It is obvious to the very nature of Kierkegaard's philosophy that he should desist from any systematic attempt to explain the nature of human existence. Such system-building is more to the liking of the idealists. Kierkegaard's philosophy is opposed to all conceptual schemes and theoretical systems. A theoretical enquiry into the nature of human existence would ignore the reality of man and reduce him to a mere object. Indeed the very starting-point of Kierkegaard's philosophy takes the form of protest against such systematisation and objectification.

To much knowledge (which he calls as the 'disease of the age',\(^1\) even though during Kierkegaard's time the extent of knowledge was so little when compared to what it is today) puts man into fixed categories of logic and makes him an abstract individual, a mere 'phantom'.\(^2\) One could very well imagine what Kierkegaard would have thought of the dehumanising intellectual tendencies of twentieth century

\(^1\)"Let others complain that the age is wicked; my complaint is that it is wretched; for it lacks passion." (S. Kierkegaard: Either/Or Vol. I, translated by D.F. Swenson and L.M. Swenson, London, 1944, p. 22).

\(^2\)"... on account of our vastly increased knowledge, men had forgotten when it means to EXIST, and what INWARDNESS signifies." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 216).
like positivism, behaviourism, totalitarian communism, fascism etc.\(^3\) Kierkegaard challenged only the abstract rationalism of his age, fostered by European scholastic and academic tradition; contrary to this tradition he holds that human existence can only be recognised with reference to a concrete living subject and not speculatively through objectified modes of thought. The subjective dimension of human existence as analysed by Kierkegaard defies categorisation. This is the significance of his characterising human existence as subjectivity in contrast to the objectivity of the speculative modes of thought and of science. The reality of human existence is not outside the individual but 'inheres' in the subject i.e., in the concrete, free, unique individual.

In the first chapter of this work, Kierkegaard's definition of truth in terms of subjectivity has already been referred to. Here it is proposed to clarify the statement further by analysing in the manner of Kierkegaard, the meanings of truth and subjectivity. Such analysis

\(^3\)The Kierkegaardian protest against the age in the twentieth has taken tremendous forms which Kierkegaard himself could not foresee. The protest against scienticism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and rationalism, epitomises the work of Karl Jaspers, protest against the traditional metaphysics, that of Heidegger, against rationalism and 'bourgeois' values by Sartre, and against nationalistic theology, that of Marcel and Buber and many others.
would not of course be a rational analysis, but an existential one. The difference between the two kinds of analysis is that the former is speculative and the latter more descriptive-sometimes even introspectively descriptive.

Kierkegaard's notion of truth is not analogous to the epistemological or metaphysical truth. For example one comes across the various theories or 'criteria' of truth in the history of philosophy, as defined by rationalists, empiricists etc. Such epistemological points of view have this in common, namely that they all regard truth as finished and final. Moreover such theories speak of truth in an abstract and objective manner. And all objective knowledge for Kierkegaard, is accidental knowledge. It would lack that essential

4"... there is nothing to prevent us from abstractly determining the truth as abstractly finished and complete; for the correspondence between thought and being is, from the abstract point of view, always finished. Only with the concrete does becoming enter in, and it is from the concrete that abstract thought abstracts." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p.170).

5Ibid., p. 173: "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 becomes indifferent, the truth also becomes indifferent, and this indifference is precisely its objective validity."
character of relationship of truth to existence, the traditional theories of truth make such a relationship accidental. Kierkegaard says that the objective truth is concerned with objective problems of science, mathematics and history, it is detached and disinterested and therefore indifferent to the human subject.\textsuperscript{6} Any knowledge, which does not have an inward relationship between itself and existence, can be regarded only as accidental knowledge.\textsuperscript{7} The epistemological categories of truth are unfit to cope with the reality of human existence.

Hegelians, for instance, defined truth in an abstract way by calling it an identity of thought and being, of the subject and the object and of the knower, the known and knowledge. In such a union of purely conceptual elements, the knower as an existing individual is ignored. This is the same as that in the quest of truth, the truth-seeker

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 173: "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."

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., pp. 176-177: "All essential knowledge relates to existence, or only such knowledge as has an essential relationship to existence is essential knowledge. All knowledge which does not inwardly relate itself to existence, in the reflection of inwardness, is, essentially viewed, accidental knowledge; its degree and scope is essentially indifferent."
is forgotten. Kierkegaard characterises the Hegelian notion of truth as 'mediate', in contrast to which, his own notion of existential truth is called 'immediate' i.e., it does not involve reflection and is not 'hidden' in speculative metaphysics. Incidentally, 'hiddenness' of being from metaphysics, theology and science is a favourite theme among the contemporary philosophers of existence.

In Hegel, the appropriation of truth is achieved through the process of 'mediation' by reflection — i.e., truth is the product of a logical process arrived at by reflection, by the achievement gradually of elimination of the subject-object division. This is how Hegel (and the Hegelians) seeks to arrive at a reconciliation between thought and being, subject and object, knower, known and knowledge.

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8 *Ibid.*, p. 176: "... the knower is an existing individual for whom the truth cannot be such an identity as long as he lives in time."

And *Ibid.*, p. 183: "... the misfortune of speculative philosophy is again and again to have forgotten that the knower is an existing individual..."

9 "The Concept (Begriff) grasps and focuses in itself the essential dialectic of Being... It is thus both substantial and consciously free, an actual totality of affirmations and negations, a living mirror of the universal (Reflexion des Wesens in sich). It is the identity of subject-object knowing itself as such." The most prominent Hegelians of the West (like Croce, Bradley, Bosanquet, Royce), all agree in this speculative and abstract definition of Absolute and transcendental truth as the union of thought and being and of subject and object. *(Hegel: Encyclopedia of Philosophy, translated by Gustav Emil Mueller, New York, 1959, p. 133).*
Kierkegaard on the other hand keeps clear of any such speculative metaphysics, by holding that the subject as an existing individual must be regarded as truth in the continuous process of becoming and hence, truth cannot be a static identity of the subject and the object. For the subject as contingent and temporal finds itself always in the tension of endless striving; truth therefore is never final, it is always in transition; it has no beginning and no end and hence remains forever an approximation. On the other hand the metaphysical or the scientific object is static and fixed. Therefore the subject, which is in transition and the object, which is fixed, cannot be regarded even speculatively as synonymous.

10 S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 169.

In contemporary philosophies of existence — notably in Jaspers and Heidegger, this view of truth as a process and approximation, and as somehow identical with Existenz, seems to have taken root. Karl Jaspers for instance (in Philosophy - Vol. III, Reason and Existenz - Lectures No. 2, 3, 4), talks of truth as encompasser (das Umgreifende), which is not fixed but always in a state of transition. In Heidegger too 'Dasein' is human and in its implications and has to be discovered through fundamental ontology of being rather than a fixed ontology of metaphysics. This may be one of the reasons why the philosophers of existence advocate a return to pre-speculative, pre-metaphysical philosophy, viz. that of the pre-Socratic, that is why Jaspers also regards reason ('Vernunft') as the polarity of Existenz (in Reason and Existenz) in the history of thought.

11 Not for a single moment is it forgotten that the subject is an existing individual, and that existence is a process of becoming, and that therefore the notion
The dynamism of human existence separates thought from being, object from subject. No particular living individual, who is always in a state of transition can be identified speculatively with the general ideal existence. Hence according to Kierkegaard, all attempts of the idealists, epistemologically to comprehend existence as truth and being are doomed to failure. A theory of knowledge can ideationally explain ideal existence, but it fails to grasp a particular unique existence.

It is for this reason that Kierkegaard rejects the notion of an ideal universal truth; for him truth is

12Ibid., pp. 293-294: "A particular existing human being is surely not an Idea, and his existence is surely something quite different from the conceptual existence of the Idea.... Existence here separates thought from being and breaks up their ideal unity."

13"It is an indirect polemic against speculative philosophy which is indifferent to the existential. The fact that there is no result, and no finite decision, is an indirect expression for the truth as inwardness, and thus perhaps a polemic against the truth as knowledge—" (S. Kierkegaard: Either/Or Vol. I, Preface by L.M. Swenson (translator) pvi).

14"But existence as a particular human being is not a pure ideal existence; it is only man in general who exists in that manner, which means that this entity does not exist at all." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 294).
existential i.e. truth is truth for me, it is for the individual, for the subject.\textsuperscript{15} It is an 'appropriation' of inwardness which cannot be conceptualised.\textsuperscript{16} Truth lies, not in the 'what' but in the 'how'. The 'what' implies a theoretical enquiry and a conceptualisation, whereas the 'how' implies infinite striving by the individual.\textsuperscript{17} As Kierkegaard puts it:

"The objective accent falls on \textit{WHAT} is said, the subjective accent on \textit{HOW} it is said... At its maximum this inward 'how' is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the infinite is the truth. But the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity becomes the truth... In this manner subjectivity and subjective 'how' constitute the truth."\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15}cite\textsuperscript{Ibid.}, p. 226: "Only the truth which 
\textit{edifies} is truth \textit{for you}. This is an essential predicate relating to the truth as inwardness; its decisive characterisation as edifying \textit{for you}, i.e. for the subject, constitutes its essential difference from all objective knowledge, in that the subjectivity itself becomes the mark of the truth."

\textsuperscript{16}cite\textsuperscript{Ibid.}, p. 171.

\textsuperscript{17}cite\textsuperscript{Ibid.}, p. 182.

\textsuperscript{18}cite\textsuperscript{Ibid.}, p. 181: (The capitals in the quotation are as used in translation of the original text).
All this perhaps amplify the often-quoted statement that subjectivity and inwardness is truth. Man's being is complex in character and there can be no 'results' and 'conclusions' about him, at any rate there is nothing final about them; if we try to identify and apprehend the character of his being in an objective manner, it will lead to generalisations which are destructive of man's existence. Thus man's being cannot be regarded as objective truth. As Pascal has aptly remarked, "the heart has its reasons, which reason does not know," and what the individual man in a concrete situation knows, feels, and chooses cannot be comprehended universally through objective reason.

In order to elucidate the idea of subjectivity, Kierkegaard contrasts it with objectivity and demonstrates that objective reflection is inadequate to comprehend human existence. Indeed the issue of truth as subjectivity poses in all seriousness the question of objectivity. Objective reflection is disinterested, it fails to penetrate into the depth of human existence. As it has already been explained before, Hegel philosophises


20S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 278.
as though he were only a disinterested spectator of
events.\textsuperscript{21} His grand conception of history presents to
the reader the picture of a philosopher watching the
entire drama from an arm-chair without being involved in
it. His abstract thought is not interested in the
concrete unique problem of the existence of man. It is
unable to explain what is 'real', because reality cannot
be expressed in the language of abstraction.\textsuperscript{22} The
entire approach of objective idealism of Hegel fails to
take into account unique situations of decision and
choice. The system which Hegel constructs is too
deterministic. For this reason, it cannot deal with
peculiar emotional, irrational aspects of every individual
human existence, to which only a concrete subjective
approach can do full justice. For, says Kierkegaard,
"... an objective truth is like the eternity of abstract
thought, extraneous to the movements of existence."\textsuperscript{23} In
his analysis of subjectivity, Kierkegaard replaces reason
by passion.\textsuperscript{24} Passion is the highest expression of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., p. 275: "... Hegelian Philosophy, by
failing to define its relation to the existing individual,
and by ignoring the ethical, confounds existence."
\item\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 279.
\item\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p. 278.
\item\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 313: "... for it is impossible to
think about existence in existence without passion....
All existential problems are passionate problems, for
when existence is interpenetrated with reflection it
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subjectivity and in this sense, all 'existential problems are passionate problems'. Kierkegaard therefore says, "The subjective thinker is not a man of science, but an artist." Existence therefore is conceived individually as a mode of living, a way of life of each individual and hence it evades conceptualisation. The highest aim of existence for Kierkegaard is to become subjective; and the task of becoming subjective is the realisation of man's freedom. The subjective thinker is not concerned with external objects qua objects, he is concerned first with his own existence, and everything else in relation to himself. Without this human or existential relationship the objects of the world have no significance; thus everything external has to be

generates passion. To think about existential problems in such a way as to leave out the passion, is tantamount to not thinking about them at all, since it is to forget the point, which is that the thinker is himself an existing individual."

25 Ibid., p. 314.

26 Ibid., p. 33: "All decisiveness, all essential decisiveness, is rooted in subjectivity."

Karl Jaspers calls this process of making everything inward as 'Innewerden' or 'Innesein'. The process itself is characterised as 'Vergegenwärtigung des Seins'. The act of 'encompassing' of reason constitutes such a movement towards one's own being, in order to awaken so to say the ground of all reality (Existenzphilosophie, p. 24 onwards).

27 "... he thinks everything in relation to himself, being infinitely interested in existing." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 281).
transformed into things internal and each such act constitutes an affirmation of subjectivity.\textsuperscript{28} As Kierkegaard himself states, "Existence constitutes the highest interest of the existing individual, and his interest in his existence constitutes his reality."\textsuperscript{29} Kierkegaard further insists, "The only reality that exists for an existing individual is his own ethical reality. To every other reality he stands in a cognitive relation..."\textsuperscript{30} The consciousness of ethical reality, therefore consists in inward contemplation of one's self or rather in the words of Kierkegaard, thinking of one's own self.\textsuperscript{31} "... for the ethical, as being the internal, cannot be observed by an outsider. It can be realised only by the individual subject, who alone can know what it is that moves within him."\textsuperscript{32} Thus one should not dupe oneself by thinking that reality must be discovered by oneself. Truth and reality must be discovered in subjectivity.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., p. 318: "The task of the subjective thinker is to transform himself into an instrument that clearly and definitely expresses in existence whatever is essentially human."

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 279.

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., p. 280.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., p. 284.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 284.

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., p. 306.
If truth is subjectivity and evades conceptualisation, then how is communication possible? Kierkegaard points out that the subjective thinker has a 'form', a 'form' for his communication with his fellow-beings. This is what constitutes his 'style'. This form however is not abstract but concrete. Kierkegaard maintains that direct communication is not possible, because direct communication presupposes certainty and finality, whereas existential truth is always in transition, in a state of process. For man is always in the process of becoming so that truth about him cannot be directly communicated. Direct communication is possible in the case of the ideal universal man; all knowledge is communication through universals but the knowledge of the unique particular individual cannot be communicated. Man's subjective

34 Ibid., p. 319: "The subjective thinker has a form, a form for his communication with other men, and this form constitutes his style. It must be as manifold as the opposites he holds in combination. The systematic ein, zwei, drei is an abstract form, and must therefore fail when applied to the concrete. In the same degree that the subjective thinker himself is concrete, his form will become concretely dialectical."

35 Kierkegaard: Training in Christianity, p. 132.

36 "Direct communication presupposes certainty; but certainty is impossible for anyone in process of becoming, and the semblance of certainty constitutes for such an individual a deception." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 68).

37 Ibid., p. 69: "Ordinary communication between man and man is wholly immediate, because men in general exist immediately. When one man sets forth something and another acknowledges the same, word for word, it is taken for granted that they are in agreement, and that they have understood one another."
thought has something mysterious, it has a limit of secrecy which cannot be directly communicated. Universal communication is possible only through objectification and conceptualisation; direct communication is outward and objective, whereas existential communication is inward and subjective. At this point it would be more apt to quote Kierkegaard himself:

"A direct mode of communication would not have permitted it, since such a method is relevant only to a recipient of knowledge, not essentially to an existing individual. By the use of a direct method some little sensation might have been achieved, but sensation is not relevant to existence, rather to gossip. Existence in what has been understood

38 Ibid., p. 73: "Ordinary communication, like objective thinking in general, has no secrets; only a doubly reflected subjective thinking has them. That is to say, the entire essential content of subjective thought is essentially secret, because it cannot be directly communicated. This is the meaning of the secrecy. The fact that the knowledge in question does not lend itself to direct utterance, because its essential feature consists of the appropriation, makes it a secret for everyone who is not in the same way doubly reflected within himself. And the fact that this is the essential form of such truth, makes it impossible to express it in any other manner."

39 Ibid., p. 232: "Inwardness cannot be directly communicated, for its direct expression is precisely externality, its direction being outward, not inward... the direct effusion of feeling does not prove its possession, but the tension of the contrasting form is the measure of the intensity of inwardness."
cannot be directly communicated to any existing spirit, not even by God, much less by a human being. Kierkegaard says further that the mode of objective thinking is 'direct', because it is indifferent to the existing and thinking subject. On the other hand, the existential 'indirect' communication cannot be indifferent to the existing thinker, it is concerned with the subject because it contemplates inwardly. Kierkegaard calls this 'double reflection' and clarifies it as follows:

"Indirect communication can be produced by the art of reduplicating the communication. This act consists in reducing oneself, the communicator, to nobody, something purely objective, and then incessantly composing qualitative opposites, then unity. This is what some of the pseudonyms are accustomed to call 'double reflection'."

40 Ibid., p. 244.

41 S. Kierkegaard: Training in Christianity, p. 132.

Cf. "While objective thought is indifferent to the thinking subject and his existence, the subjective thinker is as an existing individual essentially interested in his own thinking, existing as he does in his thought. His thinking has therefore a different type of reflection, namely the reflection of inwardness, of possession, by virtue of which it belongs to the thinking subject and to no one else." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 67-68).
The reflection of inwardness confers upon the subjective thinker a 'double reflection' so to say, because in thinking he thinks the universal, but existing in his thought, he becomes infinitely interested in his own existence. The first reflection is thinking of the universal, the second reflection is the assimilation of the universal in one's own existence, in inwardness. In 'direct' objective communication, the communicator is ignored, whereas on the other hand, the 'indirect' existential communication relates itself to the communicator. In existential communication the uniqueness and the identity of the individual is retained, both as the communicator and the communicated. There is then a genuine fellowship — in a truly religious sense. This idea has influenced contemporary existential thinkers profoundly. For Martin Buber, existential truth is imparted only through I-Thou confrontation, Gabriel Marcel calls it '1' 'Invocation' and Jaspers calls it 'existentielle Kommunikation' which is accomplished between 'irreplaceable' individuals through membership in the spirit, through the universality of consciousness as such, through proving itself in empirical existence, but also breaking through these, passing beyond them in the loving struggle (liebender Kampf) of those who will to become themselves.  

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42 Ibid., p.68 (The terminology used is Kierkegaard's (as translated).  
43 Kierkegaard: Training in Christianity, p.133.  
44 Karl Jaspers: Reason and Existenz, p. 91.
In contrast to this, 'rational communication' for Jaspers is communication of identical replaceable points of consciousness-as-such. It lacks what Jaspers calls the character of existential fellowship (existentielle Gemeinschaft). It is communication therefore not within a political and naively religious society, but a dialogue between the 'Existenzen'. Similarly for Kierkegaard, the existential truth is not a doctrine to be preached, it can only be communicated through personal-relationship. The ability to communicate truth inwardly is an art.

The idea of subjectivity could be clarified if we explain at the same time the three stages, described by Kierkegaard, in the development of life. Subjectivity should be viewed within the total framework of life; the perspective should comprise all the possible modes of existence. How does man realise his authentic self in relation to these three levels of existence, namely, the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious? When we talk about existence it could properly be only in these three

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45Ibid., p. 91f.

46"The greater the artistry, the greater the inwardness.... Wherever the subjective is of importance in knowledge, and where appropriation thus constitutes the crux of the matter, the process of communication is a work of art, and doubly reflected." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 72-73).
spheres mentioned by Kierkegaard. Man does not exist metaphysically or ontologically. These stages of life are progressive steps, from the aesthetic to the ethical and through the ethical into the religious.

The aesthetic stage is the stage of momentary pleasure. It deals with the sensuous and the immediate. The individual is here guided only by the impulses. He is constantly in despair, owing to the pleasurable moments slipping so soon from his hands. At this stage, the individual is not fundamentally interested in the question of freedom and choice. For aesthetic choice is no choice, choosing or not choosing hardly makes any difference, because the individual is in despair.

47 "There are three existence spheres: the aesthetic, the ethical, the religious. The metaphysical is abstraction, there is no man who exists metaphysically. The metaphysical, ontology, is but does not exist; for when it exists it is in the aesthetic, in the ethical, in the religious...." (S. Kierkegaard: Stages on Life's Way, translated by Walter Lowrie, Princeton, 1945, p. 430).

48 "The aesthetic view takes account of the personality in its relation to the environment, and the expression for this relation in its repercussion upon the individual in pleasure." (S. Kierkegaard: Either/Or Vol. II, p. 193).

And Ibid., p. 151: "The reason why the man who lives aesthetically can in a higher sense explain nothing, is that he constantly lives in the moment, yet all the time is conscious only in terms of a certain relativity and within certain bounds."

Cf. "This is in its generality the essential aesthetic principle, namely, that the moment is everything...." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 265).

49 "... the aesthetical in a man is that he is immejedly what he is...." (S. Kierkegaard: Either/Or Vol. II, p. 150).
in either case: "Do it or do not do it — you will regret both." The choice of the individual is guided by the whims and flickering moods; at one moment he chooses one thing, in the next moment he chooses another. He is only concerned with isolated moments. He is able to catch only the glimpses of fleeting pleasurable moments which slip away as soon as they come. This is a source of constant agony to him. Kierkegaard elaborates this in his exposition of the attitude of an aesthetic individual as expressed in what he calls an 'ecstatic lecture':

"If you marry, you will regret it, if you do not marry you will also regret it. If you marry or

50 Ibid., p. 124.

51 Ibid., p. 193: "... the aesthetic expression for pleasure in its relation to the individual is mood.... For he who lives aesthetically seeks so far as possible to be absorbed in mood, he seeks to hide himself entirely in it, so that there remains nothing in him which cannot be inflected into it; for such a remainder has always a disturbing effect, it is a continuity which would hold him back. The more the personality disappears in the twilight of mood, so much the more is the individual in the moment, and this, again, is the most adequate expression for the aesthetic existence."

52 Ibid., p. 141: "... when one does not choose absolutely one chooses only for the moment, and... can choose something different the next moment."

53 Ibid., p. 162: "... every aesthetic view of life is despair, and that everyone who lives aesthetically is in despair..."
do not marry, you will regret both. Laugh at the world's follies, you will regret it, weep over them, you will also regret that; laugh at the world's follies or weep over them, you will regret both.... This, gentleman is the sum and substance of all philosophy.\(^5^4\)

The aesthetic thinker remains only in the realm of the outward and not in his inward self. He abandons his own self to achieve something great outside himself.\(^5^5\)

In this context, Kierkegaard gives the example of the poet; aesthetically speaking the poet's production is more important than his person.\(^5^6\) Poetry therefore is

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\(^5^5\) "When an individual abandons himself to lay hold of something great outside him, his enthusiasm is aesthetic ..." (S. Kierkegaard: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 350).

Cf. "The aesthetic outcome is in the outward sphere, and it is this outward which provides assurance that the outcome is there, one sees that the hero has triumphed, has conquered the land, and then we are through with it." (S. Kierkegaard: *Stages on Life's Way*, p. 400).

\(^5^6\) "Aesthetically it is the poetic productivity which is essential, and the poet's mode of existence is accidental.... Aesthetically it would be the highest pathos for the poet to annihilate himself, for him to demoralize himself if necessary, in order to produce masterpieces. Aesthetically it would be in order for a man to sell his soul to the devil, to use a strong expression which recalls what is perhaps still done more often than is ordinarily supposed but also to produce miracles of art." (S. Kierkegaard: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 348-349).
immediate and outward. The poet contemplates things outside himself, but he is unaware of his existence. This amounts to saying that the poet is only in the realm of the 'possiole'. Poetic production holds Kierkegaard, is an imaginative production which is cut off from reality. As Kierkegaard puts it, "... poetry is the possible, the imaginary, the poetized." Analysing love, Kierkegaard maintains that the poet's ideal of love is more than anything that reality presents, the poet's ideality does not correspond to real life. Kierkegaard elaborates this as follows:


58 S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 347.

Cf. "The poet has to do only with the imaginative powers, he depicts the good, the beautiful, the noble, the true, the sublime, the unselfish, the magnanimous, etc., in a mood as remote from reality as imagination is... And the poet is the fellow who can play the hypocrite with men.... That which, if it is made into reality, is the most dreadful suffering, the poet is able to transform dexterously into the most refined enjoyment. To renounce the world in reality... is no joke. But, while secure in the possession of this world to revel in sentiment along with the poet in a 'quiet hour', that is the most refined enjoyment." (S. Kierkegaard: Attack Upon Christendom, pp. 201-202).
"Reality is for the poet merely an occasion, a point of departure, from which he goes in search of the ideality of the possible.... An attempt ethically to establish a poetic relationship to reality is therefore a misunderstanding, a backward step."59

If a religious poet tries to establish a relationship to the religious through imagination, he succeeds only in establishing an aesthetic relationship; to write a hymn on a hero of faith is as much an aesthetic task as it is to eulogize a war hero.60 True religion for Kierkegaard does not consist in singing, hymning or composing the verses, it consists in actual 'existing'.61 Poetry on the other hand, is in the imaginative sphere and it says more than what is real or actual.

It may be relevant to note here that Heidegger in contrast to Kierkegaard, highlights the depth of poetry. Poetry for Heidegger is the expression of the authentic individual being; it expresses the essence of things.62 Heidegger is greatly inspired by the poetry of

59 S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 347.
60 Ibid., pp. 347-348.
61 Ibid., p. 348.
Hölderlin, as he says, "... Hölderlin's poetry was borne on by the poetic vocation to write expressly of the essence of poetry. For us Hölderlin is in a pre-eminent sense the poet of the poet."²⁶³ Heidegger states that the poet stands between "the gods" and "the people"; the poet communicates to man what he has learnt from "the gods".²⁶⁴ The poet gives names to "the gods", (names the Holy) and the things which they signify, he enables man to realize his place in the world in relation to the things around him and before "the gods".²⁶⁵ ... thus establishing firmly, through the medium of well-chosen words, the ground, scale and standards for human Dasein.²⁶⁶

W.J. Richardson, commenting on this, remarks that for Heidegger the process of poetizing is the "origination" (Stiftung) of truth.²⁶⁷ He elaborates this by saying that language is the proper domain of poetry and the essence of poetry is understood only through the comprehension of

²⁶³Ibid., pp. 294-295.
²⁶⁴Ibid., p. 186, and p. 312.
²⁶⁵Ibid., The Essays on Friedrich Hölderlin, p. 203.
²⁶⁶Ibid., p. 203.
the essence of language, and the essence of language consists in "the origination of Being through words." As he explicates, "For language in its source consists in giving a name to beings. Hence, naming (language) discloses the Being of beings and in this sense 'originates' Being, sc. truth."

Heidegger discusses the relationship of philosophy and poetry. As against conceptual scientific thinking, he maintains that philosophy is nearer to poetry.

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68 Ibid., p. 411.
Cf. "First of all it appeared that the field of action of poetry is language. Hence the essence of poetry must be understood through the essence of language." (M. Heidegger: Existence and Being, p. 307).

69 W.J. Richardson: Heidegger, p. 411.
Cf. "The poet names the gods and names all things in that which they are. This naming does not consist merely in something already known being supplied with a name; it is rather that when the poet speaks the essential word, the existent is by this naming nominated as what it is. So it becomes known as existent. Poetry is the establishing of being by means of the word." (M. Heidegger: Existence and Being, Heidegen and the Essence of Poetry, p. 304).


And Ibid., p. 224: "According to Heidegger's definition fundamental ontological thought and description differ from scientific thought and description, and it would be unfortunate to make science the measure of the requirements of rigor for all thinking. Phenomenological description and scientific description range over different fields. Phenomenological descriptions rank higher; they belong together with poetry."
Thinking and poetry are closely linked, poetry like thinking, is original and creative. 71 "Fundamental thinking, fundamental poetizing, and the 'thinking' devotion to Being are, then, somehow rooted in the same endeavour touching the very soul of the new philosophy." 72

This digression from Kierkegaard to Heidegger has been made only to show the contrast between the attitudes to poetry of the two great philosophers of existence. We may now however return to a discussion of Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage. At this stage, the individual does not realise his authentic self. He is only in the realm of 'possibility' and not in 'reality'. 73 Such an aesthetic


Cf. "Poetic composing (dichten in the narrow sense) and thinking, Heidegger says, are the two pre-eminent modes of saying, rooted in the productive, inventive or creative essence of language. As a mode of creative 'saying', therefore, thinking is itself poetic or inventive in character.... All thinking, Reason itself, is of the nature of poiesis in the sense of inventing, contriving, making up." (J.L. Mehta: The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger, pp. 66-67.


73 "In connection with the aesthetic and the intellectual, to ask whether this or that is real, whether it really has happened, is a misunderstanding. So to ask betrays a failure to conceive the aesthetic and intellectual ideality as a possibility..." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 286).
existence cannot be prolonged for the entire span of life as the aesthetician is in constant despair and comes nearer to self-annihilation. The individual therefore has to go beyond the aesthetic to the ethical stage in order to turn his attention from the outward to the inward. For the ethical sphere is not concerned with the ideal and the 'possible' but with the actual and 'real' existence. The ethical question makes a reference to my own reality significant and basic. Kierkegaard's comparison between the aesthetical and the ethical could be summed up in his own words:

"The principal difference, and one on which

Karl Jaspers echoes the ideas of Kierkegaard in his brilliant psycho-pathological studies of Vincent van Gogh, and August Strindberg (Strindberg und van Gogh, 3rd edition, Munich, 1951).

"Ethically it is correct to put the question 'Is it real?' But it is important to note that this holds true only when the individual subject asks the question of himself, and concerning his own reality. He can apprehend the ethical reality of another only by thinking it, and hence as a possibility." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 286).

"Whenever the ethical is present, attention is directed entirely to the individual himself and his mode of life.... Ethically the highest pathos is interested pathos, expressed through the active transformation of the individual's entire mode of existence in conformity with the object of his interest; aesthetically the highest pathos is disinterested. When an individual abandons himself to lay hold of something great outside him, his enthusiasm is aesthetic; when he forsakes everything to save himself, his enthusiasm is ethical."
everything hinges, is that the ethical individual is transparent to himself and does not live ins Blaue hinein as does the aesthetical individual....

One says of the ethical individual that he is like quiet waters which run deep, whereas who lives aesthetically is superficially moved."

Regarded from the ethical point of view, the existence of the poet according to Kierkegaard is more important than his production. The ethical individual is concerned with the subject rather with the outward realm of poetic creation. The crux of the problem consists in freedom and choice which is more conspicuous in the ethical stage than in the aesthetic. It is primarily a question of either/or


78 "...ethically on the other hand, this question of the individual's mode of existence is of infinite importance; ethically the poem is infinitely indifferent, but the poet's mode of existence ought to mean infinitely more to him than anything else.... Whenever the ethical is present, attention is directed entirely to the individual himself and his mode of life.... When an individual... forsakes everything to save himself, his enthusiasm is ethical." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 349-350.

And Ibid., p. 284: "The ethical lays hold of each individual and demands that he refrain from all contemplation, especially of humanity and the world; for the ethical, as being the internal, cannot be observed by an outsider. It can be realised only by the individual subject, who alone can know what it is that moves within him."
in the ethical stage. But the choice is not between choosing good and evil but between choosing and not choosing.  

However ethical choice for Kierkegaard cannot be personal and unique. While choosing, the individual is aware of the universal norms. The self does not remain aloof and abstract. To quote Kierkegaard himself:

"He who regards life ethically sees the universal, and he who lives ethically expresses the universal in his life, he makes himself the universal man, not by divesting himself of his concretion, for then he becomes nothing, but by clothing himself with it and permeating it with the universal."

Indeed the ethical problem would not arise if the individual like Robinson Crusoe, were alone; the ethical problem paradoxically enough mainly concerns the individual

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79 "The act of choosing is essentially a proper and stringent expression of the ethical. Whenever in a stricter sense there is a question of an either/or, one can always be sure that the ethical is involved." (J. Kierkegaard: Either/Or Vol. II, p. 141).

80 Ibid., p. 141.

81 Ibid., p. 214.

choice but the choice cannot become significant, unless the individual enters into a reciprocal relation with fellow-beings. 82

Though the ethical stage is universal, yet it cannot be called objective. The choice of self is made always by the subjective relation to the subject. And the universal norms and duties are not external to man, these are not set up by ruling powers which are external to him. These norms may be regarded as expressions of man's inner self and this is why Kierkegaard regards the ethical stage as universal yet not objective. Rather it is subjective. In this sense Kierkegaard's ethics differs from Kantian ethics, which is universal and objective. Kant regards the choice of the individual as being guided by a priori moral principles. For Kierkegaard however, there are no such a priori moral principles and the individual chooses the law with reference to his own existential situation.

The ethical sphere is put by Kierkegaard in the

82 Talking of the ethical self, Kierkegaard says, "... the self which is the aim is not an abstract self which fits everywhere and hence nowhere, but a concrete self which stands in reciprocal relations with these surroundings, these conditions of life, this natural order. The self which is the aim is not merely a personal self but a social, a civic self." (S. Kierkegaard: Either/Or Vol. II, p. 220).
realm of the transitional. The ethical is not an end-in-itself; the individual has to go beyond this stage to the religious, which is the highest stage. To use Kierkegaard's expression, the individual takes a leap from the ethical to the religious. At this stage, the individual's choice is completely unique and personal; he tears up the moral codes in order to achieve a religious end. This is what Kierkegaard calls the 'teleological suspension of the ethical'. Not that the individual gets a license from any external source to supersede the ethical, but at this stage the universal moral rules cannot solve the problems of existence, of freedom and choice. In *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard narrates the famous Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. On the one side Abraham has a moral duty towards his son, on the other side he has to fulfil God's demand. There is a momentous clash between the universal values and the individual's choice. In the story Abraham rises above the universal moral norms and sacrifices his son. The deed is heroic and Abraham has truly attained the highest religious stage.

The individual becomes great not by following the rule but by being an exception to the rule. Kierkegaard

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84 S. Kierkegaard: *Fear and Trembling*, p. 83.
contrasts the tragic hero with Abraham. The tragic hero continues all the time in the moral sphere, whereas Abraham goes beyond the universal moral codes. In the ethical sphere, the sacrifice of his son by Abraham would be regarded as murder, as sinful, but it is not so at the religious stage. Ethically speaking, the father owes a moral duty to his son, to love him and violation of this universal moral duty would be regarded as sin. The

\[\text{Ibid., pp. 87-88: "The tragic hero still remains within the ethical. He lets one expression of the ethical find its telos in a higher expression of the ethical; the ethical relation between father and son, or daughter and father, he reduces to a sentiment which has its dialectic in the idea of morality. Here there can be no question of a teleological suspension of the ethical. With Abraham the situation was different. By his act he overstepped the ethical entirely and possessed a higher telos outside of it, in relation to which he suspended the former... whereas the tragic hero is great by reason of his moral virtue, Abraham is great by reason of a personal virtue."}\]

\[\text{Ibid., p. 84: "Abraham's relation to Isaac, ethically speaking, is quite simply expressed by saying that a father shall love his son more dearly than himself."}\]

\[\text{Ibid., p. 79: "As soon as the individual would assert himself in his particularity over against the universal he sins, and only by recognising this can be again reconcile himself with the universal."}\]

Cf. "Duty is the absolute requirement.... The terrible emancipation from the requirement of realising the ethical, the heterogeneity of the individual with the ethical, the suspension from the ethical is Sin, considered as the state in which a human being is." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p.239).
suspension of the ethical' constitutes sin. Sin is the expression for a religious mode of life which defies the universal moral norms. As Kierkegaard states;

"Sin is a decisive expression for the religious mode of existence. As long as sin is not yet posited, the suspension from the ethical becomes a transitory phase which again vanishes, or remains outside life as something altogether irregular. But sin... it is not a moment within something else, within another order of things, but is itself the beginning of the religious order of things." 88

The religious man is indifferent to outward results, he is concerned with his own self in relation to God. 89 In contrast to pleasure which is the basic category of the aesthetic stage, suffering is the category of the religious stage. Suffering is intrinsic to man's religious mode of

88 S. Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 239.
89 Ibid., p. 391: "... religiosity is inwardness, that inwardness is the relationship of the individual to himself before God..."

Cf. "The religious outcome, indifferent to the outward result, is only assured in the inward sphere..." (S. Kierkegaard: Stages On Life's Way, p. 400).

And Ibid., p. 399.
living. As Kierkegaard says, "The reality of the suffering thus means its essential persistence as essential to the religious life... viewed religiously the cessation of suffering is also the cessation of the religious life."90 Suffering has an essential relation to religious existence. Suffering is due to the clash between the universal norms and the individual's choice which causes tension (fear and trembling) in the religious person.

It is faith which makes Abraham sacrifice his son. Faith has its roots in resignation and resignation breaks through all temporal temptations.91 Faith for Kierkegaard, reveals the superiority of the individual over the universal.92 It is held to be absolutely subjective, it cannot be communicated.


And Ibid., p. 398: "The reality of the suffering signifies its essential persistence, and is its essential relation to the religious life."


Cf. "Such a religious exception will ignore the universal, he will outbid the terms offered by temporal reality." (S. Kierkegaard: Stages On Life's Way, p. 170).

92 The paradox of faith is this, the individual is higher than the universal..." (S. Kierkegaard: Fear and Trembling, p. 105).
Abraham's action is justified on the ground that man has an absolute duty towards God. Kierkegaard believes in the authenticity of man's choice. Kierkegaard says that man owes a responsibility towards God. The individual realises all his possibilities when he is face to face with God.

The analysis of the three stages poses the question of their interrelationship. Kierkegaard's Either Or presents two great alternatives, the choice either of an aesthetic existence or of the ethical. Kierkegaard explicates his position in the Postscript by saying that in the Stages on Life's Way, he has already introduced the idea of the religious stage. The ethical sphere for him is transitional, in order to pass over to the religious stage. Thus the ethical stage has intrinsic relationship to the religious stage. To quote Kierkegaard:

"But back to the Stages. It is obviously differentiated from Either-Or by it tripartite division. There are three stages: an aesthetic, an ethical, and a religious.... But in spite of

93 Ibid., p. 105: "The paradox can also be expressed by saying that there is an absolute duty toward God; for in this relationship of duty the individual as an individual stands related absolutely to the absolute."
this triple division the book is nevertheless an either-or. The ethical and the religious stages have in fact an essential relationship to one another. The difficulty with Either-Or is that it was rounded out to a conclusion ethically.... In the Stages this is clarified, and the religious is thus assigned to its proper place. 94

Kierkegaard does not say on what basis he grades the three stages. As an existential philosopher, he is of course against prescribing any objective criterion. The only criterion (if it can be called a criterion and which is subjective) of grading the three stages is inwardness. This is clear from what he himself says: "All interpretation of existence rank-in accordance with the degree of the individual's dialectical apprehension of inwardness." 95 The aesthetic stage is regarded as the


95Ibid., p. 506.

And Ibid., p. 507: Kierkegaard further continues, "If the individual is in himself undialectical and has his dialectic outside him, then we have the aesthetic interpretation. If the individual is dialectical in himself inwardly in self-assertion, hence in such a way that the ultimate basis is not dialectic in itself, inasmuch as the self which is at the basis is used to overcome and assert itself, then we have the ethical interpretation. If the individual is inwardly defined by self-annihilation before God, then we have religiousness A. If the individual
lowest because it is in the realm of the outward. The ethical stage is superior to the aesthetic, being inward and subjective; still the ethical remains the universal and hence has to be passed over. The religious stage is the highest, as the individual attains the greatest degree of inwardness, by an inward relationship to God. It is at this level that Kierkegaard's Knight of Faith appears as a fully authentic being, who rises above the universal and achieves complete individuality. Thus the notion of subjectivity in Kierkegaard, can be identified with religious subjectivity of man, attained in his intimate relationship to God, which is unique, individual and personal. There is no other means of realising God other than through personal inward experience. For this reason, the objective proofs for the existence of God are inauthentic. Kierkegaard asserts: "... God is a subject, and therefore exists only for subjectivity in inwardness." 96

96 Ibid., p. 178.
Is the image of man portrayed by Kierkegaard adequate? To answer this question, one has to evaluate critically Kierkegaard's notion of subjectivity. Our criticism may be divided into two parts: (a) criticism of the internal-inconsistency of Kierkegaard's position, (b) criticism of Kierkegaard's neglect of external factors which are essential for a comprehensive approach towards man. In any criticism we have to bear in mind that Kierkegaard is opposed to any systematic philosophy of man. Such a philosophy would amount to a rationalistic approach to the problem which Kierkegaard abhors. Hence the criticism of Kierkegaard should not run on rationalistic lines; a critique of Kierkegaard should be from his own anti-rationalistic standpoint.

In spite of the wide appeal which Kierkegaard's notion of subjectivity has gained in existentialist circles, it suffers from certain internal weaknesses. On the one hand the very nature of this notion of subjectivity is such that it cannot be defined by any rational means of analysis (indeed Kierkegaard himself holds this view), still he makes an attempt to explain — the idea of truth and subjectivity. Every expression — even if it is one of clarification involves in varying degrees some rational explanation. If truth is pure subjectivity then it should not be expressed at all. Hence Kierkegaard's philosophy of subjectivity is self-defeating unless it is meant only as a record of his
contemplation in loneliness. Even religious experience gains its significance only by communication within a fellowship of individuals with a like-attitude.

Further (Kierkegaard's point of view that a rational and objective definition of man is inauthentic and that every man defines himself in and through his actions, is itself after all a characterisation of man. No doubt this kind of definition -- if it can be called a definition at all, is unique, but all the same is a characterisation. However irrational a philosophy might be, it cannot altogether dispense with conceptualisation, as long it is a philosophy and not merely a description of the human existential situation, or unless it is purely contemplative like poetry (which Kierkegaard relegates to an inferior position).

But even if such conceptualisation and characterisation of man as defining himself in and through his actions, were excused as unavoidable, the question still arises as to whether such a characterisation puts us into the right perspective. This leads us to what we have called the external criticism, i.e. a criticism from the standpoint of one who does not accept subjectivity as the last word. Kierkegaard seems to have overemphasised the subjective and irrational character of human existence, ignoring the fact that communication involves factors
which are objective. Kierkegaard's philosophy hardly makes any contribution to a study of society in all its aspects including the moral and the social. Kierkegaard's notion of subjectivity is extremely individualistic. The task of the subjective thinker according to Kierkegaard is only to reflect on his inward reality. The existential man is not supposed to be interested in anything else in the world. One need not be a social scientist, in order to point out the multi-dimensional personality of the individual, which develops within a social-context. This conclusion that the individual himself is moulded in many respects, including those of his choices and decisions, by the social environment is inescapable, even though such social factors may limit man's consciousness of his existential situation. Kierkegaard's image of man is that of a lonely individual completely divorced from society. This negative attitude towards society influences also his analysis of religious experience, which for him is a one-way relationship between man and God. In other words, for Kierkegaard, relationship between man and God transcends social-relationships. But is it possible to speak of religion beyond social-relationships? Would not religion then be transformed into mysticism which is incommunicable? These questions will be taken up in one of the next chapters.