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## A HERMIT: A KIERKEGAARDIAN READING OF GEORGE ELIOT'S *SILAS MARNER*

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### Abstract

The present article aims to examine George Eliot's *Silas Marner* through the lens of Kierkegaard's notion of three spheres of existence. Soren Kierkegaard as theistic existentialist, reshaped existential notions in the framework of religion since, for him, the main problem lies in redefining the true Christianity. In other words he painted all existential problems in religious light, perceiving God as the only source anyone can pin his faith on to transcend the temporal. The focus of this article is to analyze four characters of the novel, Silas, Godfrey, Dunstan and William Dane, in the light of three spheres of life, i.e. aesthetic, ethical and religious modes of life. Furthermore, the researcher will examine the notions of infinite resignation and leap of faith in connection with unique character of Silas at the point in the novel where he renounces God, sinking into despair in the aftermath of drawing lot.

**Keywords:** Kierkegaard, Silas, Three Spheres of Existence, Leap of Faith, Infinite Resignation.

### Introduction

In an influential book called *Existentialism*, Robert Solomon states that Kierkegaard's primary concern is the question: "what is it to be a Christian?" and the answer to this crucial query lies at the center of his short-lived space of life and shot roughly through his works. In other words, Kierkegaard places premium on the notion of Christianity, putting a lot of effort into revising this conception in his time; he, from the onset to the end of his career, opened fire at the Danish Protestant Christianity and its institutional rituals. In *The History of Philosophy*, Frederick Copleston states that "Kierkegaard was meditating a frontal attack on the Danish State Church which, in his opinion, scarcely deserved anymore the name of Christian" (Copleston, 1994:339).

As Kaufmann asserts in *Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre*, "he died, having worn himself out with protests against the perversion of Christianity by Christian institutions and refusing the ministrations of his church" (1960:83). Besides, Kierkegaard is concerned with truth of Christianity and with the quality of a Christian's living in order to define and classify individuals in relation both to their outlook to life and to God. In the point of fact, the very dread and anxiety that every Christian like that of Silas must go through in the face of paradoxes of religion is the point-of -departure as to how Kierkegaard's three modes of existence might apply to the whole novel and four characters of the novel.

Having written his M.A and doctoral thesis on the Socratic irony, "Concept of Irony" and, in fact, riveted in Socrates's dialectics, he wrote most of his works *Either/or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Philosophical Fragments* and a host of other seminal works under pseudonyms to underscore the method of indirect communication under the banner of subjective truth, distinguished by their sharp wit and deep psychological insights. "He does not present ideas directly to the reader but does so indirectly through stories and pieces written and collected by the author of the works," (p:34) as Shelly O'Hara <sup>1</sup>(2004) states in *Kierkegaard within Your Grasp*. All of his works gingerly feature in his daring quest to define true Christianity and Christian, to propound the concept of subjective truth, to dispel the Hegelian collective spirit, to mold the idea of angst and freedom, and to draw a line between three modes of existence.

Kierkegaard in *Either/or* sets out to present two forms of existences: the aesthetic and the ethical. The third mode of existence, the religious sphere was given the complete account in *Fear and Trembling*; however allusions to the religious mode can be found in other works like *Stages on life's way* and *Repetition* as well. "Each stage has its own model as befits a morality tale: Don Juan, among others, for the aesthetic, Socrates, again

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among others, for the ethical" and the last one "Abraham for the religious sphere," as Flynn points out (2006:26-27). Fredric Copleston in his gigantic work of philosophy, *A History of Philosophy* (7) spells the aesthetic mode out in this way:

The aesthetic man is governed by sense, impulse and emotion. But we must conceive him as being simply and solely the grossly sensual man. The aesthetic stage can also be exemplified, for instance, in the poet who transmutes the world into an imaginative realm and in the romantic. The essential features of aesthetic consciousness are the absence of the fixed universal moral standards and of determinate religious faith and the presence of desire to enjoy the whole range of emotive and sense experience. (1994:342)

Donald. D. Palmer (2007) sums up in *Kierkegaard for Beginners* that " what all forms of aestheticism have in common from the most boorish to the most refined manifestation, is that they are governed by what Freud later call " the pleasure principle," the pursuit of pleasure and the flight of pain" (83). An obvious instance of the transition from the aesthetic to the moral is the man who renounces the satisfaction of sexual impulse and enters into the state of marriage. The ethical mode tends to be understood in terms of conformity to law, whether this takes the form of inner sense of right and wrong, a moral code taught by a religious tradition, legislation enforced by the state, or simply the customs and the conventions followed by a community," (79) as Carlisle (2006) states. It also must be noted that pseudonymous writer in the second part of *Either/Or*, Author B or Judge Wilhelm does not deny the pleasures of aesthetic life but he believes in synthesizing the two into a balanced life which is discussed as equilibrium between the aesthetic and the ethical in the development of the personality.

The contrast between the second stage and the third one, the religious mode, is best demonstrated in "the use as a symbol Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac at God's commands," (1994:344) as Copleston writes. By this movement, Abraham stands in the direct connection with the Absolute and manifests the "paradox of religion" because his action can never be rationalized after human reason or any framework of morality. Abraham forsakes the universal moral law for the sake of a higher being. In the point of fact, a man of faith is directly related to personal God whose demands is absolute and cannot be measured simply by the standards of the human reason. In comparison to Abraham, "Socrates and Agamemnon are the men of principles, pushed to the highest heroic limits of principle, ready to lose all for the sake of principle," (47) as Capute (2008) points out. Staying in ethical sphere assumes a relationship between people and the universal law, external values, mores. The epitome of the ethical people is "tragic hero" prepared to renounces his own precious things for the sake of universal.

Palmer maintains that Abraham's movement is "double movement" consisted of two movements, "movement of infinite resignation" and "movement of faith". The first one consisted of negative element in which Abraham renounces Isaac and the second is positive element in which Abraham gets Isaac back. The paradox is that both occur at the same time. Needless to say, when Abraham makes the movement of "Infinite Resignation", he becomes the "knight of infinite resignation." In other words, Abraham shakes off all the moral universal laws, obligations and duties and sees himself solely accountable to God.

Copleston states that "Kierkegaard does not intend to enunciate the general preposition that religion is the negation of morality" (1994:344). To put it simply, Kierkegaard calls Abraham's deed of sacrifice, "teleological suspension of ethical", that is, the abandonment of morality and ethics for a higher purpose or divine God. This is the highest form of individuality in the process of becoming. John Lippitt in *Rutledge Philosophy Guidebook to Kierkegaard and Fear and Trembling* sums up that: "if the ethical is universal public, then Abraham stands outside the ethical altogether: In his action he overstepped the ethical altogether, and had a higher telos outside it, in relation to which he suspended it" (2003:100).

Kierkegaard himself clarifies this movement in *Fear and Trembling*:

Infinite resignation is that shirt that we read about in the old fable. The thread is spun under tears, the cloth is bleached with tears, the shirt is sewn with tears, but then it is better protection than iron and steel.... The secret in life that everyone must sew for himself.... What I gain is myself and only then can be any question of grasping existence by virtue of faith. (1983: 45)

Infinite resignation requires that the individual make the next crucial step, leap of faith. "Leap of faith means self-commitment to an objective uncertainty, a leap onto the unknown," (1994:345) as Copleston states. Thus Abraham becomes "the Knight of Faith." Knight of faith stands alone and isolated, neither can he rationalize his deeds nor would anyone comprehend his actions. The knight of faith performs leap of faith through inwardness and passion. Solomon also utters in TTC lectures about Kierkegaard, "The only way to achieve authentic existence is by making passionate commitment to a way of life". In one part of *Fear and*

*Trembling*, Kierkegaard maintains that Abraham's action is so perplexing that he calls it, faith by "virtue of absurd." That is, Abraham's sacrifice of his son is not only incomprehensible but also it is absurd; how it is possible that God, who requires his son, will abrogate this command next moment. And this is the name Kierkegaard places in Abraham's action because it does not fit in any rational system but in absurdity.

## Discussion

### I. Silas from Kierkegaardian perspective

George Eliot's *Silas Marner* provides the appropriate point-of-departure for the study of four main characters: Silas, William Dane, Godfrey and Dunstan, in the light of three spheres of existence. These spheres of being, namely aesthetic, ethical and religious are interconnected in that individuals can move from one ladder of existence to another by subjectivity and choices. If the aesthetic is the lowest ladder in the existence of an individual who can fluctuates between the mean decadence to the highest sense of beauty peppered with the main elements of pleasure and enjoyment, the ethical requires to drift in the realm of universal laws and social mores which is in stark contrast to religious existence. The religious person contravenes the moral conventions of his society and is only accountable to God. These spheres are also relevant to subjective facet of life, to the howness of existence, i.e. how one lead his life based on his subjective truth he has chosen.

Silas, in the first stance, lives as a respectable weaver and a faith-laden fellow in his religious community in the Lantern Yard in an unnamed city in the North. Silas's faith bears one particular mark signaling his impeccable faith in proximity to God and Holy Spirit, that is to say, his cataleptic fits when he becomes unaware of his surroundings immersed in ecstatic trance in his prayers. The narrator provides sketches of Silas in Lantern Yard:

Marner was highly thought of in that little hidden world, known to itself as the church assembling in Lantern Yard; he was believed to be a young man of exemplary life and ardent faith; and a peculiar interest had been centered in him ever since he had fallen, at a prayer-meeting, into a mysterious rigidity and suspension of consciousness, which, lasting for an hour or more, had been mistaken for death..... Silas was both sane and honest, though, as with many honest and fervent men, culture had not defined any channels for his sense of mystery. (Eliot, 1970: 15-16)

Harold Fisch(2003) in *Biblical Realim in Silas Marner* states, "like the Genesis-stories or those relating to Samuel, Saul, and David, *Silas Marner* is a story of trial, retribution, and redemption. Characters are morally tested and forced to acknowledge their trespasses" (55). Each character stands in one sphere of life relevant to his subjective position and attitude toward life. Both for Kierkegaard and for Silas, suffering and tragedy of life is an acid test of faith inflicted by others' malice and iniquities. Prior to Silas's exile and his disconnection to the past, it seems that Silas is neither knight of infinite resignation nor knight of faith; and further the story unfolds, more his failure in both resignation and faith becomes patent.

Silas's abjuration of God and his faith in the face of drawing lot is a remarkable turning- point and reversal to an exile similar to peripeteia in Aristotle coming after the recognition of the truth (anagnorisis). The drawing lot is the moment when he descends into alienation and hatred because he cannot resign to what appears to be the existence of evil in the world. Past becomes a burden, a sin and a dream. "His life is made discontinuous by the rupture of accusation and exile and, as he loses sight of the past" (Rignall, 2001: 386). From this time up to the appearance of Eppie at Christmas Eve he loses his connection to his past, his Christian community, his Christian beliefs and his shared love. Silas fills this void in the incessant act of spinning and hoarding money:

Silas in his solitude, had to provide his own breakfast, dinner, and supper, to fetch his own water from the well, and put his own kettle on the fire; and all these immediate promptings helped, along with the weaving, to reduce his life to the unquestioning activity of a spinning insect. He hated the thought of the past; there was nothing that called out his love and fellowship towards the strangers he had come amongst; and the future was all dark, for there was no unseen love that cared for him. (Eliot, 1970: 26-27)

Silas's backsliding to being a miser and his continuous accumulation of gold is multifaceted. First this money- hoarding, apart from being an emblem of degradation, is a descent from faith to foulness, a collapse from sky of piety to the ground of faith- poverty:

Similarly Silas's miserly obsession with his gold coins is shown to be a means of filling the void left by his loss of faith in God and man. The emphasis placed on the 'bright faces' of the coins, which become so familiar to him that he would not exchange them for others 'with unknown faces' , defines them as substitutes for the human beings they replace, and will eventually be replaced by in their turn. (Rignall, 2001: 386)

Secondly, it shows Silas's lack of continuity with the past. Rignall emphasizes that in Eliot's novels rupture with the past is "always a symptom of moral decline in Eliot's world" (2001: 387). Past plays a major role in regard to Silas's stance and existence as he recollects his past in Lantern Yard:

Because, you see, there was nobody as cared for me or clave neither to me above nor below. And him as I'd gone out and in we for ten year and more, since when we was lads and went halves—mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, had lifted up his heel again' me, and worked to ruin me. (ibid,85)

Past and sin are closely connected in the novel. According to Fische, Eliot plays up the impact of past and sin:

Silas's personality is conditioned by what has happened to him in Lantern Yard and earlier. Similarly, Godfrey Cass's past, which he conceals from his wife, will eventually constrain him and there will be a reckoning. Providence works wonderfully and mysteriously, calling the past to remembrance, turning sin and suffering into a path of salvation. (2003:46)

This connection is best reinforced by the narrator in the passage at the beginning of chapter two, "Minds that have been unhinged from their old faith and love, have perhaps sought this Lethean influence of exile, in which, the past becomes dreamy, because its symbols have all vanished, and the present too is dreamy because it is linked with no memories" (Eliot, 1970: 24). His moral degradation has certainly forebodes, in Kierkegaard's view, his lack of courage to face the suffering and his straightforward mistrust of God.

Smith states that "courage as an element of faith is the daring self-affirmation of one's being in spite of the powers of non-being which are the heritage of everything finite. Where there is courage there is the possibility of failure" (2006: 83). In this regard, Silas is shorn of enough courage and valor in opposition to alienating power which draws him to a seclusion of fifteen years. He backslides to alienation and exile in stone cottage in Raveloe.

## II. Silas and Infinite Resignation

Drawing a parallel between Silas's accusation of robbery and Kierkegaard's notion of knight of infinite resignation and knight of faith, Silas cannot make the leap of faith and resignation in the face of mystery and absurd symbolized in the drawing lot. In responding to his suffering and his tragedy, Silas easily fails. Silas's adherence to social mores and ethics is the antimony of suspension of ethical norms. He cannot pull himself together in that everything which transpires is God's favor in the real sense of resignation. Silas is entangled in ethics in the sense of rights and wrongs in ethics. Silas's mindset is more angled for poetic justice of God which in contrast to Knight of infinite resignation. Michelman (2008) defines knight of infinite resignation as:

The knight of infinite resignation has obeyed the letter of God's command but has not yet attained genuine faith, for the belief that God is good, just, and loving is not applied to temporal existence, only to a beyond. The knight of faith goes a step beyond renunciation to "perform the double movement" of faith: He renounces what is dear to him, but at the same time expects to win it back by virtue of the absurd. (205)

It must be noted that Silas prior to his exile is deeply rooted in ethical phase, for in the face of drawing test he can neither ponder over it nor accepts iniquity afflicted upon him. Knight of infinite resignation will embrace everything as God's providence for him. In true Kierkegaardian sense, his faith in God is only illusion. Silas has no true one-to-one relationship to God to transcend his mores of religious society. According to John De Caputo, Knight of infinite resignation a person ready to sacrifice his own judgment so as to embrace what he cannot prove through his inwardness:

A lesser man might be capable of a movement of infinite resignation, of giving up on the finite, surrendering his own will, for the sake of the infinite, of doing the will of God. A lesser man could understand that sons must sometimes be sacrificed for a cause and would be able to resign himself to the loss of something finite in order to conform to the infinite, to the law of God. That is what de Silentio means by the 'knight of infinite resignation. A person who with all the courage of a knight goes to the limit of giving up his own will, but who does this with no expectation that his loss will ever be recovered. (49)

Apparently he is only capable of observing the sacraments of church with no true meaning of faith because infinite resignation precedes faith in a double movement. Silas cannot face and endure the existence of evil and treachery. Silas cannot reconcile the existence of evil with the presence of God's goodness in the world while the religious person removes this obstacle through his inwardness and passion not through iterative rationalizing. This is shown in Silas' rejection of God:

The last time I remember using my knife, was when I took it out to cut a strap for you. (Dane) you stole the money, and you have woven a plot to lay the sin at my door. you may prosper, for all that: there is no just God that governs the earth righteously, but a God of lies, that bears witness against the innocent. (Eliot, 1970: 22)

Silas's mindset is indicative of this fact that God is immanently benevolent and if God is the Almighty, he can clear him in drawing lots while knight of infinite resignation has already deprived himself of any choice and freedom with such a passion and inwardness for God that he need not any justification; whatever befalls is God's favor. Silas reflects and therefore he fails. For Kierkegaard reflection will lead to mire of facts. Reflection on the status of existence is to keep the self in the eternal abeyance. Kierkegaard perceives reflection only as benevolent helper as Muggeridge (2011) points out, "When reflection is completely exhausted, then faith begins. Everything which reflection can hit upon, faith has already seen through and thought through and merged on the other side" (60). "Intellectual reflection alone can never motivate action. A decision to end the process of reflection is necessary and such a decision must be generated by passion. The passions that shape a person's self are referred to by Kierkegaard as the individual's "inwardness" or "subjectivity" (Audi, 1999: 468).

Fifteen-year-of-hoarding gold is also a surrogate for his previous state of being. His existence as a recluse in Raveloe defies any classifications. He is not aesthete for his money-hoarding is not act of self-seeking transact or any act of pleasure, "Miserly hoarding is here a compensatory activity, innocent and understandable, not the succumbing to the demonic power of money that it is in the work of novelists like Charles Dickens and Honoré de Balzac" (Rignall, 2001: 386). Silas should not be regarded also as ethical person since he is hermit in a stone cottage living by his own sole principle of piling gold by means of weaving to see them shine in his hands and to slip in his fingers as Nancy Henry (2008) says:

His spiritual, affectionate and even erotic love is all displaced on to the coins. He knows their faces intimately and would not think of parting with them. He is crushed when, in a reversal of the theft of which he was once accused, his carefully hidden treasure is stolen. (68)

For Kierkegaard what matters is the true subjective relationship to god, not that association filled with the mere performing a series of rituals since the possibility of the existent evil in the presence of habitual performance remains. If Christianity is a way of life to be lived with infinite passion and inwardness, Silas beyond any doubt cannot consummate his existence with passion-laden faith. Kierkegaard in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* which appeared in 1846 under the pseudonymous name, Johannes the Climacus as a postscript to another work, *Philosophical Fragments* pays attention to this seminal question, how must one live a Christian life? What is the truth of Christianity? Based on Caputo, the whole book centers on the upshot of this argument that "Christianity is a way to be, something to be lived, not a theory to be debated by the philosophers" (Caputo, 2008: 58). Religious belief is not the matter of accepting or reassuring information about how things are up there. It is a challenge to commit you to a way of life. Faith is an act of pure freedom by which we choose our path, self in life.

Evidently Silas's lack of courage demonstrates that he has no inwardness and passion. One aspect of subjective truth is decisiveness. In a very famous sentence, Kierkegaard sheds light on this key aspect in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, "only in subjectivity is there decision, to seek objectivity is to be in error" (Palmer, 2007: 37). Your self is nothing but your decisions and these are based on values you have. "The self is formed through the choices it makes, and the intellect alone is powerless to make a choice. A decision requires emotional and passionate involvement," (Evans, 2009: 73) and the passion which undoubtedly requires the objective improbability.

Kierkegaard defines inwardness in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* in this way:

In order to clarify the difference between the paths of subjective and objective reflection, I shall demonstrate subjective reflection's seeking back inwardly in inwardness. Inwardness at its highest in an existing subject is passion; to passion there corresponds truth as a paradox; and the fact that truth becomes the paradox is grounded precisely in its relation to an existing subject. This is how the one corresponds to the other. Through forgetting that one is an existing subject, passion dies out and the truth in return no longer becomes something paradoxical, but the knowing subject. (48)

Silas is unable to face what appears to be a seeming injustice in drawing lot. It seems that he stands at a distance to God; for who has the passion and inwardness God is always close. He reflects on his status quo, on his catalepsy, on something to rationalize or to prove his innocence but all in vain. Reflection alone can end in stalemate. Fact alone also will lead you to the objective distance. "No fact by itself can motivate an action. A fact can be the pretext for an action only in the context of values" (Palmer, 2007: 37).

In respect to truth, Kierkegaard clearly gives priority to inwardness and passion to fill the gap of objective uncertainty. "It is a "passion" maintained in face of objective uncertainty, that is, in view of the fact that God's existence cannot be proven" (Michelman, 2008: 203). Here we can hear the sound of leap of faith as a bridge between the finite and infinite. What Silas lacks is this passion to fill the gap between what is temporal

i.e. his accusation of robbery in the temporal, finite, corporeal and God by passion. Rationality is inadequate. Coplestone in *Contemporary Philosophy* (1956) asserts that "Kierkegaard speaks not only as though proofs of God's existence could not be found but also as though they would be irrelevant, and indeed undesirable, even if they could be found. We are left with the leap of faith, the passionate appropriation by the individual of an "objective uncertainty" (152-153). Silas cannot make the leap of faith to overcome uncertainty, iniquity and his doubt that God does not exist to extricate him from allegation. The question of truth for Kierkegaard is framed only subjectively and existentially.

Tied to inwardness, self-forgetting as Kierkegaard hints is a tendency to thwart yourself from your authentic selfhood. Later existentialist called this process at work, "inauthenticity" or "bad faith". "Self-forgetting operates by various strategies of denying individuality and subjectivity: becoming "just like everyone else" by identifying with social roles and public opinion" (Michelman, 2008: 203). It seems that a human subject is hovering between these two polar axes of inwardness and self-forgetting. In the novel, self-forgetting takes various shapes. For Silas, this process of self-forgetting is symbolized in his gold-hoarding, just to evade his prior selfhood in the shape of his love for God and people. The process of self-forgetting can work through gratification and hedonism. In contrast to Dunstan who performs this self-forgetting via gratifying and pleasurable action, Silas seems to reach a moral descent defying any aesthetic action. Nor can Silas be considered rogue like Dunstan for, as we see later, he reserves the potentiality to return to ethical sphere by the arrival of Eppie.

Evidently for Kierkegaard's system of philosophy what matters is howness rather whatness as Carlisle (2006) points out, "the aesthetic, ethical and the religious are different types of subjectivity and therefore they refer to how one lives, rather than what one believes or does" (80). Kierkegaard emasculates the belief in truth in the face of the belief in untruth providing the former is done in bad faith and the latter is done through self-commitment and passion.

### III. Analysis of other minor characters

This notion is more obvious in the case of William Dane, who frames for Silas the accusation of robbery. The presence of treachery and evil in William Dane testifies more to Kierkegaard's view not only of possibility of choice and freedom but also of critiquing state Christendom which relegated people solely to a mere observing Sunday ceremonies. Dane certainly is the prime example of worshipping true God but in untruth. He lacks the passion for God since those who have inwardness are capable of sharing it. According to Watkin:

The individual always has some freedom [to respond to his environment and historical context], and this element of having freedom or choice is linked to the individual's potentiality for a spiritual existence. The ethical-religious person is...one who is attempting to fulfill the potentiality that lay in the initially given self. The aesthete or pleasure seeker, on the other hand, is one who remains living a half-life based solely on the initially given synthesis of body and psyche and is governed by the emotions rather than by will (Watkin, 2001: 231).

William Dane seeks pleasure of money and gold by manipulating others and his stance is at lowest degree of an aesthete as a rogue. Silas deprived of his previous faith and love, lives in a state of abeyance in a stone cottage. This suspense, rift or rupture with his past filled with the presence of waif, a straying child on the eve of Christmas. Rignall asserts that "after the loss of the gold and its replacement by the golden-haired child who restores his capacity for love, he regains trust in his fellow men and is left with a dim sense of beneficent higher powers" (2001: 386). Eppie restores his lost love and faith to God and to people since his hatred for folks diminishes and he starts to appear in society.

By the advent of Eppie, he acquired his previous ostentatious faith to people and God and he became an ethical person through the love he devotes to the upbringing of Eppie. He returns to the society since he chooses to be so. If he accepts the obligation of rearing Eppie, it is because he has the freedom to do so, to mold himself on the basis of shared love for the community through love for Eppie. Silas should not be juxtaposed to Abraham since he not only failed to endure in the face of uncertainty but also sank into despair of weakness for fifteen years. It maybe provokes this contention that his love for Eppie is not germane to religious faith. Regarding this, Rignall states that Silas's faith is secular rather than religious, "the faith the novel is affirming is secular rather than religious. Silas's belief that there is good in this world is a belief in a goodness whose origin, as the story has indicated, is human not divine" (2001: 386). By contrast, Fisch maintains that there is a strong analogy between Eppie's presence at the door of Silas and the biblical story of Lot:

The coming of the infant Eppie to Silas on New Year's Eve bringing to him her gift of love has been termed a Christ-event, and perhaps there is some such Christian typology at work here, but the Biblical episode, which is actually evoked in the text, is the rescue of Lot from the cities of the plain in Genesis 19..... Like the

story of the rescue of Lot, Eliot's tale is one of retribution, redemption, and rescue. The angel has been domesticated into a child, but the sense of the wonder and the miracle remains. (2003: 56)

Silas's once-again association into society affirms his stance as an ethical person. The initial choice of the ethical life is something that purifies, matures, and unifies the personality. Through love and acceptance of the responsibility to bring up a child he reclaims his solid place as a true moral person in Raveloe. His integration into the community confirms Eliot's belief in the changing, preserving power of human fellowship and love.

Godfrey Cass, the elder son of a landowner in the Rainbow, is replete with sense of guilt as he secretly married a low-birth girl Molly. So much entangled with his past that he seeks refuge in Nancy for a remedy of forgetfulness. Here again the process of self-forgetting is at work. Godfrey seeks recourse to Nancy not only to suppress his past but also to lose individuality. He cannot accept the responsibility of his action, the freedom and the will. To marry her is to forget his past and sin as the narrator says, "While Godfrey Cass was taking draughts of forgetfulness from the sweet presence of Nancy, willingly losing all sense of that hidden bond which at other moments galled and fretted him," (Eliot, 1970: 152).

Godfrey's existence in ladders of being is higher than that of his brother. Dunstan is a profligate rogue trying to manipulate his brother and to steal Silas's gold, a man only to seek pleasure in wealth with his roguish disposition. Henry states, "Dunstan is particularly dissolute and inclined to blackmail his older brother Godfrey with his knowledge of the latter's secret marriage to a lower-class woman" (2008: 68). The narrator does not allocate so many a passage to Dunstan to assess his sphere of existence, but for sure he is regarded neither an ethical person nor a religious one. He is a mere hedonist driven by pleasure principle, the overriding force of aesthete.

To take the persona of an aesthete does not denote that aesthete is necessarily vicious, but to lead life frivolously and not to bind to any pole of pre-defined morality. Aesthetic life per se excludes any yardstick of morality. "The heart of the aesthetic life is not preoccupation with beauty in its artistic and sexual forms. It is the notion that the good life can be defined without reference to good and evil, right and wrong. In the aesthetic sphere, good has an entirely pre-ethical meaning" (westphal, 1999: 547). In this respect, his accumulation of wealth through intimidating his elder brother is fully reinforced in stealing Silas's gold. Aesthete does not take heed of other's needs for the priority for him is the pleasure which takes the shape of wealth, sex or even murder. It should be noted that he is not a sophisticated aesthete like musicians or painters who seek to refine their tastes. Dunstan stands at the lowest rung of aesthetic sphere.

Godfrey is well placed in ethical stage of life, best shown in his anxiety over his secret marriage to Molly since he, as a son of Esquire, has violated social mores of his community. An individual who opts for the ethical morals is already perceived as a member of his society awash with institution and practices. Being a member of a society reflects the denotation of assimilations of favorable rules and impositions. "an Ethical person stand in reciprocal relation with his public surrounding conditions of life, the self he seeks to realize being a social, a civic self, not an abstract one that fits everywhere and hence nowhere" (Hanny, 1998: 52).

Being an ethical person, an individual conforms to the practices and norms of his community. On the contrary, Godfrey not only surreptitiously married a girl much inferior to his rank but also in the process of novel conceals his past from his wife, Nancy and evades the responsibility of his action. Therefore it is double-sided; breaking social custom of his community thus one step reversing in his stance as a respectable son of esquire and breaking with his own past to forget his anxiety over his fault.

An ethical person lives according to mores of his community and accepts the responsibilities of his deeds. Consequently this has two facets. He remains a respectable member of his society through concealing his wrongdoing but at the expense of anxiety and at the same time he fails to be a true moral individual denying his own existence. This causes the blurring of boundaries between sincerity, true ethicality and a mere patina of respectability. Again the irony of life is at work since mere appearance and the truth is blurred and people are always judged by their appearance. Godfrey's moral failure and insincerity is better shown in his supplication in the altar of chance:

He fled to his usual refuge, that of hoping for some unforeseen turn of fortune, some favorable chance which would save him from unpleasant consequences- perhaps even justify his insincerity by manifesting its prudence and in this point of trusting to some throw of fortune 's dice, Godfrey can hardly be called specially old-fashioned. Favorable Chance, I fancy, is the god of all men who follow their own devices instead of obeying a law they believe..... let him neglect the responsibilities of his office and he will inevitably anchor himself on the chance that thing left undone may turn out not to be of the supposed importance.(Eliot,1970: 106)

Godfrey consolidates his stance in community by means of marriage with Nancy whom he loves. Judge William in the first epistle “Aesthetic Validity of Marriage” to A in *Either/or* posits a rather lengthy and humdrum defense of marriage in opposition to A’s promiscuous way of life. For Judge, marriage is regarded as ethical institution and practice requiring commitment in contrast to A’ waving the banner of spontaneity and freedom. According to Evans, “the grounds for marriage that could be given are many: marriage gives society stability, provides a better environment for raising children, makes possible the joys of having children, is a school for character, helps people economically” (2009: 93).

Rather than admitting his wrongdoing and the corollary of his action, he simply evades it. To neglect not only what morality bears upon but trying to slip his past into oblivion is the greatest moral error of Godfrey. He lacks the decisiveness and bravery to eat the humble pie and therefore he loses the chance of being a moral true person and at the end poetic justice mete out Eppie’s rejection of his class and of his fatherhood to Godfrey. As Nancy Henry points out the moral of the story is very patent, “money is worthless compared to the love of another human being and the fellowship of community” (2008: 63). Silas at the end, united with his past, restored, is rewarded through genuine love for Eppie and he stands as an ethical person in his community.

### Conclusion

Taken together, the present article strives at presenting some of Kierkegaard’s seminal concepts of Kierkegaard, who paved the way for many twentieth-century existentialist philosophers such as Heidegger or Sartre or even Derrida. In other words, his philosophy helped them to expand the realm of existential perspectives to a great extent. Not only is he regarded as a philosopher but as a theologian, who put enormous efforts into redefining many preconceptions and already-assumed notions of Christianity. His entire oeuvre spins round a new definition of Christianity. He considered Christianity not to be a series of norms and beliefs to be inculcated into a new-born Christian child, and then to be performed through a series of rituals, but a way of living with passion and inwardness in the presence of God. Both the questions of existence and his philosophy are deeply rooted in his understanding of Christianity and three spheres of existence.

To Conclude, Eliot in *Silas Marner* showed the necessity and the value of morality in her characters, particularly in case of Silas and Godfrey. Characters are set in a situation like that of ours in our daily life but the choices they make in the face of a bewildering array of odds highlight the importance of freedom and responsibility. Compared to Abraham, Silas is not capable of putting aside his reason to face and accept objective uncertainty with infinite passion and inwardness, to embrace his sufferings and tragedy of life, that is to say, Silas is an ordinary man who at best remains in the ethical stance of existence.

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