

## Chapter-III

### The Concept of Meaning of Suffering in 'Either/Or'

#### 3.1. Introduction

Suffering is one of the existential modes of human existence which gives meaning to their lives. It is already mentioned in the second chapter that suffering is the highest subjective truth which can be realized only in religious stage of life. Søren Kierkegaard has divided the life of an individual into three stages on the basis of the capability of experiencing the highest subjective truth (suffering). 'Either/Or' is a very important work of Kierkegaard where he has given an detail analysis of the ability of understanding suffering in different stages of life. Human being has to suffer as a result of their action. Result of action is related with the decision of choice of the individual. It is only the individual who is responsible for what she/he chooses. In the very act of choosing, the individual has to pass through 'either/or' option. She/he has to decide either to do or not to do. This very act of choosing is difficult for individual, especially for real choice. According to Kierkegaard, we are suffered because of our inability to choose the real. In his book 'Either/Or', he has put forward an analysis of the very act of choice and how it is different in every stage of life of an individual. The three stages of life, the aesthetic, the ethical and religious shows us different life approach and this differentiation arises primarily because the incapability of choosing the real one. According to Kierkegaard, in the first two stages, aesthetic and ethical, the individual failed to make a definite choice which is different from the religious stage. For him, religious stage is the highest stage where individual can make real choice and can understand the highest subjective truth.

The book 'Either/Or' discussed these three stages of life and difficulty of understanding the highest subjective truth in aesthetic and ethical stages.

In short we can say, 'Either/Or' typically exemplifies Kierkegaard's indirect approach. He presents the different stages of life in a highly imaginative and compassionate way that allows us to 'step inside' and see various contrasting perspectives on existence. In 'Either/Or', he shows "the medium of various pseudonyms, the life-views are allowed to 'speak for themselves', leaving the reader to draw his or her own conclusions"<sup>1</sup>. Actually Kierkegaard's intention is to encourage readers to look at themselves honestly and to see in the text 'Either/ Or' as a reflection of their own lives, as the expression of a set of values in comparison with other values that might offer a more satisfying and fulfilling existence. First of all let me give a very brief summary of 'Either/ Or'.

### **3.2. Historical Background of 'Either/Or'**

'Either/Or' is the first writings through which Kierkegaard has begun his authorship. Previously, Kierkegaard has written his dissertation on '*The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*' during his student life. Actually he has written this dissertation in order to submit to the competent authority for the fulfillment of the requirements for his University degree. After submission, he planned to spend the winter season in Berlin. The aim of his visit was to attend the lectures programmed of F.W. Schelling. At that time Schelling was known as the most eminent and reversed philosopher in Germany. His lectures were on "Philosophy and Revelation" and this engrossed an audience of enthusiasts from all over Europe including many young

revolutionaries like Michael Bakunin and Friedrich Engels. Among them, Søren Kierkegaard's curious mind had a great expectation from Schelling.

But, ultimately Schelling seems to have disappointed everybody. Regarding this lecture, Karl Marx had captured, "the mood of the moment when he accused him of having no topic except 'I Schelling', and derided his claim to have transcended and reconciled flesh and idea, body and mind, philosophy and theology and every other dualism"<sup>2</sup>. According to Marx, Schelling's whole lecture was an attempt for uniting philosophy with diplomacy.

It is to be noteworthy that Schelling's lecture also failed to fulfill Kierkegaard's expectations. Schelling's lectures were so boring. Kierkegaard was also disappointed and deeply unimpressed with his lecture. He himself thought that Schelling's lecture was nothing but unbearable nonsense. Thus, Kierkegaard said about Schelling's lecture as, "I am too old to listen to lectures and ....Schelling too old to give them...Schelling is a most insignificant man to look at- he looks like a tax collector"<sup>3</sup>.

Apart from Schelling's lecture, Kierkegaard has attended many other boring lectures in order to keep himself busy in Berlin. And as a result of dissatisfaction or disappointment, he was motivated or inspired to think himself and consequently able to discover his own potentialities, imposed in his curious mind. After realizing his great potentialities, he had given up his former attitude and adopted a purely literary style which is neither academic nor expository. It has grown purely from his inner self. As a result, he was able to be found in himself his own style which had reflected in his

curious mind as an inspiration to put together a work of fiction or a pure invention which he planned to call 'Either/Or.'

It is to be notified that before coming to Berlin on October 25, 1841 he published his dissertation '*The Concept of Irony*'. In October 31, 1841 he had written a letter from Berlin to his old friend Emil Boesen that, "I have much to think about and am suffering from a monstrous productivity block. I have as yet no occasion to let its *nisis* (persistent pressure) wear off...."<sup>4</sup>. But on January 6, 1842, he had reported to Boesen that "I am working hard. So that you may see that I am the same, I shall tell you that I have again written a major section of a piece, 'Either/Or'. It has not gone quickly, but that is due to its not being an expository work, but one of pure invention, which in a very special way demands that one be in the mood"<sup>5</sup>.

Before the journey to Berlin, Kierkegaard had written a draft of Judge William's '*The Esthetic Validity of Marriage*'. It is the first piece of part II in 'Either/Or'. His second piece in part II and most of part I was written afterward in Berlin and Copenhagen. In February 1842, he wrote to Boesen that "It is absolutely imperative that I return to Copenhagen this spring. For either I shall finish 'Either/Or' by spring, or I shall never finish it. The title is approximately that which you know. I hope you will keep this between us. Anonymity is of the utmost importance to me...."<sup>6</sup>.

It is a fact that though 'Either/Or' is one of the major works of Kierkegaard, he has written only the manuscript of this book in March, 1842. Victor Eremita (the editor of this book) has combined some other strong clues with this manuscript of Kierkegaard and published it under the title of 'Either/Or' in February, 1843. The important thing is that

Kierkegaard's name is not mentioned anywhere in this book. This book is described or known as "Edited Victor Eremita".

Although only a few journal entries from earlier writing were used as '*Diapsalmata*' in 'Either/Or', but these writings are nevertheless present in tone and substance. The sardonic irony of Mr. 'A', especially in '*Diapsalmata*' and 'Rotation of Crops', exposes the tone of a '*Faustian doubter*' and represents the irony of despairing aestheticism in contrast to what is called 'Irony as a Controlled Element. The truth of Irony is found in 'The Concept of Irony'. On the other hand, the Seducer's Diary" is a specific example of the romantic individualism discussed in Irony. Rather, it is a particularized delineation of what Friedrich Schlegel calls life as 'a work of art' or an '*airy dance*'.

Soren Kierkegaard has been used first time the title phrase 'Either/Or' in Irony in its Latin form '*aut/aut*'. But, the Danish form is found in later as he remarked as, "I am without authority, only a poet- but oddly enough around here, even on the street, I go by the name 'Either/Or'"<sup>7</sup>. The meaning of the title, 'Either/Or' is a disjunction which means the negation of both the alternatives at the same time while 'both' is the reconciliation and acceptance of the contradictions. Kierkegaard stands for 'Either/Or', while Hegel and other system-builders propound the philosophy of 'both'. According to Hegel, a system is complete when thesis and antithesis are reconciled in synthesis. So long as thesis and antithesis remain in contradiction, there is tension and a state of equilibrium can never be reached. The dialectical movement must continue as by force till it reaches equilibrium which is a result of synthesis or acceptance of both. But according to Kierkegaard, such a system leaves no choice, no freedom and no scope for

the growth of self-hood. In 'Either/Or', he stated that life as it exists, consists not in equilibrium of synthesis but in a forward-going movement of choosing self-contradictory alternatives which cannot be reconciled. Hence, Kierkegaard's 'Either/Or' means truly existing. In other words, we can say it means freely choosing, deciding, taking risks and responsibilities and thus moving towards realization of the possibilities of self-hood.

It is to be noteworthy that for Kierkegaard, 'Either/Or' means true existence. That means inward existence and this existential inwardness involves various elements of 'Either/Or', such as,

The aesthetic and the ethical, immediacy and reflection, the individual and the universally human, time and eternity, history as a given and the gaining of a personal history, the momentary and the moment, existential dialectic, the use of freedom, erotic love and ethical love, living eclectic, the use of freedom, living poetically and living responsibly, despair and hope, possibility and actuality, choosing, immanence and transcendence, the inner and the outer, concealment and openness, imagination and actuality thought and actuality, knowledge and action<sup>8</sup>.

The manuscript of 'Either/Or' lies in the relation between esthetic productivity as the beginning and the religious as the goal. This book is divided into two parts, aesthetic and ethical. The first part deals with aesthetic and second part deal with ethical. Kierkegaard thinks that an aesthete who lives as a natural man has no choice since she/he is not free to choose pain or pleasure at will. She/he lives '*eterno modo*', which means that she/he must always choose pleasure and avoid pain. If she/he were free to choose,

she/he would have chosen pain also which she/he does not do. Hence, the aesthete has no freedom of choice, she/he does not live at the level of 'either/or'.

On the other hand, the ethical man in choosing virtue and rejecting vice acts on a principle which has eternal validity. The moral principles are said to be eternal and unchanging. But here, Kierkegaard asks question, '*is ethical man truly free to make his own choice?*'. If she/he were so free, then she/he could have chosen evil as well as virtue. But, she/he chooses only virtue. Therefore, to her/him 'either/or' does not exist.

This book 'Either/Or' is the core of key to the understanding of Kierkegaard's thought which says about the absent of self of man and established that there is only responsibility. It is only realized in free choices. Actually, 'Either/ Or' really means the exercise of free choice by an existing individual. In this regard Kierkegaard says, "If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power but for the passionate sense of the potential, for the eye, which ever young and ardent sees the possible. Pleasure, disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is so sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating, as possibility"<sup>9</sup>. A soul without passion is something that has lost its possibility and potentiality.

### **3.3. Philosophical Significance of Either/ Or**

From the philosophical point of view, this book has a great significance. The most important significance of this book, which is concerned with its historical background, is the cultivation of our inward potentialities imposed in our curious mind is possible through self- understanding and reflecting thinking. And self-understanding and reflecting thinking grow as a result of dissatisfaction of the existing order of thing.

Initially, 'Either/Or' was a plan that come into existence as a result of Kierkegaard's invention of his own inward potentialities. And through this book, indirectly Kierkegaard wants to show us that self-understanding and critical thinking are very much important to know our inward capacities. That inwardness is called by Kierkegaard as subjectivity. For him truth is subjective which means that it is an inward realization.

### **3.4. Significance of 'Either/Or'**

In relation to my research topic, entitled, *'The Concept of Suffering in the Existentialist thought of Søren Kierkegaard'*, this book has a vital significance. For Kierkegaard, every individual has to pass through the stages, aesthetic, ethical and religious. For Kierkegaard, religious stage is the highest stage. Suffering as a highest subjective truth can be realized only in this highest stage (religious). Here, a question may rise, *'why is it not possible to realize the highest subjective truth in aesthetic and ethical stage?'*. This means there are some difficulties because of which we are not able to be realizing the highest subjective truth in either stage. A detail analysis of these difficulties are clearly mentioned in Kierkegaard's book 'Either/Or' as well as a detail elucidation of these three spheres of human existence is found in this book. Before going to discuss these difficulties of aesthetic and ethical mode of existence, we have to give a brief summary of 'Either/ Or'.

### **3.5. A Brief Summary of 'Either/Or'**

Søren Kierkegaard published 'Either/Or', a nearly eight- hundred paged book written during a several month visit to Berlin. The work was published pseudonymously consisted of two volumes of papers. The Editor Victor Eremita had brought these two



volumes, published the first volume by an aesthete (A) and the second volume by an ethicist (B, Judge William). The first and second volume of 'Either/ Or' consists of some essays which can be presented with the approximate dates as follows,

**Vol. I:**

Preface (November, 1842)

Diapsalmata (November, 1842)

The Immediate Erotic Stages or the Musical Erotic (completed June 13, 1842)

The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic in Modern Drama (completed January 30, 1842),

Silhousetters (completed July 25, 1842)

The First Love (December, 1841- January, 1842)

The Unhappiest One (after March 6, 1842),

Rotation in Crops (Before March 6, 1842)

The Seducer's Diary (January- April 14, 1842)

**Vo. II:**

The Esthetic Validity of Marriage (completed by December 7, 1841)

The Balance between the Esthetic and the Ethical (August- September, 1842)

Last World (written after May 6, 1842)

**3.5.1. 'Either/ Or' and the aesthetic**

In the first volume of 'Either/Or', Kierkegaard described the life of an aesthetic individual. He presents the aesthetic 'A' not as person but as a representative of aesthetic personality. Here, she/he becomes what she/he immediately is. In view of the identity of the aesthetic with the immediate, one might expect her/him to be a sensual man whose

aim is the direct satisfaction of what she/he wants. For Kierkegaard, aesthetic 'A' lives for pleasure. And yet 'A' is disillusioned enough to know that no human life can live on the strength of impulse alone. Kierkegaard says, "No man turns and lives with animals, for the turning would imply a prior disengagement from the unconscious mass of beasthood. The placid and self-contained innocence of the brute is a dream of the poet, not the situation of man"<sup>10</sup>. In this stage of immediacy, desire and gratification are presented as the main preoccupation of her/his life, but not as 'A's life.

Kierkegaard has stated that 'A' is a fervid admirer of *Mozart's Don Juan*. In his essay, *The Immediate Stages of the Erotic or the Musical Erotic*, he praises *Mozart's opera* as a perfect work of art what he calls 'Classic and Immortal' on the grounds that it realizes a total fusion of form of content. In *Jon Duan*, "as 'A' hears it, the musical form is so happily and inseparably wedded to the passionate content that together they body forth sexual desire in its immediacy"<sup>11</sup>. *Jon Duan's* sensuality is purely undifferentiated desire. His passion is a 'force of nature' that is un-riven by reflection and undisturbed by moral misgivings. *Mozart's* music is the artistic analogue of this passion, an aural energy not yet articulated into the intelligible forms of speech. Here, 'A' finds immediacy that is immediately presented. The content of immediacy is interfusing and interfused by immediate form. In this, it can be said that "exquisite *alchemy* art (reflection) is nature (the immediate)"<sup>12</sup>.

Yet there is ambiguity in this achievement. *Don Juan* is after all art. It is to art that one must go if he wants to find the immediate given in its immediacy. Actually, *Don Juan* could never happen in real life because pure immediacy cannot be experienced as

the content of an actual life. It can only be savored as fantasy. In 'A's analysis of *Don Juan*, she/he is fascinated by the *Don* because it is the pure presentation of a pure type.

We have already stated that 'A' is the seeker of pleasure and enjoyment. But, the secret of enjoyment is neither to do nothing nor to do anything with all one's way. Rather, the secret is to do everything in such a way that one rigorously avoids all commitments. Actually, the art of living is neither an impossible self denial but one kind of self- discipline.

Kierkegaard in his essay '*The Rotation Method*' stated that self discipline is a technique for maximizing pleasure and minimizing boredom. Boredom is the main cause of all suffering and evil that exists from the beginning of the world. The story of Abraham is the best example here. All people are boring. In this essay, Kierkegaard has given a brief explanation of boredom. The term 'boredom' itself shows the possibility of a subdivision. 'Boring' can describe a person who bores other persons as well as one who bores herself/himself. The people who bore others are the *plebeians*, the mass, and the endless train of humanity in general. On the other hand, those who bore themselves are the *elect*, the *nobility*. The strangest thing is that those who don't get bored themselves usually bore others, while those who do bore themselves amuse others. The people who do not bore themselves are generally those who are busy in the world in one way or another. But that is just because they are the most boring, the most insufferable people. Actually when boredom reaches its zenith, then people more profoundly bore themselves and can offer others a means of more powerful diversion.

It is to be noteworthy that the artful hedonist rotates her/his pleasure. But at the end, she/he must be prepared to allow any or all of her/his desires to lay her/his fallows at

any time and it lead to the state of despair. It is to be observed that “it is impossible to live artistically before one has made up one’s mind to abandon hope; for hope precludes self- limitation. Hope exposes the hopeful to the possibility of frustration. Therefore, walk circumspectly that you may forget the unsettling at will and redeem the tedious with recollection”<sup>13</sup>. There are two paths which come together to compose the clear desperation that shields the aesthete forever from the threat of the future. One is the art of remembering or recollection which is the imaginative revision of a delightful past and another is the art of forgetting, it is sidestep by which one diverts him from the path of a disgruntling present. Here, it can be stated that

One who has perfected himself in the twin arts of remembering and forgetting is in a position to play at battledore and shuttlecock with the whole of existence....The art of remembering and forgetting will also insure against sticking fast in some relationship of life, and make possible the realization of a complete freedom<sup>14</sup>.

Generally, all human beings want to forget when they come across something unpleasant. And at that time, they are trying to forget by uttering, *‘if only I could forget’*. But, forgetting is an art that must be practiced beforehand. Actually, being able to not remember depends always on how one keep in mind. But, how one remembers depends on how one experiences reality. The person who deeply attach with the momentum of hope will remember in a way that makes her/him unable to forget. It is to be stated that

Nil admirari (wonder at nothing) is therefore the real wisdom of life. Every life situation must possess no more importance than that one can forget it whenever one wants to; each single life- situation should have

enough importance, however for one to be able at any time to remember it<sup>15</sup>.

The most rememberable and forgetful moment of life is our childhood that one remembers more poetically and also forgets more easily. Actually, remembering poetically is just an expression for forgetfulness. Here, what was experienced has already undergone a change in which it has lost all that was painful. To remember in this way, one should be cautious how one lives, particularly how one enjoys. In this regard, if one enjoys without reservation to the last or if one always takes with one the most that pleasure can offer then one will be unable either to remember or to forget. As a result, one has nothing else to remember than an excess one wants to forget. So, according to Kierkegaard, when one is being carried away by enjoyment or a life situation too strongly then she/he has to stop for a moment and remember.

In the first part of 'Either/ Or', the essay 'Rotation Method' describes the aesthete's character of enjoyment which is ignored in other essays. For example, the other essays such as, the heavy sadness that palls the *'Diapsalmata'*, and the fascination with death and dereliction in essays like *'Shadowgraphs'*, *'The Ancient Tragical Motif as Reflected in the Modern'* and *'The Unhappiest Man'*. These essays regarded death as the greatest happiness for us. In the essay *'The Unhappiest Man'*, Kierkegaard affirmed that the most unhappy man in the world is that who absents herself/himself from experience, whose hope and memory are equally vain because her/his future is already past in anticipation and her/his past forever imminent in recollection. Kierkegaard stated that "the unhappiest, the happiest I ought to say, for this is indeed a gift of the gods which no

one can give himself”<sup>16</sup>. Paradoxically speaking, the unhappiest man is the happiest man whose life and death is the aesthete himself.

The holy mystery of aestheticism is that everything, even misfortune and death, can be enjoyed. Though death is the supreme fulfillment of the greatest delight of life, yet she/he does not commit suicide. She/he must suffer and become the unhappiest and the most fulfilled man in life. In possibility, Kierkegaard liked to say, everything is possible. In the grace of possibility, the aesthete consumes her/his god and enters into her/his beatitude. According to Kierkegaard, “the aesthete’s communion with life is a foretaste of death. His beatitude- prefigured already in his initial retreat from life and now perfected in his tragic *necrolatry*- is *melancholy*”<sup>17</sup>. ‘*Melancholy*’ is the ultimate and only consistent form of aesthetic enjoyment. Actually, the art of living is the art of enjoying despair. In this regard, Kierkegaard said that “I say sorrow what the Englishman says of his house: My sorrow is my castle. Many people look upon having sorrow as one of life’s conveniences”<sup>18</sup>. According to Kierkegaard, aesthetic ‘A’ is a real man, an existential possibility. An aesthete exists in her/his poetry and poetizes her/his existence. To call her/him ‘aesthete’ is to acknowledge the hypostatic union of immediacy and freedom where art is incarnate in life and life is redeemed in art.

At the end of the first part of ‘Either/ Or’, Kierkegaard added the ‘*Diary of Seducer*’ which is a record of a seduction. This essay begins with a short introduction, supposedly by ‘A’, in which ‘A’ describes how he came in possession of the ‘Diary’. This introduction concludes with three letters that ‘*Cordelia*’ is said to have written to *Johannes* and which she/he is said to have returned unopened. This Diary itself is made up of entries relating to the seduction and letters of ‘*Cordelia*’.

In this essay, the seducer believes in the possibility of total surrender only because she/he is dreaming. This same belief leads him to think that once the seduction has been accomplished, the girl ceases to be interesting. Given his project, the seducer would seem to find a suitable subject. The girl, '*Cordelia*' has lost her parents. She is an isolated figure, has relatively few friends and luckily has not been corrupted by constantly having been surrounded by girls of her own age. This is what Kierkegaard seems to think the worst possible thing that can happen to a young girl. According to Kierkegaard, although the seducer (*Johannes*) does not want permanent relationships with other human beings, he yet needs other human beings. He does not want to be alone, he wants communication. But, he wants communication on his own terms. And thus his dialogue inevitably degenerates into a monologue as he is once more alone. In such a monologue Kierkegaard writes,

My *Cordelia*, You know that I very much like to talk with myself. I have found in myself the most interesting person among my acquaintances. At times, I have feared that I would come to lack material for these conversations; now I have no fear, for now I have you. I shall talk with myself about you now and for all eternity, about the most interesting subject with the most interesting person – ah, I am only the most interesting person, you the most interesting subject<sup>19</sup>.

So, here *Cordelia* is only the occasion for a monologue. Precisely because of this, the seduction lacks a sense of reality. And as a result this makes the seduction less interesting than it should be. The seducer is not struggling, not confronting with another

person. Such a struggle would be inexhaustible. But, what she/he confronts is a figment of her/his own poetic imagination.

Seduction, as *Johannes* (the seducer) understands it, is not the act of defloration and nor does it presuppose an excessive concern with sex. To seduce a woman means with no force but with much art to secure the free capitulation of her mind to yours. It is to be easier to understand *Johannes* the seducer if we compare the character with *Don Juan*. The *Don Juan* is sensually pure and simple, to exclusion of intellect. *Johannes* is an intellect that can become sensual at will. We can say *Don Juan* is a seducer in the sense that who will enjoy not the satisfaction of desire, but the 'deception', the 'cunning' and the method of seduction. On the other hand, *Johannes* is this reflective of *Don Juan* whose pleasure is the seducing and not the rewards of seduction. Seduction is a kind of *poiesis* worked in the medium of woman's sexuality. *Johannes* sees himself as an artist, a *poetizer* of girls.

Actually, *Johannes* the seducer is a persona, not a person. Just as pure sensuality (*Don Juan*) is possible only in art, similarly, pure reflection (*Johannes*, the seducer) is also possible. Neither *Don Juan* nor *Johannes* is a possibility that can be actualized. But they are rather the ideal position of the aesthetic life, which 'A' alone and ambiguously lives. In *Don Juan*, art is impossibly submerged in life. But in *Johannes*, life is impossibly lost for the sake of art.

With '*The Seducer's Diary*' Kierkegaard wanted to show from within that the aesthetic project had to be a failure. As we have said, this project is essentially a project to live life as work of art. The work of art is understood here as what its teleology within itself has. This conception is inherited by Kierkegaard from Immanuel Kant. To live



aesthetically is to make the individual the sole author of her/his life. Kant asserts that, 'aesthetic pleasure disinterested'. By that determination, Kant places aesthetic experience in opposition to both moral interest and interest in sensuous satisfaction which are parts of our being as embodied selves. Interest, as Kant understands, is always interest in the reality of something. In this sense, both sexual and moral desires are interested. Both presuppose the reality of the world. But this sense of reality is denied by the aesthetic project of Kierkegaard.

The main root of the inadequacy of the aesthetic life is its failure to do justice to the sensuous on the one hand and to the moral on the other. To be aesthetic, in Kierkegaard's sense, the human being must negate or theologically suspend the sensuous and the moral within herself/ himself. Because both threaten the kind of freedom on which the aesthete insists. The main point of aesthetic project is that the individual can endow her/his existence with meaning. Kierkegaard casts doubt on the project itself by showing how unsatisfactory a life based on this premise has to be. Another failure of the aesthetic project is found in the commencement of the *'Diary'* itself. Kierkegaard says,

I can think of nothing more tormenting than a scheming mind that loses the thread and then directs all its keenness against itself as the conscience awakens and it becomes a matter of rescuing himself from this perplexity. The many exists from his foxhole are futile; the instant his troubled soul already thinks it sees daylight filtering in, it turns out to be a new entrance, and thus, like panic-stricken wild game, pursued by despair, he is continually seeking an exit, and continually finding an entrance through which he goes back into himself<sup>20</sup>.

So, the aesthete remains buried within her/him. She/he finds no outside. In the 'Diary', Kierkegaard stated that the seducer is the highly reflective individual who wants to become self-sufficient. This project must lead to self-alienation and thus to despair. Although there are so many negativity in the aesthetic project but the positive thing is that inwardness is necessary to become full human being. It teaches us that before we can really give ourselves, we must gain possession of ourselves.

### **3.5.2. 'Either/ Or' and the ethical**

In the second part of 'Either/Or', Kierkegaard puts the character of *Judge William* who deny in her/his first letter to aesthetic 'A' and tries to defend the aesthetic validity of marriage. The *Judge* claims that, even given A's concern for the aesthetic, one can defend the validity of marriage and this she/he sets out to do so. In this regard, Kierkegaard stated that "there are two things that I must regard as my particular task: to show the aesthetic meaning of marriage and to show the aesthetic in it may be retained despite life's numerous hindrances"<sup>21</sup>.

The Judge letter begins with a critical sketch of the aesthetic life, as exemplified by A's mode of existence. The charge made by the *Judge* is that the aesthetic life loses reality. Here, Kierkegaard writes,

What you prefer is first infatuation. You know how to sink down and hide in a dreaming, love drunk....You completely envelop yourself, as it were, in the sheerest cobweb and then sit in wait. But, you are not a child, not an awakening consciousness, and therefore your look has another meaning; but you are satisfied with it. You love the accidental. A smile from a pretty

girl is an interesting situation, a stolen glance that is what is hunting for, and that is a motif for your aimless fantasy<sup>22</sup>.

Moreover, the *Judge* has blamed 'A' for making life into an experiment. She/he asked about that the point of this experiment. Enjoyment should justify itself. Making life into an experiment, 'A' lets it disintegrate into a collection of interesting situations. Rather than have a fate, 'A' wants to be fate and rejects every faith where we should not think right away of faith in God. He also forgets that we have faith in another person or faith in our vocation. Truly speaking, in each case faith is tied to a commitment. By accusing 'A' of a lack of faith, the *Judge* accuses her/him of being uncommitted. She/he lacks seriousness and lives in the subjunctive. The Judge says,

We are astonished to see a clown whose joints are so loose that all the restraints of a man's gait and posture are annulled. You are like that in an intellectual sense; you can just as well stand on your head as on your feet. Everything is possible for you, and you can surprise yourself and others with this possibility, but it is unhealthy, and for your own peace of mind, I beg you to watch out that which is an advantage to you end up becoming a curse. Any man who has a conviction cannot at his pleasure turn himself and everything to psy-turvy in this way<sup>23</sup>.

The judge rejected 'A's view on marriage and love. For 'A', marriage is opposed to be the immediacy of love. Actually, they are fallen in love but do not marry or they do not love but get married. Regarding the concept of marriage, the *Judge* argues that marriage is compatible with romantic love. Kierkegaard says, "The first thing I have to do is to orient myself and especially in the defining characteristics of what a marriage is.

Obviously, the real constituting element, the substance is love- or if you want to give it a more specific emphasis erotic love”<sup>24</sup>. But, the *Judge* goes on to say that marriage requires more than love. Actually, marriage has an ethical and religious aspect that erotic love does not have. For that reason, according to the *Judge*, marriage is based on resignation which erotic love does not have. If we say that the only reason for marriage is love then it means that we get married because of love. But, love is an unconditional commitment to accept and be open towards the other. For this reason, there can be no condition that could arise and justify a one-sided breaking of the commitment. But, sometimes marriage breaks down. And such a break down on this view always involves a moral failure.

Like Kierkegaard, the *Judge* stated that a life that sees sensual pleasure, as the aesthete does, is only an instrument of pleasure that fails to do justice to the whole human being. Marriage expresses a commitment to a future that extends beyond the lives of the individuals. It signifies the responsibility towards the family. But the aesthete wants to avoid this responsibility because they are threatened by a loss of independence. Moreover, the aesthetic life, as the *Judge* understands it, always running away from freedom of choice. The aesthete considers freedom as a burden she/he would like to shed. In the essay *‘The Balance between Aesthetic and Ethical’*, the *Judge* speaks of the significance of ‘Either/Or’ to stress the importance of choice. To really choose is to face an ‘either/or’. Challenging ‘A’ the *Judge* points out that; the act of choosing is the proper expression of the ethical. Kierkegaard writes,

With that you have chosen- not, of course, as you yourself will probably acknowledge, the better part; but you have not actually chosen at all, or

you have chosen in a figurative sense. Your choice is an esthetic choice. On the whole, to choose is an intrinsic and stringent term for the ethical. Wherever in the stricter sense there is a question of an 'either/or', one can always be sure that the ethical has something to do with it. The only absolute 'either/or' is the choice between good and evil, but this is also absolutely ethical<sup>25</sup>.

An ethical action is decided on in full awareness of the alternative or of the possibility to do otherwise. To choose is to limit one, to rule out one's certain possibilities which just give the choice its weights. Actually, choice consolidates the person. Someone who acts without really facing the renunciation involved in every real choice and without asking himself 'why not this, why that' is not really choosing. Such a person cannot be ethical. This does not mean that she/he is therefore immoral because immoral falls are also under the category of the ethical. Here, a question may arise about why 'A's unwillingness to face up to choice does not involve something like choice. *'Is it not something willed?'* When the *Judge* confronts 'A' with his 'either/or', he stated that aesthetic 'A' can choose to become ethical. We have known that the aesthetic life is a play with possibilities. It has to avoid every genuine 'either/or'. Actually, the aesthetic 'A' does not want to have chosen and understood it as a threat to freedom.

In Kierkegaard's essay *'Last World'*, we found the story of Abraham. Here, Abraham has to decide or to choose either God's demand or to choose the responsibility towards his son. From the ethical point of view, the decision of sacrifice of his son is like a murder. But, if we go to a further step, then we see that Abraham has faith in God and get ready to sacrifice. Kierkegaard's telling is that Abraham's story indicates faith and

reason. Actually in the second part of 'Either/Or', the understanding of faith makes an appearance in the final section which bears the title '*The Last World*'.

The last essay is, '*The Upbuilding that lays in the thought that in relation to God: We are always in the wrong*' which belongs to the essay '*Last World*'. But, this raises questions like '*Why should in relation to God, we are always in the wrong be upbuilding or edifying?*'. Or, '*what does it mean to say that in relation to God we are always in the wrong?*'. Kierkegaard says,

We think the wise and better way to act is to admit that we are in the wrong if we actually are in the wrong; we then say that the pain that accompanies the admission will be like a bitter medicine that will heal, but we do not conceal that it is pain to be in the wrong, a pain to admit it. We suffer the pain because we know that it is to our good; we trust that sometime we shall succeed in making a more energetic resistance and may reach the point of really being in the wrong only in very rare instances.

This point of view is very natural and obvious to everyone<sup>26</sup>.

Generally, we speak of being in the wrong in a way that presupposes that we not only can be, but often are and should strive to be in the right. But, here being in the right and being in the wrong are not the thought in relation to God, but in everyday familiar terms. Generally, we feel good when we know that we are indeed in the right. It is part of feeling at home in our world. The first part of the statement of this essay is easy to understand. It edifies us to think that we are doing what duty demands. Our good conscience brings with it a joy and peace that is not disturbed by the nastiness of the world. It is to be observed that,

In this view there is a satisfaction, a joy, that presumably every one of us has tasted, and when you continue to suffer wrong, you are built up by the thought that you are in the right. This view is so natural, so understandable, so frequently tested in life, and yet it is not with this that we want to calm doubt and to heal care, but by deliberating upon the up building that lies in the thought that we are always in the wrong<sup>27</sup>.

On the other hand, the second part of the statement that ‘we always, in the future as well as in the past, are in the wrong’ asserts that ‘being in the wrong’ is not to be understood as the result of some particular mistake. But, the question is ‘*what could this mean?*’. Or, ‘*Does it mean that the human being is always in the wrong just because he is a human being?*’.

Generally, to be in the right about something is to understand it. To understand something is to be in some sense on top of the matter under discussion. To really understand one is to be master and possessor of oneself. But we human beings, as Kierkegaard said, are in principle not the masters of reality, not of nature or not of ourselves. So, we are always in the wrong. But the question is, ‘*how can the recognition of that be edifying?*’. For example, “imagine yourself arguing with someone. In such cases your desire to be in the right is a desire to be on top. You want to win the argument, want to prove your superiority. The desire to be in the right is here born out of pride”<sup>28</sup>. In such cases the desire to be right is understandable, all too human perhaps, but not at all edifying. Again, if we look at this example, we can find that if the argument of the person is with someone that you really love then, ‘*would you still want to be right?*’. If it is so, then it will become a love contest, a fencing match, somewhat in the way in which the

Seducer sees his relationship with *Cordelia*. But, genuine love cannot desire a victory that would render the relationship of the lovers asymmetrical. Kierkegaard says,

You would wish that you might be the wrong; you would try to find something that could speak in his defense, and if you did not find it, you would find rest only in the thought that you were the wrong. Or, if you were assigned the responsibility for such a person's welfare, you would do everything in your power, and when the person nevertheless paid no attention to it and only caused you trouble, is it not true that you would make an accounting and say: I know I have done right by him?- Oh, no; if you loved him, this thought would only alarm you; you would reach for every probability, and if you found none, you would tear up the accounting in order to help you forget it, and you would build yourself up with the thought that you were in the wrong<sup>29</sup>.

The statement 'being in the wrong' is to be understood if we make clear distinction between love of an individual and love of God. If the person's argument is in favor of the person that she/he loved then she/he would be in a continual contradiction because she/he knows she/he was right and wished to believe that she/he was in the wrong. On the other hand, if the person was God that she/he loved then there would be no contradiction. It is to be stated that "God...who is in heaven be greater than you who live on earth; would not his wealth be more superabundant than your measure, his wisdom more profound than your cleverness, his holiness greater than your righteousness".<sup>30</sup>



### **3.6. The Three Levels of Human Existence**

Kierkegaard describes humans as living on one or more of three different planes of existence, 'the aesthetic', followed by 'the ethical' and finally 'the religious'. Each of these three spheres corresponds to a different lifestyle. Sometimes he calls these spheres as 'the stages on life's way' and at other times he calls them as 'spheres of existence'. Each different mode of existence has its source in a corresponding state of consciousness that determines the particular outlook or 'world view' responsible for the values, ideals, motivations and behavior of that mode of existence. They are 'stages' in the sense that what Kierkegaard is presenting can be seen as a developmental theory of human existence.

It is to be noteworthy that when a person continues to evolve in consciousness, then there tends to be a progression from the aesthetic to the ethical and then onwards to the religious stage. There is also a hierarchical arrangement within each sphere as some humans will express a particular mode of existence in an undeveloped manner and on the other hand, others are exemplary of more evolved versions of that way of life. Since the development through the stages of existence has a spiritual character. It is not automatic, like physical growth, but requires a conscious choice by the individual. Therefore, these different stages can also be viewed as self-contained spheres in which a person might spend their entire life. However, very few individuals fall entirely within just one category. Those who were living according to the ethical way of life naturally enjoy values of the aesthetic domain. But, they are not ruled by their desire for pleasure. Similarly, the religious mode of consciousness includes both the ethical and aesthetic spheres but their religious values are dominant.

According to Kierkegaard, the person who is living in the aesthetic sphere has based her/his existence upon an individual searching for personal satisfaction or fulfillment that depends entirely upon external contingencies of the everyday world which means they are confined to the dimension of existence- the finite world of form. He also views that ethical way of life as being confined to only one dimension of the everyday world, but this time personal fulfillment is sought through one's inner development, as part of a group which is based upon devoted commitment to family, friends and the values of social institutions. Kierkegaard stated that both these ways of life ultimately leads to an experience of despair that stems from a structural dysfunctional relationship within the self. It can be said that, "neither way of life is worthy of a person's total commitment because only a two –dimensional life- religious life- which embraces both the finite and the infinite aspect of our existence, encompasses the full scope of human potential"<sup>31</sup>.

For Kierkegaard, the aesthetic way of life is quite obviously based upon direct personal experience. In contrast to the ethical and religious spheres of existence, the aesthetic outlook on life does not provide a person with any stable sense of identity or self. Instead it alienates humans from selfhood. It is also the sphere which the majority of people occupy. This is why Kierkegaard devoted a great deal of his writing to identifying, describing and prescribing existential remedies for this way of life. Kierkegaard closely examines the aesthetic and the ethical sphere in his work 'Either/Or' and his discussion of the core of the religious sphere is most fully covered in 'Fear and Trembling'.

As we have known that Kierkegaard divided the life of an individual in to three stages on the basis of the capacity of experiencing the highest subjective truth. For him,

suffering is the highest subjective truth and this can be realized only in religious stage of life. This proves that there must be some difficulties for experiencing the highest subjective truth in aesthetic and ethical stage. Now, the question arises, '*what are these difficulties?*'. Before going to examine the difficulties it is necessary to know in details about the aesthetic and the ethical levels of existence.

### **3.6.1. The aesthetic level of existence**

At the aesthetic level of existence, the individual are concerned with pleasure, amusement and stimulation. They seek only the sensuous surface of things and think of other people simply as interesting objects. Kierkegaard describes the aesthetic personality of man. Actually, traditionally, the word 'aesthetic' has come to mean, "pertaining to beauty and fine arts, but in Kierkegaard, it remains its etymological sense of 'aesthesis' which implies sense-perception"<sup>32</sup>. For him, it is one of the dimensions of existence. He stated that the aesthete in a man is that by which she/he immediately is what she/he is. It is nature itself which is immediate. And what is immediate is existence without mediation of any kind, without reflection, without restraint or constraint, without choosing and commitment. Here, one's behavior is governed by her/his senses.

At this stage, one is purely dominated by desire. The identification with desire is so strong that one virtually confounds herself/himself with the sense- impression. Moreover, here one is fully determined by desire or by sensuous inclination. In fact, there is no exercise of freedom. Pleasure and pain are dominant categories in this mode of life. Life is governed by desire and guided by the principle of pleasure. For Kierkegaard, desire is a complex phenomenon that he subjects to make a detailed examination. He argues that

there can be no desire in the proper sense of the word unless there is a distinction between desire and what is desired. Kierkegaard writes,

This impulse with which desire awakens, this trembling, separates the desire and its object, affords desire an object. This is a dialectical qualification that must be kept sharply in mind- only when the object exists does desire exist, only when the desire exist does the object exist, desire and its object are twins, and neither is born a fraction of an instant before the other.<sup>33</sup>

This distinction between desire and the object of desire emerges only gradually. As a matter of fact, it is just the lack of a clear distinction between these two factors that is the primary feature of the first stage of the immediate aesthetic. Kierkegaard uses here three of Mozart's musical compositions to indicate each of the three stages of the immediate aesthetic. In order, they are, *Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, and *Don Juan*<sup>34</sup>. At the aesthetic stage, desire is not properly determined as desire. But, as Kierkegaard holds that at this stage 'desire is dreaming'.

Kierkegaard considers the aesthetic part as 'A'. So, 'A' of the first part of 'Either/Or' is a representative of aesthetic personality. According to him, aesthetic mode of existence is the seeking of sensuality without meditation. He says, "his passion is a force of nature, un-riven by reflection and undisturbed by moral misgivings"<sup>35</sup>. An aesthetic 'A' is a pleasure seeker. Pleasure consists in getting it constantly, in having it in one's own way and also undisturbed. But, it does not mean that the aim of a pleasure seeker is to get direct satisfaction of her/his urge because no life is lived on the strength of impulse alone.

Kierkegaard in '*Diapsalmata*' and '*The Immediate Sages of the Erotic or the Musical Erotic*' compares different methods of seeking pleasure and enjoying arts. Finally, he decides that pleasure or happiness consists not in what we enjoy, but in having our own way. This shows how Kierkegaard pleads for the individual freedom of choice even in having pleasure.

It is to be notified that a true pleasure seeker will never like the termination in attaining it. It should keep the seeker always anxious for it. It should be a continuous satisfying process, but the 'want' should not be fulfilled because the very moment of attaining satisfaction, creates indifference. So, there are only two ways to keep him always engaged. First one is keeping oneself dissatisfied. Sensuality is immediate, but it dies the very moment while it is enjoyed. Therefore, sensuality is fleeting and momentary. The very logic of immediacy is that if one desires immediacy, then that immediacy should become eternal. This is possible only through art. Art gives to immediacy an eternal form. Art is the transfiguration of nature by self-consciousness. Man cannot attain to the condition of nature; therefore he will aspire to the condition of art. According to Kierkegaard, therefore, at the aesthetic level of existence man cares for sensuality as it is embodied in art. The individual leads the life of artistic enjoyment.

The second way is called by Kierkegaard as '*rotation method*'. The artful hedonist rotates her/his pleasure as the farmer rotates her/his crops. No continuous sensuality without break can yield pleasure. Kierkegaard's rotation method is the rotation of leisure and pleasure. To him, the essence of rotation method is the dialectical circle of withdrawal and return.

Kierkegaard thinks that the essence of pleasure does not lie in the thing enjoyed but in the accompanying consciousness. It means no pleasure is possible in the bondage of choice, even freedom of having 'my own way is denied to me'. The concept of freedom is regarded as the first and foremost necessity even of aesthetic stage. According to Kierkegaard, for man, the condition of all pleasure is having in her/his own way. And in order to enjoy, it is necessary to care about nothing and enjoy everything. Therefore, Kierkegaard thinks that all choice leads to regret. If you choose or decide to marry, you regret; if you do not decide or choose to marry, you regret. Thus, to enjoy is to choose. According to Kierkegaard, "no decisions, no regrets; no actions, no consequences. The path to free enjoyment is the way of '*doke for niente*'"<sup>36</sup>.

It is to be noteworthy that if one chooses to do nothing or something, then also there is regret. Therefore, the only way to enjoy pleasure is a total abandon or 'let yourself go'. But even this can lead to regrets. Therefore, Kierkegaard comes to the conclusion that some kind of self discipline is necessary to enjoy. In this regard, it can be said that pure immediacy cannot be experienced as the content of an actual life; it can only be savored by fantasy. This kind of similar concept is also found in Indian philosophy that the seeker tries to get the utmost satisfaction through different methods. But as the seeker goes deeper and deeper, the lust for pleasure becomes more and more intense. It cannot be satisfied. It can only be whetted.

Thus, the continuous longing and dissatisfaction leaves the aesthete in frustration. Kierkegaard says that the seeker must abandon hope and live in frustration. A life of frustration can save the aesthetic man from the threat of the future. In order to realize

freedom in full, it is necessary that she/he should be free from the future and free from hope.

According to Kierkegaard, no method can provide the pure delight which an aesthete can desire. To him, death is the greatest event of life. Otherwise, all pleasure is dead as it is born. There are well known insects which die in the moment of fecundation. So, it is with all joy that life's supreme and richest moment of pleasure is coupled with death. So, for Kierkegaard, death is delight. Death is for us the greatest happiness. Reality aesthetically conceived is death.

The aesthete is always engaged in getting pleasure and shuns pain, boredom and finally despairs. Kierkegaard in 'Either/Or' portrays the perfect picture of an aesthete. To call him 'Aesthete' is to acknowledge the hypostatic union of immediacy and freedom where art is incarnated in life and life is emancipated in art. The aesthetic can have rare intellectual gifts, rihimagnatio, ingenuity and spirit. But, if we try to determine the significance of this outlook of aesthete, we shall find it to be a dread of boredom. However, boredom is the subjective counterpart of the regularity which exemplifies factual actuality. It can be stated that,

Boredom is the root of all evil, no wonders, then, that the world goes backwards, and that evil spreads. This can be traced back to the very beginning of the world the gods were bored, therefore they created human beings. Adam was bored because he was alone, therefore Eve was created. Since that moment, boredom entered the world and grew in quantity in exact proportion to the growth of the population. Adam was bored alone, then Adam and Eve were bored together, then Adam and Eve and Cain

and Abel were bored *en famille*. After that, the population of the world increased and the nations were bored *en masse*<sup>37</sup>.

To overcome from boredom the aesthete develops what Kierkegaard calls '*the rotation method*' which allows one to create one's own personalized world of pleasure. This requires avoiding all commitments including love, marriage and even friendship. It is to be observed that, "one does unusual things like attending the theatre, but only the middle of the play. One reads only the third section of a book, one irritates sensitive people and one falls in love but only with the idea of the lover, so that if anything happens to this person, one would not be affected"<sup>38</sup>. In other words, we can say that here one remains merely a spectator and manipulator of life which will allow one to remain free and to escape boredom. But this brings the aesthete in a state of desperate despair.

The aesthetiker even avoids the ties of friendship because friendship involves a certain stability of relation. Kierkegaard says, "Companionship has its aesthetic companionships, but friendship is a task. He also avoids marriage. Permanence and fidelity horrify him"<sup>39</sup>. Here, too many personal whims have to be sacrificed. The aesthetiker is quite capable of giving everything, but he cannot sacrifice whole lifetime for one woman. Actually, the marriage relationship not only solidifies the relation between the person herself/himself and another person, but also solidifies her/his relation to the race. The aesthetic life can manifest itself in contempt or a rejection of enjoyment. The negative and indifferent attitudes towards pleasure are merely variations of the aesthetic outlook.

It is to be noteworthy that Kierkegaard's criterion of existence implies the degree to which the thinker tries to live in her/his thought as well as the degree to which she/he



attempts to actualize its potentialities. But the aesthetic level of existence lacks several elements that are necessary for the true exemplification of the highest level of existence. In other words, the highest subjective truth cannot be realized in this level of existence. That means there must be some difficulties. Now the question is, '*what are these difficulties?*'.

### **3.6.1.1. Difficulties**

It is to be stated that the Kierkegaard's criterion of existence on this aesthetic level of existence demands a level which is more often from actuality to potentiality than vice-versa. In this regard, the inherent capability is very possibly to be furnished by imagination and fancy. But, the problem arises when the individual concerns herself/himself with the task of transforming her/his own factual existence in accordance with a norm. Interestingly, this is lacking here because the reflection leads away rather than toward the subject. The individual's task is to flee tasks, a flight which gives witness to the ubiquity of his actuality and the task which it posits<sup>40</sup>.

The aesthetic individual tries to avoid self-continuity by avoiding of which would require continued activity on her/his part. Here, boredom becomes again a spectator to the reality of the continuity which she/he tries to escape earlier. We can say that this dread of continuity is, at the same time, a dread of meaning. And for meaning, it points to permanence. Hence, the individual avoids the all questions regarding what she/he herself/himself means and what her/his activity means.

It is already mentioned above that the aesthetic individual avoids continuity. Because of that, she/he is incapable of self-commitment. That means, in other words, she/he is not capable of dedicating the self to a given task. As self-commitment is

essential for a real choice, the aesthetic never really does choose. It is true that she/he selects from among a wealth possibilities, but in the end, she/he admits that it makes very little different what she/he chosen. Actually the aesthete allows her/him to be driven and looses herself/himself in possibilities. She/he runs away from one profession to another and from one person to another. The aesthete never puts herself/himself forcefully into a position where she/he has to make option for living. For aesthete, to arrive at this position, she/he would signify an attention to her/his own actuality and a reflection on self which would involve a rejection of the whole view of life what Kierkegaard calls *Lebensanschauung*. To reflect on enjoyment the aesthete has to dull its zest.

### **3.6.2. The ethical mode of existence**

The ethical sphere of life requires a person who takes a more active role in the shaping of her/his self and manner of living. Kierkegaard describes this as ‘choosing oneself’. In the ethical existence, the individual’s inner world becomes of greater importance than her/his outer existence. He or she seeks self- knowledge and struggles to become a better human being, an ideal self. The fundamental distinction that Kierkegaard makes between the aesthetic and ethical ways of life is that the former is ‘outer’, contingent, inconsistent and self- dissipating. On the other hand, the later is ‘inner’, necessary, consistent and self- creating. The core idea of Kierkegaard’s conception of ‘ethical self- choice’ is that a person must assume full responsibility for all aspects of her/his life. To do this, it requires detachment that allows her/him to break identification with her/his ‘given’ self whilst accepting that she/he possesses an autonomous will and freedom of choice.

Man chooses, thinks and feels in every level of existence; but in ethical level, she/he chooses, thinks and feels in a way that differentiates her/him qualitatively from the individual what she/he was on the predominantly aesthetic level. This difference consists in the way that the individual maintains a tension between herself/himself as essence and herself/himself as existence through concrete self- reflection. Unity of self implies this tension and one can achieve this unity through choice and the achievement is in proportion to the earnestness with which the choice is made in a given situation. Choice is thus the strictest expression of the ethical level. Here, it is to be noteworthy that whenever we find genuine choice, we also find earnestness. It is to be stated that,

Choice is serious, because danger is in the offing....the danger being that the moment in which there is an opportunity for choice will be gone before we ourselves make the choice. Life goes on whatever we choose or not. Life is just as the vessel continues to plough through the water while the steersman is deliberating as to which way to move the helm<sup>41</sup>.

For ethical thinker, the moment of choice becomes infinitely important and earnest. But, the aesthete does not characterize by this earnestness and importance. At the time of choosing, the aesthete either reacts immediately in obedience to impulse or loses herself/himself in reflecting on a multiplicity of possibilities.

In general, choice is something that one is called to act one way or another in where we find the individual in a disturbing dialectic. If choice is real then the individual must crawl within herself/himself and cut loose from everything which may be independent of her/his willing. But at the same time, we immediately see the impossibility of this demand. For our very choice, it is to determine our relations to something which we do

not will or posit, such as, our environment, our fellow men, or even our own habits and tendencies. So, if we want real choice, then choice demands from the individual the completest isolation and relation and this demand sets up the tension of ethical existence. This tension creates some difficulties or obstacles in the individual for realizing one's actual existence because of which the ethical person remains unable to understand or realizing the highest subjective truth. The question is, '*What are those obstacles or difficulties?*'.

### **3.6.2.1. Difficulties**

The first point of difficulty is only in isolation, we are free to make real choice. When we have chosen something then our choice must be real. Real choosing brings into prominence the notion of responsibility. But, attempt to avoid responsibility implies the connection between the notion and concrete choice. This point can be best elaborate with an example of 'Legislator'. The example is, "in substance the Legislator says: true the act was accomplished through my agency, but it was not I, who chose, but rather my constituents, or the safety of the people etc"<sup>42</sup>. This example shows that the Legislator wants to deny what she/he chose as an individual because she/he was afraid of that she/he can be blamed if she/he takes the responsibility of what she/he chose. But if she/he admits that she/he acted as an individual then she/he is isolated herself/himself from all ties, that is, constitution, expediency, family, friends, feelings or tendencies and so on.

It can be stated that the act of isolation is very necessary for true choice and responsibility. Because at the time when an individual become isolated, only then she/he can claim that she/he is free. The most important thing is that at the time of isolation, there must be nothing to compel choice. Rather it is the individual which becomes

Absolute through her/his own choice, not the Absolute which chooses through the individual.

The second point of difficulty is the relativity of choice. When we are talking about concrete choice then it becomes obvious that choice without content is meaningless. Content involves a step beyond the pure autonomy. But, if there is complete autonomy with respect to the object as well as the act of choosing, then there would be no room for choice, since everything would be posited by the individual. When we have tried to point out the fact that the real choice in the nature of radical decision, it points to an element in the choice situation which is in some sense alien to the autonomy of the choosing individual.

The third point of difficulty is that the dialectic of choice produces tension. One can choose what is already there. Otherwise, one should be creative rather choosing. But to accept the given as such is not choosing either. The real act of choice is not creation. It is not creation if we attend to the external aspect of choice. In general, it is always relative to some need or purpose. However, there is a creation in true choice, viz., the creation of free being which would not be if someone did not choose. In real choice, someone can choose freedom and also can choose it absolutely. But to choose absolutely is to choose that which can be in a self- relation. And concretely, this is the free human self.

Generally, it is very credible to speak of choosing myself as free. But, thereby the meaning will be coming into a proposition; *I choose to choose to choose*. But certainly the problem does not pose itself so simply. Here, we have to determine more specifically that, *'how is the self chosen absolutely?'*. This can be explained with a suitable example. For an example, one man, named, Tom Jones and he choose himself. That means he

becomes responsible for himself. But the question is, 'what is the self that Tom Jones chooses?'. Or, 'what constitutes Tom Jones as Tom Jones?'. If we characterize the person 'Tom Jones' then it will be like, Tom Jones is a particular register of time in the language of Bergson, i.e., he is a section of history. He is a mass of tendencies, motives, traits and habits. He is at once a man, a citizen, a husband, a father, an uncle and a lodge member. He is a nest of relations and determinations and this is his self. If Tom Jones is to choose himself, he must choose all these. But the question is, 'what else is there for him to choose?'. In other words, when we ask for the content of the self, we find the aesthetic in man. That is men as given. Then the self to be chosen is the factual or empirical self. At this point, the question arises, if in genuine choice I assume responsibility for my choice, *'how can I become responsible for what is 'given' to me?'*. Now, here an existential problem arises. The task before me is to either accept or reject myself.

Generally, the whole point to freedom, choice and responsibility lies in the possibility of radical difference. But in ethical level, such a difference arises in the very act of choice. It is to be observed that, "For in my choosing and my rejecting I act upon the ultimate difference between good and evil"<sup>43</sup>. In ethical act, good and evil are directions of self- determination rather than any quality of the objects chosen. Thus, the good is posited in the act of choice. So, in such an act, the individual is committing herself/himself to a certain mode of existence diametrically opposed to the direction indicated by not choosing. In brief, we can say, the decision to choose places the individual under ethical categories, viz., the categories of good and evil.

As we have seen that the tension which resulted from the dialectic of choice is exemplified in the contrast between the inner and outer act. To keep freedom in the

genuine sense, the accent must be placed on the good will. On the other hand, without some content we lapse into a mere formalism. Kierkegaard brings the possible accusation of formalism in two ways,

(a) In the first place he tries to show that the really good will can will only the good.

(b) Furthermore, he maintains that this good will's good is a relation to a highest good, which he calls '*ewige Seligkeit*'.

We have already determined that the absolute choice is the choice of the self. Now, it remains to show how this self is to be chosen, only then it comes into relation with the highest good. This question was mentioned above in the form of an existential problem which demanded the simultaneous acceptance and rejection of the self. According to Kierkegaard, we can solve this problem by choosing the self in repentance. Now, the question is, 'what do you mean by choice in repentance?'. The self that the individual chooses is her/his concrete and determinate self. In doing so, she/he accepts responsibility for it. But this very acceptance is the witness to the fact that there is something in that which is chosen. This chosen is not wholly good and if it had depended on the will of the given individual, might have been otherwise.

Choosing in repentance is the ethical task for existence on the ethical level. It unites in itself the noetic task of knowing the self which is chosen and the activity of transforming this factual existence in accordance with a norm. Here, this norm is the good will or freedom and there is a task because there are obstacles to its fulfillment, as it witnessed by the tension in which the personality finds itself.

Thus, repentance is the acknowledgement of the norm and the commitment of the personality to the achievement of that norm. The result of this activity is a new self. This

self is qualitatively different from the self abandoned in repentance. It can be said that, “just as the Gamin becomes a different boy after adoption by respectable, responsible agents, so the aesthetic self alters when accepted in repentance”<sup>44</sup>. It must be noted that this new self was not, but became through the act of choice. Yet, in some way it must have been, otherwise it could not have become. It had the non- being which is not sheer non- being. Rather, it is the non- being of possibility which accrues to what- ought- to be. It is the kind of non- being which participates in every process of real becoming.

For Kierkegaard, becoming ethical is not synonymous with choosing to be a good person. Rather, it is a commitment to being a person. The first ethical act for an ethicist is to give oneself a defined identity or at least considering whether or not one will. According to Kierkegaard, people who are not performing this act are not complete persons. He says, “to confront the ‘either/or’, which separates the aesthetic from the ethical is to bring into existence a self whose essential characteristics can be fixed by a decision”<sup>45</sup>. Kierkegaard claimed that this confrontation itself is an ethical task. He has brought the ethical sphere of existence in the realm of transitional. It is not an end- in- itself. The individual has to go beyond this stage to the religious which is the highest stage. In Kierkegaard’s language, we can say that the individual has to take a leap from the ethical to the religious.

### **3.6.3. Religious level of existence- the highest level**

At this religious stage, the individual’s choice is completely unique and personal. Unlike ethical, she/he tears up the moral codes in order to achieve a religious end. This is what Kierkegaard calls the teleological suspension of the ethical. It is because at this stage, the universal moral rules cannot solve the problems of existence. To explain this



situation, Kierkegaard brings the famous Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac and this story is found in his book 'Fear and Trembling'. Here, Abraham has moral duty towards his son and on the other hand, he has to fulfill God's demand. There is a momentous clash between the universal values and the individual choice. In this story, Abraham rises above the universal moral norms and becomes ready to sacrifice his son and by doing this he has reached the religious stage.

In the ethical sphere, the sacrifice of his son by Abraham would be regarded as murder, but it is not so at the religious stage. If we observe it from the ethical point of view, then we see that father owes a moral duty to his son to love him and violation of the universal moral duty would be regarded as murder. But the point is that the individual cannot pass from the ethical stage to the religious stage through rational process of mediation but through the 'leap of faith'. This 'leap to faith' is possible only in religious stage.

According to Kierkegaard, when someone truly acknowledges the truth of their stance towards existence, then they will realize the contradiction between the way they exist in their innermost soul and their failure to express this outwardly. This contradiction leads to a state of 'ethical despair'. But, if they can have a leap to faith then it will become the religious outlook on existence. Kierkegaard discloses a fundamentally important limitation of the ethical viewpoint which is evidenced in situations where the demands of religious faith and ethical duty collide. He has examines this collision as it exemplified in the story of Abraham and Isaac in his book 'Fear and Trembling'. In this story of Abraham, faith is the deciding factor. His use of this biblical story is like an explosion that utterly demolishing the view that ethics is the ultimate standard by which

one should live. On the other hand, for faith, the single individual and the human will take precedence over social morality and human reason.

The religious way of life is characterized by an awareness in which the individual realizes the impossibility of truly fulfilling the ideals of the ethical way of life. In 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript', Kierkegaard has distinguished two forms of religious experience. One is immanent religion which he calls as 'religiousness A'. Here, the individual strives to relate God and resolve the problem of guilt by relying exclusively upon one's natural 'immanent' idea of God. And another one is transcendent religion which he calls as 'religiousness B' where one accepts that God is incarnated as a human being for the purpose of establishing a relationship with humans. Kierkegaard regarded Christianity as 'religiousness B' which is a transcendent religion based upon revelation rather than an immanent religion. Only here, an individual can accept the 'leap to faith'. The 'leap to faith' is very essential because the truth of the revelation that forms the basis of Christianity cannot be rationally demonstrated. It is because the incarnation of an infinite God in the finite form of man is a paradox that transcends all human reason. He holds that the former can be attained through self-examination. He says, "this is the stage reached by Socrates, who achieved awareness of a transcendent good, but could say nothing about it. 'Religion B' goes beyond Socrates, for it gives man the nature of the Beyond through the Christian revelation grasped in faith"<sup>46</sup>.

So for Kierkegaard, genuinely the religious person is someone who has utterly understood that the relative values from our finite worldly existence should never become our life's purpose. Actually, worldly ambition guarantees an inner sense of emptiness. They have understood their utter dependence upon and nothingness in the face of the

eternal force that created them. The religious person has knowledge of maintain the 'balancing act' simultaneously an absolute relation to the Eternal or Absolute and a relative to worldly life. In the religious sphere of existence, the aim of the individual is not to deny worldly life but to put in its rightful place.

When an individual has truly established a relation to the eternal aspect of existence, then it will signify that their life becomes transformed by it. That person is not a religious believer, but a religious exister. Actually, their way of life is testimony to this fact, for they live in the truth. But, there is also a life of 'objective uncertainty'. Because the validity of the genuine religious life cannot be rationally proven or justified, this ultimately leads to a life based upon and rooted in faith. According to Kierkegaard, the decisive mark of the religious state of consciousness is the awareness of total indebtedness to the eternal that we owe ourselves to and are rightly owned by the eternal. Any other primary value is mere self- deception which is double- mindedness. Here, it is to be stated that, "two wills, one that desires the world and the other – which one tries to ignore- that desires the infinite. But, purity of heart is to will one thing- to have one goal, which in this case is the Eternal"<sup>47</sup>.

However, one cannot make the Eternal focus of one's life in order to improve one's position in the world. For Kierkegaard, 'Eternity' is an 'either/or' choice. This means that all human relations are subordinate to the Eternal. One interacts with the world as an individual, even though she/he inwardly detached from the crowd, always conscious of one's primary responsibility to the Eternal as an individual who stands before the Eternal. According to Kierkegaard, man is not 'eternally responsible' for the achievements as well as any breakdown of her/his life. But, without exception, she/he is

eternally responsible for the kind of means she/he uses. Kierkegaard argues that the moral behavior of a religious person is not due to self-disciplined adherence to social morality, but rather it is the natural consequence of their moral character which she/he derives from their inwardness as an individual conscious of the Eternal. To sin, according to Kierkegaard, is to avoid intentionally one's calling to the Eternal. He asserts that consciousness of sin makes the 'infinite qualitative difference' clearer between man and the Eternal. The religious life what Kierkegaard regarded as the 'call of the infinite' acts as a constant reminder that the laws and customs of any people are finite. Worldly values are one-dimensional, but humans are not. We are a synthesis of the finite and the infinite or eternal. Now, let's discuss the two forms of religious experience which helps us to explain the individual's relation to the highest good (God).

#### **3.6.3.1. Religiousness A (Immanent Religion)**

It is to be worth mentioning that every genuine act of self-commitment, such as choice, involves a relation to the highest good. The highest good, as much as we come to it through a unified will, is the connecting link between the ethical and religious forms of existence. Every genuine ethical act has a relation to this highest good. But, in so far as it transcends all finite existence, this relation will take the form of a divine relation.

In general, when we are trying to formulate the existential expression of man's relation to a highest good, then we are really in the midst of the traditional problem of relating the finite and the infinite. Indeed, Kierkegaard's whole discussion of 'Religiousness A' can be regarded as an application of the distinction made by medieval among the terms, 'finite in its own kind', 'infinite in its own kind' and the 'absolute infinite'.

The important point is that 'to be finite or infinite' means to be comparable and comparability involves membership within a class. This means that to be finite is to have some points of similarity with other things. Therefore, everything permitting description may be called 'finite in its own kind'. On the other hand, 'infinite in its own kind' is connected to that which is the super relative degree of comparison. It is unique within its class. But, it does not have any infinite attributes nor is any of these attributes infinite.

'Absolute infinite' refers to exclusion from the universe of the finite and consequently from determination and description. It implies uniqueness and incomparability. In other words, we can say, it is '*sui generis*'. But, if God is taken as absolutely infinite then it follows that she/he is indefinable and therefore unknowable<sup>48</sup>.

Now, if we take the highest good as 'absolutely infinite', then all relations regarding the absolute become impossible. This highest good is not a something; if it were, it would express relatively another something, and would itself be something finite and relative. So, our entire attempt to form representation of this highest good reveals the improper application of aesthetic categories of it. A '*ewige Seligkeit*' is the poorest possible material for aesthetic representation<sup>49</sup>. The existence of such a good cannot be demonstrated. It exists only when an individual is in relation to it. But, to be in relation to it is to exist in a certain way which prevents the desire for demonstration. Moreover, we can say that the reality of 'what absolutely ought to be' is revealed only in living so and it is the demand that confronts the person on the ethico- religious level. Now, the question arises, '*what is the ethico –religious level of existence?*'.

The main task of ethical individuality is to live and her/his every act and whole existence express the highest good. However, the consequence of this is the awareness of

the gap in kind between the highest good and all relative goods. We cannot expect for it in connection with other goods. Moreover, we can see that the highest good cannot be achieved through relative goods and so that the expression of a relation to the highest good is the recognition that it is the 'highest good'. That means it is the only good. But, if this renunciation is to be an expression of a relation to the highest good, then it must be recognized as being itself of no value.

However, concretely we cannot renounce all relative goods, unless we renounce life altogether. So, the demand for existential exemplification of a relation to the highest good involves double relation, that is, an absolute relation to a highest good and a relative relation to relative goods. On the other hand, renunciation is not purely an ideal task. It is to be observed that, "to renounce the world in thought is the work of moment, just as it is the work of not a moment to doubt everything in thought"<sup>50</sup>. But genuine renunciation, like genuine doubt, is a difficult task and is the work of lifetime.

Actually, this double task is a vigorous one to remain in this and somehow it is get out of it. Our relation to relative good must be so manifested that it expresses the fact that we are also related to the highest good. The awareness of this difficulty occasions suffering and this is the existential form of the person living at this stage of existence. Thus, our relation to the highest good is determined negatively. That means we act ethico- religiously by suffering or being passive. Aesthetically suffering is seen as a necessary ingredient of existence.

Suffering has its ground in the fact that for the finite human being, relative ends often have to be made absolute. However, the relation to a highest good means a reversal of this whole evaluation schema before the highest good. Apart from the highest good, all

other goods, even that of life loses their value. But, this abandonment of all natural inclinations is not true suffering until we realize that nothing we can do and can have any value in the light of the highest good. Thus, Kierkegaard points out that self-mortification are not true suffering. Because, it assumes that human pleasures have some value before the highest good. If it is so, then it becomes clear that suffering is the essential indication that it obtains a relation to the Absolute good. This suffering reveals a deeper source on reflection. We may ask, 'why should an inability to effect a perfect relation to the highest good be an occasion for suffering?'. One does what one can, but 'can man expect more?'. Only one circumstance could disturb the resigned complacency of this position and it is possible only when the individual feels that the inability to effect the relation to the highest good is due to her/his own guilt. To shift the blame for this misrelating on human nature or the race does not establish the innocence of the individual. Actually, the notion of the guilt of a race arises only when the individual synthesizes her/his guilt with the relation to a highest good. Consequently, guilt is the decisive factor in a relation to the highest good and it is this guilt which leads to suffering.

As we have seen that the whole conflict which we have been describing is ultimately inward. It arises only through my interest in my ethical existence and interest is always subjective. Actually, it is on this level that Kierkegaard's famous dictum 'subjectivity is the truth' applies. The truth is that which we can appropriate as an attitude towards existence. We cannot find God or the highest good speculatively. Everything depends on the individual relating herself/himself to God. So, this relation is really a divine relation. Similarly, we are in possession of existential truth only when our relation

to it is an existential relation. That means we live in it or living truth. Moreover, here the main emphasis is not on the relation between thought and its object, but rather on the relation between the thought and its thinker. It has given the proper way of knowing and this knowing leads to truth. So, if we know the way 'how' to know then we can find 'what' the truth is. Of course this criterion of truth does not deny the validity of such disciplines as mathematics, science or history. But they are not to be taken as existential truths unless one is prepared to live mathematically, scientifically or historically. The interest of these disciplines is to lead away from the subject rather than towards the subject. Their universality lies in their ability to become objective and to neglect the particularity of the subject. But in existential knowledge, interest is always given to the subject.

### **3.6.3.2. Religiousness B (Transcendent Religion)**

'Religiousness A' was described by Kierkegaard not because God was in man, but because it was assumed that through reflection on the ethical task, man could arrive at and express a relation to God. But, in 'Religiousness B', we are asked to stake everything on a belief in a union of pure being and existence which is incomprehensible to reason. To do this, it requires absolute faith to face all the difficulties and the moment in which we achieve this faith is of infinite importance. Only then it makes the emergence of a new person whose existence henceforth takes a new direction. The highest tension of human existence lies in to live in this faith.

It may be true that no actual person has ever exemplified the stages of existence as we have described them or even as Kierkegaard has described them. Actually, these levels are to be viewed as ideal possibilities for human existential forms. Their content



can vary with the environment, history and background of the individual. But insofar as an individual is genuinely human, their existence brings for her/him the possibility of a tension between potentiality and actuality and existential metamorphoses that radically alter her/his evaluation scheme. These metamorphoses mark the transition between the levels of existence.

For Kierkegaard, transition is a qualitative Sprung. Genuine transition is not the unfolding of what is implicit. It can be stated that, “As the tree is said to unfold from the seed, nor is it the logical ‘passage’ from the ground to consequent”<sup>51</sup>. For example, the ethical is not unfolding of the aesthetic, nor is it the logical consequent of the aesthetic. The ethical level springs into being during a personal metamorphosis; something absolutely new emerges which is difficult to explain in terms of antecedent psychic states or physical conditions.

Kierkegaard regarded *angst* as the existential manifestation of the proximity of essence and existence in the human individual. It is the nascent tension which comes into full force in the progressive levels of existence. Unlike fear or hope, it has no specific object. It is what Kierkegaard calls the ‘sin of not choosing’.

*Angst* can be compared to the dizziness which is often experienced when the eye look into abyss. The cause of the dizziness is as much in the abyss as in the eye; it is the whole situation, not any one of its components that gives rise to the dizziness. It is because ethical existence is a free activity that we experience *Angst*. It is to be stated that “nascent freedom, prior to its explicit discovery, occasions anxiety, for together with nascent freedom is nascent guilt”<sup>52</sup>. The actualization of *nascent* freedom is accomplished in the sprung. An example of this concrete transition is found when we consider the

passage between the aesthetic and ethical levels. The problem is 'how can a level whose essence is a profound sense of responsibility issue from a level whose very nature demands that it avoid responsibility?'. Although we cannot know what takes place in this passage, we can describe its immediate neighborhood.

According to Kierkegaard, we can characterize this neighborhood by 'despair' which denotes a choice which has not yet been made, but it should be made. Explicitly, on the aesthetic level, persons experience despair only when they realize that the goals which they have been trying to achieve are transitory. Now, all aesthetic aim at some form of immediate enjoyment and the transitoriness of the goal is essential to it. Therefore, we can say that all aesthetic individuals are potentially in despair, although they are not always conscious of it. Despair can be one of the aesthetic variations, but as such it is not genuine despair. It is a pose which does not demand the utter rejection of the aesthetic, but merely regrets that it cannot be carried through. Despair on the intellectual level is doubt. Doubt is the despair of the intellect. It is an impersonal methodological tool which disappears soon after reflection gets under way. On the other hand, genuine despair pervades the whole personality. It is not only makes unable people to think, but also affects in taking action as well as in the act of feeling. Kierkegaard says, "The despair I have in mind is an act for which power, earnestness and self- control are necessary. To despair, one must will to despair, it is to be said that "despair with all your heart, and all your soul and all your power"<sup>53</sup>.

But, in the very act of choosing despair, we overcome it. In this act of choice, the aesthete is taking the first step toward the ethical. Here, the individual chooses herself/himself, not in her/his immediacy or the accidental individual, but rather in the

eternal meaning of her/his personality. Through despair, man finds herself/himself for the first time in the isolation which is one of the indispensable conditions of choice. In choosing despair, she/he is recognizing her/his unity with the given factual world and the totally new way in which she/he must react to it.

From the above discussion of three levels of existence, it becomes clear that suffering is intimately related with individual's understanding of her/ his inner self. The understanding of inner self what Kierkegaard calls 'subjectivity' is not possible either in aesthetic or ethical level of existence, but in religious level. Religious level of existence is the only one where an individual can freely choose oneself and has faith on God. Here, the so called suffering is transformed into the eternal happiness. That's why Kierkegaard asserts that one can understand eternal happiness when she/he understands what suffering is. Therefore, according to Kierkegaard, religious stage is the highest stage because only in this stage one can understand the highest subjective truth- 'suffering'.

### **3.7. Conclusion- A Contemporary Reading of 'Either/Or' and the Concept of Suffering**

From the above discussion, we have seen that in the first part of 'Either/ Or', Kierkegaard has shown successfully that such a life (Aesthetic life) is a life of despair, possibly only in bad faith. The second part leaves us the life of the *Judge*, who is happy in the circle of her/his family and secure in her/his position in society. The *Judge's* life as presented to us in her/his letters is not different from a life live in bad faith which is very much similar to the life of aesthetic 'A'. So, in 'Either/Or', the first part shows the life of an aesthete who is a seeker of pleasure and the second part shows a person's whose life is governed by ethical norms. It is to be noteworthy that the aesthetic and ethical spheres of

existence represent suffering as a tragedy of life which people want to avoid. In aesthetic sphere, Kierkegaard shows how the individual tries to avoid suffering in terms of pleasure. Similarly, in ethical sphere also, they try to avoid it in terms of ethical obligations. But, suffering is a universal phenomenon which we cannot avoid either in terms of pleasure or in terms of ethical norms. It is an inalienable part of life that every individual has to face in any stage of life. But, in both aesthetic and ethical spheres of existence, individual failed to understand that truth. But religious sphere of existence is a stage, where an individual by taking a leap to faith can understand or realize the highest subjective truth. Actually, in 'Either/Or', Kierkegaard tries to illustrate the sorrow of the disastrous life on one hand and the most profound suffering and profound ecstasy of religion on the other hand. The words, 'either' and 'or' are respectively the aesthetic and ethical ways of living. The contents of 'Either/Or' wants to generalize and analogize the life in which tragedy and comedy imitate.

Regarding the book 'Either/ Or', there are many contemporary writers who have written books and articles and tries to analyze the significance of 'Either/Or' from different perspective. Kierkegaard wrote only the manuscript of 'Either/ Or' and the editor Victor Eremita gave these writings shape of a book and published it. After that, from these days to the present time, there are many commentary writings which tries to re-search and critically analyze the teachings of 'Either/ Or'.

Sarah Wright has put forwarded the view that "Kierkegaard's Either/Or will draw out themes common to both: forms of love and the amatory cure; free will (represented by the choice); the angst of human finitude and the quest for immortality; the tensions between binary oppositions and triadic dialectical discourses; religion as a 'leap of

faith”<sup>54</sup>. According to him, Kierkegaard’s ‘Either/Or’ is a mediation on seduction. It is a large part of a work which has given a description of *Johannes’s* seduction of the innocent *Cordelia* in the so called ‘*Diary of a Seducer*’. Here, Sarah Wright has discussed the view of Hannay that Kierkegaard’s ‘Either/Or’ can be read as covering the spectrum of arbitrary self love, erotic love and marital love where *Judge William* ends with a borrowed sermon from the *Jylland pastor* on the love of God<sup>55</sup>. Moreover, he also stated that even the essay on ‘*The Rotation of Crops*’ could be read as a variation of the theme of avoiding boredom in marriage by an analogy with rotating crops within the same soil.

Daniel Berthold argues that ‘Either/ Or’ is an exuberant experimentation with the art of authorial disguise<sup>56</sup>. This article examined the first volume of this work as a collection of the scattered writings of an anonymous aesthetic author (A) and possibly a supplementary aesthete of the ‘Seducer’ who may or may not be the same as ‘A’. On the other hand, the second volume is composed of the writing of an ethical author ‘B’ (or *Judge William*) who may or may not herself/himself be the same as ‘A’. Here, the author claimed that *Johannes* (the Seducer) is only a key for make out Kierkegaard’s own seductive style of indirect communication. The more attractive side of reading of this book is to realize that just as there is deception and deception, similarly there is seduction and seduction. *Johannes’s* seduction of *Cordelia* is finally a ruthless act of manipulation, though it is an artistically brilliant act. According to Daniel Berthold, actually *Johannes* is Kierkegaard’s formation of the skillfully pre (or post)- ethical eroticist, while Kierkegaard’s own seductive style of writing is created around an ‘ethics of deception’ intended to affirm the readers autonomy.

Simon D. Podmore introduces W. G. Kirkconnell's crucial reading of the pseudonymous 'Either/Or' as a religious polemic. It is a '*reductio ad absurdum*' of the amoral spirituality of the poet that also pushes the ethical religiousness to the flouting position, until it becomes obvious that there are in fact serious limits for both the ethical and the religious in this approach<sup>57</sup>. Exploring the vast difference between nineteenth-century Danish Christendom and twentieth century Western secularism, Kirkconnell wants to regenerate the function of Kierkegaard's 'Either/ Or' as 'religious satire' which directed towards the contemporary debates and figures in the cultural- religious discourse that raged at the time. Kirkconnell concludes that 'Either/or' draws the breakdown of the aesthete life in despair and the release from despair through the ethical. And again it continues to follow the ethical through the appearance of guilt- consciousness which opens the door to a new personal relationship to God.

Karten Harries discusses 'Either/Or' in the context of a philosophical investigation of the origins and implications of art and aesthetics. Here, we found a detail analysis on the aesthetic, ethical and religious life of an individual. The aesthetic lives in a world where no place for suffering is to be found. But, ethical life represents a life governed by ethical or moral responsibility. The individual has to pass through both of these stages and finally she/he has to choose a way. Both aesthetic and ethical life leads an individual in to despair. Only in religious stage, all sufferings become to an occasion of joy. Karten Harries stated that 'Either/ Or' means either to chose suffering or to chose the passionate ecstasy of religion.

Daniel Berthold discusses the views of Kierkegaard and Camus regarding the origin of suffering. According to Kierkegaard, despair the cause of suffering is not an act,

but a state of sin. For him, sin is what separates the individual from God or sin before God. But, Albert Camus by opposing his view stated that despair is sin without God. It is true that both Kierkegaard and Camus agree with the point that despair is not an act but a state of being. Similarly, sin is not an act but a state of being. Anguish as the result of despair arose because of separation. For Kierkegaard separation defies a distance between man and God because of which despair come to the individual's life. Despair disappears only when the individual accept God by faith as companion and goal of life. On the other hand, for Camus, separation defies a distance between man and the universe. It is the distance because of which despair arose. According to him, man as an intellectual reason being is incapable of entering into a personal relationship. Although Kierkegaard and Camus have their opposite views in many places, but both agree with the point that despair is sin. For them, it is a state of lack in need of reparation by the struggle way of life that can resist it and redeem us<sup>58</sup>.

We have seen that all contemporary authors have discussed and analyzed 'Either/Or' from different point of view which shows a vital significance of this book in the contemporary world. One very important point is that, some people are confused with the very meaning of the title of this book 'Either/Or'. They have considered the title of the book 'Either/Or' as a choice between aesthetic and ethical life. Actually, it does not imply this. It implies that both are necessary. We cannot make a choice between them. Since, one is not wholly separate and better than the other. The choice that the title of the book implies is in between the aesthetic and the ethical life on the one hand and the religious life on the other hand.

It is already mentioned above that the individual has to make choice either aesthetic and ethical or religious; it does not mean that the former two have no importance in human's life. These two stages are necessary to reach the religious stage. Becoming ethical is choosing to live ethically rather than aesthetically. That means in confronting this choice we make the transition to the ethical. Kierkegaard believes that the ethical existence is a necessary stage in the development of authentic subjectivity. However, subjectivity cannot rest in ethical life. Similarly, the aesthetic lacks subjectivity in the sense of lacking a consciousness or awareness of an enduring personal identity determined by choice<sup>59</sup>. Like that of aesthetic life, an ethicist's life is also subject to internal contradictions, such as, anxiety. For Kierkegaard, an understanding of these contradictions will make us to know the necessity of moving beyond strictly ethical life in the direction of religion. On the other hand, human freedom is realized in a choice which is the main point of ethical stage. Choice implies how much free we are to chose. And this act of choice again brings anxiety in human's life which causes suffering. So, there must be a co- relation between freedom and suffering which is a subject of discussion of the next chapter 'Suffering and Freedom'.



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