerning discourse and power, within which hegemonic power of culture is viewed as a threat to individual freedom. Subsequently, it also emphasizes the unavoidability of the otherness in the context of the self, and, hence, demands the urge of going beyond the domain of the subject.

The third and fourth chapters directly deal with Blanchot's philosophy. Accordingly, third chapter discusses the idea of death that is presented by Blanchot, within which his own views on language through writing becomes pivotal. The significance of Blanchot's philosophy of death is introduced in the chapter placing a critique of Derrida on Heideggerian notion of death. The chapter also involves a discussion on ideas of totality, limit, border, and border-crossing that are significant in conceptualizing the very notion of death.

The fourth chapter presents Blanchot's idea of death reflected in his literary and philosophical works. Here, addressing Blanchot's "contradiction" and "confusion" in finding an answer to the question of "what is death?" or "what is life?", the chapter examines following texts of Blanchot: *The Idyll, Thomas the Obscure, Death Sentence, When the Time Comes, The Last Word, The Madness of the Day, Awaiting Oblivion, Literature and the Right to Death.*

CHAPTER – I

DEATH, IM-POSSIBILITY OF SELF, AND LANGUAGE

1.1 Some ideas on Death before Heidegger

The unavoidability of death, which brings the *end* to the living life, has set the human beings to *accept* it, though it is that which being is afraid of, and from which being tries to refrain itself. Despite the reality of death, if there is life, it is the fear, separation, pain, and sorrow that the being is generally obsessed with throughout its living. Therefore, death seemingly has a *negative* meaning in relation to life. It is this negativity that attempts to explain death in terms of *darkness* or *evil* in many religious discourses. Accordingly, the movement from life to death is usually understood as a movement from light to darkness, or from happiness to sorrow. More than any other reason, it is this negativity about death in the human mind that tightly bounds the being into the religious domain following the belief that it is only religion, mostly the God, who can *take care* of Being by protecting him from the evil called *death* or the *pain of death*. Therefore, the individual feels the necessity to be the follower of God and be obedient to his word, by making a promise to *not to* commit sins — for greater the sin, greater the fear and the pain of death. If so, then the question which can be posed here is that, *how* God really can watch out for someone's life?

According to the Judeo-Christian tradition, especially the Christian discourse, the world has been considered as a result of *creation*. It is a creation by a Creator, and this creator is none other than God. Many religious discourses, for instance, Christian religious discourse established through Bible, authenticate and confirm the world and the human being as a *creation of God*.[80] Accordingly, it is the Bible, which brings the first reference to consider death as a sin or the punishment given by God to man, after Adam ate the fruit from the prohibited tree, which is the "tree that gives wisdom"[81]. If he had not eaten the fruit from that tree, he would have lived happily without encountering death. Also, he would not have encountered fear, sorrow, or pain that comes along with death or in relation to death. However, it is the disobedience of man

[80] Genesis 1, 2. [Good News Bible. The Bible Society of India, pp. 1 – 2]
[81] Genesis 1, 2. [Good News Bible. The Bible Society of India, p. 2]

to God's command that has caused him to undergo the *pain* of death. Therefore, before any other discourse, it is the Christian religious discourse that places death in relation to *evil*, *sin*, and *punishment*.[82] So, the suffering that follows throughout life due to the fear and sorrow of death is *unavoidable*. Observing the religious discourses, what one should be hopeful for is not the life *before* death, but the life *after* death, that is to be discussed in relation to the idea of heaven and redemption. The above understanding of death in relation to *sin* is explained in detail by Samuele Bacchiocchi. Samuele Bacchiocchi in *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*, explains the above understanding of death in relation to *sin* in detail.

> 'To understand the Biblical view of death, we need to go back to the account of creation where death is presented, not as a natural process willed by God, but as something unnatural opposed to God. The Genesis narrative teaches us that death came into the world as a result of sin. God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and added the warning: "In the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen 2:17).'[83]

However, though the above interpretation of death shows death as the punishment given by the God, by expelling Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden so that they do not get the chance to eat the fruits from the "tree that gives life"[84] to *live forever*, it also explains death as that which man *must* go through in order to reach heaven and unite with God. Therefore, death is the end of all sufferings of human life while it is also the gateway to heaven.

Nevertheless, the agreement with the above idea is possible only when the ideas of mind/body or soul/body dualism are considered in depth. Though the mind/body or soul/body dualisms do not bring two different notions, yet, it is the term *soul* which is frequently used in theological discourses. Accordingly, at death, it is the *soul* which detaches from the body and goes away from the earth to *heaven*, which is always considered as something *above* the earth, where one *unites* with God. Therefore, the whole life of being that is destined to encounter the fear of death has not been seen as something *good* or *cherishable*. It is already a *sinned life*, and that

[82] Genesis 3. [Good News Bible. The Bible Society of India, pp. 3 – 4]
[83] Bacchiocchi, 2001, p. 134
[84] Genesis 3, 4. [Good News Bible. The Bible Society of India, p. 4]

has to be lived accepting the way it has been *given* until one gets the chance to *rest in peace* (RIP) — at death. This understanding depicts death as that over which one should not feel sad; because, it is the very end of suffering, and also, the greater redemption of the soul from the sinful body. However, it is in relation to the *sinned life* or the *sinned body* that the idea of *morality* has been carved into human life. Accordingly, the morality that is derived in relation to good and bad, or good and evil, which majorly originates from the discourse of religion, has been playing a major role in shaping one's life. Consequently, for this task of *shaping* one's life, as Nietzsche notes in *The Anti-Christ*[85], the priest is required, for he prevents one from doing *bad* or *evil* that leads an individual to hell.

> 'The priest had, with precision and pedantry, right down to the imposts large and small which had to be paid to him (– not forgetting the tastiest pieces of meat: for the priest is a beef-eater), formulated once and for all what he intends to have, 'what the will of God is'…. From now on all things of life are so ordered that the priest is everywhere indispensable: at all the natural events of life, at birth, marriage, sickness, death.'[86]

Nonetheless, the notion of *death* in the Western philosophy attempts to understand death as an "exhaustive category"[87] through which death is explained as *the end* of *life* — in other terms, *the end of being*. Nonetheless, this *end* is taken as *the end* which is final and finite. Accordingly, Western philosophy is a philosophy of finitude, and Heidegger falls within this tradition, which is discussed in the chapter in detail.

1.2 Heidegger on Death

German philosopher Martin Heidegger, whose work is associated with phenomenology and existentialism, presents his views on death in *Being and Time*[88] with the question of meaning of *Being* i.e. what does it mean to say that an entity *is*. This is the critical question of ontology. Human being exists, and here, the verb *to*

[85] Nietzsche, 1968
[86] Ibid, p. 150
[87] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/death-definition/ (accessed on 02.02.2013)
[88] Heidegger, 1962

exist is differentiated from *to be*. A stone is this or that, and its being is exhausted by such descriptions. But, the human being exists in the sense of *being-able-to-be*. As Heidegger explains, the underlying character of human being as opposed to any other category of being is that it retains the *possibility* of being authentically *singular*, the possibility of being-able-to-be. This possibility is the possibility of realizing *Self* through *death*. Therefore, as Heidegger explains, death is not only the "End"[89] of life but also the "possibility" of the *Self*. Our relation to death is either fearful or passive waiting for the last moment to come, or as Heidegger argues, it can become a question of an active anticipation of death as the ultimate horizon on which one *chooses* one's existence. The actual existence of man, his *being*, depends immediately and constantly on questioning of *being*. Only man can question being, can endeavor to think being and voice its thought process. This is the first fundamental assertion of *Being and Time*. This questioning generates and it alone makes substantive and significant what Heidegger calls "Existenz"[90]. There is no such thing as an assured, a priori essence of man. Man achieves his essence, his humanity, in the process of "Existenz", and he does so by questioning *being*, by making his own particular existence questionable.

However, in Heidegger's discussion, though death appears to be the End of life, still, that end is not seen *negatively*. For him, it is something positive and possible, because, it is the only way to be the *Self*. It is only through death that one can become *I*. This realization of *I* is the realization of Being. Till then, "we are ourselves the entities to be analysed.[…] These entities, in their Being, comport themselves toward their Being. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being."[91] This entity, which comports itself toward its Being, is termed as "Dasein"[92] by Heidegger. And, the essence of Dasein lies in its "to be".

[89] Ibid, p. 285
[90] Ibid, p. 32. Heidegger refers to the kind of Being towards which Dasein can comport itself in one way or another, and always does comport itself somehow, as "existence" [Existenz].
[91] Ibid, p. 67
[92] Ibid, p. 27

1.2.1 Being with the world: On Being and Death

A being, which questions Being by first questioning its own Being [*Sein*], is a *Dasein.*[93] Man is man because he is a *being-there* and *is-there*. The ontic achieves Dasein by querying the ontological. It does so, uniquely and necessarily by language. To question its "*Sein*" is to question its "*Sinn*" — its sense, its meaning, its purpose. *Dasein* is *to be there* (*da-sein*) and *there* is the world of concrete, literal, actual, and daily world. To be human is to be immersed, implanted, and rooted in the earth, in the quotidian matter and the matter of factness in the world — human has in it *humus*, the Latin word for *earth*. The world is a fact, which is the primal wonder and source of ontological asking. It is here and now and everywhere around us; we are in it. To express this radical immanence or embeddedness, Heidegger uses the composite; "*In-der-welt-sen*" i.e. a "being-in-the-world"[94], a *to-be-in-the-world*.

Thus, we find that the concept of Being includes the idea of Facticity[95], which implies that man has been "thrown" into a given world. This in turn connects to the idea of Existentiality, which signifies inner personal existence i.e. to make one's own world. Further, this can be linked to the idea of *Forfeiture*, indicating oblivion of Being; the Beings falling out of being, i.e. falling out of what one *must be*. Existentiality is thus also a significant link to the concept of Alienation[96]; in the sense that one remains alienated from the world owing to one's existentiality. However, Being signifies opening out of one to the other and not reconciliation of old and new; *being* refers to the opening out of a closure, and accepting the external without closure. Thus, *being* imbibes or inculcates qualities of Being. Our being-in-the-world is "thrownness"[97], a "*geworfenheit*". The world, into which we are thrown, was already present before us and will continue to exist after us. Our Dasein is inseparable from it and there is a sense in which the world derives meaning from our Dasein. The world, into which our Dasein is thrown and into which it enters, has others in it. The *world's worldhood* is such that the existence of others is absolutely essential to its facticity, to its being-there at all. Our understanding of the ontological status of others,

[93] Ibid, p. 27
[94] Ibid, p. 78
[95] Ibid, p. 82
[96] Ibid, p. 222
[97] Ibid, p. 174

and of the relationship of such status to our own Dasein, is itself a form of being. To exist is to understand the presentness of others.

According to Heidegger's explanation, Dasein is not capable of being its own self while living in the world, since *to live* in the world means to be "Being-with". This Being-with others, which belongs to the Being of Dasein, "is an issue for Dasein in its very Being. Thus as Being-with, Dasein 'is' essentially for the sake of Others."[98] Nonetheless, Heidegger does not see Dasein as a *failure* that has to be understood as a *negative way of living*. Rather, it is a possibility, and "it 'has' this possibility."[99] But this possibility is not a property, because "Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it can, in its very Being, 'choose' itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself."[100] This losing itself and wining itself is grounded on his idea of "authenticity"[101] that shows something of its *own*. As he explains, there are two modes of Being, and one of them is "inauthenticity", and the other is "authenticity".

1.2.2 Inauthenticity and authenticity

Inauthenticity and authenticity are the two ways "in which Dasein's Being takes on a definite character, and they must be seen and understood as priori grounded upon that state of Being which we have called "Being-in-the-world.""[102] However, Heidegger does not use the term *inauthenticity* to signify any *less* Being or any *lower* degree of Being. He says, "rather it is the case that even in its fullest concretion Dasein can be characterized by inauthenticity — when busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment."[103]

Heidegger's discussion of inauthenticity and authenticity can be understood only when it is grounded on the idea of *everydayness* that comes under the whole phenomenon of Being-in-the-world. Because, Dasein "in its everydayness (with regard to which Dasein remains a constant theme for study), not only is in a world but comports itself toward that world with one predominant kind of Being. Proximally

[98] Ibid, p. 160
[99] Ibid, p. 68
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid, p. 78
[102] Ibid, p. 78
[103] Ibid, p. 68

and for the most part Dasein is fascinated with its world."[104] It is due to this fascination through which being of Dasein is absorbed in the world that we need to have "an approach to the Existential question of the "Who" of Dasein."[105] This approach to understand the *Who* of Dasein sets the ground for differentiating *authentic being* from *inauthentic being*.

As Heidegger explains, Being-in-the-world is "the basic state of Dasein by which every mode of its Being gets co-determined."[106] However, "Dasein is an entity which is in each case I myself; its Being, is in each case mine."[107] When this definition is considered ontologically, it is no more than an indication of a constitutive state. But, when it is considered ontically, it tells us that in each case an "I" — not Others — is this entity.[108] The assertion is ontically obvious, but ontologically misleading.

According to Heidegger, authentic being is a *being-towards-death* and this condition as *being-towards-death* presents death as the *goal* to be realized. Also, it is not merely a goal that can be targeted; it is certainly a *realizable goal*. However, this realizable condition does not belong to the goal itself, which is death. In other words, it is not a possibility that death *has*. If the possibility is something that death owns, then death has to be understood as that which can practice its power over being, demanding the submission of it. In that sense, it would have been *the death* that is explained later by Sartre and Levinas in their philosophies[109], where they analyze death as that which *comes* to being. However, for Heidegger, it is not the death that is powerful, but the being — the Dasein. Therefore, death is the possibility that resides within the capability of Dasein. In Heidegger's terms, death is the *potentiality* of being. Thus, since death lies within being as its "*ownmost* possibility,"[110] it cannot be a *stranger* to the being of whom it has no knowledge. Instead, it *cohabits* with *being* when *being* is *aware of* it.

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[104] Ibid, p. 149
[105] Ibid, p. 150
[106] Ibid, p. 153
[107] Ibid, p. 150
[108] Ibid.
[109] Sartre and Levinas present their views on *death* in their major works *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1957), and *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1969), respectively. According to their analysis, death is something that which has the power to arrive at any point of time since being has no control over it.
[110] Heidegger, 1962, p. 354

Nevertheless, though death resides in Dasein making it aware of its authenticity, Dasein *forgets* about its own being in *its everyday life* in the world, for Dasein is Being-with others. Heidegger says that *being-in-the-world* is *being-with*. According to him, those entities toward which Dasein as Being-with carries itself, are also Dasein.[111] Moreover, these entities are objects of "solicitude" and it proves to be a state of Dasein's Being. Dasein's Being is the one which is bounded with its Being towards the world of its concern, and in the same way with its authentic Being towards itself.[112] In Dasein's Being, Being "is rather that Being *for the sake of which* Dasein itself is as it is."[113] Therefore, Being-with means to understand that the Dasein *is* essentially for the sake of Others.

It is in this sense that Heidegger's notion of Being-with consists of some *negative* components. According to his analysis, Being-with is not a condition that belongs to Dasein, but a condition into which the being is *thrown*, due to which being has to be understood as the *thrown being*. Moreover, this *thrownness*, which is a characteristic of Dasein's being, makes the being of Dasein as *there*, because, "it is thrown in such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the "there". The expression "thrownness" is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*."[114] According to Heidegger, it is in a state-of-mind that "Dasein" is always brought before itself, and this finding of "Dasein" is possible through finding itself in the "mood"[115]. This disclosure that happens through the "mood" is the way in which "we turn towards or turn away"[116] to Dasein. Though the "mood" can be taken as both "turning toward" and "turning away", mostly it is a tendency that asserts "turning away", since "for the most part the mood does not turn towards the burdensome character of Dasein."[117] These moods, from which we are never free, are the ways in which Dasein is disclosed in its thrownness, and mostly, that has to be understood as turning away from Dasein. However, the thrownness makes Dasein *turn away from* its own being, placing one among others, through which it becomes *they-self*. Therefore, "the Self of everyday Dasein is the *they-self*"[118] or the Others, and, this "they-self"

[111] Ibid. p. 157
[112] Ibid. p. 159
[113] Ibid. p. 160
[114] Ibid. p. 174
[115] Ibid, pp. 172 – 179
[116] Ibid, p. 174
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid, p. 167

differs from the authentic Self, for Dasein is dispersed into the *they*. Hence, the one who is encountered everyday is not *I*, but *they-self* and Dasein is familiar with itself as they-self. It is this dispersed being of Dasein, the "they-self", that is explained by Heidegger as *inauthentic being*.

Thus, since the everyday being of Dasein is inauthentic being, the *Real* being, which is the *authentic being*, remains as a concealed being. However, this uprootedness of the everyday Dasein from its authentic being due to the *fallenness* through *thrownness* is the "most everyday and most stubborn 'Reality'"[119] of Dasein. Nonetheless, as Heidegger explains, this stubborn Reality should not be understood in a negative sense, since it is the consequence that occurs due to the thrownness, which is inevitable. Therefore, the inauthentic being is a *given* condition to the Dasein that cannot be rejected, but that can be certainly overcome through understanding of its "potentiality-for-Being."[120]

However, considering the idea of *mood*, Heidegger does not view it as psychical. It is a characteristic of state-of-mind. "It comes neither from outside nor from inside, but arises out of Being-in-the-world."[121] Moreover, the character of this mood is *disclosure* while it is also an essential characteristic of the state-of-mind that shows itself. Nonetheless, it is through the attunement of a state-of-mind that Dasein's openness to the world is constituted existentially, and that is how it is comprehended as "there".[122] Therefore, "state-of-mind is one of the existential structures in which the Being of the 'there' maintains itself."[123] As Heidegger explains, state-of-mind always has its understanding as it is the disclosedness of the Being of Dasein that reveals to itself while it is comporting itself to the Being. Therefore, it is an understanding in existing being-in-the-world and it is "the disclosedness of the "for-the-sake-of-which"."[124]

Accordingly, all kinds of appearance as Being, is the possibility of Dasein. It is that which Dasein *can be*. It is the potentiality-for-Being in Dasein. Therefore, the above mentioned Dasein's understanding of its potentiality-for-Being has to be

[119] Ibid, p. 214
[120] Ibid, p. 225
[121] Ibid, p. 176
[122] Ibid, pp. 176 – 178
[123] Ibid, p. 182
[124] Ibid.

understood as the knowing of "what it is capable of."[125] "In so far as understanding is *accompanied by* state-of-mind and as such is existentially surrendered to thrownness, Dasein has in every case already gone astray and failed to recognize itself."[126] Understanding has the character of "projection"[127]. But, this projecting is not a plan that is thought out. It is something that is already projected as Dasein, and it is with this projection that "Dasein always has understood itself and always will understand itself in terms of possibilities."[128]

Accordingly, since Dasein is always *Dasein-with* and a *being-in-the-world* into which Being has been *thrown*, *inauthenticity* and *fallenness* are not accidents or fake choices. They happen to be the necessary constituents of existence, of the existential facticity of the everyday. Being-in-the-world is itself "tempting and tranquillizing."[129] *Falling* is thus, "existentially determinative."[130] *Verfall*, a falling away from, a cadence into decline, is appositive as it manifests "an essential ontological structure of Dasein itself."[131] Fallenness has a deeper aspect of positivity. *Inauthenticity*, *theyness* and *talks* are significant so that Dasein, having been made aware of its loss of self, can strive to return to this *authentic being*. Authentic existence is only a "modified way in which such everydayness is seized upon."[132]

Heidegger's above notion of two fold Dasein as *authentic being* and *inauthentic being*, makes the being stand in-between two different worlds at the same time, creating a war kind of situation for it, which commands and demands the being to fight for searching *the truth*. Also, his argument that differentiates authentic being from inauthentic being suggests that what is there as *there is*, is not something which is *not there*, but as something which is *not true*. Therefore, what appears through *there is*, is something which is *false*, *incorrect*, *wrong*, and *inauthentic*. In that sense, Heidegger, through his two fold understanding of being, tries to search *the truth*, *the correct*, *the right*, *the authenticity*, *the essence*, or *the pureness — the self without the Other*. Heidegger's this effort reveals his own belief in something called *the ultimate*

[125] Ibid, p. 184
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid, p. 185
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid, p. 222
[130] Ibid, p. 223
[131] Ibid, p. 224
[132] Ibid.

truth or *the final truth*, which is also the *original truth* — the Genesis. If it is something related to the Origin and the Original truth, the idea of truth has to be comprehended as that which is *already there*. Therefore, is it not possible to say that Heidegger's whole philosophy of Being is governed by a truth, which is *already* there, of which he is certain and aware, due to which the *truth* and the *being* get a well-defined definition?

Considering Heidegger's views in *Being and Time*, it can be seen that how he constructs his whole argument about Being, Death, and Time, depending on his belief on a truth *as such*. In fact, it is not only a truth *as such*, but also knowledge *as such*, being *as such*, death *as such*, and the world *as such*. This can be exemplified through his analysis on *understanding*. In his view, as mentioned above, Dasein has to understand the world by exploring the world in its own way; accordingly, it becomes one's own understanding without having other's involvement in it. It is only then the knowledge becomes true knowledge or correct knowledge — *pure* knowledge. Moreover, for Heidegger, this pure knowledge is the knowledge of one's own self. However, due to the unavoidable condition of Dasein as Being-with Others, there is no possibility of having an understanding of its own. This impossibility is due to one's *lostness* in the anonymous crowd in *idle talk*.

According to above explanation of Heidegger, not only the being becomes inauthentic in its everyday life, but so does the understanding and the knowledge, consequently, language and meaning as well.

1.2.3 Inauthenticity: Everyday Being and Everyday Language of Discourse

As mentioned earlier, Dasein's understanding about the world is not authentic, for Dasein exists as Being-with; consequently, its state of mind is actually that of the *they*. As Heidegger points out, there is a specific way in which the world is understood by Dasein as *they*, who is delivered over to the society as *thrown being*, consequently, who is lost in *idle talk*. Idle talk is the language of everyday discourse with which the discourse is constructed, shaped, and carried on. In Heidegger's view, "for the most part, discourse is expressed by being spoken out, and has always been

so expressed; it is language."[133] Here, the problem lies with what is expressed in relation to what has already been expressed; because, *expression* is something which results in *interpretation*. In that sense, what is expressed in language is not the *thing-in-itself*, but the way in which it is interpreted. As, "in language , as a way things have been expressed or spoken out [*Ausgesprochenheit*], there is a hidden way in which the understanding of Dasein has been interpreted."[134]

However, as Heidegger remarks, when something is understood through language, it is not actually the thing that we understand, but the way in which it has been *talked about* or *interpreted* through language. Therefore, it is a hearing and understanding rather than the understanding through one's own exploration. Here, something can be heard only when there is something to be heard. In his view, what one hears is that which is *already* there in the talk. Accordingly, what is understood is that which is *said-in-the-talk*, while "what the talk is about is understood only approximately and superficially."[135] Nevertheless, this approximate understanding cannot be avoided or excluded by Dasein, since Dasein as "Being-with-one-another takes place in talking with one another and in concern with what is said-in-the-talk."[136] Also, it should not be taken as an understanding which is *wrong*, because it is the understanding which belongs to the discourse, which "does not communicate in such a way as to let this entity be appropriated in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of *gossiping* and *passing the word along*."[137] Therefore, "things are so because one says so."[138]

In Heidegger's view, the problem with such understanding, which comes from the everyday language, the *idle talk*, is that it is an understanding without the ground, i.e. a groundless understanding resulted from something that is groundlessly said. "The fact that something has been said groundlessly, and then gets passed along in further retelling, amounts to pervert the act of disclosing [*Erschliessen*] into an act of closing off [*Verschliessen*]."[139] It is this analysis presented by Heidegger, which suggests the knowledge and language in everyday life as something *fake*, though the

[133] Ibid, p. 211
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid, p. 212
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid, p. 213

being of Dasein is constantly carried away with such kind of unconscious *discoursing*, due to which Dasein becomes the *floating* being that is detached from its own being. Hence, Heidegger's intention is to emphasize the necessity of returning to the being or the entity that is primarily and primordially genuine, and this effort can be realized only when the being of Dasein departs from the Being-with, i.e. only when Dasein detaches itself from the *they* — the *inauthentic being*.

Considering Heidegger's project of returning to the genuine being, it can be seen that how his whole understanding of being is influenced by the idea of *purity*, which gives the meaning of *not-mixed, holy, unpolluted — the being without others,* which is the *Self.* According to Heidegger, it is only through death that the *Self without others* can be realized, since death has a *non-relational* character. This non-relational character of death individualizes Dasein down to itself detaching itself completely away from the they-self. In that sense, for Heidegger, death is the way for Dasein *to be* its own being, which is the *authentic being* — the *absolute individual* that is discussed by Jean-Luc Nancy[140] with reference to Heidegger's being. Hence, death is not an inevitable failure that the being should encounter. It is also not something from which one tries to *retreat* through postponing it due to fear — fear of losing what one already has, nor is it a thing over which one should lament. Instead, death is the final success through which one can *gain* one's own Self. Therefore, it is *certainty par excellence* — the certainty that confirms that one is finally at Home. However, this certainty is a capability that is owned by Dasein. Heidegger considers this capability of becoming one's own Self through one's own death as the *potentiality* of Being. Thus, death is the potentiality of Being while it is also the possibility of Being. As he argues, "death is a possibility-of-Being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being"[141] and this possibility has been fully assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. When it stands before itself in this way, all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone, and Heidegger sees this non-relational possibility as the uttermost one.[142] Consequently, he understands death as "the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein"[143] due to the reason that "death reveals itself as that

[140] Nancy, 1991, p. 6
[141] Heidegger, 1962, p. 294
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.

possibility which is one's ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped."[144]

Therefore, Heidegger's idea of Dasein as Being-towards-death presents Dasein as a "Being towards a possibility"[145], and Dasein comports itself towards something possible in its possibility through expecting it. As Heidegger explains,

> 'To expect something possible is always to understand it and to 'have' it with regard to whether and when and how it will be actually present-at-hand. Expecting is not just an occasional looking-away from the possible to its possible actualization, but is essentially a *waiting for that actualization* [*ein Warten auf diese*]. Even in expecting, one leaps away from the possible and gets a foothold in the actual. It is for this actuality that what is expected is expected. By the very nature of expecting, the possible is drawn into the actual, arising out of the actual and returning to it.'[146]

Dasein's expectation for death as the uttermost possibility without others is termed "anticipation"[147] by Heidegger. It is the anticipation of possibility — the possibility of Being. But, this possibility of Being through death is also the impossibility of Dasein, though Dasein is the entity that which comports itself towards death through its being. Death is the impossibility of being in the condition of *lack of totality* or *lack of togetherness* any longer. It is the impossibility of *not-yet* since death is the possibility of totality. Therefore, death is "the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all."[148] It is the very point where Dasein ceases its potentiality *to be* in the world anymore, because "Death, as possibility, gives Dasein nothing to be 'actualized', nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself *be*. It is the possibility of the impossibility of every way of comporting oneself towards anything, of every way of existing."[149]

On the other hand, death is also Dasein's *ownmost possibility*.[150] "Being towards this possibility discloses to Dasein its *ownmost* potentiality-for-Being, in

[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid, p. 305
[146] Ibid, p. 306
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid, p. 307
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.

which its very Being is the issue."[151] In this ownmost possibility and potentiality, which is the death, Dasein is substracted from the *they*. Hence death is not they-self, but the *Self* — the one's own self. Accordingly, death is the very possibility of *I*.

According to Heidegger's above analysis, death, due to its positive character, is something which confirms the possibility of returning to the Self. One should not only wait for it but also one should walk towards it without fear or hesitation. Therefore, unlike in Levinas, in Heidegger's view, there is no combat between Dasein and the death.

For Levinas, death is neither considered as that which could bring *success*, *completeness*, *rest*, *peace* or *redemption*, nor does he consider death in terms of negativity or positivity. Instead, he sees death as the "horror" — the horror which is capable of arising fear in being.[152] Therefore, death is that from which the being is "moving back"[153]. Thus, in contrast to Heidegger, Levinas views death as that to which being is *exposed*.

1.3 Death, Freedom, and Violence

Explaining how his views on death differ from Heideggerian views, Levinas, in his *Time and the Other*, remarks "death in Heidegger is an event of freedom, whereas for me the subject seems to reach the limit of the possible in suffering. It finds itself enchained, overwhelmed, and in some way passive. Death is in this sense the limit of idealism."[154] In his view, death is unknown due to which it is the *unknown of death*. But,

> 'the unknown of death, which is not given straight off as nothingness but is correlative to an experience of the impossibility of nothingness, signifies not that death is a region from which no one has returned and consequently remains unknown as a matter of fact; the unknown of death signifies that the very relationship with death cannot take place in the light, that the subject is in

[151] Ibid.
[152] Levinas, 1969
[153] Ibid, p. 224
[154] Levinas, 1989, p. 41

relationship with what does not come from itself. We could say it is in relationship with mystery.'[155]

Levinas explains that his approach to death indicates that the self is "in relation with something that is absolutely other, something bearing alterity not as a provisional determination that can be assimilated through enjoyment, but as something whose very existence is made of alterity."[156]

However, according to Levinas, being does not wait for death, because, death is that which cannot be awaited due to its unknowable and unforeseeable character; instead, being is *exposed* to death *despite* its will. This unconditional exposure, which limits the power or the strength of being, makes the being *tremble* with the *unpredictable coming* of death. Hence, death comes from *outside* — outside the self. Unlike for Heidegger, for Levinas, death is not the potentiality that the Dasein owns, but the *violence* that comes from *outside*, threatening being's power, strength, and potentiality. Moreover, being fears this "unavoidable and destructive nature"[157] of death. This fear, which constantly haunts being in its everyday life, makes him *oppose* death by *postponing* death, in the sense that it creates a situation of "war"[158] — war between being and death. Here, Levinas sees this being, who keeps postponing death, as the being *not yet* – not yet being.

However, the idea of postponement of death confirms death as that which is absolutely certain. Therefore, death remains as that which *cannot* be negated or prevented in any way; it always stays as the inevitable and unavoidable violence to which everyone is exposed. Levinas explains this character of death as follows; "the unforeseeable character of death is due to the fact that it does not lie within any horizon. It is not open to grasp."[159] Therefore, *no one* can have a *knowledge* of death, because "my death is not deduced from the death of the others by analogy; it is inscribed in the fear I can have for my being."[160] This fear is due to death's enormous power to arrive unpredictably and take the being away without leaving any chance for

[155] Ibid, p. 40
[156] Ibid, p. 43
[157] Like Levinas, Sartre too discusses about the unavoidable and destructive nature of death in his *Being and Nothingness*, (1957). For Sartre, death is that which comes from outside and it can come to one's life at any point of time through which he argues the characteristic of suddenness in death.
[158] Levinas,1969, pp. 222 – 226
[159] Ibid, p. 233
[160] Ibid.

the being to win in the struggle, and, also due to the exposedness to "absolute violence, to murder in the night."[161] Nonetheless, as mentioned above, one is already in a struggle with the other, and in struggle, one contends with the *invisible*. But, struggle is already a war "where between the forces that confront one another gapes open the interval of transcendence across which death comes and strikes without being received."[162] In that sense, Levinas relates death to the Other, saying that the Other is situated in the region from which death comes. The arrival of that hour of death is considered as an hour of fate fixed by someone who is "hostile", "wily", and cleverer than *I*.[163] Thus, death threatens from *beyond*, and the order of necessity carried out in death is like the alienation of the will by the Other.[164]

Therefore, unlike Heidegger's philosophy of death, in Levinasian views, there is no such freedom attached to death. For Levinas, death is the *limit of the self*, while it is the *limit of/for the other* in Heidegger. However, Heidegger's view on death, in which the being is able to attain freedom, is motivated by his attempt of upholding the discourse of the Self. This idea of Heidegger shows the life of being as something that *cannot have* its sovereign space to enjoy its absolute freedom. Here, the phrase 'cannot have' is significant in the context of freedom. This phrase highlights how being's capability *to be able-to-be* is in question due to the unavoidable other that one has to encounter because of the "thrownness" into the world. In that sense, freedom is not something that one *does not have* but that one *cannot have* due to something that exists *external* to the self. On the other hand, in Heideggerian sense, one has to attain this freedom by eliminating these challenging external forces. Thus, positing freedom along with death, not only he defines death as freedom, but also *freedom as such*, by denying whatever that one experiences as freedom in his everyday life as *non-freedom* or *inauthentic freedom*. It can be argued that it is prerequisite to have a definite idea or definition of freedom in order to understand or define something as *non*-freedom. However, for Heidegger, that *pre-defined* freedom awaited by the self is attainable only when the other is eliminated. In that sense, Heidegger is on a mission of *annihilating the other* for the sole purpose of achieving the Freedom to be the Self.

[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid, pp. 233 – 234
[164] Ibid, p. 234

Considering Heidegger's ideas on being, death, knowledge, language, freedom, and time, it can be understood that his philosophy is based on the idea of *totality*. It is a totality which is certainly *possible*, and it is possible only at the *End*. Therefore, the idea of *the end* itself is a totality through completeness. Consequently, he identifies everything that the Dasein experiences in its life as a lack, because Dasein, who is moving towards death in its being, is a being of not-yet. Here, Heidegger considers death as something constantly outstanding in the being of Dasein. Therefore, Dasein is the very lack of death; hence, Dasein is *incomplete*. Heidegger explains this condition of "constant *lack* of totality" in Dasein as *not-yet*. This *not-yet belongs* to Dasein as long as it *is*. It is the very character of Dasein. This lack of totality, the condition of *not-I*, gets fulfilled only at the death. In that sense, death is "the coming-to-its-end of what-is-not-yet-at-an-end"[165] through which death becomes the "End".[166] According to this explanation, Heidegger's idea of *not-yet* presupposes the determined goal to achieve the togetherness of all parts as a *whole* – Being. Therefore, it is not being, time, language, knowledge, and freedom which is available *before* death; rather, they are in *incomplete* condition due to some lack of *that* which is *yet to be achieved*. Hence, this understanding of later Heidegger probably directed him to justify his next attempt to locate being, time, and language in the context of "On the way to."[167] Moreover, this *On the way to*, is not directed toward future that is to come but toward the future that has *already arrived primordially*, since according to Heidegger, future is the "datable and significant 'then'"[168].

However, the notion of *not-yet*, which shapes Heideggerian belief of a possible totality, plays a major role in Levinasian philosophy too. But, in Levinas, 'not yet' is projected not to affirm the possibility of totality but to affirm the very *impossibility* of totality. For Levinas, not-yet is not a condition that is loaded with the desire to gain or accumulate something in order to *complete* the incomplete — the Heideggerian kind of desire. If the desire is something that can be fulfilled through accumulation that is possible at the End, then, the desire *itself* has to see its End. This is the desire that is revealed in Heidegger's philosophy. In Contrast, Levinasian desire

[165] Heidegger, 1962, p. 286
[166] Ibid.
[167] Heidegger, 1982
[168] Heidegger, 1962, p. 479

is not finite. Instead, it is a desire that can never be quenched or fulfilled. It is *infinite*. Therefore, it is a metaphysical desire. According to Levinas, "metaphysical desire has another intention; it desires beyond everything that can simply complete it. It is like goodness — the Desired does not fulfill it, but deepens it."[169] Accordingly, not-yet is that which emphasizes the incapability and impossibility of fulfillment and totality. Also, it is that which keeps one in the condition of *appealing*.

Consequently, Levinasian "not-yet" does not show death as that in which complete being as Self is possible. Instead, it shows the inability of the self to detach from the other, because, for Levinas, death itself is the Other. Therefore, *coming* of death is also the *coming of the Other*. Hence, the movement marked by the term "not-yet" is not a forward movement toward death without retreat. Contrastingly, "it is a way of being against death, a retreat before death in the very midst of its inexorable approach."[170] It is not a way of waiting to meet the one that is longed for with the hope, but a way of resisting the unavoidable meeting of *the unknown* through postponement. This postponement, which is seen as an ability that one possesses, is also an ability that is under a constant challenge or a threat. Therefore, there is no way to confirm the ability that one possesses to keep the self in the condition of *being-able-to*; instead, it suggests only the inability or being's *not-being-able-to* look away from what one tries to postpone. In this sense, one's effort always remains as an effort without having any definiteness of achieving success. Moreover, it also remains as an effort without having any goal *as such*. Hence, "not-yet" in Levinasian philosophy is not an idea that affirms the possibility of one's possibility to achieve what one aspires, but an idea that asserts one's *inability* or *incapacity* to achieve that aspiration.

1.4 Levinasian Other and Impossible Totality

Binding the self to the other through a responsibility kept by *ethical exigency*, Levinas affirms the Self's inability to be *I* due to the "presence of the Other"[171] that questions the spontaneity of the self. The Other, who remains "infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign" and whose "face in which his epiphany is produced and which appeals to me

[169] Levinas, 1969, p. 34
[170] Ibid, p. 224
[171] Ibid, p. 43

breaks with the world that can be common to us," does not negate the *I* since "total negation refers to an antecedent relation."[172] At the same time, this relationship of the self with the other does not create a fusion by obliterating the distance between self and the other. Therefore, it is neither a *negation* of *I*, nor a *fusion* of *I* and *He* that creates a totality.

As Levinas explains, the idea of infinity in the context of incomprehensible other disenables the possibility of creating any totality. Nonetheless, this incomprehensible nature of the other, which is not negative, is due to his exteriority, which calls the self from above appearing in front of the self with his face. Levinas explains this "calling" as "language".[173] Therefore, Levinas says "that the relation between the same and the other is language"[174], and this relationship is "primordially enacted as conversation, where the same, gathered up in its ipseity as an "I", as a particular existent unique and autochthonous, leaves itself."[175] This relation that is kept by language without forming a totality can be produced

> 'within the general economy of being only as proceeding from the I to the other, as a *face to face*, as delineating a distance in depth – that of conversation, of goodness, of Desire – irreducible to the distance the synthetic activity of the understanding establishes between the diverse terms, other with respect to one another, that lend themselves to its synoptic operation.'[176]

Here, Levinas wants to emphasize that "the I is not a contingent formation by which the same and the other, as logical determinations of being, can in addition be reflected *within a thought*."[177] Rather, *I* is the need since a *thought* is needed for the *alterity* in being to be produced, and ""Thought" and "interiority" are the very break-up of being and the production (not the reflection) of transcendence."[178]

However, in Levinasian view, transcendence is not the negativity, as it is the way through which his idea of *infinity* is developed. "Infinity is the characteristic of a transcendent being as transcendent; the infinite is the absolutely other. The

[172] Ibid, p. 194
[173] Ibid, p. 171
[174] Ibid, p. 39
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid, pp. 39 – 40

transcendent is the sole *ideatum* of which there can be only an idea in us; it is infinitely removed from its idea, that is, exterior, because it is infinite."[179] His idea of infinity that accomplishes *the infinite in the finite* has to be understood in relation to the Desire "not as a Desire that the Desirable slakes, but the Desire for the Infinite which the desirable arouses rather than satisfies."[180] It is in this desire that the same becomes *generous* in the presence of the Other, because "for the presence before a face, my orientation toward the Other, can lose the avidity proper to the gaze only by turning into generosity, incapable of approaching the other with empty hands."[181] This relationship erupted through the *generosity*, is the relationship of conversation. As Levinas explains, it is through the conversation that the other presents himself "exceeding *the idea of the other in me*."[182]

Levinas names this manner in which the other presents himself as "Face". Face is not the disclosure of an impersonal Neuter though it brings a notion of truth. Here, truth is understood as *expression*, since "face expresses itself"[183] by itself "and not by reference to a system."[184] Hence, he says that, "to approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it. It is therefore to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity."[185] This idea of the face brings a notion of meaning that is "prior to my *Sinnegebung* and thus independent of my initiative and my power" as it is "an exteriority that does not call for power or possession", an exteriority irreducible "to the interiority of memory", and "yet maintains the I who welcomes it." Consequently, it makes "the philosophy of the immediate" that says "the immediate is the face to face."[186]

According to Levinas, the relation with the face is not an object-cognition, because "the transcendence of the face is at the same time its absence from this world into which it enters, the exiling [depaysement] of a being."[187] Therefore, the other remains as a *stranger*. The naked face of the stranger due to the defenselessness

[179] Ibid, p. 49
[180] Ibid, p. 50
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid, p. 51
[184] Ibid, p. 75
[185] Ibid, p. 51
[186] Ibid, pp. 51 – 52
[187] Ibid, p. 75

without a cover is deprived of everything and entitled to everything. In that sense, the nakedness of the face is destituteness, and it is this destituteness which demands the self to recognize the Other. In Levinasian view, "to recognize the Other is to recognize a hunger. To recognize the Other is to give. But it is to give to the master, to the lord, to him whom one approaches as "You" in a dimension of height."[188] Here, Levinas emphasizes the *idea of recognition*. As he explains, "I can recognize the gaze of the stranger, the widow, and the orphan only in giving or refusing; I am free to give or to refuse, but my recognition passes necessarily through the interposition of things."[189] Moreover, the interposition between the self and the other through welcoming the other by the self happens through not "what one builds" but "what one gives".[190]

However, in spite of self's giving through recognition, "the face resists possession, resists my powers. In its epiphany, in expression, the sensible, still graspable, turns into total resistance to the grasp."[191] As Levinas describes, this resistance of the other and the inability of the self to grasp the other, does not mean the feebleness of the power of the self, but self's "ability for power".[192] This ability to overflow by resisting to be appropriated to any image fixed by the self in the face-to-face position, affirms the status as *infinite*. Therefore, this facing position while being the opposition par excellence is a moral call that proceeds from the other.

Considering the position of *I* in relation to the other, Levinas says, "the Other is the sole being I can wish to kill", because "I can wish to kill only an existent absolutely independent, which exceeds my powers infinitely."[193] On the other hand, "the Other who can sovereignly say *no* to me is exposed to the point of the sword or the revolver's bullet, and the whole unshakeable firmness of his "for itself" with that intransigent *no* he opposes is obliterated because the sword or the bullet has touched the ventricles or auricles of his heart."[194] But, he can oppose me in a struggle which is enacted through "the very transcendence of his being by relation to that whole". Accordingly, the infinity, the face of the other, "paralyses power by its infinite

[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid, p. 77
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid, p. 197
[192] Ibid, p. 198
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid, p. 199

resistance to murder" with its first word "you shall not commit murder" expressed in "the total nudity of his defenseless eyes, in the nudity of the absolute openness of the Transcendent."[195] However, this resistance of the other should not be understood *negatively*, because "other does not do violence to me, does not act negatively", therefore, "it has a positive structure: ethical."[196] Hence, the infinity through resistance is the ethical resistance, which is the resistance of what has no resistance. As Levinas explains, "if this resistance to murder were not ethical but real, we would have a *perception* of it. We would remain within the idealism of a *consciousness* of struggle, and not in relationship with the Other, a relationship that can turn into struggle, but already overflows the consciousness of struggle."[197]

The Other, who manifests himself in front of me with his face, speaks to me from Height that imposes himself above and beyond the manifested and purely phenomenal form, which confirms the irreducibility to a manifestation *as such* due to the infinity of transcendence. Therefore, the relation between the self and the other is a relation brought by the epiphany of the Other's face. This relation is in *separation* due to the very impossibility of knowing the other. Considering the face of the other as the expression, expression should not be understood "as the manifestation of an intelligible form that would connect terms to one another so as to establish, across distance, the assemblage of parts in totality"[198], because, "expression does not consist in *giving* us the Other's inferiority" since the "Other who expresses himself precisely does not *give* himself"[199]; it is so, because "expression does not impose itself as a true representation or as an action."[200] Instead, Levinas says, "the being that expresses itself imposes itself, but does so precisely by appealing to me with its destitution and nudity – its hunger – without my being able to be deaf to that appeal."[201] Consequently, the expression of the Other promotes self's freedom by arousing self's goodness, while, on the other hand, bounds self to be responsible to the Other *ethically*. Therefore, freedom of the self is not that which the self can derive from itself. It is through and from the other that the freedom of the self is derived. Thus, the

[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid, p. 197
[197] Ibid, p. 199
[198] Ibid, p. 201
[199] Ibid, p. 202
[200] Ibid, p. 200
[201] Ibid.

relation with the Other as a relation with his transcendence introduces that which was not in the self.[202]

The separation in the very relation between self and the other affirms the impossibility of sketching a totality. Therefore, Levinas calls this relation as the metaphysical relation that realizes a multiple existence – "a pluralism"[203]. This multiplicity can be produced only through the subjectivity, which cannot seek "congruence with the being in which it is produced."[204] He says: "Being must hold sway as revealing itself, that is, in its very being flowing toward an I that approaches it, but flowing toward it infinitely without running dry, burning without being consumed."[205] This impossibility of totality due to the finitude of the knowing subject is not negative; rather it is the very positivity of the relation, since the breaching of totality brings "*surplus*"[206] of the relation — continuity through discontinuities. It is the impossibility of totality that keeps the relation going without letting it get exhausted. Therefore, relation of the same with the other is a relation maintained against the totality, which would absorb them.

According to Levinas, totality absorbs the multiplicity of beings, and he connects this idea of totality with the idea of peace. Accordingly, it is peace that is implied in totality. He also suggests that "only beings capable of war can rise to peace. War like peace presupposes beings structured otherwise than as parts of a totality."[207] Here, it should be seen that the Levinasian interpretation of war is different from the conventional interpretation of the same, which presents "the logical opposition of the *one* and the *other* by which both are defined within a totality open to a panoramic view, to which they would owe their very opposition."[208] In his point of view, in a war, beings reject everything they have; there, they refuse to belong to anything like community or to surrender to the law. In brief, they refuse *totality*; "no frontier stops one being by another, nor defines them." Instead, "they affirm

[202] Ibid, p. 203
[203] Ibid, p. 220
[204] Ibid, p. 221
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid, p. 222
[208] Ibid.

themselves as transcending the totality, each identifying itself not by its place in the whole, but by its *self*."[209]

Thus, death is not the End where everything ends *completely*; rather, through death, everything stretches towards infinity. Accordingly, being, time, language, and meaning can never come to their ends. Therefore, in Levinas's view, it is impossible to create a totality of being, time, language, and meaning. As a result, it is also impossible to have any essence *as such*. Hence, the constant breach of totality due to the arrival of Other makes being go *beyond essence*. *To have* or *to define* essence means to create a *closure* by making a *whole*; but, *to go beyond* essence means to break free from the *given* and be exposed to *outside*, infinitely.

However, here, Levinas does not reject the idea of essence. Instead, he affirms the very essence of being in terms of *being open to outside in its essence*. However, this openness is neither conscious nor intentional — Lacanian consciousness and Husserlian intentionality,[210] which his Husserlian according to Levinas in *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*[211].

> 'there is ignorance of the concept in the openness of the subject beyond this struggle for oneself and this complacency in oneself. This is a non-erotic openness, and it is not again the openness of a look fixing a theme. But this openness would not be illusion: […] It is an ignorance of being and death which could be not an evasion, a cowardice, or a fall into the everyday or the courage for suicide, still interest, in which the subject, through fear of dying or horror of the *there is* would fall the more surely under their domination.'[212]

It is this ignorance and openness that is explained as "Otherwise than being" by Levinas.

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[209] Ibid.

[210] Husserl on intentionality http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/husserl/ (accessed on 15.12.2013)

[211] Levinas, 1991

[212] Ibid, pp. 177 – 178. The idea of 'there is' is a significant concept in Levinasian idea of being. 'There is' is that which cannot be thematized. It is the essence that stretches indefinitely without any possible halt. Accordingly, 'there is' does not stand for a presence of the object *as such*. It is anonymous and "a modality of the one-for-the-other". In addition, Levinas sees the essence of being in terms of this 'there is'. However, for further information on this idea, please see Levinas, 1991, pp. 163 - 177

Here, otherwise than being does not mean that there is an emphasis on being *as such*, from which being has turned away becoming otherwise than being, or the very being *as such*, who has its predefined essence. If the phrase *otherwise than being* is read in the above mentioned manner, it would have been impossible for Levinas to break away from Heidegger's analysis of being, since it would emphasize the notion of two fold being as *authentic being* and *inauthentic being*, consequently, *otherwise than being* could have been seen as a being away from its *authentic being*, since, for Levinas, opening up to the other is going away from one's own self. Contrastingly, Levinas presents the phrase *Otherwise than being* in order to assert his notion of the "to be"[213]. Accordingly, the openness would eventually lead the subject where his intention would be "recognized to be fundamental or as good to be otherwise but not to "otherwise than be.""[214] It is this "be" through which the being is open to the infinity of becoming, because the openness is not an openness *as such*. As Levinas shows, "the openness of space signifies the outside where nothing covers anything, non-protection, the reverse of a retreat, homelessness, non-world, non-inhabitation, layout without security."[215] This openness marks the end. But, this is not the end that marks the limit of the other, but the limit of the *self*. In Levinasian words, it is the end "of hither side, of the dark designs of inwardness, the demythization of the myths, the enlargement of a closure which the abstract notions of freedom and nonfreedom do not exhaust."[216] Here, Levinas does not see freedom as that which can be achieved by cutting away the others from the self; for him, freedom can be realized only by separating self from its own self. In that sense, one does not live in one's own world by breathing its own air. Since Levinas explains freedom as breath, the exposure is the "breathing of outside air, where inwardness frees itself from itself, and is exposed to all the winds."[217]

Therefore, death is the exposure that is neither with protection nor with assumption. It is the emptiness of space which is "filled with invisible air, hidden from perception, save in the caress of the wind or the threat of storms, non-perceived but penetrating me even in the retreats of my inwardness, that this invisibility or this

[213] Ibid, pp. 34 – 45
[214] Ibid, p. 178
[215] Ibid, p. 179
[216] Ibid, pp. 179 – 180
[217] Ibid, p. 180

emptiness would be breathable or horrible."[218] However, subject *unconditionally* gives himself to the Other without having any perception, thematization, aim, or knowledge regarding the other. Therefore, as Levinas explains, openness is the subjectivity which "suffers and offers itself before taking a foothold in being."[219]

This exposure that *happens* without *my* involvement by taking any decision from *my* side is the exposure that takes place due to the *arrival* of the Other. Thus, since the self is open to the other without any initiative or subjective act from the side of the self, Levinas sees *a passivity* in the exposure. "The approach of the neighbor is a fission of the subject beyond lungs, in the resistant nucleus of the ego, in the undividedness of its individuality. It is a fission of self, or the self as fissibility, a passivity more passive still than the passivity of matter."[220] Hence, it is the inability to stay in one's own world due to the unpredictable arrival of the unknowable other, which makes one leave "one's home to the point of leaving oneself". According to Levinas,

> 'to leave one's home to the point of leaving oneself is to substitute oneself for another. [..] The openness of space as an openness of self without a world, without a place, utopia, the not being walled in, inspiration to the end, even to expiration, is proximity of the other which is possible only as responsibility for the other, as substitution for him.'[221]

This substitution is essential since self cannot be derived from its own self but from the Other,[222] for newness comes from the other. "It is through the other newness signifies in being the otherwise than being."[223] This substitution cannot see any finality *as such*, since it is not something that the self is *able* to do; rather, it is that which *happens* to self *beyond* his possibilities to "take care" of his own self. Therefore, it can be said that not only does Levinas see death as the impossibility of possibility, but also as the impossibility of fulfilling the task that Heidegger assigns to Dasein by reminding to take care of its own being till it reaches death. This

[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid, p. 182
[222] Levinas discusses this idea throughout in his *Totality & Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, (1969), asserting the impossibility of being away from the other.
[223] Levinas, 1991, p. 182

impossibility is determined by the power of the Other is that is capable of transcending self's power — the asymmetry of power.

Levinas affirms the very impossibility of understanding death as *the* end. On the other hand, he does not say whether it is nothingness or a commencement. He sees it as something never fully knowable, for it is that which is governed by the wholly Other, who goes into infinite infinity; thus resists any attempt of appropriation. Consequently, it is the other who is going to remain as the Other — other as such. In that sense, it is a philosophy that is dominated by the Other. Also, his suggestion *to be otherwise than being* at the presence of the other, implies a possibility of outlining a figure of *being* or a *thinkability* of being so that the thought can think of the *otherwise* or *beyond* that *thinkable* being. In that sense, there is some form of *as suchness* that can be seen even in Levinasian idea of being, though that being is seen in terms of *other* or *otherwise*.

Nonetheless, as far as the idea of *otherwise* is concerned, it is necessary to ask that from where this understanding of "otherwise" generates? The *otherwiseness* in relation to being in Levinasian philosophy is another understanding that comes from the self — the result of conscious being. It is the self, who first realizes his being in a totalized form in terms of *I*; and, then he sees the one who comes from outside as completely and wholly Other. Further, this seeing or realization itself is something that is done with the very *awareness* of the *self*, according to which self identifies the Other as the complete *opposition* of the Self. As a result of this knowledge, at the end, Levinas brings two differently totalized figures into the play — Self and the Other, though his effort is actually to emphasize the impossibility of totality. In that sense, Levinas's "otherwise" or the Other itself is another manifestation of the *Same*, due to which the very meaning that is connected to *otherwise* is another understanding and meaning that generates from the language of the Same. Therefore, *despite* his effort to be ethically responsible to the Other letting the Self to be questioned by the Other, Levinas ends up giving, yet some space for the Self — the self-conscious being. Hence, Levinas's view that analyses death as impossibility of possibility is yet another way of creating another *absolute totality* that is different from Heidegger. Moreover, this totality is absolute in its *infinity* — the absolute infinity. Therefore, it is another *closed* world of which nothing can be said or known. Thus, for Levinas, death remains as complete and absolute mystery; hence, it eliminates and preempts

the possibility of doubt or imagination — imagining death. In such a situation, where nothing can be thought due to the very unthinkability of the Other, does Levinas try to bring thinking, thought, and language to a halt? Does he suggest the very uselessness of making any attempt to understand the other? Accordingly, is it not necessary to understand the other? On the other hand, unless one makes any attempt to understand the other, how can one be assures of the very impossibility of understanding the other?

However, death is the most inevitable certainty in life. But, *on the other hand*, it again becomes the most un-certain and un-predictable in terms of its *arrival*. Therefore, it is *irreducible* to a particular meaning, moment, or knowledge. Thus, death appears in its own *singularity* in its effect and in time. Consequently, it also remains as that which resists any *finalized* definition, while, at the same time, demands the very necessity of making an attempt to understand or define it. In that sense, death also suggests not the possibility of impossibility, or impossibility of possibility, but possibility *and* impossibility together and simultaneously — *im-possibilty*. Therefore, as Heidegger's and Levinas's philosophy suggest respectively, death cannot be considered as *definitely* knowable and reachable, or as *infinitely* unknowable and unreachable. Instead, the idea of death can be understood in terms of *edge* so that the necessity of exploring the strangeness and the familiarity of it does not exhaust. However, Maurice Blanchot explores this double-bind in the idea of death as edge or threshold through his writings, and this idea of Blanchot would be thoroughly discussed in third and fourth chapters.

CHAPTER – II

SELF, SUBJECT, AND CULTURE

2.1 Self and the *I* Subject

Heideggerian idea of Being discussed in the previous chapter could be seen as an idea that manifests both the necessity and the possibility of realizing the Self, and it is a *possibility* that is *realizable* only through death. Therefore, death is that which absolutely and completely manifests being (Dasein) as Being or "they-self" as Self, where no one can exist except *I* — the complete and *sovereign Self* whose space is not under threat. In that sense, Heidegger's philosophy of Being is a philosophy of Self, which advocates the continuity of self-sameness. Moreover, this self-sameness is also applicable to his idea of language and time in which case language and time become language of the self and time of the self. The world of the Self through death is a *closed world* — closure, realized by the desire of the Self to be I — the *I without* Others.

Accordingly, it can be said that Heideggerian Being is the one, who is *aware of* its own self. This awareness of Being, which is the *awareness* of the *authentic being*, takes place in the domain of the Self-conscious being. Moreover, this awareness, which is also the knowledge, makes him powerful. However, this power of knowledge needs to be understood as *ability* — ability to think. In that sense, the ideas of self, knowledge, and ability that emerge through Heidegger's philosophy bring us to the question of subject. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Heidegger does not talk about a *subject*, but of two folds being: the "authentic" and the "inauthentic". Moreover, the idea of the self-awareness oscillates between these two domains.

However, the term *subject* is often used in everyday language of everyday world as if it is a neutral or *apolitical* term. In other words, the term *subject* seems to be taken for granted in everyday life. Especially, this term mostly appears in the domain of law, medicine, and politics. Apart from these domains, it also occurs necessarily in the domain of linguistics, more specifically, within the area of syntax.

However, prior to those spheres, it appears within the domain of psychoanalysis, giving a sense connected to power.

The meaning of the term *subject* can be basically understood in two ways. In linguistics, subject is understood as the doer of the action; the other meaning, etymologically, is to "bring under". Here, to *bring under* or to *throw under* implies that there is already something *above*; also, it suggests that there is something or someone, who is capable of bringing ort throwing something/someone *under* — under the power. However, this understanding of the term subject is very different from that of the *syntactic*. In syntax, subject, the doer of the action, is manifested as someone who is powerful or capable of doing something, since, in syntactic studies, the subject is mostly studied only within the sphere of isolated sentences, which are detached from the *discourses*. Therefore, within the domain of modern linguistics, subject bears the powerful position that decides the rest of the sentence e.g. the agreement between the subject and the verb — a rule of grammar that exists in certain languages. Thus, syntactic subject is the *powerful* subject. However, the idea of subject that appears within syntax cannot be rendered to understand the idea of *power* unavoidably attached to the *subject*. In order to understand the notion of subject that unfolds in the political domain, it has to be discussed beyond the level of sentence structures that Noam Chomsky discusses in his several works. It is here the subject needs to be interrogated with reference to its etymological meaning.

Accordingly, as mentioned above, if subject is the one who is thrown under some power, we should explore *what* or *whose* this power is? In contrast to syntactic subject, the subject here has to be seen as the *subordinated*. However, in modern period that is considered as the period of science, since the idea of subject is understood with regard to human beings, there is always a possibility of asking the following question: *who else can be there above man to make him surrender*?; because, according to Cartesian method, man is far above other animals due to his ability to think, and this thinking is the rational thinking which is identified as *rational thought*. The man is the power and the powerful, as Descartes says "I think therefore I am."[224] In that sense, there is nothing that can encompass the power of the thinking being.

[224] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-epistemology/ (accessed on 27.05.2014)

2.1.1 Lacanian Subject and Psychoanalysis

Despite the Cartesian argument that projects man as rational, therefore powerful, man continues to remain as a subject, and this inevitable subjectivity needs to be discussed with regard to the idea of discourse and language that unfolds in the domain of psychoanalysis, especially with reference to Lacanian subject. It helps us to understand how being or man is *subjugated* to the power of the discourse. Considering the Lacanian subject, it can be seen that the subject is not only the *knowing* being that is emphasized by Descartes, but also a *thinking* and *speaking* being, who makes his entry into the concrete discourse through language, since, as Lacan explains, "language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it."[225] However, as Lacan analyzes, this thought or the thinking is *not* conditioned, it is not a thought or thinking that is free; because, *to think* is to be *conscious*. Accordingly, the being, who enters the discourse identifying himself as *I*, is not a powerful *I* of Cartesian knowing subject; instead, he is the one kept under the power and constant *vigilance* of the consciousness. Therefore, the *I* subject that appears in linguistics cannot be seen as a *free*, *sovereign* or *autonomous* subject. He is a subject who is already *conditioned* by consciousness. Hence, subject can be understood as the one who is thrown under the power of *consciousness*, which demands and commands him to be *aware* and *responsible* for his behavior, actions, and language. Owing to this notion, neither language nor the action or behavior in everyday life of being can be seen as the manifestation of *reality*, *truth*, *essence*, or *nature* of man and language, nor can they be understood as the presence of *real* being or language.

Lacan, following Freudian views, relates man and language, which is speech, to the idea of desire, and this desire is nothing but the *sexual* desire. According to Lacan, the subject, who appears through *I*-language, is not Real "I". Rather, it is the repressed being and the language of repression. This repression is due to his infantile sexual desire for the mother's body. As Freud describes, the infantile sexual desire for the mother's body is intervened, objected, and suppressed by father prohibiting the union between child and mother. Consequently, the unfulfilled desire leaves a *mark* in the unconscious of the child. This mark, which is identified as the "letter in the

[225] Lacan, 1977, p. 148

unconscious" by Freud, is the truth that comes out only in the dream, which has the structure of a sentence.[226] According to this analysis, the reality or truth cannot be found within the domain of the consciousness, for it is the domain of the *censored* truth. Taking the Freudian idea to the domain of language, Lacan explains how this repression is manifested in the speech of the subject that is constantly marked by an "absence". Therefore, in his view, the Saussurian model of language, which is shown as signifier/signified = signification, is more complex.

Accordingly, for Lacan, the foundation of this structure that is suggested by Saussure is actually "contained in the constitutive moment of an algorithm S/s", which is read as "the signifier over the signified, 'over' corresponding to the bar separating the two stages."[227] The bar that lies in between the signifier and the signified, in Lacanian view, is different from the one in the Saussurian model, for it does not let the signifier meet the signified in order to make the signification. "For in so far as it is itself only pure function of the signifier, the algorithm can reveal only the structure of a signifier in this transfer."[228]

Here, analyzing the topography defined by S/s, Lacan shows the bar that lies in-between preventing the crossing of the signifier to signified, as the repressive power of father. Therefore, what can be seen with regard to signifier, which is language, is not the *being* or the real presence of the being, but *the lack-of-being* in the object relation. Therefore, signification has to be viewed that which manifests the *very lack* or the *failure* of the desire i.e. signification. In this sense, for Lacan, language is a chain of signifiers that comes to manifest the lack of being that is resulted in an unfulfilled desire due to the repressive power coming from the above. As Lacan analyzes, language is not the function of being; it is the function of the subject.[229] Consequently, problematizing the Cartesian formula "I think, therefore I am", Lacan remarks, "it is not a question of knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I speak."[230]

[226] Ibid, p. 57
[227] Ibid, p. 149
[228] Ibid, p. 152
[229] Ibid, p. 164
[230] Ibid, p. 165

Hence, the Lacanian subject is being *with a lack*. Therefore, on the other hand, he is also the *lack of being* that appears to *refer back* to a dead desire. In that sense, subject is no more than a frustrated being who uses language "in order to signify something quite other than what it says. This function of speech is more worth pointing out than that of disguising the thought (more often than not indefinable) of the subject; it is no less than the function of indicating the place of the subject in the search for the true."[231] According to the above disposition of the subject in relation to the repressed infantile sexual desire, Lacanian subject cannot be seen as the one, who *cannot* have power to overcome the power that rules him reaching the truth, if there is supposedly such truth to arrive at; rather, he *has* the power to *resist* the truth and keep it *repressed*. Consequently, Lacanian subject can also be seen as the one, who lives in fear with the very awareness that there is a *truth*, which he keeps to his own self. It is his secret that is known only to him and it is the secret that is constantly kept hidden within the domain of the *consciousness*. Thus, being as a subject is marked by a *duality* or doubleness. This duality is to do with the conscious and the unconscious side of being. The conscious side, which is the *hither* side of the subject, is the domain that is away from the Real or the truth with the very *awareness* that he is *away from* the Real. On the other hand, the unconscious side, which is the *Other* or the *Other side* of the subject, is the domain where the truth or the Real resides. However, according to Lacan, the unconscious is not the condition that exists prior to subject, since, as he writes, "the unconscious is neither primordial nor instinctual; what it knows about the elementary is no more than the elements of the signifier."[232] Yet, he views it as the discourse of the Other "in order to indicate the beyond in which the recognition of desire is bound up with the desire for recognition."[233] Nonetheless, if we agree with the Lacan's analysis, how would we understand and analyze the power that is generated in everyday life of the subject, which unfolds in the grid of power enacted and maintained by himself? How far can we agree with the idea that subject is *powerless*?

[231] Ibid, p. 155
[232] Ibid, p. 170
[233] Ibid, p. 172

2.1.2 Foucault – Subject and the Truth

Taking a different approach than that of Lacan's to address the idea of *subject*, Foucault views subject as *powerful* subject. Here, he juxtaposes the two contrary terms, *powerful* and *subject*, showing how man becomes the subject and the powerful at the same time; also, how one signs up for these two different things at the same time. Claiming for his interest to be engaged with the question of the subject, Foucault, in *The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom*[234], points out the necessity of placing the subject in relation to the notion of *truth* to view the relationship between them. Here, he presents his ideas by raising the question "how does the subject fit into a certain game of truth?"[235], wherein he brings out the problem of *power* and *knowledge* into the picture. The specificity of Foucault's approach to the idea of subject is that he rejects "the idea of starting out with a theory of the subject – as is done, for example, in phenomenology or existentialism – and, on the basis of this theory, asking how a given form of knowledge is possible."[236] Instead, his intention is to show "how the subject constituted itself, in one specific form or another, as a mad or a healthy subject, as a delinquent or nondelinquent subject, through certain practices that were also games of truth, practices of power and so on."[237] According to his argument, first of all, subject is not a "substance", but a "form" which is not primarily or always identical to itself, since, as he points out, "you do not have the same type of relationship to yourself when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes to vote or speaks at a meeting and when you are seeking to fulfill your desires in a sexual relationship. […] In each case, one plays, one establishes a different type of relationship to oneself."[238] Thus, the idea of subject that Foucault tries to bring in is connected to the idea of the *self*, through which he analyses subject in terms of "care of the self."[239] This idea of "care of the self" is inevitably connected to the notion of *consciousness* and *intentionality* — that operates within the domain of the self, also, on the other hand, to the notion of discourse which constantly shapes one's cognition.

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[234] Foucault, 1997, p. 289
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid, p. 290
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.
[239] This refers to the title of the book *The Care of the Self – Volume 3 of The History of Sexuality* written by Foucault, 1986.

2.2 Discourse and the Subject

Analyzing the role of discourse in constructing and shaping subject, Foucault shows the relationship between subject and discourse as inseparable from each other, since their existence is reciprocally created and maintained. According to Foucault, there are multiple discourses that can emerge and operate together. However, among these multiple discourses, at a particular period of time, one discourse becomes more powerful than the others; and, thus becomes the dominant discourse that is capable of controlling and deciding the space and the function of the other discourses.[240] Also, it decides what form of knowledge should be considered as truth. This idea projects discourse as that which functions through *exclusion* and *inclusion*. As Foucault argues, "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality."[241]

Nonetheless, as discussed above, discourse is a machinery that enacts, emits, and manifests power, not majorly in terms of military power but in terms of knowledge and truth. This knowledge, which is also the truth, is a production of *exclusion* and *inclusion*. Considering the device of exclusion and inclusion, as Foucault shows, there are three "procedures" or "systems" of exclusion: prohibition, division and rejection, and the will to truth[242], among which prohibition becomes *the most obvious and familiar* in the society. Taking the procedure of prohibition into the domain of the subject and the speech, Foucault asserts that, as subjects, "we do not have the right to say everything, that we cannot speak of just anything in any circumstances whatever, and that not everyone has the right to speak of anything whatever."[243] This inability of saying anything and everything in speech is not due to some physical power coming to us from someone else in order to control our speech; if it is a physical power, its control would be *momentary*. Therefore, this inability is

[240] Foucault, in his *The Order of Discourse*, analyses the way in which a particular discourse becomes *the* discourse depending upon the institutional support that it gets, and, consequently, how it tends to exert a sort of pressure and power of constraint on other discourses. This essay appears in *Untying The Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* edited and introduced by Robert Young, 1981, p. 55

[241] Young, 1981, p. 52

[242] Ibid, pp. 52 – 56

[243] Ibid, p. 52

because of a *taboo* that has been incessantly operative with its own *force* over the individual in an unforgettable, undeniable, and unavoidable manner.

The cognition and the behavior of the individual as subject are constructed around this *taboo*. However, the idea of taboo here cannot be reduced only to the domain of sexuality —the Freud-Lacanian psychoanalysis. As Foucault explains,

> 'we have the play of three types of prohibition which intersect, reinforce or compensate for each other, forming a complex grid which changes constantly. […] the regions where the grid is tightest, where the black squares are most numerous, are those of sexuality and politics; as if discourse, far from being that transparent or neutral element in which sexuality is disarmed and politics pacified, is in fact one of the places where sexuality and politics exercise in a privileged way some of their most formidable powers.'[244]

In that sense, the discourse and the prohibition are inextricable from each other. Their existence and function are manifested and perpetuated reciprocally and simultaneously. Moreover, it emphasizes the need of seeing the relation between prohibition and discourse as that which reveals the *very* link with desire, with power, and, with desire *and* power. The second procedure of exclusion, which is the division and rejection, is not directly related to desire but to the truth. It is the truth that is connected to the notion of power. However, as far as these two systems are concerned, as Foucault explains, "they are constantly becoming more fragile and more uncertain to the extent that they are now invaded by the will to truth, which for its part constantly grow stronger, deeper and more implacable."[245] Therefore, the discourse that governs the subject and his perception is the discourse of truth that is asserted in terms of knowledge. Moreover, this truth supported by knowledge is the *truth* of knowledge and the *knowledge* of truth. Hence, our knowledge needs to be seen that which comes into play through exclusion and inclusion of some other forms of knowledge. As a result, certain forms of knowledge, therefore certain forms of truth are suppressed or dropped. While analyzing what is knowledge and what form of knowledge can be taken as truth, the role played by *reason* is of importance. As Foucault argues, epistemological break that occurred between the medieval and

[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid, p. 56

classical eras marked by Cartesian reason has come to dominate the formation of a system of knowledge that excludes that which does not fall within the category of reason, which is the madness — another strange path of knowledge.[246]

According to the above argument, the discourse of the mad has been rejected from the method of knowledge formation, though it is also another discourse that opens up in and through the same language which is already there; but, it is with a different or a strange meaning. Therefore, the words of the mad are not considered to be true or meaningful. Moreover, it is not because they do not convey any meaning or truth; but because they *do not* essentially fit into the *ordered* words, which operate within the method of meaning-making through *reasoning*. Therefore, Foucault writes, "his word may be considered null and void, having neither truth nor importance, worthless as evidence in law, inadmissible in the authentification of deeds or contracts […] This whole immense discourse of the madman was taken for mere noise."[247]

Considering the idea of madness along with the idea of subject, it can be said that they are two different domains when considered in terms of consciousness and unconsciousness. The domain of subject is the domain of *the consciousness*, due to which the subject is *aware* of, also, *supposed to be aware* of his own behavior and language; subsequently, he is undeniably tied up with certain responsibilities that are necessarily imbibed with certain *given* ethics. Therefore, it is not just the subject that is expected to be seen in the context of society, but also an *ethical subject* who is *aware of* his own duties and responsibilities toward others as well as himself. Hence, the domain of the subject is also the domain of ethics. These ethics, which come with duties and responsibilities, are meant to *tame*, *discipline*, and *control* the *wildness* and the *crudeness* of man. Then, what is seen as subject is the *refined* version of being, who is capable of controlling its own self by taking care of the self.

This need of taking care of one's own self, as Foucault explains, is a need that is asserted, demanded, and *artificially* injected into man in and through the discourse — discourse of religion, culture, law, knowledge — through language; or in Foucault's terms, through discursive practices which are "not purely and simply modes of manufacture of discourse. They take shape in technical ensembles, in

[246] Foucault, 1989, p. 25
[247] Foucault in *The Order of Discourse*; the version that is referred in the present study appears in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* edited by Robert Young, 1981, p. 53

institutions, in behavioral schemes, in types of transmission and dissemination, in pedagogical forms that both impose and maintain them."[248] These discursive practices are capable of introducing transformations into individuals through specific modes, owing to which, as Foucault argues, "one cannot reduce these transformations to a precise individual discovery; and yet one cannot merely characterize them as an overall change of outlook [*mentalité*], of collective attitude or state of mind."[249] Instead, the transformations that the individual as a subject constantly, though willy-nilly, undergoes within the milieu of discursive practices are just because of the "effect" — the effect that has its own autonomy.[250] It is this effect, though it cannot precisely be named, that unfolds throughout the life of the subject until his death. As mentioned above, since the transformations are due to an effect and are all about an effect, it is not required to know *who* or *what* emits this effect. Rather, one has to be aware of *what* this effect is *for*. According to Foucault's view, the particular effect is for the wellbeing of the subject, subsequently, wellbeing of the society. The subject has to be self-conscious to take care of himself. Therefore, to take care of one's own self means to *govern* one's own self for one's own *good*.[251]

Analyzing subject as a subject of government, Foucault remarks that the notion of government related to subject is that which brings a "sense of techniques and procedures for directing human behavior."[252] Accordingly, on the other hand, it is also that which commands and demands the need of self-examination and confession. The techniques by which the individual governs his own self, the "techniques of the self"[253], are the procedures through which the individual constructs his identity. These procedures are undeniably and undoubtedly invented, adopted, and maintained in all kinds of human societies. Moreover, these procedures, which are however culture specific, function in generating truth. Here, what is important is not to discuss how different cultures practice such techniques, but to view how the hegemonic power of culture affects the freedom of the individual in confining, caging, or imprisoning him without manacles or any other physical force that could come from outside.

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[248] Foucault, 1997, p. 12
[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid.
[251] For further information in this regard, listen to Foucault in his lectures on "The Culture of the Self" on YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaXb8c6jw0k (accessed on 30.06.2016)
[252] Foucault, 1997, p. 83
[253] Ibid, p. 87

In everyday life of the subject, there is a demand for one to be attentive to his own self, for it is a form of living. "It becomes a matter of attending to oneself, for oneself: one should be, for oneself and throughout one's existence, one's own object."[254] This constant attentiveness demanded from the subject guides him to shape his life by establishing a certain number of relations with his own self, which are sometimes conceived on the "jurido-political model" or represented on the model of "positive enjoyment".[255] As Foucault argues, these models that operate in our societies in order to take care of the self are the ones, which have their roots in the domain of religion and the domain of medical science. These domains are powerful in shaping one's cognition.

Considering the role played by religion in shaping the life of individuals, the idea of morality that appears indispensably in terms of ethics is significant. These ethics are often decided by religion, for religion takes the duty and the responsibility of guiding individuals to lead a better life. Here, the better life is defined in various ways in different religious discourses. The path for a better life is a path that is constructed with terms of right and wrong, therefore, dos and don'ts. Accordingly, in self-attentiveness, one is always reminded of what one should or should *not* do. Moreover, as Foucault points out, it is sexuality that has been the foremost problem among the things that fall into the category of *wrong*, *bad*, or *don'ts*. Often, the society has prohibited certain practices identified in terms of sexuality. It is not only a prohibition in terms of action, but also that of articulation. Sexuality is something which one hesitates to speak about. This hesitance is not something abruptly demanded by anyone particularly, because sexuality is common to everyone. Thus, it is not a secret. Yet, on the other hand, it is a secret that is known to everyone *as* a secret. Sexuality is a public secret. If it is thus known to everyone, why would one hesitate to speak about it? From where does this hesitance come to the subject?

Explaining how the discourse of sexuality has been unfolding throughout the human history, Foucault argues that sexuality is

> 'really the relationship with what we do, what we are obliged to do, what we are allowed to do, what we are forbidden to do in the field of sexuality, and

[254] Ibid, p. 96
[255] Ibid.

what we are allowed, forbidden or obliged to say about our sexual behavior. That is the point. It's not a problem of fantasy; it's a problem of verbalization.'[256]

Sexuality *has become* a problem not due to some problem that is *intrinsic* to sexuality; rather, it is because of the way it has been viewed throughout the human history, where certain practices were allowed, accepted, and maintained while keeping certain practices away which were viewed in a *negative* sense. This negativity is related either to moral and ethical lessons grounded on religion, or to medical science. Though these two domains appear to be very different in their own approaches and arguments, *yet* they seem to share some affinities, since both come up with some *acceptable* and approved practices and pleasures which are helpful in taking care of the self. Moreover, since these discourses function as truth-generating machines of the individual and his life, also since that truth is supported and accepted by forms and models of law, it is compulsory that sexuality and pleasure be appropriated in accordance to the structures of those models. Hence, religion, science, or law do not intervene in prohibiting or excluding sexuality completely from society. Instead, in shaping and disciplining the subject, they accept and approve only certain methods of experiencing pleasure. Thus, sexuality is recognized as that which needs to be kept *under control*, yet not always and everywhere, but only at some places and sometimes. Accordingly, sexuality, which is related to *desire*, has been regulated through certain models. One of such models is marriage, through which the family is instituted, and another is gender.

Thus, family is the legally, socially, culturally and morally accepted institution for *cultured* and *legalized* sexual pleasure. Nonetheless, on the other hand, it is imperative to see this family model in terms of *heterosexuality*. It fits into the moral and ethical demand that comes from the religious domain and brings out duties and responsibilities of husband to wife and vice versa, which indubitably revolves around *faithfulness* and *fidelity*. Additionally, it also fits into the psychoanalytic model of Freud and Lacan; because, the psychoanalytic model which discusses the position of subject with regard to the infantile sexual desire is a desire that is toward the opposite sex or the gender. Especially, the Oedipus complex can function only within the

[256] Ibid, p. 126

heterosexual context. However, what is important to be noticed here is that there is a close affinity between the moral code and the acts of the individual. According to Foucault, "the acts [conduites] are the real behavior of people in relation to the moral code [presecriptions] imposed on them."[257] Therefore, suggesting the need of distinguishing acts from the moral code, Foucault remarks that it is the moral code that,

> 'determines which acts are permitted or forbidden and the code that determines the positive or negative value of the different possible behaviors – you are not allowed to have sex with anyone but your wife, that's an element of the code. And there is another side to the moral prescriptions, which most of the time is not isolated as such but is, I think, very important: the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rapport a soi*, which I call ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions.'[258]

Understanding the idea of subject and the way it functions, it is the above mentioned "another side of moral prescription" that should be taken into serious consideration. It helps us to understand *how* prescriptions become so powerful in terms of the *effect* that they leave on one's mind. Prescriptions, which come to shape the individual as a subject, prescribe him the kind of relationship that he is required to have with his own self. In Foucault's view, the relationship to one's self has four major aspects. The first aspect is that which answers the question: "which is the aspect or the part of myself or my behavior which is concerned with moral conduct?" The second aspect is the mode of subjectivation through which people are asked to recognize their moral obligations. The third one is that "what are the means by which we can change our selves in order to become ethical subjects?" through which one is made to engage in "self-forming activity", and, the fourth is "which is the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way?"[259] According to Foucault, these four aspects, which are the codes in Greek context, and ethics in Christian context, are related to one's self in terms of sexuality through three themes: health, wives or women, and boys.

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[257] Ibid, p. 263
[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid, pp. 263 – 266

However, according to these ethics that are meant for the care of the self, one has to be careful in addressing one's own desire. Therein, one is supposed to be rational. Thus, the desire that arises within the subject *cannot* and *should not* be a desire that does not fit into the formula that functions for the very advantage *for* him. In that sense, what is significant with regard to desire emerged in the domain of the subject is the subject's ability to discipline, tame, and control the desire. Then, desire is no longer a desire as *it is*; instead, it is a *disciplined* and *tamed* desire of a *rational* being.

Therefore, it is an *ethical desire* arising from an *ethical subject*. Consequently, the problem of the subject that constantly appears in addressing the question of being is more of a problem of ethics than that of politics, for politics of the subject is unavoidably connected to the question of ethics. Therefore, the role of ethics cannot be kept aside in understanding the subject.

As far as the function of ethics is concerned, it has always functioned in order to achieve a goal or a *telos*. "The telos is immortality, purity, and so on."[260] In arriving at these goals, people follow different kinds of ethics; subsequently, kinds of ethics that are expected to be followed in contemporary society are different from those which were there before. However, here, the importance does not lie in the differences that unfold within the ethical domain. Instead, it highlights the undeniability of the domain itself. As Foucault points out, the reason for the shift within the ethics is the change of the role of men within the society. However, this change of role, which can be due to some socio-economic and political facts, has not affected the ethical substance, though there is also a change with regard to the goal.[261] Considering the difference that has taken place in relation to the goal, from classical period to modern period, the goal of practicing ethics in the classical perspective is "to be master of oneself". "[T]o be master of oneself meant, first, taking into account only oneself and not the other, because to be master of oneself meant that you were able to rule others. So the mastery of oneself was directly related to a dissymmetrical relation to others."[262] In later period, the goal has changed, and it is not directed toward the power over others. Rather, it is directed to one's own self so that one can be the

[260] Ibid, p. 268
[261] Ibid, p. 267
[262] Ibid.

master of one's own self. This mastery of one's self is the ability and capability that the being possesses with himself due to his ability to be *rational*.

Therefore, as Foucault remarks, "you have to be master of yourself because you are a rational being."[263] In this mastery of one's self, one is related to others, who are also masters of their own selves. Thus, within the domain of ethics, everyone is ethical to each other since everyone is ethical to their own selves. "And this new kind of relation to the other is much less nonreciprocal than before."[264] Consequently, it can be seen that the need of taking care of one's self has been demanded throughout the history — from the classical self to the modern subject. However, in this context, it is also important to note that Foucault does *not* disagree with the Greek model of ethics and mastering self by taking care of the self; rather, he appreciates the Greek mode of dealing with the self, because it is projected towards experiencing one's own happiness, satisfaction, and freedom. In that context, one is aware of the techniques that one adopts in order to take care of the self. In that sense, Foucault finds problems with Christianity and the modern subject that unfolds in European context.

Accordingly, in the context of *modern* subject, the techniques for taking care of the self are so *subtle* that one is not able to realize that he has undertaken such techniques for himself; which is precisely because subject is deeply embedded in the system or the structure of given knowledge which manifests a certain truth in relation to *human* being. Thus, there is *already* a given *image* of humanity and human being. This definition and the image have been functioning as a model or an ideal to be followed by everyone in the process of socialization through which one enters the domain of subject.

On the other hand, considering the ethics of taking care of one's self, it can be seen that no one is obligated to follow any standard technique. It is completely up to the individual to decide whether to follow such techniques or not. Thus, in the contemporary world, one tends to feel that there is no such importance given to ethics or ethical behavior, since ethics is nowhere to be found under *this* or *that* form. It appears that everyone is *free* — free from following or practicing any sort of ethics *as such*, and no one is restricted by any ethical obligation. Consequently, it appears that

[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid.

the idea of subject has its implication only in the domain of politics — politics of the state, owing to which there can be a subject of law, for function of *power* is identifiable only through law and other political institutions. The above understanding of subject and power completely depends on the way in which the idea of power is analyzed. As Foucault argues, "if you try to analyze power not on the basis of freedom, strategies, and governmentality, but on the basis of the political institution, you can only conceive of the subject as a subject of law. One then has a subject who has or does not have rights."[265]

Thus, the freedom of the subject is more often viewed in relation to political institutions and law; moreover, it is believed that institutions such as schools, temples, churches, and hospitals etc. which operate for the wellbeing of the individuals, by making them obedient, civilized, educated, and healthy subjects, are away from power in terms of government. In that sense, everyone seems to be *free* unless one does not violate the Law; everyone is in a journey of achieving success, happiness, wealth, and health in order to live in peace that is gifted by freedom. Thus, it seems that there is no *game of power* in everyday life that takes place through relationships that one keeps with others. Moreover, since these are *relationships*, one is *not able* to see how the game of power operates within the nexus of relationships. In other words, no one is able to realize the politics of relationships, because, in general, it is believed that there is no politics involved in relationships. One does not realize how his desire is controlled by the other, for this control is camouflaged by *love* and *care*.

Generally, love and care are not looked upon in terms of power as they do not explicitly practice any form of control, domination, and subordination. Nonetheless, one may question the validity of this assumption. Can there be a relationship devoid of desire of controlling the other and to invade one's space in order to keep him according to one's will and need, in a way that one becomes another's property — a human property, like human slave.

Emphasizing the need of understanding how power and control function in every relationship of everyday life of the subject, Foucault remarks,

[265] Ibid, p. 300

> ‘in a society like our own, games can be very numerous, and the desire to control the conduct of others is all the greater – as we see in family relationships, for example, or emotional or sexual relationships. However, the freer people are with respect to each other, the more they want to control each other’s conduct. The more open the game, the more appealing and fascinating it becomes.’[266]

This openness is not *unconditional* in the sense that it accommodates everything, and, thus denies nothing; instead, it is an openness that is *permitted* within the *givenness*. In that sense, it is a *different* kind of *control* of self. In addition, it is a control of the self by taking care of the self in order to master one’s self. Taking care of one’s self is the demand and command that comes from ethics — the ethics that are *injected* to us through the bed-time stories such as fable and folktales that our parents — in our childhood — narrate to us through religion, system of education, though community-specific rituals and practices, and also through manners and disciplines. Once we are injected with those ideas, which appear to be interesting and aspiring, and through which we make our entry into those systems of thoughts or ideologies, we start living in that constructed world as it *sounds caring* and *protective* for our own existence.

Consequently, we do not realize *how pressurizing* and *dominant* it is in controlling our *movements*, especially in terms of our thinking. Since the *given* order of ethics has already thought everything for us on our behalf, we do not have to think further. Thinking is not required. Hence, what one is supposed to do is to move ahead with the *given*. It is like “hearsay” that is discussed by Deleuze in his *Thousand Plateaus*.[267] We get used to it. Moreover, the possibility of questioning this givenness is also very *narrow*. Thus, we are almost *numb* and *lost* in a system that is strongly carved into our flesh and blood, and we keep producing the same *givenness* by considering it as *the truth* and *the knowledge*; because, we also hear and see the other fellow-beings of the given community *following* the same system as we do. Subsequently, we make our movements according to what is *given*, *said*, and *thought*, and we are not able to come out from that *givenness*.

[266] Ibid, p. 300
[267] Deleuze, 1987, p. 97

Hence, the code of ethics, which seeps into us since the day we make our entry into society through language, is much more *powerful* and *effective* in controlling us and our desires. Therefore, there is no such necessity felt for the presence of any armed force to control the subjects; such force is needed only when all other systems of power fail to perform this task. According to the above argument, it can be seen that the subject in modern times is a *self-disciplined* subject, and this disciplined nature is a requirement for one to become a subject, as if subjectivity is a medal that one can achieve in one's life. Thus, a command that is *given* to one's life is thus not taken any more as an imposition, but as a demand and necessity that emanate from one's own self. Hence, *self-disciplinedness* has become a desire of one's own.

However, the task of taking care of one's self is a responsibility and a duty, by which one is confined to certain type of conduct or behavior; also, one is *not* able to escape this responsibility and duty. Therefore, taking care by being *conscious* of one's own self is a *penalty* that is imposed on individuals. Explaining ethics of taking care of self as penalty, Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, remarks that "[T]he ideal point of penalty today would be an indefinite discipline: an interrogation without end, an investigation that would be extended without limit to a meticulous and ever more analytical observation, a judgment that would at the same time be the construction of a file that was never closed."[268] This interrogation is the best, most effective, and efficient way of *controlling* the subject to subordinate him to a system of *invisible power*. In addition, it is the most economical way, for it does not need extra man or machinery power to make the machine operate and function. Then, ethics, morality, and disciplines that are at work here cannot be seen *only* as a *desire* or a *will* that comes from an individual, but as the "panoptican" whose gaze one cannot evade from. According to Foucault, this "marvelous machine" called "panoptican" can be operated by any individual in the absence of the director, his family, friends, visitors, and even his servants. Since it is a machine that functions without the help of bars, chains, and heavy locks, it emits a power that can be passed on to the other side — the side of the subject.[269] Therefore, it becomes the power enacted by the subject *itself*. Subsequently, as Foucault describes, "he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them

[268] Foucault, 1977, p. 227
[269] Ibid, p. 202

play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection."[270] Hence, the machinery of discipline is much more *repressive*, *self-centered*, and *anarchic* than being helpful, benevolent, and friendly, because, discipline is also a "type of power" and a "technology". "And it may be taken over either by 'specialized' institutions (the penitentiaries or houses of correction of the nineteenth century), or by institutions that use it as an essential instrument for a particular end (schools, hospitals) or by pre-existing authorities that find in it a means of reinforcing or reorganizing their internal mechanism of power […]."[271] Moreover, considering the *effect* of the discipline, it is able to reach *the most minute and distant elements* in the society. This *effect* is nothing but the *effect* of language, for language is that through which all these systems are constructed and communicated to individuals. Therefore, language is, as Althusser[272] says, the most powerful Ideological State Apparatus.

If all these systems are meant to emphasize the need of taking care of one's self for one's own *good*, the next question which needs to be raised here is *what is this goodness*?; or if it is an emphasis on a particular truth related to man that revolves around the idea of essence, what is this essence or truth all about?; or if it is an emphasis on taking care of self without risking his life, *what is this risk* that needs to be *avoided*?

2.3 Humanism

The techniques and technology of the self are related to the discourse of Humanism that unfolds within the discourse of European modernity. Humanism is the discourse of Man, which has defined and decided the image, essence, spirit, and truth of man, and it has become the *ultimate* analysis of man. However, this knowledge is resulted in following a *procedure* — procedure of exclusion. Hence, it is important to know, *what* is excluded.

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[270] Ibid, pp. 202 – 203

[271] Ibid, pp. 215 – 216

[272] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" in *Literary Theory: An Introductory Reader*, edited by Saugata Bhaduri & Simi Malhotra, 2010, pp. 21 – 67

It is the animal that has been excluded in constructing the image of the man. However, though man himself is recognized as an animal among other animals, his peculiar ability to think rationally makes him stand out and above all other animals. Also, he uses a language that is different from that of other animals for the purpose of communication. The difference is marked by the design features. According to Charles Hockett[273], among the thirteen design features, human language shares nine features with mammal's language; but, there are four more features that are *peculiar* to human language, due to which it differs and stands in the highest position in the hierarchy. Consequently, human language is considered to be far better and advanced. However, it is undeniable that the above mentioned claim by Hockett is grounded on the Cartesian rationality. In *Discourse on the Method*, Descartes identifies the ability to use language as one of the two features that can be taken up in distinguishing people from *machines* or *beasts*. He, furthermore, speculates that even the stupidest people can learn a language (whereas not even the smartest beast can do so) because human beings have a "rational soul" and beasts "have no intelligence at all."[274]

However, this ability and possibility has become one of the measures to distinguish humans from animals. Nonetheless, the idea of man, which is a conflation of certain exclusions, decided by such *identified* differences, has produced the definition that could explain *what* man *is*. As a result of that, it also led to introduce the ways to be followed by man *to be* the man — the *ideal man*. Through the time span from birth to death, man is in the journey of becoming that *ideal man*. In support of this *ideal*, religion, education, and other institutions like family, law, police, etc. have been playing a commendable role throughout the history of *humanism*.

However, man being different from other animals is not the issue here. The problem lies when the difference is identified, calculated, measured and defined *as such*. This identification of the difference is derived after following the procedures of methods[275]— seeing, analysis, recognition, classification, and categorization — that emerge from the discourse of the self. This discourse *dominates* the other; because, the other is subjected to the *vigil* of the self, which penetrates the other with the intention of seeing him *properly* so that what is *proper* to him can be known. This

[273] Hockett, *The Origin of Speech*, 1960.
[274] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/innateness-language/ (accessed on 05.05.2014)
[275] Foucault, 1973, pp. 125 – 165

recognition of *the proper* enables the self to *appropriate* the other to any identity *as such*. However, this identity of the other is that which is imposed by the self on the basis of what self discovered about the other and how he analyzed the same. Accordingly, the difference between man and other animals is that which has an *identity* or a well-defined *face*.

The discourse of the Man and his humanity is thus constructed by distinguishing him from the rest of the other animals through the *identified difference*.

2.4 Culture and Community

The culture that the man is proud of is yet another construction made by himself. Though it is through culture that the man is taught *how* to achieve the ideal of man and the humanity, we should not forget the very fact that, as Nietzsche correctly points out, the "man first implanted values into thing to maintain himself – he created meaning of things, a human meaning!"[276] Therefore, "Man" is "the evaluator"[277], and evaluation is creation; only through evaluation there is value.[278] However, with the passage of time, the *invented value* of the values has become *the* truth or *the* essence of things, people have continued to maintain it without raising questions, because "the peoples hung a table of values over themselves. The love that wants to rule and the love that wants to obey created together such tables as these."[279] The power of the values that appear in terms of good and evil is capable of moving people for the joy of the life in the herd, since "joy in the herd is older than the joy in the Ego."[280] Here, the experience in the herd is the experience of community and its culture that is accepted by individual by *sharing* and *following* them *without questioning* them. These inventions of good and evil are the works of men who love to be loved and appreciated by the herd or by the "neighbor"[281]. Nevertheless, by producing and maintaining such works for fixing some constructed truth and image as *the nature* of man, people have excluded and suppressed the *potentiality of multiplicities* in existence that unfolds in terms of the *discourse of the other*. So doing, man has

[276] Nietzsche, 2003, p. 85
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid, p. 86
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid, pp. 86 – 87

constructed *a prison* for himself so that he can always appear with his fixed identity as *man* or *human*.

Nevertheless, the desire to be in herd is supported by the idea that emphasizes the significance of community for the wellbeing of the individual where community and its values are given more importance *than* the individual. Accordingly, community appears as the means through which one can *find* one's self. This view compels the individual to follow the community and its culture. Hence, technologies of the self are also constructed through the above discussed evaluation procedure invented by the discourse of man and his humanity.

Nonetheless, despite all the techniques and technologies suggested and implemented by respective communities and their cultures in order to take care of one's own self for achieving the ideal of man and the humanity, what can be seen throughout the human history is the very *impossibility* of achieving such ideal. It is impossible because there is *no* such ideal that is possible in real or practical sense, as the idea of the ideal *itself* is a construction. On the one hand, if there is such an ideal of man and the humanity, every culture and every community should be able to reach or achieve that at the end of their journey; consequently, the production of every community and every culture has to be *same*. In that sense, reaching the pinnacle of man and his humanity has to be seen as death of all communities and cultures. On the other hand, if there is a possibility of any such *ideal*, it should *not* exclude anything, so that it does not *lack* anything; because, there is a *lack* in the *given* formula or image of the ideal in both the contexts of man and humanity — lack of humanity and lack of man. However, this lack is not the one that is discussed by Heidegger; rather, it is that which comes due to the continuity of the strict closures that resist the opening up to *outside*. Hence, it is the lack that is marked by the mechanism of exclusion and inclusion, which has excluded certain *animality* in constructing the discourse of man and the humanity. Thus, the lack of humanity is the *lack* of non-human in sketching the image of the human.

Therefore, it is required to break open the strict closures of the *given* discourse of man and humanity. To break open the given is to de-construct the *givenness* in the context of culture.

According to Nietzsche's view, the *closure* of man and humanity can be opened up only by breaking up the *given* philosophy of man. However, by this suggestion, Nietzsche does not try to deny the philosophy, but emphasizes the very necessity of philosophy; *yet*, it is not the *already given* which has legitimized the existing system of knowledge and truth regarding man and his world, but a philosophy that *emerges through* the very rupture of the Philosophy — the institution, the discourse. In other words, Nietzsche demands the urgency of thinking *otherwise* in order to come out from the already existing dreadful thought that is constructed by the morality and values. Moreover, he highlights the need to *address* the desire of the individual in order to seek its own self. However, Nietzsche's manner of seeking the way to one's own self is completely different from that of discourse of the culture.

He does not propose any technologies of the self to take care of the self. He demands the destruction of such technologies in order to seek one's own self. As Nietzsche points out, this denial and destruction can be attempted only through "a change", and, this change is nothing but "a change in values — that means a change in the creators of values."[282]

Hence, there is a necessity *for a change* in the one who constructs these values. In that sense, first of all, it is required to introduce a change to the very idea of man, subsequently, to the idea of humanity, since both are based on certain *invented* values. However, the change that is demanded here is not the one done by changing the positions of the *given* dichotomies of good/evil, right/wrong etc.

On the other hand, if the change takes place in this manner, it however supports the existing code of morality which one cannot escape. Nevertheless, this is what has been taking place throughout the history of humanity, which can be understood in relation to all kinds of revolutions that have taken place so far in extremely active manner. Be it social, political, or economic transformation, what could be seen as a transformation is yet another manifestation of the same code of morality. In *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*[283], Nietzsche analyses this view extensively with reference to the slave-master relationship. Therefore, the change that is demanded here is the one which breaks away from all such constructed values by

[282] Ibid, p. 85
[283] Nietzsche, 1996

destroying the values. It is this destruction which is the great change that opens up the closure for creativity making the man as a creator, for "he who has to be a creator always has to destroy."[284] This is a creation *beyond* one's self[285] to be one's self, and it is possible only when one day, one no longer sees what is exalted in him; and what is base in him, he will see all too closely; his sublimity itself will make him afraid as if it were a phantom. It is the day when he cries out: "Everything is false!"[286] This realization that comes to *solitary man* who is away from the herd, would detach him from such constructions and set him free from all boundaries that imprisoned him, so that he can find a way to himself. However, it is not easy to detach from the *herd* or to refuse the *given*, since the effect of herd instinct is so powerful that it is capable of controlling the individual. Therefore, to go apart in order to create beyond one's self is to be prepared to burn oneself in one's own flame, in which case the creation becomes a creation out of ashes.[287] In Nietzsche's words, going away destroying everything is "the way of the creator."[288]

Nonetheless, it is this destructive nature that is prohibited to us by the teachings of culture and community. *Destructive* nature is the nature of the *wildness* to which the ideal of man and humanity does not fit or affiliate. Hence, by demanding such wildness from the self in order to *create the beyond* of the self, Nietzsche opens up the strict closure of the discourse of man and humanity in order to *redeem* the man for the very experience of freedom; and, it is the *redemption through death*. Therefore, he writes "one should learn to die"[289], and it is only then one is able to find one's self.

However, the idea of redemption here should not be understood in religious terms, for Nietzsche is against the idea of God and of redemption that comes with the help of God. This redemption is not achievable by reaching heaven, which is the

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[284] Nietzsche, 2003, p. 85
[285] Ibid, pp. 90 – 91
[286] Ibid, p. 89
[287] Ibid, p. 90
In addition, apart from Nietzsche's idea, few examples can be brought here with reference to such creations that emerged out of death. The mythical bird "Phoenix" is known to be born out of ashes. Similarly, Sylvia Plath, an American poet, invented the bird called "Lady Lazarus" in her poem in order to bring the positive side of committing suicide, where she sees suicidal death as re-creational.
[288] Ibid, pp. 88 – 91
[289] Ibid, p. 97

paradise of God; nor is it a redemption related to any "star of redemption"[290] where God plays a major role. Instead, Nietzsche suggests man to create another star to redeem his own self. Also, here, achieving the self through death is not same as what Heidegger suggests in his philosophy of being and death.

The death that is capable of redeeming one's self is the one in which, on the one hand, one dies as *I*, while, on the other hand, becomes the *other*. Hence, it is the death that destroys everything — everything through which one is attached to certain image, meaning, or truth. It is through such death that the *closure* of self *opens up*. This opening up is not an *inward* opening; but an *outward* one. Therefore, it is an *outward* movement. Nonetheless, since this opening up of the self is also to open up *for* the self in terms of the other, it is an outward movement in order to travel through the abyss of *inwardness*. Therefore, it is inwardness via *outward*, where the opposition between inside and outside, inward and outward etc. cannot be understood any further in terms of binary opposition.

Accordingly, the above discussed death is not the one that comes to individual when he grows old, which is a "slow death" that is patiently awaited; rather, it is "voluntary death that comes to me because *I* wish it."[291] Wishing for a quick and speedy death for the sake of freedom is, in Nietzsche's point of view, an art; yet it is a "difficult art."[292] In addition, it is a *dangerous* art, since it is the art of *destruction*. On the other hand, it is also a *blissful* art, since it is the art of *creation*. Thus, voluntary death is the art of creation through destruction. Then, it is an art that needs to be practiced by everyone, and Nietzsche terms it as the "difficult art of – going at the right time."[293] The voluntary death, which is the "take a leave"[294] at the right time, is to leave everything behind in order to enjoy the freedom.

However, it can be seen that Neitzsche's suggestion to follow the art of dying and death is directed to achieve a *goal*. Also, for him, dying is an *upward* movement, where man is elevated to the highest position, and this highest position is that of the

[290] Here, this is referred to Rozensweig's ideas on God and Redemption that appear in *Star of Redemption*, 1930.
[291] Nietzsche, 2003, p. 97
[292] Ibid, p. 98
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid.

"Superman"[295]. The problem with this idea is that, as Nietzsche writes, "[T]here has never yet been a Superman."[296] Though he demands the need of a radical departure from the self through death, in order to create one's own self that is away from the *given*, on the other hand, he *sets* another image or a figure of a "Superman" to be achieved.

This *teleological* element that appears in Nietzsche's philosophy of Superman has unavoidably marked a finite or dead end to the very notion of death, owing to which Superman becomes the *end* point of dying and death. On the other hand, considering Superman as the one who is "never yet been", he also has predefined the Superman. In this sense, the notion of death that appears in Nietzsche's philosophy *cannot* be projected in the sense of *infinity*. Instead, it also becomes a philosophy of *finitude* — finitude of man and finitude of death.

Nonetheless, as discussed at the end of the first chapter, how can we understand death with an essential end *as such*? How do we draw a conclusion about death when we are not aware of what death *is*, since, as Levinas says[297], death comes from the zone of the *unknowable*. Then, *how* do we know *what* we *become* in our *death*? How do we know whether we become Superman of which Nietzsche is *aware*? How can we predict the time and the image that are to come along with death? Thus, though death is certain and unavoidable, it is not possible to have a *prior*-knowledge regarding the moment of death, for it is *unpredictable* and *undecidable*. Therefore, as Nietzsche asserts, we should be able to die and we should learn how to die. It is an art to be practiced by everyone in order to break away from the imprisonment of the self *for* enjoying the freedom of becoming the self. Yet, this self that one is to *become* in the flame of death *cannot* be predicted or imagined. Thus, death is certainly the death of *I*, and what comes along with death *just following death* is a *stranger* — the other. This otherness lies *outside* — outside the *given* Self, Knowledge, Morality, Culture, and Community. In that sense, freedom of the self is outside.

However, as discussed above, the death of the self for experiencing the *crudeness* of the self is impossible in everyday life of being and of language, for they

[295] Nietzsche, 2003
[296] Ibid, p. 117
[297] Levinas, 1969

are caught up in the politics of domination and subordination that operates within the domain of culture or any kind of ideology. As Nietzsche points out, the particular experience of crudeness and freedom is *an art* to be practiced, and it can be practiced and experienced, as Blanchot suggests[298], only through *literature* through *writing*; because, the domain of writing is the domain of the *other* of the *given* language. Therefore, the next chapters of the study focus on Blanchot's idea of writing within which his philosophy of death unfolds.

[298] Blanchot, 1982

CHAPTER – III

BLANCHOT: ON BEING, DEATH, AND WRITING

3.1 Death – Certainty and Meaning

If there is something that can be ascertained about death, is that death is *certain* and *unavoidable*; nonetheless, it is not possible to deduce what death *is*. Heidegger and Levinas, as discussed in the first chapter, have been able to analyze and define *what* death *is*. According to them, either it is a possibility or an impossibility, in which case, death is seen in terms of finitude or infinity. These views constitute the core of Heideggerian and Levinasian philosophy, respectively.

However, the problem to be raised in this context is that whether we possess such an *ability* to define death as *death is*. If we are capable of defining death, it would suggest that we are *aware of* what takes place at the moment of death. Thus, if one is able to be aware of it — *what* happens at the death — to the extent of explaining *what* it is, *how* it is, *where* it is, *when* it is and so on, this awareness itself would guarantee the *absence* of death, for death is understood to be "the ending of life"[299]. If death is the ending of life, how can one be aware of anything for it should be the end of the awareness too? In Heideggerian view, death is The End[300] and there is nothing beyond. Therefore, as in the first chapter, Heidegger considers death as the *totality*, whereas Levinas posits death as that which one can *never* be aware of. According to Levinas, the inability to be aware of *what* death *is*, is due to the last minute that the self passes without his awareness. He writes,

> 'time that separates me from my death dwindles and dwindles without end and involves a sort of last interval which my consciousness cannot traverse, and a where a leap will somehow be produced from death to me. The last part of the route will be crossed without me; the time of death flows upstream; the I in its projection toward the future is overturned by a movement of imminence, pure menace, which comes to me from absolute alterity.'[301]

[299] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/death/ (accessed on 04.09.2014)
[300] Heidegger, 1962, p. 286
[301] Levinas, 1969, p. 235

That is other.

Despite this nothingness or the unawareness that is projected by Heidegger and Levinas in their respective philosophies, they have been able to *define* what *death* means or what death *is*. Therefore, the ideas on death presented by these thinkers undeniably appear as some comments that are made from the side of *life*. The experience of death analyzed by them remains as that which is experienced by the self *while living*. Hence it is an experience and an existential analysis that is presented from "this side"[302] of life, wherein death becomes both the *border* and the *other side of* life or *beyond* life. In that sense, does not death remain as that which cannot be experienced by one's own self, though, as Heidegger explains[303], death is the most personal and the unshared, wherein only *I* die in *my* death?

However, in general as well as in philosophical sense, death is considered to be the *end* or the *limit* of life. Though what is considered as life necessarily entails the unavoidability of death, death always remains as the *very* last thing that happens to life. Thus, death also appears to *within* and *outside* life at the same time. If not it is *within* and *outside*, at least it appears as *the end* that the life undeniably contains. Therefore, death can be seen as *limit*, but not as *the* limit; because, to view death as *the* limit is not only to limit life, but also death *itself*. However, as argued above, if one cannot be aware of death, it would also presuppose one's inability to be aware of death as *the limit*. Instead, it *can be* a limit.

The above phrase about death, i.e. it *can be* a limit, neither denies the idea of limit that is entailed in the idea of death, nor it confirms death as *the* limit by giving some definite idea of death. Consequently, neither death nor limit fall into *absolute* infinity or *absolute* finitude. Accordingly, death remains indefinable; the auxiliary *can be* is impregnated with multiple possibilities of doubt, uncertainty, and probability; hence, it neither affirms nor denies anything in particular. In that sense, death becomes a doubt that preempts the possibility of drawing any irrevocable conclusion on it. As long as it remains a *doubt*, it can be *anything*. In such a context, death can neither be seen as the *impossibility* nor as the *possibility*. Rather, it will always remain

[302] Derrida, in *Aporias*, shows that how Heidegger's philosophy of death along with many other philosophies becomes an analysis made from "this side". Here, he begins his argument keeping death in relation to the idea of limit or a border. 1993, pp. 43 – 55
[303] Heidegger, 1962

as that which is *to be* named and defined, for it is never knowable *fully* in totalized sense. Therefore, Derrida places death in terms of "aporias".

It is important here to understand the general meaning of the word *aporia*, which means, "an irresolvable internal contradiction or logical disjunction in a text, argument or theory"; also "the expression of doubt". In that sense, Derridian notion of aporia highlights the irresolvable internal contradictory nature of death; in fact, not only that of death but also the nature of the other that keeps unfolding in the context of the self. Hence, following Levinasian idea that suggests the other as another modality of death, Derrida engages in a discussion on death emphasizing the *very* impossibility of defining *what* death *is* and of predicting *when*, *where*, and *how* it arrives. Here, the major point that Derrida notes in relation to death is the idea of *arrival*. Accordingly, death is *to arrive*, and it is to arrive from *somewhere*. In that sense, it is not at the disposal of the self. Hence self *cannot* control, resist, postpone, prepare, or deny death. Moreover, since it is *outside* the self, it cannot be seen and recognized *as such*. However, the self is constantly exposed to this coming of death from outside. Thus, Derrida underscores this unpredictable, incalculable, irresistible and undecidable nature of death as the absolute other. Death is the absolute other, which demarcates the *limit of the self*. Nevertheless, the limit is not that which marks the *absolute* end — end of everything, but the *interminable*.

What is this limit? Is this limit of self; of other; of death; of life; of living, or of limits?

3.2 Death and Limit

The idea of limit or the word *limit* conveys a sense of end. Therefore, it can also be related to following words which denote similar sense such as; *finish*, *over*, *stop*, *complete*, *final*, *last*, etc. Hence, since the idea of death is undeniably related to the idea of limit, death or to die also means to come to an end. This end can be seen as end of *life*, of *living*, of *dying*, of *everything* and so on. Thus, it gives the sense of *finishing*, *finalizing*, *completing*, or *stopping* of something or someone. Accordingly, whatever or whoever exists prior to death appears as incomplete non-final being. In that sense, life or living also can be seen as that which is necessarily connected to the

idea of *lack* or *less*, and, as we saw in the first chapter, Heideggerian notion of death and being presents such idea of *lack*. However, taking the idea of death in terms of limit, Derrida, brings out the notion of border that touches upon the idea of *closure* and *demarcation*.

3.2.1 Death: Border-Crossing

Then, death is a *border* — border of life and living. If death is a border of life, death and life have to be seen as two different territories or zones, according to which, on one side there is *life*, and on the other side there is *death*. On the other hand, it can also be said that death has a border which is called *life*, since life is a prerequisite for death. Therefore, life and death are two different zones, yet sharing a border that can never be there without each other — life and death. Moreover, each of them exists with this border. Hence, there is no possibility for any of them to be cut off from that border. As Derrida writes, "what appears to be refused is the pure possibility of cutting off."[304] Then, does it not suggest that we live with borders?

If so, then the border that is marked in terms of life or death, also the one which lies *in-between* life and death, is unavoidable in either of the conditions — living or dying, *it is with that border*, *in relation to that border*, or *along with that border* that the death takes place. Hence, though death is a different zone or the *other side* of life, they are related to each other *through* or *across* this border. It is *via* this border that the two closures are open to each other. Therefore, it can be said that there is some *border crossing* that takes place in the context of death. Here, the idea of *crossing* is of importance, not because of the very act of crossing (moreover, it is not an act that is produced; instead, it is something that *happens*. This idea will be discussed later in this chapter), but because of the *border*. The idea of *crossing* or *to cross* presupposes the presence or the existence of something that is to be crossed or passed through; therefore, simultaneously both border and crossing become equally important. They constitute each other; one *cannot* do *without* the other; one is constituted by the other in relation to the other. Thus, each is *in relation to the other*, each crossing is *along with the other*, *accompanied by the other*.

[304] Derrida, 1993, p. 78

However, *what is it* that is crossed at the moment of death? *What* do we cross when we cross a border? What does that border limit? All these questions bear some defined notion of border or limit; also, they suggest crossing as an *act*. Accordingly, death can be seen in the sense of someone crossing the *border* that *demarcates* death from life and vice versa; at the same time, someone crossing the *border in-between* life and death. The Oxford dictionary suggests more than five meanings or ideas for the word *cross*. Hence, it is also important to bring at least few of them for the present discussion on *crossing*. Accordingly:

1. To go across; to pass or stretch from one side to the other

2. To pass across each other (follow the meaning of intransitive here, when it is later discussed extensively)

3. To put or place something across or over something else

4. To oppose somebody or speak against them or their plans or wishes 5. To make two different types of animal breed together; to mix two types of plant to form a new one.

Considering the above mentioned meanings except the second one, all of them are in *transitive* form while the first shows the possibility of being both transitive and intransitive. The general idea that is attached to the word is caught up in this transitive form of the verb. Accordingly, crossing becomes an act or an action that is motivated or generated through *power* and *intentionality*. It is so, because, the particular transitive form *necessitates* the availability of some *given* object that is *to be* crossed. Hence, it can be understood as *someone crosses something*; with the awareness of *the very moment of crossing* and *the very thing that is crossed*. Thus, in crossing, one is with three kinds of awarenesses: awareness of the act of crossing, awareness of the moment of crossing, and awareness of the *presence* of that which is crossed. Therefore, crossing is an *action* that is performed *consciously*, *intentionally*, and *powerfully*. In that sense, while crossing, it is not *only* the act of crossing that is performed and completed; but also at the same time, it crosses the very *uncrossed*. As a result of that, the border becomes the *crossed-border*. Hence, it is both *border-crossed* and *crossed-border* at the same time. But, *who crosses what*? This question demands equal attention on both *who* and *what*.

Hence, at first, let's try to approach the idea of *border-crossing* in the context of death taking the question of *who*: *who* crosses what? Here, the discussion highlights the significance of the notion of *consciousness* and *intentionality* in understanding the idea of death in relation to *border-crossing*. If death can be considered as a border crossing, do we cross that border *consciously* and *intentionally*? Can there be a possibility of such consciousness in relation to such crossing? If one can be conscious in this regard, that consciousness presupposes one's awareness of *what* death *is*. Moreover, to know *what death is*, is also to have a definitely defined meaning of death. It is with that knowledge that one is able to be conscious about death. In that sense, one has to master all kinds of possibilities and probabilities of death, such as *what it is*, *how it is*, *when it happens*, *where it happens*, *how it happens* and *with whom it happens* and so on. Such knowledge is possible only if it is at one's disposal. But, as far as death is concerned, as noted above, though death is inevitable and entailed in life, it is *not* within one's own domain. It comes from *outside the self*. Then, how can self be aware of something that is *outside* the self, which is also outside the knowledge of the self?

3.2.2 Death and the Other

In Levinasian idea of death, it could be seen that how death and the other become strangers to the domain of the self; how death or the other threatens the self by arriving and appearing in front of the self. In Levinasian analysis, it is an encounter or a war that is fought between self and the other, face to face.[305] The appearance of the other in front of the self demands the *openness* of the self to the other. However, this opening up cannot be *enacted* by the self. It is not an action that is *consciously* generated and performed by the self. Also, this opening up *cannot be* intentional, because the *coming* of the *other* is completely a decision of the *other*.[306] It is the power of the other. Therefore, in the context of death, the Self *cannot* and *does not* have a position to take a decision beforehand. The arrival of the other is thus marked by *suddenness*, loaded with unpredictability which challenges the power that the self possesses in terms of consciousness, awareness, and intentionality. It exhausts all

[305] Levinas, 1969, pp. 222 – 226

[306] Derrida discusses this idea extensively in his *The Politics of Friendship*, (2005a), and *The Beast and The Sovereign: Volume 1*, (2009).

knowledge and awareness that is guaranteed by consciousness. However, it does not suggest that consciousness and intentionality are of no importance in death. In everyday life, it is the consciousness that plays a major role in one's effort of taking care of one's self, guarding one from death. So doing, one attempts to *postpone* death. This postponement also suggests the idea of unpreparedness for facing death or unpreparedness to die, and this is also an idea that Heidegger and Levinas emphasize differently, casting the condition of "not-yet". Yet, it seems that Heidegger presents it with a sense of being immature or incomplete, since "not-yet" is a condition of "Dasein", who is heading toward death — the totalized Self or Being. In contrast to Heidegger, Levinas proposes an idea of postponement, retrieval, and unpreparedness by the idea of "not-yet", by projecting being as a weak, powerless, fearful, and life desiring being. In other words, he sees being's fear of death. In that sense, Levinas sees, on one hand, the unavoidability of death, while, on the other hand, the fear of death with which life is haunted. Thus, by projecting being and death in relation to two different forces — on one side, there is the force of certainty which one cannot escape; on the other side, there is the force that pulls being *down* or *back* out of fear — Levinas shows the *tension* that continues in being in relation to death. Hence, it is a tension between life and death, due to which being itself appears as the tension that *trembles* between life and death.

Nonetheless, the significance of this tension is that it asserts the idea of consciousness and intentionality that the being carries regarding death. Therefore, as discussed above, the ideas of consciousness and intentionality *cannot* be rejected or discarded in the context of death. It cannot be considered as irrelevant or invalid. However, on the other hand, the idea of death *as* the other coming from *outside* the self determines the *inadequacy*, *incapability*, and *incapacity* of the consciousness, with which one makes attempts to be mindful about life in order to prevent encountering death. Moreover, this effort of avoidance or prevention is certainly not to *not-to-die*; but to avoid dying *untimely* or meeting death *soon*. Therefore, it is also an effort to die at the *proper time* to experience *proper* death — death proper to age and age proper to death. It is an effort to die *properly*. However, the unpredictable coming of death challenges this effort that is determined by consciousness. Despite all possible efforts that are made in order to *avoid* death saying *no* to death by pleading and suggesting *not-yet*, *not-now*, death is thus going to come at its will. Hence, it

seems that death comes *secretly* — secretly to consciousness, awareness, and knowledge that one possesses regarding death.

Thus, death is a *secret* that is *not known* to the self. It is known only by the other, and death as a secret is the "secret of the other."[307] The complete strangeness of death due to the secret of the other is that which paralyzes the self in terms of his power that he possesses in mastering the capacity and ability *to know*. Therefore, it can also be said that the other is the *limit* of the self-awareness and self-knowledge.

However, if death, like the other, is a secret that secretly creeps into the self from outside, how do we think of a possibility of self-awareness in death? More specifically, if it is a secret that is *unknown to self* , then how do we know *how*, *when*, and *where* this coming of the other — death — happens? In such a context of the other and the secret, death is an idea that can be discussed as border crossing — of life. This crossing takes place *prior* to any self-awareness. That is where death as the other becomes powerful — powerful than the self or *I*. Hence, the self becomes *powerless* at death — powerless to be conscious as self, also to generate any action. Thus, the sudden coming of death is capable of *tearing off* the *closure* of the self by making the self powerless to hold onto its own self. Therefore, other as death is that which the self is exposed to *vulnerably*. This exposure is the exposure of life, where life or living is *vulnerably* exposed to death. Hence, it is a very *vulnerable* border due to its exposure to the other side – death. In that sense, to live is also to live with this *vulnerability*.

3.2.3 Crossing the Border

Nevertheless, in such a context, it is *impossible* to figure out *who* performs the very act of crossing. On the other hand, it is also impossible to deny the crossing that takes place at the very instant of death, and also that which *happens* to the self in relation to the other due to this crossing. In crossing, something comes to pass; and, in that passing, something or someone that is *already* there within the self/being *undergoes transformation*. But, *who* undergoes *what* transformation *cannot* be identified *as such*. Here, it is possible to project the idea of biological death in order to get a clear

[307] Derrida, 2001b

understanding of what happens to someone during death. According to biological analysis, in death one ceases to breathe or one's breath ceases. Moreover, this is the death that is formally recognized within the domain of science. In *Aporias*, Derrida views this scientific analysis of death as a definition in terms of "medico-legal sense". According to that analysis, death is certified with regard to "so-called biological or physiological death [that] has been certified according to conventionally accredited criteria."[308] However, going through Heideggerian notion of Dasein, here, Derrida discusses the idea of death with regard to the distinction between *demising* (*Ableben*) and *dying* (*Sterben*). Explaining the number of meanings that the German word *Ableben* is impregnated with, Derrida writes, "*Ab-leben*, to leave life, to go away from life, to walk out of life, to take a step away from life, to pass life, to trespass upon death [trespasser], to cross the threshold of death […]."[309] Along with all these meanings, Derrida quotes Heideggerian analysis of Dasein in relation to death, in order to present Heideggerian three modes of ending that suggest death or dying: "Dasein never perishes [verendet nie]. Dasein, however, can demise [ableben] only as it is dying [solange, als es stirbt]."[310] Asserting these two sentences by Heidegger, Derrida remarks, "These two sentences very economically formalize the three modes of ending (*enden*): *perishing*, *demising*, and *dying*."[311] In addition, it is with regard to these three meanings that one has to define one's own death and specify which *mode* of ending that is referred to. As Derrida explains, there is a hierarchy among the above mentioned *three modes* of ending, where perishing is considered as that which happens mostly in the context of animals: in this case, man has to be seen as a rational animal to view his death as *perishing*. But, according to Heidegger, if man is seen as "Dasein", "Dasein" cannot perish, but demise.

> 'Demising is not dying but, as we have seen, only a being-toward-death (Dasein), that is, a being-destined-to-death, a being-to-death or tending-toward-(or up-to)-death (zum Tode), can also demise. If it never perishes (verendet nie) as such, as Dasein (it can perish as living thing, animal, or man as animal rationale, but not as Dasein), if it never simply perishes (nicht einfach verendet), Dasein can nevertheless end, but therefore end without

[308] Derrida, 1993, p. 38
[309] Ibid, p. 37
[310] Heidegger quoted in Derrida, 1993, p. 38
[311] Ibid, p. 38

perishing (verenden) and without properly dying […]. But it cannot demise without dying.'[312]

Derrida sees this hierarchy as that which is organized around the particular kind of limit that could be called "problematic closure."[313] Moreover, this problematic closure, according to Derrida, assigns a domain, a territory, a field to an inquiry, a research, or knowledge, presupposing a "thematic object". On the other hand, it also presents the idea of a border. "This border designates the spacing edge that, in history, and in a way that is not natural, but artificial and conventional, *nomic*, separates two national, state-controlled, linguistic, and cultural spaces."[314] In this sense, Derrida remarks this border as an "anthropological border", which gives a concession to "the dominant dogma" that suggests "only man has such borders, and animal do not". However, considering these two forms of limit, Derrida asserts the necessity of adding another kind of limit or border in order to explore how such hierarchy and limit with regard to death has become the truth or knowledge which produces definitions for death. Additionally, that limit is, Derrida writes, "conceptual demarcation or rather the logical de-finition."[315] Here, Derrida's argument is that the idea of border or limit that is set in relation to death is a conceptually and hypothetically created border, which, otherwise, actually does not exist *as such*.

3.3 As Such – the Dying-Properly

The idea of death as *the End*, *the limit*, *the border* of life is determined by the enigma of *as such* — death *as such*, end *as such*, limit *as such*, and border *as such*. In Heideggerian terms, death is "the possibility of the impossibility of every way of comporting oneself towards anything, of every way of existing."[316] It is this idea of *ending* every way of existing that affirms the idea of ending in terms of *finiteness* — The End: *The End* of everything which also suggests the *proper* end — the *proper end* of life, while being the end that is *proper* to being. Hence, the given notion of death is determined by the idea of *properly* dying. In that sense, in contrast to

[312] Ibid.
[313] Ibid.
[314] Ibid, pp. 40 – 41
[315] Ibid, p. 41
[316] Heidegger, 1962, p. 307

Heidegger, Derrida says that it is the idea of *properness* or *properly dying* that appears in terms of death. Then, death is, also the death of certain *properness*. In addition, in this appearance of death *as such* in the context of properly dying, as Derrida shows, it "*at once marks and erases*" the three types of limits that are mentioned here: the anthropological border, the delimitation of the problematic closure, and the conceptual demarcations of this existential analysis.[317] As he explains,

> 'to mark and at the same time to erase these lines, which only happen by erasing themselves, is to trace them as still possible while also introducing the very principle of their impossibility, the principle of ruin, which is also their chance and which promises the line while compromising it in parasitism, grafting, and divisibility. This principle of ruin is nothing other than death: not the dying-properly but, and it is quite different, the end of the properly dying.'[318]

Then, in death, what becomes possible is the *impossibility*, and this impossibility is the impossibility of *as such* — the "as such" of death.[319] Accordingly, *as such* of death is impossible, and this impossibility is the possibility. Therefore, in dying, death is *impossible*.

This understanding is quite different from Heideggerian reading of "the possibility of impossibility", where Heidegger reads death as a triumph that the self achieves, *at the End*. In contrast to Heidegger, the similar expression is presented by Blanchot regarding death, yet with a different meaning. Hence, referring to Blanchot, Derrida posits the necessity of a different reading of the expression "the possibility of impossibility."[320]

3.3.1 Impossibility of Totality – Need of Dis-closure

The impossibility of *as suchness* of death presupposes the impossibility of a *complete* death or dying *completely* or *properly*, for the very *properness* that is to appear in the

[317] Derrida, 1993, p. 73
[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid, p. 77

form of *as such* is *impossible*. Hence, this idea implies the *impossibility* of seeing death *as totality* or *complete end* of the life while projecting death itself as that which cannot be *totalized*; because, death itself does not have any particular end *as such*. Therefore, it seems that death is nothing but *dying* the *infinite death*. On the other hand, the impossibility of totalized death suggests that there is something that resists the possibility of *totality*. However, it does not say that there is no room at all for a totality or a possibility of a totality. If we say that there is no possibility of totalities at all, then, it would become an *absolute* condition, which is the *absolute impossibility*. When it becomes such *absolute* impossibility, it subsequently remains as that which is *absolutely* open, exposed, and scattered forever. Hence, there *cannot* be any idea of death; there cannot be any space for any imagination of death, since the space for a thought of death is already denied as a *priori* condition. Then, how do these philosophies and cultures of death and funeral rituals still manage to exist?

The previous chapters and the above mentioned arguments in the current chapter emphasize the *impossibility of totality*, and the *necessity* of such impossibility in order *to open up* the *given* self-centered discourse of death to the *other*, so that the limits of all kinds that are constructed *conceptually*, and then practically and concretely, *break open* to their utmost *exteriority*. Accordingly, the idea here is, on one hand, to bring out the problematic of the *closure*, and, on the other hand, to underscore the necessity of the *disclosure*. However, if it asserts the necessity of disclosure, what kind of disclosure should it be? Is it an *absolute* disclosure which remains exposed to its infinity? Or, is it an *infinite disclosure* against *infinite closure*?

The idea of *infinite disclosure* is as *problematic* as the idea of *infinite closure*, because infinite disclosure too is another *absoluteness*, in which case it becomes the *absolute infinity*. In the *absolute infinite* exposure, nothing is possible, for it *denies* any possibility of making an attempt to *think*, *imagine*, and *understand*. Thus, it *exhausts* the very *attempt*, owing to which it also becomes the impossibility of thinking, thoughts, knowledge, and understanding. In that sense, no one should try to think and understand anything because no one is capable of thinking, for everything is thus *absolutely infinite*. To follow such an absolute openness, which denies any possibility of any kind of totality, is to discard all kinds of knowledge, understandings, structures, systems, and also language, with which they all are constructed. So doing, it would finally direct us to discard the very philosophy, which

asserts such absolutely infinite openness and infinite impossibility. Hence, the *infinite* impossibility projects the very idea of attempt itself as a *failure* at the very outset. Therefore, it is important to note that the argument made here is not directed to assert such infinite impossibility, or absolute *infinity* of disclosure.

Highlighting the problematic of absolute closure and absolute disclosure, the present chapter, demands the necessity of the disclosure, which is *in-finite*. Therefore, the disclosure or the opening up of the self has to be seen as *dis-closure*, wherein neither closure nor disclosure is permanently placed and maintained *or* permanently excluded and denied. However, the problem of the absolute closure and the absolute disclosure is determined by the very impossibility of creating any permanent totality *as such.* This impossibility is due to that which *cannot* be totalized; that is to say, there is always something that *cannot* be totalized, because there is always something that cannot be grasped, seen, viewed, defined, and thematized by any knowledge, structure, schema, reason, and so on — outside. It always remains *exterior* to the totality, and it is termed as the *remainder* or *remnant*. The totality is always problematized by that which remains *outside* the totality, resisting to be totalized. However, this idea of resistance does not suggest that there is something which is incommensurable in that which is outside in the sense that it remains always *hidden* like a treasure and would thus be known only to it. Rather, it refers to that which remains *to come* in a way that there is always an *excess*.

Accordingly, what is more important here in relation to the idea of closure and disclosure is the notion of *outside* — *outside* the *totality*.

3.4 Blanchot – Thought Of the Outside, Outside the Given Discourse

What is this idea of *outside*? What does it refer to? The idea of outside is not referred to any outside *per se*; it is not another place that can be identified *as such*; nor can it be understood in terms of its material existence. Rather, it is, outside the given — the given concepts, theories, and ideologies, which create certain systems and structures of knowledge and truth. As Derrida writes in *The Politics of Friendship*, concepts, which are constructed or conceptualized, mark their own boundaries or limits, and

these limits are certainly not actual or certain; they are also conceptualized limits.[321] Therefore, it is necessity to go *beyond* such conceptual limits, for which the idea of outside is of greater significance. Accordingly, the idea of outside calls for going *beyond* or thinking *outside* the conceptualized limits, within which the *given* concepts and knowledge of death are produced.

The *remainder*, which disenables the possibility of totality, denotes the idea of outside. In that sense, the idea of outside is also the idea of *remnants* which can never be accumulated completely to make a composite whole. Moreover, this remainder threatens and dismantles the totality; so doing, it reminds the existence of that which is *outside* the totality. However, this remainder cannot be identified *exactly* as a thing *as such*. It is *some* remnant *of* something, which *cannot* be *appropriated* to any figure, form, or definition *as such*. Since this remnant thus never ends *absolutely*, it can be further understood in the sense of a *fragment* — remainder in fragments. Hence, it is a *fragmented remainder*, which *remains in fragments*, in bits and pieces; it is something here and there in *this* and *that* form, in *this* and *that* manner; thus, it is *scattered* everywhere. Therefore, it can *never* be gathered at one particular place, in order to say *now* and *here*; therefore, this fragmented remainder is *nowhere*[322] — *nowhere* when it is searched for; yet *now-here*. Asserting this fragmented remainder in terms of *now here* and *no where*, Blanchot offers a literary-philosophical treatment for the question of death *without* setting any conceptual limit to it.

Then, it is important to understand the idea of *outside* in Blanchot's philosophy. What is this outside? If there is an outside, of *what* or *whose* outside is it? Moreover, how can that outside be *thought*? In the previous chapter, we discussed how the self is influenced and controlled by the power of the discourse, and how he is enclosed and guarded *against* the *other* within the space of *I* subject in the context of everyday life. Connecting such discourse of self-sameness to the notion of *outside* and the *other*, the thought of the outside appears as a demand that necessitates certain going *beyond* or *crossing* the limits of the *given* world of *I* subject. Hence, the outside is that of the *given* discourse of the *subject* and its language, meaning, and form — the identity. The idea of outside implies two things at the same time: one is the limit as a

[321] Derrida, 2005a

[322] Blanchot in his essay "The Essential Solitude" discusses this idea of *nowhere* (p, 410 – 411). The version of the essay that is referred in the present study appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, 1999. pp. 401 – 415

prerequisite for the thought of outside, and the other is outside as the space of the *unconditional*. The later suggests the impossibility of totality since outside is already the *unconditional*, whereas the former appears as an attempt of *conditioning* the very *unconditional*. Hence, it seems that the word *outside* already proposes *two* sides or *more than* one side, since the *outside* is always to be thought in relation to a *limit, border,* or *boundary* which are conceptual limits.

Nonetheless, these limits are problematic since they are considered to be *real* or *true* limits. As a result of that, they have become *concrete* and *rigid* to the extent that they are no more taken as *constructions*. Moreover, these limits function as the machinery of *exclusion/inclusion,* in which the *difference* between inside and outside is rigorously maintained by demarcating and excluding outside from inside and vice versa, *as if* the distinction of such strict border is easily visible, graspable, or thinkable. Furthermore, such demarcations also suggest the impossibility of *passing* of one to the other; impossibility of *crossing* the borders or limits; so doing, it incapacitates the possibility of one passing *through* the other *blurring* the boundaries. However, as Derrida argues in *The Politics of Friendship*[323], these limits are *deconstructable*; also, should be *deconstructed*. The deconstruction is enabled as a possibility by the very *limits* that are conceptually constructed. It is precisely due to the very conceptualization of the limit that the limit is always *deconstructable*. As a result of that, limit can be re-thought, re-conceptualized, re-constructed, re-imagined and re-defined. Yet, each time, it will appear as *anew*.[324]

The next question that emerges here is that, *how to deconstruct the given* or how to think the outside? Is there a way through which the thought of the outside can be invoked? If there is a way, should that be fixed to another discourse? It is with regard to these questions that the present chapter brings the idea of *literature* through *writing* that is put forth by Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Derrida through their philosophies which already appear as the outside of the *given* discourse of philosophy — institutionalized philosophy, which differentiates philosophy from literature or fiction.[325]

[323] Derrida, 2005a
[324] Ibid.
[325] In this regard, please see Derrida's *Margins of Philosophy,* (1982) and *Acts of Literature,* (1992).

3.5 Language and Writing – Space Of Outside

The idea of outside that is presented by Maurice Blanchot, is directly connected to his notion of language. Blanchot's philosophy of language is fundamental to understand not only the idea of outside, but also the notion of *being*. Blanchot's argument that appears throughout in his writings asserts language *as* that *through which* the opening up of the self to the otherness, can be experienced. However, here, Blanchot's idea of language is completely different from the general notion of language, which sees language as the medium of communication; also the one within which speech is privileged over writing by projecting speech alone as language. According to this general notion, which is also the philosophy put forth by Plato[326], writing is considered as *secondary*, and it is a *representation* of speech. Thus, writing is already *outside* language. However, this idea, which later found its legitimacy within general linguistics, basically grounds written language in relation to *alphabetic writing* or writing *as such*. In contrast to this notion, Blanchot takes up writing and elevates it into a different level. He sees it *not* as a representation of something that is *already* there, but as the very *presentation* of that which is *nowhere*. Therefore, the language that Blanchot underscores is the language *through* writing.

If Blanchot's idea of language is based on writing, what kind of writing does he suggest in relation to his idea of *outside*? Here, does he include all kinds of writing; or does he suggest one kind of writing that spaces for all kinds of writing? If there is such law under which every kind of writing can come, what is that law that he attempts to invoke?

The discussion has to mover further in relation to these questions so that the notion of writing by Blanchot can extensively be investigated. Here, the discussion would be based on following four major questions or concepts:

i. the question of being and death

ii. the idea of totality

iii. the idea of language through writing and,

[326] For further understanding, please see Derrida's discussion which appears in part-1 in *Of Grammatology,* (1994) regarding the idea of language presented by Plato and how it was taken ahead by Ferdinand De Saussure in general linguistics.

iv. the law of outside.

Among these, *the idea of language through writing* has to be approached first so that the other three can simultaneously follow in the discussion. There are two significant aspects that are to be highlighted in relation to the notion of writing. Accordingly, on one hand, it brings the *act* of writing; and, on the other hand, it presents a *space* that is *constructed through language through writing*, which is the "space of literature."[327] Moreover, it is with relation to these two aspects that Blanchot's idea of language opens up to a *different* space, which is the space of literature that can be understood as the locus of being, language, death, and the law of *outside*.

3.5.1 What, Why, and When – Writing?

Writing is the demand of the outside that always remains *external* to totality. In other words, writing is governed by the very law of *outside*, in which outside becomes the *law* that demands and commands the necessity of writing.[328] As discussed above, the outside is that of the self, knowledge, awareness, language, meaning, definition, and thought and the thinking being. Hence, the idea of outside suggests a complete *strangeness*, *newness*, *difference*, or *otherness*, which cannot be seen from *this* side — the side of the *self* or the *conscious* being.

The idea of *outside* the *self* proposes the *death* of the self. *Death* is not in the sense of physical death; instead, it needs to be seen as the *withdrawal* or the *detachment* of the self *from* the *self*, which is also the *withdrawal* from *I* subject. According to Blanchot, it is "I without I."[329] This strange situation that Blanchot invokes here is not only that which the self faces; it is also the very *strangeness* of the self *itself* where one is not able to say *I* or recognize one's self in terms of *I* — the *I-ness* that is declared as subject. Hence, by his suggestion of a withdrawal from the

[327] *Space of Literature*, (1982), one of the major works of Blanchot, highlights the space that is constructed through literature through writing as the locus of language and being.
[328] In this regard, please refer to Blanchot's essay "The Absence of The Book". The version of the essay that is referred to in the present study appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, 1999, pp. 471 – 486
[329] Blanchot, 1995c, p. 15

subject, Blanchot seems to be placing a critique and a denial of the given discourse of the Self.

However, it is not possible to see, perceive, or capture this separation, detachment, or withdrawal; it cannot be declared as it is a change. Blanchot points out, it is "a change in time."[330] In addition, this particular withdrawal is an attempt that is made through language *through* writing. This attempt does not terminate or efface the existence of *being*, it does not bring the complete end or death of the being; instead, it marks the *death* only *of the subject*. It ends all appropriations, attributes, and identities thorough which one had known his own self, also others. Therefore, it is a *displacement* from *I*-language, as Blanchot says, one would not be able to say *I* any longer.

Since it is thus a withdrawal *in* and *from* language, does it also imply a withdrawal from communication or expression, as there is no other possible language except one's own language with which one is familiar to one's own self? Certainly, this is the idea that Blanchot emphasizes i.e., the *loss* of a *proper* and *familiar language* at the *loss* of *the self*. It is at this very *disaster* that he tries to think of a *survival*, which is neither death nor life[331]. Moreover, this survival of "I without I" is able to be achieved through something or someone that is other than the self — *the other*. Hence, the withdrawal from the language of *I* delivers him to another language, which is *other's* language. Therefore, it is also the *language of the other*. Therefore, the discourse that Blanchot tries to bring forth is the *discourse of the other* and the *language of the other*.

How to access this language of the *other*, also how to access the other through whom *I* am going to survive? Am *I* able to access something or someone that is not me, therefore, the one who is outside *me*? If the other is *outside* me, is there any possibility which makes my accessibility possible? If I am still able to possess this very possibility to access the other, is not the other still under my power?

As discussed above, if withdrawal from *I* is the *withdrawal* from the *power* of the Self, *the self* should not be able to be capable of finding out *who* or *what* the other

[330] Ibid, p. 14
[331] Derrida, in his *Learning to live finally: The Last Interview*, (2007), explains the idea of survival as that which is different from living. p. 26

is; *where* the other *is*. Hence, this movement towards the other cannot be initiated from the side of the self, where *the self* becomes the *agent* of the initiative; it is not that *I* go *toward the other*; instead, this movement *comes to me* from the other, which also means it comes to me *from outside*. Therefore, the moment and the movement of withdrawal, separation, detachment and so on, is not that of a *going*, but of a *coming*; and, that coming does not cease; instead, as Derrida[332] says, it *comes to pass*, while *passing by*.

The idea of coming to *me* from outside suggests outside or the other as that which *cannot* be accessed, for as Blanchot explains, "we have no access to the outside, but the outside has always already touched us in the head, for it is the precipitous."[333] This inaccessible outside is an experience, and that is the experience of the outside, which is outside the *self*. Hence, this can be experienced only through language through writing, for as Blanchot writes, writing is the "extenuation of the subject."[334] Accordingly, Blanchot asserts two things, while demanding just one thing: that is the necessary rupture or the breaking away from the subject, and, this rupture is, on the other hand, the opening up to outside. This *breaking free* and *opening up* does not happen in two different times; there is neither hierarchy nor linear order in happening of these two events. They, instead, occur *together at the same time*. Moreover, this rupture that Blanchot emphasizes in this context is not an action that is taken up by the self, where self becomes active with his power. Rather, it is that which happens due to the *passivity*. Explaining how writing and passivity can be related to each other, Blanchot notes,

> 'if there is a relation between writing and passivity, it is because both presupposes the effacement, the extenuation of the subject: both presuppose a change in time, and that between being and not-being, something which never yet takes place happens nonetheless, as having long since already happened. The uneventfulness of the neutral wherein the lines not traced retreat; the silent rupture of the fragmentary.'[335]

[332] In this regard, see Derrida's essay "From Psyche" that appears in *Acts of Literature*, 1992, pp. 311 – 343; also see his essay "Ethics and Politics Today" in *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971 – 2001*, (2002a).
[333] Blanchot, 1995c, p. 6
[334] Ibid, p. 14
[335] Ibid.

3.6 Passivity

The *rupture* of the self, and, therein *opening up* to *the outside* is the condition of *passivity*. It is passive, for it is an action that is devoid of intentionality. Moreover, this rupture happens due to the *other* coming to *me* from outside. Then, it is, as Levinas says, a destitute condition, where *I* becomes helpless and is no longer able to be resistive.[336] Hence, the coming of the other is the very *limit* of the self. Nonetheless, is it possible to think of such passivity in everyday language and life?

As Blanchot remarks, "passivity does not belong to the world"[337]; it can be evoked only through "a language that reverses itself"[338], and that can be done only by interrupting *what* already language *is*. Thus, passivity would *interrupt* our reason, speech, and experience.[339] If passivity is thus *interruptive*, can it still be seen as passivity? To be able to interrupt is to *have* some *power* to be active. However, here, it is not a power that generates any action; rather, it is the power or the activeness of the *effect* — the effect that the passivity emits or the effect that emerges from the *silent* rupture. In Blanchot's words, it is the very force and its effect that erupts from the very event of "fall outside the self."[340] Falling outside the self interrupts the continuity of the self, owing to which possibility of the self is always threatened. Thus, it *destroys* what is already there as the self, and presents self in its *fragments*. This disturbance, which causes discontinuities, is hence destructive in the sense that it *does not let* the self continue in terms of self-sameness. Moreover, such disturbances are *infinite*. Therefore, there is no possibility to think of one *proper* ending or end, because, end itself has no such end *per se*. Nevertheless, due to the above discussed strange nature of *passivity*, it cannot be considered passive enough.

> 'This is what is strange: passivity is never passive enough. It is in this respect that one can speak of an infinite passivity: perhaps only because passivity evades all formulations – yet it seems that there is in passivity something like a demand that would require it to fall always short of itself. There is in

[336] Levinas, 1991
[337] Blanchot, 1995c, p. 15
[338] Ibid. p. 14
[339] Ibid, p. 16
[340] Ibid, p. 15

passivity not passivity, but its demand, a movement of the past toward the insurpassable.'[341]

However, the interruptive passivity is then undeniably *destructive*. Moreover, since it is possible only through language through writing, writing needs to be considered as that which occurs in this disaster. However, here, there is no such sequence in disaster and writing in the sense that writing *follows* the disaster, i.e. writing happens *after* the disaster. Contrarily, as Derrida writes following Blanchot's stance in relation to writing, writing, which is mourning in Derridian terms, happens *just following* the death or the disaster.[342] Therefore, Blanchot views it as "the writing of the disaster". Blanchot's idea, here, brings forth two different things at the same time; yet it is based on one idea, and that is the idea of *power*: one is the power in relation to *the powerful*; the other is that which is related to *the powerless*. He casts the powerless *as* the powerful while raising the following questions, "where is there the least power? In speech or in writing? When I live, or when I die? Or again, when dying doesn't let me die?"[343]

As Blanchot remarks, the demand for passivity and the powerless as the powerful, is necessitated by the thought of *ethical concern*. According to him, it is the ethical concern that distances one from the power. Moreover, this distancing, on the other hand, pushes the same into a powerless condition in a way that the relationship between the self and the other is kept, not on the basis of power and its hierarchical distribution, but in terms of *responsibility*. This responsibility can be thought of only when the self becomes powerless in holding onto its own self-centeredness *before* a call that comes from outside, which demands a *response*.

This responsibility is that which commands self to *not to be* the self on the demand of the other. It is a responsibility which *I* cannot escape because *I* am summoned to be responsible. It is also because *I cannot* be replaced by another in a way that the responsibility is transferred to be undertaken by another on behalf of me.[344] Because, Blanchot writes,

[341] Ibid, p. 16
[342] Derrida, 2001a, p. 49
[343] Blanchot, 1995c, p. 12
[344] In his *The Gift of Death*, (1995), Derrida involves a deep discussion in explaining this idea of the untransferable and inescapable responsibility assigned to the self in the context of the demand that

> '[I]t is the other who exposes me to "unity", causing me to believe in an irreplaceable singularity, for I feel I must not fail him; and at the same time he withdraws me from what would make me unique: I am not indispensable; in me anyone at all is called by the other – anyone at all as the one who owes him aid. The un-uinque, always the substitute. The other is, for his part too, always other, lending himself, however, to unity; he is neither this one nor that one, and nonetheless it is to him alone that, each time, I owe everything, including the loss of myself.'[345]

Moreover, "the responsibility with which I am charged is not mine, and because of it I am no longer myself."[346]

This s*elf-effacement* and *giving away* the self to the other in the name of the other, is an experience of *writing*, within which only the continuous effacement of the self comes to exist, and leaves only the traces of that which is effacing. Writing begins by marking this *effacement* while effacing the self. Hence, writing is the self-effacement.

3.6.1 When to write?

However, this writing cannot be *planned*. One cannot write *when* there is *already* something *to write*; nor can one think of *what* to write, because, *to be able to have* something or *being able to be already rich* with something that is to be written, is to have something of one's own — one's own *self*. Hence, the writing that Blanchot demands here is that which just *happens* when there is *nothing* to write or in the very *absence* of a thing *as such* to be written. Accordingly, writing is *accidental*. This idea of Blanchot can be directly linked to his notion of *disaster*. Accordingly, writing becomes the experience and announcement of disaster, in which case writing itself can be seen *as disaster*, also the writing *of* the disaster. Because, "[T]o think the disaster […] is to have no longer any future in which to think it."[347] Then, writing needs to occur when there is *no time* to think and then act. Hence, writing has to

comes from the other. He analyzes and exemplifies the same with reference to Biblical story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac in response to God's command. pp. 53 – 81

[345] Blanchot, 1995c, p. 13

[346] Ibid.

[347] Ibid, p. 1

happen *suddenly* just like a *sudden eruption*. *Suddenness* is significant in the context of writing, since it delivers being to a moment of absolute nothingness or of a "zero degree"[348] of voice; and, this moment is the moment of *silence*, where *no* voice can be heard. Nonetheless, it is within this silence that *everything* takes place, not in terms of action, but in terms of thinking. However, this thinking is not of *this* or *that*, because thinking of *this* or *that*, would suggest the possibility of *distinguishing* thought *from* thinking. Instead, it is *both* thinking and thought at the same time, in the sense that thought *cannot be detached* from thinking and vice versa. Then, the silence is thinking itself, also the thought itself; this thinking, which is also the thought, occurs yet in another language, for there can be no thought or thinking without a language. This language is nothing but *writing* — the one which *erupts* in silence. Moreover, more importantly, thinking and writing does not *precede* or *follow* each other; because, just the way thought *cannot* be distinguished from thinking, thinking *cannot* be distinguished from writing, hence from language.

In that sense, to write is to experience a moment of thought, thinking, and language. This moment cannot be calculated in terms of time. It is *uncountable* and *measureless* in the sense of time because of its immeasurable *singularity* that cannot be captured. It is a time where one is completely absorbed or attracted by one's own thoughts. Moreover, this attraction is such that one hears nothing but the ocean of thoughts, within which multiple tides and waves rise and break; it takes him to a world far away from the *everyday* world. Therefore, Blanchot writes, "[T]o write is to surrender to the fascination of time's absence."[349] Accordingly, in writing, one enters the moment of "time of time's absence."[350] Hence, this space created through language is a *strange space* within which only *absence* — absence of speech, time, self, consciousness, subject, and so on — comes to *presence*. In that sense, that is also the space of presence of absence.

The idea of presence of absence and absence of presence[351] is directly connected to the idea of time. In this context, the idea of present can also be viewed in

[348] This is an idea presented by Roland Barthes. But, Blanchot takes it up with a different meaning. For further understanding, please see *The Writing of the Disaster*, Blanchot, (1995c).
[349] Blanchot, 1982, p. 30
[350] Ibid.
[351] This idea of presence-absence is one of the major ideas that shape Derridian philosophy of being and language. He discusses this idea in relation to the notion of différance, that basically appears in *Of*

the sense of presenting something that is present, or presenting the presence of something; also, that is presented in present — the present time, in terms of *now* — the *now time*. However, is there anything to present as presence in present? Can there be anything that is presentable in present other than the very absence or the impossibility of presence? Hence, presence of absence and absence of presence is present-absent and absent-present, in which case what is present is not the presence of presence or *the presence as such*; but the *presence* of *absence*. In that sense, it is the time of time absence, because, as Blanchot explains,

> '[T]he time of time's absence has no present, no presence. […] The time of time's absence is not dialectical. In this time what appears is the fact that nothing appears. What appears is the being deep within being's absence, which is when there is nothing and which, as soon as there is something, is no longer. […] The reversal which, in time's absence, points us constantly back to the presence of absence.'[352]

Further, according to Blanchot, this is the experience of language *as* writing — the experience of literature.

3.6.2 Literature – Writing as the Crude Word/ Crude Being

Literature through writing is the domain of the *other*. Moreover, as explained above, this otherness comes in relation to and in response to the withdrawal of the self. The withdrawal as *withdrawal of the self* marks the absence of *I* subject, due to which now what is left is just the *being* — the *crude being* and its "crude word"[353] or *language*. Here, the word *crude* has to be taken in the sense of pureness. However, this purity is not that which is bereft from impureness. In fact, Blanchot's idea of crudeness *contradicts* the general notion of purity. General notion of purity stands for that which is *unmixed* and *untouched*; because, to get mixed with something that comes from outside is to *lose* very essence or identity of the *thing*. Hence, purity is for maintaining the very thing as *itself* in its essence. This is the dominant notion in the discourse of

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Grammatology, (1994), and *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* (1973).

[352] Blanchot, 1982, p. 30

[353] Ibid, pp. 38 – 39

the subject. However, in contrast to this idea, which *excludes* outside by considering it as that which spoils the purity, Blanchot's idea of "crude" shows crudeness, mixture, and contamination as the *pure* nature of being and language. In other words, to be *pure*, *authentic* or *natural* means to be *impure*, *touched* and mixed.

Then, what is this crudeness?

Blanchot's idea of crudeness needs to be discussed in relation to the notion of subject and its language in order to understand what kind of crudeness it is and where that crudeness takes place. Earlier, the discussion on the idea of subject could show that how individual as *I* subject is placed in the society and how his cognition and behavior along with his language is controlled by the order of discourse, though he himself is a part of constructing and maintaining that order. Accordingly, every individual is a product of culture and community, in relation to which each individual becomes a subject of the discourse. Every individual has to go through the mechanism of exclusion and confinement by conforming to a particular identity. However, this procedure does not conform particularly to a natural order or to the nature; because, there is no nature *as such* according to which one should adjust. If there is any *as suchness* in nature, that is not nature, but *naturalized* nature that is meant to serve the purpose of the discourse — discourse of subjection. Hence, we should think of being or individual who is prior to subject in order to think of the nature of being — the crude. The crude being is the one prior to subject.

To understand being *as* crude is to consider being *as it is*, which is the non-refined. This non-refinedness denies nothing; excludes nothing; rejects nothing. Accordingly, whatever comes as being is considered as its own being. Such condition necessitates the opening up of the self to the other, through which self ceaselessly becomes other; also, it commands and demands to welcome that otherness without a prior knowledge of *whom* to welcome.[354] Hence, the nature of being or self is nothing other than *becoming other* — other than *the given*, and this undeniable rupture is the very condition through which one is able to survive. The constant breaks due to the

[354] Derrida, in *Of Hospitality*, (2000), discusses this idea of welcoming the other with utmost hospitality. Here, distinguishing the difference between the foreigner and the absolute other, he asserts an unconditional hospitality that welcomes the absolute other, who does not have a name or a family name. In that sense, this idea of welcoming the absolute other with unconditional hospitality commands a break with the general notion of hospitality. More importantly, Derrida sees the question of hospitality as the question of the subject and the name as hypothesis of decent.

sudden moments of certain events are undeniable to the existence of being, and these ruptures happen when one reaches to one's own limits. Moreover, these limits, which are innumerable, according to Blanchot, are thresholds, which are exposed to two sides, i.e. *here* and *there*. Coming to such thresholds is then not to be on hither or thither side; it is neither here nor there; instead, it is now and here, yet *nowhere*. Hence, it is neither crossing of a limit nor un-crossing; it is both crossing and un-crossing within which the limit or the "border trembles."[355] In such a moment, something *remains*, and it would keep coming in the future *to come*. However, Blanchot presents this unexplainable yet undeniable experience of being in in terms of language as writing, where he highlights space of literature as the experience of dying beyond death.

3.6.3 Literature that denies nothing

Literature is a *space* created through language. However, this language is not *given*, but emanates *through* writing. In that sense, there is no language *as such* that the writer could pick up in order *to write*. Instead, it begins to appear only when writing *occurs*; and, here language cannot be distinguished from writing, because language is nothing but writing, and writing creates the space of literature.

According to Blanchot, space of literature through writing accommodates *everything*. It is so, because it does not negate anything, nor does it control anything. It negates even the negation.[356] However, the entry to such space begins with the withdrawal of the speaker from speech. This withdrawal disenables him from speaking in the sense that he is no longer able to speak. This impossibility of speech delivers him to the ocean of silence, where he experiences only the silence.

3.6.4 Withdrawal – Silence

This *silence*, of which beginning and end cannot be found, of which any point of high and low cannot be found, of which any direction or path cannot be found, is

[355] Jacques Derrida. Full documentary film, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_ujk4vld9A (accessed on 17.05.2016)
[356] Blanchot, 1995b, p. 315

everywhere. And, it grows further into its abyssal depth from which he, who keeps falling *infinitely* due to its gravity, screams from pain, fear, and vulnerability. It is the vulnerability, where no one comes to help and where everything becomes *impossible*. In such an *absolute* impossibility due to the gravitational force of the abyss, which pulls him continuously to the very abyss, of which the depth cannot be measured, even the silence becomes impossible; because, it is a moment and space that is created and comes to exist in and through silence — silence that grows from each side just like darkness grows and gathers together.

Thus, the silence is that which keeps becoming thicker; it is sooner going to encapsulate the weakening being and bury him within. Hence, it is silence that gets totalized slowly, within which the intensity of silence becomes stronger in a manner that its intensity is too heavy to be kept within, *silently*. More it grows, more it rises; more it rises, more intense it becomes. This intensity is heavier and it *cannot* accommodate further *more* silence *unless* it breaks within. It – the silence – has to crack or break *within* in order to find more space for further silence. It is this cracking of the silence which happens due to the withdrawal from speech and everyday world that appears in literature through writing. Hence, writing is *another* sound — sound that occurs *along with* and *due to* the crack and cracking of silence.

3.7 Language and Writing – Passive Cracking of Silence

Thus, literature is another *voice*. It is both the crack and the cracking – the noun and the verb. However, cracking is not an intentional act. It is merely passive. It is an *occurrence*, for which one cannot be *responsible*. It just happens. Then, it costs nothing but its own self.

Hence, this cracking is the cracking of language. Here, one crack is marked by the very withdrawal from the *given* language or the speech; the other crack is that which occurs while cracking *another* language, which is writing. In other words, writing itself is the crack while cracking the given language. This rupture of language tears open the fabric of language. By tearing, it breaks its unity and the togetherness. Thus, it *destroys* its smooth texture. So doing, it leaves it in *fragments* that can never be united to a finalized *oneness*. In that sense, there are *innumerable* cracks to which

language is subjected, and through which language delivers onto *further* language. Through each crack, it is the language that breaks down, and while breaking down, it comes to present itself *as* language. Hence, writing is the very locus of language that can never be totalized to produce homogeneous language due to its infinite *becoming* — becoming language. Hence, language of literature is not only a language; but also the very space where literature *takes place*. Also, on the other hand, literature is the world or the space where language can be experienced as *mere* language — the free, also the crude language.

3.7.1 Writing and Becoming

The idea of becoming language and experiencing language while involving one's own self with language suggests literature or writing as a very *personal* experience. And, this utterly personal experience where one experiences one's own self through language delivers him to a *supreme* freedom, where he is deprived of *nothing*. Hence, there is no rule, law, or any order that intervenes to govern, control, or stop the writer when he writes; also, what he becomes *while* writing. Therefore, in writing, both writer and language keep *becoming*. However, is there anything that the writer or the language attempts to *become*?

In approaching the idea of freedom in relation to becoming, it is important to see how Blanchot views that what author is capable of writing. In his essay "*Literature and the Right to Death*", Blanchot writes,

> 'What is an author capable of? Everything—first of all, everything: he is fettered, he is enslaved, but as long as he can find a few moments of freedom in which to write, he is free to create a world without slaves, a world in which the slaves become the masters and formulate a new law; thus, by writing, the chained man immediately obtains freedom for himself and for the world; he denies everything he is, in order to become everything he is not. In this sense, his work is a prodigious act, the greatest and most important there is.'[357]

[357] Ibid.

The idea that is communicated here, then, answers the question raised above with regard to becoming. The writer becomes *what* he is *not*. And, here, he is not aware of *what he is not*; because, he cannot know it *before*. It is only through writing that he comes to know what he is *not*; at the same time, what he *is*: what he *is not* when what he *is* and what *he is* when what he *is not*. Thus, in writing, he is delivered to this double bind condition, which I will discuss detail in the next chapter with reference to Blanchot's literary works.

While writing, the writer keeps becoming something or someone, which he was not aware of previously. Then, more he writes, more he becomes; and, more he becomes, more he writes. Hence, writing is *becoming*, according to which writer becomes *other*. Writing and becoming are thus intertwined and become the means of survival. However, it is in relation to this becoming which cannot be defined *as such*, that the idea of ultimate freedom needs to be taken into consideration. As discussed above, since there is no such pre-determined goal or a *telos* that the writer aims to become through his writing, he is capable of becoming *anything* and *everything* in the very process of writing. He is constantly *transformed* through writing. He is being transformed while going through the process of *transformation*. In that sense, to write is to experience both action and noun at the same time: on one hand, there is an act of transforming; on the other hand, there is a transformation. Thus, *action* and the very *result of* the action can be experienced *together* and *simultaneously*, due to which there is no such possibility of distinguishing one from the other — the act or the action from the result, the cause *from* the effect, the subject *from* the object, form *from* content, and one *from* the other. They are no more available for recognition *as such*. It is a process, which does not have end result *as such*, because it is *mere* experience. However, in this transformation, nothing is denied but the very negation. Here, it can be said that the writer still negates something while negating the *negation*. The negation that he negates in this context is the negation that is *already* done by the world. Therefore, Blanchot writes,

> 'His negation is global. It not only negates his situation as a man who has been walled into prison but bypasses time at that will open holes in these walls; it negates the negation of time, it negates the negation of limits. This is why this negation negates nothing, in the end, why the work in which it is realized in not a truly negative, destructive act of transformation, but rather the realization

> of the inability to negate anything, the refusal to take part in the world; it transformed the freedom which would have to be embodied in things in the process of time into an ideal above time, empty and inaccessible.'[358]

Then, the above mentioned 'refusal' marks the very entry to a freedom of which boundaries are not set. There is no law that rules such freedom, because it is the very *outside* — outside the law. Hence, to be free means to remain outside — outside everything. Then, it is the outside that has to be considered as Law, since there is nothing other than outside to control the very outside. Thus, as Blanchot writes in his "Absence of the Book"[359], outside is the Law and to experience this outside is to experience the freedom — through language through writing. "The Law is writing itself which has renounced the exteriority of interlocution to designate the place of the interdicted. The illegitimacy of writing, always rebellious towards the Law, hides the asymmetrical illegitimacy of the Law in relation to writing."[360]

[358] Ibid, pp. 315 – 316
[359] The version of the essay that is referred in the present study appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, 1999, pp. 471 – 486
[360] Ibid, p. 482

CHAPTER – IV

RADICAL PASSIVITY IN BLANCHOT'S LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS

4.1 Blanchot: Writing Death, Death-Writing

Blanchot is *different* in his approach to understand, explain, analyze, and define what death *is*. For him, death is inexplicable, incomprehensible, and indefinable; besides, it is also *impossible*. Blanchot's idea of death delivers us to a subtle, yet deep philosophy of being, existence, and death, within which we are thrown into the abyss of a reality that is strange from the reality of everyday life which brings forth a linear narrative and orderly compartmentalized time span that is attached to the empirical life that ends with empirical death. Hence, Blanchot's philosophy is, first of all, *beyond* empiric; therefore, it is beyond visibility, tangibility, analyzability; it is beyond the cognition and knowledge. Thus, it is also a philosophy *beyond* the *given* — given space of philosophy, knowledge, and language. Blanchot's deep philosophical treatment of the question of being and death unfolds in his philosophic-literary works. Through these works, not only he presents the blurring of constructed boundaries that maintain binary oppositions such as life/death, inside/outside, self/other and so on, but also he breaks open the closures, which are maintained in the context of philosophy and literature by projecting and placing them as different or separate spaces. Thus, Blanchot, through his works, unsettles *the border* between philosophy and literature in a way that their institutional existence *as such* is paralyzed. The present chapter explores the idea of death, being, and language by examining Blanchot's philosophic-literary works.

However, it is difficult to include all of his works into the present study due to the constraints of time and space. The limitation is also of impossibility of compiling Blanchot's works into another totality, for all his works multiply into many and become another universe of thoughts. In each work, Blanchot appears with his philosophy, yet differently; he attempts to say something, yet he does not seem to say

anything *particular*. It is difficult to find some *clarity* in his *voices*. Thus, what one hears in him, through his works, is only a "murmur"[361].

4.2 Murmuring the Impossible

4.2.1 What is impossible for Blanchot?

It is everything that is impossible for Blanchot. Through this impossibility, he claims to be his *being*, and that *being* is *every* being that gets *different* names at different times and places. Yet, at the end, it is about the same-different *being*. Within this *impossible* everything, the most significant thing for him is that which generally appears to be the most certain in its certainty, and that is the certainty of *death*. Therefore, it is the most possible *to happen*; also, it is the worst that could happen to life. Death is the most and last possibility in a *war*; it is the most possible in a *heart-break*; it is the most possible in a *worsened* illness; it is the most possible in an *accident*. Thus, death is the most powerful, most fearful, most threatening *event* in life. Moreover, one can attempt to embrace it at the extremity of thought in the sense that one commits suicide, or like Levinas writes about death in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, one would run away or postpone death due to the fear of experiencing the most horrible and terrible face of death. Thus, there are two possibilities in relation to death: one is the death through suicide. The other is the one that *comes*, timely or untimely, to *terminate* life. However, Blanchot challenges this idea of death that has been governing the centuries of human history.

According to Blanchot, death is *impossible*. He writes the impossibility of death. It is this impossibility of death that is written while announcing death, just "following the death."[362] Hence, the writing itself is resulted in death and that is the death of the *I* subject – the Self. Accordingly, as Blanchot shows, to write is to die at the very outset, also, to resurrect from the other side. Therefore, writing is both death and resurrection. One dies in that death, while dying, one *ceases* to be *I*. Thus, in death, one continues to disappear from the Self. How does this disappearance happen? Why is it seen as a disappearance instead of *absolute* death where nothing is left *here*;

[361] Blanchot, 1982
[362] Derrida, 2001a, p. 49

where everything is totally absorbed? Then, how do we think, experience, or talk about death?

In *The Step not Beyond*, Blanchot writes, we are not accustomed to death.

> 'Death being that to which we are not accustomed, we approach it either as the unaccustomed that astonishes or the unfamiliar that horrifies. The thought of death does not help us to think death, does not give us death as something to think. Death, thought, close to one another to the extent that thinking, we die, if, dying, we excuse ourselves from thinking: every thought would be mortal; each thought, the last thought.'[363]

Hence, in death, what we possibly experience is that which we are not accustomed to, owing to which death becomes *strange*, also the *stranger*. Thus, in death, we are delivered to a complete strangeness. Though we seem to be aware of death, since it is the certainty which keeps company to life, that awareness does not commensurate with the exactness of death. It is so, because death of which we are aware is yet another *thought*. Also, that is a thought, which is thought regarding a stranger, *beforehand*. Therefore, this knowledge that we are equipped with is drawn out of *ignorance*. We are conscious about death only through this knowledge that is based on assumption. Accordingly, though we die in death, we are *not able to be certain* of what exactly happens at death. In previous chapter, we discussed death in terms of crossing, or passing through. In the moment of passing, there is something from which we are separated. Moreover, that is kept away from our consciousness and awareness despite our effort to be vigilant even at the very last minute, in order to gather yet some knowledge. It is an effort, *as if* one wants to die *wise* or one wants to master one's ability to know about one's own self even at the moment where one has to depart from everything, including one's own self. Thus, what seems to be certain of this knowledge is the certainty of *ignorance*, and it is this ignorance that which unites and separates being *from* death. Therefore, the understanding, knowledge, or truth of death is thus governed by the duality of the oneness — wisdom and ignorance, both together and simultaneously.

[363] Blanchot, 1992, p. 1

Hence, the significance of death, also the powerfulness of death is manifested through the ignorance, which makes death *strange* and *unaccustomed*. Therefore, it is the ignorance that makes death impossible. Yet, it makes it traumatic through horror, fear, suddenness, surprise, and pain that declare the "disaster"[364]. This ignorance throws us into complete strangeness, within which we are no more capable of knowing from the side of *ours* or from the side of the *Self*. At death, we become strangers to our own self. Thus, one is *with* the other, also one is *related* to the other. Therefore, death is yet another relation — relation *across*.

According to the above idea, the question that pesters Blanchot is that, if death is that to which we are not accustomed, if it is the strangeness to which we would be thrown at any time despite our plans, efforts, determinations, knowledge, consciousness, and so on, are we able to think of death as that which occurs just *once* in our life; is it just *once* that we die? Do we not keep encountering death while living? These questions and ideas do not let Blanchot relax, rest, or be at peace: they do not let him come to a definite meaning or understanding of death, therefore of life. They fling him to a contradiction, confusion, restlessness, uncertainty, bewilderment, and silence. He is neither able to say *what* death *is*, nor is he able to explain *what* life *is*. Whenever he makes an attempt to define or understand either of them, he ends up walking to the other side of each of them, where he finds himself as *neither* here *nor* there. Thus, he is *nowhere*. Instead, in each time and in each attempt, he is always only *now* and *here* — be it death, or life. He is not able to take any side; always, he is *outside* either of death or of life, and it suggests that when he thinks he is on the side of life, he is actually not there. On the other hand, when he thinks that he is probably on the side of death, he is *yet* on the side of life. Thus, he is related to life and death *at the same time*, *across* the border or the threshold, which occupies a thin, yet deep and unexplainable space between life and death. For Blanchot, it is a threshold; a gap; a vacuum; an abyss, where one is driven by an unexplainable vertigo. It is this vertigo, within which one remains at the verge of life and death, which is depicted and expressed by Blanchot through his writings.

Hence, we shall go through some of his writings in order to involve a deeper discussion on his idea of death, also of life.

[364] For further understanding of the idea of *disaster*, please see Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster*, (1995c).

4.2.2 *Vicious Circles: The Idyll*[365]

In *The Idyll*, the context is a city into which he enters, and "[T]he moment he entered the city", he becomes a "stranger".[366] The stranger is taken to the place known as "Home". There, he – the stranger – meets the owner or the master of the "Home" along with his wife. Also, he sees many people there engaged in different works. With little bit of interaction with others, the stranger gets a name for himself: "Alexander Akim". This is the name *given* to the stranger by the owner's wife when she was leaving him after a conversation saying "Well, see you soon, Alexander Akim."[367] Since then, the stranger is known as Akim among others at *Home*, also to his own self. In the Home, there are few questions, which do not leave the sight or the mind of the stranger, and they are very important for him since he is, very often, perplexed with what he gets to see around him and what he gets to hear from other strangers who stay in the same house. He cannot understand clearly what goes on at Home. He himself is not aware of why at all he is taken to this Home. However, one of the questions, which keeps coming to him incessantly, is the one regarding the couple — the owner and his wife, and their relationship with each other. Within this question or related to this question, there are many other questions, which emerge in a way that he cannot put a halt to them. It is so, since he cannot be convinced with just one answer, because, *every* stranger that he encounters within and outside Home, brings different answers to the same question. Moreover, though he wants to believe in one of those answers that he hears in relation to his question regarding the relationship of the couple — whether they are happy with each other or not, he is just *not able* to do so because of what he gets to see in relation to the couple with his *own* eyes. Moreover, his personal experience is contradictory to what he hears from others.

The other question, which he is driven by, is the question related to his own freedom. He is waiting for his freedom. It is in search of freedom that he ends up in the city. As a result of entering the city, now he is taken to this "Home" where he is supposed to stay, but freely. For him, this "Home" is a prison, and he is eagerly waiting to go out of it so that he can be *free*. Yet, on the other hand, he is asked *to be* free, because, at "Home", he *can be* free. At least this is what he is told by others. It is

[365] "Vicious Circle: The Idyll" is a fiction by Blanchot. The version that is referred to in the present study appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, 1999, pp. 7 – 31
[366] Ibid, p. 7
[367] Ibid, p. 9

a place that *welcomes* everyone – all the strangers. "What luxury there, what comfort! The people of the city are happy to have it, since it allows them to welcome strangers in the best possible way. We don't like people to live in exile among us"[368], he is told by the owner of the bookstore. At Home, the overseer helps him to understand what is required of him during his stay. Accordingly, "there were no major obligations: a little discipline was demanded, but only on certain days (for example, walking in single file and not talking during work)."[369] Yet, Akim does not feel comfortable there. He feels of himself only as a prisoner. Despite his effort to understand and adjust with the context and situation within which the "Home" unfolds in front of him every day, he *fails* to do so. Finally, answering to few questions asked by the director of Home, he says: "I'm not troubled", "I don't understand the customs of the house and I suffer from it. That's all. If I'm allowed to go back to my own country, I'll always remember your excellent hospitality." "How long are you going to keep me prisoner?"[370] Ironically, the answer that he gets is, "Prisoner?" answered the director, frowning. "Why do you say prisoner? The Home isn't a jail. You weren't allowed to go out for several days for reasons of hygiene, but now you're free to go wherever you like in the city."[371] Thus, there is a freedom around Akim though he does not feel it for himself, due to which he appears as the one who is *longing* for *freedom*.

Third question that revolves around Akim is about marriage, of which he has no idea. He listens to what others say about marriage. But, personally he decides for marriage so that he can *leave* the Home. It is thus a trick or a mean through which he can run away from Home for the freedom of not being a prisoner any more. He says, "To be free, that's what counts."[372] He, being an unmarried person, sees marriage as that within which he could be free; so, he waits for it; he seems to like it, unlike the bookseller; being already a married man, the bookseller seems to have a different opinion about marriage. Therefore, he advises Akim, "Good idea. If that's your destiny, I can only approve. But perhaps you shouldn't decide so hastily. The Home has its advantages. To be housed, to enjoy all the modern comforts, and to give only a few rare moments of work in exchange — it's not a bad life. The rest of us envy you." The story that he gets to hear from the overseer about his marriage is *again* different.

[368] Ibid, p. 16
[369] Ibid, p. 11
[370] Ibid, p. 19
[371] Ibid.
[372] Ibid, p. 27

"To love, to be loved", he said, "that's not enough. The circumstances also have to be favorable. Could my wife stay married to a man who lived in such a disagreeable house, living beside such an unfortunate couple? She left me, and I don't even know where she is."[373] Here, what he refers to as "unfortunate couple" is the director of the Home and his wife. Thus, Akim falls into inexplicable controversy regarding marriage, and he wonders not knowing what is to be taken as *the* truth regarding marriage, because, every experience that is shared by different people with whom he interacts bears a *different* truth. Hence, there are many versions of *truth* of the same thing.

From beginning to end, Akim is oscillating among many truths regarding The Home, the couple, the freedom, and the marriage. Each experience that is brought to his ears or his eyes is true *in its own way*. All the more, his own idea regarding each of them carries a truth that is known only to him. Nonetheless, his truth is not taken seriously by others. If not his truth, what he attempts to express from his side about what he thinks of any of these things is either *mis*-understood or understood *differently* by others. That is where Akim, at last, is really punished by the director with ten lashes. "You will receive ten lashes", director declares and overseer is the one going to give him these lashes. The act that Akim seems to have done is probably something that he himself did not see as a crime or an offense. He comes to know about it only when it was declared by the director. "You are guilty of a disturbing act", he said sadly. "You have deceived a girl by proposing marriage to her, when all along you were only thinking about running away. You have deceived us by causing us to relax our surveillance—under the pretext of preparing this wedding. You have upset the order of the house."[374] For this offence, Akim is given lashes; with the very first lash, he loses his *consciousness*, but, with the third, he comes back to his senses and suffers a "mortal pain". He does not know whether he would live long enough to be killed by another blow. "[h]e was torn apart, humiliated, menaced by the thought of staying alive while enduring an agony powerful enough to kill him."[375] However, at the end of the lashes, Akim seems to be still alive, waiting for death. "He wants to die, […] nothing more", says Piotl. The old man says, "Right now, he doesn't want anything at all. He's going to sleep." At the end of the story, everyone sees him as

[373] Ibid, p. 29
[374] Ibid, p. 30
[375] Ibid, p. 31

someone who is going to die or sleep. When there is no movement to be seen in his body, people around him think that he is probably dead, or going to die just in a while that is minute than a second, even a millisecond. Yet, his body moves. Even though the body stops moving, his eyes are still fixed on the director, though they are becoming gloomy. Looking at him, "The men began to make signs, to remove their hats, to wipe their faces."[376] However, Akim's face is still quivering and the director, who is no longer able to bear the sight of death and the dying or to bear the one who is living in relation to death while dying, hurries to close Akim's eyes and declares his death saying "You're losing a good comrade."[377]

Nonetheless, none of these acts or words really *says* or *can* say whether he actually died. What others assume to be death or dying is related to what they see through their *observations*. Besides, these observations are confirmed by the knowledge of death that they are equipped with. Pertaining to that knowledge, Akim is dead or *almost* at death. That death is verbalized in different ways by the onlookers. For instance, according to the old man in the story, Akim "is going to *sleep* [emphasis added]"; for others, they are "*losing* [emphasis added] a good comrade", whereas for the director, "it's the *end* [emphasis added]." Nonetheless, Blanchot does not say what actually Akim feels for his own death. Also, we – the readers – are not aware at *what point* exactly Akim died or whether he is dead at all. Instead, what we get to hear are the perceptions and the assumptions, which are drawn from *already* existing *constructed* knowledge. According to that knowledge, what the onlookers consider as Akim's death is the physical death, which has also not been exactly confirmed by the writer. Each sign signals the death of a *dying* person; on the other hand, this death that is assumed by reading certain *signs* which appear from the lashed-Akim, can also be seen as mere *exhaustion* of the *attempts* of reading — reading the signs. However, it is the exhaustion from the side of reading, not from the side of signs. They, the signs, can never come to a complete halt. In that sense, there is still something *remaining* in Akim and, probably, it lies either in his eyes through which he is gazing at the director or in his breath that is going to be the *last*, yet which would *last* for a time that is not known to anyone, not even to Akim's own self. That *last* time, which is going to *last*

[376] Ibid, p. 32
[377] Ibid.

for an incalculable time, is the time in which death is robbed away from Akim, also from death itself.

This death is that which is awaited by the director and all the others who are standing around Akim, looking at him. They are waiting to see *the* death, while witnessing it. In fact, it is not only the onlookers who are waiting to see his death, but also Akim himself. All of them are waiting — to see, to witness, to recognize and to confirm the death. What are they waiting to confirm or witness here? Is it death *of* death or death of *dying*? Leaving this question to be discussed later in the chapter, what is highlighted here in the context of death is the idea of *waiting* — waiting for death. But, can waiting bring anything for the one who is waiting? Can waiting bring that which is awaited? Presenting the idea of waiting through his *Awaiting Oblivion*, Blanchot writes, "[W]aiting neither opens nor closes. The entering into a relation that neither welcomes nor excludes. Waiting is foreign to self-concealing/self-revealing movement of things."[378] Hence, the death that is awaited by Akim and the others is going to remain as that which will be awaited *infinitely*; because, as the above quote says, waiting is the entering into a relation that has neither got a beginning nor an end *per se*.

Nonetheless, Akim is destined to this unexpected death which has arrived with its *suddenness*. This suddenness *shatters* all expectations, plans and arrangements that have been there with everyone at "Home" in relation to Akim's marriage. It is a party that is meant not only for Akim, but also for the other prisoners. It is that hope for this party through which they will be pleased with pleasure that keeps everyone waiting.

> 'The other prisoners, warmed by the hope of an extraordinary day, tried to get close to the man responsible for this pleasure. Several of them also thought of marriage; weren't there families in which the children waited and waited to get married? It seemed to them that chance alone had selected Akim for this happy fate, and they too were ready to claim the same privilege.'[379]

Hope for the happiness and freedom, *through* Akim and *in relation* to Akim, is thus awaited by everyone, especially by the prisoners, also by Elise and the old man Piotl. All the plans and arrangements have been placed by this desire to be happy and

[378] Blanchot, 1997a, p. 71
[379] Blanchot, 1999, p. 29

free, and it should *not* be postponed, because happiness and freedom are *not* to be postponed and waited for, especially by those who are eagerly waiting for freedom and by those who are at their old age. That is why, when the director says, "Louise of course was delighted. She would have liked to wait several days, since there were so many things to take care of", Akim replies "No, it will be tomorrow." Confirming the necessity of marriage to be taken place tomorrow *itself*, old Piotl reasons out saying, "Yes, tomorrow", […]. "At my age, you don't put off days of happiness."[380] This manner, marriage, which is going to bring freedom and happiness to Akim and Piotl respectively, is not to be postponed and it should take place "tomorrow" *itself*.

Yet, when the time comes, what happens is something that was not expected. It is *the unexpected* that actually *takes place*; it is that which was *nowhere* to be seen, which has just emerged *suddenly* making that *nowhere* as *now-here*. The united word *nowhere* just has erupted with a rupture or a crack within the word itself making it appear as two words. Thus, in the word itself, what we see is a *fissure*. Also, this fissure, which is seemingly minute, does not let anything be totalized. It *undoes* the united: it *unties* what is tied. It is with this fissure that death is robbed away from death itself, *secretly*. Therefore, within this unexpected death and dying in that death, it is not possible to say exactly whether one dies *before* the death or *along with* death. In *The Idyll*, Akim is in such a condition; he is neither dead nor *not-dead*. Instead, it seems that he is *living* in his death and *dying* in his living. It is both — living the *death* and dying the *living*, and one *cannot* be separated from the other, because they are kept *in relation* to each other. Akim, at this moment of death, is kept in relation to death *through* his *waiting*. He is *waiting* for death *while* dying. As Blanchot shows, this is an extreme point of waiting. "In this extreme point of waiting where for a long time what is awaited has served only to maintain the waiting, in what may be the last moment, perhaps the infinite one: man still among us."[381]

[380] Ibid, p. 27
[381] Blanchot, 1997a, p. 6

4.2.3 *Thomas the Obscure*

Thomas the Obscure[382] is another text, which depicts the impossibility of defining what death is, also what life is. *Thomas the Obscure* brings two major characters: Thomas and Anne. Like most of his works, the story unfolds as a third person narrative: either it is coming from the side of Thomas or from that of Anne. Majorly, it appears as end-less thoughts that storm into Thomas's mind. However, it presents a situation to us, where two people are posited in relation to death: dying Anne and living Thomas. Anne stands almost at the side of death, while Thomas stands at the side of life. At least, this is how they are positioned in opposition to each other and the linking-line through which they keep their relation to each other is *death*. It is by death that they are challenged. Nevertheless, death, on the other hand, cannot challenge them, because, death has not been experienced by any of them. Therefore, in fact, it is not death which prevails throughout the story, but *fear* — fear of death. Also, it is a fear of death that is coming while living.

However, in the story, Thomas is the *obscure*, and this obscurity is that which needs to be clarified. Anne, who is related to Thomas, is related to him through this obscurity. It strongly binds Anne to him. Nevertheless, Anne does not understand that. For her, she is related to him through their relationship that is based on understanding; it needs to move ahead with understanding, clarity and knowledge. However, despite Anne's desire to know him — *know* him *better*, Thomas continues to be obscure. Accordingly, Thomas's whole being and existence becomes a question for Anne and this question alone is capable enough to keep her related to Thomas. For Anne, Thomas is an inevitable being in her life. She sees him coming; "coming without surprise, this inevitable being in whom she recognized the one she might try in vain to escape, but would meet again every day."[383] Thus, she sees him every day; she meets him every day; "[E]ach day he returned at the same time to the same place. And, it was precisely the same moment, the same garden."[384] Here, the "same moment", "same time" and "same place" is not only the moment, time or the place that can be understood only in terms of clock-time and space *as such* — the garden. Rather, it is

[382] "Thomas the Obscure" is another fiction written by Blanchot. The version that is referred to in the present study appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, 1999, pp. 55 – 128
[383] Ibid, p. 77
[384] Ibid.

also the time and space that is *beyond* time and space; it is a time when there is no time-limit; it is a place where there is no place *per se*. The garden where and within which Anne keeps meeting Thomas is also the garden of her *heart* — heart of Anne. It is in this garden that Anne keeps coming to meet Thomas in his presence, also in his absence. Moreover, even he is physically present, he is still absent. Therefore, Thomas is related to Anne through his *absence*.

It is the absence of Thomas which makes Anne wonder of him, where Thomas is present to her — present as most *familiar* and most *intimate*, also as most *strange* and most *distant*. The question through which she is related to him is: "Really, who could you be?"[385] She addresses him through this question as if she would be given an answer in a way that she does not have to ask this question again: she raises this question in order to know who he – the Thomas – *is*? Who could he *be*? This question, to which Anne was not able to get a satisfactory answer, leaves Anne in some ignorance, due to which Thomas becomes a stranger to her and her knowledge within which she envelopes him even as a stranger, yet familiar. Thus, for Anne, Thomas is a *familiar-stranger*. This strangeness, which brings him closer and distant to her *at the same time*, continues to be with Anne in her sickness, as well as till her death. Until her death, she stays on with this effort of knowing him or recognizing him; she has been searching a word all her life to reach him.[386]

Nevertheless, Thomas cannot help for this obscurity with which he has become "the obscure". The obscurity, which is inseparable from Thomas, is something with which not only Anne but also Thomas himself is haunted. Thomas does not make any attempt to be obscure. He is a mystery to his own self. The only thing that he knows about himself is nothing but a *feeling*, which keeps coming to him in different manners. Yet, he does not know how to be aware of this particular feeling with which he comes to his own being; he does not know *what it is*. Moreover, with this feeling, which is very complex, he feels *disturbed*. The feeling makes him feel tired, disturbed, scared, sad, frustrated, and so on. It is a powerful wave that *attacks* him.

[385] Ibid, p. 82
[386] Ibid, p. 107

The story begins with a setting of a sea. Thomas sits down and looks at the sea.[387] There, "he remained motionless for a time, as if he had come there to follow the movements of the other swimmers and, although the fog prevented him from seeing very far, he stayed there, obstinately, his eyes fixed on the bodies floating with difficulty."[388] Thus, at the beginning of the story, we meet Thomas as a silent observer who is seeing the bodies of the other swimmers floating on the sea-water. They are far from him, yet he could see them. His eyes are fixed on them and he is deeply lost among those floating bodies — the silence. In this fixity on others, what he does not see is that, what rushes *toward* him. He does not see what is coming to him; he is not aware of whether anything at all is coming to him. It is in such a moment, where he has fixed his own eyes on others that the powerful wave reaches him. Blanchot writes, "Then, when a more powerful wave reached him, he went down onto the sloping sand and slipped among the currents, which quickly immersed him." Yet, this powerful wave still seems familiar to him in the sense that he is able to have control over himself, because he is a swimmer. He has been in the "habit of swimming for long periods without tiring."[389] Therefore, though "currents shook him"[390] neither sea nor swimming is unfamiliar to him. The only difference that he has made today is that he has "chosen a new route". However, "[C]urrents shook him, though without giving him the feeling of being in the midst of the waves and of rolling in familiar elements."[391] Few lines later, Thomas is thrown into a sudden realization which makes him realize that "there was, in fact, no water at all made even his effort to swim into a frivolous exercise."[392] Then, he appears as someone who attempts to drive away the thoughts, which had made him feel that he is struggling in his *familiar* swimming in his *familiar* sea; which had made him feel that he is already in the need of some help; which had already made him feel that he is tired. At this moment, he realizes that the sea in which he was struggling to swim is a "virtual sea". Consequently, his swimming, where he felt shaken and rolled in some familiar currents without much familiarity, becomes another *virtual* swimming; the real sea that is "driven by the wind", breaks lose. "The storm tossed it, scattered it into inaccessible regions; the squalls turned the sky upside down and, at the same time,

[387] Ibid, p. 55
[388] Ibid.
[389] Ibid.
[390] Ibid.
[391] Ibid.
[392] Ibid.

there reigned a silence and a calm which gave the impression that everything was already destroyed."[393] At this moment, he is left with nothing other than swimming. He has to swim, because there is no other option left for him to survive in this stormy condition at the sea.

This situation into which Thomas has been thrown is *crucial*, because it is *disastrous*. It is at this disastrous moment that Blanchot attempts to write — to write the sea, to write the storm, to write Thomas who is captive in the currents of the waves. The storm here is an *event* that is powerful enough to toss the sea in a way that the sea breaks and scatters into "inaccessible regions". It is also an event that turns the sky upside down. Thus, event is affecting and influencing the sea and the sky. It has *already changed* both of them. It is no more the sea that it *was*; it is no more the sky that it *was*. With the event of the storm, they have again become further sea and sky. However, the significance of this change is that it could at least be visible. All the more, just like the storm erupted in its suddenness, it has also gone into silence by itself without taking much time. It just emerged from *nowhere* and manifested itself as *now* and *here*. Thus, the storm struck in its own time has already disappeared in a way that there is already a "silence and a calm". The tossing, breaking, scattering, and turning upside down have already taken place in that moment of storm striking. Now what is left is the *effect*. Moreover, this effect, which occurred with the very moment of striking, has not disappeared like the storm leaving some silence and calmness behind. Effect continues to remain. In this sense, this particular event of storm is like death, for death is an event — the event par excellence (this idea of event and death has already been discussed in previous chapter). Then, here, the situation into which Thomas has been thrown is nothing other than the disastrous moment of death, where one continues to struggle without knowing whether he would succeed. In this context, there can be two kinds of success. One becomes successful in his struggle to live and he saves his life; that way he continues to live. The other success is that where one struggles to die in order to be dead and discontinues living then on (if one assumes that death as the End of life). Nevertheless, here what matters is the struggle that is *to be* on this side or on that side of life, which is death. In any case, it is a struggle to be *either*/*or*, and one has to give one's self to either of them — life or death. In giving one's own self to either of them, one saves the other, not the self.

[393] Ibid.

In this struggle, if one struggles to live, what one ends up saving is death. Accordingly, one saves death and choses to live. While living, he takes care of his saving that is kept for future. But, by saving death in this struggle to live, has one been able to save something that of his own? Can death be taken as one's own saving? Is it not already a saving that has come as complementary to life? If death has already been coming with us as a permanent deposit even without demanding our effort to take care of it in order to save it further, are we going to do anything new or better? Is it not an attempt to repeat what was already there for us, with us; in doing so, do we not continue to repeat the same and stagnate ourselves there?

Hence, by making an attempt to save death through struggling to live, what one actually ends up doing is saving death, and suffers from it, which constantly arouses fear in us. On the other hand, it is not possible to be done away with this death which wraps us in fear, for death, as Blanchot says, is a relation. This relation, which is undeniable and inescapable, is scary so long as we keep ourselves away from it. We are scared of this relation since it involves a risk — risk of facing the *unknown*, through which one puts one's own self in *danger*. Nevertheless, as Blanchot argues in his *The Step Not Beyond*, is this danger anyway not a part of this life? Are we not destined to die — if not today, if not now, some other day that is to come from future? Therefore, there is no point of making an attempt to save death by choosing to live; instead, what one should attempt to do is to save life which is far more precious. It is precious, because it is life that is full of energy and enthusiasm; it is precious, because it can give birth to so many other lives and can make one continue to live through many others into infinity. Then, one should die in order to live. Therefore, it is necessary to enter into this relation from which we have kept ourselves away out of fear. Blanchot appeals, "Let us enter into this relation."[394] In this suggestion to die, he suggests to live; in suggesting to die, he appeals for life; he yearns for life; he yearns for living; he yearns for infinity — infinity of life and freedom, due to which this suggestion itself becomes a suggestion for freedom. However, now, one has to respond to this suggestion by Blanchot. He suggests, invites, appeals; also, in its own feeble voice through which he murmurs this suggestion, appeal, and invitation, he makes a demand that cannot be ignored. One has to respond immediately. There is no

[394] Blanchot, 1992, p. 1

time left to think. Just like Piotl and Akim in *The Idyll* suggest, it cannot be postponed — the marriage, the relation.

Thomas hears this murmur in his struggle to live. The more he gives his strength to live or survive in the storm, more the sound of murmur becomes audible. Though it is murmur, it does not sound like murmur. It is a noisy and loud murmur. He has to respond, and there is no escape for him now. He really has to swim. If he does not swim or if he gives up on swimming amidst the water, he would have to "drown himself bitterly in himself."[395] Therefore, he swims. It is through this swimming, which has *suddenly* become difficult for him, that Thomas enters into this relation — relation with death, which is also the relation with the other.

Nonetheless, this swimming has no aim. He swims aimlessly and endlessly. Still, he cannot give up, since giving up is going to be the giving up for his own self, and that is bitter for him. If he drowns in himself, he will be enclosed along with the drowning; he will be closed at the very bottom since he would be going "under". Therefore, he has to give himself away, which is a "new possibility" that he suddenly discovers in this crucial moment of drowning in his own self. "He swam, a monster without fins. Under the giant microscope, he turned himself into an enterprising mass of cilia and vibrations."[396]

This event that unfolds in the first chapter in *Thomas the Obscure* is an event which happens in Thomas's mind, and not out there where the sea, its waves, and the swimmers who are swimming in it could be seen. It is an event that *invades* Thomas — his mind. This storm is the one that occurs in his thought and in his own being. Moreover, that storm, which is his own thought, is turning him upside down, tossing his own being and breaking him into pieces in a way that he cannot reach to find his own self any further. Therefore, here, in the story, storm and the one who undergoes through this storm, is none other than Thomas's own self. It is Thomas and his own self who are in a struggle that is caused by some *sudden eruption* of a thought that has reached and *attacked* him *unexpectedly*. Thus, Thomas, being invaded by some thought that came to him from *outside* — outside, because he was not aware of its existence or its arrival — is no more *identical* to his own self. He is still Thomas, but

[395] Blanchot, 1999, p. 56
[396] Ibid.

not the *same* Thomas. He is *another* Thomas. In that sense, Thomas has become some *other* — some stranger, stranger to his own self, yet another self that is still Thomas. Then, he is in a *relation with* the otherness, yet he is not aware of that otherness. It is a *mystery* to himself, due to which Thomas himself cannot find an answer to the question that Anne has been posing to him: "Really, who could you be?"; "But, what are you?"[397] The answer to this question is apparently "Thomas", because he is Thomas; yet, Thomas — the *obscure*.

It is in this obscurity that Thomas continues to live. He meets Anne; he feels sad for her; also, he feels sad for himself having been made to answer this question posed by Anne with the curiosity and interest of knowing that *who* or *what* he *is*. However, it is difficult for Thomas to answer this question of *who* or *what*. Still, out of mixed feeling of anger, cruelty, politeness, silence and wordlessness, Thomas attempts to answer or to give an explanation: "what I am …."[398]

"Be quiet." Anne stops his attempt of explaining. Thomas, who is back to his silence, thinks where he feels "(she might complain, she might cry miserably because he kept her twenty fathoms below the truth in brilliant and empty words; but it never came to her head, in spite of her sullen effort to speak herself and of him in the same words, there might be, in what she called the character of Thomas, any duplicity)."[399] But, he knows, in his own silence, that he had not deceived her, "and yet she was deceived by him. Treachery revolved about them, so much the more terrible because it was she who was betraying him, and she was deceiving herself"[400] while betraying him in her knowledge.

However, Thomas continues to be a *victim*, always *attacked* by something *unknown* to his own self. In *each* attack, what he loses is his *own* self. Nonetheless, he continues to be Thomas. The first attack by which he is hit is the one that happens at the beginning of the story, where he is dragged into the sea by the wave that rushes to him. It is with that attack that *something happens* to him in a way that he feels some tiredness and foreignness with the things that he earlier used to feel familiar with. "He

[397] Ibid, p. 82
[398] Ibid, p. 83
[399] Ibid.
[400] Ibid, p. 83 – 84

confused himself with the sea."[401] Moreover, he is being pulled down by the currents of the waves in a manner that he feels that he would drown. If he does not struggle to go *against* this current, he would be gone *with the* current, and it would make everything come to a halt — the End. Therefore, he attempts to swim — swim towards the opposite direction from which he is pulled away.

Thus, he is swimming *against* the flow — flow of death. Death is that in which he is drowning; its flow is strong, and it is impossible to resist — resist the death. Nevertheless, through swimming continuously against the force, Thomas attempts to make what is impossible, possible. It is as if he is attempting to walk-back to the shore from which he has been washed away. His struggle here is like a struggle that one would make when one has gone to some *extremes* of life — death. Therefore, this effort is something that he made on the *verge* — verge of life and death, *almost* dead, *but* saved somewhere by some *sudden* possibility that emerged at the extremity of impossibility. Therefore, it is in this new possibility, where he begins *once again*. Moreover, this beginning begins with *transformation*. *Amidst* the storm, which is more virtual in terms of its *visibility*, but actually real in terms of its *effect*, he as a *survivor* of that storm, has already been transformed as the one, who *went through* the storm and *came out through* it. At last, he has "turned himself into an enterprising mass of cilia and vibrations." Thomas comes through a transformation in a way that *now* he is *different*, though he is not aware of *what* that difference *is*. He is tempted to find a place to set his feet, which have been swimming.

> 'The temptation took on an entirely bizarre character when he sought to slip from the drop of water into a region which was vague and yet infinitely precise, a sort of holy place, so perfectly suited to him that it was enough for him to be there, to be; it was like an imaginary hollow which he entered because, before he was there, his imprint was there already. And, so he made a last effort to fit completely inside. It was easy; he encountered no obstacles; he rejoined himself; he blended with himself, entering into this place which no one else could penetrate.'[402]

[401] Ibid, p. 56
[402] Ibid.

In the above quoted lines, Blanchot presents how Thomas, without his knowledge, steps out *from* the world that he was *already* living in; also how thoughts *outside* the conscious subject invade him in a way that he has already been tossed, shaken, and scattered by these thoughts which *stormed* into him like a wave that rushes over him. He is pulled *away* from his own self; he is pulled toward *outside* — outside the self. He opens up and gives himself away to the other *in* his death, *through* his death, *across* his death, and *beyond* his death, also *despite* his death. Hence, Thomas is dead in that death; yet, the significance in this particular giving is that he has given himself away not for his own self, which would have been "bitter" for him, instead he has given himself away to *an-other* – other. Therefore, it also suggests that there has been something with Thomas *despite* his death, and that is what he seems to be giving away *across* and *beyond* his death. In that sense, there is still something or someone of Thomas that *remains* in the other, due to which other is also *yet another* Thomas. Nonetheless, as discussed above, this Thomas is not identical to the same. It is in this puzzle that both Thomas and Anne continue to revolve around. She feels *frustrated* by him due to his silence, and he feels *betrayed* by her due to her question which asks *who* he *is*.

Blanchot brings forth this silent, yet noisy tension that keeps *dying* Anne and *living* Thomas or *living* Anne and *dying* Thomas run into each other to meet each other with a recognition. Anne, seeing her futile effort to know him, attempts to give up on him; if not on him, at least she gives up on thinking about him. She is aware of the fact that Thomas is far away from her even though he is within her as a thought — as a thought, which she wants to give up in a way that he is no more with her or as a thought which she wants to keep in a way that he is with her. *Either* way, she continues to remain with him. As the story continues what we see is that how Anne continues to live with him. However, due to this distance and strangeness of Thomas, Anne is in a miserable condition. In her desire to know him and to be close to him or to tell him who he *is* and to be away from him, Anne alone has to make an attempt to understand him, define him, and recognize him. Her desire can be fulfilled *only* when she succeeds in this act of *fixing* him to some meaning, which would give some clarity to her own self. She desires it just because of her relationship with him. For her, in this relationship, there is something abnormal: "what was abnormal was that nothing could be discovered about his life and that in every circumstance he remained

anonymous and without a history."[403] Still, she has to make her attempt to recognize him, and that recognition alone would confirm to her that how close he has been to her and how correct her understanding is about him. Consequently, she begins to tell him *who* he *is* — who he is *according* to her. "What you are …" she said … And as she spoke these words, she seemed to dance around him and, fleeing him at the same time, to push him into an imaginary wolf-trap. "What you are…"[404]

In this attempt of Anne, what she finds is a *failure*: failure in everything - failure in her knowledge, understanding, and relationship. Yet, it is not the worse among worse. The *worse* failure with which she feels so helpless is the one that happens in her *language* when she begins to speak. She fails to speak; she cannot speak any further. Blanchot writes this *failure* — failure in language with which one had constructed everything. Therefore, to fail in language is also to fail in everything. Hence, Anne fails to speak: instead, she "babbles". In this babbling, she cries out: "No, she said, "it's not that. What you really are …"[405] She fails in her every attempt. Moreover, she looks as if she is passing "from life to death, and worse from death to life, in a tormented dream."[406] She *can* be tormented because she has been Anne with her *awareness*. She is *to lose*, but not yet. What is there to lose is that which is capable of tormenting her, and that thing which she is yet to lose is either *Thomas* or the person *in* Anne, through whom Anne is related to Thomas. Here, it is important to look into the idea of "crude" being that Blanchot has discussed in his *Space of Literature*. The crudeness as the pureness of being is that which is to be felt by Anne. So, Blanchot necessitates her entering into the intimacy of pure things. But, to enter pure things means to undergo the pain, which is more painful than what she feels in relation to Thomas. It is a rupture that is going to separate Anne from Anne.

While going through Blanchot through this story, it can be seen that Blanchot gives a great deal of himself to Thomas. He expresses Thomas in his silence, and he is constantly under attacks in a way that he keeps experiencing this rupture many times. He continues to die, also continues to resurrect in another form. Death *moves through* Thomas, and Thomas is also *moved by* it. Yet, they never come to be there in their full presence in a way that Thomas is present in his death or death is present in him. They

[403] Ibid, p. 86
[404] Ibid, p. 87
[405] Ibid, p. 88
[406] Ibid, p. 89

cross each other *while* crossing their paths, but, never come to a junction that would keep them in a *face-to-face* position as if it is an encounter, in which one is present to the other in his fullness in the sense that one is able *to see* the other. In that sense, death is like a *passage* through which Thomas is moving; or, it can be the other way too — Thomas is a passage, through which death continues to pass just like a wind, "a storm", "a squall" or a tempest. It is difficult to say in which direction this movement happens and from whom to whom it happens. The only thing that can be said regarding this movement is that there is an *outside* to which one is exposed. In that sense, not only Thomas but also death is exposed to outside — further outside *beyond* death. Therefore, death is also *in-finite* in a way that there is a possibility of series of death, which produces series of births, which need to be understood in terms of *becoming*; *becoming-through-death-through-becoming*, a relationship that is made about life and death. That is what Blanchot depicts through Thomas's series of becoming especially in the middle of the second night, where Thomas becomes "a cat", "a dull-eyed creature", an "over-cat", a "little cat" and so on.[407] In this manner, Thomas is torn apart from his own self while he is delivered as being who is *in relation* with something or someone. It is the kind of he/it relation that is explained by Blanchot in his *The Step Not Beyond*[408]. It is precisely because of this he/it relationship that one is able to pass *through* or escape even death, through which one paralyzes the *sovereign* power of impossibility. Hence, what is more important here is neither life nor death, but the *relationship* between life and death, which *confuses* the direction of movement — whether the movement is from life to death or death to life.

Here the idea of *movement* is of importance. According to a general understanding regarding death, it is a movement from life to death, and death is the destination of that movement. This idea of moving towards death is hence *teleological*. However, Blanchot's idea of death in terms of movement is contrary to the above noted teleological notion. For him, death is not *telos*. Moreover, it is not a *one-way* movement from *this* side to *that* side; rather, it is toward both the sides, and Blanchot draws this idea in relation to life and death, where he explains that it is possible to die or to be *already* dead while continue to be alive; also, it is possible for one to be alive despite one's own death. In other words, one can be physically present

[407] Ibid, pp. 71 – 75
[408] Blanchot, 1992, pp. 3 – 5

when one is already absent, and one can always be present and continue to be alive when one has already been taken away by death. That is what Blanchot presents to us through *Thomas the Obscure*; through the relationship that Thomas is kept in with Anne; through the scene where Anne's dead body is surrounded by the onlookers including Thomas and Thomas's *live* body that is standing near Anne's *dead* body. It is a scene – the last scene – where Anne and Thomas are brought into each other's gaze. However, there is a difference in this gaze: one is the gaze of the dead, while the other is the gaze of the living.

Blanchot *contradicts* the difference between the dead and the living. In the narration, it is Anne who has passed away and Thomas is the one who continues to be alive. But, within this narration, there seems to be another narration, and that is the narration of Thomas. In this narration within the narration, it is Thomas who is continuously looking at Anne. *He* is the one who is looking — looking at the one who is already dead. It is Thomas who thinks, and he thinks about Anne. Yet, suddenly, there is again a slight slip — slip of mind or thought, also of language. At once, again, there is a puzzle, and this puzzle is: whether it is Thomas who is actually thinking about Anne over her death; or is it Anne who is thinking about Anne *through* Thomas; also whether it is Thomas who thinks about Thomas *through* Anne. If Thomas thinks of him through Anne, can that be Thomas any longer? Is that Thomas or is that Thomas *through* Anne? Is it Anne or is it Anne *through* Thomas? Is that Thomas *through* Thomas *in relation to* Anne or is that Anne *through* Anne *in relation to* Thomas? If so, how are we going to differentiate who *is* who? Are we able to think of Thomas *as* Thomas or Anne *as* Anne, who have finally become themselves by cutting off their relation from each other? Or, are we to think about them in relation to each other especially at this point of death, at this moment of death, where one is seemingly substracted from the other or one is separated from another? Is it not the moment where they actually appear to be *together* and *closer* to each other by presenting to each other in a way that one is *with* the other *through* a relation which is going to last as a *fragment*? Fragment of Anne and fragment of Thomas have passed onto each other at this moment of death. They are no more identical as Anne or as Thomas. To think of Thomas is to think of Anne and to think of Anne is to think of Thomas. The thought continues to hold the other in the self in a way that the other moves *through* the self, through which self is moved *by* the other. Hence, to decide

who is *dead* and who is *alive* is to confuse one's own knowledge about death, because, in this relation that has become stronger and present as never before at this moment of death — Anne's death, which is also Thomas's death — Thomas is no more *Thomas,* but *Anne-Thomas*; Anne is no more *Anne*, but *Thomas-Anne*. They have passed onto each other while crossing life or while crossing death at this moment where life and death shines so strongly; where knowledge about life and death shines so strongly. Why do life and death shine *here*? Why does the knowledge erupt here significantly?

Throughout the story, what we see is Anne's desperateness to know or to recognize Thomas, also the strangeness with which Thomas continues to live. They both appear to each other in and through that which has made them unbearable to each other, and that unbearability is marked by the absence of recognition. But, at the moment of death, they seem to have suddenly found what they had been searching for all these times. For the first time in all these times, Anne sees with her opened eyes that "there is Thomas." Also, she hears Thomas; "in fact, she knew now what she had to say to Thomas, she knew exactly the words she had searched for all her life in order to reach him."[409] But, what is the point of this knowledge that she found at this *last* moment where everything has finally *become insignificant*? Anne's abortive effort that she generously made with all her energy *to know* Thomas had alone made her life so significant to herself rather than to anybody else. Yet, it is within that effort that she found herself at the biggest failure of her life. It is this man – Thomas – who had become so *significant* to her that she had felt the *insignificance* of her life to herself. Her whole life is wasted on this futile effort of knowing him. But, at this moment where she is moving to her very last moment, *suddenly* all those moments, which had gone *in vain*, seem to have got totalized in a way that she had found "exactly the words she had searched for all her life in order to reach him." Then, this last moment, which was to continue with familiar *insignificance* and *ignorance,* has suddenly become very significant in a way that the significance of her whole being, her existence, her life *also* her death has become very significant *now* and *here* — at the moment of death. This moment is significant, because it is the moment of Anne's death. Moreover, it is significant to those who are going to live witnessing Anne's death, for death cannot be significant to the one who is dying as he or she is

[409] Ibid, p. 107

accompanied by it. Accordingly, there is a company that is given to her in her death where she is *not* going to be *alone*. She is going somewhere *out of* here, yet *not* alone. She has a companion and this company is going to travel with her.

So, it has to *come to take* her *to go*. To take her away, this company *has to* come. It has to come near her in a way that she needs to feel the presence of the company. At this moment, she feels the presence of the company of this *strange* death. It is a new relationship that is built at this *border-crossing* of life, also the *border-crossing* of death. She was alone in her life *without* a company. At death, she is getting a company. She has to give herself away to this company. She has to *respond*. What is significant here is not what she knew, but what she did not know about these last moments. Thus, at death, what is significant for her is some other life, which is coming to her from *outside* the life that she had lived. Moreover, that life, which comes *as* death and *through* death, is passing through her, while giving company to her to cross the border — border of life, also of death. Then, she is beyond death *while* going through death. Her death will be robbed from her in a way that she would *pass* death without knowing that she is passing through death. In any case, she is passing through death while death is passing through. It is like the sleep that *comes* to us when we *go* to sleep — coming of sleep while going to sleep. Yet, we do not know when these two meet and enclose each other. However, that is how we go to sleep — a pact that is secretly kept between us and the sleep.[410] So, "Let us sleep"[411], Anne says silently or Anne thinks loudly. May be it is not Anne who says or thinks so; rather, it is Blanchot, who thinks of death in terms of going to sleep — death as sleep and sleep as death.

The knowledge that she managed by the time she had reached this last moment is, then, no more significant. It *was* significant to her *once*, and that *once* was probably the whole time that she lived thinking about Thomas. But, it has already begun to become a past and the significant recognition that could not serve the purpose when it was needed, which has, thus, come to her at a moment where everything and everyone has become insignificant. Therefore, that knowledge, which comes at this last moment, is of no importance. So, "she remained silent; she thought; what good is it – and this word was also the word she was seeking – Thomas is

[410] Blanchot, 1982, p. 264
[411] Blanchot, 1992, p. 107

insignificant."[412] Her look is an "empty look", and that is the look of the one who is *dying*. But, is it actually the look of the dying? Who sees her look as an "empty look"? It is an empty look "for humans". Also, it is an empty look for those humans who are looking at her. For Anne, none of these looks matters. All these gestures, signs, and interpretations are coming from those who are standing around her at the time of her death. Everyone thinks that she is dying; they see her eyes, smiles, and face, which communicate some knowledge that they had heard about death. However, what is that death that they all are aware of or they all have heard of? It is the death that occurs according to the law, which is to say that one is bound to die at the end of life. Hence, it is the end of life now they are observing in relation to Anne's dying moment where her smile, face, look in the eye, and so on become the messenger, symbol, gesture and sign of her death. They all confirm that she is dying; she is going to die. Thus, they read death through her; according to their knowledge, she is dying now.

> 'She had her face turned toward them as if she wished to see them up to the very last moment. Everything that had to be done, she did it. Like every dying person, she went away observing the rituals, pardoning her enemies, loving her friends, without admitting the secret which no one admits: that all this was already insignificant.'[413]

Blanchot, who is uncertain about the *given* definitions, truths, and meanings, is confused with what the rest of the world considers as clarity, simple, and pure. He is uncertain about *the certain*; indefinite about *the definite*. He is confused where everything appears to be clear, simple, and easy; what appears as simple is complex for him. It is that confusion and complexity which makes him travel back and forth in this relation between life and death. He is confused and in that confusion, he finds a truth which is not confusing any more. Moreover, that truth is confusion itself. It is a sort of madness — "madness of the day"[414]. But, that madness or the confusion does not attempt to pretend anything other than what it is. Since there is no pretention, that confusion or the madness is the clarity within which one realizes the undeniable truth of life, which is death. That undeniable death is the only truth that Blanchot realizes

[412] Ibid.
[413] Ibid.
[414] "Madness of the Day" is also a title of one of short fictions that Blanchot has written. The version that is referred in the present study appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, 1999. pp. 191 – 199

as life and living. He does not distance death from life; he does not aim at it as a destination. He does not see death as *opposite* to life. Instead, he sees death *in* life; also death *in* living. He asserts that it is death that one continues to live while living. Someone had confusedly called it life.[415] This inevitable death that continues to live so long as one is going to live is that which is presented to Thomas. For Anne, death, at the moment of her death, is insignificant, because death will cease to be death any more. She will not die any longer because she dies the death that is *proper*. In dying that death-proper, she will annihilate the *properness* of death or death *as such*.

> 'The doctor bent over her and thought that she was dying according to the laws of death, not perceiving that she has already reached that instant when, in her, the laws were dying. She made an imperceptible motion; no one understood that she was floundering in the instant when death, destroying everything, might also destroy the possibility of annihilation. Alone, she saw the moment of miracle coming and she received no help. Oh, stupidity of those who are torn by grief!'[416]

Then, is Anne not finally away from death? She ends up dying. Hence, Anne is not dead. But, it is madness to say that Anne is *not* dead. It is confusion, also confusing the truth that is visible, if what is visible is to be taken as truth. But, that is what Blanchot *murmurs* through Thomas that Anne is not dead. She continues to live with Thomas. She is ever more present in him at her death. How to unravel this confusion?

Is death a miracle? If death is a miracle, what is life? Is it something stupid? Is it something dying *without* death?

Certainly, life is stupid and it is dying *without* death. That is the life for Thomas who is left alone to-live-to-die. He is dying *without* death. He has no company in his dying at the moment when Anne is accompanied by her death. It is Anne who has given herself in search of some company. She would not be alone anymore. But Thomas has been deserted by her finally. He is left with no company. There is "no one left in the world to name Anne" any more. She seems to have taken everything with her while leaving him. Yet, taking everything while leaving, Anne

[415] Blanchot, 1992, p. 2
[416] Blanchot, 1999, p. 106

has *not* taken anything with her. Therefore, everything is here. Everything about Anne and everyone, who could be named as Anne, is just *here* in the room. It is the room where she is *nowhere* to be found — she is *dead*. But, it is in this room that she is just *everywhere*. It is only Anne who is there in the room — in the room where she lived once; also in the room that is now Thomas's heart. "As her death became more real, she grew, she became larger, she hollowed out a deep tomb in her couch. Obliterated as she was, she drew every glance toward her. […] the dead double in weight, that they are the largest, the most powerful of all beings."[417] It is in Anne's death that she has actually begun to live drawing attention only toward her. Now it is Anne, yet dead-Anne, appearing in Thomas, and he is unable to die. In this inability to die, what is saddening is having to continue with life. It is saddening, also maddening. It is a sadness which throws one into madness — madness of life, just like the *madness of the day*.

Blanchot-Thomas or Thomas-Blanchot writes:

> 'It was truly night. I was surrounded by stars. The totality of things wrapped about me and I prepared myself for the agony with the exalted consciousness that I was unable to die. […] I revealed to them, in me, the strangeness of their condition and the shame of an endless existence. Of course I could die, but death shone forth perfidiously for me as death of death, so that, becoming the eternal man taking the place of the moribund, this man without crime, without any reason for dying who is every man who dies, I would die, a dead person so alien to death that I would spend my supreme moment in a time when it was already impossible to die and yet I would live all the hours of my life in the hour in which I could no longer live them. Who more than I was deprived of the last moment full of hope, so totally deprived of the last consolation which memory offers to those who despair, to those who have forgotten happiness and toss themselves from the pinnacle of life in order to recall its joys? And yet I was really a dead person, I was even the only possible dead person, I was the only man who did not give the impression that he died by chance.'[418]

[417] Ibid, p. 110
[418] Ibid, p. 111

Hence, he is going to draw death from life. It is death that he is going to live in the sense that he exists only to present death. Therefore, death is no more a metaphor to him. He is death: he is the one who is really dead. It is death that is presented to him through his life. Then, what is he deprived of here? Is it life or is it death? Blanchot takes us to a thought through his thought to think of this question, and he thinks through writing. He questions through writing, and he writes through questioning. Also, more specifically, he writes the question, because;

> 'To write as a question of writing, question that bears the writing that bears the question, no longer allows you this relation to being […] that you received one day from the past of the world, domain you had been called upon to govern in order to strengthen your "Self", although this was as if fissured, since the day when the sky opened upon its void.'[419]

So, he writes the question: the question of life, which is the question of death. But, which death is that; whose death is that; where does it happen; when does it happen and how does it happen; the worse among the questions is that why does it happen?

Blanchot does not bring any answer to any of these questions which revolve around the major question of life, which is death. He does not answer this question not because he *intends* to not to, rather, because he *cannot* find an answer. This question that he writes is written just to *express* his *inability* to find an answer. It is through writing that he manages to unravel this mystery into a question. Moreover, putting it in a form of a question is yet another difficulty. Blanchot is very poor in forming this question in a proper form so that, that question itself appears as a big question which terrifies everyone, which attracts everyone's attention to think of this question — question that is kept to be discussed with great seriousness and attention. He does not ask any question *as such* in relation to death. He does not seem to write the traditional, also grammatical question: "what is death?" or "what is being?". He does not seem to be courageous to raise this question unlike Heidegger who begins his project in *Being and Time* with this question of "what is being?" Heidegger writes that detailed account that is named as *Being and Time* as an answer to the same question. He goes on explaining how death happens, where it happens, how to make it happen

[419] Blanchot, 1992, p. 2

and so on. So doing, he attempts to give a precise answer to his question of *being*. Therefore, Heidegger is straightforward, brave, courageous, and enthusiastic to raise the question about being, about life and death. He is not afraid of death. He wants to walk towards death; he is enthusiastic about it; also he is capable of death. So, for Heidegger, death is a possibility.

But, Blanchot, unlike Heidegger, is *not* straightforward, brave or enthusiastic about death, also about life. He is not capable of explaining anything about anything — be it death, life, or being. In case he attempts to explain it just the way he does in his *Death Sentence*, it is going to be "awful" because "it could actually be told in ten words."[420] How can one bring such a short answer for a bigger question like "what is being?" or "what is death?" Therefore, Blanchot, in his weakness to form a proper question or to present a precise answer with a detailed account, attempts to write *about — about* life, *about* death and *about* life *and* death. His thought, his writing, his question and his life thinks, asks and writes: "And what about death?"[421] Hence, what he writes is neither a question nor an answer. He *just* writes, yet making a *relation*. Moreover, that is a relation marked in and through this conjunction "And". His question is then *about* a *relation* through which relation itself appears as a question, also an answer to the same question. Therefore, he cannot help of writing this line, which carries traces of a question, a thought, a statement, an expression, and a relation, therein also an answer. Then, he writes both question and answer, in which case every answer becomes a question and every question becomes an answer. Not only every answer becomes a question and vice versa, but also, more importantly, every relation becomes a question and an answer.

For Blanchot, there is no *opposition* here. It is because he does not know whether there can be any opposition *as such*: question/answer, life/death, alive/dead and so on. It is so, because nothing appears to him in this oppositional manner in a way that he finds him on one side at one time. Each moment is a moment of *duality*; also contradiction. Therefore, each moment is at least not *one* moment. He feels it is *more than* one moment. That is why he is incapable of saying anything in the point of *exactness*. So, he writes. Yet, there is no clarity in what he writes. Clarity is veiled

[420] This line is quoted from "Death Sentence" written by Blanchot. The version that is referred to in the present study appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, 1999, p. 131
[421] Blanchot, 1999, p. 191

with some confusion. Then, he writes *confusedly*. In that confused writing (thinking), he writes confusion. But, this confusion, which is dark and darkening the very possibility for clarity, is actually *enlightening*. It seems that Blanchot finds some clarity in darkness *as if* darkness is light. It seems that he is able to find some clarity not in light, but in dark. So, he needs darkness to find — to find him in a way that he is no more what he *was*. He draws some light from darkness just the way he draws life from death. There he sees Thomas again, who is living-dead and dead-living.

Thomas is thus a testimony for a *strange* relation, which inhabits both life and death at the same time. He inhabits this relation through his relationship with Anne, who is already dead. Anne is dead, and Thomas is alive. He saw her dying and how she got along with death. While seeing Anne dying, there was something that he *did not see* or *could not* see and that is *his* death. He could not witness *how* he was dying. He was ignorant about his own death, which had begun probably before Anne's actual death. At least, he could see some signs of death from Anne. In that sense, he was somewhere *prepared* to hear and see this proper death of Anne. It is that preparedness which could make him wait to see how Anne bids farewell to others including him at her last moment. He saw the way he was losing Anne. However, he did not see how he was losing his own self without knowing. It is the ignorance, and that ignorance has taken a leap to take him away from himself before he prepares himself to face it – the *death*. Now he is "like a beast terrified by its own leap."[422]

In this leap, it is Thomas's death which is highlighted more than Anne's. Anne's death is not a leap. She was *going* to die. However, Thomas's death is *just like* Thomas – the *obscure*. His death is obscure, because he is alive. He is there in the room. "He did not leave the room, and he seemed deeply afflicted."[423] Thomas is there, and he can be *seen* by others. His presence is marked by his physical presence. So, that is enough for him to be there, and he *seems* deeply afflicted. He is alive. He is not dead.

He is not dead — neither to him nor to others. They all are there to witness Anne's death. Yet, this death which has taken away Anne from Thomas is actually more *brutal* than it appears to be. This brutality is not because it took Anne away

[422] Ibid, p. 119
[423] Ibid, p. 109

from him. Blanchot finds this brutality in its extremity since it has been so brutal to Thomas, by snatching death away from him while leaving him dead in life or while leaving him to die every moment and every day without that *proper* death. So, Thomas is *dying*, yet *not dead*. He is *deprived* of death but destined to live — live with death. Then, what he can do now on is to draw death from his existence. It is miserable than death, and this miserableness is deep within him. He cannot think of it. Instead, it is something that he feels strongly. Yes, he feels it – Blanchot writes:

> 'All my being seem to mingle with death. As naturally as men believe they are alive, accepting as an inevitable impulse their breathing, the circulation of their blood, so I ceased living. I drew my death from my very existence, and not from the absence of existence. I presented a dead person who did not confine himself to the appearance of a diminished being, and this dead person, filled with passions but insensitive, calling for his thought upon an absence of thought and yet carefully separating out whatever there might be in it of void, of negation of life, in order not to make of his death a metaphor, an even weaker image of a normal death, brought to its highest point the paradox and the impossibility of death."[424]

Turning upside down the idea that suggests death as that which is unavoidable, paradoxically, Blanchot, through Thomas, depicts life as that which is inevitable. He brings forth this necessary condition of having to live despite the desire for death. Hence, in this situation of Thomas, life is the punishment that is given to him when he is unaware of what crime he has committed to be punished so brutally. When one has no desire to live, when one has no desire for life, when one has no hope to wait at this departure of the beloved, when one is thus shattered, when one aspires and desires only death, since death is that which cannot be taken away from anyone, and thus death becomes the final hope that one can look up to, one is *condemned* to live. This is in fact what makes destiny "inexplicable". Hence, that is *Death Sentence* which is given to Thomas. Death sentence, for Blanchot-Thomas, is thus to have the "appearance of any living person" when one is "real only under the name of death."[425]

[424] Ibid, p. 111
[425] Ibid, p. 112

4.2.4 *Death Sentence*

However, the problem here is that how to explain this death to which one is *sentenced*. It is difficult to explain, because it is not the usual way of doing things – giving death sentence. One is *sentenced* to death only when one is found guilty due to a crime that is committed by him. This is the usual and familiar way of giving death sentence. But, here, the kind of death sentence that Blanchot presents is completely different one. He brings forth death as a sentence that is given to someone, whose crime cannot be found or named; or probably to someone who has not done any crime *per se* to be sentenced to death. On the other hand, this *punishment*, which is death sentence, is not that which terminates one's life; instead, it is that which is given to *live* – to live *death*. Accordingly, Blanchot's death sentence is punishment through which one is *condemned* to *live* despite one's will and desire to die. Moreover, Blanchot finds this condemnation as the *worse* among all the punishments. However, how to explain this worse suffering! It is inexplicable, yet something that cannot be kept away without making an attempt to explain at least a bit – a bit of this brutality. Nonetheless, he understands that there is no point of making this futile attempt to understand or to explain this torture of death that is confusedly called or known as life or living by many others in everyday life.

The death sentence, which is also the final, possible, and severe punishment that can be given to any culprit, suddenly appears in Blanchot as that which can be given as the best, less-severe, and more kind-sort of punishment for it *terminates* one's life through granting *proper* death. In that sense, this law, which imposes death sentence and grants it in cases of proven guilty, seems to be *good* and *caring*, because the guilty would soon be *redeemed* from his so called proven-sin or crime. Therefore, law is not that harsh though it appears to be so. What is harsher is when one is forced to live *to die* every day and go through many *deaths*, having been deprived of that death which is common to everyone. One is deprived of something that belongs to everyone by birth — death as one's right by birth. It cannot be taken away by anyone since everyone is bound to die someday. However, there is no such law that says or demands everyone should live because everyone is bound to live. No one talks about life as a law or certainty. It is the death that is law and certainty. Moreover, everyone is afraid of that law and certainty, as it annihilates each and every space for any law and certainty. Yet, Blanchot does not seem to be afraid of this law – law of death.

Also, he does not seem to be concerned about that death of which everyone is certain. Instead, he is much concerned about life or existence within which one undergoes many *deaths*, within which one suffers *without* death — just the way Thomas suffers. This death which comes as *final* death is anyway known as death; but, what about those invisible yet gravely felt deaths that one really experiences when one *has to* live; when one is *compelled* to live; when the living becomes imperative. Blanchot wonders that how to name it — name it otherwise or name it stepping out from the way it is *already* named. There are two names or words within which he is confused: one is *Life*, the other is *Death*. However, through his writings, he keeps going back and forth between these two terms, two names, or two faces, and he appears as if he is trying to recognize *what* face and *whose* face it *is* or what name and which face that would respond to whenever it is called out. Involving this task of attempting to come out of this confusion, Blanchot has to make another attempt of writing, since it is the way through which he realizes that at least he is trying to do something regarding this problem, yet doing actually nothing. Therefore, he *writes* this sentence to which he is condemned: he is condemned by his own self to find out with what he is punished — punished with life *to die* or punished with death *to live*. So, he begins to write *Death Sentence*[426]. He is condemned to *write*.

Declaring his failure in explaining, speaking, or understanding death or life, Blanchot *inscribes* life in death and death in life in and through *writing* – writing death sentence. For him, it is a difficulty with great uneasiness. Yet, he cannot help of this feeling – feeling of the need to write. This necessity of writing is the demand to which he has to *respond*; he is compelled to respond. He is not able to turn away this demand. Though he does not want to write, he *cannot* stop this force rising within him against his own will. Therefore, until he writes, he will not be at some rest or peace. Hence, writing is a demand, command, and a necessity, and he cannot escape it. What he wants to write now is something, which he had wanted to write "nine years" before, and for nine years, he has been trying to write — write "these things" that happened. Writing this failure while writing *about* the failure, Blanchot writes, "I have already tried to put them into writing many times. If I have written books, it has been in the hope that they would put an end to it all."[427] If he wants to write, if there is

[426] Ibid, pp. 131 – 187
[427] Ibid, p. 131

a hope of putting an end to it and if he is also not frightened of the truth that he is going to reveal, what does prevent him from doing this? Why has he not been able to write the same for all these years? He locates this failure in language. It is *language* which denies him; it is language which distances him in what he wants to write or say; it is language which paralyses his efforts and betrays him, because, he says, "until now, words have been frailer and more cunning than I would have liked."[428] The *dissatisfaction* with language in which he has to make an effort to write "these things" has already compelled him to destroy the manuscript that he managed to write during the last week of July or the first weeks of August in 1940. Now, even with this dissatisfaction and distrust that he has been feeling in relation to language, he cannot keep himself away from it. He is compelled to make another effort to write that, in which he has already failed. So, he is going to start all over again – *anew*. This time, which is first time though it is a repetition of previous times, he thinks to write freely:

> 'I will write freely, since I am sure that this story concerns no one but myself. It could actually be told in ten words. That is what makes it so awful. There are ten words to say. For nine years I have held out against them. But this morning, which is the 8th October (I have just noticed to my surprise) and so nearly the anniversary of the first of those days, I am almost sure that the words which should not be written will be written.'[429]

Here, Blanchot surprises us through his words, which are also his thoughts. He says that he is surprised, yet this surprise is due to some other reason, which is *personal* to him. However, with what are we surprised? With what does he manage to surprise us? He does it through language while asserting that surprise is nothing but language itself. It is language that *surprises* us, because language is surprising. However, that surprise is marked by the number of years that have passed through language in order to find ten words. He says that there are ten words to say, and he has held himself for nine years against those ten words. How can one become such a failure? How can one fail for such a long time to say those ten words? Certainly, it is not that he never made any attempt to say those ten words; instead, despite his efforts, he has not been able to say those ten words. Then his failure is not *himself*, but *language*. Language is the failure of/for Blanchot. It is in language that he fails. But,

[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid.

how does he fail in language or how does language fail him? Is language powerful than his power? For nine years, language has been able to fail him in his efforts, and he has been struggling for nine years to come against this power. This situation tells us that how he has been wondering to find those ten words. Hence, now, what matters to Blanchot is not the incident or things, which he has already gone through and which still continue to remain with him in whatever form or manner, but *language*. The task within which he is caught up is language. He is amidst language and is struggling to find ten words. However, does language lack these ten words or is he aware of what these ten words are?

Blanchot does not say what these ten words are, because he does not know *what* they *are* – the ten words, a very little number to worry so much for nine years. Yet, it is Blanchot, who is always worried and disturbed by certain things which appear to be trivial or almost nothing in day-today-life. In that way, Blanchot is like Kafka, who is very often disturbed by every-day life and trying to escape it. However, Blanchot cannot help of this feeling — feeling of not knowing what to do and what to say when he is summoned by a situation; that is what we could see in Akim in *The Idyll* and Thomas in *Thomas the Obscure*. Now, here, again, he appears in the same *helpless* condition that has been holding him like a hostage for nine years. Blanchot is then a *hostage* of language. It is the power of language and he seems to be afraid of it. Why is he afraid? It is a question of limiting and deciding. One is compelled to decide just to find *ten* words in order to say something that can be said in ten words. There are ten words to say; but the difficulty is to find those ten words in the ocean of language.[430] Moreover, to find ten words or to say "those things" in ten words is to *limit* "those things" into ten words and imprison them within these words. It is a task of selecting, and, the moment that he selects ten is also the moment when he loses *the rest*. Also, there is no guarantee that the selected ten words would serve the purpose, since he has *already* been *betrayed* by language. He has no confidence to invest on language, because his confidence or trust that he had laid upon language has *always* betrayed him at the crucial moments, where language alone appeared as the only thing that he could hold onto, especially when the people on whom he had relied had

[430] Blanchot, in his "The Song of The Sirens", brings out this metaphor of *ocean* with reference to Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, where Blanchot views Melville's work – work of language, which presents a setting of sea, itself as "ocean on its own scale". 1999, p. 448

betrayed him.[431] Now, not only he fears people with whom he has been in relation, but also he fears the very language, through which he met and made those relations. It is the fear with which he continues to live. Yet, he does not attempt to condemn this fear, because it is the only master at *The Last Word*[432]. He writes, in his *The Last Word*, "[F]ear is your only master. If you think you are no longer afraid of anything, reading is useless. But it is the lump of fear in your throat that will teach you how to speak."[433] Hence, Blanchot has to "write freely" — in order to speak of death. Speaking of death through silence is to write death in and trough a sentence in a way that writing becomes *Death Sentence*.

In *Death Sentence*[434], death is suspected to be with the other and it is brought out through first person narration. It begins with an assumption – "I assume she's dead."[435] But, when we go through the story we realize that J is not yet dead. Yet, she is almost *there — near* death, with death. Being there near death still leaves *a gap* between death and the one who is just near it. Also, it is within this gap, which is immeasurable and unlocatable, that everything in the story takes place. J, who has been "overcome by a strange attack" at the moment when she was about to open "the closet", is ill and doctor gives her three weeks to live. But, she exceeds this time limit while overcoming the fever. Blanchot writes, "she got up every day; she lived on equal terms with an exhausting fever, she shivered for hours, but in the end she overcame the fever."[436] Then, she is given another month. Despite this grant of time for death, which also means, on the other hand, grant of time for life, she continues to live *beyond* the *given* time. Amid this strange truth, we are delivered onto another eyes-widening confusion. That is the mystery of the time-span of their lives — life of J and life of the narrator. The confusion is between the *given* time and the time that they have *actually* been living. The disease that she has been fighting with is

[431] This is what Thomas in *Thomas the Obscure* experiences in relation to Anne. He feels that Anne has betrayed him through asking the question to which he cannot find an answer.
[432] "Vicious Circles: The Last Word" is a short fiction written by Blanchot and the version that is referred to in the present study appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, 1999, pp. 37 – 50
[433] Ibid, p. 43
[434] "Death Sentence" is a short fiction written by Blanchot. The version that is referred in the present study appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, 1999, pp. 131 – 187
[435] Ibid, p. 132
[436] Ibid, p. 133

something that has been there for last ten years, and "her doctor had told [me] that from 1936 on he had considered her dead."[437]

At the beginning of the story, the narrator says that "these things happened to me in 1938"[438] and the story that he narrates unfolds as flashback. Now, within that story, he brings out another narration by the doctor, according to which J is already considered as dead. Though narrator himself is aware that J had made some "unsuccessful poisoning attempt two or three years earlier", and though he assumes that she's dead, it is around the incident of the above mentioned attack that he sees with his own eyes that how she trembles and breaths hoarsely, and that he presents a different reality. According to what he sees, she lives. "On the 5th or 6th of October, I think, she was still going for rides in the car with her sister, along the Champs Elyseés."[439] He can see what she is doing and how she is living. He thus explains *what* he saw. Yet, suddenly, we are called to be thoughtful. We cannot just go on listening to what he is narrating. There are small places which are very slippery, and in case we miss those places because of our own slip in language, what he narrates becomes just another story. However, as always, Blanchot does not attempt to bring any story *as such*. There are no stories. For him, they all are truths; and all these truths are stories, which exemplify some great confusion between truth and fiction. However, there are many slips in Blanchot's language. He slips. Language slips. He and language slips into different peripheries while slipping through each other. So, while giving the exact dates on which J had gone for car rides, he writes "I think", breaking the continuity of this coherent thought that has been coming to him. Now, we are not to miss this sudden consciousness that flashes amid the thought, and it brings some *vagueness* to what he is saying. Nevertheless, this vagueness enlarges or becomes thicker when he says what he heard from the doctor that "from 1936 on he had considered her dead". If we believe what doctor says, we are also compelled to believe that what narrator narrates as some hallucination. In fact, within the story, the narrator himself is compelled to suspect what he sees, due to some other knowledge presented to him by the doctor. All the more, in general, it is believed that doctors are the ones who are able to tell truth about patients and illnesses. Their knowledge and understanding regarding sicknesses are believed to be far more reliable, since it is the

[437] Ibid, p. 134
[438] Ibid, p. 131
[439] Ibid, p. 133

knowledge derived from medical science. This scientific knowledge thus causes confusion between what *is* going on and what *should* actually *be* happening. Nevertheless, doctor's words cannot be taken as ultimate truth, since, as the protagonist says, "[O]f course the same doctor, who treated me several times, once told me, too, "Since you should have been dead two years ago, everything that remains of your life is a reprieve." He had just given me six months to live and that was seven years ago."[440]

If they are supposed to be dead already, who are these people of whom he has written? How does he understand this puzzle? He does not know how to resolve this confusion. It is probably this confusion that has held him against writing this story that he is narrating after nine years. This confusion cannot be put into a language. Even if he attempts to do so, whose language can that be? Is it his language? If it is his language, who is he? He is supposed to be dead according to the doctor. Then who is this person that narrates this story of the dead ones? Is he another person or is he an apparition of his own self?

As Blanchot explains in his *The Step Not Beyond*, here, the narrator-writer makes a relation through *writing*. To tell this story, which is already a confusion, he has to make a relation with the past and the present at the same time; because, despite doctor's prescription, he still feels that he continues to live. It seems to him that J too continues with her life just the way he does. But, they both should have been dead. There are different versions of the same thing or same person. If to take doctor's words seriously, they – J and the narrator – should already be dead; if he is to believe what he sees and feels, they both are *not yet* dead. He is in between two different versions of life and death. He feels one of them is suspended — either life or death. It appears that something is present in its absence and something is absent in its presence. This confusion cannot even be articulated in a way that it makes some sense to another person, who listens to it. This impossibility to articulate or to speak evokes a desire in him to say what cannot be said. Nevertheless, he wants to say this particular thing that happened to him not because he wants to know the reason for these things that happened to him, but because he really does not know *what* has *actually happened* to him, to J, to N, and so on. Only thing he is aware of is "these

[440] Ibid, p. 134

things happened to him". The moment he attempts to lay out these things that happened to him, he finds the difficulty of separating one thing from another. Everything that has happened seems to be jumbled up in a way that there is no way to make a story, arranging one incident after the other in a linear order. There is no sequence in which he is going to write: present is mixed and confused with past, death is confusedly mixed with life, and life seems to continue with death, good health is settled in sickness and sickness continues to be good health and so on.

These things which are mixed with each other cannot be put together to make one truth or story. They cannot be *totalized*. The moment he attempts to totalize them that totality seems to destroy the very attempt that he makes. That is the problem with those ten words, which are necessary in this task, also dangerous at the same time since they are *destructive*. What he is trying to put together are those things, which *cannot* be put together, because they all are in fragments. There cannot be any particular order for fragments, for fragments can be arranged into any form following any order. Fragments are free – free from orders and formulas. Therefore, these fragments can be casted only when they are laid freely. That is why finally he thinks that – "I will write freely", because it is only writing that let things appear freely, despite how confusing they are. Writing lets the way for confusion since it casts confusion as confusion; since it does not attempt to gain any clarity or give any clarity to any other. He writes it, because he *wants* to write. At the beginning itself, he says that the story concerns no one but himself.

Hence, through writing *Death Sentence*, Blanchot makes a relation with death and life. In doing so, he brings many deaths to life, especially to the life of J, and it suggests that to live means to make *death* more *alive*. Through J, we are made to feel that death is not a horror; for her, it could be a rose, "a perfect rose" – a gift and gift of love, because now what she is doing is living the death. For now, it is the life with which she continues that has become death, and that death is more torturous than *real* death, which is the visible and the identifiable death. How many times does J go through this death? How much does she suffer *without* death? This suffering, which is painful, needs to be lessened and the doctor decides to give shots of morphine to J so that the pain reduces. But, the moment it is injected to her, "the battle took another

form and became even more difficult"[441] for J. Here, the battle that she is fighting is a different kind of battle. She does not fight for life to postpone death; instead, she fights for life by pleading *death*. Going through the story, it can be understood that J is *not* fed up of life, though she has attempted to commit suicide by poisoning. But, she is *afraid* of death just the way she is afraid of night. It is death which makes her afraid, due to which life becomes nothing but fear; and, the sickness that she suffers from is probably evoked by that *fear*. She needs to overcome this fear that does not let her live – live freely, without fear. Then, she wills to die *out of love* for the life. It is the life that she aspires through death.

On the other hand, death, the enemy, stands against her will and thus keeps moving away from her when she feels that it is just there – very close to her. When she goes to sleep while being alive or "when she had seemed to be sunk in complete unconsciousness", she is probably closer to what she has been waiting for with all her love for life – which is death. It is at such moments, she suddenly sees "a perfect rose" that is moving in the room – "the dream image."[442] Life is a rose that she wants to smell. She can smell it only if death becomes that rose. In other words, life is the gift that can be presented by death. It is the death that can present life as a gift. Blanchot tosses some everyday story and makes it upside down. He contradicts and *confuses* the general notion of death that death takes away life. He seems to suggest that death does not take anything away from life; *instead* it brings life as a *gift*. Death *gifts* life and that gift, which is presented through death, is a "perfect rose". Now, going away from her despite her will, death has become more *insensitive* to J. She is waiting to give herself away to embrace death, but death *denies* her, death *kills* her. Moreover, the *pain* caused by death through denying death is inexplicable. It is a sickness of which symptoms are invisible. Blanchot says, it is a "pain near her heart"[443] that remains invisible, when symptoms of this wild sickness had died down. Then, it seems that this life that J is given is actually the death sentence that is given to her by death by *denying* death when she desires it. "If you don't kill me, then

[441] Ibid, p. 140
[442] Ibid, pp. 147 – 148
[443] Ibid, p. 137

you're a murderer" - J says to doctor. With this saying, Blanchot is reminded of a similar phrase, attributed to Kafka: "If you don't kill me, you'll kill me."[444]

However, the last scene, where J scatters "like sand" with the death, brings another strange truth that is related to life and death. The narrator describes how J attempts to live her last minute saving her last breath. He says it through writing,

> 'We were all very slow creatures and she needed to move like lightning to save her last breath, to escape the final immobility. I never saw her more alive, nor more lucid. May be she was in the last instant of her agony, but even though she was incredibly beset by suffering, exhaustion and death, she seemed so alive to me that once again I was convinced that if she didn't want it, and if I didn't want it, nothing would ever get the better of her.'[445]

As discussed above if J waited for her death. She waited not because she loved death because it terminates life; instead, she loved death because it terminates both dying and death. When death terminates death, there is no further death. It is the proper death which terminates the *as suchness* of death, which is already discussed in previous chapter. In that sense, there is no death *as such* any more. Death *ends* there, and it is *beyond* this end that now one is going to live. Hence, this threshold where J is struggling to save her last breath is both life and death at the same time. It is the last breath that she is breathing, and with that last breath she continues *to last* while passing through it. We see that, for Blanchot, it is this *last* breath, which is more significant; it is significant because it is the last vestige of that which is passing; it is significant as it is the edge, or the verge of the threshold — threshold that is open to the abyssal depth. The one who is standing there feels the urge of being conscious in order to know that he is standing just at the point of edge – edged-point, which is very sharp; also, he wants to feel the *edge* of the edge since one has always been reaching such points many times just the way J has. Therefore, one needs to confirm at least at this time that one has reached the *last* point, so that one is no more cheated with this promise of death. One needs to feel the accomplishment of this promise. Therefore, this last moment is more important. It is brighter than any other moment; it is stronger and wilder, also violent.

[444] Ibid, p. 141
[445] Ibid, p. 151

Thus, *last* moment shines. It is where the light becomes brighter in a way that it dazzles like the mid-day light. It is with this light which is *maddeningly* bright that eyes are not able to seeing anything. There, whatever one gets to see is blurred. This last minute's brightness, where everything shines, thus, gives nothing but vertigo. It is with this vertigo that one's pulse begins to beat violently, heavily and rapidly in a way that one *cannot* be aware of how long the last vestige of last breath would *last*. While one is waiting to experience this last moment of *all* the moments, all the moments of that *last* moment are taken away from the one who has been waiting. It is a *robbery* that happens at the last minute. However, in that last minute, what is robbed is not life, but death. Death is being robbed by death itself while J is passing to another zone secretly. He says, "[T]wo or three minutes later, her pulse became irregular, it beat violently, stopped, then began to beat again, heavily, only to stop again, this happened many times, finally it became extremely rapid and light, and "scattered like sand"."[446]

Now, the significance of this last moment that he has explained here is held by that which is *unsaid*. Just the way he has written other texts, some of which that have already been discussed in the current chapter, here, in *Death Sentence* too, Blanchot has not declared that if someone *is* dead. Leaving it *unsaid*, he has also left death as that which *cannot* be said, explained, or defined. He left it unsaid not because he wanted to leave it unsaid, but because he is *not able* to say it. This inability is due to the *impossibility* of understanding what death *is*, also what life *is*. Hence, he writes this impossibility as follows; "One thing must be understood: I have said nothing extraordinary or even surprising. What is extraordinary begins at the moment I stop. But I am no longer able to speak of it."[447]

Blanchot is not able to speak of it any more. He experiences this inability at the moment he is compelled to speak *only of* that which *cannot* be spoken. He becomes silent very often at the moments where he should not be silent, for silence can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Silence is capable of betraying; therefore, he must make an attempt to speak of what he *cannot* speak. Then, stopping at such a point and giving up speaking while giving one's self to silence, is he not betraying his own self? If he cannot speak of what he saw, who else can speak of it? If someone else speaks of that which he does not speak, will that not contradict the truth

[446] Ibid, p. 151
[447] Ibid.

that is known only to him in a way that truth is put at a risk? He is aware that he writes this story for his own sake, not for any other, and he says that he is *not afraid* of truth. Moreover, he has already written what he has been waiting to write for the last nine years of his life. When he reaches a point where his narration or writing becomes more meaningful, he *stops* it *suddenly*. Why does he do that? Does he not want to come to that point where what he has been saying begins to make some sense or meaning? Does he not want to make any sense, meaning, or truth that what he has experienced?

Blanchot, through his writings, evokes such questions within us. He *leaves* us *suddenly* at a moment where we want to hold *only* on to him, as we begin to feel that he is the *only* one who can tell us the truth at last – the final or ultimate *truth*. We feel the need of him and his words to understand what has been going on since the time we start to listen to him through reading his writing. We have been waiting until the time comes for us to hear what he has to say about everything – about life, death, and about life *and* death. While reading him, we begin to walk with him; while walking with him, we have moved, sometimes slowly just the way he walks, sometimes suddenly just the way he is moved by a storm or an attack. In addition, in that movement, we have also become confused like him. His confusion is all about finding the direction toward which one should walk in order to find life or death. He keeps walking in this confusion, sometimes in darkness, sometimes in light; while walking, he stumbles upon people, buildings, walls, and so on; he ends up in cities, roads, hotels, apartments, libraries, and courtyards. He forgets directions, also, sometimes, his room's key. Thus, Blanchot appears to us through some confusion as if confusion is nothing but Blanchot himself and vice versa. However, it is important to raise this question: is it only Blanchot who is confused? What about us – the others who stand apart from Blanchot? Have we been able to stand apart from Blanchot while listening to him through reading him through his writing?

Like Blanchot, we are also confused. We also stumble upon things like him. We are also in search of a direction that leads to life. Is it that difficult to find a way to life? Blanchot takes us through different ways to come back to life, irrespective of how difficult the journey can be. This is what we see in Thomas when he is swimming in the sea without an aim, yet managing to come back to the shore. Therefore, finding a way to life is not impossible. It is not very significant and

different from everyday life. So, there is nothing extraordinary in what Blanchot has been saying. Still, there is really something that is extraordinary in Blanchot in his search for a way to life or to death. He, along with us, searches for a way that leads only to *life*, where there is *only* life – life *without* death; if there is no such way that leads *only* to life, at least he should be able to find a way that leads only to *death* – death *without* life. Hence, we see him moving here and there in search of such a way or a direction. In spite of day and night, light and dark, he makes this movement with this desire. In that movement, he appears to be even more confused than before. Once, in this confusion, he speaks as if he is in some madness:

> 'I am not learned; I am not ignorant. I have known joys. That is saying too little: I am alive, and this life gives me the greatest pleasure. And what about death? When I die (perhaps any minute now), I will feel immense pleasure. […] But this is the remarkable truth, and I am sure of it: I experience boundless pleasure in living, and I will take boundless satisfaction in dying. I have wandered; I have gone from place to place. […] I have been poor, then richer, then poorer than many people. […] Is my life better than other people's lives? Perhaps. I have a roof over my head and many do not. I do not have leprosy, I am not blind, I see the world – what extraordinary happiness! […] I have loved people, I have lost them. I went mad when that blow struck me, because it is hell. But there was no witness to my madness, my frenzy was not evident. […] People would say to me, "Why are you so calm?" But I was scorched from head to foot; at night I would run through the streets and howl; during the day I would work calmly.'[448]

Thus, he is confused. Nonetheless, he is also aware that he is confused in a way that this confusion is nothing but his own self, to which he cannot give any reason. This confusion that he writes reminds us of our own confusions, which make us wander without a direction, where we attempt to find something to hold on to in a way that, that something would become the very direction that we have been searching for. That is what we feel when we listen to Blanchot in his confusion. Still, while he narrates his confusion, which is very similar to our confusions, we move with him who is in search of some way out. In that movement, we wait for him to tell

[448] Blanchot, "The Madness of the Day", p. 191. The version that is referred to in the present study appears in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, 1999, pp. 191 – 199

us about his way out so that we also could follow him. In a way, we wait for him, because he makes us wait for him to speak some truth that he *alone* would probably know, and yet capable of throwing some light of that truth toward the darkness that we all are sunk in. So we wait – just the way Anne waits for Thomas to say who he is; just the way Akim waits to know about the marriage of the director and his wife at Home; just the way J waits to talk everything to him at her last breath; just the way *she* waits to hear truth from *him* while *awaiting oblivion*, just the way he waits for Claudia and the way he is awaited by Judith to hear truth, to hear what exactly happened at the moment *When The Time Comes*. Nonetheless, at that crucial moment where he can make the best out of all the moments that he has spent in order to say what he has been trying to say by giving *The Last Word* from his side, he withdraws; he *stops* speaking and we are just left amidst the ocean of nothingness. At this last moment, he scatters "like sand".

He cannot speak of death, because in his attempt to speak of it, he ends up speaking of life. Thus, his attempt to find life without death or death without life becomes a *failure*. This failure is due to the *relation*, which relates life to death and death to life. This relation keeps the one in relation to the other, within which it is always the other that keeps appearing *When The Time Comes* for one to become one's own self. Moreover, as far as *coming* of this time is concerned, one is not able to know when it comes, because, it comes in its own time. It is the decision of the *other*; which is already discussed in previous chapter with reference to Derrida. Therefore, time comes only *when the time comes* and when it comes we are no longer there to experience it to the fullest, since it is something that can *never* come, but *keeps coming*. It *remains* to come while it keeps coming. In this continuous coming while it has already begun to come, we too are moved while continuing to move in a way that we are *metamorphosed*[449].

In this continuous transformation, we are neither what we already *were* nor are we anything *entirely* new. We are no more identical — neither to us nor to the others. We are not able to say *who* or *what* we really *are*. This is what we experience in relation to Thomas in *Thomas the Obscure*. However, this transformation is brought

[449] Please see the idea of Metamorphosis in Kafka's novella titled *Metamorphosis*. The version of the novella that is referred to, appears in Vintage Publication's *Franz Kafka: The Complete Short Stories*, 1999.

to us through some sudden attack. The suddenness of the attack leaves everything scattered in the sense that these fragments cannot be put together back in order to form the thing or the person who/which was there *before*. For Blanchot, death is similar to such an attack, which comes with its full power to knock someone down. All the characters that appear in most of Blanchot's works are exposed to these sudden attacks, which are also very often violent, moreover, these attacks hit them in a way that either they feel dizzy, nausea, headache, feverish, or fall into unconsciousness. And, then, there is some gap of time which cannot be calculated through clock-time. That time, which could even be most minute millisecond, *cannot* be timed, also it is just *outside* the *given* time. As Blanchot says in his *Space of Literature*, it is the time of time absence. In this absence of time, what happens to being is imperceptible, immeasurable, and indefinable. When he returns, he never returns in the same form or manner. What he goes through cannot be explained despite the very feeling that he goes through something. This explanation is impossible for it is something through which he *passes* or moves without getting time to realize what it is. Then, it is like death that comes to us where one passes while continuing to pass through that death, however, without realizing how one passes through while something passes through him, yet without an encounter. Thomas, Anne, Akim, J, Judith, Nathalie, Claudia – all these characters – are brought to us through Blanchot through such attacks with and within which they keep *becoming* other than what/who they have already been.

4.3 Language of Literature

The idea of literature as the space of being and language urges the necessity of understanding literature with regard to the question "what is literature?" As Blanchot writes in his essay *Literature and the Right to Death*, it is this question that marks the very existence of literature. "Literature begins at the moment when literature becomes a question."[450]

However, as Blanchot argues, it is impossible to answer this question. It always has to remain as an unanswerable question in order to summon literature

[450] Blanchot, 1995b, p. 300

through the same. On the other hand, the question of *what* denigrates literature, as the question paralyzes the possibility of finding any definition or an answer to the same. When it cannot be located, objectified, and recognized with a face that is identical to itself and also to others, it becomes sheer nothingness in its existence. However, since literature is thus nothing, it, on the other hand, becomes everything — it is a movement "from nothing to everything."[451] It could become anything since it is invested; since it has no ground on which it stands. It is the very groundlessness that has become the ground of literature. Thus, everything about literature – the origin, form, content, meaning, and existence – begins and ends with nothingness. That is why the question "what is literature?" becomes more crucial in grounding, placing, spacing, and also displacing literature.

However, the uniqueness of literature is, as Blanchot shows, the marvel of language through writing. It is the language that is invented in writing, which is a unique language that takes place while creating a different space that is of its own. Hence, literature becomes the world that is made up of language; the ground and the walls of the world of literature are built, also painted in and through language. Since it is, thus, based on language, literature is ephemeral; it has no permanency in its existence, because, not only it is created, but also created with that which is fragile. Thus, because the substance of the creation is fragile and there is no substance *as such* in it, it cannot last through the continuity. It breaks, because it is destined to break; its fate is to begin with a break and to survive through continuous breaking — the discontinuities.

However, fragileness is the nature of language; also, it is an irresistible condition that is imperative to language to become language infinitely. Hence, it is important to ask what language is for? Language is expression; it is to express, express everything as *it is* without having any intervention.

Then, the problem is whether it is possible to think of such a language which is so intimate to our thoughts. The language of everyday world cannot have this pure intimacy, for it is the domain of subject devoid of "crude" being. Contrastingly, in literature, language stands as language within which words become things, and, is out there in the real world. These things are those which appear in the way they are

[451] Ibid, p. 318

imagined. It is a world of imagination where things are imagined in innumerable forms and manners; where things are thought in a different manner, and thoughts are not conditioned by *this* or *that* law. Hence, it is the enormity of the *unconditional* thought that unfolds through imagination. This imaginary world can appear only when the writer withdraws from the *given* world, also, from the given time. In withdrawal, writer falls into the abyss of nothingness — absence of the world, also of time; and, there, he is fascinated by the image. He is carried into the world of the image. His life, living, thought, thinking, passion, and hope, are nothing but this world in which he begins to live. Moreover, he is able to realize it only through language. As Blanchot writes, writer's hope "lies in the materiality of language"[452]. In that language, writer begins to murmur, where silence begins to speak.

4.3.1 Literature and Nothingness

It speaks, yet, it says nothing; it *cannot* say anything particularly because it is born out of imaginary where image begins to play by its own. Therefore, language in literature becomes a *play* of image, which *multiplies* in its excess. Hence, it becomes an ocean of images that begin to compete with each other in the very effort of emerging to be captured; it is a mass of images that appear in the gather of thoughts which flow into the mind of the writer from *outside* just the way sea-wave that rushes towards Thomas, who is sitting at the shore. In this rush, there is no time left to be selective. The only thought that the writer is pushed by is the very need *to write* at this moment of absolute nothingness. However, in this complete absence, there is something still present and that is the presence of *absence*. Moreover, for Blanchot, words are nothing but this duality – duality of presence and absence at the same time, and it is in the domain of writing that this duality, which is contradictory, can be laid out. Differentiating literary language from common language, Blanchot explains this idea as follows:

> 'Common language is probably right, this is the price we pay for our peace. But literary language is made of uneasiness; it is also made of contradictions. Its position is not very stable or secure. On the other hand, its only interest in a

[452] Blanchot, 1995b, p. 327

thing is in the meaning of the thing, its absence, and it would like to attain this absence absolutely in itself and for itself, to grasp in its entirety the infinite movement of comprehension. What is more, it observes that the word "cat" is not only the nonexistence of the cat but a nonexistence made *word*, that is, a completely determined and objective reality. It sees that there is a difficulty and even a lie in this.'[453]

In that sense, the image that is born in and through writing designates what the thing is not.[454]

Hence, there is a *refusal* that takes place in literature, and Blanchot sees it as a refusal to name. This refusal is due to the contradiction that is manifested by the word in naming the thing — thing that emerges in the imaginary. Moreover, what occurs in the imaginary is not a decision that is taken by the self, because, imaginary "is ***my*** consciousness ***without me***, the radiant passivity of mineral substances,"[455] where "the word acts not as an ideal force but as an obscure power."[456] This power enables them "***really*** present outside of themselves" in which case word becomes "one moment in the universal anonymity" rather than becoming a name. Accordingly, it becomes a "bald statement" of language through which only a play of language is presented. Hence, it is a refusal of language; yet, it is only through this refusal that language unfolds *as* language. In that sense, literature does not reveal anything, not by choice; but because of its fate —it *cannot*. It is the very inability to reveal anything *as such*.

However, the writer does not write in order to confirm the impossibility of revelation. If the writer begins to write with the purpose of non-revelation, the very act of writing becomes the self-conscious act of the subject. In that case, writer becomes the one who maintains his secrets through writing. But, if he is aware of *his* secret, it cannot be his *secret* anymore. On the other hand, if writer writes in order to *hide*, why should he write at all? Can he not keep it to his own self as *his* secret? Blanchot does not project writing as the strategy of escaping or hiding any fact or truth that is known to self. For him, passion for writing is the very desire that aspires to say what cannot help of being said. Thus, it is the desire to express that which

[453] Ibid, p. 325
[454] Ibid, p. 326
[455] Ibid, p. 328
[456] Ibid.

could never be expressed, which becomes the motivation to write. Thus, writing is irresistible, and the writer attempts to speak through writing; he attempts to reveal. He goes on writing and writing unfolds on the page in a way that it becomes the space of language; but, it is only language, *not revelation*. Revelation does not take place, because in writing, language takes its own journey and it *cannot* be determined by the writer. It is no more the language of the writer. Writer is pulled by the "obscure power" of language. Thus, he is deviated from his own being; he forgets his *own self*. Now, there is only *other* that has begun to unfold in writing, which is a process. He forgets what he wanted to reveal; instead, his own being begins to unfold as revelation. It is not a revelation that is intended; it *cannot* be intended since it comes from outside; it is *to come*. Revelation of being is thus to come from outside — from future. In that sense, writer begins to experience his own being while passing through language. However, he cannot stop in order to have an encounter with this being that is passing while he is in the movement of language. Thus, there is nothing revealed to him. It is "a strange impersonal light"[457]. Hence, there is no revelation *as such* that takes place in the attempt of writing. As Blanchot explains,

> 'By turning itself into an inability to reveal anything, literature is attempting to become the revelation of what revelation destroys. This is a tragic endeavor. Literature says, "I no longer represent, I am; I do not signify, I present." But this wish to be a thing, this refusal to mean anything, a refusal immersed in words turned to salt; in short, this destiny which literature becomes as it becomes the language of no one, the writing of no writer, the light of a consciousness deprived of self, this insane effort to bury itself in itself, to hide itself behind the fact that it is visible — all this is what literature now manifests, what literature now shows.'[458]

However, irrespective of this nothingness to which the writer is delivered, he *cannot* stop writing. In that sense, writer is in "the great confinement"[459] of language; he falls back on language in the very attempt of coming out from the same. This demand of language spaces and places an infinite conversation between self and the other that is kept across death.

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[457] Ibid, p. 329
[458] Ibid, pp. 328 – 329
[459] Blanchot, 1993, p. 196

Nevertheless, is there such confinement in language? Generally, the idea of confinement suggests a sense of immobility. In that sense, the one who is confined would also be immobile or immovable. This immobility is determined by the powerlessness of the confined. Confinement can be understood in two ways: one is physical; the other is mental. Between the two, former is attemptable in order to achieve certain goals, and this sort of confinement could be seen in the domain of law, also in medical science.[460] The achievement of the second kind is doubtable, since there is no power that can restrict thinking or the occurrence of thought. As discussed in the second chapter, there is certainly an attempt made by the ongoing discourse to impose restrictions on what one thinks. However, nothing is able to stop or set restrictions on thinking — the occurrence of thoughts. Thoughts *cannot* be confined; and, thus move despite all restrictions. Moreover, the one in whose imagination these thoughts occur is also moved by them. In *The Infinite Conversation*, Blanchot projects this thought as follows: "I therefore have a thought that goes beyond my power, a thought that, to the very extent that it is a thought of mine, is the absolute exceeding of the self that thinks it — in other words: a relation with what is absolutely outside myself: the other."[461] Hence, it is a thought that is capable of moving self *beyond* the power of the self. Thus, it is a *powerful* thought, and it emerges as literature. In this *imagined* world, the writer is moved and transformed. He makes movement in *language* becoming other by overcoming *the given*. Where does he move?

As Blanchot shows, there is no particular destination toward which he moves. He "goes astray"[462]. Nevertheless, in this context, Blanchot emphasizes the *movement* rather than the direction, since direction is nothing but *outside*. As far as movement is considered, it takes "turns about" leaving "the protection of the center", according to which, the one who goes astray turns about himself adrift and subject to the center, and is no longer guarded by it.[463] As Blanchot explains,

> 'he turns about – a verb without complement; he does not turn around some thing or even around nothing; the center is no longer the immobile spur, the point of opening that secretly clears the space of advance. One who goes

[460] In this regard, please see Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*: *A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (2001) and *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison* (1991)
[461] Blanchot, 1993, p. 53
[462] Ibid, p. 26
[463] Ibid

astray moves steadily ahead and stays at the same point; he exhausts himself while under way, not advancing, not stopping.'[464]

However, one of the significant things that happen in such movement is that one is *not* able to *return*. It is impossible to return, because, as Blanchot says, "the state of things does not return to what it was."[465] Hence, it is a perpetual departure and it delivers one into *infinite* journey.

If so, how can we say that the writer is in great confinement of language? As discussed above, if the writer makes a movement in writing, there cannot be such confinement to which he is subjected. It seems that he goes astray to infinity. Thus if he becomes the infinity of infinity, literature would then stop becoming literature any further, and it would erase the contradiction on which it is founded. If it is to be seen as absolutely infinite, writer would succeed in this very act of writing; he would be able to continue his journey without facing any interruption. But, literature is founded upon interruption; it begins with interruption, which destroys the *given*. Moreover, in this world of literature, if he manages to continue without any interruption, he would be able to be constructive in a way that there is a result — a final product. He would be able to close himself within the world in which he *creates*. In addition, it would result in obtaining ultimate freedom. However, as Blanchot analyses, literature cannot become a space *as such*, where one can permanently reside without returning to everyday world. It is true that, as argued above, returning is impossible. Nonetheless, one has to come out from the world into which he had withdrawn himself. In that sense, he, who is engaged in writing, has to be interrupted in a way that he *has* to stop writing. He has to be reminded of his duties and responsibilities that he has to attend, for which he has to come out from the solitude world in which he has been wandering. Writing on Kafka's works, Blanchot exemplifies how Kafka was disturbed by everyday life and its responsibilities which interrupted his writing. As Blanchot writes, it is a conflict that Kafka is destined to face.[466] He cannot go on writing. It is not his profession. "He has a profession, a family. He belongs to the world and must belong to it. The world provides time, but takes it up. Throughout the *Diaries* – at least up until 1915 – there are despairing comments, where the thought of

[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid, p. 13
[466] Blanchot, 1982, p. 58

suicide recurs, because he lacks time: time, physical strength, solitude, silence."[467] The time that he lacks, hence yearns to have, is the time *to write*. But, he is not able to get it as he is bound by the responsibilities of everyday life. He has to attend them and that keeps him away from writing. But, how much time does he need to write?

4.3.2 Blanchot & Kafka: Literature and Philosophy

Going through Kafka's diaries, Blanchot opines that "Kafka cannot, or will not, consent to write "in little bits" – the incompleteness of discontinuous moments."[468] He places this idea in relation to what Kafka had written on "the night of September 22." "That night, having written without interruption, he grasped in its plentitude the limitless movement which enables him to write."[469] Hence, it is the continuity that he wants in writing; he wants to continue writing; in that continuity he continues withdrawing from the given world as he is being fascinated by the world that unfolds while writing. Highlighting this unavoidable conflict that Kafka was destined to undergo, Blanchot projects writing as the very means through which one manages to live. That is why Kafka yearns to find time to write — write without interruption, a thought undisturbed. But, can there be a thought that can continue without any interruption?

Blanchot emphasizes the impossibility of writing without interruption. Just the way writing takes place in and through interruption, it also ends due to the same. In Blanchot's point of view, writer does not want any interruption that interrupts writing. It is the "limitless movement" of thought that enables him to write. For that, he needs to have time — time to move timelessly since he moves limitlessly. When one wants to move limitlessly, even the time should move limitlessly in a way that movement happens in a time when time is absent; one should not be disturbed by time. He is too busy with his writing to the extent that he does not have time to think about another time. For him, time is thought, thinking, and writing itself. He gives his all the time to write, because writing *takes* time. Accordingly, it is important for him to have time to write, and that has to be without breaks; it has to be infinite in its continuity.

[467] Ibid, pp. 58 – 59
[468] Ibid, p. 60
[469] Ibid.

Nevertheless, the problem here is whether one gets such a time that continues without breaks. It is here that Blanchot attempts to highlight the pressure that comes from exterior circumstance and disrupts the movement that takes place in language, for which he takes Kafka's condition as exemplary. According to his readings on Kafka's diaries, Kafka has been desperate to write; but, he does not want to write "in little bits". He wants to write completely in the sense that he writes everything. However, as Blanchot shows, "exterior circumstances are unfavorable."[470] Hence, during day, he *cannot* write; he does not have time to write since the time is taken away from him by the tasks of everyday life, which he cannot escape. Therefore, he has to find time at a time when he does not work; when he does not act. Accordingly, "he has to write in the evenings and at night, his sleep is disturbed, anxiousness wears him out."[471] Nonetheless, we see that how he fails to write his heart out. Blanchot goes onto explain how unhappy and dissatisfied Kafka was because he could not write fully and completely despite the time that he got after falling sick with his illness.[472]

Here, with reference to Kafka and his desire to write, Blanchot strives to assert the endless-ness of writing. It does not come to an end *as such* so that it produces everything as a whole. Writer is not able to write everything, because *every* everything ends up becoming something in the process of writing. Instead of writing everything, in writing, writing becomes everything in a way that there is nothing outside writing. In that sense, everything keeps becoming everything, and yet nothing. In this everything becoming nothing and nothing becoming everything, one is not able to write anything to its completeness. That is why, as Blanchot explains, Kafka is not able to write "the story." "Very often "the story" goes no further than a few lines; sometimes it rapidly attains coherence and density and yet stops at the end of page."[473] He writes; however, he cannot produce the story: Every writing stops somewhere, and there are many reasons for this, notes Blanchot. One reason is that Kafka does not find the long stretch of time which would allow the story to develop as it wants to, in all directions.[474] Hence, whatever that he writes becomes bits and pieces – fragments. His writings appear only as fragments. This incapability and

[470] Ibid, p. 59
[471] Ibid.
[472] Ibid, pp. 59 – 60
[473] Ibid, p. 59
[474] Ibid.

inability of mastering the story through writing completely torments the writer. But, is it only in language that he fails?

Referring to his diaries, Blanchot says that Kafka had desired to become a writer. But, the question is whether he was able to realize this desire to be a writer? To fulfill this desire, he has to write, and he has written as well. Still, his diaries cast a different story in which writing becomes not his dream or desire, but his existence. Blanchot writes this in his essay "Reading Kafka" as follows: "Kafka wanted only to be a writer, the *Diaries* show us, but the *Diaries* succeed in making us see in Kafka something more than a writer; they foreground someone who has lived rather than someone who has written."[475] And, Blanchot gives great significance to this idea in his unique way of philosophizing being. Considering the remarks in *The Diaries*, he views Kafka as someone who has failed not only in language but also in life. So doing, he underscores not only a personal question with which Kafka had suffered but also the impossibility of distinguishing literature from philosophy and philosophy from literature. First of all, seeing writing as that within which Kafka had existed, Blanchot challenges the *given* notion of life and living. Traditionally, people experience life and living only in this world – the everyday world, and when they die, they leave this everyday world and go to the other world, which is unknown. Moreover, in this context, literature has been seen as a representation of this world in which people live. Accordingly, whatever that is written and presented in the world of literature is a report, representation, and symbolization of what happens in the real world. Now, his argument, which claims that Kafka lived in writing, redeems writing or literature from this secondary status that is given to it through casting it as a re-presentation. In that sense, writing is elevated as another means and sphere of human existence. However, this human existence is not centered on a particular humanity. As discussed earlier in the chapters, it is the sphere of the "crude".

Hence, Kafka has lived through writing according to which writing becomes Kafka's life. Therefore, Blanchot says, "from then on, he is the one we look for in his work."[476] Now, the question is whether it is possible for us to find Kafka in his writing. To find Kafka in his work is impossible, because, it is Kafka who disappears when he writes, and the Kafka who disappears is the one who is known to everyone.

[475] Blanchot, 1995b, p. 1
[476] Ibid.

When that Kafka disappears, on the other hand, it is the *other* of Kafka that emerges in the sense that it is a different and a strange being that begins to unfold in his writing. It is an enigma to Kafka's own self. Nevertheless, as far as writings are considered, they are Kafka's own writings. Here, Blanchot attempts to emphasize the enigma of being, which keeps being in ignorance of its own self. It is due to this enigma that Kafka is not able to understand his own self: moreover, even if he comes to an understanding about his own self, that understanding is always about his *contradiction*: he understands that he is contradictory; yet, he cannot do anything to eliminate that contradiction in order to live without any duality. He cannot help it. In that sense, his understanding, which makes him realize that he is contradictory, *cannot* bring any solution to any of his problems. Contradiction is not an answer; rather, it is a problem. It is this problem that he lives with throughout his life. Blanchot in his effort of reading Kafka through his writing explains how Kafka describes his own self as follows:

> 'Kafka, in his attempt at autobiography, described himself as an ensemble of particularities, sometimes secret, sometimes explicit, endlessly throwing himself at the law, and not succeeding at having himself either recognized or suppressed. Kierkegaard went more deeply into this conflict, but Kierkegaard had taken the side of the secret, while Kafka could not take either side. If he hid what was strange about him, he hated both himself and his fate, and considered himself evil or damned; if he tried to make his secret public, the secret was not recognized by the community, which gave it back to him, imposing secrecy on him again.'[477]

Hence, this contradiction especially in the case of Kafka is very unfortunate, because it constantly subjects him to an end-less trial. It is in this trial that Kafka ends up hating himself for the very crime that he has committed, while, on the other hand, he also feels sad for himself for having to bear this life.[478] The worse is that, he is not aware of the blunder that he has done. Hence, the guilt that torments him is actually due to nothing. He is not aware of the crime that he has committed; yet, he is charged

[477] Ibid, p. 3

[478] In this regard, see Kafka's "Metamorphosis". The version that is referred for the present study appears in *Franz Kafka: The Completer Short Stories*, Printed by Vintage Books, (1999); also see his *Diaries*.

guilty. This self-contradiction continues in Kafka's writing, and it never gets unsettled.

However, as mentioned above it is Kafka's own contradiction. It appears only through his writing. As Blanchot rightly explains, Kafka has not written anything extraordinary. Especially, some of the entries that he has made in his diaries are very ordinary. If not they are ordinary, they are too trivial to be noticed or written. Fleets of a woman's skirt, color or a button of a woman's frock, collar of man's coat, etc. are some of the examples for such minute things which grabbed his attention. Nevertheless, for Kafka, they do not seem to be simple; he cannot ignore such things. In that sense, nothing can be ignored to be irrelevant, or trivial. Everything becomes important for Kafka to be thoughtful, and it plays its own significance in making the very Kafka who appears through his diaries. Moreover, some of the entries in his diaries, also the stories that he has written are short in terms of their length. They contain only few lines. Nonetheless, they stand as the way in which Kafka thought about life, about things that are related to life — his life, also others' lives. Hence, Kafka has not written stories in order to tell any particular story *as such*; rather, they seem to be the stories that present the destiny of being. Asserting the impossibility of demarcating literature from life, from reality, from truth, from philosophy and from knowledge, Blanchot approaches and reads Kafka through Claude-Edmonde Magny in the following manner:

> 'All the commentators ask us to look for stories in these stories: events signify only themselves, the surveyor is indeed a surveyor. Do not substitute "dialectical constructions for the unfolding of events that should be taken as a real story." But a few pages later one can "find in Kafka's work a theory of responsibility, views on causality, finally a comprehensive interpretation of human destiny, all three sufficiently coherent and independent enough of their novelistic form to bear being transposed into purely intellectual terms" (Claude-Edmonde Magny, *The Sandals of Empedocles*).'[479]

The above reference that is made by Blanchot in relation to Kafka's writings offers two significant ideas: one is related to Kafka and the other is related to himself. Blanchot writes on Kafka and his writings projecting Kafka as a writer-thinker, who

[479] Blanchot, 1995b, p. 2

presents a unique reading and understanding of life. So doing, he elevates Kafka's writings to be more than stories in the sense that they become another philosophy — philosophy of life, of death, of living. Referring to Kafka's Diaries, he says,

> 'The Diaries are full of remarks that seem linked to a theoretical knowledge that is easily recognized. But these thoughts remain foreign to the generalization from which they take shape: they are there as if in exile, they fall back into an equivocal style that does not allow them to be understood either as the expression of a single event or as the explanation of a universal truth. Kafka's way of thinking does not conform to uniformly valid rule, but neither does it simply refer to a particular event in his life. His thoughts swim fleeting between these two streams.'[480]

Hence, in Blanchot's view, Kafka is not only a writer but more than a writer. Also, he is not only a thinker; rather, he is more than a thinker.

If Kafka is to be seen only as a writer, it would be necessary to note what he writes, in which case it would require us to find a theme or a subject under which Kafka has written. In that sense, Kafka and his writings would be reduced to mere stories that have no significance beyond what they narrate. Similarly, if he is to be seen as a thinker, we would be compelled to recognize and categorize his thought under some philosophical tradition or as a thought that is influenced by certain tradition of philosophy. However, it is important to note that there is certainly some philosophy that is communicated in and through Kafka's writings. Nevertheless, that philosophy is not governed by any particular tradition of philosophy. It is not a reproduction, reaffirmation, or reconfirmation of some notion that is legitimized by some philosopher. Moreover, Kafka does not attempt to present any of his idea as ultimate truth. Instead, Kafka writes things that are very banal, and those are the ones which really bother Kafka. Nevertheless, as argued above, Kafka can neither be seen only as a writer, nor can he be considered only as a thinker. Rather, he is *both* thinker and writer — thinker-writer. It is here that Blanchot's contribution becomes more significant.

[480] Ibid.

Considering the way in which Blanchot makes his attempt to approach Kafka's writings, it could be seen that Kafka is not only a writer but also a thinker-philosopher. Moreover, this is the way in which Blanchot presents Kafka and his works. Hence, it is here the unique signature, that Blanchot leaves in the domain of literature and philosophy, becomes more significant. It shows how Blanchot deconstructs the very border, which lies between literature and philosophy in a way that literature and philosophy begin to overlap.

The idea of truth and reality play a major role in differentiating philosophy from literature. Philosophy is a system which attempts to seek out things through dealing with systems depending on "preconceived ideas" and "implicit constructions".[481] Literature is considered to be fictional, due to which the validity of truth that it produces is under question. In that sense, in general, it is philosophy that has received the recognition of being the source of knowledge and wisdom. This notion has prevailed since the time of Plato's *Republic*[482] where Plato demands to be done away with all the poets and artists considering them as those who mislead the people in Republic. Here, the accusation against art and literature is due to the role that it plays in the republic. According to Plato, its role is misleading. Hence, he demands only philosophers and expects the banishment of all the artists. According to this argument by Plato, literature is not to be taken seriously; because it cannot be recognized as a means of knowledge. Thus, it disgraces literature. However, overthrowing this belief held by Plato and his tradition, Blanchot asserts why literature *cannot* be discredited.

In his attempt to emphasize literature as knowledge and philosophy, at first, Blanchot seeks to challenge the idea that demands honesty from literature.

> 'Unfortunately, fictional work has nothing to do with honesty: it cheats, and exists only by cheating. It is hand in glove, in every reader, with the lie, with the equivocal, an endless movement of trickery and hide-and-seek. Its reality is to glide between that which is and that which is not, its truth is a pact of

[481] Blanchot, 1995b, p. 194

[482] Plato, *The Republic*, published in 1974 (reprint 2007) by Penguin Books, pp. 335 – 352

> illusion […] It is in the mode of the imaginary that it meets the real, it is by fiction that it approaches the truth.'[483]

This argument of Blanchot seems to suggest that there is no one particular way of telling truth or approaching truth. Truth can be approached by many different means, and literature takes the means of fiction. However, there is a significant difference in this very attempt that is made by literature. Unlike philosophy, literature is not bound by the role of producing truth in knowledge. It does not exist to fulfill any role as such. It is free. It does not exist before writing in the sense that writing follows literature. Instead, literature begins with writing and it is always going to unfold in the very process of writing. It appears only through writing, and writing is the very unfolding — unfolding of being, language, thought, hence, truth. It appears only to present what it *is* and what it is *not* at the same time. This contradiction that is inherent to being and language can be presented and expressed only trough literature through writing. Explaining this nature of literature, Blanchot writes,

> '[l]iterature is made of words, and these words work a continuous transmutation from the real to the unreal and from the unreal to the real: they breathe in events, real details, tangible things, and project them into an imaginary real and offer it as actual. This activity that makes us live what we know as if it were unknown, and regard as true what we could never live at all, must sometimes necessarily give the one who practices it, the feeling of a remarkable power, such that he can, thanks to it, make discoveries and learn more than he knows.'[484]

Accordingly, literature through writing is a way through which one makes certain discoveries; but, these discoveries are not aimed or targeted in advance. Instead, they are invented in the process of writing.

Nevertheless, they cannot be discarded as not-knowledge. They express and communicate a reality, truth, knowledge, and a real condition that could be experienced existentially. The unavoidable contradiction that is inherent in the context of being, language, life, and death, thus, together emerge through writing by presenting language and being as nothing but the very contradiction that never leads

[483] Blanchot, 1995b, p. 192
[484] Ibid, p. 194

to any definition, meaning, reality, truth or knowledge in the form of *as such*. It is this contradiction that leads to confusions in a way that one is not aware of *what* or *who* one is; and thus becomes a stranger to one's own self. This non-identity that breeds within one's own self without one's awareness delivers nothing but the obscure – the Thomas, who is not identical to his own self, yet bearing the same name – Thomas-for all.

This profound philosophy that Blanchot offers through his writings, cannot be discarded for it appears through fictions, instead, as Blanchot argues, there is no better way other than fiction to philosophize and become philosophical. In this sense, not only he erases the line that demarcates literature or fiction from philosophy and truth, but also he redeems philosophy from the *given* notion of philosophy. Hence, philosophy is deconstructed in a way that philosophy is nothing but literature and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

This study "**An Investigative Study of 'Radical Passivity' in Philosophical and Literary Discourses**" consists of four chapters preceded by an introduction. In relation to the question of being, death, and language, the idea of *radical passivity*, as presented by Maurice Blanchot, is analyzed in the present study. Taking poststructuralist approach to being, death, and language, the study discusses the impossibility of defining being and death in any absolute sense.

So doing, it lays its emphasis on two things: one is the impossibility of creating perpetual totalities; and, the other is the necessity of deconstructing totalities. Here, the study discusses the idea of totality while highlighting its problematic closure that is constructed by excluding the other. This closure is that of the self where self enjoys the sovereign power, through which the other is subjugated to the order of the self. It is in this context that the significance of relation between the self and the other, in addressing the question of being and death, is brought into the discussion. Accordingly, this relation has been projected as that which is unavoidable since being is always in relation with the other due to its exposure to outside. In addition, it disenables the possibility of continuity of self-sameness, as the other *interrupts* the closure of the self. However, the idea of death is crucial to this relationship of the self with the other, since death is considered to be the end of life, hence, of every relation made in life — it is an absolute end. It is in this context that the study explores the idea of death.

Accordingly, the first chapter discusses how ideas of *being* and *death* have been casted by Heidegger and Levinas, for Heideggerian and Levinasian philosophies are crucial in understanding the ideas of *being* and *death*. Though Blanchot's philosophy closely shares and reflects Levinasian philosophy of *self* and the *other*, within which ethical responsibility toward the other is emphasized, the study states the necessity of placing Levinasian views in juxtaposition to Heideggerian views. Heidegger's ideas certainly play a major role in dealing with the question of being and death. The central idea of Heidegger's *Being and Time* is based on the question of

"what is being?" In order to find an answer to this question, Heidegger projects his ideas on death, within which death is shown as the End of the being.

As he shows, the being in everyday world is not a pure being or pure self; instead, it is the *inauthentic being* where self is mixed with *they-selves*. Heidegger has been concerned to the question of becoming the authentic Self by cutting off from the they-selves. In Heidegger's view, death is the only way through which the being is able to realize its own self. Consequently, death is seen as the possibility of the Self — *I*, and this idea seems to dispel some negativity that was attached to death. Therefore, in the context of Western philosophy, Heidegger's ideas have been indispensable in dealing with the question of being and death. Nonetheless, highlighting death as the possibility of the self, Heidegger has targeted to eliminate the other.

The second part of the first chapter deals with Levinasian ideas on being and death. His philosophy plays a major role in shaping Blanchot's ideas on being, death, and language; as well as in producing a critique of Heidegger's ideas founded on self-sameness. These two major reasons highlight the extreme importance of Levinasian views in the current study. In contrast to Heidegger, Levinas underscores the necessity of the presence of the other, for one cannot derive oneself from one's own self. It is the existence of the other that is most important for the survival of the self. Therefore, in the first chapter, I make an attempt to project this significance of the other by projecting the relation between self and the other in terms of ethical responsibility. Accordingly, the presence of the other and the relation with the other is shown as unavoidable and indispensable due to the exteriority *beyond* the self — the outside. Self is *not able to be* aware of coming of the other. Levinas gives a great deal to this idea of *coming of the other* while making the other autonomous and powerful than the self. In this coming, the other breaks into the space of the self and tears the totality of the self. The other, also, questions the spontaneity of the self. This is a command; also a demand that is made by the other, and the self is not able to escape this call. The opening up of the self to the other as a response to the call, is a responsibility kept by the self in terms of an ethical exigency. It is in relation to this idea of responsibility through response, that the chapter brings Levinasian idea of language into the discussion.

However, the nature of Levinasian otherness is undecidable and unpredictable. Levinas analyzes this nature also as the nature of death. He positions death and the other in the same zone. In this context, the chapter seeks to understand how the other i.e. presented by Levinas, becomes an infinite other who continues to come to the self even beyond death. It is here Levinas underscores the notion of "remainder" — an idea that later finds a great significance in shaping the philosophies of Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Derrida. The idea implies the impossibility of realizing anything in its absoluteness. In that sense, even at death, self is not able to realize its absolute self due to the presence of the other. Since death is one of the modalities of the other, the unknowability of death continues to remain in the sense that self can never have a complete understanding of its own death. Therefore, Levinas affirms the very impossibility of this death as *the end*. He does not say whether it is nothingness or a commencement. He sees it as something that is never fully knowable. It is the wholly other, of whom the self cannot have a full understanding due to its transcendental nature. However, the latter part of the chapter briefly discusses the problematic of Levinasian idea of death too, that suggests death as that which is infinitely unknowable. Along with this critique, the chapter asserts the importance of Blanchot's philosophy of being and death.

The second chapter deals with the idea of subject and discourse within which Lacanian and Foucaultian ideas are significantly discussed. Since the ideas of self-consciousness and intentionality have become very prominent in Western Philosophical tradition, the study required a particular chapter on the notion of subject. The chapter begins by highlighting the idea of consciousness which runs throughout Heidegger's analysis on authentic being in relation to death. The awareness of authentic being that Heidegger emphasizes, is an awareness essentially tied to the *conscious being* — the Self-conscious being. Accordingly, the awareness enables self to unite with its own Self at death. Consequently, being is able to be self-conscious even at death; therefore, self-consciousness becomes an ability which makes the self powerful over the other, also though which self recognizes its own self in terms of *I*. This ability is that which is related to thinking; one is able to think as *I*. In that sense, it is a thinking being that is discussed by Heidegger. However, what does being think when he thinks in terms of *I*? It is with regard to this question, the study finds relevance of the idea of subject. Accordingly, first part of the second

chapter attempts to understand the meaning of the word *subject* within which two kinds of meanings are discussed. One is in relation to the domain of linguistics, especially in the field of syntax and grammar; the other is related to the domain of psychoanalysis. Among these two, the second one is extensively discussed, since it is based on the idea of power, domination, and subordination, which is more relevant to the question of being; while at the same time, the idea of subject that is seen within the domain of linguistics itself is projected as a production of that mechanism of power. The notions of being and death become complex only when they are located in the context of subject, as the idea of subject posits being as an individual who enters a discourse of power. In this regard, Lacanian notion of subject helps us to understand how being is *subjugated* to the power of the discourse.

Lacanian subject is a *powerless* subject. However, in probing the Lacanian idea of subject that is kept under the powerful discourse, one major question that comes up within the analysis is: how do we understand and analyze the power that is generated within everyday life of the subject which unfolds in the grid of power that is enacted and maintained by subject itself? How far can we agree with the idea that the subject is powerless? It is in relation to this question that the chapter places the notion of subject that is presented by Michel Foucault. Taking a different approach than that of Lacan's to address the idea of subject, Foucault sees subject as a powerful subject. Here, he posits two contrary terms, *powerful* and *subject* against each other and shows how man becomes the subject and powerful at the same time. Analyzing the role of discourse in constructing and shaping the subject, Foucault brings out the relationship between the subject and the discourse as that which cannot be separated from each other, because, their existence is reciprocally created and maintained. This idea is extensively discussed in the chapter while viewing culture, community, religion, education, and so on as institutions which are operative as systems and mechanisms of power. The chapter underscores the hegemonic power of culture as a threat to individual freedom. This discussion is taken forward with reference to Nietzsche's ideas on humanism, culture, freedom, death, and art — within which the experience of crudeness of being and freedom is projected as an art to be practiced.

However, addressing the notion of subject, the second chapter emphasizes the idea of otherness that is unavoidable in the context of the self, which is *I subject*, despite the hegemony of culture and community that is operative in repressing and

subjugating that otherness. So doing, it demands to go *beyond* the domain of subject through death in order to experience freedom through becoming being which is pure in terms of *crudeness*. This idea of pure or authentic is contrary to the notion of *authentic being* that is discussed by Heidegger.

The third and fourth chapters of the present study deal with Maurice Blanchot's thoughts on being and death. The third chapter explores Blanchot idea of being and death where his views on language through writing become pivotal. Nonetheless, the necessity of Blanchot's philosophy in understanding death is introduced in the chapter through Jacques Derrida's critique on being and death that is presented in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Since the first chapter already asserts the problematic of Heidegger's and Levinasian philosophy, the third chapter demands the necessity of going beyond the philosophical tradition that analyzes death as a border of life. However, Derrida, in his argument, especially in *Aporias*, opposes this notion of pure possibility of cutting off from the other in death. Therefore, at first, the chapter gives a great deal to Derrida's arguments that are placed with certain problematic concepts strongly rooted within Western philosophical tradition. Subsequently, the problematic of the idea of border, limit, and crossing that is important in understanding the idea of death, has been explored with reference to Derrida's views. Here, it places the significant suggestion by Derrida that demands for a different reading of Heideggerian expression on death which is "the possibility of impossibility". Derrida's demand is inspired by the way in which the particular expression is read by Blanchot in his understanding on death.

The second part of the chapter deals with Blanchot's idea on death and being. Here, the chapter sees how Blanchot addresses the question of death, within which the idea of *proper death* or *dying properly* is questioned. So doing, it presents how Blanchot contributes in discussing certain problems that are central not only to philosophy *as such*, but also to life of being itself. In his understanding of the idea of death, he raises the question of totality, power, freedom, and truth while emphasizing the impossibility of totality in absolute sense. It is here that Blanchot's philosophy of language through writing finds its greater significance, as he projects writing as the very locus of being, death, and life. Hence, within Blanchot's philosophy, language through writing becomes central in understanding the idea of death. He shows the existing knowledge or philosophy of death as baffling, as it is caught up within the

language of dominant philosophical tradition that hesitates to go beyond the *given* by opening up to the other; also which searches for a *properness* or as *suchness* of everything. Then, the chapter probes into the idea of outside that unfolds throughout Blanchot's philosophy, within which the relation between the self and the other is explored while asserting the necessity of opening up to the other by breaching the existing totality of the self in order to experience the Self which is beyond and other than the *I* subject. According to Blanchot, this opening up of the self is possible only through language through writing. His idea of language explains how language becomes language further through writing, as language is metamorphosed through writing.

It is in relation to the idea of language through writing that Blanchot draws his understanding of being and death. Accordingly, writing is seen as that which happens at the death of the self. At this point, chapter projects the idea of *radical passivity* that is discussed by Blanchot especially in *The Writing of the Disaster*. Blanchot demands the necessity of death of the *I subject* so that self becomes Self by becoming *other* — other than the subject. This death that he demands is in the *given* language. In this context, Blanchot urges us to think of *what* or *who* comes after the death of the *I subject*, and whose language is that which we are to hear then on. Here, the chapter discusses Blanchot's idea of silence and murmur.

In analyzing the idea of being and death discussed by Blanchot, the chapter highlights the impossibility of finding being, death, and language or literature in their own isolations, for they are inseparable from each other when the question of being and death is addressed beyond the idea of subject. It is so, because being is always *more than* and *beyond* subject. It keeps becoming *other than* the subject and it happens through the *rupture* of the self. In this context, Blanchot makes us question ourselves —how often do we go through such ruptures within ourselves? How many times are we metamorphosed in life?

Experiencing death as *I* subject and become another *I* at the same time, which is not identical to the same in terms of the continuity of self-sameness, challenges the traditional idea of death which posits death as the *last point* of life or *the End* of life. Blanchot shows death as that which can never be appropriated to any definition or understanding *as such*. As discussed in the chapter, he views death as a *limit* or a

rupture, which brings discontinuities to life; yet, it is certainly not *the* death, *the* limit, or *the* end. Blanchot's idea of death goes beyond the *empirical* death. While he is not concerned about the *proper death*; at the same time, he *awaits* that death. Nevertheless, in waiting, what he realizes is not the proper death, but the very *death* of certain *properness*. In that sense, Blanchot is concerned about the death which is confusedly called life. It is in relation to this notion that Blanchot's idea of death becomes more significant and challenging.

Fourth chapter explores the complex idea of death and life offered by Blanchot through his philosophical and literary works. In this regard, it is important to mention that I am not able to refer to all the works of Blanchot in the present study due to certain constraints. Moreover, some of his texts that are referred to throughout the study are English translations, as almost all of his works are written in French. Therefore, my understanding of Blanchot's philosophy of being, death, and language is within this limited space determined by the very problem of language. However, keeping these two factors in mind, the present study is carried ahead by looking into some of Blanchot's works which are basically novellas. Accordingly, *The Idyll*, *Thomas the Obscure*, *Death Sentence*, *When the Time Comes*, *The Last Word*, *The Madness of the Day*, and *Awaiting Oblivion* are analyzed in the fourth chapter. Apart from these literary works, the chapter also majorly refers to his philosophical works i.e. *The Step Not Beyond*, *Space of Literature*, *The Infinite Conversation*, *The Writing of the Disaster*, and *Literature and Right to Death*.

Taking the above mentioned works by Blanchot into close consideration, the last chapter presents Blanchot's approach to the question of being and death, within which Blanchot is found to be someone who is unable to produce any coherent definition of life or death. Blanchot's ideas are placed in a greater confusion and contradiction which complicates all kinds of *given* knowledge of life, death, and being. This confusion is taken positively throughout the chapter by explaining the confusion and contradiction as that which produce innumerable doubts, and, thereby, throw being into an infinite conversation with its own self as the very locus of generating thought, philosophy, language, being, life, and death ceaselessly. So doing, chapter emphasizes the impossibility of having any precise and accurate knowledge of being, life, and death, because, being is nothing but a space of confusions, contradictions, and complexities. That is the crudeness of being, and the space of

literature through writing is the domain where the above mentioned nature of being unfolds without any negation.

The study, then, explores the idea of radical passivity that is presented by Blanchot in and through his writings. However, some of his works are literary works which often appear as novellas while some are philosophical essays. Nonetheless, some of those essays do not have a proper form of an essay; rather, they appear as fragments. *Writing of the Disaster*, *The Step Not Beyond*, and *Awaiting Oblivion* are examples for such fragmentary writings. Apart from these two kinds of writings, Blanchot also produced enormous body of writing which discusses literary works of other writers, such as Kafka, Hölderlin, Rilke, Joyce, and Melville. These particular essays which are based on works by other writers, present Blanchot's unique vision of language, literature, life, and truth. He problematizes the validity of *given* borders that distinguish reality from fiction, literature from philosophy, life from death, and so on. He shows how these spaces, very often, run into each other and blur the borders. In that sense, it can be said that Blanchot draws the relation that keeps *one* in relation to the *other* across and beyond all the borders in the context of being.

However, though the present study addresses all the intended research questions and objectives that were set initially while explaining the necessity and relevance of engaging in this study, as noted above, it is an impossible task to read and be familiar with Blanchot's works in the sense that he produced enormous body of works within which each work finds its own unique significance due to the deep philosophy that is conveyed within. Especially, in his literary works, he does not provide us any particular idea of his own. He does not say anything in particular about anything. On the other hand, without saying anything in particular, he says everything in a way that everything becomes extremely significant. It is not possible to justify the selection of only certain works of Blanchot. Nonetheless, it is the limitation of time due to which certain literary works by Blanchot, like *Aminadab*, *The One who was Standing Apart from Me*, could not be included in this study.

Moreover, even the works that are examined in this study should be re-read and re-worked on, for there is still much to *re*-search within them in relation to the same question of being, death, and language. Therefore, the present study also appears as a demand, which asserts the necessity of probing into Blanchot's works further in a

way that his works along with his philosophy are re-produced and re-worked through constant engagement. It, thus, opens up the space for further studies regarding the same issues.

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