



THE CONCEPT OF AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE IN EXISTENTIALISM

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In the name of Allah who guides entire humanity towards knowledge, truth and eternal joys

*This work is Dedicated
To
The Memory of My Dada
And To
My Beloved Parents*

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Dated

Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis “**The Concept of Authentic Existence in Existentialism**” submitted by **Mr. Diwan Taskheer Khan** for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of Philosophy, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, is a record of bonafide research work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance. It has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Preeti Sayeed.

(Preeti Sayeed)
Supervisor

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CONTENTS

	Page. No.
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	<i>i - ii</i>
Preface: The Idea of Authenticity	1 - 11
Chapter-I Exploring Existentialism: Some Recurrent Themes	12 - 38
Chapter-II Soren A. Kierkegaard: An Irrational Passion	39 - 68
Chapter-III Martin Buber: Meeting Through Dialogue	69 - 85
Chapter-IV Paul Tillich: Inspirations of Ultimate Concern	86 - 113
Chapter-V Karl Jaspers: Illumination of Existenz	114 - 138
Chapter-VI Gabriel Marcel: Encounter in Creative Fidelity	139 - 161
Chapter-VII Jean-Paul Sartre: Creating Meaning in a Meaningless World	162 - 191
Chapter-VIII Martin Heidegger: Awakening From Lostness in the They	192 - 231
Chapter-IX A Summing Up: Reaching Authentic Existence	232 - 253
Postscript	254 - 256
Selected Bibliography	257 - 290

Preface :
The Idea of Authenticity

PREFACE

The Idea of Authenticity

It is sometimes suggested that existentialism is a bygone cultural movement rather than an identifiable philosophical position. Some critics of existentialism have gone so far as to announce its death claiming that nothing of any relevance remains to be explored further. However a thought can be considered as living which holds the potentiality to encourage activity and a capacity to reorganize certain forms of behaviour, i.e. to move people either to feel, or to think, or to act in a specific manner. It is true that as a cultural movement, existentialism belongs to the past but as a philosophical inquiry that introduced a new norm, namely *authenticity*, for understanding what it means to be human – a norm tied to a distinctive, post-Cartesian concept of the self as a practical, embodied being-in-the-world – existentialism has continued to be of immense importance to contemporary thought. The society for phenomenology and existential philosophy, as well as societies devoted to Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Jaspers, Marcel, Simone de Beauvoir and other existential philosophers, provide a forum for ongoing work – both of a historical, scholarly nature and of more systematic focus – that derives from classical existentialism, often bringing it into confrontation with more recent movements such as structuralism, deconstruction, hermeneutics, and feminism.

After years of being out of fashion in France, existential motifs have once again prominence in the works of leading thinkers. Foucault's embrace of a certain concept of freedom, and his exploration of the 'care of the self', recall debates within existentialism, as does Derrida's work on religion without God and his reflections on the concepts of death, choice, and responsibility. A re-

appraisal of the legacy of existentialism has become an important agenda for contemporary philosophy. In some sense, existentialism's very notoriety as a cultural movement may have impeded its serious philosophical reception. It may be that what we have most to learn from existentialism still lies before us.

While a philosophical definition of existentialism may not entirely ignore the cultural fate of the term, the concept picks out a distinctive cluster of philosophical problems and meaningfully identifies a relatively distinct current of twentieth and now twenty-first century philosophical inquiry – one that has significant impact on fields such as theology and psychology as well. What makes this current of inquiry distinctive is not its concern with 'existence' in general, but rather its claim that thinking about human existence requires new categories not found in the conceptual repertoire of ancient or modern thought; human beings can be understood neither as substances with fixed properties, nor as atomic subjects primarily inter lacing with a world of objects.

The term authenticity is used in contexts so diverse that it resists any identification. However the most crucial problem that arises in trying to define it lies in the philosophical nature of its meaning. Even to say 'the nature of meaning' implies an essentialism, which happens to be a perspective of objectivity absolutely alien to authenticity. As Sartre pointed out, authenticity does not denote 'objective qualities' which are qualities predicted of 'the person', in the same way as one asserts, for instance, that the table is round or square'. The notion of authenticity signifies something beyond the domain of objective language as opposed to attributes to which language can refer to directly.

The existentialists reiterate that to acquire an understanding of a human being, it is not enough to know all the truths that natural science – including the

science of psychology – could deliver. The non-reductive dualist has no advantage in this regard over the physicalist. Nor does it suffice to adopt the point of view of practice and add categories drawn from moral theories. Thus neither scientific nor moral inquiry can completely capture what it is that makes me myself my ‘own most’ self. With due regard to the validity of scientific categories which are governed by the norm of truth and to moral categories upholding the norms of the good and the right existentialism may best be described as the philosophical theory which confirms that a further set of categories, governed by the norm of authenticity, is necessary to grasp human existence in its entirety. To approach existentialism through this categorical route may seem to conceal what is often taken to be its ‘heart’ – (Kaufmann, 1968, p. 12) namely, its character as a gesture of protest against academic philosophy, its anti-system sensibility, its departure from the ‘iron cage of reason’. But while it is true that the major existential philosophers wrote with a passion and urgency rather uncommon to our times, and while the idea that philosophy cannot be practiced in the disinterested manner of an objective science is indeed central to existentialism it is of utmost importance that all the themes popularly associated with existentialism – dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom, commitment, nothingness and so on – find their philosophical significance in the context of the search for a new categorical framework, together with authenticity as its governing norms.

The quest for authenticity acquires a certain urgency in extreme situations which are confined not only to personal and external crises, but also significant social and historical crises such as that arising from the decline of the powerful and long-ending ethos of objectivity, rationality and enlightenment. Recalling Nietzsche’s terms, this era of the *twilight of the idols* and the *death of God*

reopens the issues of personal identity and meaning frequently referred to as central dilemmas of the postmodern world.

Existentialism arises with the collapse of the idea that philosophy can provide substantive norms for existing, ones that specify a particular way of life. Nevertheless, there remains the distinction between what is done as 'myself' and as 'anyone', so in the sense existing is something that either succeeds or fails. Authenticity in German, *Eigentlichkeit* – names that attitude in which an engage with one's projects is taken as ones own (*eigen*).

Thus, the norm of authenticity refers to a kind of 'transparency' with regard to ones situation with a recognition that I am a being who can be responsible for who I am. A choice made in the light of this norm as the guiding principle becomes instrumental in the recovery of the self from alienation, from absorption in the anonymous 'one-self' that characterizes a person in his everyday engagement in the world. Authenticity, thus, indicates a certain kind of integrity which is not a pre-given whole but that of a project to which I can either commit myself and thus become what it entails or else simply occupy for a time, inauthentically drifting in and out of various affairs. To take it further, the measure of an authentic life lies in the integrity of a narrative that to be a self is to constitute a story in which a kind of wholeness prevails, to be the author of oneself as a unique individual. In contrast, the inauthentic life would be one without such integrity, one in which I allow my life-story to be dictated by the world.

Authenticity defines a condition on self-making. The problem to be dealt with becomes *do I succeed in making myself, or will who I am merely be a function of the roles I find myself in?* thus, to be authentic can also be thought as

a way of being autonomous. In choosing ‘resolutely’ – that is, in committing myself to a certain course of action, a certain way of being in the world. The inauthentic person, in contrast, merely occupies such a role and may do so ‘irresolutely’ without commitment. It is here that existentialism locates the singularity of existence and identifies what is irreducible in the first person stance. At the same time authenticity does not hold out some specific way of life as a norm: It does not distinguish between projects that I might choose. Instead it governs the manner in which I am engaged in such projects – either as ‘my own’ or a what one does transparently or opaquely.

Thus, existentialism’s focus on authenticity generally leads to a distinctive stance towards ethics and value-theory. The possibility of authenticity is a mark of my freedom, and it is through freedom that existentialism approaches questions of value, leading to many of its most recognizable doctrines.

The question arises can authenticity be a viable ethical norm or is it a romantic ideal, an immature protest against the leveling process of the unidimensional objectivity that dominates the modern, excessively technological civilization. Most existentialists in one way or another committed themselves in postulating authenticity as an ideal that is necessary if we are to become what we are given a cultural and social context that undermines authentic selfhood.

In existentialist ethics, authenticity “refers to an individual’s autonomy in making moral choices that are not bound by society’s norms... (It)... replaces conformity and shifts moral choices from the society to the individual. ... *Authentic person acts from a sense of innate principles and does not depend on social acceptance for his or her standards of ethics*” (Roth, 1996, p. 69). The

term 'authenticity' opposes the objectivity. It does not point towards any particular mode of existence. Existentialists advocate that individual is the ultimate authority of value. It holds that "we create our authenticity: it is not delivered to us by higher authorities" (Golomb, 1995, p. 25).

The existentialist encourages, creativity, originality and radically different patterns of life. Authentic existential behaviour is truly original, not determined by social influence. It enshrines a search for unique, unoccupied modes of existence. In doing so a clear demarcation between sincerity and authenticity has been drawn. Sincerity is the agreement between what one speaks, does and feels. Authenticity is boldly revealing the essence of the persons; not a given essence but a created one. Authenticity suggests "a more strenuous moral experience than 'sincerity' does, a more exigent conception of the self and of what being true to it consists in, a wider reference to the universe and man's place in it, and a less acceptant and genial view of the social circumstances of life" (Trilling, 1972, p. 11). Sincerity simply refers to correspondence between attitudes and actions, between moral code and moral action whereas authenticity is the defies any such correspondence for it has no reference to anything static. It is a relentless ongoing self-creation with its gaze beyond any consequences.

The existentialists do not offer rational arguments to convince us of the need for authenticity because it is in their spirit to doubt objectivity and rationality. They make use of various literary styles to induce the reader changing from one literary form to another defying any systematization. Heidegger resorted to lectures, essays, dialogues and poetry. While others made use of short stories, novels, poems, aphoristic essays, fictions, diaries, biographies and autobiographies as a medium of their expressions. The purpose behind this form

of exposition was to evoke in the reader a sense of the pathos of authenticity. Their aim was to restore the lost willpower of the individual that leads to a sense of selfhood. It was, “to block off certain avenues of escape and bring about fundamental changes in our lives, ... (they)...use fictional portraits and dramatic descriptions of extreme situations, it is up to us to create our own selves” (Golomb, 1995, p. 25). Instead of arguing, they portrayed heroic and original patterns of life with great power. Their effort has been to encourage the reader to choose random types of action since the ‘*how*’ is more important than the ‘*what*’.

Thus, in existentialist philosophy, authenticity means creating our own comprehensive life-meanings – our ‘Authentic-project of being’. When we recenter and reintegrate our lives around our feely choosen purposes, we become more focused, unified and decisive. We gain greater autonomy and increase our capacity to resist and transcend enculturation. This approach to life was developed by such existential philosophers as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Camus and so on clearly guiding the individual to uniquely evolve the contents that would occupy the structure of authentic existence.

We notice that from a particular point of view, the existentialists are roughly divided between writers and philosophers. The philosophical existentialists are further divided between theistic and atheistic. The theistic existentialist, Soren Kierkegaard ‘the ultimate anti-Christianity Christian’ was considered to be the father of them all and friedrich Nietzsche ‘the ultimate anti-christ philosopher’ was a crucial figure at the origins of the development of atheistic existentialism. Religious existentialists include both; Jews such as Martin Buber ‘the Protestant Jew’ and Christians such as Paul Tillich. Other religious existentialists include Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel. The atheistic

existentialists include Martin Heidegger ‘the non-Christian atheist though he denied that he was an existentialist, and Jean-Paul-Sartre the ultimate atheist.

Today the ideal of existential authenticity is not only of no concern to analytic philosophers, who in any case have never been keen on it, but also other traditions. However if authenticity really be such a redundant and irrelevant notion then an inclination to explore more than a century-long continental involvement with it would be natural.

This work seeks to explore the thoughts of a few thinkers held together in their effort to understand and set out the concept of authenticity though means that were truly existential in nature. The selection however is not arbitrary. An effort has been made to bring together a broad gamut of positions; similar in as much they bear the mark of existentialism and dissimilar in the nature of the journey they chose towards the one common goal – the idea of authenticity.

The structure of our thesis is simple and direct. The chapterisation observes the major bifurcation present in the expression of existentialism. We first deal with the positions held by Kierkegaard, Buber, Tillich, Jaspers, and Marcel respectively as exponents of theistic existentialism followed by an expression of atheistic existentialism, the proponents being Sartre and Heidegger.

In the *first chapter* entitled, “Exploration of Existentialism: Some Recurrent Themes” we have explore the historical background of existentialism, the causes responsible for the emergence of the movement, and some recurrent themes like, existence, freedom and most importantly authenticity.

The *second chapter* is entitled “An Irrational Passion”. In this chapter we make a study of Kierkegaard’s two tired attack i.e. upon Hegelianism and

Christianity, followed by his exposition of the three stages of life. We find that the most authentic moment, for him resides in the religious stage, where an individual surrenders himself unconditionally in a surge of an *irrational passion* before the will of God.

The *third* and *fourth chapters* deal with two philosophers of *Neo-orthodoxy*, namely Martin Buber and Paul Tillich respectively. The *third chapter* entitled “Meeting Through Dialogue” dealing with the philosophy of Martin Buber indicates that authenticity can be gained only in the genuine dialogue between two individuals. His notion of authenticity lies in his formation to the *I-Thou* and *I-It* relationship. An individual can discover his true authentic existence when he treats other fellow beings as *Thou* rather than an *It*.

Paul Tillich, the second philosopher of Neo-orthodoxy has been dealt with in the *fourth chapter*, entitled “Inspirations of Ultimate Concern”. Tillich was of the conviction that when an individual transcends from the courage to be as a part and the courage to be as oneself or from the God of Mysticism and the God of theism then he comes face to face with an absolute faith which he calls ‘God beyond God’. This absolute faith, he says, should be the *ultimate concern*. This ultimate concern, according to him, determines our being and non-being. In absolute faith which is an ultimate concern authentic existence is revealed.

The *fifth chapter* entitled “Illumination of Existenz” deals with Jaspers, who points out that the realization of authenticity is actualised through the channels of *communication*. Jaspers considers philosophizing to a movement of transcending the world of empirical and rational realities, not on account of any dogmatic commitments but by a kind of revelation revealed in the phrase *the illumination of existenz*.

In the *sixth chapter* entitled “Encounter in Creative Fidelity” we have dealt with philosophy of Marcel who professes a primacy of faith which alone holds the promise of a meaningful life. He holds that the individual can discover his authenticity only under the condition that the subject-object dichotomy be dissolved. This dichotomy of subject and object is dissolved in *creative fidelity*, which unites ‘me’ and ‘thee’ into an unbreakable cohesion.

Chapter seven entitled “Creating Meaning in a Meaningless World” is a departure to a study of atheistic existentialism where we bring in consideration the philosophical ideas of the major force behind the inception and sustainance of the entire movement: Jean - Paul Sartre. Authenticity for Sartre primarily involves acknowledging the realities of the human condition and explicitly accepting their consequences. This entails accepting the power to choose anew in each situation, taking on the situation – rather than trying to ignore or distance oneself from it, and accepting responsibility for choices and the model they offer to others in similar circumstances. Thus, an authentic individual, according to Sartre, is one who accepts his situation as it truly is; who does not flee from it in self-delusion. He accepts the responsibilities and dangers that his situation involves fully conscious of the finality of his decision - making.

Chapter eight moves on to Martin Heidegger, the title of the chapter being “Awakening from Lostness in the They”. Heidegger’s account of authenticity and inauthenticity is largely based on a fundamental *crisis* i.e. the *forgetfulness* of the *question of Being*. He equates forgetfulness with ‘inauthenticity’ while on the other hand, the overcoming and recollection of this forgetfulness is ‘authenticity’. Both ‘authenticity’ and ‘inauthenticity’, according to him, are the possible ways for Dasein to-be-in-the-world. Dasein as to-be-in-

the-world, is inclined to be content with things, lose itself among the things of the world, and forget himself as that unique being which has a special openness to Being. As Dasein is a being of fallenness, it will never fully escape from this tendency. At certain moments however, Dasein obtains a sense of the uniqueness of its own being, of the finite openness to Being that Dasein is. It is this self-comprehension which marks the authenticity or the overcoming of the crisis of forgetfulness.

The *last chapter* titled “A Summing Up: Reaching Authentic Existence” consist of a final interlacing of the broad gamut of committed positions taken up by the existentialist philosopher under consideration in the course of this dissertation. It explores how authenticity located in the existentialist milieu takes on a distinctive stance towards ethics and value-theory clearly stating that the possibility of authenticity is a mark of an individual’s *freedom*. It is through freedom that existentialism approaches questions of value, leading to many of its most recognizable doctrines. But instead of normative ethics they make their arguments on the metaethical level which is based on freedom.

A clear cut conclusion would perhaps become absolutely antithetical to the idea of authenticity hence a postscript imparts the final words to this humble study

Chapter – I

**Exploring Existentialism:
Some Recurrent Themes**

Exploring Existentialism: Some Recurrent Themes

Existence-philosophy is the way of thought by means of which man seeks to become himself; it makes use of expert knowledge while at the same time going beyond it. (Jaspers, 1959, p. 159)

Existentialism is a twentieth century movement which involves itself with the problems and conditions that are in direct relation to man and the life that he lives. It rescues philosophy from the clutches of empty abstractions with a purpose to shift the focus of their enquiry to the concrete existence of human beings. Instead of identifying itself as a specialized theoretical discipline existentialism is a commitment to an existence which encapsulates a complete vision of man and his interactions with the world he lives in, an endeavour common to the Greek philosophers. Unlike the past philosophies beginning from Plato down to Hegel which takes a reductionist point of view regarding the understanding of man, existentialism instead has attempted to gather all the elements of human reality in creating a comprehensive picture of man. It does not confine itself to one predominant aspect of human reality i.e. man as a rational or essential being but goes beyond any partisan approach in trying to grapple with human reality in all its multifaceted dimensions. The following remark captures the existentialist impulse with great cogency:

“The system of traditional philosophy and modern science have reduced man to an abstraction; whatever the system may be, within it, man is functionally defined as part of a network of concepts draining him of individual identity. Thus, he becomes the ‘rational animal’ of Aristotle, the ‘homoeconomicus’ of Adam Smith, a Marxian specimen of class-consciousness and so on”. (Gill, 1973, p. 14)

man in its entirety even if it were to involve a consideration of all that may be dark and questionable in his existence.

‘Emphasis on human existence’ in a way becomes the beginning of a description of existentialism, but any description would lack the precision required for use in reference to the modern movement; for existentialism’s concern about man grows out of specifically modern conditions and concludes in quite a unique position. Among these conditions are the loss of the individual in mass culture and technology, the consequent alienation of the human person from himself as well as from his productions, and the loss of meaning in life through divisions within the human spirit. The result of these conditions is frequently called the ‘existential experience’. Recorded by many artists and writers as well as philosophers, it is, in sum, an experience of the decomposition of our phenomenal world – first of all rational concepts, next of objects, then of time and history, until finally all coherence is gone to a point where one faces only despair. Sometimes also called an experience of crisis, it has arisen in times of social and personal catastrophe in our century. However, existentialism should not be understood to be a philosophy of despair, for indicative of the existentialist attitude is the existential experience that becomes instrumental in the formation of an important philosophical alternative with its focus being human existence. Other philosophies also study man; but they view him in terms of some concept or essence derived from reason. The existentialists oppose such traditional conceptualism and its abstract general concept of existence. They believe that what man is can only be determined from how he is. Man’s essence is to be found only in his concrete existence. The desire to know the meaning of

the individual man in a more radical way than other philosophers have sought leads the existentialists to hold that the starting point of philosophy is the exploration of the concrete situation of man in the world.

Alisdair MacIntyre in his book *Existentialism* delineates some central recurrent themes in existentialist writings to be those of intentionality, being and absurdity, freedom and choice, angst and death which are dealt with in one form or another in all existentialist writings with a focus on the concrete situations that a human being encounters. To remain faithful to their enterprise the existentialists often abandon Western philosophy's traditional argumentative modes of expression, in favour of a less rigid and a more evocative style. Literature and theatre become as important as philosophical treatises for exploring the themes considered to be seminal by the existentialists. Linda Patrik comments, "Existential literature provides easier access to existentialism than do the non-fictional, philosophical works of existentialists, especially for readers unfamiliar with the jargon and argument style of twentieth-century European philosophy". (Patrik, 2001, p. xi) Most existentialist thinkers wrote systematic treatises but the sheer bulk of their literary contribution is noteworthy. The existentialists use of literature certainly enhanced the popularity of the movement. Patrik says that the existentialists "forged a connection between philosophy and literature that has not since been duplicated." (Patrik, 2001, p.xi)

Existentialism happens to be without any doubt the best publicized of all the developments in contemporary thought. It is difficult to understand existentialism for it resists any attribution of a precise description or a crisp definition. The task becomes even more difficult as it cannot be arranged neatly

in the form of a system, school or creed nor does it present a particular set of clear cut tenets to be propounded or endorsed. Marcel says:

“Hardly a day goes by without my being asked what is existentialism. It is perhaps hardly surprising that my answers tend to be evasive. I should like to say, ‘It is too difficult’, or ‘it would take too long to explain’ but I realize that such answers are disappointing and cannot be given too often”. (Cited in Gill, 1973, p. 03)

Oaklander in his book *Existentialist Philosophy* challenges the communicability of the subject matter of existentialism making use of an interesting argument. He says it seems impossible to communicate to someone else what it is to be a particular, existing individual, because communication involves the universal and “since the individual as such cannot be thought, it follows that what it is to be an individual cannot be described or directly communicated”. (Oaklander, 1996, p. 06) Another reason why he considers the subject matter of existentialism to be incommunicable is that the human individual is in a constant process of becoming for what would be communicated one moment would be falsified the very next moment by the constant transformation of the human individual subjectivity.

If Oaklander's argument is to be accepted then it would be futile to study existentialism. He observes “what existentialists say about the structure of human existence is existentially relevant only if we choose to see it in relation to our own life, incorporate it into our life, and become involved in an intensely personal act of self-transformation as a consequence of it. Only then can we ‘know’ the subject matter of existentialism. Such ‘knowledge’ or ‘self awareness’ cannot be directly communicated, but must be lived.” (Oaklander, 1996, p. 08)

In his much publicized lecture of 1946, *Existentialism is a Humanism* Sartre says, “existentialism, in our sense of the word, is a doctrine that does render human life possible” and in addition, declares that “every truth and every action imply...a human subjectivity”. (Sartre, 1948, p. 24) He also says, “there is no other universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity”. He gives his famous formula “existence precedes essence, or, if you prefer... subjectivity must be the starting point.” (Sartre, 1948, p. 55) It could thus be said that existentialism is the philosophy that considers the human as the starting point, an empty one, without any definite essence – a starting point that needs to be built up through our free and authentic choices.

There are several allegations and reproachments that have been laid against the term itself. It is often characterized as the vulgar philosophy and café philosophy. It is made out to be the philosophy which highlights the evil side of the human nature. It dwells over “quietism of despair.” (Sartre, 1948, p. 23)

The communists blame that it is yet an another bourgeois philosophy. And Christians reproach that it denies the seriousness of human affairs. It is not without reason that Sartre begins his famous lecture *Existentialism and Humanism*, by saying that “My purpose here is to offer a defence of existentialism against several reproaches that have been laid against it.” (Sartre, 1948, p. 23) And finally concludes these allegations with the following words:

“Most of those who are making use of this word would be highly confused if required to explain its meaning... it is intended strictly for technicians and philosophers”. (Sartre, 1948, pp. 25-26)

The divergencies and radical oppositions among existentialists on the number of important questions too make it difficult to define. There is no common body or set of doctrines to which all existentialists, subscribe or are

comparable. Most of the existentialists even reject the title of being an existentialist. Kierkegaard says that “he is a religious man and has no philosophy to call philosophy of existence.” (Cited in Wahl, 1969, p. 03) Jaspers declares that “existentialism is the death of the philosophy of existence.” (Cited in Wahl, 1969, p. 03) And Heidegger clearly says that I am neither an existentialist nor phenomenologist but only a philosopher of being. He believes that there is one and only problem which should be primarily attended to and that is the problem of being. Sartre too, adopted the title only after much initial reluctance, when Marcel referred to him as an existentialist. The existentialists disregard for being fixed under a label is primarily as Roger L. Shin observes:

Almost any self-respecting existentialist refuses to call himself an existentialist. To say, I am an existentialist, is to say, I am one of that classification of people known as existentialists; whereas the existentialist wants to say, I am myself – and I don't like your effort to fit me into your classification.” (Shinn, 1968, p. 13)

Existentialism is generally operative under two opposing areas; theistic and atheistic. This further makes the task of defining existentialism even more difficult. Sartre states:

“The questions is only complicated because there are two kinds of existentialists. There are, on the one hand, the Christians, amongst whom I shall name Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both professed Catholics; and on the other the existential atheists, among whom we must place Heidegger as well as the French existentialists and myself.” (Sartre, 1948, p. 26)

On the other hand Paul Tillich who himself is to be considered as a theist existentialist affirms that the distinction between theistic and atheistic existentialism is arbitrary, unjustified and apparent. “... in reality, there is no

atheistic and theistic existentialism... it does not try to give an answer, either in theistic or atheistic terms.” (Tillich, 1957, p. 28)

This division fails to take account of the fact that frequently the relationship of the existentialist to his theism or his atheism is one which is highly paradoxical in nature for there exists a kind of love-hate relationship between them in which the elements of belief and disbelief are intertwined. For example, Kierkegaard, a theist existentialist with passionate commitment to the Christian faith treated conventional Christianity with total disregard. He criticized the churchmen for their dispassionate commitment. He said “all Christianity is rooted in the paradoxical whether one accepts it as a believer, or rejects it precisely because it is paradoxical... A once fiery and spiritual steed may come to loose its mettle and pride of carriage when it is held for hire and ridden by every bungler.” (Kierkegaard, 1941, CUP, pp. 96-97) Similarly, this love-hate relationship is conspicuous in Nietzsche’s atheism too. His declaration of the ‘death of God’ was as sincere and passionate as Kierkegaard’s striving for faith. But despite his sincere and passionate rejection of Christianity, Christianity continued to exercise a fascination over him. As Jaspers puts it:

“... despite Nietzsche’s savage attacks on Christianity there are strange ambivalences in his attitude. His opposition to Christianity as a reality is in separate from his tie to Christianity as postulate. And he himself regarded this tie as positive – not merely as something to be served.” (Jaspers, 1961, p. 06)

The religious and cultural heritages too continue to influence the existentialists in the exposition of their thoughts. As John Macquarrie observes that “in spite of Kierkegaard’s severe criticisms of Luther, his existentialism is infact inseparable from his Protestantism. Martin Buber’s philosophy too is seen to be intertwined with the Hassidic tradition of Judaism. The existentialism of

Dostoyevsky and Berdyaev are deeply rooted in the spirit of Russian orthodoxy. Unamuno's attachment to Don Quixote and the quixotic generally is as Spanish as it is existentialist." (Macquarrie, 1972, p. 20) The rich diversity among these existentialists reflect their cultural and religious background as instrumental in the formation and execution of their ideas. And this diverse religious and cultural heritage makes existentialism immensely complex in its content.

A radical opposition and diversity manifest in the personal lives of existentialists. Heidegger was considered to be a Nazi, Sartre a communist whereas Kierkegaard and Nietzsche had no inclination towards politics. Further Nietzsche was regarded as naturalist but others were anti-naturalist.

Kierkegaard finds the meaning of life in God, Nietzsche in art, Sartre and Simon de Beauvoir in political commitment and for Heidegger it is philosophy itself in which an individual can find the meaning of life.

Despite radical oppositions and divergencies on a number of important issues, what unifies them is the nature of the problems that they set out to explore and their style of philosophizing. "The existentialists, for all their individual differences clearly constitute a family of minds related by an abiding and even obsessive concern with certain philosophic themes and issues that can never, they maintain, be comfortably resolved within the framework of a closed rational system. The quarrel they have with one another remains a family quarrel." (Gill, 1973, p. 06)

Existentialism in its wider implications is always understood as a philosophy of a concrete man in a concrete situation. Existentialists do not agree with the claim of traditional philosophers that man can be understood as a manifestation of pre-given cluster of qualities, qualified as 'essences'. It does not

inquire into the nature of man as tied down by the logical rules of a system as traditional philosophers did. It is most commonly understood as a revolt against traditional philosophy which is essentialist in nature. In this sense it is a revolt against essentialism. The subject matter of the existentialist philosophers is not the 'nature' or 'essence' of a thing, but an inquiry into the crisis-ridden, isolated existence of an individual.

The man who reacted vehemently against the essentializing attitude of traditional philosophers was the Danish theologian and philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, who emphasized the importance of the uniqueness of individual as opposed to universal essences. He took the essentialists attitude to be the mark and shame of the nineteenth century, and characterized that period as essentially one of 'understanding and reflection without passion'. He described his age as one that had forsaken the individual in order to take refuge in the collective idea. 'There are no longer any human beings' he said.

Existentialists hold that reason tries to give an idea of man in general oblivious to the uniqueness of the individual. Though reactions against essentialist tendencies took place it was the existentialist trends in the past that opposed it with sustained rigour.

Essentialism holds the view that in reality 'essence' is prior to 'existence'. And "looking for the source of the intellectualist mode... Kierkegaard ultimately traces its roots to the very origins of the western theorization in ancient Greece and, most crucially to Plato himself." (Gill, 1973, p. 07) Plato is to be considered as the prime originator of the essentialist trends in western philosophy.

Plato's philosophy largely determined the style and the very terminology of subsequent conceptualization in classical, medieval and even modern times.

The substance of this legacy is the famous doctrine of two worlds, which exalts the realm of 'Being' or 'essence' over that of 'becoming' or 'existence'. According to Platonic dualism, there are two types of worlds, 'the world of ideas' and 'the world of percepts'. He affirms that 'the world of ideas' are the real world and 'the world of percepts' are dependent on or are a mere copy of the 'world of ideas'. It is so because he believes that only ideas are real and the world of objects which we perceive, are merely the fading copies or approximation of the original 'universal' idea. Thus, an ordinary horse perceived on the ordinary level of sense experiences is a changing creature, differing from all other horses in numerous, subtle ways and displaying like all other entities manifold flaws and limitations. Yet common to him and all other horses, past, present and future is the unvarying general nature of the horse itself. And it is these general characteristics of horse or the essence of the horseness, according to Plato, that stands at a higher level than being. Plato applies the same criteria for all phenomenon inclusive of human being. Thus apprehending each particular object of the universe through a common universal class and considering each particular an example of a universal class.

The essentialist claim that the singular path of reason leading towards the superior domain of absolute truth further discards an alternative approach through senses as unreliable and delusive. They believe that the inferior mundane sphere available to the senses consists only of transient appearances and that the generalizing power of the pure thought is man's cardinal attribute and function. Thus making man into a pre-eminently rational animal.

This essentializing trend manifest from Plato to Hegel is far removed from a comprehensive understanding of human existence. Ramakant Sinari in

his book *Reason in Existentialism* comments, "Platonic Being is factually an indifferent reality. It is a heaven erected entirely for its own sake, and has nothing to do with the world of individual existences." (Sinari, 1966, p. 153)

In relation to this Bergson with great clarity states that to reduce things to ideas, is to resolve becoming into its principle moments, each of these being, moreover, by the hypothesis, screened from the laws of time, and, as it were, plucked out of eternity. Being as understood by human intellect, ignores the particular characteristics of the existing individual whose function consists of the fleeting consciousness itself. When Plato speaks of Being as the most universal form, or as that which is grasped through conceptual knowledge, he equates the whole of it to the general or essential aspect of it. Thus, in the reaction against traditional philosophy which propounds that 'essence precedes existence', existentialism accelerates its first principle as its exact reverse *Existence precedes Essence*. This is the principle on which almost all the existentialist whether theist or atheist unites. As Sartre puts it "what they (theist and atheist) have in common is simply the fact that they believe that existence comes before essence." (Sartre, 1948, p. 26)

In the history of philosophy two metaphysical principles, essence and existence, have been under distinction. By essence is understood the common and essential attribute present in all individual or particular instances of a class. Tillich explains essence as the universal or the nature in which a thing participates. The essentialists believe that it is the essence or the nature through which each thing of the world is defined including the individual. And in this sense they advocate 'essence precedes existence'. But on the contrary existentialists argue that essence is universal and only a possibility, whereas, existence is particular, an individual an actuality belonging to a specific time and

space. Essence can be grasped by reason, but existence can be grasped only in one's immediate experience. For the existentialists man exists first and then contemplates about his nature, looks at the world and thinks about it. "His contemplations and his actions are possible only because of the priority of his existence: existence, thus, is the first principle from which all else follows. It is only later, by living, thinking, acting that man defines his nature and forms what is called his essence." (Odajnyk, 1965, p. 09) Thus, a man does not have pre-given 'essence' or 'human nature'. He never comes in this world as finished product or as well defined. Rather he defines himself in course of his life in his interaction with the world. As Sartre observes:

"What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards. ...Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself." (Sartre, 1948, p. 28)

Different existentialists exhibit a great diversity of form and expression in the dealing of issues relating to human existence yet they are 'children of the same age', without exception involved in the same predicament, which to them is one of crisis. Thus, in spite of their diversity, they are united in attitude and situation, protesting in their individual ways against tendencies prevalent in the present age. Sympathetic yet critical their protest is the challenge to all philosophy. Its function is to bring about a release from the predominance of analysis and rationalism, and to stir us to a revaluation of the traditional problems of men. Both theistic and atheistic existentialists have been highly critical of the philosophical and ethical traditions they inherited. The divergence of their views converges in their effort to provide an alternative to the overtly rational and what they like to coin as 'inhuman' philosophical approach with a

purpose to provide a comprehensive account of what it is to be a human being living in this world. So seen, existentialism remains an important, though perhaps not final expression of issues concerning the existence of man.

Existentialism in its boldest application is a revolt against rationalism. For existentialists there is no acceptance of pure thinking as it concerns itself with pure abstractions which, though greatly prized in scientific inquiry, are of irrelevance to philosophical enterprise on account of an attitude of detached spectatorship which at its best can lend itself to a disinterested thinking. "And for this, there is but a short step to the view that reason, when it functions coldly and dispassionately, from the stand point of a mere spectator of all time and existence, introduces a serious distortion into our understanding of things and must therefore, be rejected as an unreliable witness to the truth." (Gill, 1973, p. 65)

The existentialists do not deny the importance of reason but object against its sole authority which lacks the pervasiveness to accommodate a comprehensive understanding of man. They believe that reason does not have self-contained answer to the meaning of a holistic, concrete existence. Reason must always function from within existence. As Dostoevsky puts it in *Underground Man* "Reason... is an excellent thing, there is no disputing that but reason is only reason, and can only satisfy man's rational faculty... and human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously or unconsciously, and even if it goes wrong, it lives." (Cited in Gill, 1973, p. 17)

The existentialists do not agree with the rationalists claim that, it is the possession of reason alone which distinguishes man from the rest of the species but that apart from being rational he is in possession of volition and emotion

which perhaps are constitutive of the uniqueness a person possesses. As Pascal too suggests that “the nature of man is his whole nature; *Omne animal.*” (Cited in Gill, 1973, p. 17)

The existentialists do not disregard reason but execrated rationalism’s idolatory of reason. They do not attack rationalism to undermine the role of reason or to deny its importance, but to observe the restrictions within which it can meaningfully be operative. They take reason to be a tool and not as a tribunal. They argue that the domain of human existence reveals irrational and transrational variations. In such contexts the instrumentality of reason has to be acknowledged but not the conclusive authority. Regarding the challenge and subsequent rejection of the philosophical tradition Alisdair MacIntyre remarks that existentialist thinkers should be considered as “disappointed rationalists” as a kind of metaphysical rationalism is palpable in the background of almost all existentialist philosophies such as in Kierkegaard’s rejection of Hegel. He says rationalism is disappointing to the existentialists as human existence resists such systematization as is unable and insufficient to capture and explain individual existence. MacIntyre perceived the nineteenth century as an onset of immense opposition to worldviews presenting an ordered system created by a god or a rational order. The notion of a contingent or absurd world emerged as a reaction to such systematic, rational world views. Reason, according to MacIntyre, is at best a limited tool and if used solely to apprehend human existence it would only amount to over-stretching the powers of this limited tool. Existentialists make it their business to reveal the shortcomings of reason and as Warnock points out, “to free people from the shackles of illusion.” (Warnock, 1970, p. 03)

For Nietzsche man's unquenching endeavour at acquiring a complete picture of the world takes him beyond all scientific inquiry for the optimism based on logic collapses in the face of dilemmas that cannot be appropriated thus. Jaspers too declares "the knowledge of science fails in the face of all ultimate questions." (Cited in Gill, 1973, p. 18) The great German rationalist Hegel tries to construct a grand system through which he wants to explain everything. Each aspect of the world becomes a component of his grand system including man. The existentialist philosophers in general and Kierkegaard in particular revolt aggressively against this system building as a philosophical endeavour. An understanding of a human being can never be made possible if forced through the grid of systematic dictates. The uniqueness that is constitutive of a person's individuality cannot be grasped and contained in a system capable of containing the collective idea only. Hegel reduces each thing of the world including man into a universal 'Idea'. He explicitly rejects the concept of the individual in favour of the collective idea. The Hegelian system tries to capture individual existence in the logical development of concepts, but existentialists argue, that it captures only the concept of the individual and not the individual. Kierkegaard says:

"What confuses the whole doctrine about being in logic is that people (i.e. Hegel) do not notice that they are always operating with the concept of existence... the difficulty is of course whether existence can be reduced to a concept."
(Kierkegaard, 1941, CUP, p. 173)

Kierkegaard perceives Hegel's failure as the failure of all of traditional rationalistic philosophy. It fails due to the non inclusion of a subjective view point i.e. the existence of the individual. Kierkegaard believes that the function of philosophy is the recognition of oneself as an instance of the concept of

humanity. It is on the strength of such self-knowledge that we erect our most fundamental commitments, and it is the understanding of the nature of such 'commitments' which constitutes the chief concern of Kierkegaard's philosophy. For him, philosophy is primarily concerned with the individual and his way of life, not with concepts and conceptual knowledge. To exist, for him, is not to be a knowing subject but to be a moral agent. Philosophical 'truth' as sought by Kierkegaard is the truth of a commitment rather than anything like knowledge. As Kierkegaard says, "the real subject is not the cognitive subject... the real subject is the ethically existing subject." (Kierkegaard, 1941, CUP, p. 281)

Thus the existentialists argue that systematic speculative philosophy remains oblivious to the individual being for they are concerned solely with humanity at large. In such a system the individual is reduced to nothing. Not only Kierkegaard but most existentialist philosophers have directed their criticism against rationalism that appropriates the individual in terms of essentializing characteristics. Sartre in his novel *Nausea* writes, 'the world of explanation and reason is not the world of existence'.

The existentialists critique of rationalism should not be taken as a manifesto of irrationalism or anti-intellectualism. In their criticism of reason they simply attempted to direct philosophy in the direction of the actualities of life. As Kierkegaard clarifies this issue thus, "If thought... speaks depreciatingly of the imagination, imagination in its turn speaks depreciatingly about thought; and likewise with feeling. The task is not to exalt one at the expense of the other, but to give them equal status, to unify them in simultaneity; the medium in which they are unified is existence." (Cited in Gill, 1973, p. 19)

The problem on which all existentialists reach to a common consensus, despite their divergencies and radical oppositions is the problem of 'existence'. The man who attributes an entirely new meaning to the term 'existence' is Soren Kierkegaard. For him, the meaning of 'existence' is not the same as it was previously articulated by traditional philosophers. He reserves the term 'existence' only for a unique, concrete human being who is involved in the actualities of life rather than attributing it to an abstract concept of 'existence'. Kierkegaard speaks of 'individual existence' in a very special sense of the term which treats man not simply as a biological, psychological or social animal, but one who is a human being' an 'existent' which is something far more comprehensive and demanding than the 'mere' existence of a particular organism. This notion of 'existence' is reserved for those who distinguish themselves as individuals, forging their thoughts and values with the impulse of a creative freedom and above all living a life of commitment and responsibility. As Soloman points out in his book *From Rationalism to Existentialism*, "it is the human being who ... is the passionate anti-social or at least asocial individual who is master of his own life, the author of his own values." (Soloman, 1970, p. 85)

Protagoras says 'man is the measure of all things'. And Socrates pronounces the dictum 'know thyself'. Even Aristotle says that 'substance is the concrete individual' and the individual cannot be subsumed under genera and species. In Modern period Descartes' main concern has been to prove the existence of individual self. It may be felt that the emphasis on individual existence is perhaps not unique to existentialism for philosophers of the past have paid much attention to this.

The existentialists recognized the need for an enquiry that would place the very existence of the analytical at the core rather than departing into abstractions and conceptualization about the subject, for in the process of making ‘concepts’ they forget the real ‘subject’ or *existence*. Existentialists argue that the concerns of the traditional philosophers remain trapped in a surface inquiry confined to a conceptualization rather than an interaction with what is concrete in a real being who lives, suffers and dies.

Existentialists protest that existence cannot be reduced to mere ‘concepts’. Because a concept is limited to a mere possibility while existence requires an application of that possibility. Further, for existentialists, “existence ... is the contingent, the particular, that which refuses to fit into some system constructed by rational thought.” (Macquarrie, 1972, p. 62)

Thus, the existentialists usage of the word existence refers to that which is unique, concrete and individual. They focus on the practical aspect of human lives rather than the mere idea of being human. As Jaspers says:

“Philosophy grew in me through finding myself in the midst of life itself. Philosophical thought is practical activity... not impartial thinking which studies a subject with indifference.”
(Cited in Gill, 1973, p. 15)

Kierkegaard highlights this further by drawing a contrast between the lives as lived by Socrates and that of Plato. He writes

“Socrates... concentrates essentially upon accentuating existence, while Plato forgets this, and loses himself in speculation. Socrates’ infinite merit is to have been an existing thinker, not a speculative philosopher who forgets what it means to exist.” (Cited in Gill, 1973, p. 15)

Nietzsche too, much in keeping with Kierkegaard’s viewpoint makes a similar distinction between what he calls as the *theoretical man* and the *tragic*

mind. According to him, a philosopher should be an instance for the society at large and it should be not by mere thoughts but mainly through his actions. He declares that “I judge a philosopher by whether he can serve as an example.” (Cited in Gill, 1973, p. 15)

Sartre, too, believes that a man should be ‘engaged’. He thinks that in order to become authentic, a man should be actively involved in the actualities of life. Simone de Beauvoir mentions in her diary that by February 1940, she and Sartre had become aware of an important change within themselves. She writes:

“Sartre had come to feel that he could no longer remain aloof from political involvement. The concept of ‘authenticity at which he had arrived demanded that he ‘assume’ his ‘situation’ in the world and he could do so only by transcending it and engaging in action.” (Cited in Kern, 1962, p. 12)

Despite their sharp divergence and radical oppositions from one another, all existentialists are definitely in accord about man’s freedom. It is the basic theme around which the entire existential philosophy revolves. (They believe that freedom is the sole-criterion of human subjectivity. It is only because of the freedom of choice that an individual is defined as ‘subjective being’.) Both the theistic and atheistic trends give emphasis to the freedom of choice. Even though they are radically opposed to each other concerning the function of freedom. (For theistic existentialism, freedom makes possible the *leap of faith* through which man comes close to God. While for atheistic existentialism, freedom allows man the conscious decision through which man defines himself.)

In contrast to objectivity, existentialists emphasise human subjectivity. Kierkegaard considers the task of philosophy is to rediscover the subjectivity of individual because he thinks that we have lost sight of our subjectivity under the

illusion of objectivity. And he believes that this illusion of objectivity can be eliminated only through free choice. He says that “truth is subjectivity, inwardness, eternal becoming and active freedom.” (Sinari, 1966, p. 15) Sartre too says “subjectivism means ... freedom of the individual subject.” (Sartre, 1948, p. 28)

For the existentialists freedom means freedom of choice, for them it is the free choice that leads to authentic selfhood. They believe that alternative choices are always available and one has to choose from within these alternatives. By adopting one alternative rather than another, one sets out values over other. As Kierkegaard writes in *Either/Or*:

“... the choice itself is decisive for the content of the personality, through the choice the personality immerses itself in the thing chosen.” (Cited in Gill, 1973, p. 32)

Freedom of choice is always coupled with the notion of responsibility. And responsibility lies in the fact that whenever we choose something it should concern all others. We are not choosing only for ourselves but for entire humanity. Sartre says:

“If, however, it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders. And, when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.” (Sartre, 1948, p. 29)

He further says that:

“What we choose is always the better: and nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all... Our responsibility is thus much greater than we had supposed, for it concerns mankind as a whole.” (Sartre, 1948, p. 29)

Choice, at its deepest level, is a commitment. For the theists it is commitment to God while for the atheists it is through free commitment that a man realizes himself. As Sartre declares:

“What is at the very heart and center of existentialism, is the absolute character of the free commitment, by which every man realizes himself.” (Sartre, 1948, p. 47)

The existentialists equate freedom with projection. It propels man towards the future. In exercising freedom man projects himself towards the future and decides what he should be. As Sinari puts it in *Reason in Existentialism*:

“Man is the repository of innumerable possibilities whose actualization confirms that he is a ‘projection’. Freedom and projection are one and the same thing... Freedom is the action of my creating myself. I decide, I act, and through this I am my sole freedom.” (Sinari, 1966, pp. 77-78)

Similarly Sartre says that “man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself.... Man is, indeed a project.... Before that projection of the self nothing exists.... Man will only attain existence when he is what he purposes to be. Not, however, what he may wish to be.” (Sartre, 1948, p. 28)

Existentialists link freedom with transcendence. Without freedom the transcendence is not possible. It is only because of freedom that an individual can transcend from his given situation or in Sartre’s terminology *situationality*. Heidegger uses freedom and transcendence as identical and says “transcendence of the world is freedom itself.” (Heidegger, 1969, p. 103) Heidegger takes freedom as the opening of philosophy. He argues that freedom “evokes in man the basic question about the primordial relation between Being and Time. Freedom is the condition of possibility for the disclosure of the Being of entities – for the understanding of Being. Primordial freedom is fundamental to

philosophy, as it lets man into the extensiveness of Being and into the intensiveness of time as the horizon of understanding of Being. Thus, the basic question of philosophy, according to Heidegger, is grounded in the question of the essence of freedom.” (Puthenpurakkal, 1987, p. 102) And for Jaspers it is only transcendence which rescues man from ‘shipwreck’.

Thus, the existentialists unanimously suggest the illumination of human existence where man can make his choice, his decision as a free and responsible individual. They feel that it is by bringing man back to his concrete existence, by restoring his freedom, by giving him chance to choose and decide like a responsible individual that a man’s life becomes authentic. Tillich says that it is the aspect of human freedom, his power to contradict himself and his essential nature that makes the transition from essence to existence possible. Tillich writes, it is human freedom that provides the possibility for the transition from essence to existence.

Authenticity is of central concern to almost all the leading existentialists. As we have seen existentialists concentrate their attention on the problems that are directly related to the concrete human existence rather than on those that are abstract or speculative. Such themes as freedom, decision making and responsibility become central to the all existentialist philosophies as they constitute the core of personal being. It is through free and responsible decisions that man becomes authentically himself. Existentialism laid great stress on freedom of the individual in forging a life – an authentic existence for one self. It rebels strongly against the conformity born out of the belief that a human is only a pre-determined cog in a completely ordered universe. Thus in a very large sense authenticity is understood in existential philosophy as living with the

recognition that one's own life and choices are one's own responsibility. And 'inauthenticity' on the other hand, is the suppression of responsibility for one's own life.

Though the term authenticity and inauthenticity were introduced for the first time, by Heidegger – and later adopted, with some variations in meaning by Sartre, but other existentialists too have dwelt upon the same fundamental notion and their phenomenological descriptions of how the two modes, authentic and inauthentic, become manifest in man's day-to-day life. Indeed, whatever terminology may be used, the concept of the authentic as opposed to the inauthentic life is one of the most original and important contributions of existentialism precisely because it negotiates with ethics as genuinely rooted in human ontology. All existentialists consider that individuals are radically free and that they have to make conscious authentic choices, as the value of choice is tremendous in the shaping of one's existence. They feel that human beings are free and must choose because there are no objective values. Instead of accepting a nihilism that may ensue, most existentialists propose that the individual must be responsible and undertake it as their most fundamental task to create values.

Thus, different existentialists perceive the construction of authenticity differently. Theistic existentialists consider a leap in faith as the mark of authenticity. Kierkegaard the forerunner of twentieth century existentialism held that for him the authentic individual is a person of faith as Abraham was. He uses the words like individuality, subjectivity, spirit, inwardness and authenticity synonymously. For him commitment and passionate action are the important tenets of authenticity. He conceives the job of philosophy as not the detached

search for knowledge but as an involved and desperate quest to find out what to do.

Authenticity for Kierkegaard meant rising of the individual above the leveling process of crowd. He detested, the glorification of the state, the church, the committee or the crowd above the individual considering the process of leveling as the greatest danger to authenticity. He says:

“...a crowd in its very concept is the untruth, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible, or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction.” (Kierkegaard, 1962, p. 112)

Kierkegaard’s notion of authenticity stresses the primacy of will over intellect. An act of will is the center of harmonious authentic selfhood. His Christian choice is an act of will rather than a rational explication. It is to be embraced by an act of the will by the leap of faith a moment before God which consequently leads to authentic existence.

Because of the Nietzsche’s declaration of the death of God “... men are faced with the profound responsibility of deciding for themselves, choosing for themselves, acting for themselves, and being themselves; i.e., choosing authentic existence rather than ‘loosing’ themselves in the crowd, becoming a ‘non-entity’, escaping reality.” (Natanson, 1973, p. 02)

Like Kierkegaard, in order to become authentic, Nietzsche too, rejects the traditional morality which he characterizes as the slave morality of the crowd. It assumes that what is good or bad for one is the same for another. Instead of the traditional or *slave morality*, Nietzsche advocates the *morality of the master*; the over man. In master morality one transcends from the pre-given traditional

morality and creates his own values through his free choice. He needs no approval by any one. He himself is the source of value.

Nietzsche pronounces the *will to power* as the sole criteria for morality. He advocates that the greatest expression of power is to overcome oneself and it is the will to overcome which lies implicit in every morality. As he puts it in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*:

“A table of values hangeth over each people. Behold, it is the table of its resignation; behold, it is the voice of its will unto power.” (Nietzsche, 1908, p. 74)

Thus, Nietzsche advocates that an authentic individual is one who has the will to power, who breaks the traditional morality and makes his own value with exercising free choice. He speaks about the *transvaluation of values*. And those who transcend from traditional values and have the will to power will be authentic individuals or super men. He says:

“To redeem what is past in man and to transvalue every ‘It was’ until will saith: thus I willed! Thus shall I will.” (Nietzsche, 1908, p. 272)

Camus felt that though ultimate meaning in this world is impossible we can still restore our own dignity as persons by challenging the absurd through faith in one’s creativity. A love of life emerges from an encounter with despair. Camus denies meaning for his existence from an original denial of the possibility of meaning thrust from an external world.

Sartre believes that man is thrown into an absurd existence, as a result of which the individual has the opportunity to discover himself using his own will and free choices. Like Nietzsche, Sartre too, surpasses the tenets of traditional morality which were based on the underlying assumption that human beings are in possession of a given ‘essence’ which may be called ‘human nature’.

Differentiating human beings from everything that has a given essence, Sartre says “Man is the being who is what he is not and who is not what he is.” (Sartre, 1957, p. xix) It means a constant transformation of our self towards a possibility that is not yet crystallized. A human being is a constant ‘not yet’. In *Being and Nothingness*, authenticity is a value that cannot be realized, the nature of authenticity is ideality and it is a necessary unrealizable ideal, still the individual should strive constantly for otherwise the fear of lapsing into bad faith opens up. Striving constantly causes us to reflect on our being, never ceasing to accept the challenges and responsibility of free choices.

For Heidegger authentic existence is attained in the decisive *Moment-before-death*. The man authentically exists as a being of care and temporality, finally abandoned to death anchored to a radical finitude. Being is revealed authentically through the temporal horizon of Dasein as it is lived toward its final possibility of death. To live authentically is to choose resolutely, to live towards ones death, thereby appropriating the experience of ultimate nothingness. Inauthenticity by contrast, is the refusal of being towards death. To exist inauthentically is to be free from the awareness of freedom, responsibility and death, seeking refuge in the security of the anonymous ‘they’ which tells me what to think and what to be. The ‘they’ defines a person as a fixed actuality rather than a free possibility.

Thus, on the one hand man is portrayed as exercising freedom, will, decision, creativity, setting goals and striving for their attainment and on the other a being of care and temporality, finally abandoned to radical finitude. A person is seen in his essential sociality as a being-with-others capable of love but on the other hand it is also seen that this being-with-others is usually swallowed

up in the inauthentic collectivism of the they and many of the existentialist thinkers like Marcel and Buber have thought it a necessity to stress the individual's need to extricate himself from the *crowd* in order to be fully himself.

Chapter – II

**Soren A. Kierkegaard:
An Irrational Passion**

SOREN A. KIERKEGAARD

An Irrational Passion

... Kierkegaard...desires Christianity in its original purity, for this alone can help such a time as ours. Christianity must be resuscitated as the martyrdom of the individual, who is to-day annihilated by the mass-man. Kierkegaard will not allow himself to be vitiated by the prosperity of a secure position as pastor or professor; will not promulgate an objective theology or philosophy; will not become an agitator or a practical reformer. He can not show his contemporaries what they ought to do, but can make them feel that they are on the wrong road. (Jaspers, 1959, p. 20)

Soren Kierkegaard was a Danish philosopher, theologian as well as a man of literature. Kierkegaard's renaissance is one of the strangest phenomena of our time. It is rather ironical that this lonely thinker of the nineteenth century Denmark, who made no significant impact on his own age and died in utter misery in a Copenhagen hospital, has been considered as the initiator of the existentialist school of thought. For the understanding of his philosophy it becomes imperative to begin with his biographical detail which demonstrate the successive stages of the realization of his personal existence and eventually become the ground for his existential philosophy. He was born on May 5, 1813, in Copenhagen as the youngest of seven children. Under a very strict orthodox Lutheran education of somewhat sombre and depressing kind Kierkegaard could not really enjoy his childhood. He admits, "I have never had any immediacy, and therefore, in the ordinary human sense of the world, I have never lived. I began at once with reflection; ... I am reflection from first to last." (Kierkegaard, 1962, p. 81) In 1830 he entered the University of Copenhagen where at that time Hegelianism prevailed. In 1840 he passed the theological examination, entered the pastoral seminary, and delivered his first sermon in a Copenhagen Church in

1841. In 1840 he was engaged to Regina Olsen, which he broke off in 1841, an event of great consequence for his literary and spiritual life. It marked the beginning of a very prolific literary activity. His polemical nature brought him into conflict with the official church. He committed himself to the task of defending true Christianity against its distortion by the church. He died on November 2, 1855.

The meaning of *existentialist authenticity* in Kierkegaard's life and works is a translation of the abstract into the concrete, an ethical and religious appropriation of the ideal, and realization rather than any doctrinal knowledge. He fights his battle on two major fronts: on the one hand, he fights against the liberalist secularization of the Danish Lutheran Church which propagates Christianity as a doctrine rather than an active passionate commitment, and on the other hand, against the rampant Hegelianism which tyrannized the philosophical world of the early nineteenth century. Taking Hegelianism to be the expression of the spirit of those times, Kierkegaard's attacks were directed towards philosophical as well as social and religious forms. For a comprehensive understanding of Kierkegaard's philosophy it would be of consequence to follow the dynamics of Kierkegaard's discontent which he express in the form of an attack issued in two different directions viz.(1) A religious attack upon Christendom, and (2) A philosophical attack upon Hegel.

Attack upon Christendom:

Kierkegaard acts as a provocation to thought, calling upon his reader to question old established opinion and to rethink his whole position. He achieves this by formulating apparently a very simple question. How to become a true Christian? But to ask this question seems to be paradoxical, because his

contemporaries were Christians. But in Kierkegaard's opinion, in the true sense they were not Christians. He says "At the present time the difficulty of becoming a Christian involves actively transforming an initial being-a-Christian into a possibility, in order to become a Christian in reality." (Kierkegaard, 1941, cup, p. 326) The defenders of Christianity before him had struggled to show that the doctrines of the religion were reasonable and that philosophy, as the embodiment of reason, could show these doctrines to be objectively valid. Kierkegaard was convinced that such a defence could not be successfully carried out as Christianity, far from consisting of a set of reasonable doctrines, was the paragon of absurdity. Philosophy or reason and Christianity were absolutely irreconcilable. The very essence of Christianity, according to Kierkegaard, is paradoxical and irrational.

Kierkegaard says that there was the vulgar conception of 'being a Christian', which accepted a person as a Christian if he had been born of Christian parentage and occasionally succeeded in barely performing prescribed rituals. Thus, to be a Christian was to be born into a Christian family completely unified and indistinguishable from each other, in a community before God. This was conveniently institutionalized in the concept of the state - church. It was established by the state as a kind of eternal principle that every child was naturally born as a Christian. As the state obligated itself to bring eternal bliss for all Christians, it also took upon itself the task to produce Christians. The state thus delivered, generation after generation an assortment of Christians; each bearing the manufacturer's trademark of the state, with perfect accuracy, one Christian exactly like all the others with the greatest possible uniformity of a factory product.

Kierkegaard reacts strongly against the state church with a recurring insistence on individuality, which permeates his religious writings and becomes the very foundation of being a Christian:

“‘The individual’: now that the word has gone so far along the road of reflection, Christianity stands and falls with that category.” (Kierkegaard’s Journals 1847, Cited in Soloman, 1972, p 74)

He defines Christianity as ‘suffering’. His childhood confrontation with the despair and suffering inherent in his father’s Christianity leads him to reject, with an excessive bitterness, even in his works, any notion of ‘being a Christian’ which provides men with happiness and self-satisfaction. As he says in, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* that ‘Christianity is suffering’ and to be a Christian is to be forever conscious of the unhappy passions of dread and guilt.

Christianity, because it is defined by suffering and the feelings associated with sin is not a set of doctrines to be accepted or rejected for Christianity is not a mode or body of knowledge, but it is a way of life.

A Christian could be only the most spectacular of men. It is not possible both, to lead a successful secular life and be a Christian. In fact, Kierkegaard takes as his model of Christianity the asceticism of the monastery.

“Back to the monastery out of which Luther broke - that is the truth that is what must be done...The fault with the monastery was not asceticism, celibacy, etc.; no, the fault was that Christianity had been moderated by making the admission that all this was considered to be extraordinarily Christian - and the purely secular nonsense to be considered ordinary Christianity.” (Kierkegaard, 1944, p. 155)

Kierkegaard takes it upon himself to change the conception of Christianity. He responds that what must be changed is not Christianity but only our conception of Christianity, that is, what it is to be Christian. He says,

“My only analogy is Socrates. My task is a Socratic task-to revise the conception what it means to be a Christian.” (Kierkegaard , Attack upon Christendom, Cited in Soloman, 1972, p. 74)

Kierkegaard says that the acceptance of Christianity is not at all reasonable, and belief in Christ can never constitute a piece of knowledge. ‘The problem is not to understand Christianity, but to understand that it can not be understood’ says Kierkegaard in his *Journals* in 1948. What this means is that although Christianity contains a set of doctrines as its foundations, to be a Christian can not be merely the acceptance of these doctrines. The doctrines of Christianity are absurd, and the absurd doctrine is not one which one can accept as true. Since Christianity is not something that can be known at all, ‘acceptance’ is not appropriate to it ‘Christianity is not a doctrine.’ What is required is passion - the *passion of faith*.

The central doctrine of Christianity according to Kierkegaard is not to be believed in any literal sense at all, but is rather to be used as a foil, as a cause for passion and feeling. The acceptance of ‘Christianity’ is therefore, an acceptance of a *way of life*, a life of suffering, but suffering that has no reason whatsoever. At the very basis of this suffering is the doctrine of one’s relationship to God, as signified by Christ. This doctrine is not something true or known or even literally believed. It is a feeling one has of constant guilt and despair, but whose object (one’s sin before God) must forever remain, not only a ‘mystery’, but simply incomprehensible. To be a Christian, therefore, is to embark upon this ‘irrational’ way of life.

Because Christianity is a way of life, and it lies in feeling, nothing could be more inimicable to it than the success of apologetics. If one could accept the doctrine of the Trinity as one could accept, for example, the laws of gravitation,

one would have a plausible belief, but hardly a way of life. Kierkegaard held that any attempt to rationalize Christianity is nothing other than the attempt to make being a Christian emotionally empty. The many attempted proofs of the faith are nothing other than aids for lacking in emotions and passion.

“When faith....begins to loose its passion,
when faith begins to cease to be faith,
then a proof becomes necessary so as to
command respect from the side of unbelief.”
(Kierkegaard, 1941, CUP, p.202)

Kierkegaard's defence of Christianity firmly rests on his celebration of the individual and his absolute rejection of collectivity and the *crowd*. To be a Christian, as to be an 'authentic human being', is to isolate oneself and choose one's own mode of life with a *passionate commitment*, as Kierkegaard himself feels that he had done. It is this celebration of the individual and the emphasis on commitment and subjectivity that marks the major breach between Kierkegaard and Hegel and the whole of traditional western rationalism.

Attack on Hegelianism:

Kierkegaard reacts vehemently against western rationalism which tries to define human being in terms of reason only. Philosophers construct grand speculative systems, so complete in themselves, that every aspect of reality can be accounted for. In such systems 'truth' is a matter of finding an appropriate place within the system, and trading in the domain of reason there remains no place for emotions or the subjective aspects of our human existence. In such a grand system there is a place for everything, and everything in its place; every aspect of human knowledge is completely accounted for, labelled, systematized, criticized, and methodically evaluated. Such was the ideal of reason during the nineteenth century and the champion of rationalism was G. F. W. Hegel, who

was Kierkegaard's chosen enemy. Kierkegaard attacks on the great speculative thinker and says, "If Hegel had written the whole of his Logic and then said... that it was merely an experiment in thought, then he could certainly have been the greatest thinker who ever lived. As it is, he is merely comic." (Kierkegaard's Journals, 1843, Cited in Soloman, 1972, p. 77) What made Hegel comic for Kierkegaard was that he tries to capture all reality in his system of thought, yet in the process lost the most important element, namely, *existence*. For Kierkegaard, the term existence was reserved for the individual human being. For him existence implies being a certain kind of individual, an individual who strives, who considers alternatives, who chooses, who decides, and who, above all, commits himself. Virtually none of these acts were implied in Hegel's thought. Kierkegaard's entire career might well be considered as a self-conscious revolt against abstract thought and an attempt on his part to live up to Feuerbach's admonition: "Do not wish to be a philosopher in contrast to being a man...do not think as a thinker...think as a living, real being...think in Existence." (Stumpf, 1988, pp. 476-477)

For Kierkegaard reason deals with what occurs in time only, while Christianity is concerned with eternity. He had radical objections against abstract metaphysical systems, and especially Hegel who claimed to find an exhaustive explanation of everything through his reasoning. Kierkegaard insisted that philosophy should not be abstract; rather it must be based upon personal experience. He tried to turn the outward-looking mind of his contemporaries inwards. He says:

"Truth or value that I hanker after is not merely for satisfying the idle intellect but for being 'appropriated' or realized in my life. It should, therefore, satisfy me. But the conception of objectivity demands, on the contrary, that truth should not depend upon my satisfaction, it

should satisfy others and I should cultivate a detachedness which should drown my personal verdict in the verdict of others. This means a spiritual suicide.” (Kierkegaard, 1941, CUP, p.113)

Thus, Kierkegaard was of the view that “objective truth is easily recognized...e.g. twice two is four...Once I know it ...But the truth of religion is not like that: It is a truth that must penetrate my own personal existence, or it is nothing; and I must struggle to renew it in my life everyday... This kind of a truth is not a truth of intellect but of the whole man. Subjective truth is not a truth that ‘I have’, but a truth that ‘I am’.” (Barret, 1972, pp. 152-153) Kierkegaard rejects theoretical and systematic goals. Instead Kierkegaard thinks that philosophy should be primarily concerned with ethical practice. It should speak directly to individuals and awaken them from their passive, slumbering lives. Although Hegel is mindful of existential concern, his primary aim is to create a complete system that informs all spheres of reality and produces existential harmony. Unlike Hegel, Kierkegaard is not interested in knowledge and system because he thinks that these aspirations distract attention from the important task which is to transform people’s existence. Hegel believes that both aims are important, and his goal is to demonstrate how both theoretical and practical goals can be realized in a unified system. But Kierkegaard simply dismisses his theoretical goals, as if they are irrelevant to philosophy. He offers his conceptual studies and psychological analyses in order to serve his larger purpose of facilitating personal authenticity.

Kierkegaard’s objection to the very idea of a systematic philosophy can be simply summarized in his words as, ‘philosophy, under Hegel, had left no room for wisdom, for ‘ethics’. One thing has always escaped Hegel, and that is

how to live'. Hegel may have achieved the absolute knowledge of reality, but, Kierkegaard says:

“The only reality that exists for an existing individual is his own ethical reality. What would be the use of discovering so-called objective truth, of working through all the systems of philosophy....to construct a world in which I do not live but only hold up for the view of others.” (Kierkegaard’s Journals, 1935, Cited in Soloman, 1972, p. 78)

Kierkegaard declared that Hegel gives us a system of ‘Absolute knowledge’ only at the cost of excluding practical wisdom, the ‘ethical’, as part of philosophy. Yet this practical wisdom, knowledge of how to live and what to do, is precisely what Kierkegaard demands of philosophy. He says that ‘if Hegel’s philosophy can not give us this wisdom then it is of no use’. He says about Hegel: that “he was a ‘poor existing individual’ who invented the system in the vain hope of losing his finitude by being absorbed into it.” (Rorty, 1999, p. 33) His philosophy can be substituted for ethical or practical wisdom only as a distraction from the need to make ethical or practical decisions. The general disagreement between Hegel and Kierkegaard is thus Kierkegaard’s demand that philosophy provides us with just those edifying ‘truths’ which Hegel explicitly denies that it is the business of philosophy to give us.

Kierkegaard believes that, Hegel’s failure, as the failure of all of traditional rationalistic philosophy, was its avoidance of the “subjective view point”, the ‘existence of the individual’. This failure comes not from an oversight on Hegel’s part, or from a conscious attempt to ignore the subject and to neglect subjective truth, but comes from a basic impetus in the very conception of the systematic philosophy. The medium of the system is concept, and, in its development every aspect, every conception, of human existence is

given expression. Isolated individual human existence is included as only one of the stages in the conceptual development of spirit. However:

“what confuses the whole doctrine about being in logic is that people (i.e.Hegel) do not notice that they are always operating with the concept of existence....the difficulty is of course whether existence can be reduced to a concept.”
(Kierkegaard, 1941, CUP, p.173)

Kierkegaard thinks that Hegel’s dialectic assumes that all oppositions can be rationally resolved through some higher stand point - In a form of life that retains the strengths of the previous forms but resolves their problems. Kierkegaard doubts that this is possible. He sees inevitable paradoxes and contradictions between different forms of life, and insists that ultimately unjustifiable ethical choices must be made between them. This is perhaps their most fundamental disagreement.

Kierkegaard complains that existence can not be so reduced for a *concept* is a mere possibility, but existence requires an instantiation of that possibility. Kierkegaard claims that the Hegelian system does not attempt to capture individual existence in the logical development of concepts, but it captures only the *concept* of the individual, and not the individual. ‘Subjectivity’ can never be captured in logic for it is forever irreducible to a *concept*.

Kierkegaard rebels against Hegel’s universal concepts which he developed in his systematic philosophy. He believes that such concepts can not comprehend specific individuals and particular situations. Even though Hegel elucidated the concrete universals that inform particular eras, but Kierkegaard insists that each person lives the spirit of the age differently, and the task is to explore these diverse responses and their implications for individual lives. In his *Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel too, examines a variety of styles of life, but Kierkegaard insists that Hegel examines only idealized types and raises

problems for these types that are limited to their role in his developmental scheme. To really explore those forms of life requires a more detailed examination of specific cases, not influenced by the demands of the grand system. Kierkegaard's own discussion of the aesthetic, ethical, and religious lives uncovers a multitude of intrinsic problems and deals with various efforts to avoid them. Hegel, of course, does this too, but Kierkegaard would insist that Hegel's efforts remain sketchy and abstract, unconnected with the personal dimensions of these forms of life.

Kierkegaard asserts that the dialectic within Hegel's system is too impersonal - attempting to discover a necessity that it can not justify. Hegel implies that everyone will follow a certain developmental path based on the structure of the abstract types he describes, when in fact different people will resolve the issues within the various forms of life differently and may not emerge from these stages in the way Hegel accepts. Some may continuously struggle within a form without ever superseding it. Kierkegaard rejects the claim that crises within each form are so determinate that they require specific resolutions which lead in inescapable directions. In effect he rejects Hegel's concept of determinate negation. Hegel acknowledges that only people who take the standard of each form of life seriously will undergo the transitions he describes, but he also insists that the dialectical structure he uncovers is real. He claims that the tensions within each form of life are resolved in specific directions, and he would suggest that this claim can be defended for each form of life. An individual may come to the resolution of a stage in different ways, but he suggests that there are internal dynamics within forms of life that drive people toward specific resolutions.

Logic, according to Kierkegaard, exposes those concepts which are necessary conditions for 'consciousness in general'. Hegel's logic traces the development of the concepts of a literally 'general consciousness' which are necessary for spiritual self-consciousness in *The Idea*. Hegel's concern is only for the universal, the a priori, and the analysis of those fundamental concepts or categories in logic. Logic, however, can not capture the peculiarities of an individual person - his feelings, particular thoughts, emotions, dispositions - in short, all of those non-universal aspects of a person to which we refer as his personality. The kind of 'understanding' Kierkegaard demands of philosophy is just this sort of understanding, of psychological differences rather than logical similarities. The task of philosophy is the recognition of oneself as unique and peculiar, and not the recognition of oneself as an instance of the concept of 'humanity'. It is on the basis of such self-knowledge that we base our most fundamental commitments, and it is the understanding of the nature of such commitments which constitutes the central problem for Kierkegaard's philosophy. Thus philosophy for Kierkegaard is primarily concerned with individual and his way of life, not with the concepts and conceptual knowledge.

The objectivist metaphysician may argue that logic and metaphysics must precede and determine the ethical decision of rational being. Kierkegaard's entire criticism against Hegel is that he seeks to furnish the explanation of individuality through logic. The rationalist believes that logic can explain everything about the individual but Kierkegaard hold this as sheer illusion.

Kierkegaard's objections to the detached and collective nature of Hegel's system may be illuminated by contrast with the unsystematic philosophy of Socrates, to whom Kierkegaard frequently appeals. Wisdom and not indifferent truths are for Socrates the practical guides for living and the goals for his

enquiry. Wisdom, however, is not a property of a group or a society, but that of an individual, a property which manifests itself in wise reaction to the group. For Socrates, like Kierkegaard, to 'know thyself' is the end of all enquiry. Hegel, quite to the contrary, left no room for the future in his system, and therefore no room for the question 'What should I do?' The concept of the individual, for him, was an inadequate and outmoded concept - which had been surpassed in the dialectic of the system, and preserved only in the abstract notion of the 'spirit', which according to Kierkegaard, is the very negation of the concept of the 'existing individual'.

Kierkegaard's personal contempt for Hegelianism lay in the system's treatment of Christianity. For Hegel, Christianity consisted of a set of doctrines to be believed by Christians; to be a Christian was to believe these doctrines. In contrast to Hegel, Kierkegaard says that Christianity is not a set of doctrines and therefore, nothing that can be proved to be true or made reasonable. The problem of Christianity is not the truth of Christianity, but the relation of the individual to Christianity, the concern of the 'infinitely interested individual'.

Becoming a Christian is not a result of the philosophical (scientific) enquiry, but a question of deep personal involvement or 'faith':

"Faith does not result simply from scientific enquiry: it does not come directly at all. On the contrary, in this objectivity one tends to lose that infinite personal interestness which is the condition of faith."
(Kierkegaard, 1941, CUP, p.30)

In Hegel, Christianity is not the result of his system: that is, it is the absolute knowledge consisting of realization of oneself as spirit.

The doctrine of Christianity is not important, except as object of faith, and not knowledge. Faith, as subjectivity, can not be had by a doctrine, or by a religion, or by a church but only by an individual who 'chooses the path of

faith'. Hegel's understanding of Christianity as a doctrine of the spirit, that is, spirit's conception of itself is fundamentally at odds with Kierkegaard's conception of Christianity as a way of life which is chosen not because it is true or even plausible, but simply because one personally commits himself without appeal to reasons or reason at all.

Spheres of Life:

Unlike Hegel, who describes a wide variety of forms of life, Kierkegaard concentrates on three main types: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. He also examines several variations within the ethical and religious forms. He explores the distinctive features and paradoxes of each sphere which in turn define the good life in fundamentally different ways. Kierkegaard explores the tension in each form of life, and forces his readers to see the personal implications of choosing each path. Although some of the flaws he identifies might be considered internal flaws, most of them derive from external standard imbibed from the form of life he is most inclined towards - the religious type.

Kierkegaard's analysis of the three stages represents a sharp contrast to Hegel's theory of the gradual development of a person's self –consciousness. Whereas Hegel expounded the dialectic movement of the mind as it moves from one stage of intellectual awareness to another through progress of thinking, Kierkegaard described the movement of the self from one level of existence to another through an act of will, an act of choice. Hegel's dialectic moves gradually toward a knowledge of universal, whereas Kierkegaard's dialectic involves the progressive actualization of the individual. Whereas Hegel overcomes the anti-thesis by a conceptual act, Kierkegaard overcomes it by the act of personal commitment.

The contrast between the aesthetic and the ethical comes out most clearly in *Either/Or* and that between the ethical and the religious in *Fear and Trembling*.

The Aesthetic mode of Existence:

The aesthetic and ethical standpoints are presented in the book *Either/Or*, in the form of edited sets of papers and letters. It is indicated that the man who lives aesthetically is not really in control, either of himself or his situation. The aesthetic life is devoted to the immediate: the momentary, the sensual, the whimsical, the new, and the challenging. It is an involvement with each moment that pursues no larger organizing end and is lacking in any degree of consistency. Aesthetes make no effort to judge their actions in moral terms remaining completely oblivious to moral standards. Insofar as immoral actions offer a new kind of experience, they may taste them, but they do not dwell on them. Aesthetes depend heavily on good fortune, both to provide new experiences and to achieve success in relation to new challenges. They refuse to reflect on their lives as a whole, and they do not question the 'ultimate meanings' of their existence. Instead, they remain involved in each passing experience - relying on chance to provide something to savor - hoping their own evanescent charms and talents will ensure success.

At this level a person behaves according to his impulses and emotions. He is for the most part governed by his senses. For this reason the aesthetic person knows nothing of any universal moral standards. He has no specific religious belief. His chief motivation is a desire to enjoy the widest variety of pleasure of the senses. At this stage an individual can exist inasmuch as he deliberately chooses to be an aesthetic man. But even though *existence* can be achieved at

this level, Kierkegaard infuses the element of quality into the matter of existence. Later existentialists were to speak of this quality in terms of *authenticity*. That is an individual on the aesthetic level is aware that his life consists, or ought to consist, of more than his emotive and sense experiences.

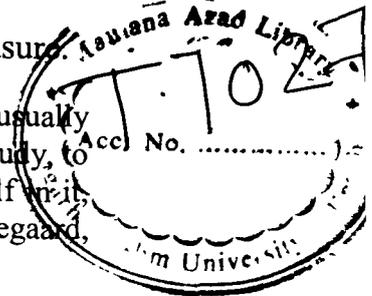
The aesthete typically tends to live 'for the moment', in whatever the passing instant will offer by way of entertainment, excitement, and interest. He is committed to nothing stable or definite, and is immersed in sensuous 'immediacy'. He may do or think one thing at a given time and the exact opposite at some other time. His life lacks any semblance of 'continuity', stability or focus and changes direction according to the varying moods or circumstances and exhibit an absolute whimsicality.

The aesthetic mode of existence is the life of pure 'immediacy' and its ultimate maxim is not a 'reflective' or a 'rational principle', based on obligation or self-discipline. The aesthetic life can be at best the life of whim, of immediate satisfaction and gratification. It lacks any moral principle, in the form of good or evil, it is devoted only to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction, fulfillment or frustration, pleasure or pain, happiness or suffering, ecstasy or despair. The aesthetic existence is lived by the romantic who is described by Hegel as the 'Romantic spirit' in the *Phenomenology*. The aesthetic mode's most characteristic example is *Don Juan* in his unending quest for 'sensual faithless love'. Sensual love is purely for the moment, in the same moment everything come to an end, and the same thing repeats itself over and over again. The question whether the union will be satisfying does not arise for it is a union which is not futuristic. Don Juan does not experience the responsibility of developing a relationship, for he does not dwell upon it too long. For him every woman is simply 'women in the abstract'; at most there is a sensual difference

between them, not a personal difference. Don Juan is without principle, or faithless, in that there is only a cursory difference between his involvements. He seduces women, which mean that each is to be enjoyed for the moment, and, there is nothing unique about that moment for it is indistinguishable from all other moments.

The principle of the aesthetic is satisfaction with the immediate, with whatever is arbitrarily chosen as an object for immediate pleasure.

“The whole secret lies in arbitrariness. People usually think it easy to be arbitrary, but it requires much study, to succeed in being arbitrary so as not to lose oneself in it, but so as to derive satisfaction from it.” (Kierkegaard, 1944, E/O, pp.279-296)



The aesthetic life consists in the enjoyment of the moment regardless of what that moment may hold. One can enjoy good health and beauty, in himself or others, or riches and honor or talent in the arts in the same way as sensuous pleasure is enjoyed. The aesthetic life, although essentially unreflective is not necessarily without intelligence for it consists in the enjoyment or even creation of music or poetry, or even philosophy, as long as these are enjoyed purely for their immediate satisfaction.

There is, however, a negative component imbedded in the aesthetic stage for not only is there pleasure but the constant threat of pain and suffering, not only satisfaction but also frustration and what is most destructive is the experience of *boredom*. For the aesthete, nothing is more damaging than being bored, or recognizing the repetition of his life of the 'immediate'. The very moment the aesthete, recognizes the threat, he becomes obsessed with escaping boredom and repetition, and subsequently becomes a slave to the demand for a new experience. Don Juan comes to live not for pleasure and gratification, but to escape boredom and the staleness of repetition.

The aesthetic life is essentially the life of the immediate, and as such, rejects any reflection concerning the significance of that moment. One does, however, come to reflect on his life and the significance of his actions, and on reflection, the immediate loses its value, and the life of absorption in the moment is experienced as a mere 'emptiness'. It takes the form of a series of repetitions which are ultimately *meaningless*. One becomes increasingly restless attempting to explore ever new experiences in order to suppress the feeling of meaninglessness.

As one reflects on the futility of trying to satisfy the human spirit through immediate gratification, he tends to become skeptical about all gratification and about all desires. This stage of the aesthetic which has been exemplified by Faust one turns away from seeking any new gratification of desires and goes to the extent of denying those desires themselves. His existence becomes pure pride, coupled with cynicism for the worth of anything.

Facing the prospect of death and the meaninglessness of life, the aesthete, in silent despair, desperately attempts to escape from reflection altogether. The natural way of doing so, Kierkegaard suggests, is to stop all self-appraisal and self-assertion, and to lose oneself in the crowd and the meaninglessness of everyday collective, inauthentic life. For those few who are sufficiently strong to maintain their individuality, the choice of the ethical life is in the offing.

Kierkegaard identifies several problems with the aesthetic way of life. First, its dependence on chance implies that it lacks ultimate control over its own success thus easily falling into despair if aesthetes suffer serious injury or endure highly repetitive experiences. Second, their continuous pursuit of new experiences creates a ceaseless restlessness. Experiences can feel similar even if they contain some new elements, and this can produce an inevitable boredom.

To take Kierkegaard's prime example of Don Juan, even if new victims of the seducer present different challenges, the similarity of the process of seduction can blind the aesthete to these differences. Then this life can seem like endless repetition. Third, if aesthetes ever do reflect on life as a whole, they will experience a deep emptiness because their lives have no cumulative meaning, no unity, and no centeredness. Here Kierkegaard seems to rely on a standard imported from the ethical form of life, rather than explore the paradoxes of the aesthete. Kierkegaard's main objection, however, is that the satisfaction achieved by the aesthete is short-lived, unreliable, and unstable.

The Ethical Mode of Existence:

Unlike the aesthetic life, the ethical life is characterized by *reflection* and *self-appraisal*, and with reflection one can appraise the *meaningfulness* of his life. Deliberate and principled choice, as opposed to action on whim, is the mark of the ethical, and actions have significance not according to immediate gratification, but with regard to their accordance with moral principle. This long-term significance and regard for principle rather than immediate satisfaction, allows the ethical life to give a meaning to existence that the aesthete can never achieve.

Unlike the aesthetic man, who has no universal standards but only his own taste, the ethical man does recognize and accept rules of conduct that reason formulates. Moral rules give the ethical man's life the elements of form and consistency. Moreover, the ethical man accepts the limitations upon his life that moral responsibility imposes. Kierkegaard illustrates the contrast between the aesthetic man and the ethical man in their attitude toward sexual behavior, saying that whereas the aesthete yields to his impulses wherever there is an

attraction, the ethical man accepts the obligations of marriage as an expression of reason, the universal of man. If Don Juan exemplifies the aesthetic man, it is Socrates who typified the ethical man or the supremacy of the universal moral law.

The ethical involves in organizing one's life into a coherent whole through intense commitment to an ideal that takes account of one's capabilities and situations, devotedly discharging the resultant social duties, and regarding people as absolute ends rather than as means to one's own ends. His key example is someone who enters into marriage — a long term commitment to a person - with single-mindedness, sincerity, and the will to make the relationship last to the benefit of both parties. Thus people living ethical lives do not mindlessly accept socially prescribed duties, but attempt to put their unique imprint on each duty they acknowledge. They also define their own long-term ideals in relation to their commitments to other people, rather than simply following an ideal intrinsic to their culture. The ethical life is less concerned with successful results rather than with good-faith efforts, sincere devotion, and long term dedication. The ethical life is devoid of any conception of sin and paradox and the satisfaction achieved by actualizing personal commitments become the source of stability and self sustainance.

The ethical life thus is a synthesis of two elements: social norms and personal commitment. However it must be distinguished from another form of social life that is central to Heidegger: the impersonal or public mode of social life that he characterized as the inauthentic mode of existence. In this form of life, people conform to public norms — not because of conviction, conscious affirmation, or personal self-definition, but because of routine and social expectations. They act as everyone acts, unreflectively following whatever the

masses embrace. Their behaviour conforms to social rules, but the rules carry no personal stamp. This inauthentic existence, Kierkegaard finds to be typical of his age, and even those who believe in a Christian God in this other-directed, depersonalized fashion are of no worth.

The basic feature of the ethical would be expected to be the employment of universal rational principles that transcend and leave no exception for the individual but yet remain secular principles. The ethical life is the societal life, the life of man who considers himself part of a community of men and lives according to principles which treat every man as an end in himself and subsume self-interest to moral duty. The ethical life, with its emphasis on universality, rationality, and duty, in short, morality, signifies for Kierkegaard, as for Hegel, the ethics of Kant. Although Kierkegaard does not deny the inclusion of a non-kantian ethics within the ethical sphere, it is clear that the system of values which concerns him is that of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. The ethical sphere thus consists of living for the good of men in community and personal interests are always to be subsumed under the interests of morality.

The central feature of the ethical is universality, and a necessary condition for a set of principles to be ethical principles is the impartial applicability to every person at every time.

“The ethical as such is the universal, and as the universal it applies to everyone, which may be expressed from another point of view by saying that it applies every instant.” (Kierkegaard, 1941, F&T, p. 64)

Kierkegaard, like Kant, considers morality to be autonomous and rational. Every man produces these principles for himself, and must, in so far as he is moral, uphold these principles even against the disagreement of society at large.

Kierkegaard does not fully adopt Kant's moral philosophy to his dialectic, because the thesis from which Kant maintains that every rational creature will recognize these principles in himself is identical to his characterization of reason. Because Kierkegaard rejects this characterization in his denial that reason can give us justification of ultimate moral principles, he can not maintain with Kant that the principles of morality can be autonomously delivered by every 'rational creature'.

The model for ethical life, however, is not similar to the formal derivations of Kant's ethics, but the historical example of Socrates. In Socrates, we find a clear representation of not only the values but the living adherence to the values of morality. It is Socrates who not only taught, but lived the principles that man is of the highest value, that 'the good is in every man', and that love of man is the ultimate good. Socrates like Kant argues that the good which is in every man has absolute justification and that subjectivity does not serve as justification of these principles. It is the self reflection and a life of principles which marks Socrates as the paragon of ethical existence.

Thus, according to Kierkegaard, the secular reflection of the ethical life is adequate to disclose the meaninglessness of the aesthetic life and simultaneously a reinforcement of the moral principles which define and give meaning to existence. As long as one remains in this secular state of reflection, guilt is a result of failure to fulfill ethical demands and can always be overcome by the performance of good acts.

Kierkegaard's objections to the ethical life are based even less on internal criteria than his objection to the aesthetic life. First, the ethical life can be lived in good conscience, without *angst* or doubt. Though many might regard this as a benefit, Kierkegaard regards it with suspicion because he is convinced of

humanity's irredeemable sinfulness. In addition, the degree of passion and subjectivity a way of life can achieve is a function of its irrationality, paradoxes, and difficulty. Since the ethical life need not be paradoxical or irrational in this way, Kierkegaard regards it as less demanding and even less serious than the religious life. Finally, ethical persons may be divided by loyalties to conflicting values, rendering them incapable of acting as a unified whole. Only singular devotion to God can assure such self-integration.

One of Kierkegaard's criteria for evaluating different styles of life is their self-sufficiency or independence from the vagaries of chance. But he rejects one ethical attempt to achieve this independence: stoicism. Stoics retreat from the world and attempt to remain indifferent to the results of their actions. They seek equilibrium and inner calm. This ideal is another way of avoiding Kierkegaardian authenticity. He values personal commitment, individuality, passionate devotion, and the willingness to risk oneself. He believes that the inner fortress to which stoics retreat empties them of genuine feeling and care. In addition, stoics may falter if forced to endure long-term suffering. Kierkegaard believes that only a relationship with a transcendent deity will provide the strength to endure such suffering. This personal and passionate relationship to God is the core element of the religious way of life.

Thus for the most part, the ethical man considers moral evil as being a product either of ignorance or of weakness of will. But after some time when the dialectics progress in the consciousness of the ethical man he begins to realize that he is involved in something more profound than an inadequate knowledge of the moral law or in sufficient strength of will. The ethical man ultimately comes to realize that he is in fact incapable of fulfilling the moral law, that he deliberately violates that law and therefore he becomes conscious of his guilt.

This guilt or the sense of sin becomes the dialectic element, the anti-thesis, which places before man a new *either/or*. Now he must either, remain at the ethical level and try to fulfill the moral law, or he must respond to his new awareness, the awareness of his own finitude and estrangement from God to whom he belongs and from whom he must derive his strength. Again man's movement from the ethical to the religious stage can not be achieved by thinking alone but by an act of commitment, by a *leap of faith*.

Religious way of life – Becoming a Christian:

The difference between faith and reason is particularly striking for Kierkegaard when man arrives at the third level that is the *religious stage*. Man's movement from the aesthetic to the ethical level required an act of choice and *commitment*. For Kierkegaard truth is the subjective matter and a consequence of commitment. Without risk there is no faith. And with faith, Kierkegaard says, the existing individual realises his true authentic self.

The religious stage is that sphere of life defined by the conception of the individual in relationship to God. Kierkegaard personally considered this stage as his chosen mode of existence and that the central purpose of his writing, as he admits in his *Point of View of My Work as an Author*, is to arouse the religious view of life in his readers. 'Religious' for Kierkegaard is to be taken in a very restricted sense— to be religious is to be a Christian, but a Christian in Kierkegaard's very special sense. The sense of religious here is so restricted that it is questionable whether anyone who has not had a background in Kierkegaard's pathological guilt-ridden Lutheran upbringing could qualify as the religious *Knight of Faith*. Membership in the Christian church is the very anti-thesis of being a Christian. In fact,

“It is easier to become a Christian when I am not a Christian than to become Christian when I am one.”
(Kierkegaard, 1941, CUP, p.327)

Kierkegaard's conception of Christianity is diametrically opposed to the rationalist conception of Christianity as in Hegel and Kant. For Kant, Christianity was rationally justified by its necessity for practical reason, and God is postulated in support of morality. Christ enters into Christianity as a corollary of belief in God, for belief in Christ can be rationally justified only so far as this belief is necessary for morality. For Hegel also, belief in God is rational, but the Hegelian God is of a radically different sort. For Hegel, God is not transcendent as for Kant, but immanent. God for Hegel is that subject which is common to all men, and Christ is the symbol of that 'incarnation', that is, the fact that God or spirit is man, and man is God.

Kierkegaard rejects not only the reinterpretation of the Christian conceptions of God, Christ, and the incarnation by Hegel, but the entire rationalist approach to Christianity. God can not be an object of knowledge, but simply an object of faith. And for the question of his existence, once one is within the religious viewpoint he can not be intelligibly raised.

Christianity is not a set of doctrines, but a way of life, a set of values. The absurd doctrine of incarnation, the Trinity, and so on are not important in themselves; it is the attitude of the religious toward these that is of importance. The appropriate attitudes for Kierkegaard are fear, dread and even terror, before an almighty yet unknowable God, despair and suffering at one's personal weakness, and overpowering guilt in the face of sin before God because of these shortcomings.

The religious life includes a feeling of sinfulness, an extreme sense of paradox, and a knowledge that ordinary social laws may have to be suspended in

order to follow God's will. For Kierkegaard, the more irrational the faith in God, the more personal and authentic the religious faith because it lacks the support of objective reasons. Kierkegaard insists that the belief in the Christian God is paradoxical because it asserts that an eternal transcendent God becomes incarnate and temporal. This paradox can not be fathomed rationally: it can only be accepted through faith.

Crucial to Kierkegaard's notion of the religious life is feeling the continuous presence of God. Instead of foundering in uncertainty or skepticism, religious person welcomes this continuous living presence and respond with constant devotion and awe. This living presence personalizes the devotee's relationship with God; everyday life becomes an expressive witness to that presence. Religious person willingly disobey the requirements of social morality when God commands it - e.g., when God called upon Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Christianity is the love of this God, confidence in his goodness and justice, as well as the fear and despair of him. The life of a Christian is to be totally and passionately before God, and to be the Christian 'knight of faith' is to drop every vestige of skepticism and rationality with regard to religious questions and simply exist in the presence of God.

"The believer defers from the ethicist in being infinitely interested in the reality of another." (Kierkegaard, 1941, CUP, p.288)

One can be rational only to the extent of recognizing the absurdity of the doctrines of Christianity and discovering the utter irrationality of accepting the Christian way of life. Reason thus having completed its functions, what is left is the choice, the unquestionable acceptance, the leap of Christianity.

Knowledge of God is past the limit of reason Christianity is irrational in the sense that it is absurd, and that it must be accepted though it can not be understood. In this sense, Kierkegaard is a strict anti-rationalist, in that he attacks any possibility of rationalizing Christianity. Contrary to Hegel, Christianity can not be grasped by the development of reason, for Christianity is not a set of doctrines to be understood, but only to be accepted and lived by. In the religious stage, no comparable understanding and no comparable employment of reason is possible. Kierkegaard does speak of the ethical sphere as rational but the religious sphere is not. The ethical life is the life of reason; the religious life is the unreasonable life of faith.

The teaching of Christianity, therefore, can not be based on reason but must be based on authority. Kant and Hegel's insistence on natural religion is, according to Kierkegaard, to reject what is fundamental to the religious way of life. 'Positive' religion is the only possible religion.

Because religion rests on authority, the teacher, namely *Jesus*, is not simply an 'occasion' for learning, but Himself constitutes the truth that 'God exist in and with his own existence.' It is not a matter of indifference that Christ is the teacher of religion, for He Himself is the 'truth' which He is teaching. To 'learn' Christianity, one must feel himself confronted with God, and this confrontation is not the sort of 'learning' which could be prompted by an 'occasional' teacher.

It is the conception of the eternal which differentiates the religious sphere from the other two. In the aesthetic sphere, "time" refers only to the immediate; in the ethical, 'time' refers to the more than immediate, but only to secular (worldly) existence. In the religious sphere, however, there is no concept of

time; our recognition of God places us 'beyond the this – worldly and the temporal.'

The central teaching of God, therefore, is that man is in sin; acceptance of God is the acceptance that one is sinful. Facing this sin, which does not involve any specific transgression, feeling guilty about it, despairing at the impossibility of erasing it, and earnestly repenting is the Christian way of life.

"Christianity begins with the doctrine of sin, and therefore with the individual." (Kierkegaard, 1941, SUD, p.197)

It is the presence of sin that distinguishes the religious from the ethical, for sin is *irrational*. In ethics a man feels guilty because he believes he has transgressed some specific moral principle. In religion the believer feels guilty for a transgression against no principle in particular. By his very being he has sinned against God where no amount of reasoning could disclose how such a sin is possible. In ethics one is responsible for his own error, but this is not true of the doctrine of original sin. Moral transgression, even if not remediable, can be absolved by God Himself, Who, because He is not concerned with the temporal but with salvation, makes it a point not to provide such absolution during a man's worldly existence. Rather, this existence must be one of continuous guilt and suffering-the permeating recognition that one is basically incomplete and as such constitutes a virtual insult to God. Therefore, sin is not one of the corollary doctrines of Christianity, but is the inevitable consequence of recognizing oneself in God's presence.

The breach between the religious and the ethical is best illustrated in the story of *Abraham* and *Isaac*. In his choice between obeying the command of God and saving his son, Abraham was faced with the inevitable choice between

the central precepts of the religious and the ethical for to fail to obey a direct imperative of God would be inconceivable for a religious person and yet the murder of ones own son would be perhaps the greatest of all crimes. The choice itself shows beyond any doubt that secular morality and religious duty may be in absolute conflict in that there is no criterion for making this difficult choice; one must simply choose between God and morality. Kierkegaard encourages a broader conception of morality in which one's first duty is to God, the *teleological suspension of the Ethical*. The religious way of life consists basically in the adoption of religious attitudes of *inwardness* and *suffering, guilt* and the like. Abraham provides an extreme case just because he confronts the toughest test with unflinching faith in God. In these commandments, the ethical can be considered God's expression of His commands to all men, and it is belief in God that gives sanction and ultimate meaning to morality.

Kierkegaard contrasts two theories of access to divine commands. Socrates believes his access to his inner voice as reliable because he could remember a prior contact with an eternal reality to which his actions conformed. He was able to challenge the laws and customs of Athens because of his access to this reality. His task was to teach people how to recollect their relationship to this eternal realm. Kierkegaard's objection to Socrates' understanding of the religious life is that it is purely theoretical. In contrast, Christians' access to God's commands will forever be clouded because of their sinfulness. They can not expect to achieve unity with God on their own through recollection. A Christian's relationship with God depends on his grace and forgiveness. There can never be final assurance or security. Christians thus experience constant uncertainty, despair, and crisis. Kierkegaard's preferred version of the religious life involve a continual struggle and a *leap of faith* is required, and this

distinguishes the religious life from the ethical and the aesthetic way of life. The more irrational the faith, the greater the authenticity required to affirm God.

In the movement from one life style to another, there is a shift in the way one looks at the world. The movement the decision to commit ourselves to a new lifestyle is not a logical one, nor does it always happen smoothly. This shift in life orientation is fundamental and radical. It means a change in our value system. The transition involves a commitment. When we are engaged in a living orientation we give that value system and its orientation the full weight of reality.

All of us make changes in our lives. And what we do during this process is commit ourselves to different values, projects and programs of action. This transition does not happen just rationally or logically. Our entire emotional orientation as well as our mind set changes. It involves an emotional factor, and not merely a mental or intellectual demand. This transition calls for a free choice, a free decision on the part of the individual. The changes are so fundamental and the distance between the spheres is so radical that Kierkegaard calls it a leap of faith. Thus leap of faith, according to Kierkegaard, is 'unconditional' and irrational. It requires passion not knowledge. And this unconditional, irrational, passionate commitment is the mark of authenticity which can be seen only in the religious stage where an individual surrenders himself before the will of God unconditionally.

Chapter – III

**Martin Buber:
Meeting Through Dialogue**

MARTIN BUBER

Meeting Through Dialogue

Only when every means has collapsed does the meeting come about....No deception penetrates here; here is the cradle of the Real Life. (Buber, 1937, p. 12)

The development of twentieth century philosophy emerged as a consequence of a revolt or a departure from idealism and distinguished itself through an extraordinary renovation in religious thinking. Some nineteenth century materialists believe that the following century would witness religion perishing from the earth, but on the contrary a new prophetic fervor directed towards preserving and defending the traditional religions become visible. The ancient pieties were once again proclaimed, and the banners of faith spread out. New and original efforts to understand the basic phenomena of religion came into being. Theology once again become intellectually exciting and for certain theologians even fashionable. Theologians and religious philosophers were led to examine the varieties of experience that underlie the towering superstructure of theological concepts. The religious thinkers in seeking to renew the old, re-created the experiences that lay at its very origin.

Thus, the twentieth century philosophy experienced an extraordinary rebirth of traditional religious thought. The movements in question have been contemporary, i.e. they have been acutely aware of themselves as different from the attitudes of the period immediately preceding. They are both, new in the sense that they in some sense belong to the contemporary - and also traditional, in their attempt to keep some aspects alive, retained more or less in the same form in which it once had lived. Hence, it is rightly termed as *neo-orthodoxy*.

Here, we are including two philosophers Paul Tillich and Martin Buber, who represent the two dominant religious traditions of western civilization; Protestant, Christianity and Judaism. Both these thinkers have made extensive use of previously existing resources of their respective traditions; yet with each the attempt to renew the tradition is far from being a mere repetition of the past, as both of them have made the more rigidly orthodox extremely uneasy. Buber's religion strikes orthodox Jews as much too *Hassidic* and *mystical*, and Tillich's theology is for a good many protestant theologians altogether too secular and *Psychological*. Thus given their style of speculation these two philosophers can well be understood as the bridge between *neo* and *orthodox* ideas.

Martin Buber was a German philosopher, whose faith rested on the religious tradition of Judaism, but he emphasizes on an aspect of religious experience that is faithful to both the Jewish as well as the Christian tradition. Buber was of the conviction that it would be impossible to enter into a relationship with God unless a human being developed the capacity to relate meaningfully with human beings. The interpersonal aspect of religion has been held as sacrosanct by Buber and is the very foundation in the formation of his thoughts. For this reason he has often been pronounced as an existentialist theologian who held 'personal encounter' as the very core of his philosophical pronouncements.

For existentialists, the point of departure is the question of what it means to be an 'existing human being'. A question that can be meaningfully answered only if the dimension in which a human being enters into a relationship with another human being is sufficiently explored. Buber deviates considerably from other existentialists in the usage of a vocabulary and the presentation of the

dynamics of interrelatedness which is unique to him. An exploration of this dynamics would be in place for a clearer understanding of this issue.

He suggests that there are two basic word-pairs: *I-Thou* and *I-It*. These two basic or primary word-pairs according to him, represents the two modes of existence. These two word-pairs emphasize the two ways of becoming a self or an 'I', for there are two primary ways of relating. Buber believes that an individual becomes human only in a relationship, and these paired terms describe two possible ways of relating. The 'I-Thou' relationship is one of intimacy, mutuality, sharing and trust. While on the contrary, the 'I-It' relationship is one of having, using, and exploiting. To put it differently, the 'I-It' relationship is unidirectional moving only from the subject to the object, from I to the thing. But the 'I-Thou' relationship is a form of relating in which the 'I' gives and receives from the 'Thou'. When we relate to another person as a 'Thou', we do not treat that person as a thing or an object. This is what Buber means when he says, 'when I confront a human being as my Thou and speak the basic word I-Thou to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things'. Will Herberg points very cogently in summarizing Buber's distinction between I-Thou and I-It as follows:

"The primary word *I-Thou* points to a relation of person to person, of subject to subject, a relation of reciprocity involving 'meeting' or 'encounter', while the primary word *I-It* points to a relation of person to thing, of subject to object, involving some form of utilization, domination, or control even if it is only so-called objective knowing."
(Herberg, 1972, p.14)

Martin Buber's notion of authenticity lies in his formation of the 'I-Thou' and 'I-It' relationship. The problem that Buber faces is: how can man achieve 'reality' without returning to the naïve, pre-Kantian 'objective' view of the

universe. Buber finds this reality through 'perceiving' that in addition to man's 'orienting' function he also possesses a 'realizing' function which brings him into real contact with God, with other men, and with nature. In his most celebrated work *I and Thou*, he speaks about the relations of man to man and to things as well as God. This relationship cuts across the lines of our ordinary distinctions to focus attention not upon individual objects and their causal connections but upon the relations between things. Buber says:

"Here I and Thou freely confront one another in mutual effect that is neither connected with nor coloured by any causality." (Buber, 1958, p.51)

In the development of his philosophy of I and Thou the thoughts of his teacher, William Dilthey, provide a secure foundation. He was much influenced by Dilthey's thought that a man can not take a detached scientific observer's position about the realities of life, but that he must *participate* with the things of the world because only in *participation* a man discovers the typical and unique aspects of his life. Another important influence on Buber's philosophy were the thoughts of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. The influence of these two philosophers may account in part for the 'dynamism' of Buber's philosophy. Both of them emphasize on the concrete and actual as opposed to the ideal and abstract. They also emphasize on the value of life impulses and wholeness of being as opposed to detached intellectuality. In one of his early writings Buber speaks about Nietzsche as the path finder of a new culture, the awakener and creator of new life-values and a new world-feeling.

In addition to Dilthey, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard, the most important influences on the development of Buber's 'I-Thou' philosophy were Ludwig Feuerbach and George Simmel. Buber states in *What Is Man?* that Feuerbach imparted a decisive impetus in his youth. Unlike Kant, writes Buber, Feuerbach

postulates the whole man and not cognition as the beginning of philosophizing and by man he does not mean an isolated individual, but man with man – the connection of I and Thou. Like Feuerbach, Simmel too, is concerned with relation – the relation between man and God, between man and man and between man and nature. He draws an analogy between the relations of man and God and those of man and man which come quite close to Buber's own 'I-Thou' relation. To believe in God, according to Simmel, means not just a rational belief in his existence but a definite inner relationship to Him. This involves a surrender to the Will of God with complete trust that paves the path of life. In the same way to 'believe' in a man means to share a relationship of mutual trust. He begins his philosophy of man in *I and Thou* with the following description:

“To man the world is twofold, in accordance with his twofold attitude. The attitude of man is twofold, in accordance with the twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks. The primary words are not isolated words but combined words. The one primary word is the combination *I-Thou*. The other primary word is the combination *I-It*; wherein, without a change in the primary word, one of the words *He* and *She* can replace it. Hence the I of man is also twofold. For the *I* of the primary world *I-Thou* is a different *I* from that of the primary word *I-It*.”
(Buber, 1937, p.03)

Buber characterizes these two primary words *I-Thou* and *I-It* as man's two primary attitudes and relations. But he does not use both the I's in the same way. He says:

“The primary word 'I-Thou' can only be spoken with the whole being. The primary word 'I-It' can never be spoken with the whole being.” (Buber, 1937, p.03)

Buber contrasts the reality of man with nature. His distinction rests on the two fold principle of human life that consists of two basic movements. He describes the first movement as 'the primal setting at a distance', and the second

as 'entering into relation'. The first movement presupposes the second, as one can only enter into relation with another being that has been set at some distance from us and thereby has an independent existence. The first movement exhibits the possibility of human existence and the second how human existence gains realization. Only man can perform the setting a distance as only he has a 'world' which is an unbroken continuum holding not only knowledge and experience of his own self and the other he relates to but all that is knowable in the present and in the future. Buber elaborates this by contrasting man to, that of an animal which has 'environment' or 'realm' and not a world. An animal selects from his realm those things which he needs, but he does not see it as a separate whole and is incapable of distinguishing between what is perceived from what can be perceived. He says

"Only man as man, gives distance to things which he comes upon in his realm; he sets them in their independents of things which from now on continue to exist ready for a function and which he can make wait for him so that on each occasion he may master them again, and bring them into action."(Buber, 1965, p. 65)

Thus, Buber believes that only man has a 'world' impregnated with meaning while animals have only an 'environment' or a 'realm'. Animals utilize it governed by their needs, but do not see it as a separate whole with which a persisting relationship can be established. Contrary to animals man possesses an impulse and a distinct awareness of an unaccomplished task before him – that of discovering the world, through personal participation. Buber says that the distance becomes instrumental in the creation of a situation and the procedure through which a man relates to that situation is his becoming. This act of entering into relation with the world as a whole, for Buber, is a 'synthesizing apperception'. He says:

“... by synthesizing apperception I mean the apperception of a being as a whole and as a unity... The conception of wholeness and unity is in its origin identical with the conception of the world to which man is turned.” (Buber, 1965, pp.62-63)

Buber states that wholeness and unity can be achieved only by looking at the world as a complete whole and not just a tool or an instrument to be grappled with. And this grasping is performed not simply through ‘setting at a distance’ but through ‘entering into relation’ with it. He says:

“only the view of what is over against me in the world in its full presence, with which I have set myself, present in my whole person, in relation – only this view gives me the world truly as whole and one.” (Buber, Cited in Friedman, 1955, p.80)

Further, it is in men’s relation to one another that the twofold principle of human life can be seen still more clearly. Man sets himself apart and at a distance from others and thus makes himself independent. He is therefore able to enter into relation with other retaining his unique individuality.

“The basis of man’s life with man is twofold... the wish of every man to be confirmed as what he is,... and the innate capacity in man to confirm his fellow men in this way... actual humanity exists only where this capacity unfolds.” (Buber, Cited in Friedman, 1955, p.81)

Genuine conversation, like every genuine fulfillment of relation between men, means acceptance of otherness. This means that although one may desire to influence the other and to lead him to share in one’s relation to truth, one accepts and confirms him in his being that a particular man made in his particular way.

Thus, mutual confirmation of men is fully realized in what Buber calls ‘making present’, an event which happens partially wherever men come together but in its essential structure only rarely. Making the other present means to ‘imagine’ the real, to ‘imagine’ quite concretely what another man is wishing

feeling, perceiving and thinking. Something of the character of what is imagined is joined to the act of imagining. One to some extent wills what he willing, thinks what he thinking, feels what he feeling. The particular pain which I inflict on another surges up in myself and paradoxically we are engulfed in a common situation. It is through this making present that we grasp another as a self, that is as a being whose distance from me cannot be separated from my distance from him. This event is not ontologically complete until he knows himself made present by me and until this knowledge includes the process of his inmost self becoming.

The starting point of *I and Thou* is neither metaphysics nor theology but philosophical anthropology – the study of the problem of man. Philosophical anthropology is an important development in Buber's thought because he defines philosophical anthropology as the study of 'the wholeness of man', which is an essential existentialist dimension. He develops this notion of philosophical anthropology in his book *Between Man and Man*. It is an extension and development of his philosophy of dialogue.

In *What Is Man?* Buber defines 'philosophical anthropology' as the study of 'the wholeness of man' and lists the following as among the problems which are implicitly set up at the same time by this question:

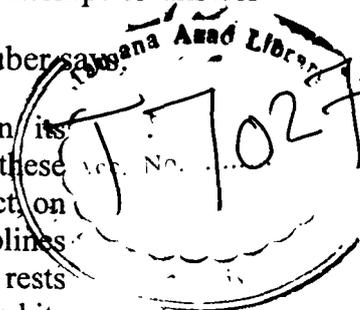
“... man's special place in the cosmos, his *connexion* with destiny, his relation to the world of things, his understanding of his fellow men, his existence as a being that knows it must die, his attitude in the ordinary and extraordinary encounters with the mystery with which his life is shot through...” (Buber, 1947, p.120)

Buber proceeds to set up philosophical anthropology as a systematic method which deals with the concrete, existential characteristics of man's life in order to arrive at the essence of man:

“Even as it must again and again distinguish within the human race in order to arrive at a solid comprehension, so it must put man in all seriousness into nature, it must compare him with other things, other living creatures, other bearers of consciousness, in order to define his special place reliably for him. Only by this double way of distinction and comparison does it reach the whole, real man.” (Buber, 1947, p.121)

The concern with the wholeness of man rules out the attempt to answer the question in terms of particular philosophical disciplines. Buber says,

“Philosophy succeeds in rendering me... help in its individual disciplines precisely through each of these disciplines not reflecting, and not being able to reflect, on the wholeness of man... in everyone of these disciplines the possibility of its achieving anything in thought rests precisely on its objectification, on what may be termed its ‘de-humanization’.” (Buber, 1965, p.14)



Buber does not agree with Heidegger in his belief that philosophical anthropology can provide a foundation for metaphysics or for the individual philosophical sciences. He claims that in doing so it would become so general that it would reach a false unity instead of the genuine wholeness of the subject based on ‘the contemplation of all its manifold nature’. Buber says:

“A legitimate philosophical anthropology must know that there is not merely a human species but also peoples, not merely a human soul but also types and characters, not merely a human life but also stages in life; only from the... recognition of the dynamic that exerts power within every particular reality and between them, and from the constantly new proof of the one in the many, can it come to see the wholeness of man.” (Buber, 1965, p.14)

In defining philosophical anthropology as the problem of finding the human in the constant flux of individuals and cultures, Buber develops an approach through which we can avoid the abyss of abstract unity, on the one hand, and that of meaningless relativity, on the other. Buber states that “man’s existence is constituted by his participation, at the same time and in the same

actions, in finitude and infinity; man's uniqueness is determined by the particular existential characteristics of his relation to 'mystery', cosmos, destiny, death, things, and man, related to the definition of man as the creature who participates in both finitude and infinity." (Buber, 1965, p.15) Buber defines man in *Between Man and Man* "...as the only creature who has potentiality." (Buber, 1965, p.15) Further Buber writes "Man is the 'crystallized potentiality of existence'. Even though this wealth of possibility is confined within narrow limits. These limits are only factual and not essential. Man's action is unforeseeable in its nature and extent." (Buber, 1965, p.15) It is because of this potentiality that Buber is able to speak in terms of the freedom of man and the reality of evil.

In *What is Man?* Buber defines man as the creature who is capable of entering into living relation with the world and things, with men both as individuals and as the many, and with 'the mystery of being – which is dimly apparent through all this but infinitely transcends it.' In a living relation with things, man not only regards them technically and purposively, but also turns to them as having an essence. In relation with man one life opens to another such that one experiences the mystery that is one's own. The two participate in one another's lives not psychically but ontically. Here Buber contrasts this essential relation with Heidegger's category of solicitude for other men. He affirms that solicitude does not set a man's life in direct relation with the life of another, for in it one offers one's assistance but not oneself to the other person. An essential relation to God, finally, cannot be reached, as Kierkegaard thinks, 'by renunciation of the relation to the whole being', but must include all of one's encounters with the world and men. (Buber, 1955, p.160)

Buber concludes *what is Man?* with the statement that the uniqueness of man is to be found not in the individual, nor in the collective, but in the meeting

of 'I and Thou.' He says that "individualism understands only a part of man, collectivism understands man only as a part; neither advances to the wholeness of man, to man as a whole. Individualism sees man only in relation to himself, but collectivism does not see man at all; it sees only society." (Buber, 1947, p.200)

The fundamental fact of human existence is neither the individual as such nor the aggregate as such. Each considered by itself is an abstraction. The individual is a fact of existence in so far as he steps into a living relation with other individuals. The aggregate is a fact of existence in so far as it is built up of living units of relation. That essence of man which is unique to him can be directly known only in a living relation. Preeti Sayeed in her book *Facing the Other*, intersubjectivity in existentialism describes Buber's philosophical position thus,

"In his philosophical anthropology....Buber presents a vision of man who is not a lifeless mosaic pieced together from fragmentary abstractions but an organic whole whose ambience is community and who finds an expression of his freedom and creative becoming in his capacity to positively interact with other beings." (Sayeed, 1998, p.115)

Buber's elucidation of authenticity largely is a process through which life is to be lived, in spirit a life that is face to face with the 'Thou'. He holds that the spirit is a response of man to his Thou. Our culture has abdicated before the world of It, and this abdication makes a life in the spirit impossible. He considers 'I-It' as evil because it allows to appropriate and thus shutout all relations. Neither universal causality nor destiny prevent a man from being free if he is able to alternate between I-It and I-Thou. But without the ability to enter into relation and together with the arbitrary self-will and belief in fate that

particularly mark modern man, the individual and the community become sick, and the I of the true person is replaced by the empty I of individual.

He believes that spirit is not in the *I* but between *I* and *Thou*. To respond to the *Thou* man must enter into a relation with his entire being, as the stronger the response the more strongly does it bind with the *Thou* and banishes objecthood.

The man who comes to terms with it divides his life into two separate provinces: one of institutions – It and one of feelings – I.

“Institutions are ‘outside’ where all sorts of aims are pursued, where a man works, negotiates, bears influence, undertakes, concurs, organizes, conducts business, officiates, preaches... Feelings are ‘within’, where life is lived and man recovers from institutions. Here the spectrum of the emotions dances before the interested glance.” (Buber, 1937, p.43)

Buber suggests that a true community arises through people taking their stand in living a mutual relation with a living center and only then through being in a living mutual relation with each other. He believes that community cannot be set up as a goal and directly attained but can only result from a group of people being united around a common goal in their relation to the Eternal *Thou*.

The communal life is not I-It but its mastery and predominance to which Buber refers to as evil. Communal life cannot dispense with the world of It any more than man himself. He says:

“Man’s will to profit and to be powerful have their natural and proper effect so long as they are linked with, and upheld by, his will to enter into relation. There is no evil impulse till the impulse has been separated from the being; the impulse which is bound up with, and defined by, the being is the living stuff of communal life, that which is detached is its disintegration. Economics, the abode of the will to profit, and state, the abode of the will to be powerful, share in life as long as they share in the spirit.” (Buber, 1937, p.48)

To use the evil impulse to serve the good is to redeem evil and to bring it into the sanctuary of the good. It is this which is done by the man whose life swings between Thou and It, and it is this which reveals to him the meaning and character of life.

Man's very freedom to do evil enables him to redeem evil. It enables him to serve the good not as a cog in the machine but as a free and creative being. Man's creativity is the energy which is given to him to form and to direct, and the real product of this creativity is not a work of art, but a life lived in relation, a life which is increasingly interpenetrated by Thou.

Buber holds that a denial of causality makes freedom real to us. The free man is he who wills without arbitrary self-will. He knows he must go out to meet his destiny with his whole being, and he sacrifices his puny, unfree will, that is controlled by objects and instincts, to his grand will. Buber says:

“Then he intervenes no more, but at the same time he does not let things merely happen. He listens to what is emerging from himself, to the course of being in the world; not in order to be supported by it, but in order to bring it to reality as it desires, in its need of him, to be brought... The free man has no purpose here and means there, which he fetches for his purpose: he has only the one thing, his repeated decision to approach his destiny.”
(Buber, 1937, p.59)

In contrast to the free man stands the self-willed man who, according to Buber, neither believes nor meets. He does not know connection but only the outside world and his desire to use it. He has no destiny, for he is defined by things and instincts which he fulfills with arbitrary self will. Incapable of sacrifice, he continually intervenes to ‘let things happen’. His world is ‘a mediated world cluttered with purposes’. His life never attains a meaning, for it is composed of means which are without significance in themselves. Buber elucidates here that only ‘I-Thou’ gives meaning to the world of ‘It’, for ‘I-thou’

is an end which is not reached in time but is there from the start, originating and carrying-through. The free man's will and the attainment of his goal need not be united by a means, for in 'I-Thou' the means and the end are one.

'Individuality', the I of I-It, becomes conscious of itself as the subject of experiencing and using. It makes its appearance through being differentiated from other individualities and is conscious of itself as a particular kind of being. It is concerned with its my - my kind, my race, my creation, my genius. It has no reality because it has no sharing, and because it appropriates unto itself. 'Person', on the other hand, the I of I-Thou, makes its appearance by entering into relation with other persons. Through relation the person shares in a reality, which neither belongs to him nor merely lies outside him, a reality which cannot be appropriated but only shared. The more direct his contact with the Thou, the fuller his sharing; the fuller his sharing the more real his I.

Thus, according to Buber, the act of relation is not the emotion or feeling, which remains within the I. But the pure relation is the love between I and the Thou. To the man who loves people are set free from their qualities as good or evil, wise or foolish and confront him in their singleness as Thou. Hence love is not the enjoyment of a wonderful emotion, not even the ecstasy but the 'responsibility of an I for a Thou.'

Thou to a man means to affirm his being. "Yet the man who straight forwardly hates is nearer to relation than the man without hate and love." (Buber, 1937, p.16) For in this situation what a man really has in mind is the person who he hates as distinct from the man whose hatred and love does not have any meaning and is void of any real intention. But Buber believes that hatred sees only a part of being. If a man sees a whole being and still hates, he is no longer in relation but in 'I-It'. He further says that a full 'I-Thou' relationship

can only mean love, it is better to hate men than to treat them entirely as objects to be known or made use of it.

In the silent or spoken dialogue between I and the Thou both personality and knowledge come into being. Unlike the subject object knowledge of the 'I-It' relation, the knowing of the 'I-Thou' relation takes place neither in the 'subjective' nor in the 'objective', the 'emotional' nor the 'rational', but in the 'between' – the reciprocal relationship of whole and active beings. Similarly, personality is neither simply an individual matter nor simply a social product, but a function of relationship. Though we are born 'individuals', in the sense of being different from others, we are not born persons. Our personalities are called into being by those who enter into relation with us. Thus a person is not merely a cell in a social organism. To become a person means to become someone who responds to what happens from a center of inwardness.

To be fully real the I-Thou relation must be mutual. This mutuality does not mean simply unity or identity, nor is it any form of empathy. Though I-Thou is the word of relation and togetherness, each of the members of the relation really remains himself, and that means really different from the other. Though the Thou is not an It, it is also not 'another' I'. He who treats a person as another 'I' does not really see that person but only a projection of himself. Such a relation, despite the warmest 'personal' feeling, is really 'I-It'.

Thus, Buber believes that the authenticity can be gained only in the genuine dialogue between two individuals - a dialogue in which the experiencing senses and the real fantasy which supplements them work together to make the other present as whole and one. For this, dialogue to be real, one must not only focus on the other, but also involve oneself, and that means to truly express what one really thinks about the matter in question. Genuine dialogue can thus be

either spoken or silent. Its essence lies in the fact that 'each of the participants really has in mind the other or the others in their present and particular being' and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relationship between himself and them.' The essential element of genuine dialogue, therefore, is 'seeing the other' or experiencing the other side'. 'Experiencing the other side' means to feel an event from the side of the person one meets as well as from one's own side. It is an inclusiveness which realizes the other person in the actuality of his being.

Man's wholeness does not exist apart from real relationship to other beings. In *I and Thou* Buber defines spirit in its human manifestation as a 'response of man to his Thou.' These two elements of wholeness and relation are invariably linked together in Buber's thought. The true person may again and again be required to detach and shut himself off from others, but this attitude is alien to his innermost being: for such a man wants openness to the world, he wants the company of others. Through relation the whole man shares an absolute meaning which he cannot know in a life by himself.

Thus, truth in the realm between man and man means that one imparts oneself to the other as what one is. This is not a question of saying to the other everything that occurs to one, but of allowing the person with whom one communicates to partake of one's being. It is a question of the 'authenticity' of what is between men, without which there can be no true human existence. Thus, it is the interaction between man and man which makes possible authentic human existence. It follows that the precondition of such authentic existence is that each overcomes the tendency toward appearance, that each meets the other in his personal existence and makes him present as such, and that neither attempts to impose his own truth or view on the other. The dynamic glory of the

being of man is first bodily present in the relation between two men, each of whom in meeting the other also means the highest to which this person is called and serves the fulfillment of this created destiny without wishing to impose anything of his own realization on the other.

Thus, the 'sphere of the between', mutual confirmation, making the other present, overcoming appearance, genuine dialogue, experiencing the other side, personal wholeness which lead to the attainment of an authentic human existence, an existence which is not inherited but earned through the dynamics of dialogue.

Chapter – IV

**Paul Tillich:
Inspirations of Ultimate
Concern**

PAUL TILLICH

Inspirations of Ultimate Concern

The anxiety of meaninglessness is anxiety about the loss of an ultimate concern, of a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings. (Tillich, 1952, p. 47)

Paul Tillich was an eminent twentieth century religious philosopher and theologian who illuminated and brought together the realms of culture and religion into close proximity. He was held in great esteem by the intellectuals contemporary to him both in his motherland Germany and later in his adopted homeland, the United States of America. The philosophy of Tillich made an irrepressible impact on a period that marks the gradual surrender of an overall traditional Christian conviction about God, morality and the significance of human existence.

During this transition the contribution of Paul Tillich has been of immense importance. On the one hand, he has been considered as the last major spokesman for a vanishing christian culture, being the last systematic thinker who sought to demonstrate the reasonableness of the christian faith to modern man and to explore the meaning of this faith in relation to the questions posed by the philosophical analysis of human existence. This became possible due to the coinciding of certain factors. First, he was deeply influenced by the recovery of neglected insights in the Bible. Secondly he was deeply affected by the crisis of the western culture wrought by the calamities of the first world war and most importantly his discovery of existentialism through the writings of Kierkegaard. On the other hand, his writings have been regarded as immensely crucial to the current atheistic trend. His discussions of the meaning of God and faith served to undermine traditional Christian belief, as a consequence of which he has been

regarded as an advocate of agnosticism and atheism. His use of the philosophical terminology in discussing God and faith, and his rejection of the Personal God of popular Christianity further fortified his atheistic/agnostic identity.

Thus, he has been considered as the *boundary man* as he positioned himself between the old and new, between a heritage imbued with a sense of sacred and a secular orientation defining the new age. He declared that his vocation was to mediate between the concerns voiced by faith and the imperatives of a questioning rationality.

His boundary location was on account of the parental influences impressed upon him during his childhood. Both his parents were strong personalities of contrasting types. Both of them represent two different Germanic traditions and attitudes concerning life. His family was very conservative. With his mother holding moral indictments rigidly close to her heart due to which it became very difficult for young Tillich to escape from this extreme attitude of his mother. On the other hand it was equally difficult to disregard his father's authoritarianism. In an effort to draw a balance between those opposing forces Tillich found himself situated on the boundary. He writes:

“Most difficult to overcome was the impact of the authoritarian system on my personal life, especially on its religious and intellectual side. Both my father and mother were strong personalities.”(Tillich, 1967, p.31)

In his ardent struggle against the strict authoritarianism of his father Tillich made use of the strength of philosophical argumentation which eventually led him into developing an independent philosophical position closely connected to the domain of existence. He writes:

“From an independent philosophical position to a state of independence spread out into all directions, theoretically

first, practically later. It is this difficult and painful breakthrough to autonomy which has made me immune against any system of thought or life which demands the surrender of autonomy.”(Tillich, 1967, p.32)

Paul Tillich became an outstanding figure in contemporary theological and existential thought, being one of the best thinkers who highlighted the centrality of existentialism as a true approach to religion and philosophy. As a student in Germany he had become acquainted with Kierkegaard, and his early studies of Schelling revealed to him the existential point of view comprehensively. From 1941 to 1944 he wrote a number of essays on ‘existentialism’ which are included in *Theology and Culture*. And in 1951 he delivered the Terry lectures at Yale, entitled *The Courage to Be*. These lectures were decisive landmarks in his intellectual development. Although an existentialist interpretation of religion and philosophy has been made by Tillich he remained a theologian all his life. As he himself says “As a theologian I tried to remain a philosopher, and when a philosopher to remain a theologian.”(Tillich, 1936, p.40) He further says that:

“... I was and am a theologian, because the existential question of our ultimate concern and the existential answer of the Christian message are and always have been predominant in my spiritual life.”(Tillich, 1961, p.10)

Being an existentialist theologian he insists that ‘personal involvement’ is essential for any valid religious insight. He advocates that to understand Christianity an individual must see it through the eyes of Christian faith. As he puts it in *Interpretation of History* that:

“In religious truth the sake is one’s very existence. Religious truth is existential truth, and to that extent it cannot be separated from practice. Religious truth is acted.” (Tillich, 1936, p.18)

Tillich sees the cultural predicament of his time as tragic and hopeless with modern life in utter confusion and despair. He suggests that an individual can escape from this impasse only through a radical reorientation of human life turning to God with whom a man encounters in his moments of *ultimate concern*. Ultimate concern is the central phrase and central concept in his entire thought and its around this central notion that Tillich builds his idea of religion and the discovery of meaning in human life. Such an approach is obviously existential in its nature.

The problem with which Tillich is concerned is the way religion is related to other aspects of culture. He observes that while religions exhibit a genius for preserving traditional practices, they also try to meet the demands of a changing climate of thought. Tillich faces the secular culture of the contemporary world with the orientation of a theistic world view. He tries to show that the conditions for a culture in which religious life is directed toward a theistic God, emerges from the same source as, and is firmly tied up with the so called secular life. The growing lack of rapport between those who are God - centered and those who are man - centered has been responsible in creating one of the chief difficulties for thinkers who want to achieve a rapprochement between theistic and humanistic values. Tillich tries to provide a base for a common thought by relegating religion as man's 'ultimate concern'. Even the atheist has 'ultimate concern', even though he does not believe in the existence of God.

Tillich expounds faith as the "state of being ultimately concerned."(Tillich, 1958, p.08) According to him, our ultimate concern is that which determines our being or non-being — not in the sense of our physical existence but in the sense of "... the reality, the structure, the meaning, and the

aim of existence”(Tillich, 1951, p.14). For Tillich, religious faith grows out of those experiences which we invest with ultimate value and to which we give our ultimate allegiance. He describes ultimate concern in Systematic theology as the abstract translation of a great commandment:

“The Lord, our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The religious concern is ultimate; it excludes all other concerns from ultimate significance; it makes them preliminary. The ultimate concern is unconditional, independent of any conditions of character, desire, or circumstance. The unconditional concern is total: no part of ourselves or of our world is excluded from it; there is no “place” to flee from it. The total concern is infinite: no moment of relaxation and rest is possible in the face of a religious concern which is ultimate, unconditional, total, and infinite.” (Tillich, 1951, pp.11-12)

Behind this assertion that relegates religious faith as ultimate concern, Tillich makes two assumptions. First, that ultimate concern is common to all religions. No matter what their differences, a ‘religious’ experience is precisely that which makes an ultimate claim on our loyalties. And second, that no one is without some kind of ‘faith’ in the sense of an ultimate concern.

Tillich explains ultimate concern as something that concerns a person to the extent that it looms large over that person’s life. He says that it “unites man’s mental life and gives it a dominating center.” (Tillich, 1958, p.107)) Tillich calls it a matter of infinite passion.” (Tillich, 1958, p.106) This simply means that any other concern or group of concerns will always be subordinated – sacrificed if necessary – to that which is called ‘ultimate.’

In his writings especially in *Dynamics of Faith*, Tillich supplies numerous examples of what constitutes an ultimate concern. These examples involve both religious and secular interests. The religious ultimate concerns, generally

speaking, are various deities or their manifestations. "Faith, for the men of the old Testament, is the state of being ultimately and unconditionally concerned about Jahweh (Yahweh) and about what he represents in demand, threat and promise." (Tillich, 1958, p.03) For Islam, the revelation given by Mohammed is of ultimate concern. And among the non theistic religions, the ultimate concern is "a sacred object or an all-pervading power or a highest principle such as the Brahma or the One." (Tillich, 1963, p.05)

On the secular front, Tillich gives a long list of ultimate concerns for example, the nation "If the nation is someone's ultimate concern, the name of the nation becomes a sacred name and the nation receives divine qualities which far surpass the reality of the being and functioning of the nation." (Tillich, 1958, p.44) Other people are ultimately concerned with success and with social standing and economic power. In a similar vein, some individuals embrace pleasure as their ultimate concern. Russia's Bolsheviks were concerned 'about the transformation of reality,' and present day communists are concerned about the realization of final stage of society. Scientists may be ultimately concerned about science and they may be ready to sacrifice everything, including their lives, towards that ultimate. Among existentialist philosophers, the human predicament is of ultimate concern. And for the humanists "... the ultimate concern of man is man."(Tillich, 1958, p.63)

Tillich's definition of faith as ultimate concern stresses the removal of the subject-object dichotomy. The ultimate of the act of faith and the ultimate that is meant in the act of faith are one and the same. This means the "... disappearance of the ordinary subject-object scheme in the experience of the ultimate, the unconditional."(Tillich, 1958, p.11) His definition of faith points towards -

humanity's continuity or even identity with God as the ground of being. But it can also be seen as pointing in the opposite direction, toward so extreme a sundering of God and man that faith can operate as an autonomous function of the mind whether God be a reality or not. He says:

“‘God’... is the name for that which concerns man ultimately. This does not mean that first. There is a being called God and then the demand that man should be ultimately concerned about him. It means that whatever concerns a man ultimately becomes God for him, and, conversely, it means that a man can be concerned ultimately only about that which is God for him.”(Tillich, 1951, p.21)

Tillich sometimes makes a distinction between *true* and *false ultimacy*. That which demands our ultimate concern must indeed be ultimate if it is worthy of our commitment. If the object of faith is not itself ultimate, then such a faith is idolatrous and can give rise to the *demonic*. Tillich, frequently uses the word *demonic*, to describe an ultimate commitment as that which is not ultimate, as when an individual submits to the demand of a totalitarian state for total allegiance. Fascism and communism are the examples of demonic or idolatrous for these two concerns appear to be ultimate and unconditional, but in reality “neither is a matter of unconditional concern. For one may die for something which is conditional in being and meaning – as the Germans did who, for national reason, fought under Hitler for Germany while hating national socialism and secretly waiting for its defeat.”(Tillich, 1963, p. 06) Tillich disregards national and social concerns as truly ultimate. They are only transitory and as such ambiguous. Thus, Tillich affirms that “In true faith the ultimate concern is a concern about the truly ultimate. While in idolatrous faith preliminary, finite realities are elevated to the rank of ultimacy.” (Tillich, 1958, p. 12) He further says that “Idolatry is the elevation of a preliminary concern to ultimacy.

Something essentially conditioned is taken as unconditional, something essentially partial is boosted to universality, and something essentially finite is given infinite significance.” (Tillich, 1951, p.13)

Tillich states that the truly ultimate can transcend the subject-object dichotomy, but contrary to it false ultimacy can not for in idolatrous concerns in the finite it claims infinity which it does not possess. Hence the cleavage of subject and object can not be overcome in it, as is conspicuous in the case of national and social concerns. The object of idolatrous concern remains an object which the individual looks at as a subject. The subject can approach such finite object with ordinary knowledge and subject it to ordinary handling, where subject-object cleavage is not transcended. Further, Tillich talks of degrees in the realm of false ultimates. For example nation is nearer to true ultimacy than success is. For national ecstasy can produce a state in which the subject is almost subsumed within the object at least for sometime. This is not possible in the case of success. But it should be borne in mind that a nation can never become a true ultimate. It only appears to be so, because after a period subject emerges again totally disappointed and looking at nation in a skeptical way.

Tillich says that idolatrous ultimacy inevitably leads to an existential disappointment a disappointment which deeply penetrates the very existence of man. “The inescapable consequence of idolatrous faith is existential disappointment...” (Tillich, 1951, p.13) Even the ecstatic character of idolatrous faith can conceal this consequence for a certain time only and finally it breaks down. What was considered to be ultimate proves to be preliminary and transitory and under those circumstances one’s life collapses leading to disappointment. For example, one may be drawn into communist movement,

thinking it to be his ultimate concern, with a belief that it would bring salvation to all human beings. But after experiencing the internal terror and conflict he may stop believing in the movement and as a result may be plunged into an existential disappointment once again. Under such situations Tillich suggests that only *courage* comes to our rescue. Courage restores confidence in ourselves to face the situation boldly and sets us free from the whirlpool of existential disappointment. For, “courage... is the daring self-affirmation of one’s being in spite of the powers of “non-being” which are heritage of everything finite.”(Tillich, 1958, p.17)

The three characteristics that impart meaning to Tillich’s idea of ultimate concern have been its *integrative action*, its *unconditionality* and its deeply *religious inclination*.

The first characteristic that Tillich refers to as *the integrating center of personal life* builds and integrates our lives around the ultimate concern which is the focus of all preliminary concerns. One way or the other, we evaluate our concerns either consciously or unconsciously. That is, we may not be conscious about that which concerns us most and why, but we do display our priorities by the way we act. Hence every preliminary concern is directed toward ultimate concern. For example, one studies because he requires a degree which in turn is a prerequisite to a good job and good job brings luxury and pleasure. The final concern in this entire journey is pleasure and any further questioning as regards pleasure is met with silence - that being the end. For the hedonists pleasure is the highest good; the ultimate end. A hedonist would thus build and integrate his life around pleasure. A recognition of finality comes over when ultimacy is reached and with it the series comes to an end, with no further reasons to be acquired. All

preliminary concerns converge on ultimate concerns with nothing else in view. It is around ultimate concerns that life is integrated and built. Tillich says that the ultimate concern is total: no part of ourselves or of our world is excluded from it; there is no 'place' to flee from it.

Further Tillich describes ultimate concern as *unconditional*. There can be no precondition attached to ultimate concern. A hedonist, for whom pleasure is the ultimate concern, would therefore desire pleasure under any condition. But a man for whom knowledge is the ultimate concern would qualify his concern for pleasure by desiring pleasure, only under the condition that it does not interfere with his purpose of learning. Thus, Tillich says that the ultimate concern is unconditional, independent of any conditions of character, desire, or circumstances.

The unconditional character has been linked to ultimate concern, what Tillich regards as the religious attitude. The term 'ultimate concern' is the abstract translation of the commandment: you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. Tillich links 'ultimate concern' with this Biblical commandment. He observes that this is what ultimate concern means and from these words the term ultimate concern is derived. The individual religiously structures his life around ultimate concern and he is prepared to die for it.

Thus, in the conviction that faith is the state of being ultimately concerned and the dynamics of faith are the dynamics of man's ultimate concern. Tillich explains that besides material conditions involving basic needs, man also has aesthetic, social, political and moral concerns. Some of these concerns may be urgent and may claim ultimacy in which case, it requires complete surrender. For

example, if one makes the life and growth of the country one's ultimate concern, it demands that all other claims – economic well-being, health, family – be sacrificed. As Tillich says:

“If it claims ultimacy it demands the total surrender of him who accepts this claim, and it promises total fulfillment even if all other claims have to be subjected or rejected in its name. If a national group makes the life and growth of the nation its ultimate concern, it demands that all other concerns, economic well-being, health and life, family, aesthetic and cognitive truth, justice and humanity, be sacrificed.” (Tillich, 1963, ST, III, pp.481-82)

There is an expectation that one will receive total fulfillment through one's encounter with the object of faith. Tillich says that it is not only unconditional demand made by that which is one's ultimate concern, but “it is also the promise of ultimate fulfillment which is accepted in the act of faith.” Thus unconditionality is the promise of fulfillment.

Tillich further declares that faith as ultimate concern is an act of the total personality including all elements of the personality. It is the most centered act of the human mind thus uniting the entire functions of a man's total being in the act of faith.

“It is not a movement of a special section or a special function of man's total being. They all are united in the act of faith. But faith is not the sum total of their impacts. It transcends every special impact as well as the totality of them and it has itself a decisive impact on each of them.” (Stewart, 1980, p.15)

Tillich further explains by saying that “faith is the most centered act of the human mind. It is not a movement of a special section or a special function of man's total being. They are all united in the act of faith.”(Tillich, 1963 ST, III, p. 483) In his book *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*, Tillich

classifies this phenomenon by saying that “Faith... is an act of whole personality. Will, knowledge, and emotion participate in it. But faith is not only the sum total of their impacts. Rather it transcends every special impact as well as the totality of them.”(Tillich, 1955, p.53)

Tillich equates this centered act of faith with freedom, “for faith is a matter of freedom. Freedom is nothing more than the possibility of centered personal acts. The frequent discussion in which faith and freedom are contrasted could be helped by the insight that faith is a free, namely, centered act of the personality. In this respect freedom and faith are identical...” (Stewart, 1980, p.15)

Tillich advocates that faith as a centered act of total personality is related to the rational aspect of man’s personality. He distinguishes between two kinds of reason: *technical* and *ontological*. Technical reason, according to Tillich, is the capacity to analyse, to calculate, and to argue. It provides only means and not ends. Thus, it is taken as in the sense of scientific method, logical strictness and technical calculation. On the other hand the ontological reason is concerned with the complete structure of mind, with mind as a whole, and not merely with the cognitive aspect. It is according to Tillich, effective in the cognitive, aesthetic, practical and technical functions of the human mind. In this second sense, reason is identical with the humanity of man in contrast to all other beings. It is involved in the search of knowledge, the experience of art, the actualization of moral commands. It makes a centered personal life and a participation in community possible. Tillich observes that if reason is considered to be opposed to faith, then it tends to dehumanize man. But it does not do so. Reason,

therefore, is an element of faith. If faith destroys reason, it destroys itself and the humanity of man. As Tillich observes:

“For only a being who has the structure of reason is able to be ultimately concerned, to distinguish between ultimate and preliminary concerns, to understand the unconditional command of the ethical imperative, and to be aware of the presence of holy.”(Tillich, 1958, p.76)

Thus, Tillich concludes that reason is an element of faith. If faith is the state of being ultimately concerned, no conflict between them need exist. As a matter of fact reason is the precondition to faith.

Tillich says religious faith, which is the state of being ‘ultimately concerned’ about the ultimate, can be expressed only in a symbolic language. He claims that whatever we say about that which concerns us ultimately, whether or not we call it God, has a symbolic meaning. It points beyond itself while participating in that to which it points. In no other way can faith express itself adequately. The language of faith says Tillich is the language of symbols. Tillich believes that the fundamental symbol to which we are ultimately concerned is God. He says:

“There can be no doubt that any concrete assertion about God must be symbolic, for a concrete assertion is one which uses a segment of finite experience in order to say something about him. It transcends the content of this segment, although it also includes it. The segment of finite reality, which becomes the vehicle of a concrete assertion about God is affirmed and negated at the same time. It becomes a symbol, for a symbolic expression is one whose proper meaning is negated by that to which it points. And yet it also is affirmed by it, and this affirmation gives the symbolic expression an adequate basis for pointing beyond itself.”(Tillich, 1951, p.239)

Tillich further says that though God is the basic symbol of faith. He is not the only one. According to him, “all the qualities we attribute to him, power, love, justice, are taken from finite experiences and applied symbolically to that which is beyond finitude and infinity. If faith calls God ‘almighty’, it uses the human experience of power in order to symbolize the content of its infinite concern, but it does not describe a highest being who can do as he pleases.”(Tillich, 1958, p.45)

Tillich finds it impossible to develop an interpretation of religion which was not intimately associated with the vital concerns of human life. He observes that there is a deep schism between the cultural revolution and the religious traditions. The Churches whether Lutheran or Roman or even the Greek, reject the cultural and political revolutions. And the revolutionary movements, on the other hand, disown the Churches as the expression of a transcendent heteronomy. Tillich believes that both the Churches and the cultural movements reject something from which they themselves derive life. Tillich calls this something as *theonomy*. He defines it in the following words:

“A theonomous culture expresses in its creations an ultimate concern and a transcending meaning not as something strange but as its own spiritual ground. Religion is the substance of culture and culture the form of religion.” (Tillich, Cited in Hammer, 1966, p.122)

This idea of theonomous culture, for Tillich, became the principle of philosophies of religion and of culture which proposes to fill the gap from both sides. Tillich finds this gap intolerable and disastrous and advocates that it ought to be filled. This gap, according to Tillich, can be filled partly by creating movements, like religious socialism and, partly by a fresh interpretation of the mutual immanence of religion and culture within each other. Tillich attempts to

analyze the mutual immanence of religion and culture in his Berlin lecture, immediately after the end of the war, entitled *The Idea of a Theology of Culture*. In this lecture he holds the opinion that in spite of a total breakdown and ensuing misery, a new beginning, a period of radical transformation, or in the language of New Testament, a *Kairos* had come upon us. And the breakdown of bourgeois civilization paves the way for a reunion of religion and secular culture.

A theonomous analysis of culture shows that in the depth of every autonomous culture an ultimate concern, something unconditional and holy, is implied. It is the task of deciphering the style of an autonomous culture in all its characteristic expressions and of finding their hidden religious significance. "Autonomous culture", Tillich says, "is secularized in the degree to which it has lost its ultimate reference, its center of meaning, its spiritual substance... The later nineteenth century, with its subjection to the technical pattern of thought and action, shows the character of an extremely emptied and secularized autonomy in an advanced stage of disintegration... But the religious substance, a remnant of something ultimate, was noticeable and made the transitory existence of such a culture possible. However, more than in the disintegrating bourgeois autonomy, the religious reference was effective in the movements which protested against this situation. Theonomous analysis was able to decipher puzzling experiences, such as visionary destruction of bourgeois idealism and naturalism in art and literature by expressionism and surrealism... it was able to interpret the quasi – religious, fanatical, and absolutistic character of the reactions of the twentieth century as against the nineteenth. ... In all of them there is an ultimate, unconditional, and all-determining concern, something absolutely serious and therefore, holy, even if expressed in secular terms."(Hammer, 1966 p.122)

Tillich's deepest conviction as a theologian rests in the fact that philosophy has an indispensable role to play in making of 'systematic theology'. He clearly rejects both the traditional theologies of revelation as well as the traditional natural theologies and goes on to develop his unique system of *philosophical theology* which provides an alternative to both the previous theologies.

The method Tillich advocates and professes to adopt in his work as a *systematic theologian* is the *method of correlation*. The systematic theologian is charged, according to Tillich, with a double responsibility: *first*, he must be faithful to the content of the revelation which is to be interpreted; *secondly*, he must try to interpret it in such a way which makes it intelligible even to those who do not share his religious commitment. The first of these requirements reflects Tillich's conviction that statements about God can be made only on the basis of revelation; the second underlines the apologetic character of the systematic theologian's task. The systematic theologian who employs the method of correlation tries to satisfy both requirements by seeking to connect questions which are asked by human beings quite independently of revelation with statements which can be made only on the basis of revelation. A systematic theology which employs the method of correlation will be able to satisfy simultaneously both the demand that the theologian be faithful to the content of the revelation for to interpret, and the demand that this interpretation assume a form which renders the message grounded in this revelation intelligible to those without any religious commitment.

Tillich's rejection of natural theology is not hostile towards philosophical theology. On the contrary, it is Tillich's view that the systematic theologian who

uses the method of correlation is himself a philosophical theologian of a special kind. This is because he believes that philosophy has an indispensable contribution to make to systematic theology. Although it is supposed to be no part of the philosopher's job to make his contribution in the form of a doctrine of God, it is, according to Tillich, one of his tasks to ensure the adequate formulation of those 'existential questions' to which statements about God are capable of providing possible answers.

The central affirmations about human beings made in the 'question-developing' parts of Tillich's systematic theology are (a) that human beings are *finite*, and (b) that human beings are *estranged*. Tillich holds the view that the philosopher attends critically to certain 'universally human' experiences – experiences which human beings undergo within all sorts of social and cultural conditions. As he puts it in the introduction to the second volume of systematic theology that:

“The philosopher must participate in the human predicament not only actually – as he always does – but in conscious identification. He must participate in man's finitude, which is also his own, and in its anxiety as though he had never received the revelatory answer of 'eternity'. He must participate in man's estrangement, which is also his own, and show the anxiety of guilt as though he had never received the revelatory answer of 'forgiveness.’”(Tillich, 1957, pp. 16-17)

In order to be in a position to formulate 'existential questions' effectively, it is sufficient that the philosopher scrutinize certain experiences with which he is necessarily familiar in virtue of the fact that he is a human being – in particular, the experience of *the anxiety of death* and the experience of *the anxiety of guilt*. The contention that human beings are 'finite' represents an

attempt on Tillich's part to identify the feature of the human situation which gives rise to the universal experience of *ontic anxiety* ('the anxiety of death'). The contention that human beings are estranged represents his attempt to identify that feature of the human situation which gives rise to the universal experience of the 'anxiety of guilt'. Tillich's central doctrines of human finitude and estrangement are thus the products of a special kind of analysis of the experiences which human beings are subject to.

The main objective of Tillich's magnum opus, *Systematic Theology*, is to explain and justify the role of ontology in his theological system. We find two different conceptions of the philosophical enterprise in this book. At times, the 'search for ultimate reality' is represented as the search for an answer to a question about 'ultimate reality', the 'question of being' as he prefers to call it. And at other times, it is thought of as a search undertaken by human beings (all human beings; human beings as such) in an endeavour to come to terms with that anxiety which consists in their awareness of their *finitude* – their awareness of the fact that they are 'a mixture of being and nonbeing' and that they stand between being and nonbeing'. Interpreting in the first of these two ways, the 'search for ultimate reality' is an intellectual enterprise in which only some human beings, philosophers or ontologists – engage; but interpreting in the second sense, the 'search for ultimate reality' is the religious quest, in which he says, all human beings are inescapably involved.

The elucidation and support of Tillich's insistence on the closeness of the relation between religious quest and ontological question needs to explain these two questions. (a) Why Tillich thinks that it is illuminating to describe the religious quest as a quest for being or in the language of *Biblical Religion and*

the Search for Ultimate Reality, as a 'search for ultimate reality'. (b) Why this description of the religious quest makes it easy for him at times to obliterate the distinction between religious quest and the ontological question.

Tillich's view that all human being engage in the religious quest is tied up with his belief that there are certain anxieties that all human beings are prone to. These anxieties generate the religious quest and a man's religion can consequently be seen as his way of coping with anxiety.

In *The Courage To Be* Tillich identifies three anxieties to which human beings as such are prone to be subject to: the anxiety of *death*, the anxiety of *guilt*, and the anxiety of *meaninglessness*. The anxiety of death is occasioned by man's awareness of the fact that he is a mortal, destined to die some day. The anxiety of guilt is generated by man's awareness of the gap between what he is and what he ought to be. The anxiety of meaninglessness springs from man's sense of the ultimate purposelessness of the various activities which go into the making of his life. These anxieties do not exist divorced from each other but as Tillich points out.

“... are interwoven in such a way that one of them gives the predominant color but all of them participate in the coloring of the state of anxiety. All of them and their underlying unity are existential, i.e. they are implied in the existence of man as man, his finitude and estrangement.”(Tillich, 1952, p.54)

Tillich holds the view that the religious quest generated by the experience of 'existential anxiety' can be described as a quest for being because he thinks that this universal human anxiety has its source in 'the threat of non being'. And it is 'being' which according to Tillich, has the 'power to resist nonbeing'.

The question arises as to how can Tillich suppose that the various anxieties he distinguishes in *The Courage To Be* all have their source in the threat of nonbeing. Part of the answer lies in the distinction he tries to draw between ‘anxiety’ and ‘fear’. His main reason for distinguishing sharply between fear and anxiety is that he wants to be able to admit that fears come and go – and that specific fears can be eliminated by appropriate action – without being forced to abandon his conviction that anxiety forms the permanent and inescapable background to human life. Since he holds that fears are produced by and directed towards specific ‘objects’, the attempt to differentiate anxiety from fear takes the dramatic form of the claim that anxiety is occasioned by ‘the negation of every object – and ‘the negation of every object’ is, according to Tillich, ‘nonbeing’.

“Fear, as opposed to anxiety, has a definite object (as most authors agree), which can be faced, analysed, attacked, endured... But this is not so with anxiety because anxiety has no object, or rather, in a paradoxical phrase, its object is the negation of every object... The only object is the threat itself, but not the threat, because the source of the threat is “nothingness”. (Tillich, 1952, pp.36-37)

In systematic theology too he clarifies it further by stating that:

“Anxiety is independent of any special object which might produce it; it is dependent only on the threat of nonbeing... In this sense it has been said rightly that the object of anxiety is “nothingness” – and nothingness is not an “object”. Objects are feared. A danger, a pain, an enemy, may be feared, but fear can be conquered by action. Anxiety cannot...” (Tillich, 1951, p.212)

Tillich insists that anxiety is a natural expression of the fact that human beings are ‘a mixture of being and nonbeing’.

“We philosophise because we are finite and because we know that we are finite. We are a mixture of being and nonbeing, and we are aware of it.”(Tillich, 1955, p.13)

In elucidating what is meant by the assertion that man is a 'mixture of being and nonbeing'. Tillich relates it to his contention that *estrangement* is a fundamental feature of human existence. The 'nonbeing' which is an ingredient of man's being consists not in his being destined some day not to be, nor in his not being (identical with) other finite beings, but in his not being what he 'potentially' or 'essentially' is – that is, in his not being what he ought to be.

Tillich elucidates the general doctrine that it is 'the threat of nonbeing' which generates 'existential anxiety'. He relates the anxiety of death to the threat of *ontic nonbeing*, the anxiety of guilt to the threat of *moral nonbeing*, and the anxiety of meaninglessness to the threat of *spiritual nonbeing*. By insisting in this way on the many meanings of the term 'nonbeing', Tillich puts within his reach a way out of the charge that secures acceptance of his doctrine that existential anxiety occasions the threat of nonbeing. Despite all these distinctions drawn between different types of anxiety, it is the single quest, the quest for being, which is generated by the experience of anxiety. Thus, the fundamental human quest generated by the universal experience of anxiety is, according to Tillich a quest for being.

Tillich, normally recognizes that the religious quest and ontological questions are different but he finds a close connection between them. There are two main ways in which Tillich tries to link the fact that human beings as such engage in religious quest with the fact that some human beings ask the ontological questions. First, because the ontological question is represented as a question about what is sought by human beings in the religious quest. Since the religious quest is frequently characterized, as a 'quest for being' or as a 'search

for ultimate reality' in Tillich's philosophy the ontological question is represented as a question about the 'being' or 'ultimate reality' which is the object of the religious quest. This is the view of the ontological question which predominates in *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*. And secondly Tillich represents the ontological question as the one concerning the features of the human situation which shed light on the fact that the religious quest is one in which human beings necessarily engage. On this view the ontologist is required to contribute the sort of doctrine of man which will render intelligible the fact that there is a certain quest—viz. the quest for being – which human beings as such undertake.

Tillich holds the view that philosophers are interested in the elucidation of the *structure of being (or reality)*, they trace this interest to the fact that it is the structure of being which makes experience possible rather than to a desire to identify the features of the human situation which give rise to the religious quest or to a desire to give some account of the meaning of the verb 'to be' or to a desire to illumine the 'mystery of being' by explaining why there is a world at all.

Tillich's claim that the philosopher investigates the structure of being with a view to throwing light on the conditions of the possibility of experience is construed by him in two quite different ways.

On the one hand, the conditions of the possibility of experience are identified with certain features of the objects of experience – features they must have in order to be possible only because reality has a certain structure, the sort of structure which makes it possible for the mind to 'grasp' it. And it is this structure which it is the job of the ontologist to articulate.

On the other hand, it concerns, not the features of the things we experience which alone enable them to be experienced by us, but the nature of the distinction between the experiencing subject and what he experiences: for experience to be possible at all, the distinction between experiencing subject and experienced object must, it is held, be grounded in an ontological distinction between the 'self' and its 'world'.

Tillich maintains the view that the 'basic ontological' structure is the self-world structure. His primary contention is that the distinction between the experiencing subject and experiencing object is grounded in a fundamental ontological distinction, that between the 'self' and its 'world'. The subject-object structure, Tillich writes, 'presupposes the self-world structure as the basic articulation of being. By advancing this claim, Tillich hopes to render plausible the contention that the question about what makes experience possible is an ontological question.

There are two main ways in which Tillich attempts to substantiate this claim that what makes experience possible is an ontological question. These two ways: (a) by argument (b) by appeal to 'immediate experience'.

- (a) In a preliminary reference to his doctrine of the basic ontological structure Tillich says of it that it is 'the implicit condition of the ontological condition'. He proceeds to elucidate this claim as follows: 'The ontological question presupposes an asking subject and an object about which the question is asked; it presupposes the subject-object structure of being, which in turn presupposes the self-world structure as the basic articulation of being.

- (b) Of the two claims which embody Tillich's argument in support of the thesis that it is the 'self-world structure' which makes experience possible, the first that it is a condition of the legitimacy of the ontological question that it be possible to distinguish between the questioner of the ontological question and that about which he questions be assumed to be the 'self - world structure.'

Tillich holds that the very experience of scrutiny that yields the philosophical doctrine of human finitude is also the experience in virtue of which human beings can understand what the notion of God means. He says only those who have experienced the shock of transitions, the anxiety in which they are aware of their own finitude, the threat of non-being, can understand what the notion of God means. If the receptivity of human beings to revelation is a function of the fact that they are creatures subject to *existential anxiety*, then it is natural that the systematic theologian whose task is to 'correlate' statements made on the basis of revelation with questions asked by human beings, independently of revelation should seek to articulate these questions in the light of an analysis of man's experience of this anxiety.

Tillich maintains that *estrangement* is a quality of the structure of existence and that man's estrangement from his essential being is the universal character of existence. Estrangement can at best be represented as a quality of the structure of human existence, not of existence as such. It is, however, the larger claim that estrangement is a quality of the structure of existence that Tillich considers it essential to maintain on the basis of his analysis of the human situation.

Tillich's conception of the philosopher's task in relation to systematic theology which makes it possible for him to deny that it is a 'doctrine of man' which is contributed by the philosopher to the system. He says:

"Whoever has penetrated into the nature of his own finitude can find traces of finitude in everything that exists. And he can ask the question implied in his finitude as the question implied in finitude universally. In doing so, he does not formulate a doctrine of man; he expresses a doctrine of existence as experienced in him as man."(Tillich, 1951, p.70)

In gaining clarity about what it means to be a human being i.e. that is, in analyzing the human situation Tillich says that the philosopher simultaneously gains clarity about what it means for anything to exist. To ascertain the structure of human existence is at the same time to ascertain the structure of existence as such.

In the third volume of his *Systematic Theology* Tillich develops the dynamics of philosophy of life. The thesis of the life dialectic is religion or being. As he sees that man is threatened by three forms of anxieties i.e. about death, about a meaning of life, and about right and wrong. Religion attempts to overcome this three-fold anxiety by turning to the supernatural for support. According to him, there are two extremes; *participation* and *individualization*, which is represented by *mysticism* and *theism* respectively. In mysticism, Tillich says, man tries to participate in – become a part of – the higher reality. In mysticism man tries to strive to participate in the divine power by actually identifying himself with that power. This identifying experience convinces man that the world of time and space and material reality is ultimately unreal; hence he sees death only as the negation of the negative. Thus, by denying the

significance of ordinary life, the mystic dissolves the very question of its meaning.

Theism, on the other hand, treats man and the deity as separate individuals and seeks to establish a person to person relationship. In theism, man treats the ground of his being as a person, who in the divine-human encounter, removes the cause of anxiety. God promises security against the threat of death for those who observe the requirements of prayer, service, and devotion. He provides life with a divine purpose. And, through his law, he provides the answers to what is right and what is wrong.

Tillich does not recognize any of the two judgments. He says, mysticism tries to assume away anxiety and meaninglessness rather than solve the problem. "It plunges directly into the ground of being and meaning, and leaves the concrete, the world of finite values and meanings, behind" (Tillich, 1952, p. 186). Mystical courage, moreover, is a transitory phenomenon lasting only for the duration of the encounter with the divine. And theism, on the other hand is equally wrong for him because, it makes God, "a being besides others and as such a part of the whole of reality." (Tillich, 1952, p.184) The God of theism is an all knowing, all powerful tyrant who dictates man's actions and pries into his personal life. Tillich says that "this is the God Nietzsche said had to be killed because nobody can tolerate being made into a mere object of absolute knowledge and absolute control." (Tillich, 1952, p. 185)

When man awakens from the dreaming innocence of religion, whether it is mystical or theistic, he is faced with the threat of non-being. Here, is a courage, which can "resist the power of nonbeing in its most radical form." (Tillich, 1952, p. 175) And, this is the courage to be. The courage to be, is

produced by a dialectical synthesis of being and non-being. Tillich says: “the self-affirmation of being is an affirmation that overcomes negation.... We could not even think ‘being’ without a double negation: being must be thought as the negation of the being.” (Tillich, 1952, p. 179) In the dialectical synthesis, “being ‘embraces’ itself and non-being” (Tillich, 1952, p. 34) that is, being in both the sense of reality and the sense of the true God includes the nonbeing of the supernatural God, supernatural salvation, supernatural meaning, and supernatural law. Tillich says that, in the moment of self-realization man discovers this: he discovers that God is man, hence that there is an essential unity between being (God) and nonbeing (the unreality of a supernatural God). He writes: “Being has nonbeing ‘within’ itself as that which is eternally present and eternally overcome in the process of the divine life.” (Tillich, 1952, p. 34) This ‘divine life’ is a parable depicting the evolution of personal wisdom as a three-stage process. The authentic human life moves from theism to atheism to humanism, that is from God to no God to a supernatural God. In other words, this progression can be described as a movement from revelation to reason to humanism.

Tillich’s most eloquent, mature, and clearest point of view regarding authentic individual is found in his lecture named *The Courage To Be*. In this short lecture Tillich says that when an individual transcends from both the mysticism, and theism i.e. the courage to be as a part and the courage to be as oneself then he found the ultimate source of the courage to be i.e. *God above God*. This experience of the God above God of theism unites and transcends the courage to be as part and the courage to be as oneself. It avoids both the loss of oneself by participation and the loss of one’s world by individualization. The acceptance of the God above the God of theism makes us a part of that which is

not also a part but is the ground of the whole. Therefore, our self is not lost in the larger whole, which submerges it in the life of a limited group. If the self participates in the power of being-itself it receives itself back. For the power of being acts through the power of the individual selves. It does not swallow them as every limited whole, every collectivism, and every conformism does. This is why the church, which stands for the power of being itself or for the God who transcends the God of the religions, claims to be the mediator of the courage to be.

Thus, the absolute faith, or the state of being grasped by the God above God, is not a state which appears beside other states of the mind. It never is something separated and definite, an event which could be isolated and described. It is always a movement, in, with and under other states of the mind. It is the situation on the boundary of man's possibilities. Therefore, it is both the courage of despair and the courage in and above every courage. It is not a place where one can live, it is without the safety of words and concepts, it is without a name, a church, a cult, a theology. But it is moving in the depth of all of them. It is the power of being, in which they participate and of which they are fragmentary expressions. Thus, "the courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt. (Tillich, 1952, p. 190)

Chapter –V

**Karl Jaspers :
Illumination of Existenz**

KARL JASPERS

Illumination of Existenz

When everything that is said to be **valuable** and true collapses before my eyes, those with whom I communicate or might communicate remain, and with **them** remains what to me is authentic. (Jaspers, 1970, p.117)

Jasper's existentialist inclinations **acquire** immense value as a critique of modern mass society. He criticizes modern **mass** society with an unprecedented intellectual conviction and flexibility **together** with a committed moral consciousness. Jasper's notion of history **reveals** his anxieties of the present and of the future to come but his philosophy is a **portrayal** of a hope of renewal. It is in fact, the tension between the past, present, **and** future that build up the struggle for a reach towards authenticity. Jaspers **believes** that philosophy is not a body of doctrines but essentially an activity; an **activity** intended to awaken in oneself and other human beings the possibilities for a **genuinely** meaningful existence.

Jaspers advocates that the ultimate **end** of human existence is the achievement of an authentic existence **gained** through a deeper and wider self-consciousness and he believes that philosophy **as** an activity contributes to this task of illuminating existence. But for him **this** expansion of consciousness is not the Hegelian circle of knowledge which is **forever** expanding in its effort to engulf the absolute. He feels that the **raising** of human consciousness to gain authenticity is a far more complex matter **than** the simple expansion of a circle. The *shipwreck* of a sweeping intellectual system – according to Jaspers is often an awakening into a self-consciousness **which** further leads towards the recognition of the finitude of his own mental **powers** and therefore of his own

being. As a consequence of this realization man turns away from the tyranny of those ideas. Man is always more than any of his ideas or even the sum of his ideas, and if man forgets this, he becomes the fanatical partisan of an ideology. It is out of this kind of encounter with the self that is more than the sum of all our ideas, the encounter of reason with non-reason, that authentic existence springs forth. And this authentic existence, according to Jaspers, continues only as the perpetual tension between reason and non-reason.

Jaspers sees human history as pivoting around the drama of self-consciousness. He sees the Axial Age in human history as an age in which humanity properly speaking begins. It is the period between 800-200 B.C., in which the great philosophers, prophets, and sages emerge the world over reflecting upon human existence in all its diversity. It is the period in which in China Lao-tse and Confucius, in India the Upanishadics and Buddha, in West Asia the Prophets, among the Persians, Zoroaster, and in Greece Socrates and other great philosophers came to be. What unites all these philosophies for Jaspers is not an identity of metaphysical and cosmological speculation. Such speculation is only a byproduct of a deeper historical revolution that influenced human consciousness during that period. The essential thing was that in their different ways and in their different cultures men for the first time questioned themselves on the meaning of their own existence. And despite the diverse answers, there is implicit in all their thoughts the realization that meaning enters into human existence only through the struggle for the realization of a lucid consciousness coupled with the moral courage required for that struggle. At the moment when man asks what is the meaning of my existence, there appears the possibility of breaking free from the trammels of fate. For, whatever may be the

answer, in the very act of asking this question it becomes clear that only man can establish the meaning of his existence. In this act, humanity, as strictly human with no recourse to anything beyond or apart from being human emerges from the depths of the primeval. Thus the goal of history is to raise and enrich the self-consciousness of man. History begins, says Jaspers, when man takes the first step toward authentic human existence; it continues as a struggle, with all its tensions and setbacks, toward ever greater authenticity. Jaspers in his book *Man in the Modern Age* states,

“... man as individual refuses to allow himself to be absorbed into a life-order which would only leave him in being as a function for the maintenance of the whole. True, he can live in the apparatus with the aid of a thousand relationships on which he is dependent and in which he collaborates; but since he has become a mere replaceable cog in a wheelwork regardless of his individuality, he rebels if there is no other way in which he can manifest his selfhood.”
(Jaspers, 1959, p. 45)

For Jaspers, philosophy begins not with an enquiry into the problem of being but with an enquiry into the specific situation in which the philosopher finds himself in the world. The reason behind this shift lies in Jasper’s belief that the problem of being cannot be resolved by way of a rational analysis. He states that it is impossible to conceive of a doctrine of being which, in virtue of its rational convincing force could command universal assent. Everything that I experience as essentially real owes its reality to the fact that I myself exist as an individual. Therefore, Jaspers says, that the primary philosophic task is the illumination of the personality of the one who asks the philosophic questions. There is one more reason why Jaspers does not begin with the metaphysical question, i.e. enquiry into the problem of being. He believes that an individual always finds himself in a historically determined situation. This situation

contains some known and knowable as well as some unknown and unknowable elements: it is rooted in an unfathomable past and tends toward an impenetrable future. It has neither a readily definable origin nor a definitely recognizable end. The philosopher finds himself in the midst of things, immersed in a movement that is apparently undetermined and undeterminable. Jaspers says:

“The significance of entering into the world constitutes the value of philosophy. True, philosophy is not an instrument, and still less is it a talisman; but it is awareness in the process of realization. Philosophy is the thought with which or as which I am active as my own self. It is not to be regarded as the objective validity of any sort of knowledge, but as the consciousness of being in the world.” (Jaspers, 1959, p.179)

Thus, for Jaspers, philosophy begins with the philosopher’s own existence, with what he is, and not with what he knows. He achieves and communicates not knowledge but himself. He is concerned with his own existence because in that lies the source of his own life. Here he finds not objectivity but freedom, not knowledge but choice. He stands before himself not as a reflective intelligence but as an embodied being who must take a position and become something willed in relation to a definite situation.

Thus, Jaspers advocates that the proper starting point of philosophy is my personal existence, such as it is given to me in the immediate experience of my concrete situation. He says:

“The situation is the beginning... and only form of reality.... My thinking starts from it and returns to it.”
(Jaspers, 1971, p. 03)

Jaspers’ philosophy unfolds as neither metaphysical in the traditional sense nor anti-metaphysical in the contemporary sense. He philosophises about being. According to him, being can be appropriated only through indirect

communication. It discloses itself in neither the subject nor the object of human existence, but in the indefinable sphere which encompasses both.

In the *Psychology of World View*, published in 1919, Jaspers denied the absolute validity of any doctrine and replaced the term *ontology* with another term named *periechontology*, which is concerned not with being as a determinate object, but as illuminating the sphere in which being becomes present to us. Being understood in this manner is called by Jaspers as *encompassing*. He introduces the idea of 'encompassing' as the form of our awareness of being which underlies all our scientific and common sense knowledge and which is given expression in the myths and rituals of religion. 'Encompassing', according to him, is not a horizon within which every determinate mode of being and truths emerge for us. It is rather that within which every particular horizon is enclosed as in something which is absolutely comprehensive, but not visible as a horizon at all. He says that 'encompassing' is not the horizon of our knowledge at any particular moment. Rather, it is the source from which all new horizons emerge. Thus, Jaspers states that "the encompassing has no objective content. It never appears as an object of knowledge. The 'encompassing' appears as the inexhaustible depth that transcends both subject and object." (Eugene, 2000, p. 307)

Jaspers admits that there is no escape from the 'encompassing'. It is impossible for any individual to withdraw from it. We can only enlarge the extent of our knowledge. But this extension of our knowledge is fragmentary, and it is indefinitely extendable. There is no limit of its extension. So, we are always within a horizon. He says:

“We always live, as it were, within a horizon of our knowledge. We strive to get beyond every horizon which still surrounds us and obstructs our view. But we never attain a standpoint where the limiting horizon disappears and from where we could survey the whole.” (Jaspers, 1972, p. 17)

Jaspers defines ‘encompassing’ as what is beyond the relativity of all our perspectives, horizons and conceptual schemes. But it has no fixed, knowable connotation. It is an index or sign to denote the ultimate Being which is the foundation for our concepts, but which can never be exhaustively grasped by them. Such a term has a clear use; but it has no clear, distinct, objective content.

Thus, ‘encompassing’ is the term that does not refer to any particular thing. It does not have any object content. But it can be expressed as a felt quality of all our experience and thought. As Jaspers puts it:

“The encompassing always merely announces itself in present objects and within the horizon – but it never becomes an object. Never appearing to us itself, it is that wherein everything else appears. It is also that due to which all things not merely are what they immediately seem to be, but remain transparent.” (Jaspers, 1972, p.18)

Jaspers believes that because of the intentional nature of our consciousness we always find ourselves trapped in the subject-object relationship. Every act of our consciousness is analyzable according to a model in which a subject is related to an object. “The general relation of a subject to object”, according to Jaspers, “therefore, is the horizon or ‘encompassing’ backbone of all awareness.... The analysis of encompassing is thus an elucidation of the main ways a subject is related to an object. Because this subject-object relationship is the basic model.” (Jaspers, 1972, p. xvi)

Jaspers explains that ‘encompassing’ can be discussed only in terms of its ‘modes’. There are two main modes of the ‘encompassing’. These are (i) the

'encompassing' that we are (the subject) and (ii) the 'encompassing' that being-itself is (the object). Jaspers suggests these two modes as the two possible approaches to encompassing. By approaching being through the encompassing that-we-are, Jaspers intends to work through the various modes of the subject-object dichotomy in which we are immersed, coming across in each mode upon the horizon that forces us to acknowledge the limits that prevent us from grasping the totality of being. Apart from these two modes there are three immanent modes of the subject-object relationship namely; *Dasein*, *consciousness-in-general*, and *spirit*. In each of these modes Dasein (existence), consciousness-in-general, and spirit, Jaspers says that, we are capable of breaking through the objectivity of the subject-object dichotomy, and touching upon the non-objective presence of being.

Existence which is the first amongst the three immanent modes of subjectivity, primarily, man is considered as an organic being who is there, who exists in a practical life-world in space and time. He has instincts, needs, and drives; he acts so as to satisfy them. At this level the objects which are related to him, are of his practical concern constitutive of the world of ordinary experience. This mode is called by Jaspers as simply *being-there*; 'Dasein'. But Jaspers does not use the term 'Dasein' in the same meaning as it is used by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger uses 'Dasein' as a technical term; as the name for human existence especially, and defines it by its existential categories such as freedom, historicity, resoluteness, fallenness, death, care and so forth. But Jaspers uses the term 'Dasein' in the sense of ordinary existence.

The essence of Dasein is to live like a being, and die. My Dasein is what I am in the world. Though, in a sense, the being of Dasein is said to be infinite, like a circle in which something finite turns round endlessly, it is all the same nothing more than a 'seeming substance'. As a Dasein, I am 'there' for any objective analysis, and can eventually be studied by such sciences as biology, physiology and psychology. There can be no privacy or individuality in me, as long as I endure like a phenomenon and offer myself as something to be observed and experimented upon. Being tied to some situation or other, the Dasein would scarcely be able to act as a self-determining being. Manhood or womanhood, youth or old age, being someone as opposed to not having some other identity, are constraints under which it has to live; and, while living, it cannot escape from being conditioned by the non-Dasein. As Jaspers puts it;

"The essence of man is lost in the blind reliance upon nature, where his existence seems identical with nature, and nature identical with knowledge regularities." (Jaspers, 1957, p. 87)

The second immanent mode of subjectivity is **consciousness-in-general**, or abstract rational and conceptual understanding. At this level the world known by man is not the world of ordinary experience but it is the world as represented in the sciences. This abstract level, according to Jaspers, is common to all men, and it is not unique to anyone. Because the concepts and method employed by consciousness-in-general are public and verifiable. So, its knowledge is universal and objective. Hence at this level, according to Jaspers, men are point-consciousness and interchangeable units.

Jaspers holds that what appears to our consciousness is experienceable as an object has being for us. And the experienceable being becomes present to us

through temporal act of consciousness. There are two meanings of consciousness; first, the consciousness of living beings and second, the consciousness as such. Jaspers says that as the consciousness of living beings we are divided into the confinement of the individual. But as consciousness-in-general we participate in an actuality, the universally valid truth and we are an infinite consciousness. We participate in the encompassing through the possibility of knowledge, and through the possibility of common knowledge of Being in every form in which it appears as consciousness. We participate not only in the validity of knowledge, but also in a universally recognized formal lawfulness in the activities of willing, acting and feeling. In such a way truth is timeless and our temporal actuality is somewhat complete actualization of this timeless permanence. The actual existence of this timeless meaning may be temporal, and it is something produced, but it moves and grasps itself in a new sense of the 'encompassing' that is spirit.

The third immanent level is *spirit*. The term spirit is borrowed by Jaspers from the German idealist Hegel. According to Jaspers the term spirit is the synthesis of existence and abstract consciousness in general. It is concrete and historical like existence and it is universal like consciousness in general. The spirit then is concrete universal, which Jaspers calls an *idea*. As men participate in this concrete universal, they are found together into historic unities. And these historic unities are the nation, a church or religion, a cultural tradition, professional organizations etc. Each of these historic unities is formed by an idea. When it is viewed under the idea of spirit, men are not considered as individuals. But they are considered as the members of totalities. One can get a

sense of the objective pole of this level by reflecting on the worlds of politics, art, or science.

Jaspers further says that man's life in the ephemeral world is nothing but the mortal situation of Dasein – a **shipwreck**. Human existence in the world is destined to suffer 'shipwreck'. But Jaspers advocates that man is capable of giving a meaning to 'shipwreck' which is an existential despair. This despair forges an access to Being and Transcendence. Ultimate shipwreck thus becomes the supreme 'cipher' which imparts value to all the others. In 'shipwreck' Transcendence becomes translucent. Therefore, Jaspers says that, in the face of menacing forces which bear down upon my existence, it is my duty not only to continue the struggle but to intensify its vigour. In shipwreck, consciously experienced, affirmed, and surmounted by my forward thrust toward Being, my existential freedom reaches its vital sphere. The bonds which tied it to Dasein are cut, and with its newly released energy it takes hold of Transcendence. Jaspers writes:

“The non-being of all being that is accessible to us, that non-being which reveals itself in shipwreck, is the Being of Transcendence.” (Jaspers, 1971, p. 234)

According to Jaspers existence is *transcendence*. Without transcendence existence is not possible. It is the representation of being itself beyond all objectivity. He says that “transcendence expresses the dual feature that within any level of the world one never fully articulates all possibilities, and that beyond objective determination is a background or horizon of being itself to which existing is related. Because transcendence is being-itself, Jaspers says that existing is aware of itself as given to itself by transcendence. If there were no

transcendence, if the world were all there were to being, existing would not be possible. Man would be a mundane being, describable in the concepts of the various immanent modes of the encompassing.” (Jaspers, 1972, p. xxi)

Jaspers points out that the philosophies of existence do not constitute the absolutization of existence. Materialism is the absolutization of matter because it reduces everything to matter. Idealism is the absolutization of mind because it reduces everything to mind. But the philosophies of existence do not reduce everything to existence, for existence must always be defined with regard to something other than itself, with regard to transcendence.

Jaspers was of the view that some measure of responsibility cannot be evaded for the manner in which we shape our lives and take charge of our existence. Man is the being who esteems, who values, and who sets goals and ideals for himself which he seeks to realize in his living and by which he hopes to guide his behaviour. A man aspires, he hopes, so long as he lives. He is a process, a coming-to-be, and is never finished or complete. The demands of the world and his own aspirations and interests continually call him to active engagement in practical life.

The nature of man's existence remains in some respects an open issue for him, even if, in other respects, it is closed, finished, unalterable. Something, some goal, experience, quality of living, forever remains outstanding in the form of some value unrealized, some aspirations unachieved and, as such, a man is never complete. This consciousness of one's existence as incomplete generates an alternative to the static importance to man. A man is a valuing, aspiring creature, who strives to be other than he is in some general or particular respect.

And as a result of such striving, he finds his existence continually taking on new forms. As goal-seeker and goal-setter, he shows himself to be capable of self-transcendence.

For Kierkegaard, subjectivity is sharpened and intensified when brought into contact with something other than itself. No doubt the subjective thinker concentrates upon his own thought; but by this very concentration he seeks to reach the wholly other. Subjectivity at its highest pitch points the way to objectivity. When I have reached the limits of an intense existence I come upon Being, and my relation with Being makes my existence still more intense.

Transcendence does not have the same meaning in Kierkegaard as in the various aspects of Heidegger's philosophy. And in Jaspers the meaning of the word is sometimes akin to Kierkegaard's meaning and sometimes to Heidegger's.

Husserl believes that thought is always turned towards something other than itself. And Heidegger contends that this idea of intentionality as it is found in the Husserl is rooted in an idea which is deeper than the idea of intentionality and which is the idea of transcendence.

In his book on Kant, Heidegger advances the view that what Kant calls the transcendental is not really comprehensible unless it is seen as a step towards the ontological, and that Kant, appearances notwithstanding, is not a theoretician of knowledge, but a theoretician of Being.

In order to understand Jaspers idea of transcendence two uses of the word must be distinguished. First, there is transcendence as the domain of Being – and here we have something analogous to Kierkegaard's wholly other; secondly,

there is the movement of transcendence that we accomplish – and here the meaning that Heidegger gives it at times and Sartre almost always is applicable.

Beyond the scientific domain and the domain of existence there is what Jaspers calls transcendence. That transcendence should lie beyond the scientific domain as Jaspers defines some calls for some explanations. The domain of existence is the domain of possibility – not intellectual possibility, but possibility as it is lived, as it manifests itself by our will to act in a certain way. Jaspers always speaks of possible existence. In science we are concerned with the domain of what is, in existence, with the domain of what is about to be, but is not as yet. In effect of this the ideas of futurity, of projects, of possibility, are essential to the idea of existence. We are what we shall make of ourselves, what we are about to be, or again, what we have to be.

Hence, all existence is free existence. The ideas of existence and freedom are interrelated for Jaspers, as for Kierkegaard, and this is one of the reasons why they are against positivism, on the one hand, and absolute idealism on the other.

But the existent individual, in what Jaspers calls *boundary situations* – in the face of suffering, in the face of death, in the face of his own inner contradictions, in the face of the problem of truth and of faith – feels that there is something other than himself, other than humanity in general, and that something is transcendence.

This is particularly evident in the problems of truth and faith. The existent, says Jaspers, only exists in so far as he devotes himself entirely to a truth that he considers unique – the unique truth to which he must dedicate his

life. But at the same time the existent knows quite well that other existents devote themselves to truths other than his, which they regard as unique, and that by virtue of their devotion, they, too, come to exist. Therefore, concludes Jaspers, above each man and his truth there must be something which we cannot reach, and which somehow reconciles in itself all the unique individuals and their unique truths, and all their projects and their differences. That something is transcendence.

The domain of transcendence, for Jaspers, is a domain that lies over and above possibility, choice, freedom. Choice, freedom, possibility expire in this domain, of which we can only say that it is nothing more – save perhaps, says Jaspers, by resorting to tautologies, to vicious circles, to antitheses, to all manner of round about speech.

Thus, beyond our own selves, we discover something which is the very basis of our existence, but about which we can say nothing without descending into absurdity. This, for example, is what Shakespeare wants to convey when he says: ‘The rest is silence’. The rest is that which is utterly impervious to the mind.

Here, in Jaspers we find the equivalent of Kierkegaard’s wholly other, with the difference that Jasperian transcendence is no longer the God of revealed religion, but something unnameable, the ineffable background against which all things must be seen.

The word ‘transcendence’ has two meanings in Jaspers. It also designates the movement we accomplish in transcending ourselves, in soaring above ourselves. Jaspers says the existent must accomplish a continual movement of

self-transcendence. Here in lies is the twofold meaning of transcendence in Jaspers.

Jaspers agrees with Kierkegaard rather than with Heidegger that philosophizing is a movement of transcending from the world of empirical and rational realities. And man transcends from the empirical and rational realities, according to Jaspers, not by any theoretical and dogmatic commitments but by a kind of revelation that is 'the illumination of existenz'. As he puts that "In philosophizing we ... turn toward existenz." (Jaspers, 1970, p. 10)

Like Kierkegaard, who uses the word 'existence' in a different sense, Jaspers too uses the word 'existing' differently. For him 'existing' is a technical term and it acquires its meaning from the ways he uses it and the things he says about it. It is not used as the ordinary English word 'existence'. But for him it is a quality which attributes to all men. It can only be pointed to or appealed to. "It is the being which in the phenomenality of existence is not but can be, ought to be." (Jaspers, 1970, p. 03)

Jaspers affirms that 'existing' neither refers to any universal concept extracted from individual existing beings, nor does it denote man's being in the world as biological and physiological entity. But it is that which I myself am, for to exist means to be an individual and it is left only to man to be an individual. It is absolutely unique each individual is a particular, concrete historical being in so far as he is authentic.

An individual, according to Jaspers, exists, so far as he does not present himself before himself as an object. The existing individual chooses and realizes himself as himself. He writes;

“I am existing if I do not become an object for myself. In Existing I know, without being able to see it, that what I call my “self” is independent. The possibility of existing is what I live by; it is only in its realization that I am myself.”
(Jaspers, 1970, p. 03)

For Jaspers ‘Existing’ is a movement which directs us towards a reality whose genuine apprehension is not intellectual or objective. It should also not be confused with the Dasein who is spatial and temporal by nature. The word Existing represents itself as an experience which can hardly be characterized exhaustively. Dasein denotes nothing which would refer to the free and authentic existence of man.

Jaspers acknowledges a *primacy of faith* which alone reaches towards authentic existence. He affirms that an individual can discover his authenticity when the subject object dichotomy dissolves. And according to him, this subject – object dichotomy collapses in the understanding and practice of *philosophical faith*.

Since the publication of *Philosophie* in 1932, Jaspers has advocated ‘philosophical faith’ as the meaning of philosophical doctrine, and through it he has sought to communicate with those who no longer find ecclesiastical faith illuminating. He says:

“Today philosophy is the only refuge for those who, in full awareness, are not sheltered by religion. No longer is it the affair of a restricted circle, of an elite; for, at any rate as the individual’s urgent question how he can best live, it has become the affair of countless numbers of persons. The philosophy of the schools was justified insofar as it rendered a philosophical life possible.” (Jaspers, 1959, p. 142)

Jaspers was much influenced by Kant but he did not understand philosophy to be a science in the way that some neo-Kantians conceived it. On

his account philosophy seeks to remind, to appeal, and thus to provide the occasion for the other persons grasping the meaning of philosophical doctrine and awakening to authentic existence.

Jaspers neither acknowledges the transcendent God of theism nor Spinoza's immanent God of pantheism. He believes that both the ideas of God are equally at fault because they are ontological in nature. Both imply that metaphysical truth is firmly and objectively established. And they are valid for all times and for all. Jaspers says that "after Kant all ontology stands condemned." (Jaspers, 1972, p. 17) "We can neither conceive transcendence as an individual God, separated from the world, nor can we say that 'all' is transcendent or that God is the being which contains all." (Jaspers, 1969, p. 52)

Existentialism finds it equally impossible to endorse faith in the God of 'revealed religion', because it is founded upon the claim that God has manifested Himself once and for all in human history, and supporting this claim by the promulgation of fixed dogmas, while existential freedom, says Jaspers, is strictly personal and its truth is always incomplete. Existentialism therefore, excludes and rejects any truth established once and for all and of supposedly timeless and universal validity. On the other hand, Jaspers does not accept atheism either. Because he believes that atheism sustains a 'negative ontology' of its own, and it is as dogmatic and intolerant as any revealed religion. Thus, the existential philosophy neither endorses the religious nor the atheistic position. And instead of religious and atheistic positions it acknowledges 'philosophic faith' as seminal. As Jaspers says:

"Philosophy has become the foundation of man's true being.
Today it is assuming its characteristic form. Man, torn from

the sheltering substantiality of stable conditions and cast into the apparatus of mass life, deprived of his faith by the loss of his religion, is devoting more decisive thought to the nature of his own being. Thus, it is that there have arisen the typical philosophical ideas adequate to our own epoch. No longer does the revealed Deity upon whom all is dependent come first and no longer the world that exists around us; what comes first is man, who, however, cannot make terms with himself as being, but strives to transcend himself.” (Jaspers, 1959, p. 143)

Unlike Christian faith which absolutizes and institutionalizes its contents, philosophical faith can neither be absolutized nor institutionalized. It is and remains alive only in the vast realm of individual minds and in their continued discourse through the ages. While the religious faith is dogmatic, ‘philosophic faith’ is free of any dogma, Philosophical faith’ treats the entire philosophy as preparation or recollection, only as inspiration and confirmation, thus believing that no meaningful philosophy can be a self-contained conceptual system. The conceptual structure is only one half at best and it attains truth only if, in addition to being conceived, it is embodied in the thinker’s own historical existence. Hence, the philosopher freely contorts his own thoughts. Philosophical faith cannot become a creed; its thought does not become dogma. It does not rest in a body of doctrine in turn remaining to be a venture of radical openness. Philosophical faith venerates traditional philosophy but does not maintain an attitude of obedience to it. It does not look on history as an authority, but as one continuous spiritual struggle.

It involves both the subjective and the objective side of faith in its entirety. If only the subjective side is taken into account there remains only a believing state of mind, a faith without object, devoid of any inner content. On the other hand if only the objective side is considered, there remains a content of

faith, as object, as proposition, as dogma, as an inventory, as a dead something. But when we philosophize it is the comprehensive that is taken into account disregarding the split between the subject and object.

In his later works Jaspers preferred to speak of his philosophy in terms of reason rather than existence. He says that “reason seeks the limits of knowledge and opens the way for faith to transcend the empirical and historical isolation of human existence.” (Eugene, 2000, p. 309) Philosophical faith is allied with knowledge. It wants to know what is knowable and to be conscious of its own premises. Faith cannot become universally valid knowledge, but it may become clearly present to me by self-conviction. It becomes unceasingly clear and more conscious, and by becoming conscious unfolds more and more of its inner meaning. Jaspers says that reason is not an enemy of philosophical faith. Philosophical faith affirms the way of reason and acts within it in such a way that human beings may overcome their empirical and historical isolation and acknowledge that the course of their being comes from beyond themselves. This is an act which must be continually undertaken in our coming to authentic existence in the moment.

The realization of authenticity actualizes through the channels of **communication** according to Jaspers. He holds that man cannot really become himself in isolation rather he can attain his genuine existence in ‘communication’ and ‘collaboration’ with others. He enters into ‘communication’ and ‘collaboration’ with other existences, Jaspers says, in the act of freedom. In communication not only the authentic existence of my own self is revealed but becomes equally applicable to the other as well. The other

too, attains self-realization and self-possession in the loving strife of communication. Self-realization in communication is, according to Jaspers, like a *creatio ex nihilo*. He says “a new richness of being is acquired and revealed. And, conversely, the absence or the refusal of the communication leads to a corresponding absence or loss of being.” (Jaspers, 1970, p. 58)

G.J. Shepard in his book, *Building a Discipline of Communication*, maintains that each discipline promotes a unique ontological view of existence and its artifacts. He says that we in communication have failed to offer a communication-based view of existence or Being, and that for over 300 years this has kept us in academic illegitimacy, because a field achieves disciplinary status by promoting a unique foundational ontology. We have forwarded no ‘eye on existence’, we have not shown that communication is materially essential to Being.

Although Jasper’s philosophy of communication will not lead us to any specific ‘view of Being’ that we can claim as our own, Jaspers would have us see that existential communication is the manner by which we construe more of Being. He offers no direct or final visions, but existential communication in particular can bring us to the level where we are less trapped in the subject-object dichotomy and permitting partners in existential. Jaspers gives substance to Shepard’s curiosity, suggesting that Being comes into greater being through significant existential acts of humans communicating. Jaspers takes communication as the ‘foundational transformational process’. Much as respiration in the human body could be said to be ‘foundational’. Similarly, within the social body it is human communication that is foundational.

Communication is 'transformational' in that it acts out the core creational act of giving birth to formlessness into symbolic and material forms. In this way communication not only participates in Being, it exemplifies the transformation of non-being into Being. In this sense communication could be said to be synchronous with the creative force of Being.

Hannah Arendt identifies Jaspers as the first philosopher she knows who 'protested against solitude', who dared to question all thoughts under this one standard: 'what do they signify for communication? Are they such that they may help or such that they will prevent communication? Do they reduce to solitude or arouse to communication?' (Arendt, 1957, p. 543)

There are several 'defective' modes of human communication, including "affection, insincerity, deceit and lying, and 'pseudo-communication' arising from shyness, fear, suspicion, prejudice, self-centeredness, presumed superiority, callousness, combativeness, bad will, and continually idle talk" (Kaufmann, 1957, pp. 214-216) while on the other hand authentic existential communication requires equality, mutual recognition, affirmation and clarification.

Jaspers uses the concept of 'losing struggle' throughout his writings to signify a wrestling with the other to press other and self further than either has been able to go alone: a loving contest in which each person surrenders their weapons to the other. "The certainty of authentic existence resides only in unreserved communication between persons who live together and vie with one another in a free community, who regard their association with one another as but a preliminary stage, who take nothing for granted and question everything.

Only in communication is all the other truth fulfilled, only in communication and I myself not merely living but fulfilling life.” (Jaspers, 1973, pp. 25-26)

Jaspers follows the line of argument of the Hegelian dialectic in explaining the need of communication in the process of self-realization. He says, I am an ego, only by setting myself off from a nonego, by asserting myself in the face of ‘the other’, by opposing myself to ‘the other’. This kind of self-assertion, however, leads one to the edge of ‘the abyss of absolute estrangement’ in regard to ‘the other’. And the desire for the unity of the being urges one to bridge the abyss in the union of being-with-other. Thus communication originates and is consummated.

Jaspers sees human beings as relational beings whose existence, identity, and humanity derive from interpersonal communicating. He says that “Every new human being begins in communication.” (Jaspers, 1957, p. 79) In the second volume of his magnum opus *Philosophie*, Jaspers repeatedly stresses the primacy of human communication to human becoming. He says that “It is only in communication that I come to myself.” (Jaspers, 1970, p. 53) He further says “Myself-being is always decided in communication, by its tie to communication.” (Jaspers, 1970, p. 52)

Jaspers stresses the need for communication as crucial to philosophy and to philosophical truth. For him, ‘truth’ is founded upon relationality. He says:

“I should not suffer so deeply from lack of communication or find such unique pleasure in authentic communication if I for myself, in absolute solitude, could be certain of the truth. But I am only in conjunction with the other, alone I am nothing.” (Jaspers, 1973, p. 80)

Existential communication differs from all objectively verifiable relationships among human beings. It surpasses ordinary friendship, affection, and love as well as reciprocal esteem, mutual psychological understanding, and a mere unanimity of thoughts, convictions, and aspirations. All these have their proper place in Dasein, not in 'existence'. They are all insufficient to link existences in the profundity of their unconditional freedom.

Philosophical truth in particular arises through human dialogue; it grows from authentic communication between selves struggling toward understanding of self and other, life and meaning, and is not simply passed from one to other. As Jaspers points out that:

"It would be a truth which would arise for the first time in communication, which would become actual only in and through it; it would be a truth which is neither already here to be transmitted to another, nor which presents us with a methodically attainable end in which it could be valid without communication." (Jaspers, 1957, pp. 96-97)

Jaspers says that in true communication one wants to reach the other in the original and irreducible ground and substance of his freedom. In other words one's freedom is in search of the freedom of the other and one's own self requires other selves with whom to enter into a dual relationship of opposition and unification. Jaspers says:

"I cannot become myself, if the other does not wish to become his self; I cannot be free if the other is not free." (Jaspers, 1970, p. 57)

Jaspers values independent self-reflection, but asserts that 'the truth begins with two'. He says:

"What I gain for myself alone in reflection would if it were all be as nothing gained. What is not realized in communication is not yet, what is not ultimately grounded in

it is without adequate foundation. The truth begins with two.” (Jaspers, 1973, p. 124)

In genuine communication those who enter into the existential relationship ‘open themselves’ and ‘reveal themselves’ to each other without reservation in the original depth of their being, ready to see and to be seen, to penetrate and to be penetrated, to mold and to be molded in a reciprocal give-and-take. In order to gain existence I am willing to forsake all my attachments to empirical goods and values, so that I may become free to experience sympathetically the profound existential truth of the other.

Jaspers affirms that the serious communicator “strives to become capable of playing his part in the dialogue of ever-deepening communication, which is the prerequisite for truth and without which there is no truth.” (Jaspers, 1973, p. 166) He says that truth reveals itself through communication, ‘thinking’ is a practice that transpires between persons rather than transpiring only as solitudinous performance within a single person, and truth can be “recovered from its dispersion by communication.” (Jaspers, 1957, p. 104)

Thus, in existential communication there is no fusion of the existences. Because the fusion would entail the submersion of the individual in the collective. On the contrary, true communication preserves the distinctions between individual and individual and between their existential truths. Existential truth, therefore, is as multiform as are the individuals in whom it is incarnate. And these various existential truths are not only equally legitimate but they mutually necessitate and supplement each other. Thus, like existence, existential communication is also undefinable and ineffable. It is objectively inconceivable and unknowable. What can be objectively known, seen, and

appreciated is the material effects of it. Its existential 'consequences' are beyond the reach of any objective criteria. Jaspers says that:

“The consciousness of possible existence alone is capable of perceiving their truth in the bond of communication.”
(Jaspers, 1970, p. 423)

Much like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger, Jaspers too is aware of the dangers which threaten human existence when it surrenders its inalienable personal prerogative to the impersonal, soulless anonymity of the masses. The existing individual, even in communication, must always preserve the integrity of his self. His being-with-others must be in the nature of a voluntary, personal engagement. Jaspers writes:

“He who only loves 'mankind', loves nothing but an empty abstraction; he only loves truly who loves this particular human being... I destroy communication if I seek it in a communion with the greatest possible number.” (Jaspers, 1969, p. 16)

Chapter –VI

**Gabriel Marcel :
Encounter in Creative
Fidelity**

GABRIEL MARCEL

Encounter in Creative Fidelity

I am for God inasmuch as I am unique. (Marcel, 1952, p. 263)

Gabriel Marcel was the most prominent French advocate of Christian existentialism. A philosopher, dramatist as well as musician, Marcel set the task of philosophy to be the 'Socratic' task which was to illuminate the human situation. He felt that modern man had distanced himself from the grounds of creativity, of freedom, and meaning in life. In modern times a highly mechanistic and scientific civilization exists that ignores the deepest spiritual needs of human beings. The individual tends to appear to himself and to others as merely an agglomeration of *functions* rendering existence as empty and meaningless. Marcel was of the view that modern man inhabiting a highly scientific world was rapidly sinking into feebleness and dissatisfaction born out of the technical achievements that had trapped him into an insignificant objectivity. As a result of his centrality in the cosmos was compromised. Science had begun to treat him not as an 'existing' individual but merely as a bundle of intricate functions. The magnitude and the significance of his functions had come to determine his worth. Even the phenomenon of death was looked upon as one of the worldly happenings, 'a fall into uselessness'. Instead of sheltering himself in his inner being, the modern man, having already equipped himself with the technical knows how, searches for a solution of his crisis. The characteristic feature of our age, Marcel writes, is "the man in whom the sense of the ontological... the sense of Being ... is lacking, or, to speak more correctly... he is the man who has lost the awareness of this sense." (Marcel, 1961, p. 01)

Marcel's criticism of the so-called *technological mentality* is intended to convince us of the fact that the basic problem of man in the modern world is, how to guard himself, as an integral spiritual being, against the incalculable temptations of growing sciences. Like Jaspers, he too, finds it alarming that there should be a lack of understanding of this fact among the thinkers of the past. To regard myself and the other individuals as essences is to destroy the abiding selfhood in us all.

In his book *The Philosophy of Existence*, Marcel writes, "Travelling on the underground, I often wonder with a kind of dread what can be the inner reality of the life of this or that man employed on the railway... the man who opens the doors, for instance, or the one who punches the tickets. Surely everything both within him and without him conspires to identify this man with his functions... meaning not only with his functions as a worker, as a trade union member or as a voter, but with his vital functions as well." (Marcel, 1949, p. 02) He further says, "I need hardly insist on the stifling impression of sadness produced by this functional world. It is sufficient to recall the dreary image of the pensioner official, or of those urban Sundays when the passers-by look like people who have retired from life. In such a world there is something mocking and sinister even in the tolerance awarded to the man who has retired from his work." (Marcel, 1949, p.03) It seems that everything is wrong everywhere. Life has lost its seriousness and the purely mechanical way in which it goes on laboriously without interest, originality, and creativity exhibits a sad submission to hopelessness.

In the face of such a prospect of bleakness Marcel professes a *primacy of faith* which alone holds the promise of a meaningful life. He holds that the

individual can discover his authenticity only under the condition that the subject - object dichotomy be dissolved. Marcel believes that the subject - object dichotomy which is chiefly responsible for creating an unbridgeable gap alienating human beings from each other, can be overcome through the act of faith.

Before working out the details of Marcel's insights perhaps it would be worthwhile to learn about his early life, for the events and circumstances that shaped his existence had an immense impact on the orientation and development of his entire thought.

Marcel was born in Paris, in 1889. His mother died when he was only four years of age. He writes. "not only my entire childhood but my entire life was dominated by the event of the sudden death of my mother.... In a mysterious way she has always remained present to me." (Cited in Reinhardt, 1952, p. 204) In the lonely years of his childhood he made his loneliness creative by communicating with the creature of his imagination. Thus writing his first two plays at the early age of eight years and later involving himself in the creation of musical compositions.

Soon after his mother's death he came under the care and guidance of his aunt, who also made a great impact on his life. He writes "she was a Jewess, but her family had renounced any religious beliefs. She herself had embraced Protestantism ... she imposed upon me an extremely strict moral discipline ... she shared my father's agnosticism, with the difference that his had a moral and her's an aesthetic tinge; the result was that I grew up in an atmosphere of instability and aridity." (Cited in Reinhardt, 1952, p. 204)

He traveled extensively with his father, in particular visiting the well-

known cultural and artistic citadels of Europe and acquainting himself with the great German and Anglo-Saxon writers of his time as well as the past. He submitted his thesis at the early age of eighteen on *The Metaphysical Ideas of Coleridge and Their Relationship to the Philosophy of Schelling* in 1908. This qualification enabled him to secure a position in teaching philosophy and more importantly familiarized him to the germinal insights of existentialism.

During World War I, he served with the Red Cross and was assigned the duty of tracing missing persons, a task that brought him face to face with the drama and tragedy of human existence. He was particularly repelled by the callousness with which people were treated as no more than mere data on a filing card, to be moved back and forth as other information was secured. The shock of World War I infused a sense of urgency to his philosophical endeavours for it made him realize the contingencies and fragility of those material and cultural pillars of life that had seemed so firm and secure.

The philosophical career of Gabriel Marcel revolved around a central thematic concern. He stressed the meaning and bearing of his inquiries in that “we are concerned existentially with determining the metaphysical conditions of personal existence.” (Marcel, 1952, p. 225) The axial place of mankind and of the metaphysics of the human condition was fully and clearly recognized by Marcel in his later and most mature effort, the Gifford lectures. On the occasion of the Gifford lectures he stressed the need for a metaphysics that concerns itself with who, or what am I ? that to seek the metaphysical condition of mankind it becomes important. Marcel has insistently urged it becomes important to inquire into what it is to be a human being, a self which requires a philosophical articulation of what it is to be ‘a’ self. In these lectures he advocates the need to

find meaning in life where speculative reason fails to find a satisfying answer. Marcel proclaims that it is the act of faith that rescues the individual from the anxiety and perplexity of modern day life. In the act of faith, man not only accept and fulfills the destiny prescribed for him by his particular human situation, but in his union with the transcendent source of Being, all the previously meaningless facts are understood 'existentially', that is, as meaningful aspects of a significant human existence. The whole self is involved in the act of *commitment* that establishes the reality of the person. Here an element of transcendence is found that takes man beyond the limitation of his own human situation. In the act of faith man is restored to that unity of being of which he was deprived by his adherence to scientific rationalism.

Marcel too, like other existentialists begins his enquiry with the problem of being. But his approach to this problem is somewhat different. He highlights the distinction between *problem* and *mystery*. He believes that 'being' cannot be approached as problem but it is through an involvement with mystery that the self is revealed. The distinction between problem and mystery, for Marcel, is a fundamental one. According to him, a problem is an objective difficulty. It does not imply or elicit personal involvement, and remains open to solution through the employment of appropriate techniques. Thus, for example, what the scientist meets with during the course of his researches and instrumentally tries to solve are problems, even if definite solutions are not readily forthcoming. A mystery, on the other hand, is not an insoluble problem, but something radically different. Mystery is not unknowable, but the inherently unfathomable, though it may allow exploration of its bottomless depths and infinite nuances. Moreover, it is never a purely objective matter, but something that envelops us in its issues and

implications. From this point of view, evil, death, love, fidelity – mistakenly described as problems – are really mysteries. Above all, there is the ‘mystery of Being’. Marcel holds that the mysterious and the ontological are identical.

In his search for a new and concrete approach to the problem of ‘being’, Marcel speaks, of two different kinds of reflections, i.e. *primary* and *secondary reflections*. The primary reflection has its place in scientific research while on the other hand, the secondary reflection happens to be strictly philosophical. Primary reflection is characterized as abstract, analytical, objective, universal and verifiable. In primary reflection the thinking subject is not the individual human being but the Cartesian cogito. It deals with the realm of the problematic. Primary reflection is exemplified in scientific and technical thought. It allows the individual to possess and manipulate his world more completely. Hence, it is indispensable to human culture. Primary reflection proceeds from human experiences that are confined to the categories of *seeing* and *having*. And in the categories of seeing and having the real subject disappears. “In the process of the ‘objectification’ of the thinking ego and of the empirical contents of consciousness both subject and object are totally detached from existence. Thus, the ‘thinking substance’ the Descartes and the ‘transcendental ego’ of Kant happen to be no longer ‘real subjects’.” (Reinhardt, 1952, p. 213) In the sphere of ‘seeing’ and ‘having’ that is, a purely scientific and technical knowledge, the frame of reference is not the existing individual but thought in general; the impersonal thinking of *Dasman*.

Secondary reflection, on the other hand, is concrete, individual and open. It is not concerned with only seeing and having but with presences. It transcends all objective knowledge and all objectivity. Secondary reflection is aware of the fact that the existing individual is deeply rooted in the reality. It cannot be dealt

as an object of scientific investigation. But it remains open to its object as a lover does to his beloved - not as a specimen of a class but as a unique being.

Secondary reflection is not concerned with the 'problems' but involved in 'mysteries'. As Marcel says:

"A problem is something which one hits upon, something which blocks one's way. It is wholly 'in front of me'. A mystery on the contrary, is something in which I find myself engaged, whose essence it is consequently not to be wholly 'in front of me'. It seems that in this realm (of the mystery) the distinction between the 'within myself' and the 'in front of myself' loses all significance." (Marcel, 1952, p. 214)

Thus, according to Marcel, a mystery initially appears to be merely a problem that is difficult to solve. But reflection manifests that in dealing with a genuine mystery the distinction between subject and object, what is in me and what is before me, breaks down. He says:

"Where primary (or first) reflection tends to dissolve the unity of experience which is at first put before it, the function of secondary reflection is essentially recuperative; it reconquers unity." (Marcel, 1960, I, p. 85)

The transcendence of all objectivity and all objective knowledge, in the secondary reflection, for Marcel, carries a meaning absolutely different from both the negation of Hegelian dialectic and the nihilation of Sartre. In the dialectics of Hegel and Sartre, both of them do not discover any new reality but they establish only new logical terms. On the contrary, Marcel's negation and transgression of objectivity are essentially the endeavor of human thought to escape its limitations by reaching beyond itself into the realm of 'being'. According to Marcel, every problem of knowledge becomes eventually involved in an endless regress: that which is sought in the end is always presupposed at the outset.

Marcel was of the view that the essence of man is to be in a *situation*. Man always finds himself in a concrete situation in the world. He is always involved in the phenomena of the world. The awareness of his existence in the world is not first of all a separation of his self as a knowing subject from the body as a known object, because it is the existence of his body in the world that constitutes him as an object open to a subject. But in the primordial participation of the existence in the world, the existing self becomes confused and considers himself a universal existence. And then loses his individuality in the general thought. It is the task of philosophy, Marcel says, to get rid of the false problems which arise due to objective knowledge and to institute a philosophical outlook in the individual which re-instates and re-lives essential experiences.

The first of these is the experience of *incarnation* - in a body which exists in continuity with all other objects in the world. The primary and basic aspect of the condition of man is, his 'being incarnate'. He is, 'a being who finds himself united to a body'. When it is said 'I exist' the reference is made not to the Cartesian 'cogito' but to the 'incarnate body', that is, to this body of mine, of which I can neither say that it is myself, nor that it is an object for myself. Thus there exists between myself and my body neither separation, nor a complete fusion, nor strictly speaking a relation, but a *participation*. And my linkage with the 'world', with the 'others', and with 'God' has the same mysterious character as my being incarnate in my body. In neither case can this mysterious bond be made the subject of scientific investigation or the object of scientific knowledge. Marcel says:

"Incarnation is the eternal 'given' of metaphysics. Incarnation is the situation of a being who appears to himself to be, as it were, *bound* to a body. This 'given' is opaque to itself... of this body I can neither say that it is I, nor that it is

not I, nor that it is for me (an object). The opposition of subject and object is found to be transcended from the start.”
(Marcel, 1965, pp. 11-12)

The idea of participation is a fundamental key to the philosophy of Marcel. To feel, to be incarnate, to believe, to use secondary reflection, to have faith, to love, to exist, and so on, are all to participate in being. Being is experienced as mysterious precisely because we participate in it rather than hold ourselves off from it. At a deeper level, we can never simply detach ourselves from the other within our experience without grossly distorting the reality of our situation. Marcel holds that the more we are able to recognize the individual being as such, the more we will be oriented and directed toward grasping being as being. Thus Marcel says that access to being is gained only through intimate inter subjective participation. He says:

"A complete and concrete knowledge of oneself cannot be self-centered; however paradoxical it may seem, I should prefer to say that it must be centered in others. We can understand or from others, and only by starting from them.... Fundamentally, I have no reason to set any particular store by myself, except in so far as I know that I am loved by other beings who are loved by me." (Marcel, 1960, II, p. 08)

Participation accounts for the difference between being a spectator of something and contemplating it. A mere spectator confronted with a mere spectacle is comparable to a recording machine. For him a war, at a safe distance, is merely something stimulating to observe for he is not involved in or deeply affected by what confronts him. With contemplation, however, the situation is quite different. It requires an emotional involvement in the situation so that it becomes more than a mere spectacle for those who contemplate it. Rather than being something entirely external, the spectacle takes on internal meaning. At the same time, it is not limited to the emotional or illusory; again

the distinction between the internal and external, the subjective and objective breaks down. Marcel says that "In as much as I contemplate the landscape, for example, a certain coesse is realized between the landscape and me." (Marcel, 1960, I, p. 158)

Then, participation in the mystery of being is the opposite of all objective relations, of objective knowing (subject - object knowing), and of objective doing or technique. It is a way of being with in contrast to having.

The supreme degree of participation is that relation in which all objectification is strictly impossible: the relation between the believer and God. In Marcel's view, participation in God is known in the first instance through *ontological exigence*, the fundamental awareness of ultimacy in being. This participation becomes more complete as we invoke God in such interpersonal experiences as fidelity, hope, and love, whereby the detached self is transcended for communion with others and ultimately with God. In this way, Marcel affirms that we come to discover that our true being is not something we possess naturally but something we must both choose and create. Our life, in other words, is not simply a datum given to us, but neither is it within our power to create on our own; it is offered to us as a gift which to be real has to be received. Therefore, our authentic being is not simply ours but God's being, or God's way of being, as well. As we become more truly creative, that is, more truly participant in being, God becomes more manifest to us; we participate in Him and He is in us.

Like Kierkegaard and Jaspers, Marcel too, establishes a theistic relationship between man and transcendence or Being. He says that the world of problematical is the world of fear and desire, of 'the functional' and the

'functionalizable' "... even those whose faith in techniques is strongest are bound to admit that there exist enormous realms which are outside man's control." (Marcel, 1949, p. 19) It is the exploration of these realms that a genuine religious life aims at. My inner reality cannot forever be sheltered against the sense of the 'fall' in born in itself. To be transcendental, for Marcel, is to be willed by God, to be in relation with the personal Absolute, to reveal oneself as a 'subject'. I am for God inasmuch as I am unique.

By responding to God in *creative fidelity*, we approach our true being; yet we can never fully coincide with it. Marcel says that "one might be tempted to say that between me and my being there is a gulf which I can partially close, but which, in this life at least, I cannot hope to completely fill." (Marcel, 1960, I, p. 35) The only place where this gulf apparently fills, according to Marcel, is in the life of saint, for whom there is no grace at all or for whom all is grace. But even for the saint God remains the transcendent, neither fully transcendent nor wholly immanent but mysteriously both; beyond and deeply within this being.

Marcel stresses the primacy of being over knowledge. He believes that there is a mastery within all cognition and faith because they presuppose a participation in being in which the dualism of subject and object is overcome. Our existence is not primarily a matter of thought or consciousness but something participated. Thus, Marcel emphasizes that to exist means to participate in the mystery of being. The more fully we can grasp our existence in all its reality, the closer we come to realizing our authentic existence.

In the second part of the *Mystery of Being*, Marcel takes up the relation of existence and being. Here he placed existence between being a thing and authentic being. He says:

“The idea of existence (if it is an idea) is itself deeply charged with ambiguity We are spontaneously led to treat existence as the fact that a thing is somewhere but could also be somewhere else or even nowhere at all, as though it were subject to every vicissitude, every displacement, every kind of destruction. But if I concentrate my attention on this simple fact: I exist - or again: someone that I love exists, the perspective changes; to exist can no longer simply mean to be there or to be elsewhere - it can probably mean essentially to transcend the opposition of the here and the elsewhere Existence will appear at one limit as indistinguishable from authentic being.” (Marcel, 1960, II, p. 31)

Marcel says that to realize ontological need is at once to plunge into the realm of mystery. He says that if I ask, ‘what is being?’ I must ask, ‘who am I who questions being? Can I be certain that I am?’ At this level the cogito cannot help me, for I am concerned with my being as a whole, with the living, feeling, willing, loving, praying, hoping, and so on, as well as thinking person.

Recognition of the mystery of being is bound up with personal involvement in being. ‘I’ and ‘am’ are not two distinct things that can be analyzed separately. I affirm being only as a living participant in being and only in an affirmation ‘that I am rather than I utter’, an affirmation where. ‘I am, in a sense, passive, and of which I am the seat rather than the subject’. The dualism of the self that affirms its own being and the being that affirms and underlies the affirmation is transcended.

It is by exploring the reality of concrete experience, Marcel believes, that we can solve the problem of being. The realm of objective thought, the realm of the problematic, is the realm of abstraction. It is only by abstracting from concrete, personal existence that thought becomes objectively valid. Conversely, according to Marcel, the concrete is mysterious. It is ‘metaproblematic’ in the sense that it is prior to or more basic than the abstractions that create problems.

Here, Marcel introduces the term *ontological exigence* which is the thirst

for being. It is the existential need for self-realization, or the demand to transcend the world of abstract objectivity. This exigence for being is not always experienced as such but may find expression in a variety of ways. Sometimes it is simply a deeply felt dissatisfaction with our present condition in the world: sometimes it is experienced as a need for spiritual adventure, as a need for artistic creativity and expression, or as the search for a vocation. Ontological exigence is never a desire for some object. It is an inner need or urge that cannot be distinguished from an appeal; it is a demand arising within us that our lives find fulfillment.

Thus, for Marcel, the human condition is disclosed as a fundamental ontological exigence concretely manifested as a quest: we are beings who, in our very being are in quest of our own authentic existence. As seekers, our condition is that of not-knowing; hence, in Marcel's terminology, each of us is a 'being-on-the-way', a 'voyager', whose quest, however much it may be and frequently is masked, is his most basic condition. Realizing this, I am brought up abruptly against myself: I who ask, 'who am I?' am that very quest for assuredness about myself. In order to utter the question, I must be, and thus I am this assuredness, this emphasis I give myself in the affirmation 'I exist?' Marcel states that "In every case, I produce myself, in the etymological sense of the word, that is to say I put myself forward." (Marcel, 1962, p. 15) In my seeking, I manifest myself, in what Marcel later calls an "exclamatory consciousness of self... of existing." (Marcel, 1960, I, p. 91)

Marcel's main objective is to explore the *mineness* of my own animate organism. Marcel says that my 'body-qua-mine' neither a relation of *partes extra partes* (as between physical things) nor an instrumental relation. To consider my

body as an instrument involves me in an absurdity. If it were an instrument, Marcel shows, then there would have to be a deep commonality of nature between it and the things on which it acts and between it and me, the 'subject' who 'has' it. But reflection shows that although there is a sense in which my body is an instrument for another (as in slavery), the object and my body do not share that deep commonality of nature - they are not of the same being. The user of an instrument; cannot at the same time be a user and be of the same nature as the instrument used.

Thus, my body is something indubitable. It is the basis for all personal experience. And this is so not merely in a biological or instrumental sense but in the sense that the world only exists for me because I have feelings and can act - and I can feel and can act only with my body. Being with my body is my basic way of being with and for others.

Marcel believes that our existence, like our body, is something initially and indubitably given. And for us existing things are, not through objective, detached, verifiable thought but through the same immediate participation by which we are with our bodies. To exist is to be with; to deeply experience the existence of something is to affirm the beings that we are and therefore to experience worth. Thus the more fully we open ourselves to the existence we are with, the more valuable, the more enriched, is our existence. The affirmation of existence is then, neither a matter of assigning a predicate to individual things nor an assertion about abstract existence in general. Fundamentally, existence is something, according to Marcel, that can only be felt and affirmed on a level where the affirmed and the affirmer are somehow together.

Thus, according to Marcel, an individual can find his 'authentic

existence' in the act of faith. Because in the act of religious faith the individual constitutes himself as a person by affirming the infinite personality of God. It is a union of two freedoms; the free appeal to God and the free response and homage of man. The act of faith "fills the void which exists between my empirical and my thinking self, in the affirmation of their transcendent union, and from the idea of that God who has willed me I can then pass on to the idea of that God who has willed the world." (Reinhardt, 1952, p. 210) In understanding myself as a creature of God. I am ready to accept my 'being-in-the-world' with all its limitations. I am ready to accept my being-in-the-world not because of my rational or objective knowledge but because of faith, that is the work of personal consecration of my life. In the act of faith the gulf between subject and object breaks down.

Marcel hold that faith is an "absolute commitment, entered into by the whole self, or at least by something real in myself which could not be repudiated without repudiating the whole." (Marcel, 1965, p. 52) Here the cogito transcends itself and goes beyond 'I think' to 'I believe'. It cannot be so by any logical necessity because here we are in the realm of nonobjective. Absolute commitment can only be an act that is freely entered into by the whole person. But, Marcel says that, this free act is not arbitrary like a hypothesis. On the contrary, precisely because it is the most free act, it is the most rooted in being. It is the act by which the self transcends the gaps between feeling, thought, and faith and creates itself as a concrete, active, and living reality and not merely as a thinking subject. That is, it is the act by which the self makes itself what, at a profound level, it already knows itself to be.

But despite the fact that faith may appear valid in this sense to the

believing subject, it is never a certitude. Because it is free, it must always contain an element of uncertainty. As Marcel says:

“It goes beyond what has been given to me, what I have experienced, it is an extrapolation, a leap, a bet which, like all bets, can be lose.” (Marcel, 1964, p. 135)

Marcel admits that faith is not merely a free act, but it is also a response to grace. Faith or absolute commitment is mysteriously both a free act and a response to divine grace. That is, faith without grace would be mere subjective affirmation, and that is precisely what faith, if it is real, cannot be.

Marcel declares that faith can only appear valid for those who open themselves to it in a free act. It never appears valid for thought in general. General validity would imply a universal abstract subject and the ability to substitute one person for another. This is precisely what is not possible with faith because faith is an act of personal participation by a concrete person in which the believer is not distinct from that in which he participates. Marcel says that, in true faith, the act of faith and the object of faith cannot be disconnected. He says:

“The act by which I think faith must, therefore, be the act by which I deny this dissociation; but by which, in consequence, I also deny subjectivism as well as realism There is no internal distinction between them.” (Marcel, 1952, p. 39)

Thus, faith, according to Marcel, is both a free act and a response to *grace*. So, it is identifiable with salvation. It cannot come from the human side alone but it is a gift of God involving “a mysteriously and indivisible unity of freedom and grace.” (Marcel, 1960, II, p. 155) Similarly, secondary reflection, the negation of thought toward faith, “seems to be possible only by the intervention of a transcendent power.” (Marcel, 1952, p. 50)

Marcel develops a dialectic of faith, freedom, and love to bring out the relation of faith to human freedom. According to this dialectic, faith must involve a relation of freedom between God and the person of faith. For faith God must be regarded as independent of the act of faith. Faith cannot be merely a subjective affirmation and remain faith nor can it be refused or denied. There must be a relation of freedom between the person of faith and God. But Marcel maintains further that the relation of freedom must be a relation of love. Thus, for faith there must be a divine love, which is another form of speaking grace. It does not mean that grace is somehow required or made necessary by any human act of faith. But it is rather that where there is faith, there is divine grace. If they are real the two cannot be separated.

Marcel believes that when we are confronted with Grace we can either refuse it or open ourselves to it. But even the act of opening oneself to grace is seen as conditioned or made possible by grace. He writes:

“To say that the act of faith is a free act is to put it ambiguously The truth is that it truly does depend on us to make an open place, that is, to rid ourselves of all the prejudices which bar the path to faith, or even to make ourselves available to grace.... But it must certainly be added that this reflection, which thus takes place before grace, implies, without doubt, something in its beginning which is of the same order as grace.” (Marcel, 1960, II, p. 200)

Marcel calls grace as unthinkable. He says that “we can not really think grace, or rather we can think it only as unthinkable.” (Marcel, 1952, p. 57) Through this unthinkableness of grace, Marcel indicates the gap between grace and objective knowledge. He says:

“Grace remains the transcendent and nonobjectifiable postulate of the act of faith.... By the act of faith I posit between God and myself a relation which completely eludes the categories of my thought.” (Marcel, 1952, p. 59)

Marcel refers to the presence of God in the depth of human being. The content of this awareness of absolute presence is an unspecifiable and uncharacterizable mystery. The awareness does not have a certain kind of certainty for it is a certainty that I am rather than a certainty that I have. The certainty of awareness of ultimacy does not guarantee the correctness of ideas or doctrine about God and does not guarantee the correctness of anything thought or said about God, but it does come as something unquestionably real. Marcel writes:

“You feel confined. You dream of escape. But beware of mirages. Do not run or fly away in order to escape; rather dig into the place of confinement which is given to you, there you will find God and everything. God does not float on your horizon, he sleeps in your depths. Vanity runs, love digs. If you flee beyond yourself, your prison will run with you and will close in on you in the wind of your flight; if you plunge into yourself, it will open into paradise.” (Marcel, 1962, p. 28)

Thus, the authentic existence, according to Marcel, can be understood only through the ideas of *grace* and *gift*. The bestower of that gift is the ‘non-identifiable’ as such, which is experienced or apprehended as the ‘absolute thou’. This absolute thou is seen in a light which is hailed as a presence. This is presence, of neither of something nor of someone, but an ‘absolute presence’. Here the distinction between subject and object completely breaks down and is transcended.

The presence of God is like a light within us. Without this light we would be unable to proceed on the road to our true being. Without uncreated light, we would have no being at all. But we always have being, even though we may only be aware of existing. There is always the presence of God in the depth of human being, even though it may be denied, distorted, or turned against. We are always on the road, because a person who is not on the road would no longer be a

person.

Marcel maintains that, there is the presence of God in the depth of every human being. There is an ontological point in every person where the supernatural and the natural, the divine and the human, meet and are one. There is a point of identity between the two realms, a point where we participate in God and He is present to us.

Marcel considers this point of identity as the basis of faith. It is the 'unconditional' that cannot be repudiated without denying something essential to ourselves. God is known in faith not by any kind of awareness but by the fact that faith has to posit the reality of God in order to be realistic. But as Marcel denies the distinction of subject and object it follows that whenever there is genuine faith there is the felt presence of God.

From the point of view of the mystery of being, the awareness of the point of identity between the divine and the human is a 'presentiment' of my authentic being. This is that part of me that we might call spiritual and that is beyond estrangement of the broken world of existence. Marcel says that, "the question that should concern us ... consists in knowing whether I can in some way experience myself as being in a sense other than that in which I grasp myself as existing." Just as the word 'exist' points to an emerging or arising, so being points to a turning inward. Marcel insists that "I can turn myself toward the interior, and this is what happens as soon as I recollect myself. But it seems that this act would be bound up with a presentiment of a reality which would be mine, or perhaps more exactly, which would ground me in as much as I am myself." (Marcel, 1960, II, p. 35)

Thus, Marcel maintains that there is no ultimate difference between

feeling the presence of God and being profoundly aware of being. He affirms that there is a correlation between metaphysics and religious life. There is a “hidden identity of the way which leads the metaphysician to the affirmation of being.” (Marcel, 1965, p. 92) Ontology and religious life are identical because both have their initiation from the same place, and both metaphysics and religious life are grounded in and responding to an ontological intersubjective community in which God is present.

Marcel believes that because of the technological mentality of the modern civilization, the act of faith has become foreign to us. Modern man does not only indulge in proving the existence of God endlessly, but even look upon the presence of other person as a working hypothesis. The others too, like God, are being considered as ‘objects’ or ‘obstacles’ depriving one from the sole domination over one’s own environment. Most of our judgments are in the third person and, consequently, express the reflected image of those who in reality are present to us. With the pure consciousness of my being, my self is identical with a faith which is open to God as well as to the others. Marcel writes “By faith I affirm that God is the father of all men.” (Marcel, 1952, p. 66)

Marcel’s approach to the problem of the existence of other men is somewhat phenomenological, and gives rise to the famous doctrine of **disponibility** or **availability**. He emphasizes two general ways of comporting ourselves towards others that can be used as barometers for intersubjective relationships i.e. ‘disponibility’ and ‘indisponibility’. Marcel himself translated this difficult notion in English as ‘handiness’ and ‘unhandiness’. He writes:

“Literally in English, one would render these as availability and unavailability; but it might sound more natural, if one spoke of handiness and unhandiness, the basic idea being that of having and not having, in a given,

contingency, one's resources to hand or at hand." (Marcel, 1965, p. 201)

Handiness and unhandiness refer to the availability of one's resources – material, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Thus, the term *disponibility* refers to the measure in which I am available to someone. This is the state of having my resources at hand to offer. And this availability or unavailability of resources is a general state or disposition. In this sense, Marcel believes that, a self-centered person is unhandy. He remains incapable of sympathizing with other people, nor even of imagining their situation in the world. He is imprisoned in his private experience. He is unhandy from this point of view.

Marcel affirms that for the intersubjective relationship in which *disponibility* is rooted is the outcome of only existential projection. This is the reason that I can never be *disponible* is rooted in the outcome of only existential projection. This is the reason that I can never be *disponible* to a man who is not with me or who is not *thou* to me. Marcel says that *disponibility* is the basis of every social relationship. But as long as the gulf between 'I' and somebody else is not bridged by intimacy – communion or a kind of co-presence – there is no participation in the common process of transcendence, and so nothing would make us *disponible* to each other.

When I treat the other person as *him*. I treat him, not as a presence, but as absent. However, when I treat the other as a *He* rather than a *Thou*, I become incapable of seeing myself as a *Thou*. Marcel says that in deprecating the other I deprecate myself. On the other hand, the person who is *disponible* or available to others, has an entirely different experience of his place in the world. He acknowledges his interdependence with others people., Relationships of *disponibility* are characterized by presence and communication between

persons quo other, qua freedom – a communication and communion between persons who transcend their separation without merging into a unity, that is, while remaining separate to some degree.

All authentic communication, according to Marcel, is ontological. No two persons can, therefore convey their ‘whole’ to each other when they are indisponible to each other. Marcel says:

“I bind myself to you in order never to abandon you. Even when I could neither touch you nor see you, you would always be with me I would always be with you.” (Marcel, Cited in Sinari, 1966, p. 112)

Marcel believes that it is on the level of the mystery, of the metaproblematical and of secondary reflection that man can discover his authentic existence. And so it is only in a genuine I-Thou relationship, in that encounter or meeting on the plane of intersubjectivity that I can engage in such personal relationships as disponsibility, fidelity and love.

For the integration of any two existing individuals it is essential that they both constitute an interpenetrable sphere, a collective consciousness founded on invocation. Ontologically speaking, invocation, disponsibility, cordially, sympathy and conjugal love are the allied expressions suggesting what Marcel has termed the creative fidelity.

Creative fidelity is a spiritual tie that unites me and thee into an unbreakable cohesion. Marcel says that in fact “... it is a notion which is most difficult to grasp, above all, or to define conceptually, because of its underlying and unfathomable paradox and because it is at the very centre of the realm of the metaproblematical.” (Marcel, 1952, p. 243) The others and myself while living amidst the contingent circumstances, must aspire to live together in a communion of love and amity which foster fidelity. There is nothing impersonal

in this aspiration. The only way to understanding love, according to Marcel, is to love; and the only way of being communicable is to communicate. The principle of Being casts a trance on us, and through the act of faithfulness holds us on authentic existence.

Chapter –VII

**Jean-Paul Sartre :
Creating Meaning in a
Meaningless World**

JEAN - PAUL SARTRE

Creating Meaning in a Meaningless World

He was alone, enveloped in this monstrous silence, free and alone, without assistance and without excuse, condemned to decide without support from any quarter, condemned forever to be free. (Sartre, 1986, pp.242-243)

For Sartre the source of all authenticity is human *freedom*. In the last section of *Being and Nothingness*, in the passage 'Ethical Implication' he proposes freedom in place of God as man's primary value. Similarly in *Existentialism and Humanism*, he states freedom as a moral judgment that men should accept as their ultimate goal. Similar statements have been made by Sartre in his entire philosophical and literary works. He says in an interview that "Everything that I have tried to write or do in my life was meant to stress the importance of freedom." (Cited in Anderson, 1979, p.42) Freedom as an ultimate value in Sartre's works has been emphasized and linked to his idea of authenticity for he uses freedom, commitment and authenticity interchangeably. In his essay *Anti-Semite and Jew* he says that authenticity "consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate". (Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 1948, p. 90) Thus, an authentic individual, according to Sartre, is one who accepts his situation as it truly is; who does not flee from it in *self-delusion*. He accepts the responsibilities and dangers that his situation involves fully conscious of the finality of his decision making for "he is what he makes of himself" (Sartre, 1948, p. 28) in and through his actions within a situation.

Sartre's authenticity does not consist, like Heidegger, in the faithful

revelation of Being but he makes it the task of the *for-itself*, which has brought the 'why' into the world, to supply the answers and the 'wherefore'. For a clear understanding of Sartre's ideas it would perhaps be worthwhile to begin with an explication of Sartre's notion of being.

He takes the analysis of *consciousness* as his point of departure. In keeping with Husserl, he too, believes that 'all consciousness is consciousness of something'. Meaning thereby that consciousness which is intentional in character is always directed towards an object. Thus, consciousness is nothing but an intentional activity; it is not an object in itself or an object for itself. It is nothing. For Sartre, this notion of consciousness, as nothing, leads to a distinction between two very different kinds of being – the being of objects for consciousness (being-in-itself) and the being of consciousness (being-for-itself).

Being for the object of consciousness simply is. Throughout the *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre emphasizes that *being-in-itself* is, and whatever can be said about it is that it simply exists. It can never be anything other than what it is. It is full in itself. It is complete and full of positivity. "In it there is no negativity; this would imply a lack of perfect identity." (Sartre, 1957, p. ixix) It is complete and plentiful being. Sartre explains it thus:

"The in-itself is full of itself, and no more total plenitude can be imagined, no more perfect equivalence of content to container. There is not the slightest emptiness in being, not the tiniest crack through which nothingness might slip in."(Sartre, 1957, p. 74)

Thus, according to Sartre, the being-in-itself is determinate, complete, full of positivity in itself. It is an unconscious being and therefore lacks freedom.

Thus being-in-itself is what it is, something opaque, solid, neither active nor passive, and without relation to itself; it is not created, bears no mark of a god

having brought it into being, but neither does it create itself; it is something which in itself cannot be attributed to or derived from something other than itself. Everything existing in-itself is 'contingent'. It simply is, and therefore, can be neither possible nor impossible.

The in-itself is *de trop*: it cannot be derived from anything, either from another being, or from a possibility, or from a necessary law. Sartre says:

"Uncreated, without reason for being, without any connection with another being, being in itself is *de trop* for eternity." (Sartre, 1957, p. lxvi)

On the other hand, in contrast to the being of the object of consciousness; the being of consciousness cannot be characterized as objects are characterized. It cannot be characterized as given as such, or as having such and such fixed characteristics. To quote Sartre:

"The being of consciousness does not coincide with itself in a full equivalence." (Sartre, 1957, p. 90)

The being-for-itself is indeterminate. It is full of negativity. It is a lack in itself. It is characterized paradoxically as "not being what it is and being what it is not." (Sartre, 1957, p. 93) Therefore, this indeterminacy, negativity and lack of the being-for-itself gives it; its unique character. And this unique character is its freedom. Being-for-itself is free. And this consciousness of freedom enables man to create meaning for himself through the choices he makes.

Sartre declares that *bad faith* is a threat to being human and this is possible because consciousness, which although not the whole man is nevertheless his core, is at the same time in its essence what it is not and not what it is. "It is an immediate permanent threat to every project of the human being." (Sartre, 1957, p. 70) For Sartre bad faith occurs when one is insincere to oneself.

Bad Faith or Inauthenticity

Sartre says that we are the creators of our own essence meaning thereby that we are what we are on account of the choices we freely make and hence become totally responsible for what we are. He affirms that we are our freedom and our 'whatness' is our choice. *Bad faith* or *Mauvaise Foi* arises when we treat the predicative 'is' as to what we are – we are a waiter, a soldier, a coward, a liar, - as if it were the 'is' of identity defining an essence, and abdicate our responsibility as to what we do by virtue of an explanation following from our supposedly fixed essential nature which is imposed upon us. The overarching exemplification of bad faith is thus to see ourselves as an object, as fixed; as a being-in-itself. Thus, according to Sartre, it is bad faith to live as though values and attitudes were derived from the world and not our own selves. According to Sartre this attitude of man is inauthentic which opposes its own freedom. Because for Sartre authenticity consists in free choice while bad faith opposes it and therefore becomes inauthentic. Bad faith is an attitude in which the being-for-itself deliberately wants to become in-itself in order to avoid the anguish of freedom and responsibility. Because "The reality of our freedom is so unbearable that we refuse to face it. Instead of realizing our identities as free conscious subjects we pretend to ourselves that we are mechanistic, determined objects. And refusing to freely make ourselves what we are, we masquerade as fixed essences by the adoption of hypocritical social roles and inert value system." (Priest, 2001, p. 204)

The problem of bad faith is the problem of describing what it is to be a human being (the human condition), and thus demonstrating the various modes of escape from what Sartre, has already described as 'absolute freedom'. For Sartre

the phenomenon of bad faith is clearly present in most or even all human activities, and the problem therefore, becomes a Kantian problem of explaining how such a phenomenon is possible.

Sartre declares that 'bad faith is a lie to oneself.' It should neither be identified with the lie as such nor with falsehood. Bad faith is *self-deception*. It is a lie to oneself. He defends this position on the provision that lying to one self is distinguished from lying in general or falsehood. The essence of lie is that the liar is actually and completely in possession of the truth which he is hiding. One cannot lie about what he is ignorant of. In a simple lie there is always two parties one is deceiver the other whom the deceiver; deceived. But Bad faith entails the unity of a single consciousness. There is no ontological duality between the deceiver and the deceived .The one who lies and the one to whom the lie is told are one and the same consciousness.

Sartre offers us an example of a woman to provide a basic insight into the mechanism of bad faith. In this typical but amusing example when a woman consents to go out with a man for the first time. She understands very well the intentions of her companion towards her. She does not want to read the underlying meaning of phrases addressed to her, like, 'you look very charming', 'I find you so attractive', etc. She decides to take these phrases on their face value as merely respectful or admiring. Since she does not quite know what she wants. She sees only the explicit meaning of his utterances and completely strips them of their sexual undertones. She takes the utterance of her companion as objective and sincere as 'a table is round' or 'the wall is white' since she wishes neither to commit herself to a future relationship nor remove all possibilities of any involvement. In doing so she gives everything the quality of being-in-itself. She is

well aware of the desire she invokes in her companion. “But the desire cruel and naked would humiliate and horrify her.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 97) She does not altogether want to get rid of that desire nor is she satisfied by the mere respect offered to her. The woman is clearly in two minds; she wants not only her freedom to be respected but also the charm and beauty of her body to be appreciated. But then suddenly her companion grasps her hand because he is unwilling to leave things as they are. Grasping of hand is to force a decision, i.e. to change the situation. Now this moment is very crucial for the woman. Because at this moment she is compelled to take a decision. Because leaving her hands in the warm hands of her companion implies a consent to engage herself: which she does not want. And to withdraw her hand means ‘to break the troubled and unstable harmony which makes the hour charming.’ In the conflict of decision making the woman leaves her hand there. She does not notice it, because as it happens, by chance at this moment she becomes not human but all intellect. She draws her companion upto the most lofty regions of the sentimental speculations. She speaks of life - of her life and shows herself in her essential aspect a personality, a consciousness. And during this time the divorce of the body from the soul is accomplished; the hand rests inert between the warm hands of her companion – “neither consenting nor rejecting a thing.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 97)

Sartre says that this woman is in bad faith. Because “She knows that it will be necessary sooner or later for her to make a decision. But she does not want to realize the urgency. She concerns herself only with what is respectful and discreet in the attitude of her companion. She does not apprehend this conduct as an attempt to achieve what we call the first approach.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 55)

Sartre says that the woman interprets whatever her companion says as

devoid of sexual suggestiveness, and even responds to his physical advances by denying its intentional import. He takes her hand and she simply divorces herself from it and ignores the fact that her hand is with him. Sartre says:

“We shall say that this woman is in bad faith... she has disarmed the actions of her companion by reducing them to being only what they are, that is, to existing in the mode of the in-itself.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 56)

The woman is deceiving herself concerning the intentions of her companion, but Sartre does not want to say that she is simply deceiving herself about him. She is deceiving herself about her own desires and intentions as well as about her own sexual nature. She is pretending that her companion's advances do not have anything (sexual) to do with her. Sartre advocates that this woman is in bad faith primarily because she denies the necessity of her own choice in the situation. By treating herself as non-sexual, she has denied the situation in which she must choose to accept or reject her sexuality and her companion's advances.

To describe this incident as *self-deception* leads to the following glib interpretation. The woman lies to herself; she knows that she is being treated as a sexual object but will not allow herself to realize this. She knows the truth, on the one hand, but refuses to disclose it to herself on the other. A lie is, in general, knowing the truth but refusing to disclose it, presenting some other proposition which one knows to be false instead. A lie to oneself, self-deception, is knowing something and hiding it from oneself.

Sartre's solution to the problem of bad faith is a careful phenomenological description of the phenomena commonly called self-deception. And the demonstration that these phenomena can be accounted for by the theory of absolute freedom of *Being and Nothingness* coupled with the observation that man tends to 'flee this freedom', or more accurately, 'flee the anguish of

recognition of freedom' by constructing excuses for himself and denying this freedom. Bad faith is a willful refusal to recognize oneself as both facticity and transcendence, as a man with a past and a future yet to be determined. The paradigm case of bad faith is thus the misinterpretation of choices which one makes for himself as facts which determine one. Bad faith is flight from anguish in the face of freedom, a denial of transcendence and of the attempt to look at oneself as a thing.

Thus, Sartre holds the view that human being is at once a facticity and transcendence both, i.e. given and possible projects remain to be associated with his freedom. And the woman in the given example to her advantage uses this double property of human reality. Though aware of the first approach, i.e. facticity, she uses the second approach i.e. transcendence. "She is aware of the desire she evokes but purifies it of anything humiliating by acknowledging it only as pure transcendence. While attempting to transform facticity into transcendence and vice-versa, she feels that she is escaping all reproaches. But she does so at the price of arresting of gluing down, of thing if lying, her possibilities – of objectifying her transcending freedom." (Sartre, 1957, pp. 55-57) As Sartre points out in *Being and Nothingness*:

"The basic concept which is thus engendered utilizes the double property of the human being, who is at once a facticity and a transcendence. These two aspects of human reality are and ought to be capable of a valid co-ordination. But bad faith does not wish either to co-ordinate them or to surmount them in a synthesis. Bad faith seeks to affirm their identity while preserving their differences. It must affirm facticity as being transcendence and transcendence as being facticity, in such a way that at the instant when a person apprehends to one, he can find himself abruptly faced with the other." (Sartre, 1957, p. 56)

The paradigm of bad faith is fleeing from my own freedom and

possibilities. The characterization of bad faith, however, is not restricted to this paradigm case, and it is one of the weakness of the Sartre's otherwise brilliant analysis of bad faith that he sometimes places inordinate stress on one kind of bad faith. Bad faith is generally characterizes as a 'refusal to recognize what I am' which is genuine and 'authentic existence', namely, a being who is both facticity and transcendence. Thus, bad faith does not solely consist of the denial of one's facticity and overemphasis on his transcendence.

Sartre also accounts his theory of bad faith in his famous essay *Anti-Semite and Jew*. In this essay Sartre describes the anti-semite as a man in bad faith. He says:

"The anti-semite has created the Jew from his need. Prejudice is not uninformed opinion. (Anti-Semitism) is an attitude totally and freely self-chosen, a global attitude which is adopted not only in regard to Jews but in regard to men in general... it is a passion and at the same time a concept of the world,... not of the Jews, of course, but of himself, of his conscience, of his instincts, of his responsibilities, of solitude, of change, of society, and of the world; of everything except the Jews. He is a coward who does not wish to admit his cowardice to himself; a murderer who represses and censures his penchant for murder without being able to restrain it and who nevertheless does not dare to kill except in effigy or in the anonymity of a mob; a malcontent who dares not revolt for fear of the consequences of his rebellion. By adhering to anti-semitism, he is not only adopting an opinion, he is choosing himself as a person. He is choosing the permanence and the impenetrability of the rock, the total irresponsibility of the warrior who obeys his leader...He chooses finally, that good be readymade, not in question, out of reach'.... The Jew is only a pretext; elsewhere it will be the Negro, The yellow race; The Jew's existence simply allows the anti-semite to nip his anxieties in the bud by persuading himself that his place has always been cut out in the world...Anti-Semitism, in a word, is fear of man's fate. The anti-Semite is the man who wants to be pitiless stone, furious torrent, devastating lightening: in short, everything but man."

(Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 1948, pp. 8, 26-27)

For Sartre, *sincerity* too, which seems to be the mark of authentic existence, comes under the heading of bad faith. Therefore, it too is inauthenticity. Sartre mentions that sincerity is a sort of determination to be for oneself and for others to be what one already is. But this is precisely the definition of being-in-itself. Man cannot be what he is in the manner of the being-in-itself. This implies that the concept of sincerity cannot represent the constitutive principle of human reality because human reality cannot be, in Sartre's system of thought, what it is, it must be able to be what it is not.

It therefore, follows that if man is what he is, bad faith is impossible forever and the project of sincerity ceases to be his ideal; it rather becomes his being. But man is not what he is because how can he be what he is, when he exists as consciousness of being. If sincerity is a universal concept, then its definition 'one must be what one is' cannot be the regulating principle for the judgements and concepts through which we express what we are. It is not an ideal of knowing but the ideal of being; it is an absolute equivalence of being-with itself as the prototype of being. In this sense it is necessary that we make ourselves what we are. But what are we then if we have the constant obligation to make ourselves what we are, if our mode of being is having the obligation to be what we are.

Sartre illustrates his point with the example of a *Café-Waiter*. The café-waiter tries to reduce himself to a being-in-itself. He is playing at being a waiter in a café. He is playing his role in order to realize it. Simultaneously, from within, the waiter in the café cannot be immediately a café-waiter in the sense that 'this glass is a glass'. It does not however, follow that he cannot reform the 'reflective Judgements or concepts', regarding his condition. But all his judgments and concepts refer to the 'transcendence – they are the matter of abstract possibilities'.

And it is precisely this person who I have to be (if I am the waiter in question) and who I am not. It is not that he does not wish to be this person but rather there is no common measure between his being and mine. It is a representation for others and for myself which means that I can be only in representation. Sartre says:

“But if I represent myself as him, I am not he; I am separated from him as the object from the subject, separated by nothing, but this morning isolates me from him. I cannot be he, I can only play at being him; that is imagine to myself that I am he. And thereby I effect him with nothingness. In vain do I fulfill the functions of a café-waiter. I can be he only in the neutralized mode, as the actor is Hamlet...what I attempt to realize is a being-in-itself of the café-waiter.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 60)

Sartre, therefore, maintains that the Café-waiter is in bad faith because he has ignored his transcendence in the face of his facticity. The example furnished and analysed by Sartre is highly significant, because it brings out clearly the two roles of human existence i.e. its facticity and transcendence.

Sartre illustrates his point by yet another example; that of a confidential meeting of a homosexual and his friend. The *homosexual*, in this example, suffers from a feeling of guilt that he absolutely denies of being a *pederast*. Since he has not chosen such a life, he declares that ‘he is not really a pederast’ even though he admits to having indulged, on occasion, in homosexual relations; Sartre says that “his case is always different, peculiar; there enters into it something of a game, of chance, of bad luck; the mistakes are all in the past;... Here is assuredly a man in bad faith who borders on the comic since, acknowledging all the facts which are imputed to him, he refuses to draw from them the conclusion which they impose.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 63)

The homosexual in this example is nothing different from the ‘young lady’ or ‘the ‘café-waiter’ of the previous examples. They are all in the bad faith. All

the three i.e. the young lady, the café-waiter and the homosexual, are absolutely right in choosing to think of themselves only in terms of their freedom. Homosexual, in the above example, is right in holding that he is not a homosexual absolutely in the way that, this table is table; implying thereby that the established patterns of conduct cannot define a man's essence. But the homosexual is absolutely wrong in applying this freedom with respect to his past activities. Sartre holds that in so far as he has committed these acts in the past, he is a pederast because he cannot disown the responsibility of what he has done, but he cannot be said to be pederast in any absolute sense, that is with respect to his present and future. What the homosexual is trying to do is to use simultaneously and dishonestly the two meanings of *to be*. He understands 'not-being' in the sense of 'not-being-in-itself'. He lays claim to 'not being a pederast' in the sense in which this table is a table. Therefore, he is too in the bad faith or in the inauthentic existence.

There is another important form of bad faith i.e. treating one self as an other instead of treating one self as oneself. To treat oneself as an other, according to Sartre, is to deny transcendence and turn oneself, not into a thing but nonetheless into pure facticity. Sartre argues that this form of bad faith is most primitive. It is through Being-with-others (Heidegger's *Mitsein*) that we first learn to reflect on ourselves at all, and it is the resultant Being-for-others which forms the basis of all bad faith.

Sartre declares role playing too, as bad faith. Because a man in bad faith distracts himself from the recognition of his freedom. The most common form of his distraction is to be found, according to Sartre, in the notion of "role playing", or as he characterizes it, 'Being what I am not'.

He affirms that one is also in bad faith when he assumes a social role as his role and avoids questioning that role. Thus one pays attention to the details of his responsibilities and distracts himself from freedom to accept or not accept those responsibilities. The most obvious example of such type of bad faith is the petty bureaucrat, who focuses his attention to petty rules and regulations and simply refuses to consider even the intentions and basic principles underlying those petty roles. Attention of one's 'duties' and social role as a form of bad faith is famously illustrated in Sartre's brilliant description of the Café-waiter;

"His movement is quick and studied, a little too precise, a little too rapid, He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes expresses an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally when he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automation while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tightrope walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually re-establishes by a light movement of the arm and hand. All this behaviour seems to us a game. He is trying to link his movements together as if they were mechanisms, the one regulating the other... He is playing, he is amusing with himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it; he is playing at being a waiter in a café... The waiter in the café plays with his condition in order to realize it." (Sartre, 1957, p. 59)

What the waiter attempts to be is a being-in-itself; something which is only a waiter and could not be anything else. Accepting the role hides the possibility that one could be the rich businessman waited on; it is bad faith in that one denies that he could be anything other than a waiter.

Heidegger understands the specific feature of human existence to be a kind of standing out from the world, an *ek-stasis*, *ek-sistence*. Sartre reckons with a three fold ek-stasis, the first being fulfilled with pre-reflective consciousness of things, the second with reflective consciousness, as in knowledge and the third in

man's ek-stasis as an object for another. In this latter case I 'stand out from' myself in so far as I see myself as object for another.

Sartre's ontology is not limited to my consciousness and the objects of which I am conscious; there are also other people, other consciousness. He is not simply claiming that there are other people, but he claims that our relations with other people are based on bitter struggle – not necessary for each others lives but for the protection of our freedom. My relations with others are always a struggle to preserve my freedom, especially to preserve it from the objectifying looks of the others. And in order to preserve my freedom, I attempt to change the other into an object-for-me. Human relations, according to Sartre, are based on the others attempts to reduce me to an object in his eyes. And as an object, I cannot at the same time be viewed as a free subject with whom I can have true contact. Thus, my relations with other people constitute a threat to my freedom, for the other has the ability to make me into an object. I also have the ability to turn him into an object, and thus become an equal threat to him. For Sartre, the encounter with the other is a struggle for recognition, in particular recognition as freedom the realization of which is the simultaneous realization of authenticity. The other attempts to 'reduce me to an object, to define me as a fixed self; I try to do the same to the other. Thus, it leads us into bad faith, which is a departure from an authentic world into a perpetual struggle continuously leading us away from anything we may term as truth.

Part three of *Being and Nothingness*, entitled being-in-others is estimated as one of the most brilliant and intriguing sections. It has three sections. The first devoted to the existence of others, the second to the body and third to the concrete relations with others. And undoubtedly the most important is the third and

conclusive section where Sartre spells out the concrete implications of his theory of *intersubjectivity*.

Sartre's description of the being of the being-for-itself and its relation to the being-in-itself had repercussions that Sartre could explicate only the being of one's consciousness with no bridge established to relate with the consciousness of others. The problem is that he has followed so closely the idealistic conception of self consciousness as of transcendental origin and 'creator' of all being that he constantly faces the danger of transcendental solipsism. In dealing with the problem of solipsism he analyses the existence of the other and the relations between my being and the being of the other. In his analysis of the *Reef of solipsism* Sartre, before presenting his own view, takes into consideration the notion of the 'other' as dealt by Husserl, Hegel and Heidegger.

Sartre observes that, for Husserl, the reference to the other is a necessary condition for the existence of the world. He says that Husserl has defined the other as an 'absence'. Sartre asks the question: "how can one have a full intuition of an absence?" (Sartre, 1957, pp. 234-235) unless I arbitrarily presuppose that the other is identical with me, true knowledge of the other escapes me.

The inadequacy of the Husserlian theory of the other is that phenomenological method operates only through reducing the object via the self's analysis and through intending the object via the self's acts of intending. But since we cannot penetrate beyond the core of the self, the other escapes us. As Sartre puts it "Husserl has reduced being to a series of meanings, the only connection which he has been able to establish between my being and that of the other is a connection of knowledge. Therefore, Husserl cannot escape solipsism any more..." (Sartre, 1957, p. 235)

For Hegel the problem of the other is the problem of the consciousness of self. Sartre quotes Hegel: "The consciousness of the self is real only in so far as it knows its echo (and its reflection) in another. For Hegel, Sartre claims, the existence of my consciousness as consciousness of self depends on the appearance of the other. Self consciousness appears with the exclusion of the other. Such exclusion takes a double form: by the very fact of being myself, I exclude the other; by the very fact of being himself, the other whom I exclude me.... consciousness becomes as object for the other at the same time as the other becomes an object for my consciousness." (Sartre, 1957, p. 238)

Sartre says that "We shall marshal against Hegel a two fold charge of optimism" (Sartre, 1957, p. 240) first of epistemological optimism and second of ontological optimism. Sartre says that "it appears to Hegel that the truth of the consciousness of self can appear that is, that an objective accord can be realized between the consciousness under the name of recognition of me by the other and of the other by me." (Sartre, 1957, p. 240) The ontological optimism in the Hegel's philosophy is even more "For Hegel...truth is truth of the whole." (Sartre, 1957, p. 243) And Hegel believes that truth of all already exists. Sartre says that this optimistic assertion of Hegel permits him the claim that the truth regarding the other is possible to obtain.

The failure of Hegel's optimism is the failure to produce the basis of intersubjective knowledge. Sartre claims that he deals with a mere plurality of consciousness which cannot be properly connected. His optimism is an illusion that such a connection has been established in his arguments concerning the other. "If we are to refute solipsism, then my relation to the other is first and fundamentally a relation of being to being, not of knowledge to knowledge."

(Sartre, 1957, p. 244) Hegel's failure on this particular level, according to Sartre is that... he identifies knowledge and being." (Sartre, 1957, p. 244)

Sartre says that, for Heidegger, the question of the other arises for a person only when the person has achieved authentic existence. And authenticity is achieved, according to Heidegger in the resolute decision the individual makes regarding his possibility of death. At the moment that the individual chooses his authenticity, he is disclosed to himself in authenticity, and the others around him are at the same moment elevated toward the authentic.

Sartre states that Heidegger's description of the other is an 'ontic' and psychologistic description and not a true ontological explanation, since he claims there is no warranty for passing from the idea of being-with (*mit-sien*) to the ontological structure of being-in-the-world. Sartre hold that Heidegger, like Husserl and Hegel, has failed to produce an acceptable theory of the other and that Heidegger leaves the problem unsolved: it leaves the self isolated in the dungeon of solipsism – as 'solitary'.

In his critique of Husserl, Hegel, and Heidegger, Sartre primarily wants to demonstrate the error which these philosophers made in affirming that my fundamental connection with the other is realized through knowledge. Indeed, the other is not purely a phenomenon of our consciousness. But through the consciousness of the other I become truly myself. Thus, Sartre asserts that neither idealism nor realism has been able to give an intelligible account of my relation to another. He says that it is not primarily a relation of knowledge and it is because they have treated it as such that these philosophies have been condemned to failure.

Sartre confers the solution of this problem of solipsism through the

dynamics of *Look*. As always, here too, he begins with cogito. A cogito which is simultaneously both the existential as well as epistemological in character. Sartre commits himself to the position that any consideration of the other must begin with the being of the self. He holds that the rapport with the other will be a relationship of being to being and not one of understanding to understanding, Husserl failed by measuring being through understanding, Hegel failed on account of identifying understanding with being. Sartre, to the contrary, proposes to give an explanation of the relationship between my being to the Being of the other.

The basis of the original relation to the other lies in the very appearance of the other in my world. He appears to me and a shock accompanies the presentation of the other in my world. The appearance among the objects of my universe of an element of disintegration of this universe is what I call the appearance of a man in my universe. The other shocks my world in an original, unique and irreducible manner: he looks at me. At each instance the other looks at me. The basis of the solution to the problem of the other will be the look.

Sartre selects the phenomenon of *shame* to illustrate his theory of the look. He gives an example in *Being and Nothingness* of a man who is standing in a corridor looking through a key hole into a room. In so far as his whole being is engaged in the look he is not aware of himself as a physical presence located on this side of the door. Rather he has already transcended himself. He is already beyond himself in the room in which his gaze is situated. But suddenly he hears the sound of foot steps approaching the corridor in which he is present. The sound effects a transformation of his relation to himself. In so far as the implied presence of the other makes him ashamed of himself, he ceases to be a pure transcendence and becomes a *transcendence transcended*. A transcendence transcended by the

implicit presence of the one who is looking at him looking through the key hole. And he experiences this transcending of his transcendence in shame. (Macann, 1993, pp. 142-43)

Pure shame is the feeling of being an object through not necessarily some particular object. Shame exists when I recognize myself as degraded by and dependent upon the other. Sartre says:

“Shame is the feeling of original fall, not because of the fact that I may have committed this or that particular fault but simply that I have ‘fallen’ into the world, in the midst of things, and that I need the mediation of the other in order to be what I am.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 289)

Through the experience of shame, I seek the overthrow of the other by appropriating him as an object for my subjectivity. But in this appropriation I hope to achieve more than simply the objectification of the other. What I seek is no less than the discovery in the other of an aspect of myself: my objectivity.

Shame reveals to the self the look of the other. The other looks at me and in the look, shocks or hemorrhages my inner unity, my inner world, my subjectivity. The recovery of this inner world of the self is possible by a relation against the other; i.e. by making the other the object of my look and destroying his inner unity. By the look of the other I have been made an object for his subjectivity, and he knows me only as object and never as subject. In the same manner, I know the other as object and never as subject.

Sartre says that I cannot be an object for an object. I must be an object for a subject. But if my being-for-other has revealed the necessity for the other, the question remains: what is the Being of the being-for-others? Sartre claims that the being-for-other is not an ontological structure of the pour-soi. We cannot even think of deriving, as a consequence of a principle, the being-for-other from the

being-for-self, nor, reciprocally, the being-for-self from the being-for-other.

Thus, Sartre illustrates that because of the basic epistemological character of the consciousness, I can never attempt to prove the subjectivity, my proof founders on the reefs of the limits of my knowledge; and if I accept the facticity of the other as object, I fail to penetrate to his core.

But the other is for me not just the one through whom I lose my subjectivity, the one who takes me to be what I am. In so far as I become aware of my being for the other, the other becomes the one through whom I regain my objectness, through whom I acquire a kind of being. Moreover, unlike the quasi-being which I try to make myself to be through self-objectification, the being which I acquire through the other is real being - I really am an in-itself for the other consciousness, and therefore I can be an in-itself for myself too, in so far as I am aware of myself as being for the other. But this being (in-itself) which I acquire through the other will turn out to be an 'unhappy consciousness'. For I can only become something for the other in so far as I cease to be for myself what I really am, namely, a for-itself. (Macann, 1993, pp. 143-44)

The notion of freedom and living an authentic life in the awareness of that freedom, are central to Sartre's existentialism. The notion of an 'authentic' life one lived in awareness of freedom – is increased in proportion as we are not aware of ourselves fixed as objects by others. But the strategy of evading the fixity ensuing from the look of others by in turn objectifying others is in the end self-defeating. For as I regard others as objects, so I come to regard myself as an object like them, which, according to Sartre, is the paradigm of bad faith or inauthenticity.

The passing of responsibility for what we do to something other than

ourselves is, Sartre says, inauthentic or living in bad faith. The abdication of our responsibility for what we are and do Sartre sees as a kind of self-deception; it is as if we are aware that we are responsible for what we are, through what we choose to do, but we often fail to face that uncomfortable truth. Freedom is not something we can avoid, for it is an inseparable part of being human. We cannot divorce ourselves from the situations in which choices are made, but there is always room for a free choice – even if it only consists of dissent and saying ‘no’. Thus, for Sartre, living with consciousness of the truth of my freedom is to live with authenticity.

FREEDOM: (Authenticity)

At the end of *Being and Nothingness* Sartre rejects the notion of God as man’s ultimate value and proposes *freedom* alone as the source of all value. In contrast to the man in bad faith who is considered as inauthentic because he wants to flee from the anguish of freedom and responsibility, Sartre designates the *authentic individual* as one who is in clear awareness of his freedom as the source of all value, accepts his responsibility and chooses freedom as his ultimate value. Thus, Sartre’s distinction of authenticity and inauthenticity is rooted in man’s attitude towards freedom. Recognition of one’s freedom as the source of all values and accepting responsibility arising out of this freedom is authenticity and its denial is inauthenticity. Thus, for Sartre, freedom is the only source through which an individual can make his life genuine or authentic.

Freedom is the central concept in the existentialist literature. The entire philosophy of existentialist thought revolves around this central concept. Kierkegaard insisted that human being, subjectivity and freedom were equivalent, similarly Heidegger interprets Dasein as freedom. And Sartre makes the concept

of freedom the defining 'structure' of the for-itself or human consciousness. He says:

“What is at the very heart and centre of existentialism is the absolute character of the free commitment, by which every man realizes himself.....” (Sartre, 1948, p. 47)

He further says that 'only freedom can account for man in his totality'.

Maurice Natanson in his book named *A Critique of J.P. Sartre's Ontology*, has summarized Sartre's concept of freedom in the following lines:

“Freedom is the condition of the Pour-Soi, and since the Pour-Soi exists as “lack”, its freedom is the expression of its nothingness. The pour-soi is what it is not and is not what it is. This instability defines its' freedom. Again, since this is the condition of the pour-soi, man is condemned to this freedom. Man is condemned to be free because man is freedom.” (Natanson, 1973, p. 75)

Sartre's concept of freedom is unique, like all other concepts, his concept of freedom too, is grounded in its distinction between being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Sartre affirms that being-in-itself has no possibility of extension or detaching itself from what it is; being-for-itself or consciousness, having an absolute possibility of nihilation, is in a continuous search of itself which it never attains. The search, through negation of itself, at each and every breath of its existence, is nothing but a continuous activity of consciousness. This activity, this necessity of choosing at every instant a perspective for viewing the world constitutes freedom.

Freedom is, therefore, a condition of pour-soi. It however constitutes nothing other than the negation of itself by for-itself. It is through this freedom that man is not what he is and is what he is not. Only the awareness of freedom forces man to surpass towards an exploration of his possibilities. He says:

“To say that the for-itself has to be what it is, to say that it is what it is not while not being what it is, to say that in its existence precedes essence... all this is to say one and the same thing: to be aware that man is free.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 439)

What Sartre wants to establish is that the very existence of man implies his freedom. Freedom is not something which is given to him or that it has an accidental character which is assigned to him. But he is freedom. “Man is free, man is freedom” (Sartre, 1948, p. 34) both are synonymous. He lives it from birth till death. Freedom, therefore, become inevitable to man. It is ‘indefinable’ and ‘unnamable’. For-itself is always in the process of ‘making’, hence it refuses to be confined to any definition. That is why Sartre identifies consciousness with freedom. But freedom is not being but the being of man’ that receives nothing from outside or from inside.

“He was free, free from everything, free to act like an animal or like a machine, free for accepting, free for refusing, free for shuffling... He could do what he wanted to do, no body had right to advise him. There would be neither right nor wrong unless he invented them. He was alone in a monstrous silence, free and alone, without assistance and without excuse, condemned to decide without any possible recourse, condemned for ever to be free.” (Sartre, 1986, pp.242-243)

Thus, for Sartre living with the consciousness of the truth of my freedom is authenticity, and to take refuge in the external circumstances and denial of freedom is inauthenticity.

Sartre proposes that man is absolutely free. But the absolute freedom is not the exaggerated popular claim that ‘a man can do anything he wants to do’, but rather that man is always free within his situation to confer significance upon that situation. Absolute freedom is thus, according to Sartre, the freedom of intention. Freedom is limited by one’s situation, and freedom is absolute only within these

limitations: As Merleau-Ponty says:

“Our freedom does not destroy our situation, but gears, itself to it.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 442)

The choice we make within the *situation* depends on how we see that situation, how we interpret it, what significance we place on it. The significance we impose on our situation would be the determinant of our choice within our situation. The significance we impose and the choices we make are inseparable.

It is our ultimate choice of projects or ends which determines our view of the situation. There is no ‘brute existent’ which presents itself to us for interpretation and subsequently as a basis for choice. Sartre says:

“[The] Situation.... Is revealed to this freedom only as already illuminated by the end which freedom chooses.”
(Sartre, 1957, p. 596)

Our situation is an interpreted text with goals and demands for action imposed on it by us. This interpreted situation is found by us as a complex of facticity and imposed possibilities. It makes no sense to say we are in an ‘unfortunate’ situation apart from any projects of our own which make this situation unfortunate for us, and it makes less sense to have projects in isolation from the situation in which these projects can be realized.

Thus, Sartre asserts that man has absolute freedom. But the absolute freedom does not mean that we can act wildly or capriciously. These acts are only one of the choices which one can make. What is important is that whatever choice we make is accepted as our choice; we must take responsibility for it and its consequences. It is in this way an individual’s life is said to be authentic according to Sartre.

Absolute freedom is the freedom of choice, freedom of intention, or freedom of significance and not freedom of success in action.

“To be free does not mean to obtain what one has wished but rather ‘by oneself to determine oneself to wish (in the broad sense of choosing). In other words, success is not important to freedom.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 591)

There is no denial that external circumstances may thwart action or cause actions to formulate, but Sartre does maintain that all such external circumstances are such only in view of the goals we seek to achieve.

“Human-reality everywhere encounters resistance and obstacles which it has not created, but these resistances and obstacles have meaning only in and through the free choice which human reality is.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 599)

Absolute freedom thus refers us to choice; trying, and adopting a conduct. My freedom is my awareness that nothing can compel me to adopt that (particular) conduct. One choice of conduct which is almost always open to us, of course, is the choice of obliterating our situation by killing ourselves. Even such ‘desperate’ conduct is always a matter of choice and a matter of the projects we choose for ourselves:

“If nothing compels me to save my life, nothing prevents me from precipitating myself into the abyss. The decisive conduct will emanate from a self which I am not yet.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 39)

Sartre asserts that it is in the acts of nihilations, specially acts of self-nihilation in which human freedom is born. It is because consciousness – human freedom – is nothing that he is ‘outside’ of the causal order of the world. Man is not an object in the world. But he moulds the world or interpret it in his own way through the freely made choices.

Sartre bases his nihilism on the rejection of the belief in God, just as Nietzsche does in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Like Nietzsche, Sartre sees the incredible consequences of atheism, and in *Existentialism and Humanism*, he reinterprets the concept of *abandonment*.

“(by abandonment). We only mean to say that God does not exist, and that it is necessary to draw the consequences of his absence right to the end... Dostoyevsky once wrote, “if God did not exist, everything would be permitted”; and that for existentialism, is the starting point.” (Sartre, 1948, pp. 32-33)

It is in the basis of this absence of transcendent meaning or value that existentialism becomes a form of nihilism, but this nihilism is to be replaced by a new source of values, for the existentialists, this new source is human freedom. The ethics based on human freedom is an ethics of commitment and not an ethics of whim or caprice;

“Even if my choice is determined by no a priori value whatever, it can have nothing to do with caprice.” (Sartre, 1948, p. 48)

“Life has a meaning if we really wish to give it one First of all we must act, through ourselves into some enterprise. Then, if later we reflect on it, the die is already cast we are committed.” (Sartre, 1965, p.148)

Thus, for Sartre authenticity means to assume ones *responsibility* and *engage in actions*. “By February 1940 Simone de Beauvoir felt compelled to note in her diary an important change of which she and Sartre had come to feel that they could no longer remain aloof from political involvement. The concept of authenticity at which he had arrived demanded that he assume his situation in the world, and he could do so only by transcending it and engaging in action. Simone de Beauvoir found herself in full agreement, and the deliberations of the two friends were followed by Sartre’s engagement in political activities. Though

the very concept of existential authenticity prevented him from adhering to any rigid party-line, it led him directly towards his view of literature as 'engage'." (Cited in Kern, 1963, p. 12)

Thus, the authenticity at the basis of Sartre's existentialism is essentially the freedom of choice, freedom of intention, the freedom to interpret the world and assign values to it of one's own choosing.

The freedom of which Sartre has been concerned with is the freedom of pre-reflective consciousness. Consciousness is freedom even before it has been made aware of its freedom. It is in anguish that man becomes conscious of his freedom.

"It is in anguish that man becomes the consciousness of his freedom, or if you prefer, anguish is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being; it is in anguish that freedom is, in its being, in question for itself." (Sartre, 1957, p. 35)

"It is important to emphasize that the experience of anguish depends upon freedom... anguish has not appeared to us as a proof of human freedom; the latter was given to us as the necessary condition for the question." (Sartre, 1957, p. 40)

In other words, we must presuppose freedom in order to describe the feeling of *anguish*. Sartre says:

"We wished only to show that there is a special consciousness of freedom, and we wished to show that this consciousness is anguish." (Sartre, 1957, pp. 40-41)

Sartre credits the centrality of this concept of anguish to Kierkegaard, who precedes him in "characterizing it as anguish in the face of freedom." He also notes that Heidegger's concept of 'anguish' appears very different as the 'apprehension of nothingness'. Because Sartre has argued that freedom and

nothingness are equivalent, he concludes that –

“These two descriptions of anguish do not appear to us contradictory; on the contrary the one implied the other.”
(Sartre, 1957, p. 35)

Sartre distinguishes anguish from ordinary fear by noting that fear is fear of particular objects while anguish is, according to Kierkegaard, a nameless *dread*, and according to Sartre, anguish is the fear of being oneself.

“Anguish is anguish before myself. Vertigo is anguish to the extent that I am afraid not of falling over the precipice but of throwing myself over. A situation provokes fear if there is a possibility of my life being changed from without: my being provokes anguish to the extent that I distrust myself and my own reactions in that situation.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 35)

Sartre says that anguish occurs as we recognize our own responsibility – for what we do and what we are. Anguish also occurs, however, at our own responsibility for our values and projects, and for the absence of such values as absolutes;

“There is ethical anguish when I consider myself in my original relation to values....It is the anguish before values which is the recognition of the ideality of values.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 46)

Sartre affirms that because anguish arises with (or is) the recognition of one’s freedom, and because freedom is consciousness and consciousness always must have the ability to know itself, there can be no escape from the possibility of anguish. For Sartre, as for Kierkegaard and Heidegger, anguish is an essential characteristic of man. This is not to say that it is a constant experience. On the contrary, Sartre maintains that it is rare, but nearly all the existential philosophers agree that anguish is not simply one more human emotion, but entwined in the definitive structure of human being. As Tillich says in *Courage*

To Be:

“The anxiety which is despair is not always present. But the rare occasions on which it is present determine the interpretation of existence as a whole.” (Tillich, 1952, p.51)

For Heidegger, it is confrontation with the possibility of death which ensures the manifestation of angst even in the most rigidly inauthentic people. For Sartre on the other hand, death plays little role in the recognition of freedom and the experience of anguish. Rather this recognition is forced upon us in any number of choice situations, situations in which our everyday routines will not suffice but which require a reconsideration of our entire perspective on our world.

The discomfort of anguish drives man to attempt to ‘flee from anguish’, and it is in this flight that man searches for excuses for himself, interpretations of his situation which limit his freedom and responsibility. It is in this search for excuses that bad faith is born which according to Sartre is inauthenticity. Because the possibility of anguish is always with us, the tendency to bad faith is always with us as well. The attempted escape from anguish takes on the character of the attempt to see ourselves as things to see ourselves not as ourselves but as an other would see us;

“Thus we flee from anguish by attempting to apprehend ourselves from without as an other or as a thing.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 52)

“The peculiar character of human reality is that it is without excuse.” (Sartre, 1957, p. 679)

Thus, in his notion of authenticity Sartre wants to demonstrate that no rule or criterion or any ideal personality (may be God) has so far been discovered which could tell us what is ultimately most dear to man. He says that

we can not decide an issue by merely obeying our inclinations and feelings, because we can neither measure nor verify them. It is ultimately, the choice of our inner being that can decide the issue. The moment we choose, we become responsible for our act, because it is our being that chooses to become what it has not been till now. If we choose what our most inner being prompts us to do, we realize authenticity, if we choose in bad faith, we fall in the trap of inauthenticity.

Chapter –VIII

**Martin Heidegger :
Awakening From Lostness in
the They**

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

Awakening From Lostness in the They

...Dasein is authentically itself only to the extent that , as concerned Being-alongside and solicitous Being-with, it projects itself upon its ownmost potentiality-for-Being rather than upon the possibility of the they-self.(Heidegger, 1973, p. 308)

Martin Heidegger together with Jean-Paul Sartre left an indelible mark in the twentieth century philosophy. Sartre acknowledges the wisdom of Heidegger in stating that “philosophy in the twentieth century without Heidegger was unthinkable and, for any philosopher writing after Being and Time, impossible”. (Stassen, 2003, p. IX) Heidegger has exerted an enormous influence on contemporary thinking, reaching beyond the limits of philosophy proper to include such diverse fields as psychology, theology, linguistics and modern theories of the text – most notably the hermeneutic theory of Gadamer and Ricoeur and the deconstructive theory of Derrida.

Heidegger’s philosophy has proved both contentious and controversial. He has been dismissed by some as a ‘mystificatory wizard of wordplay’ and placed in great esteem by others as the most original thinker of the century. Hannah Arendt described him as the ‘secret king of thought’ and the George Steiner as ‘the great master of astonishment’. Either way, however, Heidegger is acknowledged by all, followers and adversaries, as a pivotal figure in the history of philosophy. Following Husserl’s lead, Heidegger recalled modern philosophy to the basics, alerting it to the dangers of an era which had lost the power to question deeply, and thus pointing towards the possibility of a new beginning.

Heidegger soon discovered his philosophical vocation on reading Brentano's thesis on Aristotle's inquiry into the multiple meanings of Being. In a short study entitled '*My Way to Phenomenology*' Heidegger declares:

"Ever since 1907 Brentano's dissertation, 'on the manifold meaning of Being, according to Aristotle' had been the first help and guide of my first awkward attempts to penetrate into philosophy. The following question concerned me in a quite vague manner: if being is predicted in manifold meanings, then what is its leading fundamental meaning: what does Being mean?" (Stassen, 2003, p.70)

Thus, for Heidegger, the chief concern of philosophy is to clarify the meaning of Being. He wants to re-open this age old question because, as Walter Biemel observes, "he challenges the tradition, and he calls upon us to think this tradition through". (Biemel, 1977, p. 29) Therefore, he initiated his enquiry by tracing the entire history of western philosophy and saw that neither Greek nor modern and not even his teacher Husserl addressed the age old question coherently. So, in working out the question of Being Heidegger re-interpreted the history of ontology. He gave phenomenology an 'existentialist' orientation which gained it international acclaim and attracted such talented and original young minds as Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Hannah Arendt, Marcuse and many others.

Heidegger revised Husserl's phenomenological method so that it might properly respond to the question of Being. He re-opened the brackets to create room for existence once again. Existence was now to be understood neither as mere subjectivity nor mere objectivity, but as a fundamental openness to the Being of beings.

Husserlian phenomenology had operated largely at the level of epistemology, that is, of an inquiry into the origin of knowledge as it is

constituted by our intentional experience. This had required, Husserl believed, a suspension of the ontological question of Being in order to focus on the workings of consciousness. Heidegger goes a step beyond his master; he shifts the emphasis from the meaning of consciousness to the meaning of Being. He accepts nonetheless the overriding conviction of phenomenology that an analysis of the essential structures of meaning necessitates a movement beyond the subject-object dualism in order to lead us back to our originary experience of the world, that is, to 'the things themselves'. But where Husserl identified this originary experience as a consciousness-of-the-world, Heidegger interprets it as a being-in-the-world. Thus Heidegger graduates phenomenology from the epistemological question – what does it mean to know? – to the ontological – what does it mean to be?

Heidegger champions phenomenology as a means of recovering and restating the fundamental question of Being: why is there something rather than nothing? This question goes beyond the certainties of dogmatic speculation or science; it is not concerned with determining what things are so that they may be classified, objectified or controlled. It inquires instead into the ultimate why of being, restoring a sense of wonder that things should be at all rather than not be. While recognizing that this ontological question has become irrelevant for our contemporary culture and no longer commands our attention, Heidegger proclaims the possibility, indeed the necessity, of reviving this question by 'deconstructing' western metaphysics and thereby 'retrieving' the original existential experience of Being similar to the metaphysical questioning when it first arose.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger employs phenomenology to redirect our attention away from traditional metaphysics to the 'fundamental ontology' which originally founds it. The ontological question reactivated by a concrete description of man's being there (Dasein) in the temporal world. *Being and Time* opens with the question 'what does it mean to be?' And it proceeds on the assumption that since man is the only being capable of asking this question, our inquiry into Being as such must first engage in a phenomenological analysis of human being as it concretely exists in the everyday world.

Thus, Heidegger states that Being can be understood only in terms of beings. Because Being reveals itself only through being. He says that in order to work out the question of Being the right entity must be picked up. "To formulate and to work out the question of Being adequately, we have first of all to make the questioning entity (Dasein) transparent in its Being". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 27) And Heidegger says that "this entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiry as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term 'Dasein'". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 27)

Dasein is the right entity which provides the access to the question about the meaning of Being because according to Heidegger, it has some priority over other entities. He states threefold priority of Dasein over other entities. These three fold priorities are: ontological, ontical and ontico-ontological, an extremely lucid discussion of which has been made by Venus George in his book *The Experience of Being as Goal of Human Existence*.

Ontological priority : Dasein has an ontological priority because he is able to understand Being. Dasein (The 'Da' of 'Sein') points to the fact of how the comprehension of Being is fundamentally rooted in Dasein's Being. And this

primordial comprehension of Being constitutes Dasein's ontological structure. That is why Heidegger remarks: "understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 32) This quality of Dasein's comprehension of Being is that which makes Dasein ontically distinct from all other entities, even though Dasein, like any other entity, is an entity in the world. Heidegger says that "Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it [he] is ontological". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 32)

Ontic priority : Dasein has an ontic priority, in the sense that he is existence, i.e., he is ecstatic, stands out from and transcends other beings, besides his openness to Being. It has an ontic priority "because its essence lies rather in the fact that in each case it has its Being to be, and has it as its own". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 32) The expression refers to the two special characteristics of Dasein that is 'existence' and 'mineness'.

Existence : According to Heidegger "the essence of Dasein lies in its [his] existence". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 67) Dasein, as existence, is ek-static, which literally means: standing beyond the static entities of this world. For Heidegger all other things are but they do not exist. He says "Man (Dasein) alone exists. The rock is, but it does not exist. The tree is, but it does not exist. The horse is, but it does not exist. The angel is, but it does not exist. God is, but he does not exist". (Heidegger, 1959, p. 16) But it does not mean that Heidegger deny the reality of other entities like tree, rock, horse etc. but only he points to the unique type of being which Dasein, as existence is. Dasein, as existence, "is set apart in the realms of beings as the only existing being which can undertake an enquiry into Being in terms of his peculiar existence". Thus, according to Heidegger, Dasein is not a mere thing, but is 'to be' or existence. He is not something static,

but a reality that is to be achieved. To exist is to be on the way. Dasein is always stretched forward towards his still-to-be-realized being. It is an existence which is “already-begun-still-to-be-achieved”. (Venus, 2000, p. 71) So, an existence, Dasein is a being which stands out above other entities present-at-hand and moves towards actualization, its possibilities, thereby ever remaining on the way.

Mineness: Dasein is always someone’s own existence. And it is “that entity which in its [his] being has this very being as an issue...” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 68) Therefore, unlike other entities, human existence cannot be a matter of indifference and he can never be substituted for another. So Dasein “... is in each case mine”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 68) Thus, according to Heidegger, the essence of Dasein lies in the fact “that in each case it [he] has its [his] being to be and has it as its [his] own”. (Heidegger, 1973, pp. 32-32)

Heidegger asserts that Dasein’s mineness is to be seen in relation to its ‘existence’. As Heidegger states that Dasein is primarily existence or having-to-be, it has constantly to choose from the possible ways for it to be. Dasein is never a finished product, without having to choose from its possibilities. He points out “that entity which in its Being has this very Being as an issue, comports itself towards its Being as its ownmost possibility”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 68) And when Dasein chooses itself as its ownmost possibility, it is said to be ‘authentic’, it can have lost itself and been ‘inauthentic’. As Heidegger says “As modes of Being, authenticity and inauthenticity... are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 68) which means, he says “that Being which is an issue for this entity (Dasein) in its very being, is in each case mine”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 67) Thus,

combining both 'existence' and 'mineness', we can say that Dasein is in each case mine-to-be in one way or another.

Ontico-ontological priority: Ontico-ontological priority according to Heidegger is that, Dasein by his understanding of Being, understands his own being. And not only his own being but that of other Daseins and that of entities. Heidegger says that "in such understanding Dasein provides the ontico-ontological conditions for the possibility of any other ontologies". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 34) Thus, Dasein is the worldly human being, which provides in himself an opening for Being to be revealed. Human existence is the questioner of Being and, in posing the question about Being, he creates an opening that transcendently grounds all other realms of enquiry.

Thus, Fundamental ontology, as visualized in *Being and Time*, stood to be Heidegger's philosophical enterprise. His sole aim has been to work out the question about the meaning of Being in general. As he points out "the analytic of Dasein ... is to prepare the way for the problematic of fundamental ontology – the question of the meaning of Being in general". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 227) But it does not mean that there are two separate stages: the study of man and the study of Being. It is not even the case that one begins with man and ends with Being, nor vice versa. We can rather say that a study of man is itself a study of Being; and to this, from Heidegger's later perspective we can add that a study of Being is itself a study of man. To quote Heidegger:

"Every philosophical – that is, thoughtful – doctrine of man's essential nature is in itself alone a doctrine of the Being of being [entities]. Every doctrine of Being is in itself alone a doctrine of man's essential nature" (Heidegger, 1968, p. 79)

Dasein as Being-in-the-world: The preliminary Analysis: Division I of his magnum opus, *Being and Time*, presents a "preparatory fundamental analysis of

Dasein”, and interprets Dasein’s Being as “Being-in-the-word”. Being-in-the-world is the fundamental way through which, Dasein primarily shows itself. It is a unitary phenomena, a primary datum’ which ‘must be seen as a whole’. We can look at this unitary phenomena in three ways. We can look at the side of ‘world’, that is, the idea of ‘worldhood’; or at the side of the ‘who’ of Dasein; or at the relationship between the two – the ‘Being-in’.

“Heidegger...transposes Husserl’s intentionality of consciousness on to the plane of ‘Being’. For Husserl, the act of consciousness is a unitary phenomenon out of which we can discriminate the subject (ego), the intentional object (noema), or the mode by which the subject grasps the object (noesis). Heidegger rejects the terminology of ‘consciousness’, ‘subject’ and ‘object’ on the grounds that it confines itself to the psychical by its ontological presuppositions, and so can never see the ‘world’ as anything more than a projection of the individual consciousness. Instead Heidegger’s ontology starts with the understanding I have in everyday life, namely that ‘I’ am in the world, and on that basis alone am I able to ask about the nature of the world (for me), about myself, and about the relationship between myself and the world”. (Waterhouse, 1981, p. 68)

Because Being-in-the-world is a unitary phenomenon, the first existential, the primary structure of Dasein, is its ‘Being-in’ – that is its relatedness to world. Although ‘Being-in-the-world’ is a unitary phenomenon, in the phenomenological language it consists of two complementary aspects: noetic (Being-in) and noematic (the world) aspects. Through the special meaning of ‘in’, that centers the phrase ‘Being-in-the world’, Heidegger makes it clear that Dasein’s relation to the world is ontological, rather than epistemological. He does not use the very word ‘in’ in the meaning of ‘insideness’ of an entity with respect to another, or like an object in the box. But he takes it as the meaning of ‘to be familiar with’, ‘to be accustomed to’, ‘to dwell’, etc. The relation between

Dasein and world is not one of the subject and object or one of knowing; but it is an existential relation of dealing with things and being with persons.

In order to arrive at the Being of Dasein it is necessary to give an exposition of noematic and noetic aspects that is the world and Being-in.

The World: Noematic aspect: Heidegger considers 'world' neither cosmologically as an objective entity, nor epistemologically as the object of knowledge, but ontologically as the horizon of Dasein's existence as Being-in-the-world. Since world is to be seen in relation to Dasein, he distinguishes it between the environmental and the communal world.

The Environmental World (Unwelt)

The 'Environmental world', Heidegger takes it as the complex which is opposed to Dasein, but 'wherein' factual Dasein lives. In this sense, the term 'world' has a pre-ontological existential significance. Here, 'world' stands for the 'we-world' (Wir-welt) with others and one's own closest world of environment (umwelt). Dasein's ordinary relation to the entities within the world can be either one of theoretical cognition or one of practical dealings. For Heidegger the practical or existential dealings are more basic than theoretical observation. In practical dealings the entities show themselves as ready-to-hand (zuhanden) and in theoretical observation as present-at-hand (vorhanden). An entity shows itself as ready-to-hand in respect to its in-order-to, and to some Dasein for whose sake it is what it is. Hence only in relation to some Dasein that an entity can show itself as such a thing. Heidegger asserts that an environmental entity (equipment) does not stand by itself, but in the network of referential relationships – the maker, the user, the purpose, the whereof etc. Thus, for Heidegger, Dasein is the final center towards which all involvements are

directed. Since all such equipmental involvements find their destination in Dasein, it would mean that the worldhood of the world belongs to the being of Dasein himself. To say it in the words of Heidegger :

“but the totality of the involvements itself goes back ultimately to a ‘toward which’ in which there is not further involvement: this ‘toward-which’ is not an entity with the kind of being that belongs to what is ready to hand within a world; it is rather an entity whose being is defined as being-in-the-world [Dasein], and to whose state of being the worldhood itself belongs”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 116)

Then, for Heidegger, world is a non-ontic, non-thematic, pre-disclosed ‘there’ wherein there being (Dasein) encounters the purposeful beings with which it is preoccupied in its everyday commerce with the world-about.

The Communal World (Mitwelt)

In Dasein’s existential Being-in-the-world it meets not only with environmental equipments of concerned dealings but also a communal world of other Daseins. Heidegger says that Dasein is essentially Being-with (Mitsein). He asserts that Dasein is Being-with even in his loneliness. To quote Heidegger: “The other can be missing, only *in* and *for* a being-with”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 157) Heidegger’s understanding of Being-with is more fundamental than the theory of ‘intersubjectivity’, according to which an ‘I’ necessarily involves ‘than’. For Heidegger to be Dasein means to-be-with, which points to the ‘relation’ rather than the ‘related’, namely, the subjects. As Being-with Dasein is essentially for the sake of others. Dasein-with characterizes the Dasein of others to the extent that it is freed for some Being-with. Thus, Dasein is related to the environmental as well as communal entities (persons). Its relation to the environmental world is guided by ‘practical concern’ (Besorgen) and to the communal world, by ‘personal concern’ or solicitude (Fursorge).

Being-in (Disclosedness): The noetic aspect

The 'Da' of Dasein speaks for its disclosedness. Heidegger states that Dasein is essentially disclosive in the world. As he puts it "in the expression 'there' we have in view... [its] essential disclosedness. By reason of this disclosedness, this entity (Dasein) together with the Being-there of the world, is 'there' for itself". There are three basic ways in which Dasein discloses itself.

State-of-mind : Dasein in its Thrownness

For Heidegger, the state-of-mind is an existential of Dasein, which is prior to all psychological moods. It belongs to Dasein's existential structure. The existential structure of Dasein's state-of-mind is revealed through its ontic moods. Thus, according to Heidegger, "Mood is the lived expression of the state-of-being". (Heidegger, 1973, pp. 172-173) Dasein as state-of-mind, is never free of moods and is attuned to the world in one way or other. With the help of the moods Dasein discovers that he is in a particular way.

State-of-mind discloses the 'being-in' of Dasein, with its ontic expression – the moods in three ways: (i) in Dasein's being delivered over to his moods, (ii) in concerned dealing with entities and (iii) in his being submissive to the world.

Dasein always finds himself as Being-in-the-world, the world which is not chosen by him but it is always given to him. Dasein does not start his existence, but finds himself as already existing, whether it be in a given situation or from his origins. His existence has already started without his ever knowing or choosing. It is Dasein's non-theoretical awareness of himself as being revealed in his moods, as an essent that is delivered and according to Heidegger which is 'naked fact', Heidegger calls 'thrownness'. Therefore, Heidegger

asserts that Dasein is 'thrown'. Its thrownness must be conceived as the "facticity of its [his] being delivered over." (Heidegger, 1973, p. 174)

In Dasein's thrown existence not only his own existence is revealed, but also the existence of other Dasein's and the world with all its entities are disclosed. It would mean that in the state-of-mind, Dasein's 'being-in-the world' is disclosed, by which Dasein shows not only that he is, i.e., a thrown Dasein among other entities, but also 'that has to be'. Thus, in the state-of-mind, Dasein finds himself as 'way to be', which is the basic condition for the possibility of discovering the world, with its entities, by moving towards them dynamically.

Through Dasein's openness to the world, Dasein discloses himself as thrown to the submissiveness to the world. Since he is open to the world, Dasein can be affected, impressed and threatened in his 'Da' by entities and other Daseins. Thus, the world outside, by bringing about various moods in Dasein and changing his attitudes towards existential situations, affects Dasein, and thereby makes him submissive. Heidegger says:

"The fact that this sort of thing [entity present-at-hand] 'matters' to it [Dasein] is grounded in one's state-of-being; and as a state-of-being it [he] has already disclosed the world as something by which it [he] can be threatened for instance. Only something which is in the state-of-being of fearing (or fearlessness) can discover that what is environmentally ready-to-hand is threatening. Dasein's openness to the world is constituted existentially by attunement of a state-of-being". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 176)

Understanding: Dasein in its projection

For Heidegger understanding is the mode in which Dasein can overtake his thrown existence of the state-of-being. It implies the ability to stand Dasein's thrownness, in the sense that it can be actively developed. Understanding is not a property of Dasein, but is rooted in Dasein's 'ability to be'; it is a basic mode of

Dasein's being. "Dasein" says Heidegger, "is in every case what it can be and in the way in which it is its possibility". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 183) Understanding is not merely a theoretical grasp of Dasein's possibilities but a capacity to achieve these possibilities. Heidegger says "understanding is the existent being of Dasein's own potentiality for being; and it is so in such a way that this being discloses in itself (himself) what its (his) being is capable of." (Heidegger, 1973, p. 184)

Heidegger's account of authenticity and inauthenticity is largely based on a fundamental crisis. This crisis is, the crisis of the forgetfulness of the question of Being. He equates the forgetfulness with 'inauthenticity' while on the other hand, the overcoming and recollection of this forgetfulness is 'authenticity'. In the other words, the crisis is connected to the inauthenticity of forgetfulness and the overcoming of the crisis to the authenticity of recollection. But one cannot simply assert that, on the one hand, authenticity is somehow a life without crisis, a life of no forgetfulness, a life of pure self-possession, and that, on the other hand, inauthenticity is a life of crisis, separation and distance of the self from the true self. From the very outset of *Being and Time*, Heidegger makes it clear that authenticity and inauthenticity are not descriptions of moral states. Nor does the inauthenticity of *Dasein* signify a 'lesser' or a 'lower' degree of Being. Both authenticity and inauthenticity are possible ways for Dasein to be in the world. Dasein as to-be-in-the-world, is inclined to be content with things, lose itself among the things of the world, forget itself as that unique being which has a special openness to Being. As Dasein is a being of fallenness, it will never fully escape from this tendency. At certain moments however, Dasein obtains a sense of the uniqueness of its own being, of the finite openness to Being that Dasein is.

It is this self comprehension which marks the overcoming of the crisis of forgetfulness.

The understanding of the tradition as both triumph and defeat is not merely an accidental two-sidedness which could just as well have been a one-sidedness. Rather, this two-sidedness accounts for the way the tradition must be in order to be a tradition. If, there were only loss and forgetfulness of Being, there would indeed be no tradition of questioning about Being, for then nothing at all, including both the question and the tradition, could be. But at the same time, if there were no forgetfulness of Being, there would also be no tradition. Thus, the forgetfulness is constitutive for gaining a sense of self. It is essential for being a self.

In personal life, forgetfulness can be said to open a space for the possibility of personal identity. It creates a 'gap' in the person. But it is this 'gap' which allows the possible sense of continuity from which arises the sense of being a self. In the tradition of reflection on Being, there is also what Heidegger calls a forgetfulness, but this forgetfulness can be seen as playing a 'creative' role similar to its function in personal life. Heidegger calls this forgetfulness a part of the "richness of the tradition of metaphysics". (Heidegger, 1977, BW, p. 133) This forgetting consists primarily of an overlooking of the difference between beings and Being, a forgetting that the Being of beings is not itself a being. It is a forgetting of what Heidegger calls the *ontological difference*.

For both Husserl and Heidegger, the crisis is not something new which has suddenly come upon us. But this crisis has a history. For Husserl, the key player in this history has been modern science with its variant forms of

positivism, naturalism, and objectivism which ultimately can be seen as impoverished versions of true, scientific rationality. Heidegger too is critical of the out sided standpoints of science, but suggests that in order to understand this one sidedness, one must come to terms with the history of ontology, with the history of the questioning of Being. These differing histories can be said to lead to different crises. For Husserl, the crisis is ultimately one of science, of certainty, of knowing, of the moral obligation to know what one does and why one does what one does. For Heidegger, the crisis is not ethico-epistemological, but ontological, having to do with a forgetfulness of the ways in which Being itself is open to questioning.

Heidegger affirms that the tradition of ontology has both loss and gain, the story of laudable efforts and incorrect formulations, a forgetting and a recollecting of the question towards the sense of Being. The tradition is not simply the continual story of decay from a proper formulation of the question, nor is it the story of continual progress. It is both ground of possibility for recollection of the question towards being and impediment to that questioning. The tradition is both a point of departure for the questioning of Being, but also the departure from such authentic questioning.

The life of Dasein is largely one of indifference, it is life in the tranquility and inauthenticity of the *They*. On account of its fallenness, Dasein has a tendency to dwell in the They, in an indifference to the questioning of Being which is its own most possibility. This inauthenticity covers itself up, it is truly a forgetting, a self-forgetting, a forgetting that there is even such a thing as forgetfulness. From the standpoint of authenticity, this forgetting is revealed for what it is, as a forgetting of possibilities, as a forgetting of one's own

possibilities, as inauthenticity. What becomes evident in authenticity is that life in the everyday is inauthentic, that it is life in the 'they' and not fully Dasein's own.

Falling : The inauthentic existence : Heidegger characterizes *falling* as the 'inauthenticity'. But before going to deal with the nature of the fallen Dasein, it is necessary to ask the question of the 'who' (wer) of Dasein in this fallen state. On this point Heidegger says: "The 'who' is not this one, not that one, not oneself.... Not some people...,and not the sum of all. The 'who' is the neuter, the 'they'. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 64) The German term *Dasman* is often rendered in English as 'the one', 'the they', the they self and 'the anonymous one'. Though inauthentic, 'the they' belongs to Dasein's essential constitution). In section twenty seven of *Being and Time (Sein and Zeit)* Heidegger offers a remarkably detailed analysis of the 'they' in its inauthentic relations to others. He attributes many characteristics to the 'they'.

Distantiality: In distantiality the everyday Dasein stands in subjection to others and the 'they' determines the everyday possibilities for Dasein. Here Dasein is not his self, but is taken over by the 'they'. Distantiality consists in Dasein's 'being-with-one-another'. It dissolves one's own identity completely into the being of the other, to such an extent that the distinction between the other and oneself is destroyed and, thereby, the total control of the 'they' is established. Thus, Dasein takes pleasure reads, judges and is shocked based on the standards set by the they, says Heidegger.

Mediocrity: Distantiality is found on the second characteristics of the fallenness that is 'mediocrity'. Having brought about the loss of identity of Dasein, by distantiality the they maintains this loss in mediocrity. Here, everything

exceptional and extraordinary is done away with. Every type of priority is suppressed and all possibilities of Dasein are leveled down.

Publicness: All these features – distanciality and mediocrity – together constitutes the third characteristics of the ‘they’ which Heidegger calls publicness. In publicness, all genuineness and speciality that essentially belongs to Dasein is bloated out and obscure. Only the superficial in things are touched upon. The ‘they’ controls the way in which the world is interpreted. It presents every judgement and decides upon it and takes away Dasein’s responsibility. ‘It was always the ‘they’ who did it, and it can be said that it has been no more’. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 165) Thus, in publicness Dasein is fully disburdened by the ‘they’, and in this disburdening of responsibilities he finds a sense of security. Besides, the ‘they’ constantly accommodates Dasein by the disburdening and retaining subtly its ‘stubborn domination’. The net result is, Heidegger says, “everyone is the other and no one is himself”. This involvement in the publicness threatens to level all decisions to the lowest common denominator of what is acceptable and well adjusted. It restricts “the possible options of choice to what lies within the range of the familiar, the attainable, the respectable – that which is fitting and proper”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 239) There is a firmly established tendency, then, to go along with the flow, content with “satisfying the easily handled rules and public norms or the ‘they’.” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 334) And thereby being disburdened of all “responsibility” for ourselves. “Dasein, as a they-self, gets ‘lived’ by the commonsense ambiguity of that publicness in which nobody resolves upon anything but which has already made its decision”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 345) The result is a “dimming down of the possible as such”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 329) Inauthentic Dasein is dispersed into a multiplicity of everyday routines, drifting with the latest fashions,

tranquility assured that “everything is ‘in the best of order’ and all doors are open”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 222) “This ‘leveling down’ of all possibilities obliterates the kind of two-tiered sense of life that lets us distinguish higher from lower, crucial from trivial, central from peripheral. Taking the familiar demands of the public world as of consummate importance – as ‘the only game in town’ – we can become highly effective strategic calculators, convinced that everything is possible, yet lacking any overarching sense of what makes life worth living”. (Guignon, 1993, p. 227)

So far as the nature of the state of fallenness is concerned, it signifies Dasein’s state of absorption in or immersion in the world of his concern. Fallenness consists mostly in being lost in the publicness of the ‘they’. It is the losing sight of the truth about one’s own being, or a dimming of one’s understanding of oneself, of one’s possibilities and limitations. In other words, fallenness is a state in which one fails to grasp one’s being with transparency and clarity. Falling is a state in which, not only has Dasein lost his vision about himself, but also he understands himself in terms of others. One hardly realizes that one’s thoughts, feelings, beliefs and ideals are shared by others even though they might appear to be one’s own. In fact, Dasein begins to guide his life in full conformity with everything the other expects of him. Thus, in falling, Dasein loses his individuality, i.e., being-one’s self and allows his life world to be guided by the ‘crowd’ or the ‘impersonal’ self.

There are four conditions that belong to the state of falling; temptation, tranquilization, alienation and entanglement.

Temptation: With Dasein’s being caught up in the publicness and losing itself in the ‘they’, it falls into groundlessness. This domination of the ‘they’ becomes

for Dasein a constant temptation to be led into falling. Since Dasein is constantly tempted towards falling, he is gradually led to believe that in such a state he is secure and genuine and that the fulfillment of his possibilities are guaranteed.

Tranquilization : The supposition that Dasein's life is genuine and he is 'in the best of order' brings to Dasein tranquility. Heidegger says, "Falling 'being-in-the-world' which tempts itself, is at the same time tranquilizing". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 222)

Alienation: In tempting and tranquilization, the falling is aggravated as Dasein is not at peace or at rest. As falling becomes aggravated, Dasein is moving towards an alienation in which his own potentiality –for-being is hidden from him. Heidegger states that "Falling being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquilizing, it is at the same time alienating". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 222)

Entanglement: Alienation does not tear down Dasein from itself, but rather closes off from Dasein his authentic possibilities. It results in Dasein falling into an entanglement with himself.

Though, in falling, Dasein takes a 'downward plunge' out of himself into himself' into his groundlessness, he is under the impression that his way of living is an 'ascending', as the truth about his own true self is hidden from him. Heidegger uses 'whirl' (wirbel) as the symbol to indicate Dasein's falling. In falling Dasein is 'thrown' into the bottomless living of everydayness and continues to be in this thrown state, totally whirled by the 'they'.

The Motive of Dasein's Fallenness : Having considered the nature of falling, it is necessary to point out as to why Dasein has the tendency to fall and remain inauthentic in his everyday existence. The motive behind Dasein's tendency to falling, Heidegger says, is that the flight from Dasein's own self and absorption

in entities of the world and with others is due to Dasein's experience of his own being as inherently dissatisfying. Dasein, as being-in-the-world, is the ground of all his encounters; but this ground itself is experienced as groundless. Heidegger refers to this groundless and unsettling dimension of Dasein's being-in-the-world as guilt. Thus, this basic guilt, for Heidegger, is the motive of Dasein's falling.

Heidegger does not use the term *guilt* in its ordinary usage. But he uses it in a more original and ontological sense. 'Being guilty' is a mode of Dasein and this notion must be freed from the moral and legal concepts. The notion of guilt, for Heidegger, is not something emerging from the violation of moral norms or an offence committed, but, on the contrary, the latter itself is grounded in the more fundamental 'not' or 'nullity', that is characteristic of Dasein's being, viz., guilt. To quote Heidegger: "Being-guilty does not first result from an indebtedness..., but on the contrary, indebtedness becomes possible only on the basis of primordial being guilty". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 329) thus, in the notion of guilt, taken in the primordial sense, lies the character of the 'not' or 'nullity'. Therefore, guilt is something that fundamentally belongs to Dasein. As Heidegger says, "Being guilty belongs to Dasein's being and signifies the null being-the-basis of a nullity". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 353)

In order to understand guilt in this original sense Heidegger analyses the two existential limitations of Dasein. These two existential limitations are the two different ways in which Dasein's being is dissatisfying to him and lead Dasein into falling.

The first existential limitation Heidegger speaks of is Dasein's facticity or thrownness. It refers to the way Dasein already finds himself in the world, i.e., in

a particular complex of equipmental system. Dasein finds himself in the world, that he has not chosen. The significant aspect of this existential limitation consists in Dasein's inability to be his own ground or to change the state-of-being into which he is thrown. Dasein must choose the situation in which he is thrown and make the best of it. Heidegger states that "As existent, it (Dasein) never comes back behind its (his) it (he)-is-and-has-to-be' from its (his) 'being-its (his)-self' and leads it (him) into the there". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 330) This ontically and factually implies that one has no control on the situation that went before his birth, early growth and development of skills, as most of these are determined for him by his thrownness. It means that Dasein never has power over his ownmost being from the ground-up, and he is never the cause of his own being. This thrownness, as an inability in Dasein to generate a world for himself and as an inability of Dasein to choose the basis responsible for his own choices, constitutes the first existential limitation in Dasein.

The second existential limitation consists of the limitations that constitute these choices themselves. In choosing one of the possibilities, Dasein has to give up the other. Dasein has no freedom to choose all possibilities. By nature, choice involves preferring one alternative to another. So, this inevitable preclusion of various possibilities, which is inherent in the nature of choosing, is the second existential limitation that belongs to Dasein's projective way of being. Heidegger states that "the nullity (existential limitation) we have in mind belongs to Dasein being-free for its (his) existential possibilities. Freedom, however, is only in the choice of one possibility – that is, in tolerating one's not having chosen the others and one's not being able to choose them". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 331)

These two existential limitations – Dasein’s thrown projective understanding on which he cannot ground himself and the limitation that is imposed in Dasein’s freedom to his own possibilities – together constitutes the guilt, in its primordial sense. Thus, guilt is the essential ‘lack’ in Dasein’s nature which he does not want to face up to in his everyday existence.

The existential limitations which constitute Dasein’s guilt are essential conditions of his being-in-the-world which disturbs Dasein. Falling is nothing else but a flight from the recognition of these disturbing conditions. Dasein is always aware of his guilt; but in the special state-of-being called anxiety guilt, the motive of falling, gets explicitly and directly recognized. The anxious Dasein feels uncanny and not-at-home because, in anxiety he comes into face-to-face contact with these existential limitations which constitute the guilt and which are essential to Dasein being challenged by his own guilt. In this situation, Dasein tries to get away from himself. In other words, Dasein flees from the direct recognition of these contingencies of his being, viz., his fundamental groundlessness, and drifts into everydayness. Falling, thus, amounts to Dasein’s way of avoiding an existential grasp of his guilt and an attempt to maintain his immersion among entities and others by merely preoccupying himself in existential possibilities in a given equipmental system. So, in falling, Dasein not only fails to face his true being, but also whole heartedly identifies himself with the particular situation and accepts it as the true reality by ignoring all other alternative ends and choices.

Heidegger says that Dasein loses out on being his genuine self on account of curiosity, idle talk and ambiguity which happens to be the three modes responsible for the fall of Dasein.

Heidegger regards curiosity Dasein's as attitude towards the world and entities within it in the fallen state. This is a tendency towards 'seeing'. In curiosity, Dasein allows himself to be carried away by the looks of the world. Here one sees for the sake of seeing, and what is seen is not seen in order to understand Curiosity "concerns itself with seeing, not in order to understand what is seen... but just in order to see". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 216) Curious Dasein leaps from one new thing to another. What is aimed at, in seeing, is not the truth of reality, but just novelty for the sake of novelty. Heidegger says, "It seeks novelty only in order to leap from it anew to another novelty". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 216) Therefore, curiosity is characterized by a 'not abiding' or 'not-tarrying' along-side that is closest to Dasein. In curiosity Dasein is restless about novelties, constantly seeking excitement and changing encounters. This, in turn, leads him to continuous distraction and dissipation, thereby, always scattering into ever new possibilities. Being caught up in distraction, Dasein loses the sense of wonder or beholding the world with admiration. Curious Dasein, by his inability to dwell and to wonder about, and by his constant distraction, lives a life of 'never-dwelling anywhere', as curiosity takes Dasein everywhere and yet nowhere. Curiosity uproots Dasein in his genuine being. Thus, what is superficially seen in curiosity is expressed or given out in idle talk.

The German term *Gerede* is often translated as 'chatter', 'gossip', 'prattle' and *idle talk*. It comes about as a result of one's gossiping or passing the word alone. In idle talk what is talked about is heard only in a random manner, but not understood. In other words one is not fully involved with the content of the talk, but rather superficially and vaguely hears what is said. Thus, in this mode, speech becomes its own end, and diction, pronunciation and the style of the speaking becomes the criteria to decide about the genuineness and relevance

of the speech. It involves a constant repetition. Even though it is superficial and ungrounded, by repetition it appears to be authoritative. It is not just limited to vocal chatter, but consists also of a written form which is based on the hearsay that feeds on superficial reading. Though groundless, idle talk easily becomes public and hence is often taken for genuine discourse. It closes off what it pretends to disclose and thereby discourages any new enquiry, understanding, interpretation and communication.

Ambiguity is closely related to curiosity and idle talk. It takes away the genuineness in both of these modes. It mars the truth of not only the world, and Dasein's being-with-others, but also gives a false impression of Dasein's own understanding of himself. Ambiguous Dasein finds himself in the state of publicness and is unable to decide whether what has been disclosed is genuine or not. Being caught up in the whirl of daily activity, fallen Dasein is no more 'straight-forward'. As ambiguity takes hold of Dasein, no genuine knowledge is possible, as everything is based on hearsay and without taking into consideration what is really happening. Ambiguity also dominates Dasein's being-with-one-another. Everyone fixes his eye on the other watching how the other will comport himself. 'Being-together-with-the other' is characterized by a tense watching of one another, and by an ambiguous spying on each other, which involves a mutual over-hearing. Heidegger remarks: "under the mask of 'for one another' an 'against one another' is in play" (Heidegger, 1973, p. 219) in the mode of ambiguity. All these three modes constitute Dasein's falling, and they are interconnected in their being. Heidegger says:

"Dasein is always ambiguously 'there' – that is to say in that public disclosedness of being-with-one-another whose the loudest idle talk and the most ingenious curiosity keep 'things moving' where, in an everyday manner, everything

(and at the bottom nothing) is happening". (Heidegger, 1973, pp. 218-219)

The sole aim of the whole analysis is to work out the question about the meaning of Being in general according to Heidegger. For this purpose, an analysis of a privileged entity – Dasein, for which alone the question of Being is relevant – has been taken up. The preparatory analysis of the everyday Dasein depends upon a primordial interpretation, by considering its hermeneutical situation or fore-structure-Dasein in its totality and authenticity. So, the analysis now, must be directed in such a way that it brings to light existentially, how Dasein is approached and analysed as a whole and in what way can it be authentic – i.e., Dasein in its ‘totality’ and ‘authenticity’. Heidegger unfolds these aspects of ‘totality’ and ‘authenticity’, developing them on a two level interpretation: on an ontologico-existential and an ontico-existential level, in the analysis of *death* and *conscience* respectively.

The Ontological Dimension is a discovery of death and anticipation. In order to arrive at ‘anticipation’ as the authentic Being-towards-death, it is necessary to carry out the Heideggerian analysis of death from different points of view dealt with as follows:

Death as a ‘Not yet’: A Preliminary Conception

Care forms the unity of Dasein’s structural whole. In terms of its primary constituent, ‘existentiality’ or ‘ahead-of-itself’, Dasein comports itself towards its potentiality-for-Being. Although, this ‘ahead-of-itself’ remains hidden, it has a thorough impact on shaping Dasein’s Being. Since ‘care’ is the Being of Dasein, and ‘ahead-of-itself’ is an essential constituent of care, Dasein cannot be without an ‘ahead-of-itself’. Thus, Heidegger points out that, there is in Dasein, as long as it exists, something still outstanding, something which has not yet

become actualized. Once the 'ahead-of-itself' is liquidated, the Being of Dasein is annihilated. Hence as long as Dasein is, it will never have reached its wholeness; and the gain of 'wholeness' amounts to the loss of its to-be-in-the-world. This is the paradox that "... if Dasein is alive it is always incomplete, and if dead it has ceased to be Dasein." (Waterhouse, 1981, p. 95)

This constant 'lack of totality' in Dasein comes to an end with death, which is the not yet realized something, the still outstanding. To put it in Heidegger's words, "to be still outstanding means that what belongs together is not yet all together." (Heidegger, 1973, p. 286)

Thus, according to Heidegger, the ultimate 'not yet' of Dasein is its death. With the actualization of 'not-yet', i.e., once the 'not-yet' is no more, there is no more a Dasein. Hence as long as Dasein is, it will have never reached its wholeness. Death as the 'not-yet' is already always present as soon as and as long as Dasein is. As death is the ultimate 'not-yet', Dasein is essentially Being-towards-death. It constantly faces the possibility of the impossibility of itself. Death is the ultimate end – an 'end' not in the sense of the term of a process as in the cases of 'the rain ends' (no more), 'the road ends' (no further), 'the painting ends' (finishedness) etc. But for Dasein ending refers to the 'not-yet' that is 'already' present. "Like Tolstoy who holds in his *The Death of Ivan Illitch*, that death is something that dwells in us." (Puthenpurakkal, 1987, p. 40) Heidegger asserts that Dasein as already its end, is Being-towards-the-end. Death is Dasein's way of Being. As Being-towards-its-death, Dasein is Being-towards-its-limit. Thus, as applied to Dasein, Heidegger uses the term 'ending' in a different meaning. To quote Heidegger:

"... Just as Dasein is already its not yet, and is its 'not yet' constantly as long as it is, it is already its end too. The

‘ending’ which we have in view when we speak of death, does not signify Dasein’s Being-at-an-end [Zu-Ende-Sein] but a Bring-towards-the-end [Sein zum ende] of this entity. Death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is ‘as soon as man comes to life, he is at once old enough to die.’ (Heidegger, 1973, p. 289)

Dying is a unique experience. Because I cannot experience my own ‘not-yet’ or death. Since in the very act of experiencing it, I cease to be. As I have not so far experienced my own death, others death becomes all the more important to me. “Dasein can thus gain an experience of death, all the more so because Dasein is essentially Being with others”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 281) From the experience of the death of the others, Dasein realizes it “as a change-over of an entity from Dasein’s kind of being (or life) to no-longer-Dasein”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 281) In this sense the entity, the corpse which still remains, is not merely a corporeal thing like any other entity but “this something which is present-at-hand-and-no-more is ‘more’ than a lifeless material thing. In it we encounter something unalive, which has lost its life”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 282) Thus, death reveals itself as a ‘loss’ only as experienced by those who remain behind. We have no possibility of access to the loss-of-Being which the dying man experiences. Hence the death of others is not something that we experience genuinely. We have to die our own death. No body can die for me. There is no substitution. As Heidegger puts it “No one can take the other’s dying away from him”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 284) So, ‘mineness’ and ‘existence’ are ontologically constitutive of death. Death is something that every Dasein has to take upon itself.

Death: Inauthentically considered: Before going deep into the analysis of death in its existential and authentic interpretation, it is necessary draw a contrast

as to how death is publicly interpreted by the 'they', the inauthentic everyday Dasein'.

For the inauthentic Dasein, death is a 'mishap', a 'case of death' that is constantly occurring. Death is taken for granted as an ordinary, inconspicuous occurrence like any other happening in the world. For him, someone or other dies, it matters little, who dies. This attitude of inauthentic Dasein towards death can be expressed in the words of Heidegger like this: "Someone will die one of these days, but right now, it has nothing to do with me'. When I say, 'one dies...', I do not mean anybody; that means, the 'one' is the 'nobody'". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 253) The inauthentic Dasein tends to consider death as an event of a moment in the distant future.

As constantly facing death, Dasein is thrown back into its very existence, its genuine self. As falling Dasein tries to conceal this thrown possibility and lives in an imagined ignorance of it. Dasein falls away from its ownmost possibility. The inauthentic Dasein is constantly tempted to cover up from itself death as a distinctive possibility of its own. The 'they' keeps on talking to the dying. For them there is a constant 'tranquilization' about death both for the dying and for those 'consoling them'. The 'one' does not permit us the courage for anxiety in the face of death. The courage for anxiety in the face of death is done away with by creating a respectful public acceptance that to think of death is a sign of cowardly fear in the face of an oncoming event. Even this fear is passed off as a weakness, and what remains, is only an indifferent tranquility as to the fact that one dies. "The cultivation of such a 'superior' indifference alienates Dasein from its own most, non-relational potentiality-for-Being". (Heidegger, 1973, p. 298)

The Existential-Ontological Conception of Death

We can define the full existential – ontological conception of death in the words of Heidegger:

“Death as the end of Dasein, is Dasein’s ownmost possibility – non-relational, certain and as such indefinite, not to be outstripped. Death is, as Dasein’s end, in the being of this entity towards its end”. (Heidegger, 1973, p. 303)

For Heidegger *Being-towards-death* is a structural determination which serves the function of gathering Dasein into its total existential unity. Being towards death is grounded in ‘care’ which is the ‘ahead-of-itself’ that primarily makes Being towards the end possible. So, if death belongs to the very being of Dasein, it must be possible to interpret it in terms of its fundamental structures namely, existentiality, facticity and fallenness.

Death is a ‘not-yet’, a still ‘outstanding’, which has the character of something towards which Dasein comports itself. And at the same time “Death is not something not-yet present at hand; nor is it that which is ultimately still outstanding but which has been reduced to a minimum. Death is something that stands before us – something impending.” (Heidegger, 1973, pp. 293-294) The death which impends does not have the kind of being like that of present at hand, or ready-to-hand, but “It is a possibility of Being (Seinsmöglichkeit) that Dasein itself has taken over in every case. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being.” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 294) Dasein’s ‘to-be-in the world’ is at stake, since ‘its death is the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there.’ (Heidegger, 1973, p. 294) When Dasein stands before itself as this possibility all its relations to the other Daseins are done away with. This is the utmost possibility that Dasein alone has to face, and it cannot be outstripped. As Heidegger puts it “Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of

Dasein.” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 294) Thus, when interpreted in terms of Dasein’s essential disclosedness to itself as ‘ahead-of-itself’, “death reveals itself as that possibility which is one’s own most, which is non-relational and which is not to be outstripped.” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 294)

Heidegger says death as a possibility is not something that Dasein exists, it has already been thrown into this possibility.” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 295) Thrownness into death is revealed in a more primordial manner in the basic state-of-mind that is anxiety. Death shows itself as that in the face of which Dasein has anxiety.

“Anxiety in the face of death is anxiety ‘in the face of’ that potentiality-for-Being which is one’s ownmost, non-relational and not to be outstripped. That in the face of which one has anxiety is Being-in-the-world itself that about which one has this anxiety is simply Dasein’s potentiality-for-Being.” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 295)

Anxiety in the face of death is not same as fear in the face of one’s demise. Heidegger uses death (Tod) in an existential sense, whereas demise (Ableben), in the sense of a biological termination of life. As factually existing, Dasein is disclosed by anxiety as thrown into Being-towards-death.

Being-towards-death belongs essentially to Dasein’s thrownness. But mostly Dasein in its everydayness tries to conceal it, and lives, so to say, in blissful ignorance. Factual ignorance or forgetfulness of death is no proof that Being – towards – death does not belong to Dasein universally. On the contrary, it shows that “Proximately and for the most part Dasein covers up its ownmost Being-towards-death, fleeing in the face of it. Factually Dasein is dying as long as it exists, but proximally and for the most part it does so by way of falling;” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 295) because it gets totally absorbed in the world of its concern.

Thus, existentiality, facticity and fallenness are constitutive of an existential conception of death. Death belongs to each of the structures separately and to all of them as a unity. “As regards its ontological possibility, dying is grounded in care.” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 296)

Anticipation “The Authentic Being-towards – Death

Being-towards-death is a Being towards a possibility - a distinctive possibility of Dasein itself. ‘Being towards a possibility’ signifies, ‘to be out for something possible’ in order to make it actual. “In concernfully Being out for something possible, there is tendency to annihilate the possibility of the possible by making it available to us.” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 305) This cannot be done in the case of death, since the annihilation or the actualization of this possibility would mean the annihilation of oneself.

There are two modes in which Dasein comports itself to something possible. These are expecting and anticipation.

Expecting: To expect something involves a knowledge with regard to whether, when and how it will actually be present-at-hand. Expecting does not mean an occasional looking forward to the possible actualization of the possibility, but it, as Heidegger says, “is essentially a waiting for that actualization (ein Warten auf diese).” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 306) In expecting one tries to leap away from the possible and to get a foothold in the actual. By expecting, the possibility is drawn to the actual; and it is for this actuality that what is expected is expected.

Anticipation: Unlike expecting, the authentic and concernful looking forward to Dasein’s own most possibility is called ‘anticipation of this possibility. It is not a passively ‘waiting for’ the actualization of a possibility. But it has to be understood in the sense of actively and constantly running headlong into one’s

ultimate and ownmost possibility, that is death. And Being-towards-death is meaningful, only with this notion of 'anticipation'. By anticipation or running ahead into a possibility, we come closer to the possibility. To quote Heidegger:

"The closest closeness which one may have in Being towards death as a possibility, is as far as possible from anything actual. The more unveiledly this possibility gets understood, the more purely does the understanding penetrate into it as the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all."
(Heidegger, 1973, pp. 306-307)

Anticipation of this possibility discloses to Dasein its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, since it reveals that distinctive possibility, in which its very Being is the issue. This ownmost possibility is non-relational as well, because I alone have to face it. It is in anticipation that the non-relational character of death is fully revealed, by individualizing Dasein down to itself. To quote Heidegger:

"Dasein is authentically itself only to the extent that, 'as' concerned Being-alongside and solicitous Being-with, it projects itself upon its own most potentiality-for-Being, rather than upon the possibility of the 'they-self'.
(Heidegger, 1973, p. 308)

In anticipation, Dasein becomes free for its own death. By being free for one's own death, one is freed from one's lostness in those possibilities that may accidentally thrust themselves upon one. It is by being so liberated, that one can authentically understand and choose that possibility, which is not to be outstripped. Only in the anticipation of this possibility, do I get the certainty about death. Death as a possibility is disclosed, because it is made possible in anticipation; and to be certain of what has been disclosed, entails that one should anticipate. Nothing can be more certain than one's own death. But, to be genuinely holding death to be true and certain has to show itself in the full authenticity of one's existence, and not merely in an occasional behaviour. The

certainty of death goes with the indefiniteness as to its 'when'. "In anticipation the indefinite certainty of death, Dasein opens itself to a constant threat arising out of its own 'there'." (Heidegger, 1973, p. 310)

This constant threat is genuinely disclosed in an understanding, accompanied by the basic state-of-mind, 'anxiety', in which "Dasein finds itself face to face with the 'nothing' of the possible impossibility of its existence." (Heidegger, 1973, p. 310) "Death is the presence of the 'not' in the Being of man." (Puthenpurakkal, 1987, p. 49) Since Dasein is utterly individualized in anticipation, the authentic Being-towards-death is essentially anxiety.

The characterization of authentic Being-towards-death can be summed up as follows:

"Anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned *FREEDOM TOWARDS DEATH* – a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the 'they' and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious." (Heidegger, 1973, p. 311)

In anticipating my final and irrevocable limit of Being-in-the-world, I am made to realize that all my actions and moments of life are destined to the same all dissolving end – that my ontic exercise of freedom is limited by my freedom towards the ontological possibility. "To live authentically is to project all one's possibilities on to the screen of death, which is man's possibility par excellence." (Puthenpurakkal, 1987, p. 49)

Conscience and Resoluteness: The Ontic Dimension

The authentic potentiality-for-Being-a-whole is made ontologically possible for Dasein by its freedom toward or anticipation of death. This ontological possibility of Dasein's totality and authenticity has to be verified and

realized ontically. Heidegger looks into this question by an analysis of conscience. His analysis of conscience is different from the traditional philosophy that has thematized it. For him, conscience, as such, does not pertain to the realm of knowledge, but to the realm of existence. It is an existential, which belongs to Dasein in his concrete being-in-world. His analysis traces conscience back to its existential structures which make it an existential of Dasein.

Conscience : A Call – Conscience is a structural mode of Dasein’s being, which manifests in Dasein’s factual existence. It is not a present-at-hand fact or event which occasionally occurs and to the justification of which inductive empirical proofs might be given. Conscience is revealed as a call. The call of conscience has the character of an appeal to Dasein, to be his own inner most potentiality-for-being. To this call of conscience, there is the corresponding hearing or listening. The inauthentic Dasein, losing himself in the publicness and the idle talk of the ‘they’ fails to listen to his own self, and listens to the ‘anonymous they’. The only way of freeing oneself from the self-forgetful giving of Dasein to the ‘they’ is to listen to the voice of his own conscience. The call of conscience, by its appeal, breaks Dasein’s listening to the ‘they’ and calls him out of this anonymous mode of existence.

The call of conscience has the mode of discourse (Rede). Just as in discourse the vocal expression is not essential to Dasein, so also the call of conscience is often a soundless call which is a giving-to-understanding. The call is unaffected by curiosity and idle talk, causes a jolt and an unsettling shake up in the one who wants to be brought back from the sway of the ‘they’.

Thus, according to Heidegger, the call of conscience is of the mode of discourse. It has a number of characteristics.

Firstly, what is spoken about, in the call of conscience, is the average everyday Dasein himself. The call itself is not vague or indifferent, but is presented in a way that Dasein, though caught up in his everyday care, can understand.

Secondly, what is appealed in the call of conscience is not what Dasein is expected to be, able to do, has achieved or stood for in public everyday life; not is it the self, which can become for itself an object of self-criticism and introspection, and which is separate from the outer world and caught up in analytically gazing at psychical conditions. The call of conscience passes over all these and appeals only to that self which is in the mode of being-in-the-world.

Thirdly, the appeal in the call of conscience, i.e., the content of the call is strictly nothing. The call does not assert anything or give any information; neither is it a soliloquy. But it is the summoning of the self, i.e., to his ownmost potentiality-for-being-his-self. In other words, what the call gives Dasein to understand is the fundamental groundlessness of his being-in-the-world, viz., Dasein's guilt.

Fourthly, the call of conscience does not show itself in loud talk, but in the mode of silence and in it alone. The fact that what is called is not expressed in words or spoken aloud, does not make this call of conscience indefinite or mysterious, but only point to the fact that 'what is given to understand' by the call does not depend on external articulation or communication. Neither does it make the call of conscience and its appeal less effective, because often silence is more affective than loud talk.

Finally, though there is an apparent vagueness regarding the content of the call, what the call discloses is clear and unambiguous, viz., the direction of the self must take to move from the 'they' and to be 'authentic'.

Conscience: The Call of Care: The content of the call or what the call gives to understand is Dasein's fundamental groundlessness, i.e., his primordial guilt. Now the question we must ask our selves is the 'who' of this call or the caller of the call of conscience. Heidegger holds that the caller of the call of the conscience conceals himself in a peculiar indeterminateness and indefinability. The caller cannot be known, as entities in the world are known, by name status, origin or repute. There is nothing specific that we can observe or say about the caller. One who calls holds himself aloof so that his identity cannot be known. The only characterization that we can give him is that he calls. We may say that Dasein is the caller and that he calls 'himself to himself'. Even if this is so, there is some peculiar impersonal character about the call, because the call comes unexpectedly, unwished for and independent of Dasein himself. Dasein himself never plans, neither is prepared for, nor voluntarily performs this call. At the same time it is clear that the call does not come from some other Dasein in the world. Heidegger states that "The call comes from me and yet beyond me and over me." (Heidegger, 1973, p. 322) So, there are some who hold the view that the call comes from some alien power, viz., God, while others explain away conscience in terms of some biological theory. Heidegger does not approve of such theories because the basic assumption behind them is that whatever exists must be present-at-hand reality. According to Heidegger, only the analysis of the existential constitution of this entity who calls can give us the clue to understanding him who does the calling.

Heidegger asserts that in thrown mode of existence, the 'why' of Dasein's thrownness is hidden from him, while 'that-it-(he)-is' is disclosed to Dasein. The fact is that Dasein's thrownness is revealed to himself in the state-of-being. Dasein often reacts to it by fleeing, because it brings Dasein face-to-face with his isolated being-in-the world, which makes him feel not-at-home. Anxiety is the most fundamental state-of-being, which reveals Dasein fundamentally as the thrown object. Heidegger suggests that the caller of conscience is this anxious Dasein in his not-at-wholeness. To quote Heidegger:

“The caller is Dasein in its (his) uncanniness: primordial, thrown being-in-the-world as the ‘not-at-home’ – the bore ‘that-it (he) – is’ in the ‘nothing of the world’. The caller is unfamiliar to the everyday the self; it is something like an alien voice.” (Heidegger, 1973, p. 321)

Thus, existentially understood, the call of conscience sees to it that it constantly makes Dasein feel ‘not-at-home’ and anxious about his existence, thereby posing a constant threat to Dasein's lostness in the ‘they’ and his forgetfulness of himself in his everydayness. Thus, the call of conscience shows itself as the call of care. To quote Heidegger :

“Conscience manifests itself as the call of care: the caller is Dasein, which in its [his] thrownness [in his being-already-in], is anxious about its [his] potentiality-for-being. The one to whom the appeal is made is the very same Dasein, summoned to its [his] ownmost potentiality-for-being [ahead-of-himself...] Dasein is falling into the ‘they’ [in being-already-alongside the world of concern], and it is summoned out of this falling by the appeal. The call of conscience – that is, conscience itself – has its ontological possibility in the fact that Dasein, in the very basis of its [his] being, is care.” (Heidegger, 1973, pp. 322-323)

Resoluteness: The readiness of Dasein to be called to its essential Being-guilty is termed ‘resoluteness’ (entschlossenheit]. It is the authentic response by Dasein to the presence of nullity in its Being. In the call of conscience Dasein is made to

understand the authentic and total that-it-is of Dasein. In resoluteness Dasein gets a genuine grasp of itself. Thus, in the call of conscience Dasein is called forth not to an empty ideal existence, but to the existence of its situation, to the Dasein that is thrown into its essential Being-guilty. Dasein's understanding of the call of conscience is accompanied by the state-of-being, anxiety, which brings to the fore the homelessness of Dasein's own self. The mode of discourse is not expressed aloud, but in silence, which the inauthentic Dasein must listen to in silence. So to the one who is caught up in idle-talk and curiosity, the call of conscience, in its silent manifestation would appear as non-existent. The pre-eminent and authentic disclosedness of Dasein, attested by Dasein's wanting-to-have-a-conscience, shows itself as the silent and anxious self-projection Heidegger calls resoluteness. To quote him:

“The disclosedness of Dasein in wanting to have a conscience is thus constituted by anxiety as the state-of-being, by understanding as the projection of oneself upon one's ownmost being guilty and by discourse as reticence. This distinctive and authentic disclosedness, which is attested in Dasein itself [himself] by its [his] conscience – this reticent self-projection upon one's ownmost being-guilty in which one is ready for anxiety – we call resoluteness.”
(Heidegger, 1973, p. 343)

Thus, *resoluteness*, for Heidegger, is the authentic mode of disclosedness of Dasein. Since the disclosedness of Dasein is the primordial truth and the way in which Dasein is in truth, and resoluteness being the authentic mode of Dasein's disclosedness is the truth of Dasein which is the most primordial and authentic. Thus, the call of conscience, listened to in resoluteness, recalls Dasein from his inauthentic everyday pre-occupation to an authentic disclosedness. In fact, it does not change Dasein's world, but rather transforms Dasein's awareness of his world and others. In other words, Dasein's authentic being-his-

self does not mean that he has a self that is unattached and cut off from the world, but Dasein's 'being-alongside-the-ready-to-hand' and his 'being-with-others' "are given a definitive character in terms of their ownmost potentiality-for-being-their-selves" (Heidegger, 1973, pp. 343-344) So, in resoluteness, Dasein does not stop taking care of his environmental world, nor does he stop dealings with the community to which he belongs, but only changes his attitude towards these, from one of inauthenticity to that of authenticity. To quote Heidegger:

"Resoluteness, as authentic being-one's self, does not detach Dasein from its [his] world, nor does it isolate it [him] so that it [he] becomes a free-floating]. And how should it, when resoluteness, is authentically nothing else than being-in-the world? Resoluteness brings the self right into its [his] current concerned being-alongside what is ready-to-hand and pushes it [him] into solicitous being with others." (Heidegger, 1973, p. 344)

Resoluteness, therefore, frees Dasein from himself for his world, in the light of the 'for-the-sake-of-which' of his own potentiality-for-being. It also frees Dasein in his relationship with others in the sense that resoluteness enables him to allow than to be themselves. A resolute Dasein, thereby, becomes, as it were, the conscience of others, which, in turn, brings about the disclosure of mutual potentialities to each other. This, in turn, helps them to be authentically 'being-their-selves' and authentically to 'be-with-one-another'.

Anticipatory Resoluteness: The Ontologico-ontical: The existential analysis of Dasein's totality and authenticity in the ontological and ontical dimensions has given rise to two notions - anticipation and resoluteness. Heidegger shows that they constitute the unitary notion of anticipatory resoluteness. In anticipation the ontological possibility of Dasein as total and authentic is revealed. This ontological possibility is ontically assumed by Dasein in

resoluteness. Only as anticipating can Dasein be resolute for its essential Being-guilty. Resoluteness is made possible by anticipation, and anticipation is meaningless without resoluteness. Both speak of the radical finitude of Dasein from the ontological and ontical perspectives. As a unitary phenomenon anticipatory resoluteness brings Dasein into the full self possession of its Being – Dasein in its totality and authenticity.

. In anticipatory resoluteness we have arrived at the genuine self of Dasein. According to Heidegger, the self is not to be taken as substance or as subject, but as a noetico-noematic unity, as expressed in its 'Being-in-the-world', which implies its essential relatedness to the things and persons. 'care' unifies the various ways of Dasein's Being; but in this notion we do not arrive at the Being of Dasein that is total and authentic. Hence it is in anticipatory resoluteness that we have the genuine picture of Dasein.

Chapter –IX

**A Summing Up :
Reaching Authentic
Existence**

A SUMMING UP

Reaching Authentic Existence

For I ... am a man and every man must find out his own way.
(Sartre, 1968, p. 311)

The deepest concern of existentialist *ethics* is perhaps to foster an authentic stance towards the human, groundless, values without which no project is possible. It is a concern that is expressed in the notions of *engagement* and *commitment*. The existentialists advocate that free commitment is ethical. As Sartre puts it in *Existentialism and Humanism*:

“One can choose anything, but only if it is upon the plane of free commitment.” (Sartre, 1948, p. 48)

Existentialism like Kantian ethics, evaluates the person as well as the act. To be a good existentialist is to recognize one’s freedom of commitment and thus to take responsibility for whatever one does or is. As Simone De Beauvoir says:

“He bears responsibility for a world which is not the work of a strange power, but of himself, where his defeats are inscribed, and his victories as well.” (Beauvoir, 1967, p. 16)

Existentialist ethics ironically is oriented around the conception that there can be no ethics. This contradictory proclamation is based on the distinction of the two different senses of ethics – normative and metaethics. The existentialists do not propose a *normative ethics* instead they propound a *metaethics* which is based on human freedom. According to them, normative ethics provides us with concrete prescriptions and specific principles instructing us what we ought to do. On the contrary, metaethics is the formulation of an ethical framework and the

establishing of a logic and a discourse for delimiting the kinds of principles which are open to consideration and the kinds of arguments which are acceptable. Metaethics simply stated is literally talk about ethics. But it does not mean that metaethics is normatively unimportant. On the contrary, it is metaethical considerations which determine what our normative ethics will be like. Thus all the existentialists whether theist or atheist are involved in metaethics.

Existentialist ethics is based on nihilism, often with the Nietzschean – Dostoevskian argument that ‘if God is dead, then everything is permitted.’ *Freedom* is the ontological heart of existentialism. And it is also its ethical foundation. There is no criterion of normative ethics which can be defended as ‘correct’. But it is the principle of freedom which is defended as ‘correct’ on the metaethical level. In other words, what normative system of values one chooses is not open to judgement, but whether or not he chooses it in freedom is open to judgement. A man cannot, therefore, make a wrong choice of values, but he can make his choice wrongly. As Kierkegaard puts it ‘it is not what you choose, but how you choose that is important.’ This is the basis of modern existentialist ethics. As Simon De Beauvoir says’.

“To will oneself moral and to will oneself free are one and the same decision.” (Beauvoir, 1967, p. 24)

Thus, existentialist ethics does not criticise another person’s action. But it criticizes the way of choosing of the choices. As Sartre says in *Existentialism and Humanism*:

“People say to us ‘you are unable to judge others’. This is true in one sense and false in another. It is true in this sense, that whenever a man chooses his purpose and his commitment in all clearness and in all sincerity, whatever that purpose may be

it is possible for him to prefer another.... We can Judge nevertheless... that in certain cases choice is founded upon an error, and in others upon the truth. One can judge a man by saying that he deceives himself." (Sartre, 1948, p. 42)

Existentialism does not give us any instruction or a set of values guiding action for it is driven by a conviction to act in keeping with a choice made freely. Thus it refuses to lay down any prescriptions leading to any specific course of actions. However, this does not make the principle empty, for the ethical principle of freedom tells us not only that we are free, but that freedom has significance only when translated into an action that is born out of commitment. As Simon De Beauvoir observes:

"One of the chief objections leveled against existentialism is that the precept 'to will freedom' is only a hollow formula and offers no concrete content for action. But that is because one has begun by emptying the word freedom of its concrete meaning; we have already seen that freedom realizes itself only by engaging itself in the world: to such an extent that man's project toward freedom is embodied in him in definite acts of behaviour."(Beauvoir, 1967, p. 78)

Existentialist ethics insists that a man is absolutely free both in his freedom from the causal determination of his intentions and decisions and in his freedom from 'outside authority' instructing him what course of actions correct. The belief in freedom from causal determination has been a recurring theme in each existentialist, and their insistence upon freedom from authority is what sharply distinguishes them from Kant. Kant argues that men are causally free to choose but not rationally free to choose their own values. Existentialism, however, teaches that there is no standard of correctness for one's choices. If reason is argued to be the ultimate justification of morality' one is free to be 'irrational'. If God is posited as the ultimate source of all true values, one is free to be irreverent, if patriotism is taken as the ultimate duty, one is free to be

treasonably undutiful; and if human nature is cited as support for a principle, one is free to act unnaturally. This is not to say, of course, that one is free from the consequences of his freedom to reject a value; the irreverent may still be damned, the treasonous may still be hanged, the 'unnatural' may become ill. One is always free to reject whatever values one chooses to reject, often with the understanding that his rejection will be met with disapproval or punishment from others.

The crux of the existentialist theory of value can be based expressed in saying that all that has any value is a man and his manner of choosing. Not only is it through man that values enter the world: ultimately, it is only man that is valuable.

All the existentialists whether theist or atheist are in their own ways ethical radicals. They are radical not only in the sense that they reject the Kantian idea of a 'foundation' for morality, but also in the sense that they reject in some way the content of Kant's bourgeois morality. In a strict sense existentialism is a nihilism that has no 'content', least of all 'contents' of morality, or other ethical codes. It can, however, attack and destroy the grounds upon which people base such codes. But it does not mean that existentialism is a purely destructive philosophy. On the contrary, existentialists themselves typically adopt a strong moral and radical stance. They differ from traditional moralists in their unwillingness to procure rational justifications in favour of ethics.

They have been highly critical of the philosophical and ethical traditions they inherited. Their views are as diverse as they are. They strive to offer an alternative to the overtly rational, and what they like to coin, an 'inhuman' philosophical approach. Their aim is to provide a better account of what it is to

be a human being in this world. This task necessarily offers some ethical developments regarding our being-in-the-world as acting, encountering, socially living beings. They try to elaborate a viable alternative to traditional ethical views.

Kierkegaard develops the problem of existence in the context of his radical approach to Christian faith, and Nietzsche did so in the light of his thesis of the *death of God*.⁷ Though neither Nietzsche's nor Kierkegaard's thought can be reduced to a single strand. Both took an interest in what Kierkegaard termed 'the single individual'. Both of them were convinced that this singularity, what is most my own, 'me' could be meaningfully reflected upon while yet, precisely because of its singularity, remains invisible to traditional philosophy, which lays emphasis either on unerring objective laws of nature or else conformity to the universal standards of moral reason.

In Kierkegaard, the singularity of existence comes to light at the moment of conflict between *ethico-religious stage*. In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard argues that for philosophy my life becomes meaningful when I 'raise myself to the universal' by bringing my immediate natural desires and inclinations under the moral law, which represents my *telos* or what I ought to be. In doing so I lose my individuality but my actions become meaningful in the sense of being understandable and governed by a norm. Now a person whose sense of following God's will is what imparts meaning to his life will become intelligible just to the extent that his action conforms to the universal dictates of ethics. In the case of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice of his son, where Abraham breaks the societal norms in his readiness to end his son's life. Kierkegaard believes that Abraham's life is supremely meaningful. Because here God's command

cannot be seen as a law that would pertain to all. But it addresses Abraham in his singularity. In Abraham's case the 'single individual is higher than universal.'

In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard says that 'subjectivity is the truth'. This is the idea that prefigures the existential concept of authenticity. Abraham has no objective reason to think that the command he hears comes from God; indeed, based on the content of the command he has every reason, as Kant pointed out in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, to think that it cannot come from God. His sole justification is what Kierkegaard calls the *passion of faith*. Such faith is, rationally speaking, absurd, a *leap*, so if there is to be any measure of truth it is a standard that measures not the content of Abraham's act, but the way in which he accomplishes it. To perform the movement of faith *subjectively* is to embrace the paradox as normative for me in spite of its absurdity, rather than to seek an escape from it by means of objective textual exegesis, historical criticism, or some other strategy for translating the singularity of my situation into the universal. Because my reason can not help here, the normative appropriation is a function of my *inwardness* or *passion*. In this way I 'truly' become what I nominally already am. To say that subjectivity is the truth is to highlight a way of being and not a mode of knowing for truth measures the attitude or passion with which I appropriate, or make my own, an 'objective uncertainty' in a 'process of highest inwardness.'

In contrast to the singularity of this movement, for Kierkegaard, stands the crowd; "the crowd is untruth" (Kierkegaard, 1962, p.113), the crowd is, roughly, public opinion in the widest sense – the ideas that are taken for granted;

the ordinary and accepted way of doing things; the complacent attitude that comes from the conformity necessary for social life – and what condemns it to ‘untruth’ in Kierkegaard’s eyes is the way that it institutes itself into an individual’s own sense of who he is, relieving him of the burden of being himself. The objective truths of science and history, however well-established, are in themselves matters of indifference; they belong to the crowd. It is not insofar as truth can be established objectively that it takes on meaning, but rather insofar as it is appropriated ‘passionately’ in its very uncertainty. To ‘exist’, according to Kierkegaard, is always to be confronted with this question of meaning.

For Kierkegaard existence emerges as a philosophical problem in the struggle to think the paradoxical presence of God; but for Nietzsche it is found in the reverberations of the phrase God is dead, in the challenge of nihilism.

Responding in part to the cultural situation in nineteenth – century Europe – historical scholarship continuing to erode fundamentalist readings of the Bible, the growing cultural capital of the natural sciences, and Darwinism in particular – and in part driven by his own investigations in the psychology and history of moral concepts, Nietzsche sought to draw the consequences of the death of God. It means there is the collapse of any theistic support for morality. Nietzsche’s overriding concern is to find a way to take the measure of human life in the modern world. Unlike Dostoevsky, however, Nietzsche sees a complicity between morality and the Christian God that perpetuates a life-denying, and so ultimately nihilistic stance. Nietzsche’s idea behind his moral prescriptions is driven towards the *will to power*. The account in the *Genealogy of Morals* says that the Judeo-Christian moral order arose as an expression of the

resentment of the weak against the power exercised over them by the strong. A tool used to thwart that power, it had over time become internalized in the form of conscience, creating a 'sick' animal whose will is at war with its own vital instincts. Thus, Nietzsche arrived at Kierkegaard's idea that 'the crowd is untruth'. The so called autonomous, the self legislative individual is nothing but a *herd* animal that has trained itself into docility and unfreedom by conforming to the 'universal' standards of morality. The normative is nothing but the normal.

If the autonomous individual has so far signified nothing but herd mentality – if moral norms arose precisely to produce such conformists the individual nevertheless has the potential to become something else, the sick animal is 'pregnant with a future.' Nietzsche saw that in the nineteenth century the 'highest values' had begun to 'devalue themselves.' For instance, the Christian value of truth-telling, institutionalized in the form of science, had undermined the belief in God, disenchanting the world and excluding from it any pre-given moral meaning. In such a situation the individual is forced back upon himself. On the one hand, if he is weakly constituted he may fall victim to despair in the face of nihilism, the recognition that life has no intrinsic meaning. On the other hand, for a 'strong' or creative individual nihilism presents a liberating opportunity to take responsibility for meaning, to exercise creativity by transvaluing his values, establishing a new 'order to rank'. Through *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche imagined such a person as the *overman*, the one who teaches 'the meaning of the earth' and has no need of other worldly supports for the values he embodies. The overman represents a form of life, a mode of existence that is to blossom from the communalized, moralized 'last man' of the nineteenth century. He has understood that nihilism is the ultimate meaning of

the moral point of view, its life denying essence, and he reconfigures the moral idea of autonomy so as to release the life affirming potential within it.

Thus, for Nietzsche, existence emerges as a philosophical problem in his distinction between, moral autonomy and an autonomy 'beyond good and evil. But if one is to speak of autonomy, meaning, and value at all, the mode of being beyond good and evil cannot simply be a lawless state of arbitrary and impulsive behaviour. If such existence is to be thinkable there must be a standard by which success and failure can be measured. Nietzsche indicates such a standard in his references to 'health', 'strength', and 'the meaning of the earth.' His most instructive indication, however, comes from aesthetics, since its concept of style, as elaborated in the *Gay Science*, provides a norm appropriate to the singularity of existence. To say that a work of art has style is to invoke a standard for judging it, but one that cannot be specified in the form of a general law of which the work would be a mere instance. Rather, in a curious way, the norm is internal to the work. For Nietzsche, existence falls under such an imperative of style: to create meaning and value in a world from which all transcendent supports have fallen away is to give unique shape to one's immediate inclinations, drives, and passions; to interpret, prune, and enhance according to a unifying sensibility, a ruling instinct, that brings everything into a whole that satisfies the non-conceptual, aesthetic norm of what fits, what belongs, what is appropriate.

With Kant, Sartre teaches that 'the only thing unqualifiedly good is a good will'. For Sartre, the 'good will' is not one that makes correct or rational choices; but one that sees itself as always making choices. A 'bad will' or an act in *bad faith* is not one that chooses incorrectly or irrationally, but one that does

not see itself as a choice. However, Sartre insists that he is simply describing the human condition, there can be no doubt that he believes bad faith to be bad and good faith to be good. These 'existential values' carry with them – in any meaningful sense of the term - moral weight. In his defence of the bourgeois morality that Sartre despises, Kant had written that the heart of morality lay in the responsible and freely chosen act. For Sartre as well, morality can lie only in the act of free responsible choice, but such an insistence entails, for him, the destruction of the content of Kant's 'morality'. There is no point in talking of 'free responsible choice' if the values that are chosen are 'a priori given'. Sartre cares very much for the conceptions of 'good' and 'bad', but seeks only to continue Kant's shift in the locus of these values from 'moral facts' to acts of choice. Like Kant's morality, Sartre's ethics is the very antithesis of an ethics of an arbitrariness or irresponsibility. Everything a man does, even where we might sometimes say 'he had no choice', is his responsibility. And Sartre's neglect of the consequences of the action as irrelevant to moral worth is not to be construed as a condoning of action without regard for consequences. But the purpose of such neglect of consequences serves only to eliminate grounds for excuse and further place the burden of responsibility on the choice itself, whatever its consequences.

Sartre often returns to traditional Cartesian dualism where Heidegger and Merleau – Ponty take the same dualism to be the source of traditional problems. Here, we find that Sartre freely accepts a relatively sharp distinction between facts and values, facticity and transcendence, everyday 'given' bourgeois values and existentially chosen values. Heidegger and Merleau -Ponty on the other hand, argue at length that there are no such things as 'values' or 'facts', because there is no such viable distinction between 'fact' and 'value'. Heidegger's

critique of 'values' occupies a central role in *Being and Time*, but it must not be supposed that he is attacking the idea of there being values as well as facts. For Heidegger, Being-in-the-World does not involve both facts and value. The very idea of his 'primitive' analysis of world as *equipment* is intended to destroy all such Cartesian and Husserlian dualisms.

Heidegger pursues a campaign which is largely directed against the traditional philosophical distinction between 'practice' and 'theory'. He rejects the notion of 'things' as our primitive conception of entities in the world and replaces it with a notion of equipment. He rejects the Cartesian cogito as the starting point of phenomenological investigation and substitutes it with Being-in-the-world, a notion which does not pretend to restrict, its scope to cognitive matters. Thus, the notion of *intentionality* in Husserl, which so often appears as a cognitive attitude towards objects, is replaced by *care* which has clear practical connotations. 'Knowledge of the world' is moved to a secondary position in Heidegger's philosophy while involvement, design, utility, moods, and concern become primitive human attitudes towards the world. With this breakdown in the distinction between 'theory' and 'practice' and a parallel breakdown between the traditional philosophical categories of metaphysics and ethics is expected. If there is no clear distinction between theory and practice, between what the world is and what we aspire to make of it, then these two traditionally very different philosophical enterprises, the search for truth and the search for values, are indistinguishable.

A discussion of Heidegger's ethics becomes very difficult because Heidegger repeatedly insists that he is not doing ethics. Philosophy, according to Heidegger has no room for ethics, and that his concepts are purely 'descriptive'

and contain no moralizing criticism or negative value judgement. In *Being and Time* Heidegger declares that ethical matters are existentiell or *ontic* matters, and that they, therefore, have no place in philosophy because philosophical problems are ontological. As he says:

“In spite of all expressly given warnings not to take it as an ontic characterization of man – as a philosophy of life or an ethics which appraises “human life” then everything will be thrown into confusion”. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 213)

He tells us that values are of strictly ontic concern, and that ontology has nothing to say about what ought to be done. He insists that we do not know values at all, either on the basis of natural facts or on the basis of specifically evaluative intuitions as Husserl and Scheller advocates. Values according to him, are creations of ‘human subjectivity’, and are mere ‘objectifications of individual wants’.

Thus, Heidegger refuses to give us an ethics. As from Kierkegaard, all existentialists turn himself from universal ethics in favour of an ethics of ‘authenticity’. They refuse to give us a specific life - programme or life - style. It is the nature of these philosophies that ‘becoming authentic’ essentially requires that we each give up the quest for a set of ‘given’ values, whether these be given from God, from society (Dasman), or from philosophers. Kierkegaard’s each spheres dictates its own life-style, but ‘authenticity’ the ‘existential value’ depends on an ‘arbitrary’ or ‘irrational’ choice of spheres. Similarly for Heidegger, who does not attempt to distinguish distinct life styles, it is impossible for the philosopher to give a criterion for the correct choice of a way of life. For any such criterion would directly violate the basic ‘existential’ principle that *Dasein* must choose his own mode of existence. The ethics of

Being and Time does not signify the rejection of values as such, but it only indicates the rejection of universal values, values imposed on Dasein by others.

Being and Time is as much a treatise on human values as a treatise on ontology, and that the products of *Being and Time* are not only descriptions of Dasein, but instructions for Dasein too. The primary instruction, of course, is that we should strive to be authentic. Inauthenticity or fallenness is to be fought against and overcome. Heidegger stresses that, because Dasein existentially has tendencies to both authenticity and inauthenticity, no one could ever attain complete authenticity, nor could anyone 'fall' to complete inauthenticity. The demands of every day and the public will always cause a certain amount of inauthenticity and failure to treat oneself according to one's Existenz. Similarly, the approach of death and the Angst which is encountered in certain instances will jar even the most 'average everyday man out of his inauthenticity to a shocking recognition of his own true individuality. The ethics of *Being and Time* can thus be simply stated; one must strive to be authentic, and to be authentic is to ask the question of Being regarding oneself.

Thus, Heidegger's ethics does not provide a source of guidance that we expect from an ethics. However, any philosophy which so heavily stresses individual autonomy of choice will find itself forced to be noncommittal as to correct life programmes. It is in spite of this ethics of authenticity that Heidegger turns to National Socialism as a 'correct' moral choice, as it is in spite of his similar philosophy that Sartre defends communism.

Merleau - Ponty attacks the dualism of fact and value by placing far more stress than Sartre on the notion of the *situation*. Where Sartre is quick to degrade 'everyday' and 'given bourgeois' values, Merleau - Ponty sees that

these values deserve the central place in our ontology – not strictly as moral facts, but not as chosen value either. To be a worker, a bourgeois, French, Jewish, black, is already a source, not only of ‘facticity’ upon which we base our choices, but of intentions and interests and possibilities. Sartre often writes as if ‘I am a worker, now I have to freely decided whether to be a cooperative labourer or a revolutionary’ But Merleau - Ponty sees that one’s situation cannot be separated from his interests. Finding myself as a worker is already finding myself ‘thrown’ into a set of choices and preferences. Everyday values are neither strictly ‘given’ nor are they strictly chosen, since one is ‘thrown’ into them before one has any chance to ‘choose’. According to Merleau -Ponty, one cannot, in Sartre’s terms, ‘wrench himself away’ from his situation, but must always make his less-than-absolute choices within the limited perspective and the prejudicial atmosphere of his situation.

In contrast to the Sartre’s notion of the impossibility of intersubjectivity, religious existentialists, like Jaspers, Marcel, and Buber advocate that man can live a meaningful life only in a subject to subject relationship. Jaspers says that *communication* is an essential aspect of *existenz*. For him intersubjectivity is a fact whose ontological exploration is one of the fundamental tasks of philosophy. He wrote in his seventieth year:

“From my school days on, the question of communication between human beings was to me the basic question of our life. Man can only come to himself with his fellowmen.”
(Cited in Kelly, 1967, p. 154)

Jaspers affirms that truth has its origin in communication. He says that the only reality with which man can reliably and in self - understanding join hands in the world, is his fellow man. It is through communication that

companions find the road to truth. Whereas:

“The road is lost to the man who shuts himself off from others in stubborn self-will, who lives in a shell of solitude.” (Jaspers, 1950, p. 48)

Communication is the fundamental feature of authenticity in Jaspers philosophy. Like him, Marcel too believes that “togetherness makes *disponibility* workable...it is on the level of the mystery, of the metaproblematical and of secondary reflection that man can discover his authentic personhood. And so it is only in a genuine I-Thou relationship in that encounter or meeting on the plane of intersubjectivity that I can engage in such personal relationships as *disponibility*, fidelity and love.” (Sayeed, 1998, p. 109) He explains that when I enter into communion with another, I thereby transcend the level of having, i.e., the level of object, and I rise to the sphere of Being.

Buber defines the ethical as the affirmation or denial of the conduct and actions possible to one not according to their use or harmfulness for individuals and society, but according to their intrinsic value and disvalue. And the criterion by which the distinction and decision are made may be traditional one or one perceived by the individual himself. What really matters, he says, “is that the critical flame shoots up ever again out of the depths” and the truest source for this critical flame is “the individual’s awareness of what he ‘really’ is, of what in his unique and no repeatable created existence he is intended to be.” (Buber, 1952, p. 125)

The foundation of Buber’s definition of ethics is his philosophy of dialogue with its emphasis on wholeness, decision, presentness, and uniqueness on the one hand, and on the other, it is his philosophical anthropology with its

emphasis on the potentiality which only man has and on the direction which each man must take to become what only he can become. This emphasis on an inner awareness which gives one the power of distinguishing and deciding between right and wrong is a type of moral autonomy which contradicts the dialogical nature of the rest of his philosophy. He makes it clear that 'he is talking about neither 'moral autonomy' nor 'moral heteronomy', neither self-created morality nor morality imposed from without". (Buber, 1952, p. 129) He affirms that pure moral autonomy is a freedom that is simply 'freedom from' without any 'freedom for'. Pure moral heteronomy is a 'responsibility' that is simply imposed moral duty without any genuine freedom or spontaneity. The narrow ridge between the two is a freedom that means freedom to respond, and a responsibility that means both, an address from without and free response from within.

The thorough-going moral autonomy destroys all concepts of morality because it destroys all notion of value. For this reason, Buber, criticizes, Sartre's definition of value as the meaning of life which the individual chooses. He says:

"One can believe in and accept a meaning or value... if one has discovered it, not if one has invented it. It can be for me an illuminating meaning, a direction-giving value, only if it has been revealed to me in my meeting with being, not if I have freely chosen it for myself from among the existing possibilities and perhaps have in addition decided with a few fellow creatures: This shall be valid from now on." (Buber, 1952, p. 93)

The failure to see moral problems in terms of the relation of I and Thou ends in submission of I to the world of it. Through his dialogical philosophy Buber avoids not only the 'objectivism' of the moral absolutists but also the 'subjectivism' of the cultural relativists. If values do not exist for him apart from

persons, neither can they be reduced to subjective feeling or 'interest'. The value lies in the between in the relation of the I to a Thou which is not an It yet is really other than the I.

Buber's philosophy of dialogue not only finds the narrow ridge between the subjectivist identification and the objectivist sundering of the 'is' and the 'ought', but it also radically shifts the whole ground of ethical discussion by moving from the universal to the concrete and from the past to the present – in other words, from I-It to I - Thou. Buber does not start from some external, absolutely valid ethical code which man is bound to apply as best as possible to each new situation. Instead he starts with the situation itself. He says:

“The idea of responsibility is to be brought back from the province of specialized ethics, of an 'ought' that swings free in the air, into that of lived life. Genuine responsibility exists only where there is real responding.” (Buber, 1947, p. 16)

Most of the traditional ethical values – not killing, stealing, committing adultery, lying, cheating, and so forth are useful and suggestive, but one may not for all that proceed from them to the situation. Rather one must move from the concrete situation to the decision as to what is the right direction in this instance.

Buber says:

“No responsible person remains a stranger to norms. But the command inherent in a genuine norm never becomes a maxim and the fulfillment of it never a habit. Any command that a great character takes to himself in the course of his development does not act in him as part of his consciousness or as material for building up his exercises, but remains latent in a basic layer of his substance until it reveals itself to him in a concrete way. What it has to tell him is revealed whenever a situation arises which demands of him a solution of which till then he had perhaps no idea. Even the most universal norm will at times be recognized only in a very special situation.....There is a direction, a 'yes', a command, hidden even in a prohibition, which is revealed to us in moments like

these. In moments like these the command addresses us really in the second person, and the Thou in it is no one else but one's own self. Maxims command only the third person, the each and the none." (Buber, 1947, p. 114)

We find the most important key to the ethical implications of Buber's dialogue in experiencing the relationship from the side of the other. Only through 'seeing the other' can the I-Thou relationship become fully real, for only through it can one be sure that one is really helping the other person. To deal lovingly with thy neighbour means to recognize that he is not just another I but a Thou, and that means a really 'other' person. Only if we see a man in his concrete otherness is there any possibility of our confirming him in his individuality as that which he must become. 'Seeing the other' is for this reason of central significance, not only for ethical action, but for love, friendship, teaching, and psychotherapy.

The Thou, Buber says, "teaches you to meet others", but it also teaches you 'to hold your ground when you meet them.' (Buber, 1937, p. 33) Ethical action is not altruism and self denial. Nor is it an impartial objectivity which adjudicates conflicting interests as if from the standpoint of a third person. It is the binding of decision and action in the relation of I and Thou.

One can only be 'responsible' if one is responsible to someone. Since the human Thou must constantly become an It, one is ultimately responsible to the Eternal Thou who never becomes an It. But it is just in the concrete that we meet the Eternal Thou, and it is this which prevents dialogue from degenerating into 'responsibility' to an abstract moral code or universal idea. The choice, therefore, is not between religion and morality but between a religion and morality wedded to the universal and a religion and morality wedded to the concrete. He says:

“Only out of a personal relationship with the Absolute can the absoluteness of the ethical co-ordinates arise without which there is no complete awareness of self. Even when the individual calls an absolute criterion handed down by religious tradition his own, it must be reforged in the fire of the truth of his personal essential relation to the Absolute if it is to win true validity. But always it is the religious which bestows, the ethical, which receives” (Buber, EG, 1952, p. 129)

It is always the religious which bestows and the ethical which receives is to be found in the nature of good. The good for Buber is not an objective state of affairs nor an inner feeling, but a type of relationship – the dialogue between man and man and between man and God. This means that the good cannot be referred back to any platonic universals or impersonal order of the cosmos, nor can it be founded in any general system of utility or justice. It grows instead out of that which is most particular and concrete, not pseudo concreteness of the ‘empirically verifiable’ but the actual present concreteness of the unique direction toward God which one apprehends and realizes in the meeting with the everyday. As Buber says:

“Good conceived thus cannot be located within any system of ethical co-ordination, for all those we know came into being on its account and existed or exist by virtue of it. Every ethos has its origin in a revelation, whether or not it is still aware of and obedient to it; and every revelation is revelation of human service to the goal of creation, in which service man authenticates himself.” (Buber, IGE, 1952, p. 83)

Tillich, on the other hand professes a theory of *theonomy* as the moral law. A theonomous ethics, according to Tillich, is neither something we impose on ourselves nor something imposed on us by another will or power. It means he neither believes in autonomy nor in heteronomy. He argues that true freedom is theonomous; the moral law of God is nothing else than our true or genuine being. Tillich says that theonomy refers to those persons or cultures “in which

the ultimate meaning of existence shines through all finite forms of thought and actions' the culture is transparent, and its creations are vessels of a spiritual content." (Tillich, 1957, p. xii) Morality is thus essentially religious for Tillich. Through theonomous morality, it is possible for the unconditional, infinite (Being) to 'break through' the cultural institutions of a given period. Autonomous ethics by contrast, appears only in its finite relationships with beings.

The courage to love, as the uniting of persons in a meaningful relationship, is stronger than death for Tillich. Avoiding the pit falls of the humanistic existentialism of Sartre, Tillich's religious existentialism does not get caught in the quagmire of death-talk and fundamental anxiety over one's isolation. He asserts that "love overcomes separation and creates participation in which there is more than that which the individuals involved can bring to it. Love is the infinite which is given to the finite." (Tillich, 1957, p. 160) Love is seen as being coexistent with authentic help, concern, and attempts to make whole again the fallen self. Courage, love, justice, and power are all "ethical realities, but (they) are rooted in the whole breadth of human existence and ultimately in the structure of being itself. (They) must be considered ontologically in order to be understood ethically." (Tillich, 1952, p. 01) A Theonomous ethics is rooted in the notion of *agape*, or Christian love. *Agape*, for Tillich, "points to the transcendent source of the content of the moral imperative" and unifies our actual nature with our essential being. (Tillich, 1963, p. 40) Against the existential situation of estrangement, *agape* overcomes fallen existence from the goodness of created essential being. This version of love also draws within itself the concept and reality of justice, as the acknowledgement of the other person as person, and the power to act. The courage to love is

inextricably linked to an act of faith. Religious existentialist ethics is rooted in a God-relation. The faith-foundation in an all-loving, all-knowing, all powerful creator grounds the existential individual in the world as an ethical, inquisitive, and loving manner. Thus, the religious existentialist, by searching for the meaning of Being, enters into an ethical relationship with the other. Ethical human relationships require a level of passion, of striving, of struggling. And relationships, for Tillich require faith.

Existentialism has always been identified as the philosophy with the pessimistic view of man. But it is evident here that it is existentialism which places its highest confidence in humanity – that people will choose to be humane as well as human. They do not look at their ‘nihilism’ as a gateway to disaster. But all apparently believe that the freedom they seek will lead not to murder and chaos, but to artistic sensitivity, deeply felt religion, secreteic ethics, or new political and social conscience. Existentialism does not replace morality and humane values but places them on surer ground. To give up belief in ‘morality’ as a set of a priori or empirically practical principles is not to take the role of the ‘fanatic’. It is to set aside invalid justifications and become moral for the right reasons – because one commits himself. Existentialism gives us perhaps the most optimistic view of man ever advanced in western philosophy: man will, without being ordered, instructed, forced by man or nature, choose to be humane. Sartre’s ‘existential hero’ and camus ‘Absurd hero’ are not madmen, and it is more than clear that Nietzsche’s nihilist overman is not a Nazi prototype. The existentialists may begin with Dostoevsky’s concern, ‘if there is no God, all is permitted,’ but they soon leave Dostoevskian worries behind. Why should we suppose that man will do ‘evil’ if we remove the forces of authority of ‘good’. Perhaps there is no reason, and the existentialists do not

even argue the point. In every existentialist, there is the optimistic and almost simple-minded presupposition that man's freedom is desirable without qualification.

Each existentialist is 'radical'. Kierkegaard rejects traditional Christianity to replace it with his own notion of becoming 'becoming a christian'. Nietzsche rejects the whole of Judeo-Christian morality to replace it with an ethic of 'self-realization'. Sartre and Merleau - Ponty became Marxists. In no case, however, it morality simply rejected, but reinterpreted in a personal and often more consistent way. Kierkegaard retains the moral side of Christianity, but makes personal commitment to God the defining work of his moral life. Nietzsche brutally degrades 'morality', which he says is 'immoral' but retains the moral virtues of courage, loyalty, integrity. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty place politics and revolutionary necessities above every day morality, but they do not simply reject morality out of hand. In each case, the existentialists reject the authority of 'morals' not to reject morality but to make it their own ethics. And where there is contradiction between their own morality and the old, the old morality is not simply dismissed, but necessarily recognized as an ever-present alternative choice:

"If I occupy myself in treating as absolute ends certain chosen persons, my wife, my son, my friends, the poor man I meet on my way, If I wear myself out in fulfilling my duties towards them, I shall have to pass in silence over the injustices of the age, the class-struggle, anti-Semitism, etc. and finally I shall have to profit from oppression to do good...But on the other hand, if I throw myself into a revolutionary enterprise, I take the risk of having no leisure for personal relations, and worse still of being brought by the logic of action to treat the greater part of men and even my comrades as means." (Sartre, *Situations, II*, 1948, p. 165)

Postscript

POSTSCRIPT

In conformity with the given nature of a work such as this it becomes a requirement to lay out the main arguments and review its cogency in order to examine and thereafter clearly state the conclusive bearings which may point towards a definite objective thesis. In the case of this dissertation the above procedure would not only be inappropriate but totally antithetical to its spirit. For the formulations of authenticity we have brought into consideration have been most decidedly 'unscientific' (to use a Kierkegaardian term) and open-ended - for the posture of authenticity acquired by the philosophers under consideration is forbidding of any presumed conclusion, thereby encouraging each person to choose a path unique to one self. As Nietzsche had said through Zarathustra, 'If you would go high, use your own legs'. At best the various formulations we have studied can serve as prescriptions, as there is no single infallible route to authenticity; nor can there be one.

However culling out of the themes of authenticity under consideration a unanimity of conviction and its concerns are clearly visible which are translatable into the general idea that the actualization of authenticity is by no means a solitary pursuit to be achieved outside a social context. Away from a social void or an underground an attunement with a committed and active life within a community has to be achieved. Authenticity becomes an unceasing call for significant actions, for it is actions alone that provide the content for this singular norm. A large number of accounts of authenticity modeled around the ideal of creativity, spell out the spontaneous creation of one's life, the crystallization of which achieves a possibility only if situated in a context that pertains to that which is social and cultural in nature. For in this are deeply

steeped those conventions, ideas and institutions against which an individual has to enter into a continuing struggle to achieve authentic selfhood. Societal existence acquires great significance for on the one hand it is the fountainhead of all the ethical norms and on the other a potential source of a self-identity that must freely and consciously be overcome, modified or internalized for the realization of what one wants to become.

In most cases it is 'boundary situations' in which a determined struggle followed by a caring forging of one's authenticity takes place. These situations are moments that are set in a larger social canvass. On a desert island human life can at best be assessed according to the physical criteria of survival making any idea of authenticity as completely redundant. For authenticity is not about factual life but about life worth living.

Literature on authenticity is replete with descriptions of conflicts between individuals acting on different ethical maxims. These conflicts press the need for resolute and authentic decisions and spontaneous actions which can take place only in a social context which is the indispensable locale of authenticity.

The thinkers on authenticity unanimously accepted that an ethic of authenticity cannot be constructed a priori for it was their strongest conviction that authenticity manifests itself through the willing acceptance of the subjective pathos without the support of any rigorous ethical code.

Today the danger of the death of authenticity has become most palpable with the 'postmodernist' attempt to dissolve the subjective pathos of authenticity which lies at the heart of existentialist concern. Yet the fact that this ideal demands serious consideration and the interest it has evoked in prominent philosophers and writers over the past two centuries and most importantly the

urge it has aroused in the readers to experience this pathos is a clear indication that in authenticity as an ideal there is much more than just empty 'jargon' as Adorno had argued (Adorno, 1973 p. 10). For the deepest yearning to create ones own individuality and remain true to one self can ultimately not be suppressed.

The decline of the ethic of objectivity created an appeal for authenticity. Likewise the decline of the ethic of subjectivity in the postmodern era and with multinational markets and mass media thwarting individuality, a zealous quest for authenticity as a personal and corrective ideal is bound to be invigorated. Only the revival of the authentic pathos can arrest the decay of what is most precious in us – our ownmost self. And as Jacob Golomb writes, in the introduction to his book *In search of Authenticity*:

“If authenticity is madness, we should all be a little crazy in order to become what we cherish most, our own true selves”
(Golomb, 1995, p.5).

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