

Kierkegaardian journeys to selfhood



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Kierkegaardian Journeys To Selfhood The two ways in which the Self is created when one is confronted with the dilemma of making an ethical choice or an aesthetic choice. This dilemma has an absolute significance. This is because the choice has to be either based on truth, righteousness and holiness or based on lust and passions that are undesirable. Before making the final choice, one must subject one self to tests in different ways to know that the choice is ethical and hence the right choice. Kierkegaard feels that whether one performs an act under compulsion or not, he would regret it in either case. However, one who is unable to make a choice either way, for such a person the self is not created. Hence, a choice has to be made and this is the way that the self is created.

The aesthetic's form of choice leaves the individual self-less because he has been lured by passions and lust. His choice is based on the emotions which rule him for that small period of time. He is overpowered by those emotions of lust and passions and unable to relieve himself from them. Nobody can understand your actions and thoughts; this does not even attract pity from others. They merely pray that wise sense may prevail upon you someday because every revelation that you make is an illusion. They become self-less because they have deceived their own self throughout the life. This is why Kierkegaard says such choice leaves the individual self-less.

In the ethical stage the virtues are dominant and one evaluates the dilemma and the problem based on truth, honesty and righteousness. In such a situation, the individual is not confronted with a choice. He knows what is to be done. His personality itself is immersed in the choice that he is not different from the choice. The choice and he are indivisible; there is no dualism. Suppose one has to make a choice about a life problem. If he delays

the decision, he is able to understand the situation better. He delays not because is unable to make a choice but to understand the alternatives. When one believes in the inner self, there is no time for though-experiments. A person would always see where the alternatives would lead him to; he would evaluate the shortest path to accomplish his goals or reach his destination. Thus, the choice cannot be wrong because he is evaluating the alternatives with righteousness. The choice has to be made with tone of seriousness. This is because, Kierkegaard says, the next moment one may not have the power to choose. Hence even if the personality postpones the choice, the choice is made unconsciously; the choice is made by the powers within.

Thus the difference in the two ways of making the choice is that one is under intoxication of lust and passions; the other is under the influence of the unconscious self. In the first case the self is lacking which is why the emotions overpower the moment; in the other the self is created because the choice is made by the powers that are within.

There is a lot of similarity between Kierkegaard's method of making a choice and what Buddha preached. Buddha said suffering arises when we confront conflict; this is when mistakes occur and the decisions are made by the mind. Buddha also said that the origin of suffering is attachment while Kierkegaard believes they are passions and lust. The right choice in life can free an individual of pains and sufferings, says Buddha, to which Kierkegaard also agrees. The cause of the pain itself has to be removed and the cause is the wrong choice. Buddha says to remove the cause itself while Kierkegaard says to focus on the right choice. When one focuses on the self and the inner powers, one is not even aware of any pain. Kierkegaard suggests using

discretion and also reflecting on the choice.

Kierkegaard's advice is better because if one tries to remove the cause, one's mind will remain occupied with the cause. On the other hand, when one tries to make the right choice, one is not conscious of the alternative. The mind is not occupied with the cause of suffering. Making the right choice automatically eliminates the suffering and its cause from the self. He does not recognize suffering at all. Only when we recognize something as suffering, we feel the pain. The self is thus created faster if one follows the path of Kierkegaard.