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#### DREAD AND ANGUISH: AN AWAKENING OF SPIRIT

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

The feeling of dread and anguish has been around since the existence of human beings. Is there any resemblance between dread and anguish? There are explanatory challenges while viewing the phenomena of dread and anguish. Kierkegaard and Sartre tackle the concept of dread and anguish by focusing on the concept of sin and freedom. Kierkegaard argues that dread has no object. He gives his most original contribution by relating dread with sin. Sartre propounds his most original contribution on anguish by highlighting that anguish is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being. But this, too, is a bit unclear. It is not clear what exactly is meant by Sartre by mode of being of freedom. Similarly, it is a bit vague when Kierkegaard says that dread is sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy. I shall examine and engage with these existential positions in an authentic philosophical voice.

**Keywords:** Dread, Anguish, Freedom

**Introduction:** In the philosophical territory of Kierkegaard, dread precedes the feelings of irony, melancholy and despair. Kierkegaard distinguishes between fear and dread. Fear is always about something, it has an object, dread on the other hand has no object, it has 'nothing' has its object. Kiekegaard relates dread with sin. Sin in Kierkegaard's view is an individual's responsibility. Dread exists before sin but the more significant state of dread comes after sin for it brings about a change in man and his possibility.

The spirit confronting its possibilities in freedom gives rise to dread, dread after sin arises from the possibility of remaining in sin or overcoming it. Before the first sin there is preconscious dread when the spirit is in dreaming state. It is sin which awakens spirit and makes possible evolution of the spirit. If Adam had not sinned he would have remained in innocence and ignorance. As long as the spirit is in dreaming state the process of integration and synthesis of body, mind, and spirit has not begun. With the awakening of spirit this process begins. The cause of the experience of dread is spiritual in character. The need for spiritual integration manifests itself through dread. Kierkegaard is deeply concerned with the role of dread in leading the person through awareness of sin to inward deepening which is faith. Dread rises to its apex and culminates in faith which in fact is dread's highest point.

# **Types of Dread**

Kierkegaard distinguishes between different types of dread which are delineated below:

- 1. *Objective dread*: Objective dread is the manifestation of sinfulness in the world which came by Adam's sin for which he is responsible. Kierkegaard did not attach much importance to this kind of dread as it is evident from his brief handling.
- 2. Subjective dread: Subjective dread is Kierkegaard's central concern in The Concept of Dread. Dread is different from fear which refers to something definite, "it is freedom's reality as possibility for possibility." Dread is sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy, "2says Kierkegaard. The possibility of freedom gives rise to the possibility of a choice. And the choice is that either man can choose to remain in the state of sinfulness or he can choose to overcome his state of sinfulness. This is an alarming possibility; it is "the alarming possibility of being able." The possibility of choice results in dread. Subjective dread arises in the face of infinite possibilities. One of the possibilities raised in the experience of dread is the development of the spiritual dimension. Kierkegaard also refers to the dread of the evil. This dread comes after sin and is related to future possibility of sin. Dread for the evil is remorse but it is repentance that leads to faith which is the highest possibility. Kierkegaard regards faith as the only authentic possibility of man as a spiritual being. Dread is an experience of awakening to the eternal. It inspires an individual to choose a life-view. To be a person is to exist not in the mode of being but of becoming. Freedom is the freedom of becoming. Every individual has an awareness of a disharmony between his present life-view and other better possibilities available to him. This awareness is dread. Kierkegaard has focused his attention on subjective truth. Truth that bears a relation with the individual in his God-relation is of most significant for Kierkegaard. Truth in

Kierkegaard implies the transformation of subject in himself. It is realization of inwardness. Truth is the personal appropriation of spirituality. Truth as an abstraction or as a category of speculation has little meaning for the sage of Copenhagen. Truth that is related with the individual thinker is the subjective truth and this truth is particularly true though objectively it may be false, Kierkegaard has even said that since it is subjectively true it is objectively false or uncertain. An individual's beliefs which are true to him or her only, cannot be explained objectively, only he or she can have and know his or her beliefs or emotional state of mind or existence. An individual's moods, emotions, beliefs, feelings, and his way of thinking and his attitude exist only for the particular individual at a personal level and the emotions, feelings etc., are true for him or her alone only because he or she alone can have and know these feelings and beliefs, at his or her individual level. So truth is subjective. A particular feeling or belief which an individual alone feels or knows will not and cannot exist for another individual in the same way as felt by the first individual; even identical twins do not have the same feelings. One's toothache cannot be felt by another; therefore, what is subjectively true is objectively false, uncertain, in fact cannot exist objectively. For Kierkegaard, truth in a profound sense is a relation with God which the individual has. This relation or the feelings, emotions, and beliefs of this relation which the individual alone feels or knows cannot be explained objectively or by logic. Even if one attempts to rationalize or explain this inward relationship, the explanation would turn out to be objectively false. Therefore, for Kierkegaard, subjectivity is truth or the truth.

Subjectivity is inwardness, it is passion, and faith is the highest passion which exists in the individual alone and does not exist objectively. And the possessor of this subjective truth is the solitary, single, concrete, individual. All decisiveness is rooted in this subjective truth or subjectivity.

#### The concept of dread in The Concept of Dread

The Concept of Dread is Kierkegaard's another significant work, which merits attention as it is highly dense in form in comparison to most of his other works. Walter Lowrie in Translator's Preface remarks, "This was his first completely serious book, and everything we find in it may safely be regarded as his own way of thinking."

The title of the book is not only a bit longish one but it is also a bit quite enthralling; *The Concept Of Dread : A Simple Psychological Deliberation Oriented In The Direction Of The Dogmatic Problem Of Original Sin*, by Vigilius Haufniensis. The title itself suggests that the core subject traversed by Kierkegaard is dread. In this work he has interwoven and knitted so sublimely the

notion of dread with that of sin and guilt that the interweave has become highly subtle. Due to the subtleness of his style and presentation which characterize this work, scholars find *The Concept of Dread* slightly tricky and trappy, nevertheless, at the same time they also find it difficult to ignore. Quoting Alexander Dru on Kierkegaard's style and presentation of *The Concept of Dread*, Walter Lowrie says, "his terminology is often maddening." For Walter Lowrie the translation of *The Concept of Dread* has been a scholarly grind as Lowrie himself makes some stunning observations regarding *The Concept OfDread*, "Having now translated in whole or in part twenty-three of S.K.'s books, I have the impression that this is the most tormenting of them all. It seems to me also that this book shows the greatest unevenness of style."

Lowrie uses the word dread as precise equivalent for the Danish word *Angest*. Some past English translators use the word anguish or anxiety instead of dread. I prefer Lowrie's translation because Lowrie before doing his own translation had consulted the then available Spanish, French, and German translations and compared it with the original Danish text. Besides, he met a Danish professor, namely, professor Ferlov of University of Rome to ensure that Danish is understood correctly. In The *Concept of Dread*, especially in the first three chapters, Kierkegaard tackles the problem of original sin in a way which was quite contrary to the approach and outlook adopted by the theologians of his days. He considers dread as a state which exists in an individual prior to sin and also after sin. Kierkegaard has linked the notion of dread with sin. He asserts that in dread there is an experience of freedom because in dread one discovers the possibility to either rise or fall. Discovery of this possibility that either and individual can remain in sin or remain out of sin causes tormenting experience, which in fact is dread.

Dread in the Dane's view leads an individual to higher spiritual living which is attained by the grace of faith. In this work Kierkegaard focuses on the concept of original sin as viewed by the dogmatics and by psychology. Kierkegaard maintains that dogmatism fathoms original sin as ideal possibility while psychology explains only the real possibility of sin.

Continuing his disquisition on dread, Kierkegaard explains in the final chapter of the book that dread is not a malady rather it is an experience in which an individual accomplishes his own self-growth by means of faith. It would be apt here to discuss the concept of dread as propounded by a prominent pillar of existentialism viz., Jean-Paul Sartre.

The concept of anguish in the philosophy of Jean-PaulSartreSartre uses the word *angoisse* which Hazel E. Barnes, a principal translator of Sartre's works in English, translates it to anguish, instead of dread. Sartre's concept of anguish is linked with the concept of freedom and consciousness. Freedom is the being of consciousness or for-itself; therefore consciousness must be consciousness of freedom. Man becomes conscious of freedom through anguish {angoisse}.

"Anguish is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being; it is in anguish that freedom is, in its being, in question for itself." Sartre distinguishes anguish from fear. Fear is aroused by things that are outside. Anguish is "anguish before myself." Anguish arises from the possibility of acting one way or the other or from the possibility of negative conduct. "Anguish in fact is the recognition of a possibility as my possibility," says Sartre.

Sartre states that anguish arises at the level of reflection while fear is unreflective apprehension of the external situation. Sartre has given the example of vertigo to bring out the difference between fear and anguish. Fear is the first expression of vertigo, like the fear of slipping on a stone and falling into the abyss while walking along a narrow path. This is fear of the external situation. One can escape fear by projecting certain future conducts which would save one from falling into the abyss. But these conducts as my possibilities may not be adopted. There is always the possibility of the opposite conduct of throwing myself into the abyss ever present says Sartre. This in Sartre's view is precisely the source of anguish. Even though one may have the motive of saving oneself but the motive of saving oneself may not be effective. Since for-itself {pour-soi} has its being outside itself in the future, there is relation between its future being and its present being. But nihilation enters into this relation. I am not the self which I will be because what I am is not the foundation of what I will be. Nothing can determine what I will be. Nothing can determine what I am going to be. "I am the self which I will be, in the mode of not being it." What Sartre calls 'anguish in the face of the future' is the consciousness of being my future in the mode of notbeing. Different forms of conduct are my possible possibilities. Sartre says that there is nothing that compels me to save my life and nothing that prevents me from throwing myself into the abyss. "The decisive conduct will emanate from a self which I am not yet. Thus the self which I am depends on the self which I am not yet to the exact extent that the self which I am not yet does not depend on the self which I am."11

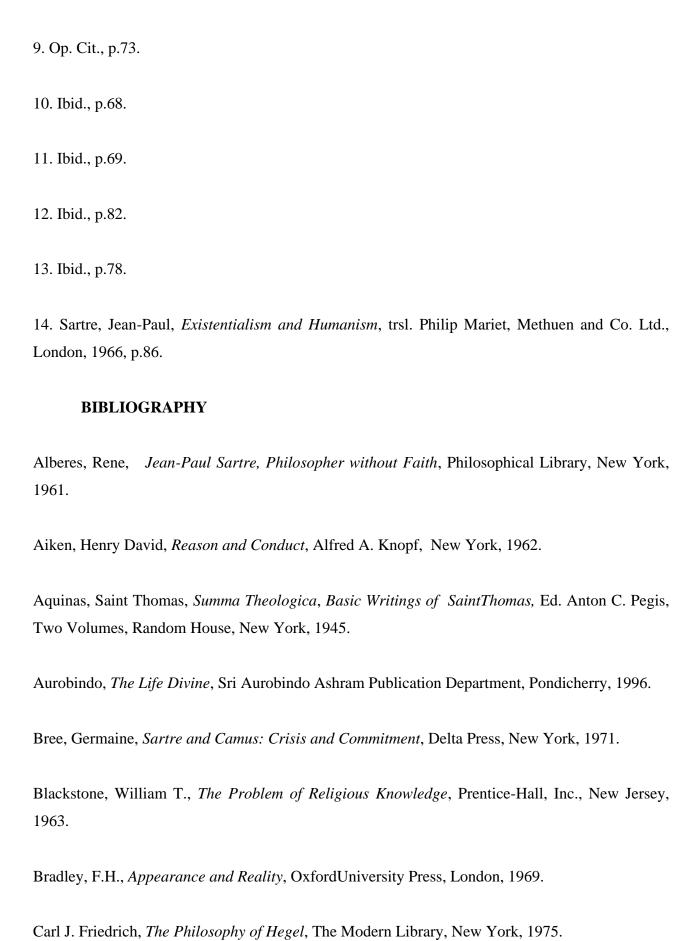
In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre points out that he has been wanting to write a book but this is his facticity which cannot compel, him to write it. His facticity and his possibility that is his transcendence is demarcated by a sharp line of nothing. This nothing entail anguish. It arises from the permanent possibility of abandoning the book and the possibility of writing it which is the meaning of my freedom. Sartre also mentions anguish as consciousness of freedom in the face of the past. The example analysed by him is that of the gambler who had decided not to gamble anymore but when he approaches the gaming table he sees all his resolutions melting away, and gradually the gambler comes to a point when there is *Nothing* left to stop him from gambling. The resolution has become an object for his consciousness. It is no longer *me* but I am it in the mode of not-being it, says Sartre. It is awareness of this nothing which anguishes freedom. This existential

consciousness of nothing by for-itself is anguish. Sartre reiterates that we cannot escape from anguish for the moment we try to flee from it, we are in bad-faith because we make a false claim of being anguish free: "It is certain that we cannot overcome anguish, for we *are* anguish." He further says, "In anguish I apprehend myself at once as totally free and as not being able to derive the meaning of the world except as coming from myself." Thus the feeling of responsibility which arises out of freedom anguishes a person. "I am the sum of my actions and nothing else; I am responsible for what I have done and can lay no claim to what I might have done but did not." He also explains that apart from the experience of feeling of dread, man may also experience different moods, on his way to personal growth.

**Conclusion:** I have presented the issues and problems in the respective philosophers' own tenor. I have examined whether dread is both relating and not relating to sin at the very same time. Similarly, I have examined whether anguish is both relating and not relating to freedom at the very same time.

#### NOTES

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- 2. Ibid.
- 3. Op. Cit., p.40.
- 4. Op. Cit., Translator's Preface, p.X
- 5. Op. Cit., Translator's Preface, p.VIII
- 6. Op. Cit., Translator's Preface, p.IX
- 7. Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Being and Nothingness, A Phenomenological Essay onOntology*, translated and with an introduction by Hazel E. Barnes, Washington Square Press, Pocket Books, New York, 1992, p.65.
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