CHAPTER-IV
In the previous chapter, I have discussed the different attempts made by different proponents of religion in establishing the existence of god by putting forward different rational proofs. We have seen that these positions and proofs are not footed strongly enough to establish the existence of God beyond all doubts. In fact I have shown the inadequacy of these rational proofs in establishing the existence of God.

In this chapter, I shall make an endeavour to discuss the positions of three great philosophers viz. Hume, Kant and Kierkegaard and try to bring out that subject under discussion is beyond the scope of reason and any attempt made in this direction in line of rational proofs is bound to fail.

**David Hume:**

Hume represents empiricist tradition of Locke and Berkeley. According to empiricists, all knowledge is based on experience. Human mind is a ‘tabla rasa’ as Locke would call it, at the time of birth without anything written on it but ready to receive impressions from without in the form of experience.
Hume brings the empiricist tradition to its logical conclusion. Hume starts with the serious examination of human mind in order to determine the nature and scope of human knowledge and tasked himself to bring forward the implications of Locke's position. To start with he divided all perception into two classes viz. 'impressions' and 'ideas'. By impressions he means the direct perceptions of hearing, feeling, seeing etc and by ideas is meant the less lively perceptions of which we become conscious when we reflect upon the direct perceptions. Further, all ideas are the copies of impressions. Hume says that "all our ideas or more feeble perceptions are copies of our impressions or more lively ones".

It is on this dichotomy of impressions and ideas that Hume bases all his philosophy. Since it follows that there is nothing in the mind which is not given through impressions, and hence Hume says, "when we entertain, therefore, any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea, we need but inquire, from what impression is that supposed idea derived? ..." Hume makes an all out appeal to experience. He says that we have certain metaphysical ideas of matter, mind, causal connection, uniformity of nature etc. These ideas play an important role in human life. But he questions the viability of these ideas and strongly objects their sustenance by

1. Hume, D : Enquiries concerning the Human understanding and concerning the principles of Morals, p-19
2. Ibid, p-22
experience. He concludes that these metaphysical terms have no grounding in experience. "Speculations which incorporates them is waste of in and paper". He stresses the need to free human understanding from such a wasteful pursuit of knowledge of such abstruse questions. He says, "the only method of freeing learning, at once, from these abstruse questions, is to inquire seriously into the nature of human understanding and show, from an exact analysis of its powers and capacity, that it is by no means fitted for such remote and abstruse subjects".

Hume divides all human enquiry into two kinds, namely 'the relations of ideas' and 'matters of fact'. In the first are placed all knowledge which is intuitively certain and in the second place i.e. matters of fact, he explains "... objects of human reason ... not ascertained in the manner; nor is our evidence of their truth, however great, of a like nature with the foregoing. The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible ...". The relations of ideas which occur in the sciences of Geometry and Arithmetic etc. Can be by their nature proved beyond doubt by the mere operations of the mind but the problem occurs in case of matters of fact. We can never be sure nor can we ever establish beyond doubt the certainty of matter of fact propositions. It is because of the fact that the contrary of every matter

3. Albury Castell: *Introduction to Modern Philosophy*
5. ibid, p-25.
of fact is still possible as it can never lead to any contradiction. The first battle of Panipat was fought in 1526 A.D. between Babar and Ibrahim Lodhi is historically true. But if we say that this battle was never fought is still easily conceivable by the mind without any hunch. Again, for example, "sun will not arise tomorrow is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more contradiction than the affirmation, that it will rise tomorrow."6

According to Hume matters of fact are founded on the relations of cause and effect. And this relation of cause and effect is only discoverable through experience and not through any form of subtle reason. Because the relation between cause and effect, if any is not known to us. We can never find out the relation of food and nourishment a priori. Since, the cause and effect are two different incidents their relation is beyond comprehension apart from the constant observation and experience. Then the question arises as to how do we know or pronounce the relation of cause and effect? Hume would say that it is through custom or habit. "The mind can never possibly find the effect in the supposed cause, by the most accurate scrutiny and examination for the effect is totally different from the cause, and consequently can never be discovered in it."7 It is only through habit or custom that we have the idea of the relation of cause and effect. For example: we have the observed the instances of 'fire

6. ibid, p-21
7. ibid, p-29.
burning us' in the past, and we conclude that when ever we put our hand in the fire, it will burn. It is only through custom or habit that we expect that the 'sun will rise tomorrow. No experience or reason can ever prove this otherwise. Though we have the instances that 'fire has burnt us in the past' but how can we, other than through custom, can say that it will burn us in future also. We have no grounds to say rationally that past will resemble the future or food which has nourished us in the past will not poison us. Thus we find that custom plays an important role in our life. It validates and renders our experiences useful and makes us expect that the past will resemble the future.

It is in this way of thinking that Hume ends up in much known scepticism. Because, it is here that the validity of empiricism is discredited and empiricism comes to its logical conclusion i.e. to scepticism.

In chapter, 'of Miracles' Hume discusses the incredibility of Miracles. He says that the miracles cannot be proved to be true. As Hume says, “A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable, that all men must die; that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood, and there is required a
violation of these laws, or in other words, a miracle to prevent them? Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death though more unusual than another, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior.”

Hume puts forward different reasons as to why the credibility of miracles cannot be established and concludes that “no testimony for any kind of miracle has ever amounted to a probability, much less to a proof; and that even supposing it amounted to a proof, it would be opposed by another proof; derived from the very nature of the fact, which it would endeavour to establish. It is experience only, which gives authority to human testimony; and it is the same experience, which assures us of the laws of nature. When, therefore, these two
kinds of experience are contrary, we have nothing to do but subtract the one from the other, and embrace an opinion, either on one side or the other, with that assurance which arises from remainder. But according to the principle . . . this subtraction, with regard to all popular religions, amounts to an entire annihilation, and therefore we may establish it as a minim, that no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle and make it a just foundation for any such system of religion . . . a miracle can never be proved, so as to be the foundation of religion”. 9

Thus, in miracles, he concludes that Christian religion is founded on faith and not on reason. The defenders are wrongly undertaking different endeavours to defend the religion by giving rational arguments. “Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity: and whoever is moved by faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience.” 10

Thus we find that since the belief in God rests on the belief in miracles, and the belief in miracles rests on the questionable grounds, the point is clear i.e. miracles do not provide us with evidence so as to

9. ibid, p-91
10. ibid, p-101
prove the existence of God. Even if the evidence of the miracles is accepted, the counter evidence over shadows this evidence. Hence, miracles can not be considered as a proof for the foundation of any religious belief. And it is only faith on the face of all challenges of reason which lies at the root of the religious belief.

Having concluded that not reason but faith forms the foundation of all religion, I shall turn the discussion now to the "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion", one of the most important works on religion - so far Hume is concerned. In the brief preface to the dialogues, the three participants: Cleanthes, Philo and Demea - represent three different positions. Cleanthes, the accurate philosopher, Philo, the careless skeptic and Demea - the orthodox. It is very difficult to judge as to who among these three participants in dialogues speaks for Hume. Different commentators of Hume have different views on this points - a point of great importance for understanding the views of Hume. Some commentators feel that it is Cleanthes who speaks for Hume. And apparently, this is based on the conclusion of the dialogues, which I shall discuss later, but, most of the commentators name Philo as speaking for Hume. This position is clearly in accordance with Hume’s other works like ‘Enquiry’. Because the line of thought which Hume develops in Enquiries is clearly prevalent in Dialogues as advocated by Philo. In enquiries Hume advocates that our knowledge of the causal agent however thorough cannot make us predict on purely a priori grounds the
grounds the effects. And in the same way the knowledge of the effect can never allow us to draw any inference about the causal agent. He says, “No philosopher, who is rational and modest, has ever pretended to assign the ultimate cause of any natural operations or to show distinctly the action of that power, which produces any single effect in the universe. It is confessed that the utmost effort of human reason is to reduce the principles, productive of natural phenomenon, to a greater simplicity, and to resolve the many particular effects into a few general causes, by means of reasoning from analogy, experience, observation, but as to the causes of these general causes we should in vain attempt their discovery; nor shall we ever be able to satisfy ourselves, by any particular explanation of them. These ultimate springs and principles are totally shut up from human curiosity and enquiry. Elasticity, gravity, cohesion of parts, communication of motion by impulse; these are probably the ultimate causes and principles which we shall ever discover in nature. . . . thus the observation of human blindness and weakness is the result of all philosophy, and meets us at every turn in spite of our endeavours to elude or avoid it”.

It is on the basis of this above position that we find in dialogues, the question discussed in agnosticism. The problem with reasoning in dialogues is that it goes beyond the point where

11 ibid, p-26
observation and inference cannot provide any test of the conclusions reached: “It seems to me that this theory of the universal energy and operation of the supreme Being is too bold ever to carry conviction with it to a man, sufficiently apprised of the weakness of human reason . . . .”

12

Throughout the dialogues, Philo criticizes the design argument - “if we see a house, Cleanthes, we conclude with greatest certainty that it had an architect or builder, because this is precisely that species of effect which we have experienced to proceed from that species of cause. But surely you will not affirm that the Universe bears such a resemblance to a house that we can with the same certainty infer a similar cause, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect. The dissimilitude is so striking that the utmost you can here pretend to is a guess, a conjecture, a presumption concerning a similar cause; and how that pretension will be received in the world.” 13

“But allowing that we were to take the operations of one part of nature upon another for the foundation of our judgements concerning the origin of the whole, yet why select so minute, so weak, so bounded a principle as the reason and design of animals is found to be upon this planet? What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call thought, that we must thus make it the model of the

12. ibid, p-57.
13. Charles W. Hendel: Hume Selections, Dialogue-II
whole Universe? Our partiality in our own favour does indeed present it on all occasions, but sound philosophy ought carefully to guard against so natural an illusion.”14

“...And will any man tell me with serious countenance that an orderly universe must arise from some thought and art like the human because we have experience of it? To ascertain this reasoning it were requisite that we had experience of the origin of worlds; and it is not sufficient, surely, that we have seen ships and cities arise from human art and contrivance.”15

“It is in vain... to insist upon the uses of the parts in animals or vegetables, and their curious adjustment to each other. I would fair know how an animal could subsist unless its parts were so adjusted? Do we not find that it immediately perishes whenever this adjustment ceases, and that its matter corrupting tries some new form? It happens, indeed, that the parts of the world so well adjusted that some regular form immediately lays claim to this corrupted matter, and if it were not so, could the world subsist? Must it not dissolve as well as the animal, and pass through new positions and situations, till in a great but finite succession it fall at last into the present or some such order?. 16

14. ibid 15. ibid.
16. Ibid, Dialogue-VIII.
Next, Philo takes up the problem of evil in the world. He raises this problem in Dialogue X. He says that “the learned are perfectly agreed with the vulgar; and in all letters, sacred and profane, the topic of human misery has been insisted on with the most pathetic eloquence, that sorrow and melancholy could inspire . . . from Homer down to Dr. Yong, the whole inspired tribe have ever been sensible that no other representation of things would suit the feeling and observations of each individual.” 17

“... the curious artifices of nature in order to embitter the life of every living being. The stronger prey upon the weaker and keep them in perpetual terror and anxiety. The weaker too, in their turn, often prey upon the stronger, and vex and molest them without relaxation. Consider that . . . every animal in surrounded with enemies which incessantly seek his misery and destruction.” 18

“... His power, we allow, is infinite; whatever he wills is executed; but neither man nor any other animal is happy; therefore he does not will their happiness. His wisdom is infinite; he is never mistaken in choosing the means to any end; but the course of nature tends not to human or animal felicity; therefore it is not established for the purpose. . . .

17. Ibid, Dialogue-X
18. Ibid—X
Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?” 19

“Look around this universe. What an immense profusion of beings, animated and organised, sensible and active! You admire this prodigious variety and fecundity. But inspect a little more narrowly these living existences, the only beings worth regarding. How insufficient all of them for their own happiness! How contemptible or odious to the spectator! The whole presents nothing but the idea of a blind nature, impregnated by a great vivifying principle, and pouring forth from her lap, without discernment or parental care, her maimed and abortive children!” 20

Further, Philo maintains the incomprehensible nature of the divine attributes. Philo agreeing with Demea says, “... there is no need of having recourse to that affected skepticism so displeasing to you in order to come at this determination. Our ideas reach no further than our experience. We have no experience of divine attributes and operations. I need not conclude my syllogism, ... establish the adorably mysterious and incomprehensible nature of the supreme Being.” 21

19. ibid, Dia-X
20. ibid, Dia-XI
21. ibid, Dia-II
On the other hand Cleanthes defends the design argument. He says, “look round the world, contemplate the whole and every part of it: you will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions to a degree beyond what human senses and faculties can trace and explain, . . . the curious adapting of means to ends throughout all nature resemble exactly, though it much exceeds, the production of human contrivance of human design, thought, wisdom, and intelligence.”

Cleanthes offers solutions to the problem of evil. Cleanthes says, “The only method of supporting divine benevolence is to deny absolutely the misery and wickedness of man. Your representations are exaggerated; your melancholy views mostly fictious; your inferences contrary to fact and experience. Health is more common than sickness, pleasure than pain, happiness than misery. And for one vexation which we meet with, we attain, upon computation, a hundred enjoyments.”

Further, Cleanthes stresses the comprehensible nature of divine attributes. He says, “the Deity, I can readily allow, possesses many powers and attributes of which we can have no comprehension. But if our ideas, so far as they go, be not just and adequate and

22. Ibid, Dia-II
23. Ibid, Dia-X
correspondent to his real nature, I know not what there is in this subject worth insisting on. Is the name, without any meaning, of such mighty importance? Or how do you mystics, who maintain the absolute incomprehensibility of the Deity, differ from skeptics or atheists, who assert that the first cause of all is unknown and unintelligible? Their temerity must be very great if, after rejecting the production by mind - I mean a mind resembling the human (for I know of no other) - they pretend to assign, with certainty, any other specific intelligible cause; and their conscience must be very scrupulous indeed if they refuse to call the universal known cause a God or Deity, and to bestow on him as many sublime eulogies and unmeaning epithets as you shall please to require them.” 24 (addressed to Demea)

In the final part of the dialogues Philo appears to back out of his opposition to the design argument. This causes confusion (mainly) for the readers as to who speaks for Hume. Here, Phamphilus sums up the dialogues saying, “I cannot but think that Philo’s principles are more probable than Demea’s; but that those of Cleanthes approach still nearer the truth.” 25

The only place throughout the dialogues where Hume speaks for himself conclusively is in the for of a footnote in the last part. He says, “it seems evident that the dispute between the skeptics and

24. ibid, Dia-IV.
25. ibid, Dia.XII
dogmatists is entirely verbal, or at least regards only the degrees of doubt and assurance which we ought to indulge with regard to all reasoning; and such disputes are commonly, at the bottom verbal and admit not of any precise determination. No philosophical dogmatist denies that there are difficulties both with regard to the senses and to all science, and that these difficulties are, in a regular, logical method, absolutely insoluble. No skeptic denies that we lie under an absolute necessity, not withstanding these difficulties, of thinking and believing and reasoning with regard to all kinds of subjects, and even of frequently assenting with confidence and security. The only difference, then between these sects, if they merit the name, is that the skeptic, from habit, caprice, or inclination, insists most on the difficulties, the dogmatist, for like reasons, on necessity”.

Though this foot note, and the agreement of Philo and Cleanthes suggests that the dispute is a mere verbal one. But, the over all study of dialogues shows that Philo for the most part speaks for Hume. It may be due to the prevailing political and public pressures at home, which made Hume to come to such a conclusion of agreement. Or this could be due to Hume’s mitigated skepticism that He in the final part makes Philo to agree with Cleanthes as indicated in the very beginning of the dialogues where in a reply to Cleanthes, Philo speaks, “to whatever length anyone may push his speculative principles of skepticism he

26. ibid. Dia XII(foot note)
must act, I own, and live and converse like other men; and for this conduct he is not obliged to give any other reason than the absolute necessity he lies under of so doing. If he ever carries his speculations further than this necessity constrains him, and philosophers either on natural or moral subjects, he is allured by a certain pleasure and satisfaction which he finds in employing himself after that manner. He considers, besides, that everyone, even in common life, is constrained to have more or less of this philosophy; that from our earliest infancy we make continued advances informing more general principles of conduct and reasoning; that the larger experience we acquire, and the stronger reason we are endued with, we always render our principles the more general and comprehensive; and that what we call philosophy is nothing but a more regular and methodical operation of the same kind.

Leaving the question of who speaks for Hume in the dialogues here with a presumption that Philo is a mouth piece of Hume employing all the sceptical principles of Hume and at the end backing out of his position and agreeing with Cleanthes (may be due to certain compulsions of the author). Now the problem is with what answer do we conclude the subject under discussion. We find that in dialogues, the only agreement reached between the two speakers is on design argument and we have seen that this agreement is not in accordance

27. Ibid, Dia-I
with Hume’s views. In fact, Hume conclusively destroys the design argument. So, what we can understand from the dialogues is that all traditional arguments propounded by different philosophers in support of the existence of God are refuted. And hence we reach to an understanding that the position is purely of agnosticism so far dialogues are concerned.

But, taking the glimpses and references in enquiry and other works of Hume we find that he does not purely subscribe to this view. As refuted above in the discussion, miracles, the foundation of religions is challenged as their veracity cannot be conclusively proved. So, I shall conclude Hume's views on the subject with his words in enquiry, “Divinity or Theology, as it proves the existence of a Deity, and the immortality of souls, is composed partly of reasoning concerning particular, partly concerning general facts. It has a foundation in reason, so far as it is supported by experience. But its best and most sold foundation is faith and divine revelation.”28 and finally he says, “... if we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.”29

28. Enquiries, p-132
29. ibid, p-132
Thus, in view of the above discussion we can safely conclude that Hume attached or did not subscribe the traditional theistic grounds of religion. And was of the opinion that reason has as such no place in theology. All attempts made to rationally justify religion in general and the existence of God in particular misplaced. Hume says, “... so that, upon the whole, we may conclude, that the Christian Religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity. And whoever is moved by Faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience”.30

30. Ibid, p-101
Kant is one of the all time great philosophers. He belongs to the rationalistic school of Wolff, but it will not be just to place him in that rationalistic tradition. During his time different currents of philosophy were prevalent. He tasked himself with the problem of doing justice to these various currents of philosophy of his age and find out the possibility or impossibility of universal and necessary knowledge and bring out its sources, extent and boundaries. He tried to limit the Humean scepticism on the one hand and the dogmatism on the other. He was greatly influenced by Hume's scepticism and it is said that Kant was ‘aroused by Hume from his dogmatic slumbers’.

As to Kant’s philosophical position, we can say his philosophy is a critical philosophy. To start with, Kant is of the opinion that the philosophy has hitherto been dogmatic. He feels a need of an examination of human reason and to find out the just claims of reason and dismiss all such claims where human reason tries to transgress its boundaries. He feels philosophy has proceeded without previous criticism of its own powers of which it must now become critical. The fundamental problem for Kant is the problem of Knowledge: what is
knowledge and how is it possible? What are the boundaries of human reason?

Kant says, “... all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience.” 1 Here, this quotation shows that on the one hand Kant agrees with empiricists that all knowledge is empirical in so far it begins with experience but at the same time he also agrees with the rationalists that it is not only experience that can give knowledge, ‘it does not necessarily arise out of experience’ i.e. it also is based on the a priori concepts. Knowledge Kant says, has the character of ‘Universal and necessary’. “the contents of our knowledge are derived from experience(empiricism) but the mind arranges its experiences according to the a priori concepts (rationalism)” 2

According to Kant, human knowledge is attained through ‘sensibility’ and understanding working together. Through sensibility, the objects are given and through understanding, these objects are thought. It is only through sensibility that all facts, all our data is given to us and understanding operates upon this data to put it under intellectual control. Kant further talks of ‘intuitions’ and ‘concepts’.

Intuitions are related to sensibility and concepts to understanding. The data given through sensibility yields intuitions which is equivalent to Humean impressions and from the understanding are the concepts which are equivalent to Humean ideas.

The concepts play an important role in the field of understanding. These concepts operate on intuitions or data, bringing this data under intellectual control. The work of understanding is to synthesis through concepts. If this is not done, the whole data will remain scattered and we would lack the unity in knowledge.

Kant, further, moves on to find out the limits of the understanding. In order to explicate this, we need to discuss the nature of knowledge possible through sensibility and understanding. Kant stays, “... the transcendental employment of a concept in any principle is its application to things in general and in them selves; the empirical employment of it is its application merely to appearances; that is, to objects of possible experience ... we demand in every concept, first, the logical form of a concept (of thought) in general, and secondly , the possibility of giving it an object to which it may be applied. In the absence of such an object, it has no meaning and is completely lacking in content.”3. So, the intuitions as we see get their meaning from concepts, that is to say, intuitions get their form from

3. Kant, I.: Critique of pure reason, B 298-299
concepts and without concepts they are devoid of any meaning as they will be without form. And the concepts without intuitions are without content. Concepts, though they may be a priori in nature, they become meaningful only when an object is given to them in experience. For all concepts to be meaningful, an empirical object must be given to them. Kant sums up this position in the following words, "... the pure categories apart from formal conditions of sensibility, have only transcendental meaning; nevertheless they may not be employed transcendentally, such employment being in itself impossible, in as much as all conditions of any employment in judgements are lacking to them, namely the formal conditions of the subsumption of any ostensible object under these concepts. Since, then, as pure categories merely, they are not to be employed empirically, and cannot be employed transcendentally, they cannot when separated from all sensibility, be employed in any manner whatsoever, that is, they cannot be applied to any ostensible object . . ."4

So, as Kant would say, if we name these given objects of sensibility as appearances (phenomena) we have to distinguish these appearances of objects from the nature of objects in themselves (though we do not and cannot intuit this nature), Kant names it as noumena. In line with the question under discussion we have to find

4. ibid, B-305
out if any meaning could be attached to this concept of noumena through understanding.

In answer to the above question, we find that in phenomena the objects are given to the concepts as sensible intuitions and for noumena, we do not have any separate category of understanding. Also, we have seen from the above discussion that the concepts have no meaning apart from the sensibility. Hence the employment of concepts cannot be extended beyond the empirical sphere. Hence our concepts of understanding are merely the forms of thought for our sensible intuitions and cannot be applied to noumena. This concept of noumena is employed only as a limiting concept to phenomena.

Having discussed the sensibility and understanding, now we shall turn to pure reason. The principles of pure reason are entirely different from that of the principles of understanding. The concepts in understanding become meaningful from the possibility of experience. But the pure reason is not confined to the field of experience only. The field of reason is so vast that experience or empirical knowledge forms only a part of it. Actual experience can never, even in any approximation, reach to the boundaries of reason, though all experience is within the boundaries of reason. Reason infers from the empirical knowledge to give this knowledge logical unit. This way reason makes its own concepts which may or may not have empirical validity. If these
concepts of reason have empirical validity, they are called ‘rightly inferred concepts’ and if these concepts lack this validity, they are termed as ‘pseudo-rational concepts’. These concepts of pure reason are named by Kant as ‘Transcendental ideas’.

These ideas can never be represented in reality. No empirical knowledge can reach to them. Reason aims to reach to a synthetic unity which is possible empirically in approximation and never completely. These ideas lead to the ideal. Kant defines ideal as, “... an individual thing, determinable or even determined by the idea alone”.5 The reason functions solely to guide and direct our inquiries and ideals which are never fully realised. It simply aims by this process in unifying the judgements of understanding and bringing the rules of understanding under higher principles. For example, Kant says, “... virtue, and there with human wisdom in its complete purity, are ideas. The wise man is, however, an ideal, that is, a man existing in thought only, but in complete conformity with the idea of wisdom. As the idea gives the rule, so the ideal in such a case serves as the arche type for the complete determination of the copy; and we have no other standard for our actions than the conduct of this divine man within us, with which we compare and judge ourselves, and so reform ourselves, although we can never attain to perfection there by prescribed...”6

5. ibid, B-596
6. ibid, B597
An ideal is a complete determination of the thing i.e. it contains one of every pair of possible contradictory opposite predicates. Not only that it contains the one of the every pair of possible contradictory opposite predicates, it also considers the sum total of all possibilities. It is the complete synthesis of all the predicates taken together which form the complete concept of a thing. “. . .everything which exists is completely determined, does not mean only that one pair of every pair of given contradictory predicates, but that one of every possible predicates, must always belong to it . . . the complete determination is thus a concept, which, in its totality, can never be exhibited in concreto. It is based upon an idea, which has its seat solely in the faculty of reason - the faculty which presents to the understanding the rule of its complete employment.” 7 Since this concept is determined completely a priori through the mere idea, hence it is called the “ideal of pure reason”. The concept of complete determination which is also the reality is termed, by Kant, as ‘ens realissimum’. In fact this becomes the basis of complete determination which necessarily belongs to all that exists. Kant calls this ens realissimum as the “supreme and complete material condition of all that exists. The condition to which all thought of objects, so far as their content is concerned, has to be traced back.”8

7. ibid, B-601
8. ibid, B-604
So according to this, all things imperfect and limited derive the material of their possibility from this *ens realissimum*. These limited things, though copy the *ens realissimum* in varying degrees, fall short of attaining this perfection. So, all possibility of these things is derivative except that this thing (*ens realissimum*) which encompasses in itself all reality. These derivative things presuppose the existence of *ens realissimum* and derive their content from this supreme reality. These things are the modes of limiting the supreme reality which is the common ground of all these derivative things. This ideal of pure reason, which is given to us through pure reason alone is termed as ‘primordial being’. Also this can be called as highest being as there is nothing beyond it. Thus relation between the highest being and the derivative things is however not an objective relation, as to be taken between an actual object to other things. This is a relation merely of an idea to concepts. Kant says that we have no knowledge of the existence of a being of such an outstanding pre-eminence.

Though the derivative beings or things derive their content from this primodial being, they cannot themselves constitute it. So, the idea of primodial is purely a simple idea. This derivation of all possibility cannot be taken as the limitation of supreme being nor is the supreme being an aggregate of these possibilities. In other words, the supreme reality conditions the possibility of all things as their ground and not their sum. This primordial being, Kant says, is God in the transcendental
sense and hence the ideal of pure reason is the object of transcendental theology.

But in using this transcendental idea, we are transgressing the limits of validity. Reason is here employing this concept of all reality without basing it on the fact that all reality should be objectively given. Such a concept is a mere fiction in which we simply combine and realise the manifold of our idea in an ideal as an individual being. We have no right to do this.

There seems to be some problem with this ideal. In order to understand this we will again have to go back to understanding to find out the illusion which it has given rise. For this ideal is bases on a natural idea and not on an arbitrary idea. We have to find out that the reason can derive the all possibility from single fundamental possibility or individual primordial being?

In answer to this we find that the possibility of objects of senses is a relation of these objects to our thought, in which something can be thought a priori, while that which constitutes the content, the reality in the field of appearance must be given. Now an object of senses can be completely determined only when it is compared with all predicates which are possible in the field of appearance. Since the real in the appearance must be given - other wise this could not be compared at all
and since this real in appearance is experience. Considered as real and all embracing, the material for the possibility of all objects of the senses must be presupposed as given in one whole; it is upon the limitation of this whole that the possibility of determination of all objects, their distinction from each other can be based. This way, nothing is an object for us unless it presupposes the sum of all empirical reality as the condition of its possibility. Due to the natural illusion we regard this principle, which applies only to those things which are given as objects of our senses, as being a principle which must be valid of things in general. Omitting this limitation, we treat the empirical principle as being a transcendental principle of possibility of things in general.

So, I should say that reason only completes the series of conditions when we proceed to look for the ground of these conditions. Thus, reason starts with experience of something actually existing. If I suppose something as existing, I must also suppose as something existing necessarily up on which this other thing is dependent. For a contingent can exist only on something necessary or in other words, the series of contingent existence leads to necessary existence. This is the line of reasoning which all human reason takes to reach to the primordial being which exists as the supreme condition of all contingent existence and itself exists unconditioned.
So, when reason, through the chain of contingent conditions, reaches to the unconditioned, it starts looking for the concept which will in no wise be in compatible with the absolutely necessary existence. For that, there must be something which exists with absolute necessity and which is complete in all wise and in a way incomplete so as to fulfil the condition for all contingents. This must contain all conditions for all that is possible and is unconditionally necessary. In this respect, all concepts must fall short of it, for they are in complete in some sense and does not contain in themselves this condition of unconditioned necessity. The concept of ens realissimum is thus the concept which completely serves this purpose of unconditionally necessary being apart from which we have no choice. This is the natural procedure of human reason.

As an argument, this is nicely presented and have certain cogency. We cannot have better choice than this absolutely necessary existence as the ultimate source of all possibility. But, when we ask ourselves as to what we really know about all this. We feel that whole argument seems deceptive and defective.

By no means it follows that a limited being which lacks the quality of highest reality is incompatible with the absolute necessity. Even if we take for granted the stated conditions viz. Firstly, from any given existence we can correctly infer the existence of an unconditionally necessary being, secondly, a being which contains all
reality and therefore every condition and is thus absolutely unconditioned and hence ens realissimum is the concept with absolute necessity. But even after granting this how can we conclude that a limited being, though lacking the concept of unconditioned which is the characteristic of absolute or totality of conditions, is for that matter conditioned. Kant says for example that in a Hypothetical syllogism, where a condition does not hold, the conditioned also does not hold. So, from this it follows that we are free to hold that even the limited being may also be unconditionally necessary though their necessity cannot be inferred from the universal concepts which we have of them. Thus this argument fails to provide the minimum properties of a necessary being and is thus in effective.

But this argument we cannot simply discard on the ground of objective insufficiency. Though we find that this argument is rationally valid, it lacks in application in all reality. At this point Kant justifies this argument by saying, "... for granting that there are in the idea of reason obligations which are completely valid, but which in their application to ourselves be lacking in all reality- that is, obligations to which there would be no motives- save on the assumption that there exists a supreme being to give effect and confirmation to practical laws, in such a situation we should be under an obligation to follow those concepts which, though they may not be objectively sufficient, are yet, according to the standard of our reason, preponderant, and in comparison with
preponderant, and in comparison with which we know of nothing that is better and more convincing. The duty of deciding would thus, by a practical addition, incline the balance so delicately preserved by the indecisiveness of speculation. Reason would indeed stand condemned in its own judgement- and there is none more circumspect - if, when impelled by such urgent motives, it should fail, however incomplete its insight, to conform its judgements to those pleas which are at least of greater weight than any others known to us.”

Thus, though the argument of necessary being rests on the inner insufficiency of the contingent being and is objectively insufficient, yet we can not simply discard it, for we grant that their are obligations in the idea of reason which are completely valid but would in its application be lacking in all reality. This argument is acceptable by the commonest understanding as though it is transcendental in nature but so simple. In general we find things come into being, change their shapes, pass away, so they must therefore have a cause. But the question can be raised about every cause, that is given in experience, about its ultimate cause. Where, therefore, we can find the ultimate causality except where also exist the highest causality, i.e. in that being which in itself contains the sufficient ground of every possible effect, to which we can attribute all embracing perception. This supreme cause we call as absolutely necessary.

9. Ibid, B-617
Having reached to this point, Kant proceed to prove the existence of God with the help of speculative reason. He says that there are only three possible ways of proving the existence of God viz. Ontological, cosmological and physico-theological.

The cosmological proof takes its start from purely indeterminate experience, that is, from experience of existence in general and finally argues completely a priori, leaving all experience behind. The ontological argument argues completely a priori, from mere concepts to the existence of a supreme cause. And lastly, the physico-theological proof begins with the determinate experience of the world as given and proceeds through the laws of causality to the supreme cause of the world. At the outset Kant says that reason hardly makes any progress in any of the possible ways to prove the existence of God. "... and that it stretches its wings in vain in thus attempting to soar above the world of sense by mere power of speculation..." 10. Kant discusses these proofs in a particular order (for reason which will become obvious as we proceed with the discussion) that is, first ontological proof, then cosmological and lastly, the physico-theological proof for the existence of God.

**Ontological proof** : As discussed in preceding pages, we have seen that the concept of necessary being is a concept of pure

\[ 10. \text{ibid, B-619} \]
reason. This is a mere idea and the objective reality of this cannot be proved simply for the fact that reason requires it. This idea shows the unattainable completeness and thus it simply limits the understanding than to extend it to new objects. But since reason infers the absolutely necessary being from a given existence, which seems imperative and legitimate, the conditions which are required by understanding to form the concept of such a necessity are lacking.

Instead of proving the existence of absolutely necessary being we need to understand this concept. It is easy to give a verbal definition i.e. it is something the non-existence of which is impossible. But this definition does not give us understanding as to the conditions which make the non-existence of a thing absolutely unthinkable. It is these conditions which we need to look for to make ourselves know whether or not we are thinking anything at all when we think this concept. In order to show the implausibility of this, Kant takes the example of a triangle- the triangle has three angles which are absolutely necessary and also it lies outside the sphere of our understanding. Kant says that this is an example from the judgements and not from things and their existence. The unconditioned. Necessity of a judgement is not the same as an absolute necessity of things. The absolute necessity of judgement is only a conditioned necessity of a thing, or of the predicate in the judgement the proposition of the example declares that three angles are absolutely necessary, but that under the condition that there is a triangle,
triangle is given, three angles will necessarily be found in it. The problem arises from the logical necessity that we form an a priori concept of a thing including the existence with in the scope of its meaning. We justify the conclusion simply by supposing that because existence necessarily belongs to the object of this concept - and we always posit the thing as given. We also, through the law of identity posit the existence of this object and so this being is absolutely necessary. We presuppose that the existence is included in the concept which is arbitrarily assumed and on that condition we posit its object.

Kant says, "If in an identical proposition, I reject the predicate while retaining the subject, contradiction results; and I therefore say that the former belongs necessarily to the latter. But if we reject subject and predicate alike, there is no contradiction; for nothing is then left that can be contradicted. To posit a triangle, and yet to reject its three angles, is self contradictory; but there is no contradiction in rejecting the triangle together with its three angles. The same holds true of an absolutely necessary being. If its existence is rejected, we reject the thing itself with all its predicates; and no question of contradiction can then arise . . ."11 The relation of a predicate to the subject does not simply posit anything existent. If it does so then the subject is already posited as existent. For example, God is omnipotent merely means if there is a God he must be omnipotent but not that there surely is God that is

11. Ibid, B-622
existent. And ‘God is omnipotent’ remains even for someone who does not really believe in the existence of God provided he understands what the concept ‘God’ means. In this way, “if the existence of the subject is not presupposed, every predicate remains indeterminate in respect of whether it belongs to an existent or to a merely possible subject.”12 As Kant says that ‘Being is not a real predicate’. It does not add anything new to the subject. It expresses a copula of a judgement. The proposition ‘God is omnipotent’ contains two concepts. The word ‘s’ is not a predicate but only it serves to posit the predicate in relation to the subject. When we say that ‘there is God’ we add no new predicate to the concept of God but only posit the subject in itself with all its predicates. Nothing can be added to the concept, which expresses merely what is possible, by my thinking its object (through the expression ‘it is’) as given absolutely. The real contains no more predicates than the merely possible. As Kant says, “A hundred real thalers do not contain the least coin more than a hundred possible thalers. For as the latter signify the concept and the former the object and the positing of the object, should the former contain more that the latter, my concept would not, in that case, express the whole object, and would not therefore be an adequate concept of it . . .”13 So when we think of a being as the supreme reality without any defect, the question still remains whether it exists or not. Though this may be a complete

12. David Walford: Theoretical Philosophy - 1755-1770, 2:74
13. Kant. I: Critique of Pure Reason, B-627
concept of a thing in general but something is still wanted in its relation to my thought viz. the knowledge of this object is still possible a posteriori. And this is the source of difficulty. Had we been dealing with the object of senses, we would not mistake the existence of the object with the mere concept of it. "for though the concept of the object is thought only as conforming to the universal conditions of possible empirical knowledge in general, where as through its existence it is thought as belonging to the context of experience as a whole. In thus being connected with the content of experience as a whole, the concept of the object is not, however, in the least enlarged; all that has happened is that our thought has thereby obtained an additional possible perception." 14

Thus, we have to go out side the concepts of the objects in order to ascribe existence to these objects. In case of the objects of the senses, this is done with the help of some perception in accordance with the empirical laws. Nut, when we go to the objects of pure thought, we have no means at our disposal for knowing their existences and that has to be done purely a priori manner. Our understanding of all existence belongs exclusively to the unity of experience, any existence outside this empirical field, while not absolutely impossible, we can never justify.

14. ibid, 629
The concept of supreme being is in fact a very useful idea but just because it is a mere idea, it is unable to enlarge our knowledge in respect of what exists. It is not even good enough to tell us about the possibility of any existence beyond that which is known to us through experience. Since, the possibility of synthetic knowledge is only to be found in experience, the idea alone cannot give us the synthetic knowledge. The connection of all real properties of a thing is a synthesis which we cannot determine a priori.

So, to conclude, we can say that since the concept of ‘supreme existence’ is a mere idea, it cannot enlarge our stock of knowledge and hence it fails to prove the existence of God.

Cosmological proof: like the ontological proof, cosmological proof retains the connection of absolute necessity with the highest reality. As per Kant, it runs, “If anything exists, an absolutely necessary being must also exist, now I, at least, exist. Therefore an absolutely necessary being exists. The minor premise contains an experience, the major premise, the inference from their being any experience at all to be existence of the necessary . . .” 15

The proof starts with experience, with some thing existent in experience as contingent and from this contingent existence we infer

15. Ibid, B-633
the necessary existence as its basis. For the contingent exists under another contingent condition and this chain moves on until we come to a cause which is not itself contingent and thus conditionally necessary. The nature of this unconditionally necessary cause or supreme cause should be completely determined through its own concept. In the words of Kant, "the necessary being can be determined in one way only, that is, by one out of each possible pair of opposite predicates. It must therefore be completely determined through its own concept. Now there is only one possible concept which determines a thing completely a priori, namely, the concept of 'ens realissimum'. The concept of the ens realissimum is therefore the only concept through which a necessary being can be thought. In other words, a supreme being necessarily exists". 16

The argument works deceptively. It starts with experience no doubt, and also it reaches the supreme cause, that is, the existence of necessary being. But further to this necessary being it cannot move on experience or any inference there of. hence, it abandons the experience here. For experience cannot tell us as to what properties this absolutely necessary being should have, that is, "... which among all possible things contains in itself the conditions essential to absolutely necessity..."17 In the argument this is supposed that these conditions are found only in the concept of ens realissimum* and thus concludes that ens

16. Ibid, B-634
17. Ibid, B-635
realissimum is the absolutely necessary being. It is presupposed that the concept of absolutely necessity can be inferred from the concept of highest reality. This is in fact what ontological argument is about. Hence, the ontological proof is being here made the basis of cosmological proof which in fact wants to dispense with the ontological proof. For 'absolute necessity' is an existence that can only be determined from mere concepts. If we say that the concept of ens realissimum in the only concept which fulfills the condition of necessary existence, we also must accept that necessary existence can be inferred from this concept. Thus the claim of the cosmological argument of its being in line with experience is a false claim. For experience may lead us to the concept of absolutely necessity but it can never demonstrate that this necessity belongs to any determinate thing. Thus Kant says, "... it professes to lead us by a new path, but after a short circuit brings us back to the very path which we had deserted at its bidding." 18

* Kant defines ens realissimum as follows: He says "... The concept of what ... possesses all reality is just the concept of a thing in itself as completely determined; and since in all possible [pairs of] contradictory predicates one predicate, namely, that which belongs to being absolutely, is to be found in its determination, the concept of ens realissimum is the concept of an individual being. It is therefore a transcendental ideal which seems as basis for the complete determination that necessarily belongs to all that exists. This ideal is the supreme and complete material condition of the possibility of all that exists - the condition to which all thought of objects, so far their content is concerned, has to be traced back. It is also the only true ideal of which human reason is capable. For only this one case is a concept of a thing - a concept which is in itself Universal - completely determined in and through itself, and known as the representation of an individual". (Critique of Pure Reason page - 490-491)
In other words, "... it will never establish more than the existence of some incomprehensibly great Author of the totality which presents itself to our senses. It will never be able to establish the existence of the most perfect of all possible beings ..." 19

Thus we find that both the ontological and cosmological proofs are one and the same thing and as our discussion in the preceding pages show that they are unable to prove the existence of the absolutely necessary being to any satisfaction and ultimately fails to be the proofs of the existence of God.

It is a strange fact that once we take something to exist we cannot avoid inferring that something exists necessarily. The cosmological argument rests on this. On the other hand if we take the concept of anything we can never represent this thing as absolutely necessary. And what ever exists we can not think of its non-existence. Thus here we are dealing not with the objective principles but with subjective principles of reason. To conclude, I shall say, "... The concept of reason is only to be found in our reason, as a formal condition of thought; it does not allow of being hypostatised as a material condition of existence." 20

19. David Walford: Theoretical Philosophy-1755-1770, 2:161
20. Kant, I. Critique of Pure Reason, B-648
Physico-theological proof: Having seen that ontological and cosmological proofs fail us in their attempts to prove the existence of supreme being, it remains to be seen the physico-theological proof, if this can lead us to the assured existence of this supreme being.

This proof takes its basis as a determinate experience of the things in the world. In the outset, I shall claim that if this proof also fails to establish the existence of supreme being, then we shall conclude that no satisfactory proof of the existence of a being corresponding to the idea can be possible by pure speculative reason.

The problem is plain and simple as- how can any experience reach to the perfection of an idea? The transcendental idea of supreme being is so great that no experience or empirical enquiry can ever reach it. For the experience always operates in the field of conditioned and can never give us sufficient material required for the concept of unconditioned. This concept can never be reached through any empirical synthesis.

If we try to put this supreme being in the chain of conditions, then, like any number of the series, we will have to look for its condition beyond it, but if, we separate this supreme being from the above said series and understand to mean as a purely intelligible being,
we can never bridge the gap between chain of conditions to this 
transcendental concept of purely intelligible being. As said above, all 
our synthesis and extension of our knowledge belongs to possible 
experience and therefore to the objects of sense and devoid of this 
experience of senses, we can have no meaning of anything. The 
description of this proof of physico-theological runs as:

"This world presents to us so immeasurable a stage of variety, order, 
purposiveness, and beauty, as displayed alike in its infinite extent and in 
the unlimited divisibility of its parts that even with such knowledge as 
our weak understanding can acquire of it, we are brought face to face 
with so many marvels immeasurably great, that all speech loses its 
force, all numbers their power to measure, our thoughts themselves all 
definiteness, and that our judgement of the whole resolves itself into an 
amagement which is speechless, and only the more eloquent on that 
account. Every where we see a chain of effects and causes, of ends and 
means, regularity in origination and dissolution. Nothing has of itself 
come into the condition in which we find it to exist, but always points to 
something else as its cause, while this in turn commits us to repetition of 
the same enquiry. The whole universe must thus sink into the abyss of 
nothingness, unless, over and above this infinite chain of contingencies, 
we assume something to support it - something which is original and 
independently self- subsistent, and which as the cause of the origin of 
universe secures also at the same time its continuance. What magnitude
are we to ascribe to this supreme cause - admitting that it is supreme in respect of all things in the world? We are not acquainted with the whole content of the world, still less do we know how to estimate its magnitude by comparison with all that is possible. But since we cannot, as regards causality, dispense with an ultimate and supreme being, what is there to present us ascribing to it a degree of perfection that sets it above every thing else that is possible? this we can easily do - though only through the slender outline of an abstract concept - while representing this being to ourselves as combining in itself all possible perfection as in a single substance. This concept is in conformity with the demand of our reason for parsimony of principles; it is free from self-contradiction is never decisively contradicted by any experience; and it is likewise of such a character that it contributes to the extension of the employment of reason with in experience, through the guidance which it yields in the discovery of order and purposiveness.”21

This argument takes into account the wonderful design and order of the world as a course for reaching from the conditioned to the supreme and unconditioned author. This evidence of order internal to things as for example ‘watches and ships’ and the wonderful order in the nature external to things, though empirical in nature but so strong

21. ibid, B-651
that reason cannot very easily challenge this. So far so good.

Though we cannot doubt the rationality of the argument so far the order in the world is taken as an evidence. But this evidence can, being empirical, can never prove the appodeictic certainty which it claims. So, we can only maintain that this physico-theological proof can act only as an introduction to the ontological proof. It can only reach to the extent of the cosmological argument.

Because the order and the purposiveness observable in the world may be completely contingent and we can argue to a cause proportioned to it. But the concept of this cause must be completely determinate and this must be the concept which possesses all might, wisdom in all perfection which is proper to an all sufficient being, which we find in the concept of ens realissimum.

Though we witness great order in immeasurable a stage as the world is, but we cannot say that we observe supreme wisdom, the absolute unity in the world which are the qualities of supreme being. We cannot advance from experience to the absolute totality. But physico-theological proof attempts to reach it.
Infact physico-theological proof can lead us to, as Kant says, "... admitting the greatness, wisdom, power, etc., of the author of the world but can take us no further. Accordingly, we then, abandon the argument from empirical grounds of proof, and fall back upon the contingency which, in the first steps of the argument, we had inferred from the order and purposiveness of the world. With this contingency as our sole premise, we then advance, by means of transcendental concepts alone, to the existence of an absolutely necessary being and from the concept of the absolute necessity of the first cause to the completely determinate or determinable concept of that necessary being, namely, to the concept of an all-embracing reality. . . ."22

Thus we find that the physico-theological proof falls back, like cosmological proof, upon the ontological proof. And, since apart from this ontological proof there is no way open for the speculative reason to prove the existence of God or supreme being, this supreme being remains as an ideal of pure reason. and speculative reason is of no help so far the existence of God is concerned. Though it can be put to diverse uses like conceiving the attributes of this supreme being, which are compatible with this concept. It also works to establish an ideal which brings whole of human knowledge under this concept of ens realissimum. Not only the objective reality of this concept of God or supreme being cannot be proved, this con not be disproved either.

22. Ibid, B-657
So, lastly, since all proofs fail to establish the existence of God, Kant makes room for faith. As he says in the preface to the second edition of Critique of pure reason, "... as made on behalf of the necessary practical employment of my reason - of God, freedom, immortality is not permissible unless at the same time speculative reason be deprived of its pretensions to transcendent insight. For in order to arrive at such insight it must make use of principles which, in fact, extend only to objects of possible experience, and which, if also applied to what cannot be an object of experience, always really change this into an appearance, thus rendering all practical extensions of pure reason impossible. I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith".23*

Knowledge is basically speculative in nature and can only be based on the objects of experience because all knowledge according to Kant is synthetic a priori. Thus when knowledge tries to transcend the limits of experience, the synthesis which it gets is devoid of all true contents of knowledge. It is here that Kant brings in the concept of faith and says, "... if, I say, the empiricist were satisfied with this, his principle would be a maxim urging moderation in our pretensions,

23. ibid,BXXX

*Kant dismisses speculative proofs for the existence of God and talks of the 'Moral proof'. The moral proof though beyond the scope of this thesis, a brief mention of it would not be out of place.
Kant argues that "...although speculative is, broadly, a tissue of errors, moral theology is perfectly possible. But the moral proof of God's existence differs from the attempted speculative proofs in at least two significant respects. First, it begins neither from a concept nor from a fact about the world, but from an immediately experienced moral situation. The moral agent feels called upon to achieve certain results, in particular to bring about a state of affairs in which happiness is proportioned to virtue, and knows that he cannot do it by his own unaided efforts; in so far as he commits himself to action he shows his belief in a moral author of the Universe. Affirmation of God's existence is intimately linked with practice; it is most definitely not the result of mere speculation. Again, a proof like the first cause argument claims universal validity; standing as it does on purely intellectual grounds it ought, if cogent, to persuade saint and sinner alike. But the moral proof as Kant states it would not even have meaning to a man who is unconscious of moral obligations; the very word 'God' removed from the moral context that gives it life, is almost or quite without significance. Accordingly Kant states that the result of this proof is not objective knowledge but a species of personal conviction, embodying not logical but moral certainty. He adds that "I must not even say 'it is morally certain that there is a God ...' but 'I am morally certain'" (B857). In other words, the belief or faith Kant proposes as a replacement for discredited metaphysical knowledge can be neither strictly communicated nor learned from another. It is something that has to be achieved by every man for himself" (The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, vol-3&4, Macmillan and Free Press).

modesty in our assertions, and yet at the same time the greatest possible extension of our understanding, through the teacher fittingly assigned to us, namely, through experience. If such were our procedure, we should not be cut off from employing intellectual presuppositions and faith as behalf of our practical interest; only they could never be permitted to assume the title and dignity of science and rational insight ..."24

Thus we can safely conclude that reason, though, it may have

24. Ibid, B-499
diverse functions in guiding our inquiries, fails to provide proofs for such a great and transcendental being - God. And, The God, or supreme being is only an object of faith and not of reason.
Kierkegaard holds an important position in Lutheran theologians. He presented his case strongly against the rationalists of his time. In another sense, the rise of Kierkegaard can be seen as a revolt against the prevailing uncertain situation in theology during his time. His case against the prevailing rationalism was no half-way effort but a full-fledged attack to drive out reasons from the boundaries of religion. It will not be out of place here to recall that the time between Luther's death in 1546 and the rise of Kierkegaard was the time of the advent of science. Due to this, all theology had come under much pressure from the scientific thought. Much of the cherished stories of the testament came under attack of rationalism. The liberal theologians made unsuccessful efforts to safeguard the citadels of theology from such attacks. Kierkegaard analysed that the strategy adopted by these theologians was of meeting the 'reason with reason'. Kierkegaard realised that it will not serve the purpose. He convinced himself that once it is admitted that a dogma is accepted not on faith or revelation but on rational evidence, the case of religion is lost. Any position taken on this stand cannot be defended. He strongly believed that the religious belief, far from being an intellectual asset, is a non-rational decision possible only through divine grace. To justify religious belief rationally is a mistake. As Bruner writes, "what can be proved is eo ipso
reality of God, because God cannot be known by theoretical reason but must be comprehended by an act of decision”.1

Having seen as to the circumstances prevailing at the time of Kierkegaard and the challenges in from of him, I shall now make an attempt to understand/evaluate Kierkegaard’s position as a philosopher of theology or as a theologian.

The gist of Kierkegaard’s thought is contained in this famous dictum, ‘religious truth is subjectivity’. By this Kierkegaard did not mean that religious truth is solipsistic or some interest of the individual. Kierkegaard believes that we can look at the problem of truth - either from objective or from subjective point of view. When we look at the problem from the objective point of view our attention is turned away from ourselves and we attend to that object. He says, “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 relates himself.”2 This sort of knowledge is a unity between one’s idea and the object of that idea. But, for Kierkegaard the Truth is the identity of thought and being’. And to attain this unit of thought and being, the

1. Emil Bruner : The Theology of Crisis
2. Kierkegaard : Postscript, p-181
inquirer must remove, as far as possible, his subjectivity and become full receptive to the object. “The way of objective reflection makes the subject accidental, and thereby transforms existence into something indifferent, something vanishing. Away from the subject, the objective way of reflection leads to the objective truth, and while the subject and his subjectivity become indifferent, the truth also becomes indifferent, and this indifference is precisely its objective validity; for all interest, like all decisiveness is rooted in subjectivity. The way of objective reflection leads to abstract thought, to mathematics, to historical knowledge of different kinds; and always it leads away from the subject, whose existence or non-existence, and from the objective point of view quite rightly, becomes infinitely indifferent”.3

in the objective pursuit of truth, the subjectivity is fully eliminated. The attention is directed towards the object of enquiry. The aim is knowledge which is valid for every inquirer. This means the elimination of thinking process. Kierkegaard discards this view of truth as mistaken. He says that though the truth is the unity of thought and being, but the being with which the objective contemplation deals is a conceptual being. The objective contemplation can never reach to the empirical reality. Since the empirical reality is irreducibly particular, thought is fundamentally general. Thought always deals with concepts (which are general in nature and are abstracted from

3. Ibid, p-173
particular existence) and never with the existence itself. Hence, the being with which the objective pursuit deals with is a conceptual being. But the fact that reality is particular and thought is general does not mean that thought cannot be related to the concrete existence. The problem is that if the content involved in thought is not a conceptual being but is empirical being, a conformity of thought and being is possible only as an ideal towards which one strives. Because when we talk of empirical being, it must be understood as becoming. Thus the truth which is a unity of thought and being becomes an approximate as the being is always becoming. The unity of thought and being could be attained only when process of becoming had stopped. This means that truth can be achieved when the empirical being has ceased to be what it is. Kierkegaard feels that in this, objective pursuit of truth this important aspect of empirical reality i.e. ‘becoming’ is abstracted from it and hence we cannot say that we get to the truth of object which we were examining. It is on this ground that Kierkegaard feels that objective reflection is unable to grasp the truth of empirical reality.

The general character of becoming as understood in Kierkegaard’s philosophy is a perpetual movement from the potentiality to actuality, this process is self-directed in humans. In this process of self-directed actualisation two things become necessary: firstly, one must be able to imagine possibilities and secondly, one must be able to realise what has been imagined. And it is here that the concept of will
comes in. For a human self, thought is the means through which possibilities are apprehended. Kierkegaard explains this point as, "Abstract thought considers both possibility and actuality, but its understanding of actuality is a false reflection, since the medium within which the concept is thought is not actuality but possibility. Abstract thought can get hold of actuality only by nullifying it, but to nullify actuality is to transform it into possibility". 4

Further, the grasping of possibility through thought is not the same as actualisation of possibility. As Kierkegaard says, "Man thinks and exists, and existence separates thought and being, holding them apart from one another is succession." 5 This suggests that the movement of thought is perused by the being in its quest for achieving the actuality but the thought always moves ahead. And hence this being never catches with the thought in its life history.

As said above, in the second condition of human becoming, it is clear that while thought apprehends the possibilities, imagined possibilities are translated into actualities through the will. But, here the realisation of possibilities into actualities is an abstract presupposition. As said above, the unit of thought and being in human self can never be attained or in other words, the unit of thought and

4. ibid, p-279
5. ibid, p-271
being in human self is an impossibility. It is a mere approximation, because the being is always in a state of becoming and hence it is a movement between potentiality and actuality. For the existing individual, thought and being can never coincide. As long as one exists, one is in a process of becoming in which one seeks to enact that about which one has thought, thereby striving to effect unity of one’s thought and being. It is a task posed to the existing self and is not an accomplished fact. Kierkegaard defines this religious truth as, An objective uncertainty held fast in an approximation-process of the most passionate inwardness in truth, the highest attainable for an existing individual’. It is an appropriation-process because the existing individual is always in a state of becoming. He strives constantly to approximate the ideals that he conceives as his possibilities. Subjectivity suggests the process by which an individual appropriates what he thinks, or constitutes his actuality by realising his possibility. Since the individual is in a process of becoming, the conformity between thought and being, as mentioned above, is never reached. At no single moment it is forgotten that subject is an existing being, and that existence is a process of becoming, and therefore the notion of truth as identity of thought and being remains illusion, and it remains as merely an expectation. Not because that the truth is not an identity

6. ibid, p-182
between thought and being but because such an identity for an existing individual is not possible.

The movement from possibility to actuality results in the alteration of the self’s actuality. On this Kierkegaard says that the truth is the subject's transformation in himself. He states about the subjectivity of truth, “Truth in its very being is not the simple duplication of being in terms of thought, which yields only the thought of being, merely ensures that the act of thinking shall not be a cob web of the brain without relation to reality, guaranteeing the validity of thought, that the thing thought actually is, i.e. has validity. No, truth in its very being is the duplication in me, in thee, in him, so that my, thy, that his life, approximately in striving to attain it, is the very being of truth, is a life, as the truth was in Christ for he was the truth. And hence, Christianity understood, the truth consists not in knowing the truth but in being the truth”.7

Here the truth is understood not as some logical truth but is identified with the life of the individual being. It is a passionate commitment of the individual. In other words it is a volitional commitment to ideals. this must always be understood in relation to the individual and can be accomplished by the consistent and disciplined assertion of the will. Kierkegaard holds that an individual accomplishes

7. Training in Christianity : p-201
truth only by being true to his ideals. Kierkegaard says that individual does not reach truth by an intellectual assent to propositions but by volitional commitment to the ideals. Intellect helps only in choosing the goals and specifying the possibilities. But, realisation of these goals and ideals is only through commitment of the will.

Some critics argue that when Kierkegaard says that, ‘religious truth is subjectivity’, he denies the objective existence of God. But, in fact, this is not true. He stresses that religious faith is not to be identified with cognitive assent to propositions, but must be related to the assertions of the individual will, or to transformation of one’s life. Kierkegaard holds that his thesis, ‘Truth is subjectivity’ grows out of biblical and Lutheran tradition. It refers to the process by which an individual appropriates what he has conceived as a possibility. In so doing, the individual himself becomes true and “Truth exists for the particular individual only as he himself produces it in action”.8

Kierkegaard divides the journey of an individual self in three stages to reach to the mature or true self hood. These stages are not randomly chosen but are very carefully and progressively ordered stages. One stage terminates into another higher stage towards the goal to true selfhood. These stages are named as Aesthetic stage, Ethical stage and Religious stage. These stages are concretely distinguished

8. *The concept of Dread* : p-123
from each other on existential determinates as enjoyment perdition, action-victory and suffering. Accordingly stages are regarded as hedonistic, ethical and Christian. These are the stages through which a becoming self passes in coming to complete self hood. Hence, here is a movement from a pleasure seeking life of an aesthete to the devout life of a Christian. Now I shall discuss these stages briefly:-

I. Aesthetic stage : The fundamental characteristic of this stage of existence is lack of decision. Those who live at this stage cannot be called as the actual selves. Because, according to Kierkegaard, it is the conscious decision which constitutes the actuality of self. It is to be noted here that an individual may live with his greatest natural endowments but until he takes the responsibility of his decisions about his action he cannot be called as an actual self in Kierkegaardian sense. In Either/Or Kierkegaard very clearly says, "great as the difference with in the aesthetic domain may be, all the way from complete stupidity to the highest degree of cleverness, but even at the stage where cleverness is evident, the spirit is not determined as spirit, but as talent".9

Since there is no intervention of the will at this stage, there is no actual self, rather self is determined as talent. At another place Kierkegaard put it in still straight terms, "the more consciousness, the

9 Either/Or, p-165
more the self, the more consciousness, the more will, and the
more will, the more self. A man who has no will at all is no self; the
more will he has, the more consciousness of self he also has”. 10
Kierkegaard believes that decision is the self conscious exercise of the
will. Therefore, the self consciousness is necessary for any possible
decision. Since, the self consciousness has not yet developed at this
stage, the decision is impossible. And, in so far as the self does not
become itself, it is not its own self.

This stage of pleasure seeking is self defeating. A person who
always tries to get pleasure out of the same thing gets bored and always
tries new things to satisfy his impulses. At last he being tired of his once
pleasure giving commodities, finds himself in isolation. It is here that a
sense of ‘despair’ dawns . it is under this despair the aesthetic makes
the choice by which he rises to the second stage of existence viz.
Ethical stage.

Ethical stage :

while the previous stage was marked with the lack of decision
making on the part of the particular self, this stage is marked with the
emergence of decision. This decision making has two distinct levels.
The first one involves the choice of the individual while the second one,
for which the first level is necessary, is what is associated with decision

10. The sickness Unto Death , p-162
making - the resolution to strive to actualise the chosen goal. These two levels constitute an individual’s self. The first level is designated as to choose oneself and it means to choose oneself in his eternal validity. It is to be noted here that for Kierkegaard, the self is not an abstract something with unlimited possibility and with no actuality. But, it is concrete, endowed with certain actualities that condition the possibilities open to the self. So, his understanding of the choice of one self in one’s eternal validity depends upon his conception of concreteness of self’s existence. He says, “He chooses himself, not in a finite sense (for then this ‘self’ would be something fine along with other things finite), but is an absolute sense; and yet in fact he chooses himself and not another. This self which he then chooses is infinitely concrete, for it is in fact himself, for he has chosen is absolutely. This self did not exist previously, for it came into existence by means of the choice, and yet it did exist, for it was in fact ‘himself’ . . . . that which is chosen does not exist and comes into existence with the choice; that which is chosen exists, otherwise there would not be a choice. For in case what I choose did not exist but absolutely came into existence with choice, I would not be choosing, I would be creating; but did not create myself, I choose myself. Therefore, while nature is created out of nothing, while I myself as an immediate personality, am created out of nothing, as a free spirit, I am born of the principle of contradiction, or born by the fact that I choose my self”.

11. Either/Or, p-219-220
At this stage of existence Kierkegaard places great emphasis on inwardness. When he says that the ethical stage is marked by the free decision of the will, he understands decision as the inward resolution and not the outward accomplishment of purpose. For the outward consequences are not always within the control of the self. He is responsible for his purpose, or his intention, and not for the outward result of his conduct. One must remain fully indifferent to the results of his decision and should concentrate upon his inwardness. He says, "A truly great ethical personality would seek to realise his life in the following manner. He would strive to develop himself with the utmost exertion of his power; in so doing, he would perhaps produce great effects in the external world. But this would not seriously engage his attention, for he would know that the result is not in his power, and hence it has no significance for him... He would therefore choose to remain in ignorance of what he has accomplished, in order that his striving might not be regarded by a preoccupation with the external, and lest he fall into the temptation which proceeds from this". 12

Now, granting that the self has attained the ethical stage, the life is regulated in accordance with the principles which demand transformation of our whole life down to the last detail. It requires not only that we should be generous, but that whenever we give...
should give just the right amount, no more and no less’. That means it demands perfection which is beyond our reach. In this case a self becomes helpless, because he cannot reach the demanded perfection. No ethical struggle will carry us to the goal. All we can do, says Kierkegaard, is to bow our heads and concede that before God we are always and infinitely in the wrong. If we cannot do what is right; we can at least confess that we cannot, and that we are miserable sinners deserving of the divine anger and castigation. It is this breakdown of all morality in confession and repentance that takes us on to the third stage i.e. Religious stage.

Religious stage:

This is regarded as the goal of the self. After having miserably failed in the ethical stage, the self enters religious stage. This is important stage for the present thesis as it is here that the Kierkegaardian position on religion will become clear. Preceding discussion shows that the Aesthetic stage is marked by indecisiveness, the ethical stage with the emergence of will, with the decisiveness, the religious stage brings in different concepts. Kierkegaard divides this stage into two sub stages viz. ‘religious stage(A)’ and ‘Religious stage(B)’. The distinction between these sub-stages is not very clearly drawn. The main difference between the two is that in stage (A) : A God is thought of as immanent, as some how continuous with our own minds and open to some degree of understanding by reason, where as in
calls ‘Christianity’, we realise that God stands over against us as infinitely different, as quite incomprehensible, and in deed absurd.

The concepts of Resignation, suffering and humour play an important role at the (A) level of religious stage. I shall very briefly discuss these concepts as they play an important role in making of a self.

(a) Resignation : It is a total renounce. The religious man should renounce all his temporal and worldly desires. Kierkegaard says, “It is abominable lie to say that marriage in pleasing to God. From Christian point of view it is a crime, and what is odious about it is that by this very crime the innocent individual is introduced into that community of criminals which is human life”. 13 This renouncing of desire - considerably belongs to the lower level of religiousness as it can be achieved by a sufficiently heroic efforts of the will, He says, “with my own strength, I can renounce everything, and find peace and rest in suffering; I can bear everything, and . . . I can still save my soul, so long it is of more consequence to men that my love for God should conquer, rather than my earthly happiness . . . . the man whose soul has not this sense of the romantic has indeed sold his soul . . . .”14

13. Fear and Trembling, p-412
14. ibid, p-67,
(b) Suffering: This is the second important concept. Kierkegaard holds that the distinguishing mark of religious action is suffering. "To be without suffering means to be without religion". By suffering Kierkegaard does not mean the outwardly suffering in this world or some sort of misfortune. The suffering which Kierkegaard is talking is inescapable, a darkness which remains even in strongest light, a suffering which belongs to the very essence of religion. This demand of Kierkegaard from a religious man that he should suffer and his suffering should become more intense as he advances in the path of religion. This is explained by Kierkegaard as, "This suffering has its ground in the fact that the individual is in his immediacy absolutely committed to relative ends; its significance lies in the transposition of relationship, the dying away from immediacy, or in the expression existentially of the principle that the individual can do absolutely nothing of himself, but is as nothing before God, for here again the negative is the mark by which the God relationship is recognised, and self-annihilation is the essential form for God relationship." This means that when the self turns into religious stage, he wants to do the will of God which he is anyway unable to do. The self then sees the self's worthlessness which causes the feeling of miserableness.

It seems Kierkegaard is thinking in line with Lutheran theology. "

15. ibid.p-406
16. ibid. p-412
God stands over us like a stern task master, insisting on obedience, demanding of us moral perfection. But since we are utterly corrupt by nature, we are unable to do anything that will please him. We are like a person in a nightmare who, with some dreadful form pursuing him, tries to run, only to find that his legs have turned to lead. From the terror and suffering of such an experience the normal man soon wakes up. For the religious man their is no waking up while life lasts. The more perceptively religious he becomes, the wider becomes the felt abyss between what God demands of him and what he can do. And any man who takes seriously the deity... has ample reason for a nightmare life. ‘Christianity exists’ says Kierkegaard, because there is hatred between God and man: ‘God hates all existence’.

It is a frightful thing, moment when God gets out his instruments for the operation, no human strength can carry out: cutting away from a man his desire to live, killing him so that he can live like a dead man. The object of this life is to give us the highest possible degree of distaste for living. Like a man who will be ready to travel anywhere in the world to hear singer with a perfect voice, so does God listen in heaven; and when ever he hears rising upto Him the worship of a man, He has lead to the uttermost point of disgust with life, god says quietly to Himself: that is the note.”17 Though Kierkegaard at times says that God is pure love. But seems impossible anyway to reconcile these two

17. _Person and Belief_, p-200
pictures of his deity i.e. (of pure love) and (God hates all existence). Again, Kierkegaard’s pronouncement that God hates all existence, sounds quite different from ‘I came that ye might have life and have it more abundantly’.

Guilt: Here it is used as the guild for sin. It seems that guilt belongs to the ethical stage as it is at that stage where the sense of right and wrong is at work and also the sense of remorse for wrong doings. But, for Kierkegaard, the sin and wrongdoing are not same. The sinner is a man who ‘lives before God’ and sees that his wrong doing is an offence against the will of God. Of this offence there is no setting right by any way of remorse or repentance. It is a personal betrayal, an alienation from God. This can be set right only through divine grace. To do wrong is to go against reason at ethical level, where as to sin is to relate oneself to the ultimate power, which bears upon ones ultimate destiny. So, guilt is an awareness of wrong doing, a conception as no longer mere worldly but a divine confrontation. The guilt of the Christian, like suffering, is inevitable, enduring, and total. Kierkegaard puts it, “the decisive expression for the consciousness of guilt is in turn the essential maintenance of this consciousness, or the eternal recollection of guilt . . . so here there can be no question of the childish thing of making a fresh start, of being a good child against . . . human justice pronounces a life sentence the first time forever. He is caught forever harnessed with yoke of guilt, and never gets out of the harness . . . .”

18. Fear and Trembling, p474-475
Humour: Humour is included as a condition for entering the religious stage of existence before faith. This humour consists of laughing at the vanities of human beings i.e. when a individual rises above the ordinary human beings he sees these individuals and laughs at their vanity. We see that the commonest kind of humour consists in the perception of incongruity; a man in a top-hat slips from the banana peel; the butler is mistaken for his lordship and tries to play out the part etc. - these are the comic characters because of the clash between appearance and reality. The jest lies in the deflation of high pretensions by humble fact. The enjoyment arising out of such a contrast between reality and appearance need not be cruel. There may be sympathy for such a man with pretensions. In fact the main distinction between irony and humour is that humour has sympathy where as irony lacks it. To the person who looks at the activity of ordinary mortals from the exalted position of detachment, finds them grotesque-puppets. The loftier the position to which a man rises, wider will be the range of his comic characters. The loftiest of all these positions is the religious position. Hence, the religious man has an unparalleled opportunity for humour. He sees every walk of life right from king to a peasant as a mere puppet. Kierkegaard writes, "When I was older, I opened my eyes and beheld reality, at which I began to laugh, and since then I have not stopped laughing. I saw that the meaning of life was to secure a livelihood, and that its goal was to secure a high position; that love’s rich dream was marriage with an heiress that friendship’s blessing was help in financial difficulties;
that wisdom was what the majority assumed it to be; that enthusiasm consisted in making a speech; that it was courage to risk the loss of ten dollars; that kindness consisted in saying, ‘you are welcome’, at the dinner table; that piety consisted in going to communion once a year. This I saw, and I laughed”.19

Religious stage(B) : This stage is the goal of Christian pilgrimage and it is at this stage that Kierkegaard answers the question : ‘How I am to become a Christian?’ The vast literature which Kierkegaard has left as a legacy seems to concern this question. It is a difficult task to find out the answer of this question out of this vast literature. To my naive understanding, Kierkegaard takes three important issues as important for a Christian or one can become a Christian only by (i) overcoming objectivity ( ii) achieving subjectivity and ( iii) a leap of faith. The issues of objectivity and subjectivity are already discussed in preceding pages. Here I shall be concerned with the leap of faith.

Leap of faith is the last step which an individual takes to reach to the highest summit of religious knowledge. This is the only possible goal which a self can achieve. What distinguishes faith from other subjective decisions is that the faith is concerned with a special sort of problem. This means that Christianity demands passionate commitment towards certain central beliefs viz the belief in ‘incarnation.’ Incarnation means at certain point of time God enters

history i.e. God actually became man. The object of faith is thus God’s reality in existence as an individual human being. This is a distinctive fact of Christianity that marks it out from all other religions. And, this fact cannot be established by any process of objective thought. As said above, we cannot prove the existence of any past fact. The whole enquiry leads to doubt and suspended judgement. The unique Christian fact, if it is to be a fact at all, is one of overwhelming moment, upon whose acceptance the eternal happiness depends.

Incarnation cannot be proved by any way of evidence, for then it will amount to more or less probability; to reason, it is bound to look like an impossibility. To say that the God became man, is to say that the eternal became temporal, the infinite became finite and the omnipotent became limited in power etc. These things are not probabilities but absurdities. Then the question arises: what a man should do? If we try to look at the problem with our reason, this is a big contradiction - that God has existed in human form. It is not only unknowable but unthinkable. Here Kierkegaard says, “To speculate upon it is a misunderstanding, and the farther one goes in this direction, the greater is the misunderstanding. When one finally reaches the stage of not only speculating it, but of understanding it speculatively, one has reached the highest pitch of misunderstanding”.20

20. Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion, p-339
Thus to know the religious truth by the intellect, in this line of thinking, is a misguided approach and is destined to fail due to the nature of subject concerned. For the absurd is the object of faith, and the only object that can be believed not speculated.

In faith there is no looking back, there is no room for rational understanding and certainty. This difficulty of overcoming the reason can only be done by a resolute act of will, the leap of faith is a daring passionate, non-rational commitment to the paradoxical and unintelligible. "Faith begins where thought leaves off."21

According to Kierkegaard, the incarnation is the absolute paradox. This rests upon his contention that God and man are absolutely and qualitatively different. This can be understood as the difference between Creator and Creature, the difference between holy God and sinful man. For Kierkegaard, the absolute paradox brings together which is otherwise totally opposite. The 'God-man' refers to this element in the opposition. That is why Kierkegaard says that incarnation is absolute paradox.

As this shows, the absolute paradox is by all standards of human reasoning (the only process of reasoning known) a completely absurd. Any attempt to comprehend this absolute Paradox through rationality is

bound to fail. As human standard of reasoning are not applicable to God. Kierkegaard says, God-man is an 'offence' to reason, the 'shipwreck' of reason, and the 'Crucification' of the understanding.

Hence, we find that in Kierkegaardian philosophy of religion, the reason and objective thought have no place. It is out right rejected as a means to understanding the religious truth.