

C H A P T E R- II

S E C T I O N- I

A brief account of Kierkegaard's Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION :

Søren Kierkegaard, known as the father of Existentialism, was born in 1813 in Denmark and died at the age of 42. Kierkegaard can not be regarded as a Philosopher in the traditional sense. His philosophy was an adjunct to his religious faith. He was mainly interested in religion, particularly in Christianity. But he gave a new interpretation of Christianity from the existentialist point of view. He is regarded as the parent of Existentialism. The notion of 'existence' takes a quite different colour with Kierkegaard and with later existentialists of the twentieth century. " In him we can see for the first time..... the desire to change one's readers, to free them from their past illusions, and make them not only think, but even live differently ".<sup>1</sup> and this characteristic is found in all existentialistic writings, says Mary Warnock. According to Margaret Chatterjee, " He was a protestant in many senses of the term. He protested both against all

collectives which threatened to swamp men's individuality and he protested against the way in which philosophers had cut off intellect from the inner springs of human existence which alone could give it life".<sup>2</sup>

" Indeed Kierkegaard was so much impervious to the idea of system-making that he chose rather an academically non-conformist mode of Philosophizing a deeply personal one- for breaking up a new path in philosophical thinking",<sup>3</sup> says Prof. Debabrata Sinha.

#### KIERKEGAARD ON EXISTENCE

That existence is primordial and irreducible is a truth which was overlooked in traditional philosophy. Kierkegaard laid his hand upon this simple truth- that unlike a category of thought, existence is unamenable to conceptual analysis. According to him, " existence can not be represented in a concept, because it is too dense, concrete and rich. I am, and this fact that I exist is so compelling and enveloping a reality that it can not be reproduced thinly in any of my mental concepts, though it is

clearly the life and death fact without which all my concepts would be void",<sup>4</sup> Unless existence is a concept, it can not be rationally analysed. According to him, it is impossible to prove that anything exists. " Generally speaking, it is a difficult matter to prove that anything exists, ..... the entire demonstration always turns into something very different and becomes an additional development of the consequences that flow from my having assumed that the object in question exists. Thus I always reason from existence, not toward existence, whether I move in the sphere of palpable sensible fact or in the realm of thought..... Whether we call existence an accessorium or the eternal prius it is never subject to demonstration"<sup>5</sup>

He points out that 'Existence' as such and 'the thought of Existence' are not the same thing. By this he seems to mean that philosophers may think about 'Existence' in different ways and may formulate different views about it , but 'Existence' as a fact is so rich in content that it cannot be represented in a concept. There can be no concept of Existence. Or it may be said that the fact that I exist does not imply ' I think, I exist'. Because I must first exist, in order

that I may think that I exist. It may, therefore, be said that if existence can not be a concept, then quite clearly it can not be reduced to essence, nor can priority for essence over existence be claimed. Then, again, if thought as the objective reality be identical with being, an actually existing being becomes identical with his thought of himself. But this is sheer tautology, because this being which is ascribed to the thinker does not signify that he is, but only that he is engaged in thinking. The existing subject, on the other hand, is engaged in existing, which is indeed the case with every human being. The existence of a human being who is a historical being living here and now is prior to 'essence' prior to the abstractions of impersonal thinking. This may be taken as an anticipation of the Sartrean statement 'Existence precedes essence'.

Although Kierkegaard's is a revolt mainly against Hegel, it is virtually a revolt against the entire, Platonic tradition, against all those who maintain that 'essence' is prior to 'existence'. Kierkegaard thus initiates the discussion on Existentialism and we look for its further elaboration and development in subsequent Existentialist

thinkers. Existentialists do, however, differ among themselves and they divide themselves into two Camps-theists and atheists. But nevertheless, none of them, while formulating his view, can rise above the basic principle of Existentialism as set forth by Kierkegaard.

### THE MEANING OF EXISTENCE

The word 'existence' acquired a new meaning in Kierkegaard's Philosophy. So long it had identically the same sense as 'being', i.e. it was just a synonym for 'being'. Previously it could be said that a table exists as meaningfully as it could be said that a man exists. But with the foundation of the Existentialist system of Philosophy by Kierkegaard who himself coined the term "Existentialism", 'Existence' and 'being' disengaged themselves.

According to Kierkegaard, 'existence' means much more than what is meant by mere 'being'. Every instance of existence is also an instance of being, but not vice-versa i.e. 'being' is not necessarily 'existence'. Existence belongs

only to human beings, and not necessarily to all human beings, but only to those who are self-conscious and self-determined or at least endowed with the freedom of the will.

Unlike Hegel, Kierkegaard holds that actual existence (existence is always actual) can never be reduced to a concept which signifies only the possibility of actual existence. On his part, he is concerned only with individual human existence, and this spirit of Existentialism is found in the thoughts of all succeeding existentialists in so far as they unanimously hold that existence always stands for individual existence, never for collective existence, Hegel failed to value the individual human being standing apart from the 'Crowd', but Kierkegaard did not. He appreciated the seriousness of the ethical dilemma facing the individual, i.e. he appreciated that the concept of 'individual existence' involves the notion of 'Choice', 'individuality', 'freedom' 'responsibility', 'commitment', 'despair' and 'guilt'.

In Kierkegaard's special sense of 'individual existence', a man is not simply a biological, Psychological or social animal, but a 'human being', and 'existence'. Existence may be authentic or inauthentic. In the strict sense, it means only authentic existence, not the inauthentic. The distinction between authentic

and inauthentic existence has been beautifully explained by Kierkegaard in his 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript', " Eternity is a winged-horse, infinitely passed, and time is a worn-out jade, the existing individual is the driver. That is to say, he is such a driver when his mode of existence is not an existence loosely so-called, for then he is no driver but a drunken peasant who lies asleep in the wagon and lets the horses take care of themselves. To be sure, he also drives and is a driver, and so there are many who also exist" <sup>6</sup> .

Unlike Descartes and his followers, Kierkegaard holds that existence is something to be striven for, not self-evident. It is only by passionately committing itself that can one exist at all.

Thus according to Kierkegaard, 'existence' means the significance which one provides for his own life through the realization of one's personal freedom and autonomy, through passionate commitment. True existence is not mere existence characterized by the capacity for abstract thinking.

The Cartesian ' Cogito ergo sum ' is Criticised by Kierkegaard as being confused, because the 'cogito' presupposes

one's existence and does not prove it. As he says, " because I exist and because I think, therefore, I think that I exist... I must exist in order to think<sup>7</sup> ". He makes a sharp distinction between the theoretical and the practical and argues that there is only a practical self, i.e. a living or existing self, and no theoretical self or transcendental self. According to him, Kant put undue emphasis upon the knowing self to the neglect of the existing self. Instead of beginning with thinking or knowing self, one could begin with the willing, striving, living, existing self. Instead of saying, ' I think, therefore, I am, one could very well say, " I suffer, therefore, I am "or" I get married therefore, I am ". Kierkegaard diametrically opposes the traditional Cartesian view point by denying the existential thinking subject and says that a purely conceptual existence is no existence at all. Only our ethical being is real, the abstract thinker ( the Cogito ) does not exist, because abstract thought is thought without a thinker. As Kierkegaard says, " The real subject is not the cognitive subject, .... the real subject is the ethically existing subject"<sup>8</sup>. Again, " A particularly existing human being is surely not an idea, and his existence is surely something quite different from the conceptual existence of

the idea. An existence is as a particular human being is doubtless and imperfection in comparison with the eternal life of the idea, but it is a perfection in comparison with not existing at all." <sup>9</sup>

Kierkegaard makes a distinction between self and existence. In the words of J.W. Elrod, " The self and existence are not synonymous. The self is the being of the individual, an existence..... is constituted by the individual's ethical responsibility for actualising the self or his being. Every human being is characterised by possession of this self-structure. The existing individual however, is particular. The particularity of existence is constituted by the manner of the individual's relation to his being" <sup>10</sup> Self and existence are dialectically related. Existence emerges as a result of the individual's execution of his ethical task of actualizing and understanding himself. " The more the existing individual understands himself the more concretely he exists ; and the more concretely he exists, the more he understands himself. The ethical task of actualizing and understanding the self-structure gives rise to existence." <sup>11</sup>

In this connection we must refer to the ambiguity of the word existence. Throughout the existentialist literature, there can be found the double meaning attitude to this word. When Kierkegaard says that one must exist in order to think, he takes the word 'exist' in its general sense of being really and concretely. Unless an individual exists first, there is no question of his thinking that he exists, because thinking is possible only for an existing human being. But when Kierkegaard says that existence emerges as a result of individual's execution of his ethical task of actualizing and understanding himself, he does not take 'existence' in its general sense, but in the technical existentialist sense meaning that existence is authentic being which is acquired by the individual concerned not with which he is born. It is an attainment through moral and spiritual discipline. Thus 'existence' means really ethico-religious existence, not mere in authentic being. To quote R.C.Solomon, " This play between two senses of 'exists' and 'existence' ( and occasionally 'being' ) permeates all of Kierkegaard's writings ( as well as the writings of later

'existentialists'). Kierkegaard unlike the many Philosophers after Descartes for whom personal existence was simply self-evident, insists that existence is something to be striven for. In this sense, therefore, the standard and worn existentialists Cliche' " Existence precedes essence" does not apply literally to Kierkegaard ( or to Heidegger)."<sup>12</sup>

Existential Dialectic and the  
spheres of existence

Kierkegaard has introduced an existential dialectic in his philosophical system, which must be sharply distinguished from the historical dialectic as found in the Philosophy of Hegel. Both the kinds of dialectic are concerned with the formation of mutually opposite concepts ; and there is a close similarity between the different stages of life or modes of existence as delineated in the dialectic of Kierkegaard and the different forms of consciousness envisaged in Heidegger's monumental work the Phenomenology of Spirit'. In the dialectics of both the Philosophers, there can be found mutually opposing concepts regarding life, self

and different value systems. On account of this similarity between the two dialectics, one may be very often confused with the other. As a matter of fact, Kierkegaard's dialectic is quite different from that of Hegel in respect of relation inspite of their similarity in content. Dr. M. K. Bhaara says, " The difference between Kierkegaardian dialectic and Hegelian dialectic does not lie in their content but rather in the relations between the various stages and forms of life."<sup>13</sup>

According to both the aesthetic life, i.e. the life of non-com attitude is unsatisfactory, and Christianity is the most authentic. view of life. But while in Hegel's dialectic the different stages of life have been arranged according to the movement of reason, in Kierkegaard's dialectic the different stages of life have been arranged according to choice on the basis of faith and passion. Hegel's rationalism or conceptualism is applicable to logic, not to life. The free choice of a man is not directed by any rational principle, but by a leap of faith. Reason informs us that we have the power or the right to choose something, but

it does not inform us about the object of our choice. While walking along the way of life man encounters paradoxes and alternative ways of action ; but he can not solve those paradoxes by means of reason, he can solve them only by a choice of one alternative through leap of faith. R.C.Solomon opines that Kierkegaard's dialectic is often presented in misleading language, as he speaks of his dialectic as 'qualitative' as opposed to Hegel's dialectic of pure being, which is 'quantitative' ; and he claims that his dialectic is the dialectic of actual existence rather than that of the concept of existence out as a matter of fact he is equally concerned with conceptions of existence, and his difference with Hegel lies in the value he places on the conception of oneself as an individual not as collectivity, and in the nature of the process of movement from one conception to another.

In the existential dialectic of Kierkegaard, one comes across three alternative ways of life, in other-words three fundamental commitments , sometimes called by him 'view of life', 'existential categories', 'spheres of

existence', 'modes of existing' and 'stages on life's way',  
These three conceptions of life are fundamentally incompatible  
in the sense that one can choose only one of them at a time  
without any compromise between them by the use of reason.  
Each sphere of existence as its own system of values, hence  
there can be no further criterion for choosing between spheres.  
Thus the choice must be made without a criterion, without a  
guiding principle, without reason, but only by a leap of  
commitment which can not be defended further. " Thus there is  
no rational way of life, no one conception of life-style which  
is more reasonable than others. One's choice of fundamental  
values is ' irrational ' because there is no reason for  
choosing one style of life rather than another, nor is there  
the possibility that one can compromise to find the best of  
each.....it is not chosen because it is most rational,  
but chosen inspite of its lack of defence by Reason".<sup>14</sup>

Kierkegaard has glorified the freedom of choice  
as much as Hegel has glorified reason. As he says, " The  
most tremendous thing which has been granted to man is the  
choice of freedom "<sup>15</sup>  
He considers the freedom of choice  
to be the most basic value that makes a man existent in the

real sense of the term. Says Dr.M.K.Bhadra, " This freedom of choice, Kierkegaard believes, is the most fundamental of values and it is what makes a man a human being or an existent individual. It is the recognition and the use of this freedom that is far more important than the object of choice. In Hegel's opinion, freedom consists simply in following the dictates of reason. Kierkegaard thinks that the obedience of freedom to anything else is the cancellation of one's freedom".

16

According to Kierkegaard, each man's life may have three stages namely, (i) the aesthetic stage (ii) the moral stage (iii) the spiritual stage. These stages are distinct and independent of one another. That is to say, no compromise is possible among them. There is no rational way of passing from one of these stages to another. However, these stages indicate the advancement of the sense of the value of human life. Kierkegaard believes that the spiritual stage is the highest (however, he sometimes glorifies the ethical stage). Sometimes he says that both the moral and religious stage are opposed to the aesthetic stage. According to R.C.Solomon,

such ambiguity persists throughout Kierkegaard's writings, and so the consistency of his dialectic becomes questionable.

The first stage of life is called the aesthetic stage in the sense that it is a stage of non-committal attitude. At this stage, one does not give one's opinion on a subject either positive or negative ; he rather withholds his opinion in all matters of life, where the situation demands either a positive or a negative answer. The second stage i.e.the moral stage is the stage of 'either or', i.e., the stage of choosing one of the alternatives. In a sense it is the central stage of human life because success in life depends upon authentic choice. If one's choice is not authentic, one can not act authentically, and consequently the desired goal can not be reached. The ultimate stage, namely, the spiritual stage is a stage beyond the ethical, and at this stage , a man surrenders himself absolutely to the will of God, his indwelling spirit, and his will being absolutely attuned with the will of God, all responsibility is ultimately vested

upon God. Here everything occurs spontaneously, as man becomes divinised through self-development in course of the preceding stages of life, " The ethical life is the life of a man in the Society, the life of a man is regarded as a part of the community. Such a man lives according to principles which consider every man as an end in himself and self interest is subsumed under moral duty. The ethical life with the characteristics of universality, rationality and duty, in short, morality, meant for Kierkegaard the ethics of Kant." <sup>17</sup> But while Kant gives a justification of ultimate moral principles Kierkegaard does not give any such justification, and he holds that the categorical imperatives as ultimate values are not ultimately justifiable. " The central thing of an ethical life which is accepted as the most necessary is not the claim to justifiability of these ethical principles. The ethical life considers the individual interest to be subservient to the demands of principles. But the origins or justifications of these principles is not provided by the <sup>18</sup> dialectic of Kierkegaard".

According to Kierkegaard, the transition of a man from one stage to another stage is not logically necessary but only Psychological. He does not claim to give us a valid argument for accepting one stage over another, and so there does not arise the question of logical compulsion of the choice of one stage rather than another. In the words of Solomon, " The reasons which Kierkegaard gives for moving from one stage to the next are not logical but Psychological ; they are not logically compelling, but they may be compelling for some individual".<sup>19</sup> Again, " Kierkegaard is not giving reasons in the sense of logically compelling reasons .....but reasons only in the degenerate sense that they are personal considerations which might persuade us to accept his position".<sup>20</sup>

It may appear that Kierkegaard's thought involves self-contradiction, because the transition from one stage to another has no rational justification, yet he gives some reasons for passing from one stage to another by appealing to the feeling of despair and guilt. But this is only apparent, as Dr.M.K.Bhadra says, " There is an apparent inconsistency in the philosophy of Kierkegaard and it issues from the ambiguous use of 'reason' and 'rational'. It is true that 'reason' and 'rationality' are strictly logical notions. It is in this sense that Kierkegaard denies that an individual can demonstrate the logical necessity for choice of one sphere than another. Another sense of ' reason' also exists and this has been utilized by Hegel.

It means anything that makes one more likely to accept some conclusion. In Hegel's philosophy this use of 'reason' and the use of 'reason' in the sense of logical necessity are combined together in the central notion of teleological explanation. The senses often remain undistinguished. In Kierkegaard's philosophy also, the senses of 'reason' and 'rationality' are often confusingly fused and the inability to distinguish these different uses produce confusions in his entire philosophy".<sup>21</sup>

#### ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION IN HUMAN LIFE

The word 'anxiety' may be used to denote a phenomenon discussed by several Existentialist Philosophers, although the word does not have precisely the same meaning in every writer who uses it. 'Anxiety' (also called anguish or dread).

is understood somewhat differently by Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre. Still there is close affinity among them in the use of the word. Kierkegaard is regarded as the pioneer in dealing with the concept of anxiety in Existentialist Philosophy.

Heidegger developed his own concept of anxiety on the basis of Kierkegaard's concept of the same, and Sartre is indebted to both Kierkegaard and Heidegger for the formation of his own concept of anxiety. Heidegger says, " The man who has gone farthest in analysing the concept of anxiety.....is Soren

<sup>22</sup>  
Kierkegaard" . Contrasting the descriptions of anxiety in Kierkegaard and Heidegger, Sartre says that they " do not appear to us contradictory ; on the contrary, the one implies the other".<sup>23</sup>

Kierkegaard's concept of anxiety has been elaborately dealt with in his book ' The Concept of Dread'. He introduces the notion of anxiety in the context of a discussion of the origin of sin. He understands the story of the fall of man as one that describes an event or development in the life of every man, the passage from innocence to sin. It is the prior condition of anxiety that makes this event possible. It is described in at least three ways :

- 1) It is inherent in the state of innocence ;
- 2) It is linked to freedom ; and
- 3) It is associated with man's peculiar constitution as body and soul, established in spirit.

# RABINDRA BHARATI UNIVERSITY

CALCUTTA-50

Received from the Rabindra Bharati University a copy of the thesis for  
D.Litt / Ph.D entitled Intellect and ~~Emo~~ Emotion in  
Existentialism

Submitted by Sri Swapan K. Guha

Date : 17.3.93

Signature :

Sus

First, already in dreaming innocence there is something like an instability, an uneasiness, by which the tranquility of bliss is disturbed. This is illustrated in the awakening of sexuality and sensuality in the individual. There is a malaise (malady) which finally issues in the sensual act and therefore, in the loss of innocence and a changed quality of existence.

According to Kierkegaard, "Dread is a qualification of the dreaming spirit, and as such it has its place in Psychology"<sup>24</sup>. When we consider the dialectical determinants in dread, it appears they have precisely the characteristic ambiguity of Psychology. "Dread is a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy"<sup>25</sup>. "The Dread which is posited in innocence is, in the first place, not guilt, in the second place, it is not a heavy burden, not a suffering which can not be brought into a harmony with the felicity of innocence.... this dread belongs to the child so essentially that it can not do without it, even though it alarms him, it Captivates him nevertheless by its sweet feeling of apprehension"<sup>26</sup>.

Secondly, anxiety is a kind of instability prior to action, and so it is described as the 'Vertigo' or 'dizziness' of freedom, in so far as freedom means possibility and standing on the edge of possibility is like standing on the edge of a precipice. Using a different metaphor of his own John Macquarrie has

explained this concept of anxiety thus : " One might say that freedom is by its very nature pregnant with possibility, and it is the stirring of possibility in the womb of freedom that is experienced as the primordial anxiety"<sup>27</sup>

Thirdly, anxiety is the tension which man with his peculiar constitution is subject to. Man is a synthesis of body and soul united in the spirit." The human task is to accomplish the synthesis of body and soul, and this task is from the beginning anxiety-laden. Anxiety is a peculiar human phenomenon. An animal knows no anxiety, for its life is purely sensual, an angel likewise, knows no anxiety, for his life is that of the pure intellect. But man conjoining sense and reason, body and soul lives in the shadow of anxiety"<sup>28</sup>.

According to Kierkegaard, anxiety is not only the presupposition or precondition for sin, it is also the effect of sin, because a fallen man lives amidst ever-deepening anxiety which is not the fear of something definite but that of something indefinite, for instance, the fear of death or that of infinite freedom.

According to Kierkegaard, there is no one who does not have anxiety in the face of his existence. The life of

modern man is lived in despair. Kierkegaard summed up the agony of the beginning and end of life.

" Hear the cry of the mother at the hour of giving birth, see the struggle of the dying at the last moment, and say then whether that which ends like this can be designed for pleasure" .<sup>29</sup>

Human life is not designed for pleasure. We strive for happiness in order to escape anxiety and despair. But there is no escape. This is the universal human condition. We suffer from anxiety even when we are not aware of it, and even when there is nothing to fear, nothing in the objective world to feel anxious about. This is because our anxiety is not objective at all, it is subjective anxiety- it is the universal fear of something that is nothing, it is the fear of the nothingness of human existence. About the meaninglessness of our existence, he says :

' I stick my finger into  
existence- it smells of nothing.  
Where am I ? What is the thing  
called the world ? ... Who am I ?  
How did I come into the world ?  
Why was I not consulted ?<sup>30</sup>

The story of an ordinary young man in his 'Either/Or', 'A Fragment of Life', shows how the man keeps falling into depression though he experiences the various forms of enjoyment, sensual and aesthetic. For Kierkegaard, in the fact of total crisis, at the edge of the abyss, only absolute faith and the leap to God can overcome the meaninglessness of our existence. Only the restoration of Orthodox Christianity, and the surrender of reason can overcome the sense of anxiety and hopeless despair for the solitary individuals of the modern world.

Kierkegaard's maxim ;  
"Truth is Subjectivity "

The 'Characteristic of all the Existentialist writing is the desire to change one's readers, to free them from their past illusions, and make them not only think, but even live differently"<sup>31</sup> .

"It is Kierkegaard, an Existentialist, who, for the first time, wanted to free people from the illusion of 'Objectivity' to him, the task of philosophy is to rediscover 'subjectivity' which we have lost. 'Subjectivity' is taken to be the very home of concrete being, to which we have access

in ways other than cognitive. As Kierkegaard sounds the cardinal note 'Subjectivity is truth, subjectivity is reality'<sup>32</sup> .

Now we are to understand what Kierkegaard means by 'objectivity' and 'Subjectivity' and also the significance of his above said cardinal note. 'Objectivity' is the tendency of those people who adopt or discover general laws that govern both behavior and thought. It is the acceptance of the role of the observer. History, Sociology, Psychology, Ethics- any subject matter which is bound by rules of evidence or which can be taught in the class-room is an objective study. This tendency transforms an observer into almost a ghost and the spontaneity and inwardness of life is lost. In objectivity the individual loses himself in the mass and ceases to recognize that the knower is an existing individual.

Kierkegaard aims to destroy the scientific myth which could dominate a man's ethical life and religious life too. The myth being, that everything is causally determined and a proper observation could provide us with a complete and true account of the behaviour of everything, Kierkegaard raises his voice against this domination of Scientific myth i.e. objectivity, over religious life and

says, " An objective acceptance of Christianity is papanism or thoughtlessness..... Christianity protests against every form of objectivity, it desires that the subject should be infinitely concerned about himself. It is with subjectivity that Christianity is concerned and it is only in subjectivity that its truth exists, if it exists at all. Objectively christianity has absolutely no existence."<sup>33</sup>

He thinks that it is not easy to discard objectivity. There are many people who can live their whole lives under the domination of objectivity. Under this condition, they are benighted and need to be rescued from this state of darkness. So long they are in this state, they are in illusion and when they are freed, they are enlightened. This enlightenment is called by Kierkegaard a sort of conversion. He comes to this conclusion from his own life when he lived a short part of his, under the domination of objectivity i.e. under illusion, and threw of the illusion later on.

Kierkegaard formulates his principle 'subjectivity is truth' in his book 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript', and here, by this principle, he means the inwardness of religious life. Descartes and Kant also thought of Subjectivity. But subjectivity for Kierkegaard, is something different. It

is of the essence of the person not of the subject,

Every existentialist speaks about an individual subject existing in the world, who freely acts for realization of his subjectivity, or his 'real being', and proves himself an existent. Kierkegaardian subjectivity is the realization of a concrete individual existent of his 'true being' in the Being of God, and this realization is as good as his realization of truth. "Subjectivity is the truth," says Kierkegaard<sup>34</sup>. He shows in his 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript' how subjectivity is the truth :  
" when subjectivity, inwardness, is the truth, the truth becomes objectively a paradox ; and the fact that the truth is objectively a paradox shows in its turn that subjectivity is the truth. For the objective situation is repellent, and the expression for the objective repulsion constitutes the tension and the measure of the corresponding inwardness. The paradoxical character of the truth is its objective uncertainty, this uncertainty is an expression for the passionate inwardness, and this passion is precisely the truth"<sup>35</sup> .

Now the question is how does the truth become a paradox ? " By virtue of the relationship subsisting between the eternal, essential truth and the existing individual, the

paradox came into being. Let us now go further, let us suppose that the eternal essential truth is itself a paradox. How does the paradox come into being ? By putting the eternal, essential truth into juxtaposition with existence. Hence when we posit such a conjunction with the truth itself, the truth becomes a paradox. The eternal truth has come into being in time, this is the paradox"<sup>36</sup> - says Kierkegaard.

About paradox he says that paradox is above every system. It is religious life which makes us aware of Paradox the paradox of the God-man ( the Incarnation), the paradox of communication between human and divine (prayer), the paradox of eternal life, Such paradoxes are beyond reason. We can not possibly be objective about them, Only subjectivity or faith can comprehend the paradoxes of Christianity. He also says that it is the internal conflict between the objective uncertainty and our passion of the infinite that enables us to attain subjectivity.

From the above description of subjectivity, the essential characteristics of subjective knowledge can be pointed out in the following way : firstly, it can not be passed on from one person to the next. Secondly, it always has

the nature of a paradox, and lastly, it is concrete, not abstract. And for this reason it must be necessarily related to a concrete living existent.

The difference between the objective truth and subjective truth is brought out by Kierkegaard in the following passage :

"When the question of truth is raised in an objective manner, reflection is directed objectively to the truth, as an object to which the knower is related. Reflection is not focussed upon the relationship, however, but upon the question of whether it is the truth to which the knower is related. If only the object to which he is related is the truth the subject is accounted to be in the truth.

When the question of truth is raised subjectively, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship, if only the mode of this relationship is the truth, the individual is in the truth even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true" .<sup>37</sup>

He further says, "The objective accent falls on WHAT is said, the subjective accent on HOW it is said....objectively the interest is focussed merely on the thought content, subjectively

on the inwardness. At its maximum this inward 'how' is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the infinite is the truth. But the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity becomes the truth" .<sup>38</sup>

### Kierkegaard's view on Religion

#### Particularly Christianity

Kierkegaard was mainly interested in Religion and specially Christianity. It may be said that his philosophy is an adjunct to his religious faith. In the nineteenth century European thought we see the general intellectual tendency towards reducing reality to a mere category of thought, to a rational concept, in the philosophy of Hegel's panlogistic system. Reason or spirit becomes in Hegel the be-all and end-all of Philosophy. The logical categories become the framework of reality itself. The logic of the mind is the same as the metaphysics of reality. 'The real is the rational and the rational is the real'<sup>39</sup>. Hegel's reason is in a process of evolution. This process of the self-development of the reason, Hegel calls the dialectic of reason.

In the second part of the Century Hegelianism met with a revolt in the form of radical anti-intellectualism. Hegelianism which reduces the entire world to a system of

abstract categories and tries to explain man from the objective point of view can never do justice to man as a living subject intent on working out his own destiny. An objective treatment of the human being only weakens ethical and religious passion. Besides, Hegel's Absolute Idealism does not recognise the reality of the individual and his freedom and responsibility. It holds that man is the reproduction of the Infinite Spirit. It places man beyond death i.e. it tries to prove the unreality of death. Hence arose Kierkegaard's bitter attack on Hegel's 'System'. Hegel, who goes to the length of talking of 'Objective Spirit', 'Objective will', 'General will' and 'Universal spirit' are the permanent target of Kierkegaard's scathing Criticism, irony and satire. 'Infact, Kierkegaard can be described as socrates reborn in the nineteenth century to counteract the beneful effect of Hegel on Contemporary Ethics and Religion"<sup>40</sup>

' There can be no doubt about his passionate attachment to the christian faith. Yet this was accompanied by an equally passionate hostility to the conventional and, as he believed degenerate forms of Christianity current in nineteenth century Denmark, and this hostility culminated in an all-out

attack on the church as he knew it" <sup>41</sup>. Kierkegaard was preoccupied with the religious problem and with how to become a Christian. The progress of the human self is from the aesthetic through the ethical to the religious stage, but again this can not be rationalized or presented in a logical way. Christianity itself is the paradox and demands the leap of faith. ' All Christianity is rooted in the paradoxical, whether one accepts it as a believer, or rejects it precisely because it is paradoxical'.....<sup>42</sup>

What commonly passes for Christianity, the doctrines and ceremonies of the conventional Church, is a perversion.

Towards the end of his life Kierkegaard became increasingly violent in his attacks on Christian institutions. In his last journals he sees Christianity more and more in world-renouncing terms and as the inward decision of the individual. Christianity in the New Testament has to do with man's will, everything turns upon changing the will, every expression everything is related to this basic idea in Christianity which makes it what it is- a change of will. In Christendom on the other hand, the whole of Christianity has been transferred to intellectuality ; so it becomes a doctrine.

Kierkegaard is, therefore, a spiritual pragmatist. He maintains that God being a spiritual principle and not an object, can not be interlectually understood, far less proved, except by my own inward straining and development towards God in faith, respect, worship, love, fear and suffering. The so called arguments for the existence of God miss this point and are unspiritual in outlook. The intellectual idea of God can at best posit a ' possible ', and no amount of argument can make a leap from the possible to the existing. ' One proves God's existence by worship..... not by proofs' <sup>51</sup> - says Kierkegaard.

## Section- II

### Elements of Intellect and Emotion in Kierkegaard's Philosophy and their relative predominance

Now we are to find out the elements of intellect and emotion in Kierkegaard's Philosophy. His Philosophical views can be classified under the following heads :

- a) His revolt against all those who maintain that ' Essence is existence '.
- b) His idea of God.
- c) His view on religion.

and our whole concern is with the intellectual" <sup>43</sup> . Kierkegaard discusses with a good deal of humour, the behaviour of professional monks and religious preachers who fritter away their love of God in outward demonstration and profession which only serve to inflame their vanity and tempt them away from God.

" He formulated his main problem in the form, how can I become a Christian ? and asserted that his religion was neither the habitual religion of an unreflective Church-goer nor that of a Hegelian. An unreflective church goer, according to Kierkegaard, is a Christian only because he is a member of a particular community. His Christianity is only superficial, depersonalised, it does not belong to the core of his personality. Similarly the religion of a Hegelian rationalist who looks upon abstract thought as the ultimate reality is also depersonalised religion so neither the unreflective church goer nor the Hegelian can be a Christian in the true sense of the term'.

" According to him, most men who call themselves Christians do not know what true Christianity is Religion is not a mere formalistic or ritualistic affair. It must be realised in one's own life. The church has reduced Christianity to an empty ritualism. 'To be' and not 'to know' should be the main motto of our life, if we want to be true

religious. A man is truly religious not because he is versed in theological literature but because he has living contact with God, a contact which transforms his whole life. He should feel the presence of God everywhere and be guided by Him at every moment of his life.

Thus Kierkegaard renounces a barely formalistic or ritualistic conception of religion and at the same time a Hegelian conception of it."<sup>44</sup>

#### KIERKEGAARD'S IDEA OF GOD

Kierkegaard is a theist. He calls God an "unknown something":

" ..... It is the unknown. It is not a human being, in so far as we know what man is ; nor is it any other known thing. So let us call this unknown something : the God"<sup>45</sup> - says Kierkegaard. He thinks that it is very difficult to prove that anything exists, because we always reason from existence, not toward existence. So the idea of demonstrating that this ' unknown something ' ( God ) exists is nothing but a folly attempt, because the idea of God's existence is already presupposed as certain in the beginning. In that case nothing is proved but merely the content of a

conception is developed The God is not a name but a concept. As regards the proof he says, ' as long as I keep my hold on the proof i.e.continue to demonstrate, the existence does not come out ..... but when I let the proof go, the existence is there.....whoever therefore attempts to demonstrate the existence of God, proves in lieu thereof something else, something which at times perhaps does not need a proof.....' <sup>46</sup>

So ' if the God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it ; and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it- says Kierkegaard. <sup>47</sup>

But the question if the existence of God can not be proved, how is it that Kierkegaard speaks of the ' unknown something ( God ) ? What is the ground of his belief in God or wherefrom does he get the idea of God ?

Here Kierkegaard refers to the paradoxical passion of reason. About this paradoxical passion of reason he says '..... the paradox is the source of thinker's passion..... But the highest pitch of every passion is always to will its own downfally and so it is also the supreme passion of the reason to seek a Collision, though this collision must in one way or another prove its undoing. The supreme paradox

of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought can not think<sup>48</sup>.

Reason being inspired by its paradoxical passion, collides with this 'unknown something' which thought can not think. This something is neither a human being nor any known thing. Kierkegaard calls this unknown something : The God. So, according to him, the paradoxical passion of the reason necessarily leads to the idea of the God which does indeed exist, but is not known.

This ' unknown something ' is the limit to which the reason repeatedly comes but cannot advance beyond this point. For Kierkegaard then, our reason is incompetent to pronounce anything positive. He says, ' The reason has brought the God as near as possible, and yet He is as far away as ever ?<sup>49</sup>

He further points out that a man equipped with the power of reason makes the best of it, but ultimately comes to discover its discursive character. Reason, with its dazzling brilliance leaves us half way resulting in disappointment when the path of reasons wings off, a void is created between the knower and the known, leaving the former in a state of

deep reflection, out of which emerges another faculty, namely 'faith'. For Kierkegaard, faith alone can fill up the gap. In a state of extreme bewilderment faith evolves as the last resort and the person concerned, with full enthusiasm, takes a leap upto goal- a leap that is founded on faith. Kierkegaard regards God as the supreme eternal subject who reveals Himself to faith. He comes to the conclusion that God is the ultimate foundation and we find ourselves as interrelated subjects fastened to God, i.e. we realize our true selves & faith is the only organ for our comprehension of the significance of inter-subjectivity.

As to the visibility of God, he thinks that God is invisible, since His visibility would annul His omnipresence. Only in inwardness or subjectivity we can feel His presence everywhere. 'Nature, the totality of created things, is the work of God. And yet God is not there; but within the individual man there is a potentiality (man is potentially spirit) which is awakened in inwardness to become a God-relationship, and then it becomes possible to see God everywhere'<sup>50</sup> - says Kierkegaard.

- d) His maxim 'Truth is subjectivity'.
- e) and development of human life.

If we analyse his philosophical views. We shall see that his Philosophy is established on the basis of intuition or experience and by means of reason or rational arguments. His subjective feelings are not mere feelings or emotions. Practically they are all reasonable emotions. He has analysed his subjective feelings or emotions and this analysis is not possible without the exercise of intellect or reason.

- a) We shall first discuss the basic principle of Existentialism the principle being 'Existence is different from essence'. This cardinal note of Existentialism is a revolt against the entire platonic tradition, against all those who maintain that 'Essence precedes Existence'. But this basic principle of Existentialism is itself established by criticising the Platonic view : Essence is prior to existence.

Kierkegaard says that existence can not be represented in a concept and unless it is a concept, because it is too dense, concrete and rich, it can not be rationally analysed. He explains the characteristics of 'existence', compares ~~it~~ it

with concept and then says that there can be no concept of existence. And as because it is not a concept, it is unamenable to rational analysis and proof.

He finds fault with ' I think therefore, I am', and says that it is a sheer tautology, because this being which is ascribed to the thinker does not signify that he is, but only that he is engaged in thinking. I must first exist, in order that I may think that I exist.

In this way Kierkegaard analyses criticises compares, argues and then comes to the revolutionary conclusion that ' Existence precedes essence', the pivot on which the entire thesis of Existentialism stands.

b) Now we shall analyse his idea of God with a view to showing that his Theism is grounded on reason, though, according to him, our reason is incompetent to prove the existence of God. He says, ' The reason has brought the God as near as possible, and yet he is as far away as ever'<sup>52</sup> This saying shows that he can not discard the role of reason out and out though it is incompetent to pronounce anything positive.

He calls the God 'unknown something' . '.....It is the unknown. It is not a human being, in so far as we know what man is ; nor is it any other known thing. So let us call this unknown something : the God'<sup>53</sup> - says Kierkegaard.

Here also we see that he compares his ' unknown something ' ( God ) with human being and other known things, distinguishes between the two and then calls this unknown something : the God and regards Him as the supreme eternal subject. As regards the proof of God's existence, he says that the idea of demonstrating that this ' unknown something ' ( God ) exists is nothing but a folly attempt, because the idea of God's existence is already presupposed as certain in the beginning. In support of his opinion, he argues with the help of the following dilemma :

' If the God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it ; and if He does exist it would be folly to attempt it'<sup>54</sup>- 1st premise

Either God does not exist or

He does exist- 2nd premise

∴ Either it is impossible to prove It or it is folly to attempt it- Conclusion.

It is interesting to note that Kierkegaard discards 'proof' outright and lays stress on the paradoxical passion of reason which leads to 'faith' through which God reveals Himself. But we see that he himself argues or takes the help of proof in support of his opinion that God's existence can not be proved. So we see that Kierkegaard builds his Theism step by step with the help of reason or intellect. Yet, in the end, he speaks of 'faith' as the last resort and the only organ of our comprehension of God. But his 'faith' originates from reason- the paradoxical passion of reason. So Kierkegaard's faith in God is not pure faith or passion, rather it may be called intellectual faith.

d) Kierkegaard wanted to free people from the illusion of 'objectivity'. To him, the task of philosophy is to rediscover 'subjectivity' which we have lost. He says, 'subjectivity is truth, subjectivity is reality'.<sup>55</sup>

Kierkegaard makes a rational analysis of the nature of human existence which was directly felt by him in his very being and comes to the conclusion that so long men are under the illusion of objectivity they are benighted and need to be rescued from this state of darkness. He thinks that

it is not easy to discard objectivity. But when they are freed, they are enlightened. This enlightenment is called by him a sort of conversion.

Now it is one thing to experience something oneself, and it is another to convey one's own experience to others. This can be done only by means of reason or language. When on the basis of personal experience Kierkegaard argued that all human beings are subject to such experience, then there is a kind of generalisation in the way of Induction. That 'subjectivity is truth' is true not of one man but of all men in general. It is also not true that only this or that person is under the illusion of objectivity, but most people are under such illusion. He is conscious of the evil effects of such illusion on human life and wanted to make people free from its spell, and in doing this he was not quite irrational. He differs between the subjective truth and objective truth and concludes that 'subjectivity is truth' 'Subjectivity is reality'. Kierkegaard's subjectivity is the realisation of a concrete individual existent of his 'true being' in the being of God ; and this realisation is as good as his realisation of truth..... But this realisation and differentiation is not possible without the exercise of intellect or reason.

So this kind of Philosophy can not be merely emotional.

Kierkegaard himself lived a short part under the domination of 'objectivity' i.e. under illusion and threw off the illusion later on. This enlightenment is called by him a sort of conversion. After his conversion, he looked back into the stages he passed, the stages being, the aesthetic stage, the ~~ethical~~ ethical stage and the religious stage. He generalises his own three stages of life upon human life. To him, these stages are the different modes of life view which a man forms and lives accordingly. Here we see that on the basis of his own experience, he generalises in the way of Induction. About the ethical stage, he says that it is the stage of choice. Here, man for the first time chooses himself. Ethical life is subjective, it is primarily fixed on inner decisions of the will.

Now forming of different life-views, a conception of life's significance and of its purpose, making choice and decisions of which Kierkegaard speaks in the ethical stage, are all works of reason or intellect. A leap from the ethical stage to the religious, a lifelong and cheerrul striving for absolute happiness, faith in God- the dialectical struggle,

his view on religion, His faith in God, his realization of truth in the being of God, love for God etc. all indicate the predominance of intellect in his philosophy. His philosophical views are grounded on reason and in some cases originates from reason though he discards the role of reason outright. The elements of emotion that we find in Kierkegaard's philosophy are all reasonable emotions.