



THE INTERTWINEMENT OF DESPAIR AND HUMAN EXISTENCE

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Abstract

The philosophy of human existence according to Kierkegaard is centered on the individual human being. It shuns all manner of universalizing the fact of existence. In the course of our existence, we encounter different aspects, among them anxiety, despair and fear. In this work, despair and human existence is our main interest. The intertwining of despair and human existence is well addressed in Soren Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death*. Although Kierkegaard does not intend to demonstrate the intertwining, it comes out clearly in the course of the work. The intertwining comes through two aspects. The first one is when despair turns out into sin. Sin is an existential factor which brings a disrelationship with God, through ignorance. The second aspect is the cure of despair, which is facilitated by Faith in God. In order for us to flee from the sickness of despair, we need to take a leap of faith in which our self recognizes a superior power which created it.

Key words

Despair, Human Existence, Kierkegaard, Sin

Introduction

In this chapter, we shall see the relationship between despair and human existence. Although despair is part of human existence, just like Anxiety, fear and dread, there is some special interplay between despair and human existence. Such intertwinement cannot be found in other aspects of human existence that we have just mentioned. This is where despair comes to play a very crucial role in shaping the self in the course of its existence. Such an intertwinement is realized through two aspects. These two aspects help magnify this interplay. The first is when despair is interpreted as a sin, from a Christian point of view, as Kierkegaard puts it. In demonstrating how despair turns out to be a sin, we shall be aided by a discussion of the forms of this sin. The second one when despair transcends itself, fleeing from itself and making a leap towards God. This it does by having faith in God. The faith in God becomes the cure of the sickness of despair. These two aspects shall be discussed in depth in this chapter in order to demonstrate and establish the intertwinement of despair and human existence. Through these two, the meeting point of despair and human existence is realized.

1.1. Despair as a Sin

Sin for Kierkegaard is an eternality gone away from an eternal factor: and as a result, all the human suffering is because of being earthly (being temporal). A really main point in the human existence Kierkegaard always intends to remind us the point that the individual can by creating a balance in his own self attain some inward eternality and consequently, regain some lost repose and tranquility. It was previously mentioned that "there is a possibility for latent disrelationship in the synthesis". This disrelationship can be found deeply in sin, which is in fact the main factor of the infinite qualitative difference between God and man. (Tabatabaee, 2015)

Sin is related with the despair of disrelationship between man and God. In other words, this is the problem of will, sin takes root in will and hence, Kierkegaard defines two types of despair by a rhetoric of will. Sin is among the things that chokes human throat, it is of those things that takes us to a light which is not the light of wisdom and philosophy. No acquisition science can explain sin because sin is an Existential factor. Sin exhorts man and shows the absolute other. (Tabatabaee, 2015)

When a person in despair wants to be himself or in despair does not want to be himself and he is simultaneously aware that he stands directly before God, his despair becomes sin. In Kierkegaard's words:

Sin is this: before God, or with the conception of God, to be in despair at not willing to be oneself, or in despair at willing to be oneself. Thus sin is potentiated weakness or potentiated defiance: sin is the potentiation of despair. The point upon which the emphasis rests is before God, or the fact that the conception of God is involved; the factor which dialectically, ethically, religiously, makes "qualified" despair (to use a juridical term) synonymous with sin is the conception of God. (Kierkegaard, 2013)

This is a rather different concept of sin than the common view. Usually, sin is associated with concrete deeds that are prohibited by God. Kierkegaard makes sure that these fall within his category of sin as well, by noting that "sin is not the unruliness of the flesh and blood in itself, but the spirit's consent to it." (Kierkegaard. 1980)

Acts such as murder, rape and theft are sinful in Kierkegaard's view as well, not because they are wrong in themselves, but because they are a sign of the self not functioning properly, which means that it is in despair, and the self being in despair is the actual sin. (Krooshof, 2016) Nevertheless, our distinction between the act and the self's permission of the act is crucial, because it means that being virtuous is not the way to live free of sin. One can lead a virtuous life and still be in despair. Consequently, for Kierkegaard, the opposite of sin is faith. (Krooshof, 2016)

1.1.1. The forms of sin

With a conception of God, a despairing person is no longer only a human self, but also a theological self. God becomes the standard of measurement for the self by which the person gains new levels in consciousness, and this makes it possible for him to heighten his despair on a whole new scale: that of sin. As a person's level of consciousness of his theological self-rises, his sin does as well. This increasing degree of sin Kierkegaard calls the continuation of sin. (Krooshof, 2016)

The continuation of sin is not caused by committing particular sins. These are merely symptoms of a person being in sin, which is, despairing before God. As Kierkegaard says, "In the deepest sense, the state of sin is the sin; the particular sins are not the continuance of sin but the expression for the continuance of sin; in the specific new sin the impetus of sin merely becomes more perceptible to the eye." (Kierkegaard, 1980)

This continuance comes in three ways, in what we call the three forms of sin, the sin of despairing over sin, the sin of despairing over forgiveness of sin, and the sin of declaring christianity to be untruth. Let us now discuss each of them.

i. The sin of despairing over sin

The initial sin is simply being in despair while also having a conception of God. The first intensification, which starts the continuation of sin, is when a person consciously realizes he is despairing before God, that is, he is in sin, and as a result starts despairing over being in sin. The individual is disgusted with himself and closes himself off of everything that might save him from his despair and sin, and makes an enemy out of everything that has to do with grace or repentance. (Krooshof, 2016)

Just like there is a paradoxical element in despair, the person conscious of his sin is a little step closer to being freed from it, while at the same time sinking deeper into sin. This makes it harder

to rescue himself from the despair over his sins. (Krooshof, 2016) Kierkegaard describes such despair as an effort to survive by sinking deeper. He gives an example;

Just as a balloonist ascends by throwing off weights, so the person in despair sinks by more and more determinedly throwing off all the good (for the weight of the good is elevating); he sinks, privately thinking, of course, that he is ascending—and he is indeed growing lighter. (Kierkegaard, 1980)

Nevertheless, despair over sin is conscious particularly of its own emptiness, that it has nothing on which to live, not even an idea of its own self.

ii. The sin of despairing of the forgiveness of sins

So far, sin means the awareness of standing directly before God. But here the despairing person even becomes conscious of standing directly before Christ. A self that in despair still does not will to be itself or in despair wills to be itself. This kind of despair is similar to despair in weakness or the despair of defiance: despair in weakness, which is offended and does not dare to believe; despair of defiance, which is offended and will not believe. (Kierkegaard, 1980)

Ordinarily, Kierkegaard believes that weakness is despair not to will to be oneself. Here this is defiance, for here it is indeed the defiance of not willing to be oneself. The individual is a sinner, wanting to dispense with the forgiveness of sins. Ordinarily, defiance is despair to will to be oneself. Here this is weakness, in despair to will to be oneself as a sinner in such a way that there is no forgiveness. To make himself clearer, Kierkegaard continues to explain:-

Sin was despair, the intensification was despair over sin. But now God offers reconciliation in the forgiveness of sin. Nevertheless, the sinner still despairs, and despair acquires a still deeper manifestation: it now relates to God in a way, and yet precisely because it is even further away it is even more intensively absorbed in sin. When the sinner despairs of the forgiveness of sins, it is almost as if he walked right up to God and said, 'No, there is no forgiveness of sins, it is impossible.' (Kierkegaard, 1980)

As a sinner, man is separated from God by a qualitative gap. In turn, God is separated from man by the same qualitative gap when he forgives sins. At this juncture, Kierkegaard thinks that if by some kind of reverse adjustment, the divine could be shifted over to the human, there is one way

in which man could never in all eternity come to be like God: in forgiving sins. (Kierkegaard, 1980)

Even though the despairing person closed himself off from grace and repentance when he despaired over his sin, God's offer of radical forgiveness found its way to him nevertheless. However, instead of surrendering himself to it, he despairs even of this proposal, intensifying his sin even further. He refuses to believe that there is such a thing as forgiveness. The idea seems so absurd to him that he is even offended by it: he envies it without accepting it. (Krooshof, 2016)

iii. The sin of declaring Christianity to be untruth

In this form of sin is a sin against the Holy Ghost, and it is the ultimate, most intense form of sin, and accordingly of despair. As Kierkegaard says:-

“Here the self is at the highest intensity of despair. It not only discards Christianity totally but also makes it out to be a lie and untruth. What a tremendously despairing conception of itself the self must have!” (Kierkegaard, 1980)

The sin of renouncing Christianity as untruth and a lie is offensive war. In a way, the two previous forms make the admission that the adversary is the stronger. But now in this form, the sin is attacking. (Kierkegaard, 1980) According to Kierkegaard, God and man are two qualities separated by an infinite qualitative difference. Thus, any teaching that disregards this difference is irrational. Divinely speaking, it is blasphemy. Kierkegaard gives us an example of blasphemous Jews in the Gospel according to Matthew and Mark, who said that Christ drove out devils with the help of devils. (New African Bible, Mat 9:34, 12:24; Mk 3:22, 2008)

For him, Christianity does not leave room for being neutral. “That God lets himself be born and becomes a human being, is no idle notion, something that occurs to him so as to have something to do, perhaps to put a stop to the boredom that has brashly been said to be bound up with being God, it is not to have an adventure.” (Kierkegaard, 1980)

Under this form, there are three subdivisions of the ways of declaring Christianity to be untruth.

The lowest form of sin here is the most innocent form. In this case, the individual chooses to leave the whole issue of Christ undecided, concluding that the individual shall not make any decision about it, he does not believe yet he does not decide anything.

The second subdivision is when a person cannot leave Christianity for what it is, but is unable to have faith as well. He lives with the thought in his head and cannot to come to a final decision. The third and final form is the sin of explicitly declaring Christianity to be a lie. Here, one understands the Christian faith fully, but thinks of it as pure falsehood. (Krooshof, 2016)

In this third form we find another form of defiance, like we've seen in the last stages of despair, but now on the level of sin. A person who is in the last stage of defiance's despair, as we have described it above, would declare Christianity to be untruth when he is confronted by it. After all, he wants to be himself, even if it means living in anguish, and refuses to be helped. If such a person has a conception of God or realizes that he might live before God, he would reject him and all his offers of help radically. (Krooshof, 2016)

We may call this: despair of sinful defiance. The person in despair of this kind is closest to reaching faith, because his concept of himself as a self before God is the most transparent, and his despair is so consuming that he is the one most likely to surrender himself completely to that which he is fighting against. It is at this point that one is most likely to say 'I cannot do otherwise.' (Krooshof, 2016)

1.2. Fleeing from despair to selfhood

In our previous chapter, we demonstrated that when the individual suffers from despair, his entire life and all his relationships suffer as well. Under the influence of despair, an individual is unable to maintain relationships with others and is also unable to regard himself, and others, in

an ethical light. Despair, as we have established so far, leaves an individual alone and without bonds with anyone else, and leads society to take on the form of 'the crowd', an unethical body of individuals with no connection or responsibility to one another. (Canjar, 2013)

Despair leads to negative connotations in both an individual's life and in the 'life' of society. Therefore, by attaining selfhood, which is key to moving out of despair and away from the problems of the 'crowd', we are fostering authentic community and relationships. This prompts recognition that all individuals are spiritual equals before God. As articulated by Graham M. Smith, modern society has failed to “understand the human being as essentially a spiritual entity related to others through God.” (Smith, 2012)

1.2.1. Selfhood and Ethical-Religious Love

Kierkegaard believes that human beings need to make the move into selfhood in order to be healed of despair. To do this, a human being needs to complete the synthesis between mind and body and make a conscious decision to ground himself in the eternal and spiritual. For Kierkegaard, this move into selfhood is the first logical move towards ethical-religious love. Selfhood has profound ethical implications for an individual, allowing him to experience the true value of other human beings and, consequently, see everyone as equals before God. (Canjar, 2013)

This begins a transition into a series of relationships amongst societal members where each feels a responsibility towards the other, causing modern society to turn away from despair and become increasingly ethical. Therefore, Kierkegaard's account of the self must be understood if we are to realize the interplay between despair and human existence in his arguments. As established before, Kierkegaard's idea of human existence is tied to his account of selfhood, as he sees the human existence as grounded in each individual's existence separately, not as existing in a group or the crowd. For him, many people want to remain submerged in the crowd and do not want to

wake up and pursue individual goals, take individual responsibility and think as a single individual existing independent of the crowd. (Canjar, 2013)

The Sickness unto Death discusses the possibility of loss of self: it introduces the concepts of selfhood and of despair and develops how each of these affect an individual. The 'sickness', despair, for Kierkegaard, is the denial of the Christian life, and the inclination to believe that for an individual death is the end. (Hannay, 1989)

Despair is spiritual in its form and is a sickness of the spirit. Selfhood, therefore, is a state of being that exists when a human being has eradicated this spiritual sickness. It exists when an individual become conscious of his potential to be a self and has accepted that his existence is grounded in something eternal: God. Kierkegaard argues that as a human being moves towards selfhood, he needs to synthesize a series of key oppositions, which, if successful, forms the 'self'. (Canjar, 2013)

The following will detail this process, explaining how a natural man makes the transition to a selfhood, and furthermore how society moves from the 'crowd' to a community of selves who feel a responsibility towards the other.

I. Selfhood: The Terms

Kierkegaard believes that despair is a 'reluctance' to move towards selfhood. Despair comes to those in a crisis "in the form of a choice between well-being (or salvation) and a fully conscious rejection of Christian teaching as 'untruth and a lie'." (Hannay, 1989)

As developed in the previous section, there are numerous forms of despair, each differing because of the level of awareness that an individual has concerning both his 'sickness' and his progression, or capability, for selfhood. These levels of despair are indicative of an individual choosing to reject Christian teachings, as he has chosen not to move towards a relationship with

God. In many forms, despair is characterized by a person being unconscious of his capability for selfhood. (Canjar, 2013)

Selfhood, therefore, is grounded in consciousness, by which Kierkegaard means an individual's awareness of his potential to become a self, and a choice of well-being due to the acceptance of God in his life. Kierkegaard argues that the more 'conscious' an individual is that he is a self, the higher degree of selfhood he has attained. When self-awareness is low and conscious selfhood is non-existent, there is despair. Therefore, *The Sickness unto Death* is primarily focused on teaching its readers how to face the spiritual challenges of becoming conscious– of becoming a self. The fundamental fear of selfhood or an individual's "unconsciousness of being characterized as a spirit" (Kierkegaard, 1980) is the reality which Kierkegaard seeks to combat and is what he calls 'despair'.

In order to understand Kierkegaard's explanation of selfhood and despair, as well as his conception of the structure of the self, we are expected to identify and connect two principal components. The first of these two components is a set of opposites. This includes: 'infinite' and 'finite'; 'freedom' and 'necessity', and 'eternal' and 'temporal'. (Kierkegaard, 1980)

Kierkegaard explains that the human being is a synthesis of these opposites, or factors. When these sets of opposites are synthesized correctly, meaning that one factor in each set does not overpower or outweigh the other in the set, the human being forms a key second component: the self. The first component deals with the set of oppositions which need to be kept in balance. Kierkegaard argues that when one extreme overpowers the other, it distorts the human being and moves him farther away from God. (Kierkegaard, 1980)

An imbalance of these characteristics does not portray someone of 'good mental health' and rather exemplifies despair. For example, Kierkegaard argues that an individual who gives into the infinite, with no balance of the finite, loses himself to imagination, whereas an individual

who does the opposite and has no balance of the infinite, is confined and limited. Losing oneself to the imagination is a problem for Kierkegaard as it causes the self to become increasingly agitated and restless. (Canjar, 2013)

This means that it becomes increasingly harder for an individual to make his way back to himself and increasingly harder for an individual to imagine a life with boundaries– a life before God. Imagination, therefore, causes an individual to be carried off so far away that God and himself becomes just an abstraction. On the other hand, becoming bound by the finite is a problem because it creates an idea of narrowness, including ethical narrowness. Being bound by the finite causes an individual to be interested only in worldliness and causes him to have no sense of the spiritual and ethical things which are necessary for a full life. (Kierkegaard, 1980)

Kierkegaard argues that there needs to be an element of each in the other: to eradicate despair, an individual must allow imagination to be present in every-day life. Likewise, Kierkegaard argues that to have freedom which is not balanced by necessity is to treat everything as if it was inconsequential. In this area, the healthy balance is found when the freedom to do whatever is balanced the realization that it is necessary to do certain things. (Kierkegaard, 1980)

When an individual finds himself with a surplus of freedom, he is unable to get anywhere, rather he “exhausts himself floundering about in possibility, yet ... never moves from where he is nor gets anywhere.” (Kierkegaard, 1980) What Kierkegaard shows here is that being bound in possibility makes it impossible for an individual to move toward selfhood as he is constantly reflecting on everything else that might be possible, rather than what is and needs to be possible. When an individual reflects in possibility, he loses himself. (Canjar, 2013)

Conversely, when an individual is caught up in necessity, he loses the conception of God because for God everything is possible. An individual who focuses solely on necessity loses the

ability to conceive of God because he is focused on what he can see, touch or what is directly in front of him. Finally, there also needs to be balance found in the third polarity: eternal and temporal. This polarity is key to the 'consciousness' of the self. It is key to understanding that while there is something fundamentally temporal about the human being, specifically the temporal space in which an individual exists, there is also something eternal about the human being. This balance is struck as an individual becomes aware of the 'self', as an individual finds that he is grounded in something eternal. An individual who lives in imbalance is "defrauded of the most blessed of all thoughts:" (Kierkegaard, 1980) the concept of God.

When an individual has a surplus of one of the factors, Kierkegaard argues that he is defrauding himself of his spiritual ties to God or of his temporal ties to the world around him. In order to live a complete life, an individual has to have a comprehension of both, and therefore the oppositions must be balanced. But, if an individual is able to balance these sets of oppositions, he can form the second component of Kierkegaard's explanation: the self. When a 'self' is attained, an individual has reached a point where he has gained a conception of God and is able to balance the sets of oppositions. (Canjar, 2013)

A 'self' therefore indicates someone who has conceived of a healthy balance of the oppositions. Whereas someone who possess an extreme of one of the oppositions operates under despair, a 'self' achieves perfect balance and has eradicated this problem. At this juncture, we have to understand the meaning of three important terms which relate to a human's consciousness of self, the second key component. These are: the human being, the spirit, and the self. The human being is, quite simply, the temporal part of the individual– it is the body, the part which occupies the temporal space in which the individual exists. (Canjar, 2014)

The spirit is the part of a human being which is emerging from innocence and beginning a journey of human development. The spirit exists prior to a human being becoming conscious of a

self and is seen as the quality which raises human beings above animals. It represents a capability for selfhood and consciousness of a self. (Hannay, 1989)

The spirit in *The Sickness unto Death* is identified as a self once it has reached a certain point of consciousness or self-awareness. Therefore, the spirit indicates the category that a human being exists in prior to starting the synthesis. Spirit is solely a name given to the capacity that human beings have to rise above animals and above 'natural man'. Therefore, whereas a self cannot exist in despair, a spirit still can. When the spirit moves into selfhood, it transitions from a spirit into a self as it becomes "a relation relating to itself," (Kierkegaard, 1980) meaning that it has become a state of being which is completely self-related, that is, a complete relation between mind and body.

Kierkegaard believes that this relation between mind and body takes place when a human being understands that he does not only exist in the temporal realm, but that he also has a spiritual element. These components and definitions are extremely important to Kierkegaard's explanation of selfhood, but as Kierkegaard does not completely define them, it can lead into an account of selfhood which is convoluted, complicated and sometimes opaque. Yet, this terminology is important for understanding how selfhood arises. (Canjar, 2013)

Kierkegaard argues that achieving the right balance of oppositions, that is, the correct synthesis of reflective factors, all which must be present in the human being, can be understood as selfhood. Selfhood requires that an individual have a conception of God. As noted before, a fear of this self-awareness, such as the fear held by those suffering from demonic despair, or inability or reluctance to be conscious of an individual's self, is called despair. Despite the description of despair as undesirable, despair is a sickness that serves a purpose. As discussed before, despair comes in many forms, all of which are part of spiritual development. (Canjar, 2013)

Kierkegaard argues that despair offers an avenue to truth and deliverance and it is only through despair, which is part of human development, that self-awareness can be found. Individuals need to fall into despair in order to see that being grounded in God is the only option for selfhood and healthy spiritual awareness. Kierkegaard's account of selfhood allows him to situate the individual socially and spiritually. The individual self is central to Kierkegaard's understanding of every relationship a human being will ever have and therefore is understood as a necessary component of each individual's life. Selfhood is a task. According to Kierkegaard, every individual is responsible for becoming a self: each individual is tasked with actively pursuing a relationship with God. (Canjar, 2013)

II. Pure Selfhood: The Move into Selfhood

Selfhood is a state which comes about after the synthesis of factors which are ever-present in the human being: infinite and finite; freedom and necessity, and eternal and temporal. (Kierkegaard, 1980) Kierkegaard argues that as these factors are recognized and balanced, a human being moves towards full comprehension of selfhood. For him, we begin our journey under the condition of despair but as time moves and as we have new experiences of life which eradicate this condition. These life experiences help us become more conscious and move towards selfhood. (Canjar, 2013)

Kierkegaard opens *The Sickness unto Death* with a passage that offers a detailed, yet convoluted, explanation of what it is meant to be a human being who attains selfhood. This passage describes the human being as a spirit and that the spirit is the self. Kierkegaard writes:

“The human being is a spirit. But what is a spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation which relates to itself, or that in relation which is relating to itself. The self is not the relation but the relation's relating to itself.” (Kierkegaard, 1980)

In this, Kierkegaard says that selfhood is a relation, as has previously been developed through the analysis of the factors which constitute a human being. He describes the human being as a

spirit and describes the spirit as a self, but warns that the human being, as looked at in this excerpt, has not yet become a self. Rather, the human being is the condition which exists prior to the synthesis. The self, a term which we define in two ways, is recognized in this context to take the form of a verb, rather than a noun, as we intend for the self to be identified as a process. The self is defined as a relation of relating to itself, a relation which recognizes the self as not a static definition, but as a synthesis of infinite and finite; freedom and necessity, and eternal and temporal. (Kierkegaard, 2013) The self is only possible when it has been established as a relation: a relation of both the numerous factors, and of a relation of itself, through its recognition of its possibility of being grounded in God.

First, this implies that the human being is always a spirit, but can only transition to a self by becoming something concrete: to become something which is both infinite and finite; both free and acting on necessity; and both eternal and temporal. (Canjar, 2013) When a balance of these terms is reached, the spirit transitions into a self. A balanced relation between these terms is what Kierkegaard means when he defines the self as a relation. The self needs to strike a balance between the sets of oppositions and relate them together. Without this relation of the human being and the spirit, the first two terms, and without the synthesis, the human being cannot be called a self: he has not completed the process. (Canjar, 2013)

Second, there also needs to be a relation within the self. Kierkegaard believes that there needs to be a relation where the human being relates to its true self, that is, the self which it is capable of being, through recognizing and striking a balance between the factors, but also as a relation between himself and something else, as a “self cannot by itself arrive at or remain in equilibrium.” (Kierkegaard, 1980) This means that we cannot transition to selfhood on our own. The human being needs to establish self-consciousness, which is done through an increasing comprehension of God.

According to Kierkegaard, it is through God that the individual is able to realize his true self. For this reason, Kierkegaard claims that a healthy balance, or a successful synthesis of terms, means that the individual has been able to stand, as a single human being, directly before God. The individual needs to accept and comprehend that God exists and is important in his life prior to being able to become a self. The individual, therefore, needs to be conscious of the idea that his existence is because of God. (Canjar, 2013)

A disassociation of the self takes place because the self has failed to relate itself to itself, or failed to have been established by God. This means that the individual has failed to remove himself from the condition of despair. This is further enforced when Kierkegaard writes that in order to complete this relation, the self must be established by another power and must relate to this other power in the correct way. Kierkegaard identifies this other power as God, writing: "Then this is the formula which describes the state of self when despair is completely eradicated: in relating to itself and in wanting to be itself, the self is grounded transparently in the power that established it." (Kierkegaard, 1980) This means that selfhood is only possible when God is brought into the equation: God is ultimately needed for any human being to move out of despair.

As John Milbank says, Kierkegaard believes the only way out of this condition of different forms of despairing, is to travel to the end of despair, to discover that despair does indeed lurk beneath the indeterminate series of finite projects. Paradoxically we have to invest our hope and love in infinite indeterminacy itself, which is ultimately grounded in God. We make a leap into believe in the Supreme Being, by which faith heals all our troubles that come along with despair. (Milbank, 1996) God, therefore, establishes the entire relation and maintains the existence of the individual at equilibrium. This is the relationship of inwardness: a relationship between the individual and God. Kierkegaard maintains that after this relationship of inwardness has been

established, the individual can begin to establish relationships in other areas of his life.
(Kierkegaard, 1980)

Therefore, Kierkegaard says;

“The self is a synthesis of opposites which are self-relating but are also dependent on an individual relating of God and an individual's true self. To truly be a self, an individual must relate to the power that established it and in this way selfhood is a spiritual concept as well as a relational one. A self which fails to conceive of these relations is marred by despair.” (Kierkegaard, 1980)

Selfhood is thus understood as an element that recognizes the relation of the temporal parts, that is, the physical and psychical, of an individual with the spiritual. To attain selfhood, a human being is dependent on seeking a relationship with God. This leads to the conclusion that when we have not conceived God, we are subject to a disoriented human existence and we suffer from the worst form of despair.

Anxiety is an unavoidable companion in this endeavour to travel to the end of despair, and those who strive to escape it are choosing to live instead in a state of despair. To let go of the effort required to be one's true self and to allow the 'held-together' synthesis of the self to fall apart, in order to escape this tension and anxiety is considered by Kierkegaard to be a cowardly human act. (Watts, 2013)

Unfortunately, however, Kierkegaard observes that most of us choose to live in a diversity of ways in which we fail to answer 'the call of the infinite'. All worldly preoccupations serve only to divert us away from the only true, worthwhile goal of human existence. For human fulfilment lies beyond all earthly ambitions and can only be realised if we choose to commit ourselves to our creator. (Watts, 2013)

What Kierkegaard considers to be the key to developing the strength to make this commitment to God is summed up perfectly in the following passage.

As a Christian he has acquired a courage unknown to the natural man, a courage he acquired by learning to fear something even more horrifying. That is always how a person acquires courage: when he fears a greater danger, he always has the courage to face a lesser. When one fears a danger infinitely, it is as if the others weren't there at all. (Kierkegaard, 1980)

Therefore, the courage he acquired is false and unreal and is slowly diverting himself from the true courage, which is the goal of all human kind. That is, achieving what is entirely true and good.

Conclusion

According to Kierkegaard, immorality, or sin as he calls it, is said to involve despair and double-mindedness, in the sense of having two wills that are inconsistent with each other. From the above discussion, we have demonstrated the interconnectedness of despair to human existence. Although Kierkegaard does not explicitly show the interplay, through a keen scrutiny of his works especially *The Sickness unto Death*, we can clearly see the connection between the two. This comes in two aspects, as we have demonstrated.

The first aspect is demonstrating how despair can turn out to be a sin. If not noticed on time, it can lead to unreasonable denial of Christianity, in what Kierkegaard calls blasphemy, as we have discussed. Our ordinary understanding of sin is not quite different from Kierkegaard's. We agree with Kierkegaard in concluding that sin is just but an ignorance. This ignorance comes in two ways, when the individual ignores his self and does things irrationally. The other way is when the individual ignores and denies the presence of God in his life. The second interplay comes in demonstrating the cure for despair, when despair flees from itself, by faith in God. This occurs when the individual acknowledges his finiteness and makes a leap of faith to God.

Acknowledgement

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