CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present era seems to be the best of times and also the worst of times. It seems to be the best of times because man has achieved unimaginable advancements in all possible fields, in particular, of harnessing science to technology for the appreciable comfort of human life. He has the power of modern technology to assist him in his work. His life has become materially comfortable and easy, in comparison with that of the man in the pre-industrial revolution. The information technology of the twentieth century has made it possible for man to talk of the world as a "global" village. Man seems to have reached the pinnacle of success in every field, so much so that the earth seems too small for his expansive activity. But it also seems to be the worst of times, because the present era has its dark side, too. News that catches the headlines of dailies leaves us often with a profound sense of gloom. Man seems to have lost control over his own creations. Due to this, there seems to be destruction and chaos everywhere around him. Man today is under such tremendous psychological stress and strain that were rarely experienced by his ancestors in the bygone times. His creations themselves seem to have pushed him to the brink of destruction of everything, including his own. It is the sad epitaph of our civilization that the dark side of life seems to outweigh man's brightest achievements. Though man has reached the highest achievements all around him, he still has no peace around and within himself. He is restless. All traditional values, be they cultural or religious, seem to have failed in making man feel at home in his world. Possibly, never in the history of mankind, man was more urgently called upon to reflect on himself than today. His very existence as a human being is at stake. Now, the concerns of human existence is at the core of a philosophical movement that goes by the name of "existentialism". The theme of the proposed thesis belongs to the field of existentialism.
A. Statement of the Problem

Within Existentialism, my specific work is on the concept of the individual with special reference to Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish existentialist. It is a modest attempt to highlight the philosophical significance Kierkegaard attaches to the individual in his many works. The introductory chapter is a statement of the problem undertaken here for study. It is surprising that Kierkegaard, who otherwise speaks of the importance of the existing individual in quite a few of his works, has no independent work on the individual. Yet, the individual is the central focus of quite a few of his works, and rightly so, because he believed that the individual is the starting point to all existential enquiries. He is of the view that, to man, to exist is to live consciously, and that being conscious entails the free individual. It is only the individual who may be said to “exist”. Moreover, being a religious thinker, his thoughts on human existence are inextricably linked with man’s religious concerns. His quest for the goal, or the purpose, in life leads him to the question of meaning in life. The question of meaningful life cannot be addressed to anything but to one who possesses consciousness to some degree. It may be true that consciousness, in a broader sense, can enfold plants and animals, since they too are living beings. But consciousness, which concerns us here, in the strict sense, is that of the higher form of life which pertains specifically only to human beings. Kierkegaard is of the opinion that human beings, in virtue of their higher form of consciousness associated with volition, are addressed to the question of meaning in life individually. Meaningfulness in life is directly related to how an individual relates himself to his environment, both natural and social, and, most importantly, to himself and to his God, and thereupon creatively responds to them. Hence, Kierkegaard has for us a philosophy of the individual for the individual. It is not without reason that he prospectively had it inscribed on his tomb-stone: “That Individual”.

There is a sense in which it could be said that western metaphysics, contrary to Kierkegaard’s concerns, is largely a metaphysics of the universals. The concern for
determining the relation between the universal and the individual, or the particular, is exhibited from the vantage point of the universal. What is prior, the universal or the particular? What is the status of the universal, of the individual? Does existence concern the particular or the universal? Since existence for man is identically the same as life, What is the reality of life? Is man the author of life? Can he make his own life, in the sense of bestowing meaning and authenticity to his life? The questions have generated heated debates in the history of realism, conceptualism and nominalism.

We have one set of answers to these questions from the perspective of the Hegelian essentialism, that anchors its philosophy on the universal “essences”, ultimately, on the most universal “Idea”. This was immediately before the arrival of Kierkegaard on the European continent. Another set of answers comes to us from existentialism that is anchored on existence that is said “to precede essence”. It is not without reason that, at least, in its initial phase, existentialism came to be known as “the philosophy of life”. For quite a few existentialists, life apparently seems to be a complete puzzle with no definite sense of understanding or direction, therefore, human existence was branded to be “a useless passion” or “nauseous”. But, for many others, it is eminently significant, because it is rooted in being, or a God who supposedly has implanted a purpose, a telos, a “divine image” in man. Kierkegaard obviously belongs to the latter group. In his religious philosophy there is a metaphysical commitment to fundamental Christian doctrines. Does his thought help us to better understand human life? Does it help us to enrich the quality of human life?

B. A Conceptual Overview of the Individual

I proceed to give in the second chapter a conceptual overview of the individual. The chapter will have a bearing on the history of western philosophy. The concept of the individual is generally tagged in this history with that of the universal. However, I cannot but be selective in the treatment of the philosophers or philosophies. The often quoted belief that the western philosophy is an intensive amplification of the philosophies of
Plato and Aristotle has a measure of truth in it. For Plato the “forms” in the world of Ideas are universals, the particulars are mere shadows. Aristotle however, has perhaps a more lasting impact on the history of the universals. Hence I have briefly surveyed the views of Aristotle and his legacy through Aquinas on the concept of the individual.

For Aristotle, the individuals are the substances that are compositions of form and matter, and, in the case of man, “soul” and “body”. Thus Aristotle’s philosophy lays the foundation for the varieties of realism in the west. The great merit of Aristotle consists in making materiality the basis of quantity, the secondary matter, the principle of individuation. The substantial form gets delimited by the receptive matter, and the latter, in its secondary manifestation, defines individuation. This perception of Aristotle was to continue in the philosophies of Medieval ages, in particular, of Aquinas. Aquinas accepted Aristotle’s approach of upholding the supremacy of the individual as that which exists, distinct from the universal. Aquinas agrees with the Aristotelian distinction between the primary and secondary substance, and thus follows the Aristotelian hylemorphism: the particular, or the individual being is a unity, or a combination, of matter and form. For Aquinas, too, that which exists is quantified by matter. Moreover, Aquinas formulates his own doctrine of potentiality and actuality in terms of essence and existence, benefiting from the hylemorphism of Aristotle, which was not considered by Aristotle. He suggests the unity of matter and form to be an essence, which is still a potentiality, open to be further actualized, by the principle of existence. Existence is the new form that actualizes the potentiality of the essence. Every substance is compounded of essence and existence. That the quantified matter is the principle of individuation is fully accepted by Aquinas. This material basis of individuation has continued in the history of western philosophy, specially through the psycho-physical dualism of modern philosophy, be it the continental rationalism or the British empiricism. It has continued to inform the debates of the positivistic philosophies, to say nothing of the “descriptive metaphysics” of Strawson and others, with certain considerable variations.
In modern times we come across P.F Strawson who, in his book, *Individuals*, talks about particulars. He claims that material bodies are in a certain sense basic to our identification of particulars. Material bodies are “basic particulars”, which are not only identifiable, but also re-identifiable. They not only occupy space but also have certain persistence through time, so that they can be re-identified. Strawson recognizes the “primitiveness” of the concept of person. A person is not an embodied ego but a unity of body and ego. He is with a body and a mind, operating and functioning as one integral unity.

C. Individual in Existentialism

In the third chapter, it is studied how the individual is conceived within existentialism. This is done by looking first into the factors responsible for the emergence of existentialism, because the resuscitation of the concept of individual is a central concern in the emergence of the existentialist philosophy. The character of existentialism, in general, and of the Kierkegaardian existentialism, in particular, cannot be divorced from the causes of its origin. The individual was submerged in the universal essence of man and society. During the world wars horrendous atrocities against human life were committed. The value of human existence was at its nadir. Essentialism was the mainstream philosophy of the age that fought the two world wars. In more senses than one, essentialism believed and advocated the emergence of a new universal humanity for which individuals had to be willy-nilly sacrificed. Before the advent of existentialism the western worldview was dominated by the essentialistic agenda, borne on the metaphysical wings of German idealism, specially of Shelling, Fichte and Hegel. Hence, it would be pertinent to ask how essentialism viewed human beings. Hegelian essentialism views individuality as something that is to be abrogated in the emergence of a universal humanity. Kierkegaard’s existentialism however fights vehemently this idea of an abstract humanity. His is a philosophy, not of the abstract essences of humanity and the state, but of the concrete existing individual, struggling to authenticate his existence through his freedom. Hence, it is imperative for this dissertation, that aims to study
Kierkegaard’s conception of the individual, to identify the determining features of the individual.

Certain factors have played the key role in giving rise to existentialism. One of the factors responsible for the rise of existentialism is the political influence of nationalism surging in Europe during the later part of the nineteenth and the earlier part of the twentieth century. Nationalism invariably engenders narrow social identities, which tend to dehumanize the “outer” groups, or other “nationalities” as well as one’s own individuality. Existentialism rose against certain political ideologies buttressed by the favoured philosophical doctrines of essentialism. Prominent essentialist philosopher, who provided a philosophical basis for such political ideologies, that had scant respect for the individual, may be said to be the absolute logical idealist Hegel. He is of the view that politically man goes through certain phases, in which the final stage represents the abrogation of the individuality, in as much as there is a final unity of freedom with authority. Freedom of man cannot be conceived without authority, because man is free to do only that which is authorized by the state. Man may be said to represent the category of “means” to an end, and the end is the collectivity that we call a “state”. Such political ideologies naturally led to the rise of absolutistic political movements in the form of Fascism and Nazism. Both Fascism and Nazism were not fundamentally economic movements, but rather the manifestation of aggressive nationalism. Only through the state is man said to be able to truly develop, and the level of development is exhibited in the degree of power the state is able to exhibit and execute.

Hegel built his absolutistic and idealistic system in accordance with his political ideology. For him, “thought”, or “reason”, takes a prominent place, which finally results in defining man as a rational being. Man develops as he goes through the process of an inner struggle or conflict between “thesis”, “anti-thesis” and finally establishes himself in the “synthesis”. Man is a rational being, and he has an identity, only when he belongs to the rational race. Individually he has no identity. Man becomes a mere medium for the manifestation of reason, and has no independent reality of his own. Ultimately such
ideologies climaxed with the outbreak of world wars, the inevitability of wars was
ideologically justified as a phase in the development of man's evolution. There was
complete submergence of human value during the two world wars, because an exclusive
emphasis on reason left no elbow room for freedom.

Thus, we see that just before the emergence of existentialism the western
worldview was captured and defined by essentialism. Its vision of human being is in
direct contrast with that of existentialism. In essentialism, thought takes a prominent
place, and it finally results in defining man's essence in terms of rationality. Man is
essentially a rational being. But to identify man as essentially rational is definitely not
appropriate, for the existentialist, because man, in the first place, is not rationality, pure
and simple. Man is equally "irrational", if not more. The Greeks had the rare perception
of man when they defined man as a "rational animal". Secondly, "the rational" is a
concept, and what is conceptual is the universal. But, for all existentialists, Kierkegaard
included, "existence precedes essence". Existence concerns the particular; particular is
the individual, opposed to the universal. Man is the individual existence, not a universal
essence. Existentialists hold that existence, for the individual, is in-the-making, a
"project", an on-going process. Such existentialists as Heidegger and Sartre share a great
deal on this issue with Kierkegaard. But Kierkegaard was the first to voice these
concerns. For all three of them, freedom plays an important role in their philosophy, as it
accentuates the individual as a being in space and time. Only individuals exist in the true
sense, because they are the centers of free actions, the free agents. The individual's life is
not characterized by pure rationality, in absolute contemplation of the essences, but rather
it is a life of passion, commitment, anticipation, therefore of angst. Dread or anguish is an
inescapable concomitant of a free individual. When the individual is faced with freedom,
dread naturally follows. But this is the only way through which the human existence is
also authenticated.

If I have considered Sartre and Heidegger, here, more than other existentialists, it
is only to heighten the uniqueness of the individual that is of paramount significance to
Kierkegaard. After all, the theme of this dissertation is the Kierkegaardian conception of the individual. Sartre represents the feeling of “nothingness”, which exists within man, to highlight the nature of human freedom that bestows individuality on man. Every time man sees that he is “nothing”, i.e. free, he experiences “anguish”. This realization hits him on the face with enormous force that he tries to conceal his freedom, landing into a situation of “bad faith”. Yet, man has to face his freedom and its possibilities continually for an authentic existence. For Heidegger, “dread” is primarily the basic feeling of man in such a way that he does not belong to the “they”, but to what constitutes the “I”. For Heidegger, too, dread is about “nothing”. Dread is about the nothingness, the “nihilation” of the being, the dread of life is at once the dread of death as well.

For Kierkegaard, too, dread is about “nothing”, or the possibility of freedom. It is natural to the human existence that is a “being-in-the-world”. Man experiences dread because he is in the world as a spirit. Heidegger’s views on “facticity” and freedom are deeply influenced by Kierkegaard. Man ultimately has to transcend the facticity by exercising his freedom, if he wants to authenticate his true existence. However, Kierkegaard’s direction here is greatly different from that of Sartre and Heidegger. For he introduces the consciousness of “sin” in human existence, the Christian philosopher that he is. Since existence is given by God, which man fails to acknowledge and realize, to Kierkegaard, man becomes a “sinner”. For him, man is constituted of mind, body and spirit. He experiences dread because of the constituent of spirit in him, which however is to synthesize the finite and the infinite in him.

D. Freedom, the Chief Determinant of the Individual

When we come to discuss the concept of the individual in the Kierkegaardian philosophy, freedom is identified as one of the chief determinants of the individual. Individual is what he is precisely on account of his native endowment of freedom. The fourth chapter therefore exclusively deals with freedom, the constituent of human individuality. It may be granted that a conceptualization of human freedom has been an
integral part of the development of western philosophy, but the manner in which it is studied in Kierkegaard’s existentialism is radically different from the classical traditions. Views on the natural freedom or the natural determinism of man are freely advocated by the classical philosophers, and they have generally given rise to varieties of psychology. Even those who advocate determinism have been compelled to admit an element of spontaneity and creativity in human life. If however we look at history, man has come to witness such socio-political turbulence that it has left man in a state of doubt if man is really free. But the same history undoubtedly bears witness also to the great movements of creativity in literature, art, music, polity, science and technology that eloquently bespeak of human freedom. Existentialism however recognizes that the turbulent and darker periods of human civilization are the fall-out of violation of human freedom. It would seem to us that man took by face value his characterization as “born free”. This only suggests that we possess freedom in earthen vessels. An eternal vigilance is the price of freedom; freedom needs to be then guarded with extreme caution. Naturally this calls for an in-depth analysis of freedom in human nature. Kierkegaard is of the view that our analysis of freedom must take into account both the secular and sacred concerns of man, in as much as man is a synthesis of body, mind and spirit. This perspective will help man to understand his freedom as rooted not merely in his physiology and psychology but also in his ontology. Freedom therefore is constituent of human individuality.

When Kierkegaard talks of man as free agent, we have to take into account a large number of questions: Does human freedom extend to the being of his existence, in addition to its becoming? If it does not, he may be said to be subject to a type of determinism. What type of determinism may be admitted for human freedom? Man cannot obviously do all types of actions. If the domain of human freedom covers only moral actions, what is the specific nature of moral action vis-à-vis physical action? This calls for a probe into the human nature itself. How does Kierkegaard conceive of human nature? Since existentialism rose as a protest against essentialism, especially of the Hegelian type, it becomes imperative for us to study the concept of freedom within essentialism. Can essentialism really speak of the freedom of the individual, when its
accredited goal is the universal? After all, for the Hegelian absolutism, all forms of individuality is to be abrogated (aufgehoben) for the emergence of the universal spirit (Geist).

For Kierkegaard, moreover, dread is a necessary accompaniment of the exercise of freedom. How is this category, that Kierkegaard brought to philosophical prominence, exactly related to the freedom of the individual? Dread, which apparently denotes a psychological feeling, Kierkegaard observes may overshoot its psychological boundaries. Dread then may make its incursion into human ontology, and transform itself into dread associated with the religious category of “sin” and “guilt”. The overcoming of this type of dread, to Kierkegaard, is humanly impossible. This is what Kierkegaard means in his belief that the individual can realize his existence only in God. This at once suggests that God, in someway, “interferes” with human freedom. If so, how are we to safeguard individual freedom?

There are atheistic existentialists who have found the existence of God incompatible with human freedom. If God exists, then there cannot be human freedom, and if human freedom exists, then God cannot exist. Sartre, Camus and Kafka have settled down for human freedom without God. Kierkegaard is however compelled to delicately balance between theism and existentialism. His theistic existentialism has to safeguard both the divine existence and the human freedom. How does he achieve his goal? He achieves his goal in approaching the problem either through the concept of existence or through the concept of freedom. In either case, to Kierkegaard, God is the fullness of existence and freedom, unlike man who is said to have only a limited existence and freedom. This at once makes us ask the question if existence and freedom, finally and per se, belong to the eternal realm? What are the implications of such eternal existence and freedom to human existence and freedom? How does Kierkegaard manage to integrate the temporal and the eternal elements in human freedom? It is a great insight of Kierkegaard that, in every choosing, or free act, the individual chooses himself, and in choosing himself, he chooses at once God, thus deeply fulfilling his own freedom and
existence. His own freedom and existence are said to be constituted by God, in as much as man is according to Christian perception, a spirit created after God’s own image. The need to strike a balance between the ontological and moral freedom in the philosophy of Kierkegaard is then pressing.

The word “freedom” is generally understood in two senses, negative and positive. Negatively it means the absence of constraints in human actions. We can thus say that a free man is one who is not acting under constraints. Positively, freedom stands for a certain ability, or power (potestas) that human being is endowed with. In this sense, we say that man is free to do those things which he can do, if he chooses to do; or free not to do those things, which he can, and yet chooses not to do. But he is not free to do those things he cannot do. Freedom here presupposes an inbuilt ability. When we take freedom positively, it can be understood that man cannot come into existence by himself. His existence is a derived existence. Going by the dictionary meaning, ability, especially if it is conscious, implies knowledge to do something, and knowledge necessarily entails awareness. To claim that man can come into existence by his own ability would mean that he is aware of coming into existence. This is absurd, because such awareness of being is not possible for man. The religious philosopher that he is, Kierkegaard believes that human existence is derived from God who is the fullness of being or existence. This at once makes human existence ontologically dependent on God. Therefore, freedom, in the positive sense of ability, too, is derived from God in the life of man. In this sense, man ontologically does not have “a freedom from” God, because his being, his existence, therefore, his freedom, is derived from God. However man has moral freedom, which encompasses the field of his moral and religious actions. Here, he has the freedom to choose God or not to choose God. In this sense, he has “a freedom for” God. The freedom for God, by implication, may include the freedom for moving away from God. Since the goal of man is the realization of his own existence, it may be supposed that man has a freedom to realize it only in God, in as much as he is created by God. For Kierkegaard this is a continual becoming. By believing and surrendering to God, the individual’s individuality begins to form and develop continually.
Does essentialism do justice to the free individual? Kierkegaard thinks that it cannot. This warrants an analysis of the Hegelian conception of freedom. Hegel is of the view that man, through the dialectics of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis, is bound to realize his universal existence. But Kierkegaard expresses his surprise, for all existence is individual, not universal. Essence may be universal, but existence actualizes the essence and individualizes it. Criticizing Hegel, Kierkegaard remarks that the individual realizes his existence by an act of will. It is through the individual's own act of will that he realizes his individual existence. Existence is an intensely personal matter, and the individual needs to attain it by himself, and not by another person.

The endowment of freedom, for man, is not necessarily a felicitous experience, an unalloyed bliss. Freedom also generates its concomitant “dread” in man, because dread is the giddiness, or uneasiness, that man experiences, in looking into the abyss of his freedom. Coming to know of his predicament of being endowed with freedom within a human nature that is both temporal and eternal, the feeling of dread is both generated and acutely experienced. Dread is the sign which indicates that the individual is faced with the possibility in freedom. The individual has to decide in the present on the possibility. Dread therefore constitutes the “now” of the individual, whose past and future are brought together in the present. Dread is experienced, here, because the “now” may encounter the conflict between the past and future, the outer and the inner, the temporal and the eternal, in man. The individual is the “materialized spirit” which, having first acutely experienced the dread, brings to an end the conflict between the outer and the inner, the past and the future, in short the temporal and the eternal. The individual brings together a host of conflicts of the past and the future in the “now” for their resolution. The “now”, or the “moment”, for Kierkegaard, is the moment of passion, the crucial point of time, in which the individual realizes the unity of his being. For Kierkegaard freedom suggests not only the experience of dread but also the felicitous resolution of the conflict within, only this way man is said to exist truly.
In freedom he frees himself from the past, opens himself to the possibilities of the future, in the present. That the individual breaks free from the past does not mean that the past is forgotten, is not encountered by the individual anymore. It only means that the individual no longer views the world in the way he did before. It is in the exercise of freedom that man relates to his true existence as grounded in God. Therefore in relating himself to his existence, he relates to himself, and in relating himself, he at once relates himself to God, in as much as his spirit is ontically related to God. The individual is active only to the extent that he endeavors to exist in freedom. This is so because, in freedom, he is faced with possibilities that led man to action. He is active, first of all, inwardly in his passion. For Kierkegaard the inward passion is not passive, rather it is itself an action that impels the individual to outward action.

Kierkegaard’s movement from essence to existence is not linear. Because this movement involves the self and God, who is the ontic foundation of man, the movement is involutional. For, in choosing God, the individual moves away from himself towards God. But when he chooses God, he also moves towards himself because he is also a spirit. The self is the starting point, it passes from the self to the divine, and, through the divine, it comes back to the self, the same starting point, but now transformed with the consciousness of its being ontically grounded. The individual authenticates his existence by choosing himself, as anchored in the divine. This clearly is different from the kind of authentication that the atheistic existentialist, Sartre, advocates.

Freedom as understood by Sartre is then different from Kierkegaard’s own conception. For Sartre, man can choose anything. The position is absurd enough, but this is the only way that Sartre can safeguard human freedom from all encroachment on the autonomy of human freedom, human or divine. Other atheistic existentialists, Camus and Kafka are novelists who express existential views through their characters, making it often extremely difficult to determine their views through the different characters they depict. At any rate, Camus and Kafka advocate a conception of freedom very different from that of Kierkegaard. Life, to them, is “absurd”, futile and meaningless. Whatever
freedom that man enjoys, for them, can be exercised only within the physical world, which however does not help man in enhancing the meaning in life. Hence human existence is "absurd" and "nauseous". While accepting the contingency of human life, Kierkegaard seeks to overcome the absurdity of human existence through its intentionality to the divine. This has greatly facilitated him to identify the destiny and meaning of human existence.

E. Perfecting Individuality in Faith

For Kierkegaard, because of his commitment to Christian vision of man, human individuality can grow and mature only in a God-relation. Therefore all perfecting of human personality can only be in religious faith. The fifth chapter will be centered around the concept of perfecting the human individuality in and through faith. Kierkegaard believes that central to human personality is subjectivity. Subjectivity brings out all the features of the dynamism of man’s life, and directly has a bearing on individuality. For the true individuality is the one characterized by a great degree of subjectivity. If Kierkegaard is the philosopher of individuality, he is no less a philosopher of subjectivity. But why does he emphasize on the principle of subjectivity? What relevance does it have to human existence? How does man come to acquire and approximate his existence to the truth of subjectivity? Kierkegaard, here, may be directly indebted to an ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, who, too, is known as the "philosopher of subjectivity". Over and above this, subjectivity can also be taken to mean religious faith, a subjective attitude of man of religion to his God, who is conceived by Kierkegaard as the maximum subjectivity. It may be seen here that Kierkegaard, more than anyone else in the Western philosophy of religion and theology, is directly responsible in defining faith in terms of commitment, and thus separating faith from its propositional formulation. Little wonder then that, for Kierkegaard, all perfecting of human personality is in the perfecting of faith.
The realm of faith belongs to the religious stage of human existence in the philosophy of Kierkegaard. Distinct from the aesthetical and the ethical stages of human life, the religious stage is characterized by a commitment to the eternal, therefore has a bearing on the transcendental, or the spiritual dimension of human reality. What is more, because of his belief in the person of Christ, who is supposedly the incarnate God, Christian faith belongs to the realm of "paradoxical religiousness". At any rate, Kierkegaard has to strike a delicate balance with the western, more importantly, the Semitic, dichotomy of the sacred and the secular. How should man view his own reality? His own reality is a complex of the sacred and the secular, in as much as he represents a unity of body, mind and spirit. Is it proper to view life as divided into different compartments? The question becomes all the more significant in the context of Kierkegaard's distinction among the three stages of existence, which is all too prone to create the misunderstanding that the religious stage is so ethereal that it has nothing to do with the physical and psychological aspects of human reality.

Faith, Kierkegaard believes, is possible only for a being endowed with freedom. For religious faith is a matter of personal decision; it is a subjective act exercised in the depth of freedom. When it is claimed that man has freedom, freedom occasions a certain personal decision to commit oneself to the person of Christ in the life of a Christian. That which is personal involves passion, and passion can be experienced only inwardly, i.e. subjectively. It is in the passion of subjectivity that faith's commitment takes place. When Kierkegaard formulates his well-known thesis "subjectivity is truth", he is speaking not of an objective cognitive truth, but, rather of the "truth of faith" which is a passionate act of subjective commitment to the person of Christ. Religion therefore is a matter of faith primarily, before it acquires a ritual or dogmatic or sociological face. This brings me directly to the pre-eminence of the religious stage of life within the schema of stages of existence.

The aesthetic stage is seen to represent a life entirely governed by sensuous inclinations. It is a life like that of a drift-wood. More importantly, it is a life
characterized by a lack of commitment to anyone. One seeks what one’s physical existence demands. Neither morality nor religiosity governs his life. The individual does not exercise his freedom to arrive at free decisions, and he allows himself to be ruled by his bodily passions. As such, he is what he is, and not what he becomes. Such an aesthete is bound to his biological passions to experience any degree of responsibility.

A step higher than this is the ethical stage. In the ethical stage man executes a certain degree of free action, in as much as his life is moved by at least some moral principles. He is considered a moral being, who is committed to the moral norms, operative in his social institutions. Marital commitment is Kierkegaard’s exemplification of ethical life. But, it would be wrong to think that the whole ethical stage is encompassed by marital commitment. It is rather the case that the ethical man associates himself with the society and the societal norms. In doing this, however, he is wedded to the universal moral principles, which ethically comfort and sustain him. All his decisions and free acts, here, seem to highlight his commitment for other’s well being.

Nonetheless, Kierkegaard believes the ethical man fails to perfect his individuality, because he is still lost in the ethical universal. He fails to make a qualitative decision, because he still lacks a sense of the self as the "particular individual". He fails to make qualitative decisions, because he cannot transcend the universal in order to reach the particular. He has therefore to transcend even the ethical to recover his existential particularity or individuality. Therefore, Kierkegaard advocates, it is only in the final and religious stage that man stands alone in his particularity before his God. Here, he is the single individual in relation to the paradox. He comes to a decision of commitment only by himself, and he experiences the tremendous and inalienable passion that goes by the name of religious faith. It is inalienable, because his commitment is directed to the religious mystery, at once "tremendous and fascinating". It is exactly this kind of decision-making that represents the maximum subjectivity in man, in as much as man loves the object of his faith with his total will, or "heart", without any reservation, often not withstanding what his reason may suggest.
The decisive decision for man is said to exist strictly in the religious sphere, because man stands here in transparency before the paradox. As such, he becomes aware of his sins, and with this awareness he makes an effort to exercise his freedom with all his passion for the paradox. Because of the consciousness of his own finitude, or "sinfulness", the sense of the infinite holiness of God overwhelms him. Nevertheless, man of faith opts for God, thus constituting his own individuality with all its imperfections, sin and dread. This commitment goes far beyond the kind of the ethical commitment, in as much as the individual is now prepared even to "suspend" the ethical in favour of the religious. This does not mean that the religious man is unethical. As one is in the religious stage, the ethical applications are not completely detached, but rather they gain a divine light. The ethical sensibility of the religious man is indeed finely tuned. However, in the final stage, man may be subject to the trials of faith, when it becomes necessary for man to give priority to the eternal over against everything, including the ethical. In the religious stage, man stands all alone, against the crowd, in relation to the paradox. While faith concerns with the Christ of faith, the union of the historical Jesus with the Christ of faith makes its object the paradox. Therefore the truth of faith is about willing subjectively to aspire and hold on to the historical, in the interest of aspiring and holding on to the eternal and the unknown. Growth in individuality, for Kierkegaard, clearly depends on man's striving to exercise his freedom for God.

Following closely the Christian doctrine, Kierkegaard affirms that man is in need of God, because he is sinful and he stands in need of divine salvation. Hence, with the consciousness of sin, the individual may be said to have taken the first step to authenticate his existence. In this authentication both ethics and religion are significant, in as much as both involve the exercise of freedom. For Kierkegaard the supremacy of the religious is incontestable. The impact of the religious on the ethical can however be seen at two levels. Firstly the relation between the religious and the ethical is positive. All ethics on the part of religious man is seen as an extension of his religious life. Man learns what love, trust, faith, commitment are, when he is in relation with the absolute and
infinite love that God is. When the individual loves God, his relation with fellow beings also takes a positive turn. At the second level, the individual may be subjected to a trial of faith, a test of faith. In the test of faith, the ethical itself may serve as a “temptation”, as it happened in the Biblical exemplar of faith, Abraham. At this juncture the ethical and the religious are seen as two different concerns. The religious gets priority over the ethical. Even in the trial of faith, the ethical is not abrogated as the aesthetical is; it is rather teleologically suspended. This makes it clear that the individuality of man of faith is so autonomous that it cannot be bargained for anything. We could therefore suggest that, for Kierkegaard, subjectivity and the perfected individuality in faith are the same.

Subjectivity can also be understood as the faith of the individual. Faith is intensely personal, therefore, there is no faith without deep passion and earnestness on the part of the individual; it is subjective. It is a “belief-in”, before it ever becomes a “belief-that”. The object of belief-in is a person, making faith at once a commitment to the person of God. If religion gets shaped into an institution out of this spirituality, the religion concerned defines a conceptual schema of doctrine. The belief-that has for its object the doctrine. Belief-in is the ground of belief-that, which may also be called “the propositional faith”. Belief-in is faith per se, because it involves the commitment to a person. Due to this its truth is subjective, while the truth of the propositional faith may be, but need not be, objective. Hence, being subjective means the same as having faith. Only in faith can man build a personal relation with God, who is a person, and at the same time be gripped by the passion of earnestness and inwardness, in as much as subjectivity alone can authenticate his existence.

To exist in the true sense implies, for Kierkegaard, perfecting one’s individuality and personality in God. This includes first of all a discovery of the meaningfulness of human life. To be a perfect human being implicitly implies that the person concerned strives for his eternal happiness in God, convinced of the meaningfulness of his life. Kierkegaard asserts that in order to make his life meaningful, man should live as God demands of him, and not as he himself wishes to live. This may engender extreme
hardship, but it is a hardship tempered by the quiet conviction of being on the right path. The Biblical knight of faith, Abraham, expresses such assured conviction in the midst of his suffering and personal anguish at the loss of everything dear to him. His commitment and trust, that is required of him as an individual in the quest for existence, never falter. The individual surrenders entirely to God, and, in thus moving towards God, he moves away from himself.

But the dynamism of faith has an element of "repetition" within itself. For in moving away from himself, the individual is restored by God to himself; man comes back to himself, this time with his existence divinely authenticated. Man gives up the temporal in favour of the eternal, but God gives back the temporal to him. The man of faith then has to live in the temporal with his heart set on the eternal. Thus the temporal plays no less important role than the eternal in perfecting man's individuality. In faith, the individual takes a risk against all his reasoning to gain the eternal, howsoever unknown it be, and, in the process, gains the temporal that is voluntarily surrendered.

Human individuality is perfected to the fullest extent in faith, because it is here that the individual realizes that he is a synthesis of the eternal and the temporal, a unity of body, mind and spirit. The perfected individual is neither a materialist nor an Adlerian ego nor an angel. He is an integrated personality. Without this integration he will have lost his balanced perspective on the temporal. Only now he is able to view the temporal with certain divine significance, which otherwise was not forthcoming. Either man would be lost in the temporal or he would lose the temporal; in both cases man would not be an integrated personality. Neither a monk nor a materialist has a right perspective on life, for Kierkegaard. For the perfected individuality, the temporal becomes a part of his life. While perfecting his personality, the individual becomes active, he becomes actively involved in everything that concerns him. Edification is a function of faith. Since edification is an on-going process, he needs faith all the time, therefore the growth of individuality is a continual process.
F. Dread and the Individual

In the next chapter, the main focus will be on dread, an important feature of the individual in the exercise of authenticating his existence. Dread, for Kierkegaard, has both psychological and ontological (spiritual) aspects. What was obscurely spoken of by literature Kierkegaard subjects to a psychological and religious exploration. Thus Kierkegaard serves as an inspiration to the depth-psychologists and theologians alike on the concept of dread. But what is dread? How does the individual come to experience dread? Can man attain existence without ever having to experience dread? Can dread be seen as what enfolds in it an element of “the unconscious”? Does the study of the concept of dread in the philosophy of Kierkegaard, in any way, throw light on the unconscious of the depth-psychologists, in particular, of Freud, and Adler? How much of Kierkegaardian perception is retained by the humanistic psychologists like Fromm, Binswanger, Erickson and Rollo May, even when they rejected the depth-psychologists’ theories? These are some of the questions addressed in this chapter.

Kierkegaard believes that existence concerns the reality of the individual, and that, to know of man’s reality, one has to probe into the inner life of man. This brings us face to face with issues of human psychology, in as much as man is not merely a biological organism but also a being endowed with mind and spirit. A probe into the inner life of man makes us aware that human being is characterized not only by determinism but also spontaneity. In virtue of the latter we say, man is endowed with freedom. Freedom is the capacity to actualize consciously the possibilities. But the realization of the possibilities brings along with it a strange sense of uneasiness that Kierkegaard calls “dread”. Because it is a feeling of uneasiness at the depth of freedom, it is psychological. Again, because this feeling is felt by a spirit in the exercise of freedom, it is also spiritual. Dread is both psychological and spiritual. Kierkegaard saw dread as the culminating point of divergent elements, which stood to determine the human individuality. The individual cannot escape dread, even as he cannot escape his freedom; he has to face it, and use it creatively both for his psychological and spiritual make-up.
For Kierkegaard, the best way to express the individuality is when man strikes a balance within himself, overcoming the dread. As the individual steps into the journey for realizing existence, he starts with a psychological “guilt”, because he is acutely conscious that he is finite. The finitude itself is seen as the imperfection. The consciousness of imperfection results into guilt. Guilt is a product of the giveness of our nature, therefore, it is a burden of the past, which calls for realization of the future in the present. As the individual moves forward from the past into the present and the future, he confronts his imperfections, therefore his dread. But the movement itself conduces to establish a psychological maturity.

But, for Kierkegaard, the same psychological guilt and its concomitant psychological dread transform themselves into “sin” and its concomitant “spiritual dread”, when man confronts the holiness or perfection of God with his own finitude or imperfection. It is the Christian awareness of the “creaturliness” before the infinite creator that introduces the element of sin and its dread. This naturally makes him aware of a desperate need for trust and hope, for without God, man is lost on the sea of meaninglessness. According to Kierkegaard, the Christian individual has to move even further from “religion A” to “religion B”, which is the religiousness directed to the paradox of Christ. The individual becomes “sin-conscious” in a special way, when he faces the paradox. This element of being sin-conscious cannot be attributed to human efforts alone, however fine-tuned his psychological sensibilities be. Man has to make willingly his transition to the religious sphere, if he has to be acutely conscious of the difference between God and man as between the infinite holiness and the finite sinfulness. Consequently man becomes aware of his utter dependence upon God. This is the first step towards faith-relation. This perhaps is what is meant by Kierkegaard in saying that “sin-consciousness is a breach with immanence”; it is an alteration with the self so that the self’s factual identity with itself is destroyed, in order to attain an authenticated self-identity in God. At any rate, it is with the dread, that accompanies the
Kierkegaard's approach to the analysis of dread is systematic. His work, *The Concept of Dread*, first studies the concept psychologically. Only after delineating its psychological boundaries Kierkegaard relates it to sin-consciousness. It psychologically explains the transition from innocence to guilt, then, from guilt to sin. Once again, Kierkegaard has his metaphysical commitment to the Christian doctrine of creation of man and "fall". In the state of praeternatural state of creation man is said to be innocent. It is only the exercise of freedom -- in the Biblical language, the choice of "tasting of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil"--, that introduces the element of sin and its concomitant dread. Because man loved his freedom, he may be said to love indirectly the dread as well. Kierkegaard insightfully states that dread is "sympathetic antipathy, and antipathetic sympathy". Man is not guilty through dread but, yet, he is guilty, for he sank in dread which he loved even when he feared it.

When man realizes his imperfection he experiences dread. Unlike fear, which is directed to some definite object, this dread is about "nothing", because his present actuality is not the true reality. His true reality is in the making by the exercise of his freedom. His reality is open to possibilities. The openness to possibility makes the concerned dread the dread of freedom, or the dread of "no-thing". The individual experiences dread, when he is faced with the possibility of becoming, of choice. He is in dread because he is guilty, and his guilt can be seen as sin, even before he commits the sin. Before God man's guilt becomes sin, so it can be said that when the individual experiences dread, he becomes aware that he is heir to a sinful state. Kierkegaard thus explains the transition of guilt to sin, of psychological dread to spiritual dread, in the light of human reality and the freedom of the individual. Dread announces the freedom of the individual, it is the harbinger of what is possible for man. Though freedom itself is a conscious exercise, the possibility itself of freedom is at the unconscious level. Due to this the individual may be moved by conscious decisions or unconscious desires and
drives. The individual however becomes aware of his freedom, when he experiences dread. Therefore dread is, despite its unpleasant nature, beneficial to human spirit, in as much as it is a sign and a seal of human freedom.

In virtue of the fact that dread can work not only at the conscious level, but also at the unconscious level, Kierkegaard’s reflections on dread may have something in common with Freud’s concept of the “unconscious”. One of the psychological constructs in Freudian philosophy is the unconscious, the store-house of repressed wishes and instincts. He is of the opinion that the repressed states can be manifested in distorted and indirect forms, seeking substitute satisfactions. Kierkegaard also says that the individual, in his state of innocence, may dreamingly project his imperfection. Awareness of imperfection brings in the psychological guilt and the need to achieve a socio-psychological balance in personality. At this level there may be a lot of similarity between the views of Kierkegaard and Freud. But Freud is not prepared to go beyond his psychological construct of the unconscious. The transformation of guilt into sin is specific to Kierkegaard.

Moreover, while Kierkegaard says that only the individual himself can realize his existence, Freud stresses on the role of the therapist to strike a balance in the life of the psychologically disturbed patient, and thereupon to effect a “cure of the soul”. The vast differences between the two thinkers therefore must not be overlooked. For a patient, once his illness is cured, need not go on fighting traumatic experiences, avers Freud. But, for the individual of Kierkegaard, all cure, be it at the psychological or at the spiritual level, is neither a moral nor a religious holiday. He has to keep his relationship with God active all the time by the exercise of his freedom for God. This is a necessity of understanding existence as an on-going process. The individual has to integrate in his personality the threefold division of time, past, present and future. Past represents the actuality of the individual; the present represents the openness to the possibilities that are before the individual, and the future represents freedom, or the course of action that is to follow. Becoming a true individual implies that one has to consciously depart from his
past, and the present should serve as the medium, in which he takes the “leap of faith” with a resolve to live dynamically a life of God-relationship.

This emphasis on future is something that Adler shares with Kierkegaard. Adler, the one-time associate of Freud, judiciously parted ways with Freud. While he concurred with Freud, that behaviour is motivated or directed towards some goal, he objected to Freud’s excessive emphasis on sexual motivation and instincts. Pan-sexualism of Freud was increasingly shunned by the psychoanalysts, even during Freud’s own time. Adler was of the opinion that psychological disorder was a disorder of the total personality, and that a great many non-sexual factors can also lead to conflicts in a person. He therefore emphasized on what he called the dynamics of the whole family and social environment as instrumental in determining a person’s psychological state. He saw the individuals in his “individualist psychology” as unified, “indivisible wholes” with a forward pushing attitude to something better, a goal determined by them. Like Kierkegaard, Adler prospectively emphasized on the future, while Freud retrospectively dwelt on the past life of man. Freud went so far back as to dwell on infant sexuality and the Oedipus complex. Freud talks of goal-directed behaviour, but only to the extent it is rooted in the gratification of instinctual and sexual drives. However, for Adler, the goal-directed behaviours are rooted in the quest for perfection, sharing similar concerns with Kierkegaard.

Adler, no doubt, gave a different perspective to depth-psychology, when he recognized the importance of the non-sexual conditions as determining the personality of an individual. This paved the way to view man from a much wider perspective. Society came to be acknowledged as an important determinant in developing man’s personality. When we look at the humanistic psychologists like Erich Fromm, Erik Erikson, Ludwig Binswanger and Rollo May, we find the compelling concessions that depth-psychology itself had to make to the development of the concept of the individual. They all, in one way or other, owe something to Kierkegaard’s struggle to restore the individuality of the free man. They all take the individual as a whole, an integer, who is influenced by
society, culture, family and, above all, his religion. Finally, it can be said that the post-
Freudians and the humanistic psychologists gained immensely from Kierkegaard,
because it was Kierkegaard, who first expressed the importance of the individual and the
authentication of the individual existence through the exercise of freedom.

G. Some Corollaries

The concluding chapter, in its first part, will be a brief summary of what has been
discussed in the preceding chapters. More importantly, the second part of the chapter will
deal with some of the corollaries that emerge from my study.

First of all, Kierkegaard is an existentialist, a champion of human freedom, even
before he is a religious thinker, and a radical Christian for that matter. This observation
needs to be highlighted, because his radical Christianity is so emphasized, (and this is not
without reason in as much as his influence on Christian theology is substantial), that one
tends to forget that he is a pioneer in the existentialist philosophy, that heralded the
autonomy of the individual and his freedom. Autonomy of the individual and his freedom
are placed at the heart of his religious philosophy. Therefore, the concerns of the
individuality and religiosity are warp and weft of his existential fabric of philosophy. To
Kierkegaard, to exist is to be free, to be free is to be religious. Man can have faith, only if
he wills to do so. Freedom thus comes clearly before religion. It can be said that freedom
of the individual is the starting point of all that concerns the individual, including
religion. Thus the individual existence brings under its fold in a significant unity both the
sacred and secular activities of man. When it is said that Kierkegaard is a theistic
existentialist, we must not forget the primacy he assigns to the individual and his
freedom. If he comes to do a new type of theology, he reaches there through the
philosophical culture of the west. This also explains his rejection of the Hegelian
essentialism to highlight the primacy of existence. This is made possible because of the
primacy of the individual, who is what he is, because of existence. Kierkegaard
accordingly reverses the order in making the particulars or individuals, primary, and the universals, derivative; they are derived from the particulars that concretely exist.

Secondly, existence to Kierkegaard is not merely an act, but an intentional act. This again indicates how deeply Kierkegaard is rooted in his philosophical tradition, especially in Aristotle, Aquinas and Descartes. The act of existence is always a perfection. For Kierkegaard, this perfection apparently culminates with the freedom of the individual. For to exist means to be aware, and to be free is an act with the full awareness. For only a free act is an intentional act, in as much as it is an act directed to a goal prescribed as good, therefore, an act to which the agent is bound by a moral responsibility. Hence, every free act is also an act of self-experience of personal maturity. Kierkegaard terms it an action for edification. Edification is possible because man is a goal-oriented being, more a “project” than a product. Thus to exist means to be free, and freedom implies a continual growth in maturity by way of edification.

Thirdly, in his enthusiasm for freedom of the individual, Kierkegaard may not have taken adequate care to temper freedom with responsibility. If Sartre has taken his concept of freedom to one extreme, Kierkegaard has taken it to equally another extreme, in this case, an extremism of religious nature. A free act is not necessarily one that emerges from one’s will alone, but also the one that takes full responsibility for the consequences. It is an act that cannot be borne merely on the wings of passion, but also on the reason. The full implication of a free act as an act of one’s intentionality will have to be borne in mind. In a world where so much advancement has been achieved in various fields, all contributing in its own way to the understanding of human being, philosophy too has its due share for enlightenment, however limited, in the form of innovative ideas. As such, theism and atheism are, in the final analysis, personal choices, not devoid of certain reasons. It is salutary to remember that theism, no less than atheism, is a deliberate and intentional choice that one has made. Kierkegaard apparently is not prepared to acknowledge the weight of personal choice involved in atheism. It is a moot
point whether a theoretical atheism is possible at all, but a passionate atheism is a reality encountered in every culture.

Fourthly, while accepting the legitimacy of the Kierkegaardian categories of subjectivity, passion and paradox, we cannot afford to ignore the fact that passion without reason can make freedom blind. Passionate murder may be a free act, in one sense, but it is also a morally unacceptable act, not merely because it interferes with others right to life, but also because it diminishes one’s own humanity. The murderer is no more a human being, but a brute, governed only by his passions. Freedom without responsibility has long crossed its sacred boundaries to become licentiousness. Even purely on the religious level, it is only by reason that one can distinguish between the genuine voice of God from one’s own personal fancies passing for the voice of God. The Semitic voluntarism may not have fully overcome its own self-contradictions. Its fusion with the Greek rationalism may have kept it in a healthy check. Besides, in multi-religious societies, clashes between religious ideologies are bound to occur. Only reason can evolve and evaluate standards for truth and value for human life across religious cultures. We can ill-afford to ignore sanitized voice of reason in the human affairs, including religion. The role of the philosopher, without being moralizing, consists in philosophically illumining the private universes that we all cherish in the name of one’s own culture, religion, society and polity. Even Kierkegaard may have to incorporate, along with his will, the element of intellection as constituting the image of God, with which every human being is endowed with in creation. His own definition of man as a unity of body, mind and spirit provides ample room for such correctives for his philosophy.