CHAPTER V

THE IDEA OF GOD
The idea of God is commonly regarded as central to any philosophy of religion. Two questions may be posed in this connection. The first is about the reality of the existence of God and the second is about our knowledge of God. If God exists, how can we know Him?—this is an abiding question of traditional and contemporary philosophers of religion and the answers are given from different standpoints. The other questions are: What type of reality can be ascribed to God? What is the nature of religious experience? What is the relation between God and man? and between God and the external world? etc..

Religious rationalism tended to look at the whole problem from an objective and impersonal standpoint. God is regarded as a reality, being ontologically independent of human experience. He is known objectively and through reason. The scholastic tradition in European philosophy—particularly as developed by Thomas Aquinas

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1For instance, in the works of Schleiermacher and Rudolf Otto, experience of the 'Holy' or of the 'deity' is made central to religious experience. Rudolf Otto characterises this experience of the ineffable as that of a mysterium, tremendum et fascinans, which is found in every form of religious consciousness from the most primitive to the most refined. Otto's study however could fittingly be called an objective analysis of religious experience.
and his followers has been responsible for giving a rationalistic perspective to the religious problem. The mediaeval scholastics held that reason was capable of obtaining certain knowledge of God's existence, though such knowledge is mainly inferential. A number of proofs for the existence of God, which are very well-known, were formulated during this period.

For instance, the ontological proof for the existence of God which was first formulated by St. Anselm and developed later by Descartes, attempts to demonstrate theoretically the existence (existentia) of God from the idea of His essence (essentia). There is ontological relation between existentia and essentia, which is still a fundamental ontological doctrine of modern Thomism. As St. Anselm applied it, the inference preceds from God's essence to His existence i.e., from God's nature to His reality.\(^2\) It is familiar to the students of the 

\(^2\)Cf. H.J. Paton holds that the ontological argument formulated by St. Anselm, is from the concept of a perfect being to His existence; perfection implies the existence of God. As he says further, "Such an argument may be in need of further premises; perhaps we ought to show that a perfect being can be conceived without contradiction and also that there can only be one perfect being,... The crux of the argument is the contention that we are entitled, and indeed obliged, to pass from the thought or notion of God's perfection to knowledge of His existence — to knowledge that He must necessarily exist." (H.J. Paton: The Modern Predicament, London, 1958, p. 176).
history of philosophy that the ontological argument has many variations, one of which may be put simply as follows: God is by definition a perfect Being and we may speak of degrees of perfection in relation to a supremely perfect Being; it is self-contradictory to regard a supremely perfect Being as non-existent; for to lack existence must itself be an imperfection. St. Anselm develops this point further: If the most perfect conceivable Being exists only in mind, we should then have the possibility of conceiving of a being more perfect than the present one, which should be a contradiction. Hence the same perfect Being must exist not only in the mind but also in reality. Descartes reformulated Anselm's argument by maintaining that existence is an essential characteristic or property of

3 Cf. Ibid., p. 179.

4 "However, that then which a greater cannot be conceived can certainly not stand only in relation to the understanding. For if it at least stood only in relation to the understanding, it could be conceived to be also in reality, and this would be something greater. Therefore, if that than which a greater cannot be conceived only stood in relation to the understanding, then that than which a greater cannot be conceived would be something than which a greater can be conceived. Obviously this is impossible. Therefore, something than which a greater cannot be conceived undoubtedly both stands in relation to the understanding and exists in reality." (St. Anselm: The Proslogion, translated by Arthur C. McGill, 1965, Chapter II).
God, that existence is necessary to perfection and this proposition was said to be as certain as the mathematical theorem that sum of the interior angles of a triangle must be equal to two right angles. It is unthinkable, because it is self-contradictory to deny that the three angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles; likewise it is a contradiction to deny any perfection to the supremely perfect Being and inconceivable that God lacks the perfection of actual existence.

The proofs for the existence of God undoubtedly have given rise to a great deal of controversy since they were expounded. In particular the ontological argument has been subjected to close scrutiny by many

5"... it is no more possible to separate existence from the essence of God than the equality of its three angles to two right angles from the essence of a triangle or the idea of a mountain from that of a valley; so that to think of God (that is, of a being completely perfect) as without existence (that is, of a being completely perfect) as without existence (that is, as lacking a certain perfection) is as impossible as to think of a mountain without a valley." (R. Descartes: Meditations On First Philosophy, Meditation V in Descartes Philosophical Writings, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, New York, 1958, p. 224).

Cf. "When I turned back to my idea of a perfect Being, on the other hand, I discovered that existence was included in that idea in the same way that the idea of a triangle contains the equality of its angles to two right angles, or that the idea of a sphere includes the equidistance of all its parts from the centre. Perhaps, in fact, the existence of the perfect Being is even more evident. Consequently, it is at least as certain that God, who is this perfect Being, exists, as any theorem of geometry could possibly be." (R. Descartes: Discourse on Method translated by Laurence J. Lafleur, New York, 1956, pp. 23-24).
thinkers including Kierkegaard because of its importance. The ontological argument as H.J. Paton maintains, is unique as it is not based on experience of any existent thing. It is not even based on what man sometimes claims to be the direct religious experience of God. It rests on the basic idea of perfection rationally so conceived or pure thinking 'unsullied' by sense or feeling. It passes from the pure thought of perfection to knowledge of God's existence so as "to enjoy such knowledge by means of this pure thought alone." Immanuel Kant has challenged the ontological argument in a criticism that has become famous. The merely conceptual hundred thalers do not add anything to their existence:

"The attempt to establish the existence of a supreme being by means of the famous ontological argument of Descartes is therefore merely so much labour and effort lost; we can no more extend our stock of (theoretical) insight by mere ideas than a merchant can better his position by adding a few noughts to his cash account." 7

The ontological argument assumes that "existence" is a predicate or property like blue or green. It has been pointed out that propositions like "the table exists" and "the tables are brown" are


grammatically similar but they are logically different. Thus existence is regarded as a quality of a perfect being as absolute wisdom, absolute power. It is not correct even to regard existence similar to the three angled property of a triangle. The ambiguity of the word 'exists' has been a topic which has been much discussed in recent analytical philosophy.  

Thus the notion of 'existence' adds nothing to the concept of a thing; it just amounts to acknowledging a thing as an actuality rather as mere fiction or possibility. This is why Kant said that the real contains no more than merely possible. Addition of existence does not add anything new to the predicates of a thing. At one level Kant is prepared to accept Descartes claim that the idea of existence belongs


9 "By whatever and by however many predicates we may think a thing — even if we completely determine it — we do not make the least addition to the thing when we further declare that this thing is. Otherwise, it would not be exactly the same thing that exists, but something more than we had thought in the concept; and we could not, therefore, say that the exact object of my concept exists." (Immanuel Kant: Critique of Pure Reason, p. 505).


11 Immanuel Kant: Critique of Pure Reason, p. 505.
analytically to the concept of God in the same sense as the idea of having three angles belongs analytically to the concept of a three-sided plane figure. In either case the predicate is linked to the subject. But says Kant, it does not follow from this that the subject actually exists. What is analytically true is that if there is a triangle, it must have three angles and that if there is any infinitely perfect Being, He must have existence.

'To posit a triangle, and yet to reject its three angles, is self-contradictory; but there is no contradiction in rejecting the triangle together with its three angles. The same holds true of the concept of an absolutely necessary being. If its existence is rejected, we reject the thing itself with all its predicates; and no question of contradiction can then arise.'  

For Kant, the supposed entailment between perfection and existence on which the ontological argument rests, is deceptive. A perfect being lacks no positive quality, thus such a being cannot be thought to be deficient in positive quality of existence; it would then be internally self-contradictory.  

This misunderstanding will be removed if existence is not regarded as a quality, as existence has no place in a list of attributes of God. Even if we conceive of a

\footnote{Ibid., p. 502.}

\footnote{Cf. Frederick Ferre: \textit{Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion}, p. 205.}
Being who is perfect in all respects, a question still remains whether He exists or not.¹⁴ In short, Kant not only attacks the assumption that a formal implicatory relation between perfection and existence would compel us to admit that something actually is perfect but he also rejects the basis for maintaining that any implicatory relation can hold between perfection and existence.¹⁵

Kierkegaard also attacks the ontological argument, but his criticism is not like Kant's. His criticism centres around his own analysis of the word 'existence'.¹⁶ 'Existence' for him is not a quality-word, or 'attribute expression'. He points out that the existence of God (the unknown) cannot be demonstrated because existence

¹⁴Cf. Ibid., pp. 205-206.
¹⁵Cf. Ibid., p. 206.
¹⁶"In beginning my proof I presuppose the ideal interpretation, and also that I will be successful in carrying it through; but what else is this but to presuppose that God exists, so that I really begin by virtue of confidence in him? And how does God's existence emerge from the proof? Does it follow straightway, without any break of continuity? Or have we not here an analogy to the behaviour of these toys, the little Cartesian dolls? As soon as I let it go of the doll it stands on its head. As soon as I let it go — I must therefore let it go. So with the proof for God's existence. As long as I keep my hold on the proof, i.e., continue to demonstrate, the existence does not come out, if no other reason that I am engaged in proving it; but when I let the proof go, the existence is there." (J. Kierkegaard: Philosophical Fragments, pp. 33-34).
is not a predicate;¹⁷ 'I do not say that a stone exists but some existing thing is a stone'. In Cartesian philosophy, God is impersonal and abstract and His reality emerges from a process of detached intellectual contemplation. It is possible that Kierkegaard regarded Descartes as too naive a thinker and 'child-like' in his approach to philosophical problems.¹⁸

The cosmological argument, it is well-known, rests on the supposition that nothing can exist or occur without sufficient cause and from this, one goes on to that God must be the sufficient cause of everything. On the basis of a general experience of this world, it is argued that since everything in the world must have a cause, there must be a first cause or uncaused cause which can be called God. The teleological argument argues from evidence of design and order in the cosmos, and finds

¹⁷'Ibid., pp. 31-32: "The entire demonstration always turns into something very different from what it assumes to be, and becomes an additional development of the consequences that flow from my having assumed that the object in question exists. Thus I always reason from existence, not toward existence, whether I move in the sphere of palpable sensible fact or in the realm of thought. I do not for example prove that a stone exists, but that some existing thing is stone. The procedure in a court of justice does not prove that a criminal exists, but that the accused, whose existence is given, is a criminal. Whether we call existence an accessorium or the eternal prius, it is never subject to demonstration."

¹⁸S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 298.
in them the confirmation of a 'designer' or 'governor' of the universe, though, 'telos' literally means 'end' or 'purpose'.

Kierkegaard repudiates in general the validity of a theology based on objective and universal reason. As against speculative theology which has its aim in clearness and distinctness of ideas in religion, Kierkegaard's approach towards religious experience is irrational. For the problem of the existence of God is rationally insoluble. It is futile and impossible to know religious truth through reason. Kierkegaard's attempt gives a new appreciation of the nature of religious experience which can properly be regarded as a vigorous reaction against intellectualistic and doctrinal theology. The rationalistic method may be adopted in dealing impersonally with things in the world. On the contrary, man's relationship with God is personal. The rationalistic arguments start with the idea or essence of God and come down to the reality. This method could be justified if we are able to grasp God's factual existence, but this is something which can never be achieved, by conceptual means and would inevitably lead to contradictions and absurdities. The starting-point therefore should be existence. For "If God does not

exist" says Kierkegaard, "it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it."\textsuperscript{19} If God does not exist, in that case I will be postulating the existence of God and if God exists in that case the question of proving the existence seems absurd, because in that case I will only be developing the content of the conception. In both the cases I start from existence and not from reason do I go to existence.

Further, from the works of God we cannot deduce His existence, as we cannot prove the existence of man from his deeds.\textsuperscript{20} This criticism which particularly

\begin{itemize}
\item[19.] Kierkegaard: \textit{Philosophical Fragments}, pp.31-32.
\item[20.] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 33: "The wisdom of God in nature, his goodness, his wisdom in the governance of the world — are all these manifest, perhaps, upon the very face of things? Are we not here confronted with the most terrible temptations to doubt, and is it not impossible finally to dispose of all these doubts? But from such an order of things I will surely not attempt to prove God's existence; and even if I began I would never finish, and would in addition have to live constantly in suspense, lest something so terrible should suddenly happen that my bit of proof would be demolished. From what works then do I propose to derive the proof? From the works as apprehended through an ideal interpretation; i.e., such as they do not immediately reveal themselves. But in that case it is not from the works that I prove God's existence. I merely develop the ideality, I have presupposed, and because of my confidence in this I make so bold as to defy all objections, even those that have not yet been made. In beginning my proof I presuppose the ideal interpretation, and also that I will be successful in carrying it through, but what else in this but to presuppose that God exists, so that I really begin by virtue of confidence in him?"
\end{itemize}
directed against the teleological argument of Leibnitz which deduces the existence of God from the design and harmony of the world. No demonstration of the existence of God is possible through proofs or arguments;

"... to try to prove the existence of God is a shameless result for it shows that the reasoner is really ignoring God.... For the scientist to put God to the test empirically is equally offensive." 21

On this point Kierkegaard is particularly sharp in his criticism: "The physicist uses the microscope as a dandy uses opera glasses; only, the microscope is focused on God." 22 This in fact is a rejection of natural theology and other scientific approaches towards religion. For instance, Henri Bergson is entirely realistic and scientific in his approach to religious problems. In contrast to Kierkegaard's subjective and individualistic approach to religious experience, Bergson's approach to religious experience is scientific. Bergson's identification of man with God is almost to the point of numerical identity. It is a conscious experience usually analogous to perception. As he


\[\text{22 Diary of Søren Kierkegaard. Ed. P.F. Rohde, New York, 1960, p. 95.}\]
himself puts it:

"Generally speaking, we look upon an object as existing if it is perceived or might be perceived. Such an object is therefore presented in actual or possible experience. No doubt you may construct the idea of an object or of a being, as the geometrician does for a geometrical figure; but experience alone will decide whether it actually exists outside the idea thus constructed."  

Unlike Kierkegaard he believes that religious experience is objective and refers to an independently real God; he thinks that there is an 'experimental' way of approaching God. The objective reality of God is affirmed on the basis of actual experience, even if it is not verifiable. Not all scientific truths are verifiable. Similarly religious experience even if not verifiable, nevertheless is scientific.

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24 Ibid., p. 229: "... mysticism... must furnish us with the means of approaching, as it were experimentally, the problem of the existence and the nature of God. Indeed we fail to see how philosophy could approach the problem in any other way."

25 Ibid., p. 234: "In the first place, it is by no means certain that a scientific experiment, or more
Bergson's distinction between what he calls static or natural religion and dynamic or open religion is based on the differentiation between static or closed morality and open or dynamic morality. In the former, the individual conforms to outward social norms and fulfills certain obligations towards society. Static or natural religion is in conformity to accepted ways of life and is derived from the 'providence' of nature: "It is a defensive reaction of nature against what might be depressing for the individual, and dissolvent for society, in the exercise of intelligence." Such a generally an observation recorded by science, can always be repeated and verified. In the days when Central Africa was a terra incognita, geography trusted to the account of one single explorer, if his honesty and competence seemed to be above suspicion. The route of Livingstone's journeys appeared for a long time on the maps and atlases. You may object that verification was potentially, if not actually, feasible, that other travellers could go and see if they liked, and that the map based on the indications of one traveller was a provisional one, waiting for subsequent exploration to make it definitive. I grant this: but the mystic too has gone on a journey that others can potentially, if not actually, undertake; and those who are actually capable of doing so are at least as many as those who possess the daring and energy of a Stanley setting out to find Livingstone."


27 Henri Bergson: The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, p. 194 (Author's italics).
dogmatic religion has a preservative function and is closed to change. The individual is forced to accept a religious way of life. In contrast to this, an open or dynamic religion enables the individual to rise above social norms. Such 'remarkable' individuals are characterised as mystics by Bergson. Dynamic or open religion is born out of mystic's intuition in the immediate awareness of the basic reality by living in the world is called intuition. Such experience is beyond intellect. The contrast with Kierkegaard is complete when it is seen, Bergson believes in the independent reality of God to be known only by sensuous experience:

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29 Cf. Ibid., p. 194: "The way of life in a particular society is determined not only by a feeling of obligation but also by an inspiration to an ideal. This ideal is embodied not in rules to which one must conform, but rather in the way of life of some remarkable person... Such persons... are commonly called mystics."

30 Cf. Ibid., p. 194: "The mystic's way of life is curiously different from that of others. It does not consist in the obligation to conform to the established ways of the group to which he belongs. It springs directly from his inner life. And it is sustained by a feeling of obligation but by a feeling of love."

31 Cf. Ibid., p. 195.
"If experience is the only source of knowledge and the intellect has to depend on experience, there is no reason why mystic experience should be left out and the science of spirit should not be cultivated as assiduously as the source of nature, based on sensuous experience. Bergson is, therefore, a strong supporter of... the scientific study of mystic experiences."\(^{32}\)

But religious experience unlike scientific knowledge is direct, non-inferential, and based on personal experience.

Kierkegaard's analysis of religious experience is in direct and personal terms and finds its echo in contemporary existentialist theology. One is reminded of two names in this connection, those of Gabriel Marcel and Martin Buber.

Like Kierkegaard, Gabriel Marcel also holds that man's relationship to God is personal and subjective. For Marcel, God is not an object to be grasped and analysed; He is to be experienced by the subject.\(^{33}\) This


\(^{33}\)"God can only be given to me as Absolute Presence in Worship; any idea I form of Him is only an abstract expression or intellectualisation of the Presence." (Gabriel Marcel: Being and Having, translated by Katharine Farrer, Glasgow, 1949, p.170).
relationship becomes explicit with Marcel's distinction between what he calls "first reflection" and "second reflection", "problem" and "mystery". The "first reflection" is scientific analysis of a thing; making it impersonal and objective. Looking at the world from a scientific, objective and dispassionate standpoint without reference to the inquiring subject, is characterised by Marcel a "problem". A "problem" therefore is objective and abstract, it is an inquiry...
into an object which is outside me; the being of the questioner is not involved in it. As Copleston elaborates Marcel's position: "'First reflection', objectification and the notion of 'problem' go together." The 'first reflection' is confined to the categories of 'seeing' and 'having' (voir et avoir) which is purely scientific and technical knowledge. There is a subject-object relationship at this level of reflection, the other person is for me an "object", an "it".

The "second reflection" transcends scientific and objective categorisation and relates itself to the inquiring subject. It does not concern itself with a "problem" but is involved in "mystery". A "mystery" in contrast to a "problem", is something in which I find


37 "What we have obviously presents an appearance of externality to ourselves.... I can only have, in the strict sense of the word, something whose existence is, up to a certain point, independent of me." (Gabriel Marcel: *Being and Having*, p. 155).

Cf. While discussing Marcel's 'first reflection', Reinhardt says, "Its frame of reference is not the existing individual, but 'thought in general', the impersonal thinking of 'das Man'." (Kurt F. Reinhardt: *The Existentialist Revolt*, New York, 1960, p. 213).


39 Ibid., p. 168.
myself engaged; the being of the inquirer is involved in it. The subject-object relationship is transcended at this level of reflection; the other person is for me not an 'object', and an 'it' but a 'thou' (tu, Du), this is the level of intersubjectivity. I transcend the

40... a mystery is something in which I am myself involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as a sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and its initial validity... a mystery, by definition, transcends every conceivable technique." (Gabriel Marcel: Being and Having, p. 117).

And Ibid., p. 141: "Mysteries are not truths that lie beyond us, they are truths that comprehend us."

And Ibid., p. 171.

Cf. Copleston explains Marcel's notion of mystery: "... the word in "mystery" here must be understood in the theological sense of a truth revealed by God which cannot be proved by the human reason alone. Nor does 'mystery' mean that which is mysterious in the sense that we cannot know because we lack the means at present of answering the relevant problem. 'Mystery' is neither revealed truth nor the unknown. The word is used to refer to that which is given in experience but which cannot be objectified in such a way that the subject can be simply disregarded." (F. Copleston: Contemporary Philosophy, p. 167).

41Cf. "We are here on the plane of intersubjectivity. And on this plane, I transcend the narrowness of egoism and the subject-object relation, there arises personal relationship like love and fidelity and 'disponibibility' (being available, as a person for another) which can be explored by second reflection. On the plane of intersubjectivity I consciously realise and appropriate my participation in Being at the level of personal communion and communication." (F. Copleston: Contemporary Philosophy, p. 170).
relation of "having" (an object) and am in the sphere of being. 42

Marcel maintains that God is realised by the individual at the level of "second reflection", the relationship between the individual and God is an I - Thou relationship; I realise God, as the personal transcendent Absolute, as absolute Thou. Marcel states that being is always more than what we know of it and metaphysics therefore is an endless quest of "mystery". At the level of "first reflection", God is known as an 'object', the 'conclusion of a syllogism' or 'an astronomical hypothesis'. 43 So the 'problem' of God gives way to the 'mystery' of the 'Absolute Thou', God is personal and cannot become for me a he (lui) or it; He is to be realised by the individual.

In recent years, the name of Martin Buber is associated with the idea of man's intimate relationship to God which he symbolises as an I - Thou (Ich-Du)

42 Cf. Ibid., p. 170.

43 Cf. Ibid., p. 179.

Copleston further says, "If, however, a man places himself on the level of 'second reflection', he can discover God as the personal Absolute who gives significance and value to those personal relationship which arise on the plane of intersubjectivity." (Ibid., p. 172).
relationship. The influence of Kierkegaard on both Marcel and Buber is striking. Buber also holds that God is nonobjectifiable reality; He is realised through personal relationship and cannot be grasped through definite concepts. As Buber puts it, God is a reality to be addressed and not to be expressed.\footnote{44} Any concept of God excludes the Thou and makes Him an It (objective reality). Buber distinguishes the I-Thou relationship from that of the I-It ('It' can be replaced by 'He' or 'She'). The I-It according to Buber, is an impersonal and an abstract type of relationship; the other person is seen from outside. The word I-It as Buber states, \textit{"can never be spoken with the whole being"}\footnote{45} because this kind of knowledge is independent of the observer. I-Thou relationship on the other hand is the personal direct immediate relationship;\footnote{46} the whole personality

\footnote{44}{\textit{...} God is the Being that is directly, most nearly, and lastingly, over against me, that may properly only be addressed, not expressed.} (Martin Buber: \textit{I and Thou}, translated by Ronald Gregor Smith, Edinburgh, New York, 1958, pp. 80-81).

\footnote{45}{Ibid., p. 3.}

\footnote{46}{Ibid., p. 11: \textit{The relation to the Thou is direct. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between I and Thou.}}

And \textit{Ibid.}, p. 4: \textit{When Thou is spoken, the speaker has no thing for his object. For where there is a thing there is another thing. Every It is bounded by others; It exists only through being bounded by others. But when Thou is spoken, there is no thing. Thou has no bounds."}
of the individual is involved in it: "The primary word I-Thou can be spoken only with the whole being." Buber further says:

"Just as the melody is not made up of notes nor the verse of words nor the statue of lines, but they must be tugged and dragged till their unity has been scattered into these many pieces, so with the man to whom I say Thou. I can take out from him the colour of his hair, or of his speech, or of his goodness. I must continually do this. But each time I do it he ceases to be Thou."48

In I-Thou relationship I is completely involved and responds fully to the other person. This is what Buber calls "a personal meeting", the personal is based on the experience of Thou, having the immediate knowledge of the whole man. The individual is fully involved in the present; and the relation of cause and effect cannot be applied to the "personal meeting".50

Buber concludes therefore that man-God relationship is of I-Thou sort; God is above all objective knowledge; the idea of God includes Thou and excludes It. To

47Ibid., p. 11.
48Ibid., pp. 8-9.
49Ibid., p. 12.
50Ibid., p. 9: "So long as the heaven of Thou is spread out over me the wind of causality cover at my heels, and the whirlpool of fate stays its course."
quote Buber:

"The eternal Thou can by its nature not become It; for by its nature it cannot be established in measure and bounds, not even in the measure of the immeasurable, or the bounds of boundless being; for by its very nature it cannot be understood as a sum of qualities not even as an infinite sum of qualities raised to a transcendental level; for it can be found neither in nor out of the world; for it cannot be experienced, or thought; for we miss Him, Him who is, if we say 'I believe that He is' — 'He' is also a metaphor, but 'Thou' is not."

In all these three thinkers the underlying idea is that the religious individual does not think or conceptualise about God but rather 'addresses' Him directly and in a personal manner as 'Thou'. This is what is meant by saying that I-Thou relationship to God, takes us above the inauthentic conception of Him as an objective reality. The idea of God cannot therefore be made the object of any argument or of an inference. The categories of logic and epistemology cannot be applied to religious experience. A scientist uses deductive or inductive reasoning to establish or refute the truth of

51Ibid., p. 112.
a proposition. He has a definite procedure, a technique of verification and methods to test a hypothesis. As religious experience is non-discursive but direct and personal knowledge, these procedures are irrelevant. Moreover, these procedures are objective in the sense of being neutral and universal, whereas religious experience is unique, individual and non-shareable and even incommunicable; and as such, the latter is not verifiable. Thus Kierkegaard's criticism of a rationalistic philosophy as failing to recognise the distinctive nature of religious experience is justified, because such an analysis of religious experience (though practised by the so-called natural theologians even in the twentieth century — for example by the late A.N. Whitehead and the late J. Alexander) would make it objective, naturalistic and highly artificial. God is not an object that can be discovered outside me and analysed and classified as such.

After considering Kierkegaard's views on religious experience as pivoting around the personal relation between the individual and God, the significance of religious experience for the individual and his freedom may now be considered with reference to Kierkegaard. As we have already seen, pure thinking detached from experience and life cannot give us knowledge of God's existence, and unlike the classical proofs for the existence of God,
the source of religious knowledge is to be found in the realm of a concrete authentic experience. Kierkegaard says, subjective certainty or faith as 'the highest passion in the sphere of human subjectivity' is a sufficient condition for religious knowledge. If God is to be found at all, it is not certainly in the objective world but through the inwardness of man. God is revealed in man's inward experience — in 'the indescribable emotions of the heart'. Scientific knowledge may have to be objective, but not religious experience, which is to be realised in the sense of subjective certitude of religious reality and truth. Kierkegaard shows the inappropriateness of objective methods for an analysis of religious experience. For objective method can give us only an approximate knowledge

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52"For one may have known a thing many times and acknowledged it, one may have willed a thing many times and attempted it, and yet it is only by the deep inward movements, only by the indescribable emotions of the heart, that for the first time you are convinced that what you have known belongs to you, that no power can take it from you..." (S. Kierkegaard: Either/Or, Vol. II, p. 294).

53"That very instant he has God, not by virtue of any objective deliberation, but by virtue of the infinite passion on inwardness... God is precisely that which one takes a tout prix, which in the understanding of passion constitutes the true inward relationship to God." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 179).
of reality, it cannot give us a true reality.\(^5^4\) The religious issue is a matter of the passionate inwardness of the individual. This point is stressed again and again by Kierkegaard.\(^5^5\) As it has been quoted before that for Kierkegaard, "... God is a subject, and therefore exists only for subjectivity in inwardness."\(^5^6\)

In contrast to reason, God is realised through faith in the highest intensity of inwardness.\(^5^7\) Faith is equated with objective uncertainty,\(^5^8\) and it cannot

\(^5^4\)Ibid., p. 179: "Now when the problem is to reckon up on which side there is some truth, whether on the side of one who seeks the true God objectively, and pursues the approximate truth of the God-idea; or on the side of one who, driven by the infinite passion of his need of God..."

And Ibid., p. 102.

\(^5^5\)Ibid., p. 132: "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual."

\(^5^6\)Ibid., p. 178.

\(^5^7\)Cf. "The self that affirms the truth of this paradoxical affirmation in the passionate subjectivity of faith maximises the tensions sustained in its imagination and maximises its inwardness. Thus, by the same process whereby he enters into an authentic relation to Christian truth the individual achieves his most authentic selfhood..." (Malcolm L. Diamond: "Kierkegaard and Apologetics" in The Journal of Religion, April 1964, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, p. 129).

\(^5^8\)"Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and
be expressed by means of a doctrine. Religious truth must be passionately affirmed in the objective uncertainty i.e., appropriation to faith. "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual." And Kierkegaard adds, "... the above definition is equivalent expression for faith." Although the notion of faith will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, it may be observed here that this notion is an integral aspect of Kierkegaardian criterion of religious truth, which is understood in terms of objective uncertainty, inwardness, subjectivity and passion. If one treats God as an objective certainty the objective uncertainty. If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 182).

59 Ibid., p. 182.
60 Ibid., p. 182.
61 Ibid., p. 188: "When Socrates believed that there was a God, he held fast the objective uncertainty with the whole passion of his inwardness, and it is precisely in this contradiction and in this task, that faith is rooted. Now it is otherwise. Instead of the objective uncertainty, there is here a certainty, namely, that objectively it is absurd; and this absurdity, held fast in the passion of inwardness, is faith."
like any 'thing' or 'object' in the world, then the personal relationship to God could be absent. Merely to reflect on or ponder over God is to degrade Him; that is why it is maintained that the passion of inwardness which is God's reality, is an objective uncertainty properly confronted by man. 62

Kierkegaard further believes that the meaning of human existence is incomplete without God. It is man's relationship with God that makes him an authentic individual. 63 Therefore Kierkegaard calls religious

62"For if to thee God's Word is merely a doctrine, an impersonal, objective something, then there is no mirror for an objective doctrine cannot be called a mirror; and it is just as impossible to be mirrored in an objective doctrine as to be mirrored in a wall. And if thou dost assume an impersonal (objective) relationship to God's Word, there can be no question of beholding thyself in a mirror; for to look in a mirror surely implies a personality, an ego; a wall can be seen in a mirror but cannot see itself or behold itself in the mirror. No, in reading God's Word thou must continually say to thyself, 'It is to me this is addressed, it is about me it speaks.' (S. Kierkegaard: For Self-examination and Judge for Yourselves! translated by Walter Lowrie, Princeton, 1944, p. 68).

63"Essentially it is God-relationship that makes a man a man." (S. Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 219).

Cf. "Before God to be oneself— for the accent rests upon 'before God', since this is the source and origin of all individuality." (S. Kierkegaard: Works of Love, translated by Edna and Howard Hong, New York, 1962, p. 253).

Cf. "For the knowledge of God is the most decisive factor in every human life, and without this knowledge,
stage as the highest stage in the life of man. The authentic individual confronts God in a unique and an exclusive manner.

"To come to oneself in self-knowledge, and before God. For if self-knowledge does not lead to knowing oneself before God, then indeed there is something in what the merely human view says, that it leads to a certain emptiness which produces dizziness. Only by being before God can a man entirely come to himself in the transparency of sobriety." 64

To sum up, the nature of God-man relationship is characterised by inwardness. Man's relationship to God is personal and subjective. The analogy given by Kierkegaard to explain this relation is picturesque. He says that the relationship of God-man is that of man-neighbour. 65 It is expressed by the second personal

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64 S. Kierkegaard: For Self-examination and Judge for Yourselves!, p. 122.

pronoun 'thou' than by the third 'he' or 'it'. Man confronts God in a passionate manner analogous to that in which man addresses his own neighbour as 'thou'. In short, the purely subjective nature of religious experience could be summed up in Kierkegaard's own words: "All religiousness consists in inwardness, in enthusiasm, in strong emotion, in the qualitative tension by the springs of subjectivity." 66

At this point, the contrast between the theology of Kierkegaard and that of recent theologian Albert Schweitzer may be considered. Indeed the contrast is so striking that it cannot be ignored from the perview of the present work. In opposition to Kierkegaard's unique, subjective, personal notion of faith, Schweitzer's faith is a rational faith. Schweitzer's philosophy has been characterised as one of "subjective idealism" which holds that 'essence precedes existence." 67 For him there are objective values and norms. It has been stated that Schweitzer's philosophy is an attempt to put authentic experiences into 'an ordered pattern of meaning' which is considered to be valid for all men. 68

66 Kierkegaard: On Authority and Revelation, p. 155.
68 Ibid., p. 142.
than an arbitrary leap into the darkness of a senseless existence, in which any view of one's self is as valid and as absurd as any other."

Schweitzer maintains that God cannot be apprehended or realised in an abstract way, but he does not believe in any direct personal way of realising Him. He conceives of God as an 'Ethical Personality' as well as cosmic Will-to-Live. It is only living in the world that the individual experiences God inwardly. Schweitzer calls his theology as 'ethical mysticism'. The individual realises God in identification with all that lives—animals, plants and people and he further emphasises that this is the only way of 'meeting' God:

"There is no Essence of Being, but only infinite Being in infinite manifestations. It is only

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69 Ibid., p. 142.

70 The Essence of Being, the Absolute, the Spirit of the Universe, and all similar expressions denote nothing actual, but something conceived in abstractions which for that reason is also absolutely unimaginable. The only reality is the Being which manifests itself in phenomena". (Albert Schweitzer: Civilisation and Ethics, London, 1949, p. 237).

71 Ibid., p. xviii: Preface "From an inner necessity, I exert myself in producing values and practising ethics in the world and on the world even though I do not understand the meaning of the world. For in world-and life-affirmation and in ethics I carry out the will of the universal will-to-live which reveals itself in me. I live my life in God, in the mysterious divine personality which I do not know as such in the world, but only experience as mysterious Will within myself."

72 Schweitzer's 'ethical mysticism' is different from what he calls 'pure God-mysticism' (The Mysticism
through the manifestations of Being, and only through those with which I enter into relations, that my being has any intercourse with infinite Being. The devotion of my being to infinite Being means devotion of my being to all the manifestations of Being which need my devotion, to which I am able to devote myself. 73

For Schweitzer the meaning of life lies in the will-to-live, which stands as the 'only manifestation of the divine source'. He explains his 'concept' of God as the mysterious 'ethical mysticism' which he calls 'reverence for life' — which is originated in the fact that people have will-to-live. 74 Unlike Kierkegaard, of Paul and Apostles). 'Pure God-mysticism' is direct becoming-one with God; which Schweitzer considers as intellectual and not ethical.

73 Albert Schweitzer: Civilization and Ethics, p. 238.

74 Ibid., p. 241: "All true knowledge passes on into experience. The nature of the manifestation I do not know, but I form a conception of it in analogy to the will-to-live which is within myself. Thus my knowledge of the world becomes experience of the world. The knowledge which is becoming experience does not allow me to remain in the face of the world a man who merely knows, but forces upon me an inward relation to the world, and fills me with reverence for the mysterious will-to-live which is in all things."

And Ibid., p. xvii: Preface, "'From an inner compulsion to be true to itself and to remain consistent with itself, our will-to-live enters into relations with our own individual being, and with all manifestations of the will-to-live which surround it; that are determined by the sentiment of reverence for life!'"
Schweitzer places ethics above religion. Ethics according to Schweitzer must be rooted in Being-itself and 'genuine ethics' becomes ethical mysticism. Ethical thought for him is not concerned with an ethical interpretation of the world, it is not abstract thinking; it is cosmical and mystical. In the words of Schweitzer: "The origin of ethics is that I think out the full meaning of the world-affirmation which, together with the life-affirmation in my will-to-live, is given by nature, and try to make it a reality."  

Schweitzer criticises the Cartesian starting-point, 'I think therefore I exist', as it is to abstract:

"It never finds the right approach to ethics, and remains entangled in a dead world-and life-view. True philosophy must start from the most immediate and comprehensive fact of consciousness, which says, 'I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life which wills to live'.... A mysticism of ethical union with Being grows out

75Ibid., p. 240.

And Ibid., p. 240: Ethical thought "... must seek to conceive all the self-devotion which rules in ethics as a manifestation of an inward, spiritual relation to the world... must remain elemental, understanding self-devotion to the world to be self-devotion of human life to every form of living being with which it can come into relation."
Ethics, according to Schweitzer has its origin in the mystical basic moral principle which aims at preserving and promoting all kinds of life.\textsuperscript{77}

Thus for Schweitzer God is to be found inside men.\textsuperscript{78} Like Kierkegaard, Schweitzer holds that God cannot be viewed speculatively but he radically differs from Kierkegaard because he does not believe in any unique, personal religious experience which is non-shareable. Kierkegaard takes a negative attitude towards the world; for him God is realised by the individual as a single, solitary self by transcending the world, by breaking up the ties of the world and the people, man attains the highest individuality. On the other hand,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{76}Ibid., p. 242.
  \item \textsuperscript{77}Ibid., p. 243: "A man is truly ethical only when he obeys the compulsion to help all life which he is able to assist, and shrinks from injuring anything that lives. He does not ask how far this or that life deserves one's sympathy as being valuable, nor, beyond that, whether and to what degree it is capable of feeling. Life as such is sacred to him."
  \item \textsuperscript{78}Cf. "... we cannot apprehend and therefore cannot believe in any God outside of Being. For him (Schweitzer) God is the mysterious force that manifests itself in us as will-to-live. If we obey the call implanted in us, we will help to fulfil the purpose of life which is to promote 'the kingdom of God'." (Gabriel Langfeldt: \textit{Albert Schweitzer}, London, 1960, pp. 47-48).
\end{itemize}
Schweitzer holds a positive approach towards life, society and the world; indeed the only way of realising or experiencing God is through 'world-and life-affirmation'. God is realised through living in the world, in communion with the fellow-beings. Authentic religious experience for Schweitzer must originate from one's contact with life. Kierkegaard's approach to the religious problem, on the other hand, is asocial and amoral. This is evident from his relegation of the ethical stage to a secondary position in comparison to the religious stage.