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Tunrada Wiangket

Soren Kierkegaard

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In the early age of modern world, materialism was everywhere. Many people unconsciously lost their self-identities to a delusion of an artificial light. Human's real concept of life was disappearing while the illusion of a so-called modernity was swallowing the society. For this reason, Existentialism, an idea based on each single individual's independence and freedom¹, was created. The precise meaning of Existentialism has not yet been clearly defined. The notion of the philosophy, however, is that it is an itinerary for every single individual to find the hidden meaning of one's life without being dominated by externalities or misconception of society². Ironically, a person who his name is famous as the first Existentialist philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, likewise was kind of lost the goal in his life. Kierkegaard can be categorized as many things; from an intelligent religious philosophical writer to an anti-philosopher³. Because of the idiosyncratic style of writing, his works are not always easy to read. The basic understanding of Kierkegaard's biography is needed to understand his ingenious inventions. His peculiar yet original story as a single individual, therefore, is the most interesting part about Søren Kierkegaard himself.

¹ John Macquarrie. *Existentialism*. 1972. p.14–15.

² Douglas Burnham and George Papandreopoulos. "Existentialism." *IEP, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 6 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/existent/#SH2a>>

³ D. Anthony Storm. "A Biography of Kierkegaard." *D. Anthony Storm's Commentary on Kierkegaard*. 6 Feb. 2013. <<http://sorenkierkegaard.org/kierkegaard-biography.html>>

On May 5th 1813, Soren Kierkegaard was born to a wealthy family in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. Ane Sørensdatter Lund Kierkegaard, his mother, had initially entered the household as a servant. She was impregnated before marriage by his father, Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard. Michael believed that his act to Ane was one of his personal sins because in the past having sex before marriage was considered to be sexual immorality⁴. The other act that he believed to be his another personal sin occurred when he was a child. Michael was raised up poorly; he had been through poverty and hardships. He worked as a shepherd in the Jutish moors⁵. As he was left alone confronting with unfortunate and destitute experiences since he was born, young Michael cursed the name of God, which at the time was one of the worst sin a human could commit. After his escape from the tragic life to his kinfolk's house in Copenhagen, he started his career as a trader and later became successful with wool investment. He was so prosperous that he was able to retire at only age of forty. However, a string of tragic incidences had yet stopped surrounding his life. He outlived his wife and five of his seven children. He was again in depression, this time with a greater pain of losing beloved ones. He claimed that those unfortunate events were God's punishment on both of his personal sins. Soren's early works were observably influent by his father's religious point of view of melancholy and tragedies in the family.

Notwithstanding an honor as a father of existentialism, Soren Kierkegaard did not categorize himself as an existentialist philosopher. In fact, he was born and

⁴ Was McAdams. "Is Sex Before Marriage a Sin." *Radically Christian, 1st Century Christianity in a 21st Century World*. 7 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.radicallychristian.com/is-sex-before-marriage-a-sin>>

⁵ The Royal Library Contributors. "Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard (1756-1838)." *The Royal Library, National Library of Denmark and Copenhagen University Library*. 7 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.kb.dk/en/nb/tema/webudstillinger/sk-mss/samtidige/6skfamilie/6-1.html>>

decreased too soon that the word existentialism have not yet included in any dictionary during his life time⁶. Unlike his father, Soren's life as a freelance author was not so notably eventful. He spent most of the lifetime in the city he was born, Copenhagen. He was not that type of a rich, stuffed shirt who lived superfluously. He found walking on the street where carriages seldom went by and talking to random people in Copenhagen to be enjoyable⁷. His journal as a writer began at the University of Copenhagen, where he studied theology, philosophy, and literature⁸.

On a spring day in May 8th 1837, Kierkegaard's life-changing event occurred when he met Regine Olsen. It was written in his journals that they had made a very strong impression and immediately attached to each other at the first meeting⁹. At the time, Kierkegaard was twenty-four, and she was only fourteen. Three years after their first meet, Kierkegaard proposed to her and the two engaged formally. Abruptly after the two were affianced, Kierkegaard felt unsure about his decision. Despite the fact that they were madly in love with each other, he recanted his proposal and broke off their engagement on August 11, 1841. The true reason of his odd act was unclear. A small hint was stated in his journal that he was so overwhelmed by his melancholy that he felt unconfident about his ability to be a good husband. The broken engagement had strong influence on his later works. It uplifted his perspective of the society as a single individual. He, nevertheless, had said in many of his works that his life was so

⁶ Crowell, Steven. "Existentialism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 7 Feb. 2013. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existentialism/>>

⁷ Søren Kierkegaard. *The Point of View of My Work as An Author*. 1859. p.48-49.

⁸ Copenhagenet Contributors. "The University of Copenhagen." *Copenhagen Portal - Travellers Tourism Website and Cultural Guide*. 7 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.copenhagenet.dk/cph-map/cph-university.asp>>

⁹ Natural Thinkers. "Søren Kierkegaard Journals & Papers of Søren Kierkegaard." *Natural Thinker, Everything is Nature*. 7 Feb. 2013.

<http://www.naturalthinker.net/trl/texts/Kierkegaard,Soren/JournPapers/II_A.html>

pointless and that he was a good-for-nothing. In addition, he, somewhat, considered himself as an outsider. He distanced himself from every other ordinary individual after the heart-breaking event.

An unexpectedly shocking event happened on October 2nd 1855, while Kierkegaard was walking along the street of Copenhagen, he suddenly collapsed and fell into unconscious. He was sent to the hospital due to the paralysis of the lower part of his body. It was possibly caused by a permanent injury from when he fell off a tree in his childhood. At the time he was in the hospital, he refused to communicate with his only brother who was still alive, Peter, for again an unknown reason. After approximately a month of staying in the hospital, Kierkegaard passed away at the only age of forty-two.

After his decrease, his writings were translated into German and later many other major European languages. Many modern philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger and Albert Camus were inspired by his invention of Existentialism, leading to a literary movement after the World War II¹⁰. Apart from his philosophical works, Kierkegaard was also specialized in modern psychology. His works of psychological interpretation explains individuals' emotions facing with life decisions.³ For instant, he classified human's existential situation into two types which are the spectator and the actor. He said that the spectator is the one whose life is existing but inactive; no differ from a piece of rock, and vice versa. Some of his other works were overlooked because of frequent changes of his pseudonym.

¹⁰ Wikipedia contributors. "Søren Kierkegaard." *Wikipedia, The FreeEncyclopedia*. 7 Feb. 2013. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%B8ren_Kierkegaard>

By gaining some basic knowledge of Soren Kierkegaard's biography, a reader will be able to dive into his outstanding origination of enlightenment to see the truth of the modern world even more deeply. The grief, the imaginativeness and the odd aspiration of Soren Kierkegaard's works were all influenced by the unremarkable, yet memorable journey of his own life. A man who had lost the destination of his own life could, somehow, saw the humankind through its adulterated color. Introducing the heartfelt thought to the modernity, even after his lifetime, has guided many sell-outs to return to the right path. Soren Kierkegaard's existentialism is definitely a revolution to the modern philosophy.