A Kierkegaardian Reading of Plato's Allegory of the Cave

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Abstract: This study read's a part of Plato's *Republic* in the light of Soren Kierkegaard's three stages of life in particular, Plato's allegory of the cave in the context of Kierkegaard's notion of anxiety and despair. The former shows the process of an individual moving towards enlightenment. Likewise, the latter discusses the achieving of life with authenticity through the three stages. The study also gives an analysis of the methodology of both philosophers, namely — Plato's use of anonymity and dialogue vis-à-vis Kierkegaard's indirect communication — with the hope of providing a fresh look at Plato's allegory.

Keywords: Anxiety, Cave, Despair, Process, Stages of Life.

Introduction

In the field of philosophy, many regard Plato as one of the most influential thinkers. Plato is also the key ingredient for the vast development in the ancient period of western thought. Plato along with his teacher Socrates and his student Aristotle laid the foundations of western thought. As the famous philosopher Alfred North Whitehead once stated, "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."[1]

Plato wrote the *the Republic*, which is composed of ten books and contains the ideas and principles of Socratic and Platonic philosophy. In book VII of *the Republic,* we can see his analogy of the dualistic view of reality, known to many as the "Allegory of the Cave."

The individual's turning away from the shadows to see the visible objects and eventually the reality outside the cave, represents the philosopher's journey from darkness to light, from the world of shadows to the world of ideas, from ignorance to the knowledge of forms. Thus, Plato's analogy is a philosophy applied in a given situation for an individual.

After almost two thousand years after, the Dane philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen. He is considered as the father of existentialism, and had influenced the philosophies of Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger, and Emmanuel Levinas, among others. Moreover, he germinated the notions of subjectivity, truth, anxiety, boredom, individual, existence, love, authentic experience via his criticism of Hegel's ideas.

One of his most famed philosophy is his analysis of "the stages" of life's way. He identifies the spheres of existence into three: the aesthetic life, the ethical life, and the religious life. In the first stage, is where an individual seeks sensual satisfaction and is chasing after new things each day. A free spirited life filled with adventure and passion. However, when the

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excitement subsides, people who belong to this stage will start to see life as boring. Thus, leaving the individual fall into despair.[1] The second is the ethical life, which is in contrast with the former. Here, individuals do not rely on sensual pleasures or excitements, instead they anchor their lives in themselves and their duty. The individual's focus is doing what is right in life.[1] The last stage and the highest is the religious life, wherein an individual establishes a unique and solitary relationship with God, which brings one to an authentic form of existence. Richard Lee describes this stage as the 'infinite passion for the infinite'.[2]

What then is the relationship of these two different philosophers? They both lived in far different time periods. It is evident that Plato had no idea of Soren Kierkegaard. Albeit, Kierkegaard has read Plato,[3] there has been no direct written work, essay, or reference on one of the famous myths of Plato's cave. It is from these two important points in the philosophies of Plato and Kierkegaard, this research aims to formulate a reading of Plato's Allegory of the Cave in the light of Kierkegaard's philosophy of the stages of life. This thesis therefore, intends to see Plato's Allegory of the cave in the light of Soren Kierkegaard's stages of life's way.

In meeting this aim, the following sub-problems are addressed: first, how is the journey of an individual towards freedom and truth, illustrated in Plato's allegory of the cave? Second, how is the idea of the "individual" formulated in Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence vis –a-vis the three stages of life? Lastly, how can Plato's allegory of the cave be understood as Kierkegaard's Three Stages of Life?

This thesis primarily uses Kierkegaard's *Sickness Unto Death* (translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Published in New Jersey by Princeton University Press on the year 1980) and other works that are relevant to the study. The study also uses Plato's *Republic* (Translated by Benjamin Jowett, Published in New York by Simon and Schuster Paperbacks on the year 2010).

There are vast measures of existing literature on Plato and Kierkegaard separately, but rarely on both, specifically on the topic Kierkegaard on the allegory of the cave. This study is significant, therefore, for the following reasons: First, in the field of philosophy as it serves as another contribution to the existing interpretations on Plato's allegory of the cave and as an additional input to the existing discussion on Kierkegaard's stages of life. This will also be an introduction to those who want to explore the philosophers Plato and Kierkegaard. Second, in the field of philosophy as it would offer the reader insights on how to live one's life in accordance with Plato and Kierkegaard and lastly, to the existing debate on the concept of the "state of an individual" as the article would give a description that would enhance the debate.

Plato's Allegory of the Cave

1. Platonic Dialogue

In the period of classical Greece, writing in the form of Socratic dialogue was practiced by Socratic authors, but Plato was the only Socratic writer to turn this popular genre into a major art form, because he was the only one who utilized the a forenamed as a device for presenting a full-scale philosophical world view.[4]

Unlike other philosophers, Plato uses anonymity in his writing. He does not address his readers directly as the author. This platonic anonymity is essential for the effectiveness of Plato's work, because a philosopher may assert his own views and arguments, but that would only invite criticisms of his ideas and would

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make his claims intellectually external to his readers. Meanwhile, through Plato's anonymity the reader's experience becomes different. He guides his readers to envision the world as he does, rather than to prove the truth of propositions about the world.[5]

Furthermore, Plato's dialogues can be considered as unique, because it features real personas, events, and places. In his dialogues, we can see characters like Socrates, events such as Agathon's victory and Socrates' trial and execution. Although the elements are real, the conversations and all the circumstantial details of time, place and action are the product of Plato's art.[6]

In Gerald Press' *Plato*, he argues that it is wrong to attribute the ideas of the characters of the dialogues to Plato, because they are not only mouthpieces who impart what Plato wants to say. As he infers:

> It is wrong to argue from a statement made by a character such as Socrates to a conclusion about a belief held by Plato unless one can prove that Plato intended the character to have been read as a mouthpiece in this way. But we have no such evidence. Are Don Quixote's statements to be understood as statements of Cervantes? Are Hamlet or Julius Caesar or Lear merely mouthpieces for the views of Shakespeare? Surely not. What they say, no doubt, bears some relation to what their authors believe, but the relationship is complex, indirect and interpretation, rather than being able to be read straight off the words themselves put into the character's mouth. And so it is with Plato.[7]

If the other characters of Plato's dialogues did not originate from Socrates, then Plato might have placed these characters in his dialogue in order to impart his personal beliefs through different scenarios.

2. The Republic

One of the most influential works of Plato is *The Republic* which contains ten books. It follows the protagonist Socrates along with other individuals, who ponder on the meaning of justice and the state. It also showcases some of Plato's ideologies namely the theory of forms, immortality of the soul and the roles of philosophers. Bertrand Russell categorizes the ten books according to theme. As he writes:

> Plato's most important dialogue, The Republic, consists, broadly of three parts. The first (to near the end of Book V) consists in the construction of an ideal commonwealth; it is the earliest of Utopias. One of the conclusions arrived at is that rulers must be philosophers. Books and VI and VII are concerned to define the word 'philosopher'. This discussion constitutes the second section. The third section consists mainly of a discussion of various kinds of actual constitutions and of their merits and defects."[8]

From this classification, we can see the different themes found in *The Republic*. This thesis, however, focuses on the theme of defining the word philosopher, because this is the area where we can see the object of the Allegory of the Cave that is found in books VI & VII.

A. The Interconnected Analogies of Plato

In books VI and VII of the *Republic,* Plato discusses three analogies: The Analogy of the Sun, Analogy of the divided line and the Allegory of the Cave. These three are used in order to show how a philosopher should be educated. Plato uses these three interconnected images to convey his ideas.[9]

1. Analogy of the Sun

The first analogy is a dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon, it is given by Socrates when Glaucon asked him what goodness is, however

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Socrates professes that he cannot define it so he gave a simile instead.[10] The analogy of the Sun is used as an analogy between the visible and intelligible realm just as the sun is the source of light and growth.[11] It is where Plato compares the good with the sun.

Socrates starts by stating that there are many beautiful and good at the things we define, but there is also the absolute good and the absolute beautiful, and the absolute which may be brought under a single idea.[12] Socrates then separates the sense of sight from the other senses, because for a person to see there needs to be an addition of another nature which is light, because without the light we cannot see color.[13] The source of light is the sun, which is the author of sight, who is recognized by sight.[14] To further clarify this analogy Socrates gives the example that when a person directs his sight at objects when there is no longer light, that persons is nearly blind and his vision is unclear, but when a person views objects when the sun shines, they see clearly.[15] Socrates further expounds this example by comparing the soul to the eye. As Plato writes:

> And the soul is like the eye: when resting upon that on which truth and being shine, the soul perceives and understands, and is radiant with intelligence; but when turned toward the twilight of being and perishing, then she has opinion only, and goes blinking about, and is first of one opinion and then of another, and seems to have no intelligence?[16]

Socrates then defines the good as that which imparts truth to the known and the power of knowing to the knower. The good is the cause of science, truth, and beautiful.[17] In his conclusion, Socrates gives his final statement on what the good and the sun really is, as he writes:

> The sun is not only the author of visibility in all visible things, but also of generation, nourishment and growth. In this manner the good may be said to be not only the author of knowledge to all things known but of their being and essence, and yet the good is not essence.[18]

Through this analogy, we can see that the Forms define the intellectual domain over which the Good reigns as the sun reigns over the visible world[19]. Using this analogy as a foundation, Socrates would immediately continue with the Analogy of the divided line.

2. Analogy of the Divided Line

The second analogy given by Plato is the analogy of the divided line; it is an analogy about the intelligible and the visible world. In order for Socrates to make this known to Glaucon, he uses the line as an instrument to make the distinction between the visible and the intelligible world evident. Socrates starts by letting Glaucon imagine a line that is cut in two unequal parts and the divisions are again divided in the same portion. The two main divisions in this line represents the visible world and the intelligible, through this distinction Socrates then compares the different subdivisions depending on their level of clearness.[20]

According to Socrates the first main division of the line is divided into two spheres wherein the first sphere of this line is where we will see visible shadows, reflections whether from water or polished surfaces. While the second section of the first main division consists of the things we resemble whether animals or anything that grows or is made which is the physical things we see. Socrates adds that both sections of the visible world have different degrees of truth and that the copy is to the original and the opinion is to knowledge.[21]

The other main division of the line, the intelligible world also consists of two divisions. The first division is the lower of the two divisions, is where the soul uses the figures

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given by the former division as images which inquires hypothetically, while the higher division is where the soul passes out of the hypotheses and goes up to a principle, which is above the hypotheses. This stage does not use images like the earlier division, but is proceeding only through ideas themselves.[22]

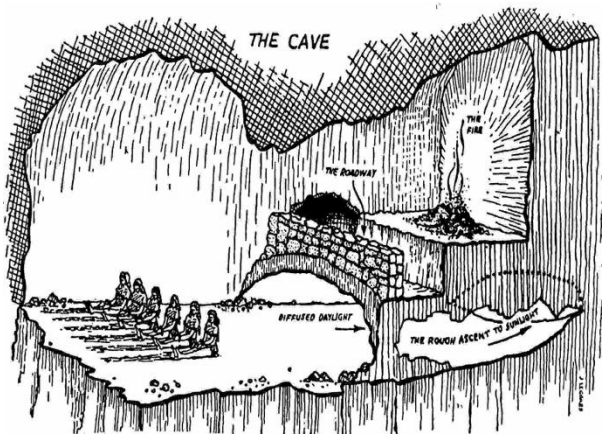
From these two divisions we can see that the visible world consists of opinion, whether derived from shadows and physical objects, and the intelligible world also consists of knowledge that is divided into two parts. The first is knowledge, which the thought recognizes, but is not only of the intelligible as it is also makes use of the visible. While the last and the highest level is knowledge, which is purely intelligible. This is the understanding of only ideas. This is Plato's way of showing us the hierarchy of what knowledge is for him. We can see that Shadows is inferior to Physical objects, Physical objects inferior to Mathematics which deals with both the intellectual and the visible realm, and lastly the highest of them all, which is knowledge, does not rely on any visible object.

After stating the two analogies, Plato now has the proper foundation to impart his third Allegory which is the Allegory of the Cave.

3. The Allegory of the Cave

The third analogy given by Plato is on the Allegory of the Cave. As mentioned earlier, this analogy is the focus of this thesis. The setting of this story is described by Socrates. It is assumed that it occurs in an underground cave, and in it there are prisoners. These prisoners are said to have lived in the cave since birth. They are fixed in the same place with chains in their neck and legs, which allows them to only see things which are in front of them. Behind the prisoners there is a fire which gives light to the cave and between the individuals and the fire there is a path with a wall that would be used by puppeteers in their shadow play. On the other hand, outside the cave, people who carry all kinds of artefacts also project shadows that are said to resemble animals and human statues to the prisoners.[23]

The illustration below shows the setting of this allegory. [24]



From this setting we can see that these images projected by the passers-by and the puppeteers have an impact on the prisoners, because they would associate names for them. At the same time, they would believe that the sounds they hear also come from the shadows, which would eventually lead them to think that truth is none other than the shadows, which they see in front of them.

After giving the setting of the cave, Socrates then proceeds and gives a certain scenario wherein a prisoner of the cave is released and freed from his chains. The individual would then follow the path, which will lead him/her outside the cave. Nonetheless, the prisoner cannot go out of the cave easily, because he will be glared by the light. This is because, he spent all of his life in the dark cave, so he needs to get adjusted before he could see things at daytime. The individual then starts studying during night

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time. At first the individual is capable to see shadows the best; next he will be able to see the reflections of physical objects, until he will be able to see the objects themselves, celestial bodies in the night like the moon and the stars. Eventually, by doing the aforesaid, he will be able to see at day time and look at the sun, which leads him to have reason.[25] The said individual will discover that what he sees in the cave is not real, because he sees the carriers of the artefacts that cause the shadows in the cave. Moreover, when he looks at his reflection in the water he sees himself as a separate individual and not only as a mere reflection, he would argue on the origin of things, the guardian of the world and inquire on things through his reason.[26]

After the enlightenment of an individual, he would be reminded of his/her old dwelling place. That person would find that living in the real world was more superior than living in the cave. He then pities the prisoners in the cave, because they would honor and glorify those individuals who were quick to observe the order of the shadows seen in the cave. The prisoners would choose the individuals who best interpret the shadows as the ideal person to draw conclusions for them in the future,[27] and they believe that shadows are the truth, so the freed individual plans to return to the cave and bring his fellow prisoners out of the cave. But the individual has to compete with the prisoners by measuring the shadows, the enlightened individual would seem ridiculous to the prisoners, because the he loses to the prisoners in determining the shadows, for the reason that his eyesight is not yet fully adapted to living in the darkness again. The prisoners then ridicule the enlightened individual by saying that he went out of the cave and lost his eyesight. The prisoners would then think that living inside the cave was better than ascending outside the cave, and that they should not go through the same journey as the freed individual. The prisoners will kill anyone who would try to free a prisoner and would try to lead them outside the cave.[28]

Plato's Allegory of the cave is a depiction of man's tendency to see only the shadows that is found in the cave, for them to see the shadows as truth. But an individual who escapes this view and through a rigorous process is able to transcend outside the cave that will make him realize that the shadows are mere illusions and the light that illuminates the cave is not the true sunlight, but the borrowed light from the fire inside the cave. The individual is enlightened and knows what is the good the true and the beautiful.

1. Symbolisms of the Allegory

There are different elements found in the abovementioned Allegories. Socrates already defines some when he describes the prison house as the world of sight and the journey towards the upward world as the ascent of the soul to the intellectual world.[29] But through this allegory we can see what the other elements stand for. As the prison is the world of sight, then we can see that the cave represents the visible realm. The world we live in, which is full of opinion and relative truth may stand for the shadows and illusion in the cave. The men who teach false knowledge and the freed individual who seeks to escape this world of opinion, may be the philosophers or individuals who sense that there is something which transcends the visible world. The puppeteers and the carriers of artefacts that shows the shadows stands for those who deceive the masses with their false ideologies. The outside world represents the intellectual world, the sun as seen in the Analogy of the Sun stands for goodness, which gives us the light in order for us to know the truth as we can see from the analogy of the sun.[30] Through the understanding of these

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elements one may easily relate the Allegory of the Cave and its significance in our daily lives.

Soren Kierkegaard and the Three Stages of Life

This chapter aims to establish that Kierkegaard's life is his philosophy, as illustrated in his discussion on stages of life. This chapter also includes personages that hugely affected the way of thoughts manifested in his writings particularly, Michael Kierkegaard and Regina Olsen. This includes the stages in life's way which he divided into three*: the aesthetic*, *ethical* and the *religious* stage.

A. Kierkegaard's life experiences

Kierkegaard uses his personal experiences to start a path of self-discovery. Along the way, he discovered central themes of existentialism such as absurdity, miserable life, the importance of making choices, and the need to live passionately and authentically. He formulated these themes in a radically new kind of Christian context.[31] He rejected traditional answers on both philosophy and the orthodox Christianity of his time. Instead, he embraced a vision of faith that cannot be validated or justified by reason. He was also one of the first philosophers who made philosophy personal, because he believes that reasoned calculation cannot answer the questions on how one should live, but rather how one could answer these questions through one's self.[32]

One history of philosophy book speculates that there are many experiences that may have shaped Kierkegaard's philosophy, but there are specific personalities that contribute to his writings: his father Michael Kierkegaard, his fiancé Regine Oleson and himself.[33] These played significant events in Kierkegaard's life that made his philosophy the way we know it today.

The first is his father, Michael. There are two events in Michael's life that made him an overbearing religious penitent. The first event is when he was still young he cursed God while tending sheep, which is a major sin in the Lutheran pietism he was raised in.[34] The second is when he had an affair with Kierkegaard's mother who was the former maid of the household when his father's wife was still terminally ill.[35] Michael saw the potential in Kierkegaard and he tried to nurture it by letting him eavesdrop on his dinner parties with the elites of Copenhagen and sent Kierkegaard to Latin school with the instruction that he should bring the third best grade, because it is easy for a genius to get good grades. Nevertheless, in order to get the third best, he must figure out the second and fourth best and place himself in the middle.[36] His father also introduced the young Kierkegaard to Christianity by teaching him who Jesus is. Eventually, the experiences he gained from his serious and religious father influence his works to have existential themes such as guilt, remorse, pain and anguish. [37]

The second influence in his writings is Regine Olsen, a woman Kierkegaard solely loved in his life. Kierkegaard met her when he was twenty-one while she when she was fourteen. He waited three years before he could properly court her. He used the three years in finding more about Regine and even befriending her partner Fritz Schlegel and eventually winning her heart thus, they became engaged. However, out of nowhere Kierkegaard cancelled the engagement, because he was not sure that he could continue to do God's work and be married at the same time.[38]

Both of these experiences in Kierkegaard's life helped him formulate his philosophy. Through them he was inspired to formulate the themes that would later be used by the future existentialists in their philosophies.

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B. Kierkegaard's use of Indirect Communication

Kierkegaard believes that subjective truth is the most important kind of truth. Unfortunately, subjective truth cannot be communicated directly, because it is composed of deep insights about one's life, which differs in the case of each individual. In order for Kierkegaard to write about subjective truth he makes use of a theory of 'indirect communication'.[39] He secretly writes books with different pseudonyms to communicate for him; each pseudonym has his own personality, style of writing and belief.[40]

In the last section of Kierkegaard's work *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, he admits that he is indeed the authors of the works that are published under pseudonyms. He says the use of different individual's names is necessary, because they represent different views and personalities. He does not take credit for any of the ideas of the authors. As Kierkegaard writes:

> What is written is indeed therefore mine, but only so far as I have put the life-view of the creating, poetically actualized individuality into his mouth in audible lines, for my relation is even more remote than that of a poet, who creates characters and yet in the preface is himself the author. For I am impersonally, or personally, in the second person, a souffleur1 who has poetically produced the authors, whose prefaces in turn are their production, yes, as are their names. So in the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by myself. I have no opinion about them except as third party, no knowledge of their meaning except as reader, not the remotest private relation to them.[41]

Much of Kierkegaard's inspiration for this method is from Socrates as depicted by Plato, wherein he uses metaphors to help others discover the truth that is present within them. Hence, letting them discover the truth themselves[42]. As Kierkegaard admits, the virtue of the production of his equivocal authorship is Socratic.[43]

C. Kierkegaard on Existence

Kierkegaard is considered to be the founder of existentialism.[44] It is surprising how he laid the foundations to existentialism, influencing the likes of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Jaspers among others. Kierkegaard even claimed that his writings are religious, comparable to those of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. This religiousness is significant for them to reach the aim of their philosophical work.[45] Kierkegaard's importance to the field of philosophy is his concept of existence that could be known objectively, but more genuine subjectively.

On the other hand, Kierkegaard contrasted his notion of existence with that of Hegel, because he believes that mathematics and logic should not be involved when dealing with existence, because they are both objective and cannot deviate from their own rules. Objective sciences make them consistent and fixed. Hegel believes that logic is applicable as a way of understanding existence. However, Kierkegaard stresses that this method has no room for experience, memory and prejudice.[46] As Kierkegaard wrote:

> Abstraction may go on by paraphrasing this as much as it pleases it will never come any further. As soon as the being of truth becomes empirically concrete, truth itself is in the process of becoming and is indeed in turn, by intimation, the agreement between thinking and being, and is indeed actually the way for God but it is not that way for any existing spirit, because this spirit, itself existing, is in the process of becoming.[47]

Kierkegaard views existence as a work in progress, which is completed when a person finds who he really is[48]. An individual must know that he is a definite person that has the

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capability to choose whatever the individual wants to be in life because it possible that one lives his life purely in terms of ritualized formats and social roles but never realizes the truth of one's subjectivity.[49]

He believes that our beliefs will be expressed in our actions, so if we change our beliefs then our actions would also change and this would make us a different person. This change in one's life is evident in Kierkegaard's three stages of life, because in it we can see the change of belief could change the person completely.

D. Kierkegaard on Anxiety

Anxiety is commonly defined as a desire to do something that is typically accompanied by worry, nervousness and unease. Kierkegaard's view on anxiety is seen in his work *The Concept of Anxiety* written under the pseudonym of Vigillus Haufneinsis. This book brings together two disciplines, psychology and dogmatism,[50] which takes its orientation from the doctrine of original sin and the transition from the unconscious life to the preconscious life.[51] This is patterned on the story of the fall of man seen in the book of Genesis.

This story depicts how God created the first human beings, Adam and Eve and placed in the Garden of Eden wherein they have everything they need in life. They are in the presence of God, they have dominion over all the animals and they have everything they need to live a happy and content life. They are able to eat every fruit in the garden except the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because if they eat from this tree then they will surely die. A serpent then came and talked to Eve and said that when she eats from that tree they will not die, but rather their eyes will be opened and they will be like gods knowing what is good and evil. Eve is persuaded and eats the fruit; she then gives some to Adam. After eating from the fruit they realized that they were naked so they sewed fig leaves together to make clothes, God knew of their wrong doings so they were driven out of the garden, made child birth painful and man should earn their food through work.

Kierkegaard views this story of the fall of man as an allegory of each individual's passage from preconscious, animal-like life to self-conscious adulthood.[52] He sees the state of Adam and Eve in the garden before the fall as a state of innocence and ignorance. This is the state wherein they still do not have the attributes of the spirit, but only with immediate unity with nature,[53] but this does not make them as merely animals, because according to Kierkegaard man is a synthesis of the psychical and the physical which is united by the spirit which makes them not merely animals, because if man is merely an animal then he cannot be a man.[54] Then, we can infer that anxiety came to man when God prohibited Adam from eating the forbidden fruit. It induced Adam in anxiety, because this prohibition awakens in Adam freedom's possibility.[55] This is because Adam became conscious in the fact that he can become a person who does not do what God tells him to.

Kierkegaard urges us that we must be like a young man from the Grimm's fairy tales, which is the story of the young man who embarks on an adventure in order to learn what it is to be in anxiety. Every human being must go on a similar adventure to learn to be anxious, so that he may not live without anxiety or be defeated by it.[56] As he writes, "Whoever has learned to be anxious in the right way has learned the ultimate."[57]

He also defines that "anxiety is a *synthetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy.*"[58] Regarding

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this, Palmer provided an explanation, as he writes:

> That is, dread (anxiety) is the desire for what one fears and the fear of what one desires. Once Adam knows he can disobey God, he desires to do so, and he dreads his own desire, because he knows that as a free being there is nothing but himself to stop him from sinning.[59]

In other words, anxiety is when one fears the monstrousness of freedom, because there is nothing that could prevent Adam from eating the forbidden fruit but himself.[60]

E. Kierkegaard on Despair

Another negative emotion Kierkegaard dwells on is despair. Despair is defined as the complete loss or absence of hope. It can be seen to those who no longer have hope and is on the verge of giving up. Kierkegaard gave a deeper meaning to the term in his work entitled *The Sickness Unto Death* written under the pseudonym of Anti-Climacus.

Despair arises when an individual fail to be the self that one truly is and this is what he calls the 'sickness unto death'.[61] This death is not a physical death, but rather to long for death. For Kierkegaard despair is something, which is present even if one is not in despair, or one is not conscious of being in despair. It is still a form of despair.[62] If despair is present when we do not have despair, then all individuals whatever the situation in life, there will always be despair.

In order to be free from despair one must strive to overcome it, rather than to deny its existence. Through acknowledging that one is in despair, the more the individual becomes a conscious spirit, he writes:

> Those who say they are in despair are usually either those who have so deep a nature that they are bound to become conscious as spirit or those whom bitter experiences and dreadful decisions have assisted in becoming conscious as spirit.[63]

Moreover, Kierkegaard gave three forms of despair which are the following:

1. Despair as Defined by Finitude/Infinitude

The first classification views despair in the aspect of finitude and infinitude. Kierkegaard begins by stating that the self is the conscious synthesis of both finitude and infinitude that relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, which can only be done only through the relationship with God,[64] In order for the self to be concrete, one must neither become finite nor infinite, rather it should be a synthesis of the two, he writes:

> Every moment in which a human existence has become or simply wants to be infinite, is despair. For the self is the synthesis of which the finite is the limiting and the infinite the extending constituent. Infinitude's despair, therefore, is the fantastic, the unlimited, for the self is healthy and free from despair only when, precisely by having despaired, it rests transparently in God.[65]

Based from the excerpt above, the first form of despair is born out of ignorance. It is when man is in a state, wherein he is not aware of the infinite that created him/her. Consequently, this is where one accepts living a finitude life without knowing the infinite. Hence, Kierkegaard considered a person who is in this phase, as someone who is in despair. Contrariwise, according to him, it is not apparently seen, because of man's state as being preoccupied with temporal matters. A person have a family and is honored by his/her fellow men that would make it hard to see that one lacks a self.[66]

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We can see in our world today that losing the self does not cause a huge concern in our world. This is considered as dangerous by Kierkegaard. As he writes:

> The greatest hazard of all, losing the self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all. No other loss can occur so quietly; any other loss—an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc.—is sure to be noticed.[67]

We can see that in our world today, losing a self goes unnoticed. However, on the one hand, losing material things like money for example, would be more noticeable.

2. Despair as Defined by Possibility/Necessity

The second classification is despair. It is viewed in the aspect of possibility and necessity, which for Kierkegaard are both essential for one's becoming, so both of these are essential if one wants to be free from despair. As Kierkegaard states, "A self that has no possibility is in despair, and likewise a self that has no necessity."[68]

Kierkegaard defines a self that is lost in possibility as:

> … missing the power to obey, to submit to the necessity of one's life, to what may be called one's limitations. The tragedy is when he did not become aware of himself, aware that the self he is a very definite something and thus the necessary. Instead, he lost himself because this self fantastically reflected itself in possibility.[69]

As seen above, if a man only lives by possibilities, then we can see that he is not aware of himself. A man who thinks of his possibilities without necessity, would not be able to make his possibility an actuality, because without a person knowing himself and taking action on these possibilities, then these will only remain in one's imagination, which leads to despair and frustration on the individual.

On the other hand, a person who has necessity without possibility is in despair. According to Kierkegaard a person without possibility is unable to breathe.[70] As he writes:

> Personhood is a synthesis of possibility and necessity. Its continued existence is like breathing (respiration), which is an inhaling and exhaling. The self of the determinist cannot breathe, for it is impossible to breathe necessity exclusively, because that would utterly suffocate a person's self.[71]

Without possibilities, then an individual is incomplete, because they are necessary with each other, our possibilities as finite beings are limited but in God everything is possible so we should believe in God in order to combat this despair. As he writes:

> The believer has the ever infallible antidote for despair — possibility — because for God everything is possible at every moment. This is the good health of faith that resolves contradictions. The contradiction here is that, humanly speaking, downfall is certain, but that there is possibility nonetheless. Good health generally means the ability to resolve contradictions.[72]

As finite beings our possibilities are limited, so we should trust in God, because for Him all things are possible.

3. Despair as Defined by Consciousness

The third classification views despair in the aspect of consciousness, whether one is conscious or unconscious of being in despair. Unconscious despair is the most common form of despair. It is when one does not knows that he is in despair, thus he does not eliminate it.[73]

Kierkegaard identifies two forms of conscious despair: (1) the despair of weakness and (2) the

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despair of defiance. In reference to this, Kierkegaard also posited that there are two forms of Despair of Weakness, (1) the despair over the earthly and (2) the despair for the eternal.

Kierkegaard gave the description of the despair over the earthly as follows:

> This is pure immediacy or immediacy containing a quantitative reflection. — Here there is no infinite consciousness of the self, of what despair is, or of the condition as one of despair. The despair is only a suffering, a succumbing to the pressure of external factors; in no way does it come from within as an act.[74]

The despair of the earthly comes from the external causes. On the other hand, an individual's despair comes from the loss of material things in this world and if the external condition is changed and the individuals desire is fulfilled, then the individual would be alive again. This man of immediacy does not identify his own self, but he identifies himself with the clothes he wears.[75]

While the despair for the eternal happens when one knows that he is in despair of earthly things. Kierkegaard regarded this kind of despair as different from the despair over earthly, because in this state one is already aware of one's weakness. As he writes:

> Despair over the earthly or over something earthly is in reality also despair of the eternal and over oneself, insofar as it is despair, for this is indeed the formula for all despair but the individual in despair depicted above is not aware, so to speak, of what is going on behind him. He thinks he is despairing over something earthly and talks constantly of that over which he despairs, and yet he is despairing of the eternal, for the fact that he attributes such great worth to something earthly—or, to carry this further, that he attributes to something earthly such great worth, or that he first makes something earthly into the whole world and then attributes such great worth to the earthly — this is in fact to despair of the eternal.[76]

Kierkegaard asserted that despair involves a greater psyche which he described as eternal and which brings us closer to salvation.[77] But this despair is still a despair who does not will to be oneself. Kierkegaard compares people in this state of despair as like that of young children. As he writes:

> In fact, it is only purely immediate man—who in the category of spirit is just about on the same level as the young child, who, with utterly lovable unconstraint, tells all—it is only purely immediate people who are unable to hold anything back. It is this kind of immediacy that often with great pretension calls itself 'truth, being honest, an honest man telling it exactly as it is,' and this is just as much a truth as it is an untruth when an adult does not immediately yield to a physical urge. Every self with just a minuscule of reflection still knows how to constrain the self." And our man in despair is sufficiently self-inclosed to keep this matter of the self away from anyone who has no business knowing about it[78]

This is where ethical person acknowledges that there is despair on the earthly, but he does not address this problem.

The second form of the conscious despair is the Despair of Defiance. Individuals in this kind of despair will to be themselves. They would be motivated by desire to be whoever they want to be. This is where one believes that one is able to the task of becoming all on their own, who refuses dependency on God.[79]

As Kierkegaard writes:

> In this form of despair, there is a rise in the consciousness of the self, and therefore a greater consciousness of what despair is and that one's state is despair. Here the despair is conscious of itself as an act; it does not come from the outside as a suffering under the pressure of externalities but comes directly from the self.

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> Therefore, defiance, compared with despair over one's weakness, is indeed a new qualification.[80]

Although this stage is a self that wills itself, it is in despair, because the task of becoming who they are through themselves makes them the ruler of their lives.

F. The Self and the Stages of Life

Kierkegaard gives three different stages of existence which are the aesthetic, ethical, and the religious stages. These different stages of existence represent the different passions of life that gives shape to the different configurations of human existence. These steps are presented by Kierkegaard as stages that show human existence as developing, starting from the aesthetic to the ethical, and eventually to the religious.[81]

1. The Self in the Aesthetic Stage

The first stage of existence is the aesthetic stage. This is the stage wherein an individual is living in the moment, and is listening to their own immediate desires.[82] If a new interest comes up to them, they will pursue it. Moreover, in this stage there is a need for continuous entertainment, in order for them not to be bored. This can be seen in the essay of 'A' as seen in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, wherein he states that boredom is the root of all evil.[83] As "A" writes:

> It would be quite impossible to prevail if one wanted to demand a divorce because one's wife is boring, or demand that a king be dethroned because he is boring to behold, or that a clergyman be exiled because he is boring to listen to, or that a cabinet minister be dismissed or a journalist be executed because he is frightfully boring. Since boredom advances and boredom is the root of all evil.[84]

The aesthete is comparable with that of a young child because a young child is dominated by immediate desires.[85] Individuals in this stage have their lives governed by principles sensuousness. As a result of being guided by pleasure, one is never in control of one's self, but rather the aesthete's life is governed by external circumstances.[86]

In this stage there is no fixation of the self, which Lee calls to be a 'centre-less self'.[87] As seen in the earlier discussion on Kierkegaard's concept of despair, we saw a kind of despair that is the self, that is unconscious of being in despair. The self in stage of aesthetic life is experiencing that despair. We can also say that the individual in this stage also experiences the despair over the earthly, because the aesthete's life is fixated on the earth, earthly passion and material things are his object of desire.

2. The Self in the Ethical Stage

The Second stage of existence is the Ethical Stage. This is the state wherein the self has a quest for identity; the ethicist sees the aesthetic life as living in the moment and reduces the self to a collection of moments.[88] So the ethicist seeks to be something more than a collection of desires, he wants to have some degree of coherence and unity.[89] For Kierkegaard, to be a self is to know one's self and he should have something is to live for,[90] one must have a concrete set of values and commitment that does not change often like that of the aesthetic sphere.

This is where the individual has to make a choice on what set of morals he should live his life; the ethicist's choice of what he wants is important, because it dictates the course of his life.

In the ethical stage, we can see the despair of the eternal, because individuals in this stage are more conscious of themselves and of despair. They are aware that they are in despair, but they

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would aim for achievements or dissolving one's self to sensuous living, in order to forget the despair.[91]

Although the self in this stage has discipline and is living an ethical life, the self that is found in this stage is still not free and despairing.[92] The true individual who is free from despair is the one who is aware of the eternal and lives by faith; this is what this stage lacks.

3. The Self in the Religious Stage

The last and the highest stage of existence is the Religious Stage. As we can see from the previous stages of life, individuals found in them are still in despair, which has a positive side, because it reminds an individual of something eternal.[93]

The ethical stage is connected with the religious stage, because an individual may be ethical but not religious, but being religious means being ethical also. What differs between the Religious and the Ethical stage is the commitment an individual makes, in the ethical stage man is committed to a set of moral values on which he follows, but on the religious is committed to the will of God.

In Kierkegaard's work entitled *Fear and Trembling* written under the pseudonym of Johannes de silento, it attempts to understand the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac.

The story begun when God promised to Abraham that his wife would conceive a child despite their old age. Sarah then was able to conceive and gave birth to Isaac, who made Abraham happy. But later on, God talked to Abraham and ordered him to sacrifice his son Isaac on an altar. Without hesitation Abraham obeyed God's command. He placed his son in the altar and as he was about to strike his son, an angel of the Lord stopped him saying that Abraham passed the test.[94]

Amazed at this story, Johannes de silento found two movements of Abraham that occurred at the same time and in the same act,[95] these are the movement of the infinite resignation and the movement of faith. As Johannes writes:

> Abraham makes two movements. He makes the infinite movement of resignation and gives up Isaac, which no one can understand because it is a private venture; but next, at every moment, he makes the movement of faith. This is his consolation. In other words, he is saying: But it will not happen, or if it does, the Lord will give me a new Isaac.[96]

The 'leap' or movement of faith is performed when an individual move from one stage of experience to the other, by putting behind one's old self. For Kierkegaard, this is performed by virtue of the absurd.[97]

In above mentioned story, we can also see that Abraham had performed the 'teleological suspension of the ethical',[98] which entails the suspension of the ethical for a higher purpose, which is religious.

The story of Abraham shows what an individual in the Religious Stage is, an individual who is able to put God above first, above pleasure and worldly moralities. This is Kierkegaard's highest stage of existence, wherein the self is related absolutely to the absolute.[99] The self in this stage is identified by Lee as "a God-centred self, who is a free and the true self."[100]

From these ideas of Kierkegaard, we will now see how these are compatible with that of Plato's allegory of the cave. This will be discussed in the succeeding chapter.

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A Kierkegaardian Reading of the Allegory of the Cave

In this chapter, the author seeks to reexamine Plato's allegory of the cave in the light of Kierkegaard's philosophy of the three stages of life. This study illustrates Plato and Kierkegaard's indirect way of communication as their methodologies, particularly the use of anonymity and dialogue.

George Pattison notes that throughout his life, Kierkegaard is fascinated by Socrates. From the beginning of his first major work entitled *The Concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates*, until his last work a pamphlet series entitled *The Moment*, wherein he declared that "the only analogy I have for what I am doing is Socrates."[101] Socrates then plays a role in Kierkegaard's philosophy and appears regularly throughout his works.

It is important to note that Plato is the one who preserved Socrates's ideas and thus, implies indirectly that Kierkegaard reads Socrates via Plato.

Kierkegaard is aware of the difference of the ideas of Plato and Socrates. As Rebecca Elleray in her essay entitled "Kierkegaard, Socrates and Existential Individuality" writes:

> Kierkegaard draws a distinction between Socrates' and Plato's thought. Plato's thought is characterized by our coming to know an eternal realm of 'Forms' – the archetypes of which all our changing experiences are instances. Kierkegaard sees Socrates to be an 'ironist', bringing us to a state of doubt in which we are thrown back on to our existential (lived) situation when making decisions. On realizing this, we cannot avoid responsibility for our basic understanding of truth by simply referring our thought to absolute standards of objectivity.[102]

Kierkegaard is aware that Plato and Socrates are two different individuals. Although Kierkegaard is more drawn with the ideas of Socrates with that of Plato, Plato is still the one who made all of it possible.

Plato's allegory of the cave depicts the different experiences the individual faces, as the individual progresses his journey there is a process of self-realization in the individual. While in Kierkegaard's three stages of life, he depicts the different stages in one's life starting from the lowest to the highest stage in one's life.

One may ask however, is it not that the process of realization and the different stages are synonymous? Both are processes of the realization of the self, where an individual recognizes a higher understanding of life. In this manner, the Allegory of the Cave is similar to that of the three stages of life because both depict a process wherein the individual becomes better than what he previously was.

The researcher would like to explain in a simple manner, the allegory of the cave and how this is seen in the aspect of Kierkegaard's stages of life.

A. Cave Dwellers and the Aesthetic Life

The first phase in Kierkegaard's stages of life is the aesthetic stage. This stage is present in the allegory symbolized by the prisoners in the cave.

In the allegory, the prisoner is bound by chains. He is only able to understand things through sight, by seeing shadows casted by the puppeteers and by hearing through the sounds they perceive. The prisoner is only limited to a sensuous understanding of life. He has no other possibility of understanding his surroundings because he is constrained in a fixed manner. They would incorporate meaning to the shadows in the cave and glorify those who could give the best interpretation.

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Previously, we defined the aesthetic life as a life which is dictated from principles of sensuousness. As the result of being dictated by the senses, an individual is not in control of himself, but rather he is controlled by external circumstances. In this stage of existence, the self is a center-less self.[103]

There are similarities between the state of the prisoner and the aesthete. The Prisoner's life is also dictated by sensuous principles, because here a person knows by what he sees and hears. Thus, he is also not in control of himself. Moreover, in this situation, an individual is also dictated by external circumstances. He is also in despair. In fact it can be said that the prisoner has four kinds of despair: (1) despair of finitude, (2) despair defined by possibility, (3) despair of ignorance of being in despair, and (4) the despair over the earthly.

Another aesthetic characteristic that the prisoner has is the importance of art. The shadows seen in the cave represents Plato's view on art, which is a false form of truth. In the aesthetic stage the arts have an important role with the aesthete. As Evans states, "The arts have a connection to the immediate because the arts in some way appeal to the senses."[104] The prisoner, like the aesthete views highly of art. Another point in relation to this is despair. For Kierkegaard, despair arises when one fails to be the self that one truly is.

Despairs of the Cave Dweller

A. Despair of Finitude

The first kind of despair is the despair of finitude. This despair arises when one is not aware of the infinite, because for Kierkegaard a self is a synthesis of finitude and infinitude that relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, which can only be done only through the relationship with God.[105] The despair of the finite is when he lacks the infinitude. As Kierkegaard writes:

> As a matter of fact, in the world there is interest only in intellectual or esthetic limitation or in the indifferent (in which there is the greatest interest in the world), for the secular mentality is nothing more or less than the attribution of infinite worth to the indifferent. The secular view always clings tightly to the difference between man and man and naturally does not have any understanding of the one thing needful (for to have it is spirituality), and thus has no understanding of the reductionism and narrowness involved in having lost oneself, not by being volatilized in the infinite, but by being completely finitized, by becoming a number instead of a self, just one more man, just one more repetition of this everlasting *Einerlei* [one and the same.[106]

In the allegory, the prisoner is bound inside the cave. He is still in the presence of shadows. He is still in a state wherein he is not aware that there is an infinite that created him. This causes him to have this kind of despair.

The prisoner is like the aesthete, because both are ignorant of the fact that there is an infinite. Both only dwell on things which make them happy. As Kierkegaard infers, "What is glorious and divine about esthetics is that it is associated only with the beautiful; essentially it deals only with belles lettres and the fair sex. It can give me joy, it can joy my heart."[107]

Without knowledge of the infinite, the prisoner in the cave has the despair of 'finitude/infinitude'.

B. Despair of Possibility

The second kind of despair is the despair of possibility. This despair arises when an individual does not have a possibility. As Kierkegaard states:

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> The necessary is like pure consonants, but to express them there must be possibility. If this is lacking, if a human existence is brought to the point where it lacks possibility, then it is in despair and is in despair every moment it lacks possibility.[108]

In the allegory, the prisoner is in this despair because he does not have any possibilities. He cannot do anything aside from looking at the shadows in front of him. Here, a person is unable to move from his position. He cannot do the simplest movement like moving one's neck, for example. The lack of basic movement shows that there is hardly any possibility for the prisoner.

C. Despair of Ignorance of Being in Despair

The third kind of despair is the despair of ignorance of being in despair. This despair arises when an individual is not aware that he is in despair. Thus an individual is unable to fix his despair. This kind of despair is the most common in the world. As Kierkegaard writes:

> This form of despair (ignorance of it) is the most common in the world; indeed, what we call the world, or, more exactly, what Christianity calls the world—paganism and the natural man in Christendom, paganism as it was historically and is (and paganism in Christendom is precisely this kind of despair) is despair but is ignorant of the fact.[109]

Likewise, the prisoner in the allegory is like the pagan, because he is also ignorant that he is in despair. The aesthete also is unaware that he is in despair because the aesthete category does not provide a criterion of what is despair.[110] Due to the ignorance of his despair, then the prisoner would do nothing to remove the despair.

D. Despair Over the Earthly

The fourth kind of despair is the despair over the earthly. This despair arises when an individual losses material things and his external condition is changed, where an individual desire something temporal and worldly. As Kierkegaard writes:

> He himself, is an accompanying something within the dimensions of temporality and secularity, in immediate connection with "the other" and has but an illusory appearance of having anything eternal in it. The self is bound up in immediacy with the other in desiring, craving, enjoying, etc., yet passively; in its craving, this self is a dative[111]

Socrates says that the cave represents our world. The prisoners represent the individuals who desire earthly pleasures, honors and objects. They would rely on the cave for truth and they would choose among themselves who is the best interpreter of the shadows. Their whole lives are based on this cave; they are like the aesthete who also exists for worldly pleasures and desires.

From this examination, the prisoner in the allegory of the cave is an individual living in the aesthetic stage because the prisoner has characteristics similar to that of the aesthete. Due to these similarities, we can say that the prisoner is an aesthete.

Later in the allegory, a prisoner is eventually freed, which enables him to reach the next stage of existence.

The Freed Individual and the Ethical Life

The second stage in Kierkegaard's stages of existence is the ethical stage. This stage is present in the allegory symbolized by the freed individual.

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In the allegory, Socrates depicts the release of a prisoner from the cave, He then decides to embark in a journey out of the cave. The journey is a tedious process because he takes time before he is able to see the sun. After some time, the gradation of his sight slowly improves from seeing shadows, to being able to see the objects themselves; however, he still is not able to see the sun.

Previously, we defined the ethical life as the state where a self has a quest to find his identity. This is the stage wherein one seeks to be more than a collection of desires. The ethical individual is on a quest to find meaning in his life by adapting a set of moral principles on how to live his life.[112]

Likewise, the freed individual also undergoes this ethical process. This process leads him to know his own identity. He is no longer sees the world as collection of shadows. The freed individual now discovers his form of identity. He no longer sees himself in shadows but in concrete terms, He sees the absurdity of his old self. This realization allows him to live different from those inside the cave.

A. Anxiety in the Freed Individual

When the prisoner is released, he experiences a moment of decision. He is in the state of anxiety. Kierkegaard defines anxiety as the dizziness of freedom that emerges when a spirit wants to posit the synthesis and freedom now looks into its own possibility.[113] The freed individual fears of monstrousness of freedom.

Kierkegaard also defines consciousness of the future as anxiety.[114] The future is not like the past, which is unchangeable. The future is still uncertain; one must create his own future possibilities. Anxiety arises from this fear of one's self creation. One must create his future and this also leads to anxiety.

In the allegory, the freed individual is in the state of anxiety because there is nothing stopping him from going outside the cave. He is contemplating whether he should go outside of the cave or remain inside. He could stay in the cave and live seeing shadows, but knowing that there is a possibility of living differently outside the cave causes him anxiety. He fears this decision because whatever decision he will choose it will define what kind of person he will become in the future

Like the prisoner the freed individual is also affected by despair. He is affected by two kinds of despairs.

2. Despair of the Freed Individual

A. Despair of Finitude

The first kind of despair is the despair of finitude. Like the prisoner the freed also experiences this kind of despair. Although the freed individual has discovered who he is, he still does not have a relation to the infinite which leads to his despair.

In the ethical stage, the ethicist still does not have a relationship with the infinite. Kierkegaard views Socrates as an ethicist but he is not a religious ethicist. As he writes:

> Socrates was indeed an ethicist, the first (in fact, the founder of ethics, as antiquity unconditionally claims), just as he is and remains the first of his kind, but he begins with ignorance. Intellectually, he tends toward ignorance, toward knowing nothing. Ethically, he interprets ignorance as something quite different and begins with that. On the other hand, Socrates naturally is not an essentially religious ethicist, even less a Christian dogmatician. Therefore, he does not really enter into the whole investigation with which Christianity begins.[115]

Kierkegaard sees Socrates as a person living in the ethical life, because he does not have a

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relationship with God. So, Socrates also falls in this despair.

B. Despair Over the Eternal

The second kind of despair is the despair over the eternal. This despair arises when one knows that he is in despair of earthly things. This kind of despair differs from the despair over earthly because in this state one is already aware of his weakness.[116] The individual now knows that he is in despair of the earthly but he does not address his problem. Kierkegaard says that those individuals who know they are in despair, yet does nothing to get rid of it experience a more intensive kind of despair. As he writes:

> However, it is in only one sense, in a purely dialectic sense, that the individual who is ignorant of his despair is further from the truth and deliverance than one who knows it and yet remains in despair, for in another sense, an ethical-dialectical sense, the person who is conscious of his despair and remains in it is further from deliverance, because his despair is more intensive.[117]

In the allegory, the freed individual still relies on the visible world to know himself. He is still unable to venture completely outside the cave in broad daylight to see the sun. He has the despair over the eternal, because he knows that despair over the earthly leads to despair, but he does not make a solution. It is,because he still relies on the visible world for knowledge, so he is still unable to leave the cave.

From this examination, the freed individual is in the ethical stage of Kierkegaard's stages of existence. He also ventures on a similar process of finding his true identity.

There will come a time wherein a man would realize that there is something more to life than pleasures and worldly things and then as a result he will seek the unchangeable. As Kierkegaard writes:

> There will also come times when you will have occasion to discover for yourself a saying which the language has suppressed, and you will say to yourself: 'Change is not pleasant how could I ever have said that variety is a pleasure!' When this experience comes to you, you will have especial occasion (though you will surely not forget this in the first case either) to seek Him who is unchangeable.[118]

When a man yearns to seek God, then he will proceed to the next stage where in his process of realization is now complete.

The Enlightened Individual as the Knight of Faith

The third stage in Kierkegaard's stages of existence is the religious stage. This stage is present in the allegory symbolized by the enlightened individual. In the religious stage, an individual completely surrenders himself to the will of God. He sees that there is something higher than morality and rules imposed to him by the society. He becomes aware that there is a God who has a higher authority in his life. He understands the duty given to him by the Absolute. As Kierkegaard writes:

> That there is an absolute duty to God, for in this relationship of duty the individual relates himself as the single individual absolutely to the absolute. In this connection, to say that it is a duty to love God means something different from the above, for if this duty is absolute, then the ethical is reduced to the relative. From this it does not follow that the ethical should be invalidated; rather, the ethical receives a completely different expression, a paradoxical expression.[119]

The individual's in the religious stage of life is called by Kierkegaard as the 'knight of faith'. Abraham is an example of the knight of faith, because he follows the duty of the Absolute. By

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sacrificing Isaac, he is able to do what seems unethical. As Kierkegaard writes:

> The absolute duty can lead one to do what ethics would forbid, but it can never lead the knight of faith to stop loving. Abraham demonstrates this. In the moment he is about to sacrifice Isaac, the ethical expression for what he is doing is: he hates Isaac. But if he actually hates Isaac, he can rest assured that God does not demand this of him, for Cain and Abraham are not identical. He must love Isaac with his whole soul. Since God claims Isaac, he must, if possible, love him even more, and only then can he *sacrifice* him, for it is indeed this love for Isaac that makes his act a sacrifice by its paradoxical contrast to his love for God.[120]

In the allegory, the freed individual is enlightened when he finally is able to see the sun. He is now able to see himself as himself. As Plato writes:

> Last of all he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.[121]

He now has now a clear understanding of what he is. This is all due to the sun; because once he was able to see its light he attained reason.

For Kierkegaard the enlightened individual is courageous, because he had the courage to undergo the journey outside the cave. As he said, "it takes a purely human courage to renounce the whole temporal realm in order to gain eternity."[122]

The enlightened individual lives in the religious stage, because he now sees the intelligible world. He is like the knight of faith, because he now sees the true meaning of living life. he has already become what he really is.

The self for Kierkegaard is a synthesis of finitude and infinitude with a relationship with God. The enlightened individual in the same manner knows of the visible and the intellectual world and he has a relationship with the Good, thus He is living in the religious stage which is the highest form of existence. Unlike the previous stages of existence, Kierkegaard sees the religious individual as free from despair. As he writes:

> We are touched; we look back to those beautiful times. Sweet sentimental longing leads us to the goal of our desire, to see Christ walking about in the Promised Land. We forget the anxiety, the distress, the paradox.[123]

One may argue that enlightened individual is not in the religious life because there is no God mentioned in the allegory.

1. Plato's Sun as Kierkegaard's God

In his Analogy of the Sun, Plato compares the Sun to his idea of the good. The good is described as seen with effort. When it is finally seen it is inferred "as the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and the lord of light in this visible world and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual."[124]

Plato did not clearly state a concept of God, but when Kierkegaard sees Plato's idea of the good, he will relate it with God because he believes that God is the creator and the provider of all things. As Kierkegaard writes:

> Behold the birds of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns.' Yet the birds certainly do not live on air any more than men do. So there must be one who sows and reaps and gathers into barns for them? That there is indeed, namely God, the great caretaker and provider, or, as we call Him, Providence. He sows and reaps and gathers into barns, and the whole world is, as it were, His immense store-room.[125]

From this, we can see that the sun in the allegory in Kierkegaard's perspective because

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Plato's good is the universal author of all things, it is described as the lord of light in this visible world. Kierkeaard's God is the Christian God, who is also described as the Alpha and the Omega, creator of heaven and earth.

Plato's did not give a definite definition of God. This is because Plato and the other ancient Greek philosophers lived before Christ existed. In Plato's time, the gospel was not made known to the gentiles and was exclusive for the Israelites. Plato's good is a pagan view of God.

2. Enlightened Individual's Leap of Faith

The enlightened individual sees the real world as more superior compared to the cave, which reminds him of his old habitation. He pities the prisoners in the cave, so he wants them to lead them out of the cave. The individual acts like a knight faith, he believes in the absurd through faith. As Kierkegaard writes:

> The knight of faith realizes this just as clearly; consequently, he can be saved only by the absurd, and this he grasps by faith. Consequently, he acknowledges the impossibility, and in the very same moment he believes the absurd.[126]

His return to the cave can be seen as a leap of faith, because he does not know what will happen to him when he returns back to the cave. He surrenders everything to God.

Upon his return to the cave, his eyesight is still not adjusted in the darkness. The prisoners used his poor eyesight to conclude that the journey outside the cave only causes harm. No one should be allowed to go in the same journey. When one attempts to lead another outside the cave he will be killed.

The prisoners would rather believe in the shadows, rather than the truth themselves. Kierkegaard describes these kinds of people as dominated by the sensations. As he writes:

> For example, if a man is presumably happy, imagines himself to be happy, although considered in the light of truth he is unhappy, he is usually far from wanting to be wrenched out of his error. On the contrary, he becomes indignant, he regards anyone who does so as his worst enemy, he regards it as an assault bordering on murder in the sense that, as is said, it murders his happiness. Why? Because he is completely dominated by the sensate and the sensate-psychical, because he lives in sensate categories, the pleasant and the unpleasant, waves goodbye to spirit, truth, etc., because he is too sensate to have the courage to venture out and to endure being spirit.[127]

Just like the prisoners in the cave, they far from wanting to be corrected in their error. They would view those who correct them as their worst enemy because the enlightened individual would destroy their happiness.

Kierkegaardian Interpretation of Plato's Allegory of the Cave

It is noticeable as well that Plato did not explain or provide details on how exactly the individual is able to free himself and eventually to go outside the cave. Plato also did not give the real motive, on why the individual returned back to the cave. This portion would like to push through with the story by incorporating Kierkegaard's philosophy, particularly the personages of the stages of existence, in the hope to see an answer to these mysteries left by Plato.

The prisoner (aesthete) is able to go outside the cave, because he is experiencing anxiety and despair and boredom, which is caused out of his aesthetic situation. He is bored, because of the false truth he is living in. He yearns to be something more in life not just a life full of shadows (aesthetic desires). This sparks his

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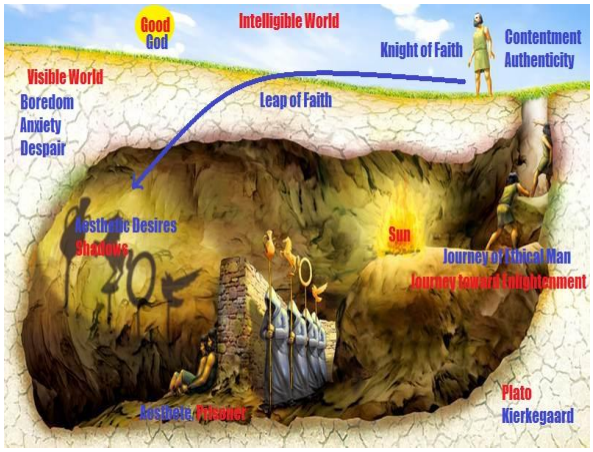
journey outside the cave. The journeying individual (ethical man) learns that life is not full of shadows (aesthetic desires). He follows a moral virtue to live his life on. But in the end, boredom, anxiety, and despair still persist, because he is bored out of his daily cycle, which leads him to seek a higher form of living. This is when he reaches outside the cave and when he is able to see the Sun(God), instead of the fire(sun). He sees the Sun (God) and reason came to him. He now becomes an enlightened individual (Knight of Faith).

In this state the individual is living the most fulfilling stage in life. There would be no more sense of boredom, anxiety and despair. In this stage, one is contented in life. While Plato did not say how or why the individual who is content in life would plan on returning back to the cave, but through Kierkegaard's stages of life, we can see why the enlightened individual (Knight of Faith) would dare go back inside the cave, without regard for his own safety he returns back into the cave because he would like to enlighten the prisoners in the cave. This return (Leap of Faith) to the cave brings him misfortune as he is mocked and ridiculed.

A summary of the Kierkegaardian reading of Plato's Allegory can be seen in the illustration below: [128]



As we can see that through Kierkegaard, the allegory of the cave of Plato is now seen in a new interpretation. Voids left by Plato are also answered through the incorporation of Kierkegaard.

Through Kierkegaard's reading of the allegory, we can see the similarities between the two. The aim of the allegory and the stages of existence are to make their readers aware that one should strive to become enlightened. The only difference of the two studies is that Kierkegaard wrote his idea in a Christian view, while Plato sees it as the education a state ruler. When Kierkegaard's philosophy is incorporated with the allegory, it results in a new interpretation of Plato's cave. It is now seen as a man's path to know God.

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[1] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: The Free Press, 1957), 53.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Kierkegaard has certainly read Plato because he even wrote the "In Vino Veritas" which is a dialogue that invites comparison with Plato's symposium and he even wrote a thesis on Socrates, so we can see that Kierkegaard really has an idea of Plato's works but he has not concentrated or has given a commentary on Plato's allegory of the cave.

[4] Charles Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9.

[5] Gerard Press, *Plato: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 146.

[6] Ibid., 97.

[7] Ibid., 147.

[8] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 97.

[9] Louis Pojman, *Classics of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2011), 169.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Plato, *Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2010), 294.

[13] Ibid., 295.

[14] Ibid., 296.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

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[17] Ibid., 297.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Kahn, 362.
[20] Plato, 298.
[21] Ibid., 299.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Plato, 302-303.
[24] Image taken from https://ethicsjusticeandsociety.voices.wooster.edu/allegory-of-the-cave/.
[25] Plato, 304-305.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid. 306.
[29] Plato, 306.
[30] "As goodness stands in the intelligible realm to intelligence and the things we know, so in the visible realm the sun stands to sight and the things we see." (Republic 508c) *Ibid*., 296.
[31] Pattison, 16.
[32] Ibid., 17.
[33] Donald Palmer*, Kierkegaard for Beginners* (New York: Writers and Readers, 1996), 2.
[34] Ibid., 3.
[35] Ibid., 4.
[36] Ibid., 6.
[37] Christopher Panza and Gregory Gale, *Existentialism for Dummies* (New Jersey: Wiley Publishing Inc., 2008), 16.
[38] Ibid., 228.
[39] Palmer, 21.
[40] Ibid., 26.
[41] Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Alastair Hannay (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 527-528.
[42]C. Steven Evans, *Kierkegaard an Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 29.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Palmer, 17.
[45] Pattison, 5.
[46] Ibid.,18.
[47] Soren Kierkegaard*, The Essential Kierkegaard*, edit. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 200.
[48] Martin Blok Johansen, "Darkness Overcomes You: Shaun Tan and Soren Kierkegaard", *Children's Literature in* Education Vol. 46 (2015), 43.
[49] Palmer, 44.
[50] Joakim Garff, Soren Kierkegaard a Biography, trans. Bruce H. Kirmmse (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 269.
[51] Pattison, 49.
[52] Ibid., 50.
[53] Ibid.
[54]Soren Kierkegaard*, The Essential Kierkegaard*, edit. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 140.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 153.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., 139.
[59] Palmer, 61.
[60] Palmer, 60.
[61] Ibid., 70.
[62] Soren Kierkegaard*, The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 23. Hereafter SUD
[63] Ibid., 26.
[64] Ibid., 29-30.
[65] Ibid., 30.
[66] Ibid., 32.
[67] Ibid., 32-33.
[68] Ibid., 35.
[69] Ibid., 36-37.
[70] Ibid., 39.
[71] Ibid., 40.
[72] Ibid., 39-40.
[73] Lee, 95.
[74] Ibid., 50-51.
[75] Ibid., 53.
[76] Ibid., 60-61.
[77] Ibid., 62.
[78] Ibid., 63.
[79] Panza and Gale, 209.
[80] Kierkegaard, SUD, 67.
[81] Evans, 68.
[82] Lee, 94.
[83] Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Part I*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 286. Hereafter EO
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid., 70.
[86] Palmer, 83.
[87] Lee, 95.
[88] Evans, 90.
[89] Ibid., 91.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Lee, 95.
[92] Ibid., 96.
[93] Kierkegaard, SUD, 17.
[94] Palmer, 111.
[95] Ibid., 113.

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[96] Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling Repetition*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 115.
[97] Palmer, 134.
[98] Ibid., 66.
[99] Lee, 96.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Pattison, 172.
[102] Rebecca Elleray, "Kierkegaard, Socrates and Existential Individuality," *Richmond Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 16 (Winter 2007), 1.
[103] See Chapter III page. 41.
[104] Evans, 70.
[105]Kierkegaard, SUD, 29-30.
[106] Ibid., 33.
[107] Kierkegaard, EO, 428.
[108] Kierkegaard, SUD, 37.
[109] Ibid., 41.
[110] Ibid., 45.
[111] Ibid., 51.
[112] See Chapter III Page. 42.
[113] Kierkegaard, SUD, 11.
[114] Palmer, 62.
[115] Kierkegaard, SUD, 89.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Kierkegaard, SUD, 44.
[118] Soren Kierkegaard, For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourselves, trans. Walter Lowrie (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1944), 239. Hereafter FSE
[119] Kierkegaard, SUD, 70.
[120] Ibid.,74.
[121] Plato, 305.
[122] Kierkegaard, SUD, 49.
[123] Ibid., 66.
[124] Ibid., 307.
[125] Kierkegaard, FSE, 239.
[126] Kierkegaard, SUD, 47.
[127] Ibid., 43.
[128] Image taken from http://www.wolverton-mountain.com/articles/platos-allegory-of-the-cave.html.

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