



# International Journal of Psychology and Psychoanalysis

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Dread According to Kierkegaard

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### Abstract

An explication of Kierkegaard's concept of dread provides insight into the life and mind of one of the first existentialists noted for giving particular attention to the subjective individual. His view of dread shows it to be much deeper and more complex than anxiety by invoking an awesome expanse of freedom and possibility. This awesomeness is frequently an overwhelming state of *being* contrasted to *becoming* and further still to the eternity of *non-being*. These terms became the essential topics of later existentialist writers. Selected quotations from Kierkegaard show him to be insightful about the human psyche and unafraid to expose his personal thoughts and feelings to public view. Kierkegaard's irony, satire, and disjointed method of communication hinder an initial reading until his unique style of expression becomes clearer to the reader. Successive reading shows Kierkegaard to be a dutiful student of Socrates, his literary mentor.

### Keywords

Dread, The individual, The crowd, Qualitative leap, Soul, Socrates

## Introduction

The Danish noun "angst" is defined in the *Ordbog of Vinterberg & Herløv* (5<sup>th</sup> edn) [1] to be "dread, apprehension, fear" given in that exact order. Therefore, angst, as used by Kierkegaard, should be defined as dread. Lowrie [2] correctly translates angst in the title of Kierkegaard's book as *The Concept of Dread*. Lowrie [2] further adds, "We have no [English] word which adequately translates Angst". Thomte [3] chooses to use anxiety in the title of his edition of the text, which I believe leads the reader astray. That is because American usage of angst misses the mark of the concept that Kierkegaard wants to describe. Kierkegaard [4] himself explains,

One almost never sees the concept dread dealt

with in psychology, and I must therefore call attention to the fact that it is different from fear and similar concepts which refer to something definite, whereas dread is freedom's reality as possibility for possibility.

The cryptic remark, "freedom's reality as possibility for possibility", is common to Kierkegaard's style however confusing it appears upon first reading.

Anxiety is commonly associated with a matter of concern; some problem or fear perplexing the individual. By contrast, dread, according to Kierkegaard, invokes "awesome freedom" by way of anticipating some yet to occur experience hanging over a person in such a way as to possibly cloud the mind by impeding perception, thought, and action. Sullivan [5] explained, "Dread is far more than the purely conversational sense... It is a sort of shuddery, not-of-this-world component, a curious survival from a very emotional experience". Sullivan considered the role of dread be carefully differentiated from all other manifestations of anxiety.

Imagine a long period of incessantly dreary, rain-soaked days that seemingly never end producing a debilitating effect upon ones' physical and mental state. Such a state acts as a heavy weight; an enormous ball and chain attached securely to the neck causing the head to hang low incapacitating all thought, feeling and action.

Stolorow, et al. [6] relate a case study that describes the influence of dread:

Steven began treatment with a vague and generalized sense of doom and a pervasive fear . . . His fears centered generally on his dread of becoming depressed, which he associated with a loss of con-

control over his mind and body . . . Steven's early life was punctuated by pervasive feelings of loneliness and emotional isolation, his dread of feeling and depressive affects.

The authors go on to describe the devastating effects that Steven's dread produces. Their continuing use of "dread" seems clearly appropriate to describe how pervasive Steven's condition had become, and showing how dread dominated his psyche.

For Kierkegaard, dread is first manifest as an anticipatory state. Dread in this sense impairs not just the recollection of past matters as does fear; dread produces a sense of being overwhelmed together with an ominous foreboding that entangles the individual thus preventing progress in any activity. Such dread is overwhelming. It appears somewhat similar to agoraphobia when, for example, a person suddenly becomes overwhelmed upon entering a "big-box" store; accosted by the blinding lights and bedazzled by all the seemingly endless possibilities.

Fear, by contrast, usually concerns some object, circumstance, or creature. These fears are usually focused and situational. We might fear snakes, but absent from our immediate environment, such fear is minimized. Other fears are internal and may appear similar to dread. Stone [7] found people's reported fears to be either situational, based on specific external fears, or internalized ones. Absent a height producing a scaring feeling, there remains only the remembrance of a fear of heights. By contrast, fearing embarrassed by the anticipation of some public performance shows this form of fear to be more in line with dread. It might be concluded that probably all fear emanates from within. Nevertheless, dread remains the best word to convey and distinguish Kierkegaard's Danish word "angst" used to connote an ominous forebodingness distinguishable from anxiety and fear.

Kierkegaard in his *Journal* [8] writes,

Dread is a desire for what one dreads, a sympathetic antipathy. Dread is an alien power, which lays hold of an individual, and yet one cannot fear oneself away, nor has a will to do so; for one fears what one fears one desires. Dread then makes the individual impotent.

This potent statement is typical for Kierkegaard. He sometimes uses the same two words in opposition, comparing and contrasting his ideas and feelings in stark contrast to one another, and often expressing these words in ways that catch our attention. Understanding Kierkegaard requires more thought than first garnered from an initial reading. His troubled syntax was noted by all his translators, and it perplexes us as well.

### Søren kierkegaard

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard was born May 5, 1813, and

died November 4, 1855, in Kjøbenhavn (Copenhagen), or Merchant's Harbor, Denmark at age 42. Kierkegaard has earned renown as an existentialist. Friedman [9] considered him "The real founder of the philosophy of existence by his emphasis upon the existential subject".

A religious existentialist is how other philosophers classify him along with such writers as Buber, Rosenzweig, Berdyaev, Marcel, and Tillich. His use of religious terms and emphasis upon a critique of Christianity turns some people away from considering what he has to say. Kierkegaard ironically deemed himself a missionary to Christians.

Always an excellent student, Kierkegaard earned special recognition for his studies in History, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He was a student of philosophy and religion in Berlin before submitting his dissertation *On the concept of irony with particular reference to Socrates* in 1841 [10] to the University of Copenhagen. Kierkegaard's own classification of writings designated his early works to be aesthetic/philosophical culminating in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* [11]. His religious writings followed this major publication. *The Concept of Dread* [4] belongs to the earlier philosophical category.

Kierkegaard reported a happy childhood albeit strongly influenced by his father's deep mournfulness and religiosity. Kierkegaard's own disposition to melancholy was attributed to his father whom he described as "the most melancholy man I have known". Kierkegaard writes [12],

In the two ages of immediacy (childhood and youth), with the dexterity reflection always possesses, I helped myself out, as I was compelled to do, with some sort of counterfeit, and not being quite sure of myself and the talents bestowed upon me, I suffered the pain of not being like the others - which naturally at that period I would have given everything to be able to be, if only for a short time.

Kierkegaard was lanky and ungainly in his movements suffering the torments of his schoolmates. His quick wit and intelligence served as an antidote to this cruelty, and his verbal retorts became a longstanding hallmark of his behavior. With trades people he was kind and conversant. By contrast, his verbal retorts to critics were well-known. Kierkegaard met numerous times for long conversations with the Danish King who apparently enjoyed these talks and desired even more conversations.

By 1834, Kierkegaard's father had lost his wife and three children to early deaths; only Peter the eldest (29) and Søren (21) the youngest were still living at this time. Peter destined to enter the clergy regarded his younger brother Søren as the prodigal son. They were never close. From his twenties onward Kierkegaard alternated between maniacal exaltation and depression, exhibiting

what we might diagnose today as a bipolar condition. Lacking supportive love from his father and an alien to his brother, Kierkegaard's survival and work were largely left to him. Fortunately, he was never in need of money do to his father's wealth and generous providing. Lowrie [13] writes,

He became the physician of his own soul. He became a psychologist by analyzing his own symptoms, both the normal and the pathological, and thereby he anticipated much, which now goes by the name of deep [depth] psychology.

Kierkegaard's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday arrived together with what he called *The Great Earthquake*. On that day his mournful father revealed that he had earlier seduced (raped?) Kierkegaard's mother, formerly housekeeper. In his *Journal* [8] Kierkegaard records the revelation:

It was dread which caused me to go astray, and where might I seek support when I knew or suspected that the only man I had admired for his strength and power was wavering?

Perhaps his father's revelation contributed to the conception of *The Concept of Dread* [4], published in 1844, June 17. It was dedicated to Poul Møller, an esteemed professor of Kierkegaard from his days at the University of Copenhagen. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* [11], Kierkegaard writes, "*The Concept of Dread* is unlike the other pseudonymous works for the fact that its form is direct and even a little like lecturing". However, thoughts on dread pervade all the works of Kierkegaard and not just in this one volume.

Kierkegaard's literary convention was to assign pseudo authorship to his philosophical books reserving for himself the ironic role of "editor".

His choice of author names reveals one more aspect of his ironic view. [Table 1](#) lists the dates of his aesthetic/

philosophic works culminating with *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. His "religious" publications followed after. The total output is enormous especially considering the few years over which they were written as shown in [Table 1](#). Kierkegaard's life-long use of a journal probably facilitated this production. You could not conclude that melancholy impeded his productivity. On the contrary, to this large body of philosophical and religious works is the *Journal* first begun as snatches of notes, and then formalized into a series that he wrote in throughout his life. They now occupy six volumes containing almost 7,000 pages Dru [8]. His *Journal* also offers the requisite insight into Kierkegaard's thinking and is highly recommend. Dru's modest selection contained in a Harper Torchbook Edition [14] was my professor's recommendation to best introduce Kierkegaard.

*The Concept of Dread* [4] deals with apprehension of the future. Dread is not to be interpreted as a singular presentiment for the next day or concerning the next event, but a constant and continuous foreboding. In *Christian Discourses* [15] Kierkegaard explains, "... it is fighting against the future . . . and no man is stronger than himself". *Dread* frequently culminates in *Despair*, but never for Kierkegaard who persisted with his writing in spite of this condition, producing an extraordinary number of publications over a short period. Melancholy need not hinder productivity except for those who need the excuse.

### The individual - the crowd

Of fundamental importance to Kierkegaard [4] is the contrast between *The Individual* (det enkelte in Danish) and *The Crowd*. He asks the reader, "Do you live in such a way that you are conscious of being an individual?... For in the outside world, the crowd is busy making noise". Several statements by Kierkegaard [12] illustrate his diatribe delivered against The Crowd.

**Table 1:** Publications under pseudonyms and SK acknowledgement.

Date	Title	Author ascribed
1841 9/16	<i>On the concept of irony with particular reference to Socrates</i>	SK's dissertation
1843 1/10	<i>Either-Or</i>	Victor Eremita
5/16	<i>Two edifying discourses</i>	SK
10/16	<i>Fear and trembling</i>	Johannes de Silento
	<i>Repetition</i>	Constantin Constantius
	<i>Three edifying discourses</i>	SK
12/6	<i>Four edifying discourses</i>	SK
1844 3/5	<i>Two edifying discourses</i>	SK
6/8	<i>Three edifying discourses</i>	SK
6/13	<i>Philosophical fragments</i>	Johannes Climacus
6/17	<i>The concept of dread</i>	Vigilius Haufniensis
8/31	<i>Four edifying discourses</i>	SK
1845 4/29	<i>Three occasional discourses</i>	SK
4/30	<i>Stages on the road of life</i>	Hillarius Bookbinder
1846 2/27	<i>Concluding unscientific postscript</i>	Johannes Climacus
1847-1851	A dozen <i>religious</i> works follow in this period	
1859	<i>The point of view for my work as an author</i> was published by his brother 4 years after SK death	

Where there is a multitude, a crowd, or where decisive significance is attached to the fact that there is a multitude, there it is sure that no one is working, living, striving for the highest aim, but only for one or another earthly aim. . . The “crowd” is the untruth.

For a ‘crowd’ is the untruth. . . . A crowd in its very concept is untruth, because of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible, or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction. . . For crowd is an abstraction and has no hands: but the individual has ordinarily two hands.

The crowd, in fact, is composed of individuals; it must therefore be in every man’s power to become what he is, an individual. From becoming an individual no one, no one at all, is excluded, except he who excludes himself by becoming a crowd.

Becoming an *Individual* or joining a *Crowd* constitutes the essential purpose of being for Kierkegaard. Joining the crowd may seem at first appear to make more comfortable the difficult road of life. Standing as an individual is definitely more difficult as anyone knows when choosing this position to make a stand, or by finding oneself alone in some manner. We must choose between these two alternatives says Kierkegaard. His role for the individual appears extreme; something only a few might dare to follow. It is much easier to flow with the crowd. However, each of us must choose the difficult road to becoming an individual or permit domination by the crowd. Kierkegaard’s words are as pertinent for our troubled times as they were in his lifetime. Constantly repeating this phrase, he reiterates that the crowd is untruth. For him the issue is a choice all must make. It is one reason why Socrates was so esteemed by Kierkegaard. Life requires each person to either think and decide for herself/himself or subscribe to what the crowd dictates. From making this decision we construct our goals for living, or else submit everything to the crowd. Kierkegaard [11] asks no more of us than he did of himself writing,

He (the individual,) is not, therefore, eternally responsible for whether he reaches his goal within this world of time. However, without exception, he is eternally responsible for the kind of means he uses. And when he will only use or only uses those means, which are genuinely good, then, in the judgment of eternity, he is at the goal.

Henrik Ibsen, a contemporary, fostered a similar viewpoint concerning the individual vs. the crowd occasioning commentary by Freud [16]. In *An Enemy of the People* [17] Ibsen’s hero and spokesman, Dr. Stockman, proclaims, “He is the strongest man in the world that stands alone”. This exclamation arises because the hero, the town doctor, must declare that the bath

springs contaminated, while town fathers and towns people seek to stifle his honest voice so as not to face the truth and impair the bath spring commerce. Dr. Stockman continues,

“The most dangerous enemy of truth and freedom among us - is *the compact majority*. The majority has might - unfortunately - but right it is not. I have a mind to make a revolution against the lie that the majority is in the possession of truth”.

Ibsen through Dr. Stockman’s railing against the “compact majority” argued that an independent thinker would always be judged “an enemy of the people”. Freud [16] almost paraphrased Ibsen writing, “I learned early to know the lot of standing in opposition and being placed under a ban [as a Jew] by the ‘compact majority’”.

Freud (1937) [18] was later to write,

Groups have never thirsted after truth. They demand illusions, and cannot do without them. They constantly give what is unreal precedence over what is real; they are almost as strongly influenced by what is untrue as by what is true. They have an evident tendency not to distinguish between the two.

Another critic of the crowd was Charles Mackay who documented many of the world’s most blatant absurdities in *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* [10]. The financier Bernard Baruch claimed this volume saved him millions according to Mackay’s book editor Tobias [10] who added that Baruch also quoted the philosopher Schiller: “Anyone taken as an individual is tolerably sensible and reasonable - as a member of a crowd, he at once becomes a blockhead”. In his book, Mackay documented the abnormal influence of alchemy, bizarre prophesy and fortune telling, the crusades, witchcraft, haunted houses, dueling, and the influence of politics and religion in promoting harebrained ideas. Crowds have continued to influence behavior whenever individuals relinquish their responsibilities.

## Socrates

Kierkegaard esteemed Socrates in spite of the sobering analysis by Taylor [19] who reminds us that Socrates left no original works. We therefore rely on Plato, forty years his junior, Xenophon and Diogenes Laertes for even a smidgen of direct information. Almost all of what we attribute to Socrates rests upon secondary information. Consequently, we are unable to separate Socrates from what Plato and others portrayed him to be, or what remarks they attributed to him. That said, we could certainly affirm the adage “Know thyself” as a probable thought with wide application. This phrase also appeared in an early page of Kierkegaard’s *Journal Dru* [8].

Socrates as portrayed by Plato hardly projects the

degree of irony we find in Kierkegaard's works. One must look to the *Journals* [8] of Kierkegaard to find a more intimate and straightforward explication of his thought. Especially important is the matter of dialogue. For Kierkegaard, as for Socrates, dialogue exists between individuals and within the individual. The latter view preoccupies Kierkegaard by his continuous emphasis on self-reflection as an important tool by which to "Know thyself". In Dread [4] Kierkegaard writes,

"Every man who gives heed to himself knows what no science knows, since he knows what he himself is; and this is the profundity of the Greek saying, γνωῶθι σεαυτον (know thyself)".

Kierkegaard further draws upon Socrates' explication of soul. Readers embracing atheism/agnosticism might object to Kierkegaard's continuous use of Christianity, sin, soul, etc. However, soul is prominent with Socrates as conveyed in Plato, and Taylor brings to our attention that use of soul was a conception of Socrates not often recognized. Taylor [19] writes,

"Socrates, so far as can be seen, created the conception of soul. ... Man has a soul, something that is the seat of his normal making intelligence and moral character".

Soul is "religious" for Socrates, but not over-burdened by dogmatism. In *The Socratic conception of the soul* [20]. Burnet indicated that today's connotation of soul together with any specific denominational conception is incorrect. Soul is the Socratic word for the being, essence, and eternal light of each individual. Soul is the essence of Socrates' conception of eternal human thought. In the Socratic sense, soul is not separate from rational thought; soul designates the eternalness of a human being. For such thoughts, Socrates was found guilty and condemned to death for corrupting the minds and souls of Greek youths.

### Subjective and objective

Kierkegaard [11] writes concerning the travails of life:

An existing individual is constantly in the process of becoming; the actual existing subjective thinker constantly reproduces this existential situation in his thoughts, and translates all his thinking into terms of process.

Kierkegaard distinguishes between subjective and objective differently compared to their contemporary use. We usually assign "subjective" to all that emanates internally from an individual and "objective" to all that is external apart from an individual. Kierkegaard [11] offers this distinction:

The objective accent falls on WHAT is said, the subjective accent on HOW it is said.

. . . An objective uncertainty held fast in an ap-

propriation-process of the most inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual.

Kierkegaard cautions that we mistakenly label matters using the wrong terms. This happens because our innermost desire is to objectify our personal i.e. subjective points, to argue that what we say, do, or think does not emanate from an internal, subjective source, but stands as objective information. In as much as we commonly play deceptive word games with ourselves, Kierkegaard turns the table on us by doing the same thing, but in reverse by showing that what we are doing is attempting to make objective that what is subjective. This only shows that upon closer examination all that is declared objective arises from inner subjectivity. The discerning point lies in neither of these terms, but in our relationship to these matters. We dare not risk recognition of our inner subjective thoughts as embraced so tenaciously. Instead, we attempt to voice them as objective, and in doing fail to distinguishing between subject and object. The important point is how subjective and objective are related to the truth. Kierkegaard [11] explains;

Objectivity to the truth, is an object to which the knower is related. Reflection is not focused upon the relationship, however, but on the question of whether it is the truth to which the knower is related. If only the object to which he is related is the truth, the subject is accounted to be in the truth. When the question of truth is raised subjectively, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship; if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not truth. When the question of truth is raised in an objective manner, reflection is directed.

To resolve this issue requires absolute clarity in one's thinking so once more Kierkegaard raises his subtle sense of irony to point out that reflection upon any matter is a reflection/double reflection process. Our thoughts rest in the particular, in the subjective, and within the existing individual. To give them credence we objectify them in hopes of making them no longer subjective. We are deceived in such thinking as Kierkegaard points out,

The reflection of inwardness gives to the subjective thinker a double reflection. In thinking, he thinks the universal; but as existing in this thought and as assimilating it in his inwardness, he becomes more and more subjectively isolated.

Knowledge of reality is but a possibility, not a certainty. Reflection facilitates recollections; it does not make them accurate. Kierkegaard [13] under the headings of childhood, youth, and twenty-five years of age record-

ed, “The construction of my periods [as given] might for me be called a world of recollections”.

Our recollections are constructions. They are reproduced with subjective recall and confabulation having been bundled with the affect by which they were first acquired. To reflect is to monitor these recollections and align them more accurately with our observations. As a result, we have a subjectively perceived objective world that is recalled with less than full and complete accuracy. From this combination of subjective observations and subjective recollections arises the world we treat as “objective”.

Small wonder we can be insecure when so-called objective data changes or is modified. Witness the countless times we are asked to change our views on matters such as nutrition, diets, medicine, science, etc. initially declared correct to another “new” position now thought to be the truth. The important matter is that throughout this process what is thought to be objective truth changes by successive demonstrative statements each one taken as “final” until replaced by a new truth. These changes are compounded in the social sciences where we are bombarded by waves of “objective” information only to have it re-evaluated in light of new outcomes. The examples are too numerous to recount because they occur constantly when we pay careful attention to their occurrence. This process goes on and on for the human need for dogmatic truth appears to be ultimately fixed within us by a deep need to continually grasp at each new expression as the final truth. Numerous illustrations from our life experience should teach us that this journey to absoluteness is futile. Kierkegaard [11] knew of this dilemma and responded to it by remarking, “All knowledge about reality is possibility”.

In a section entitled Reflective Communication [11] Kierkegaard writes,

Ordinary communication between man and man is immediate, because men in general exist immediately. When one man sets forth something and another acknowledges the same, word for word, it is taken for granted that they agree, and that they have understood one another. Precisely because the speaker has not noticed the reduplication required to a thinking mode of existence, he also remains unaware of the double reflection involved in the process of communication. Hence, he does not suspect that an agreement of this nature must be the grossest kind of misunderstanding. Nor does he suspect that, just as the subjective existing thinker has made himself free through the reduplication given his reflection, so the secret of all communication consists precisely in emancipating the recipient, and that for this reason he must not communicate himself directly; aye, that it is even irreligious to do so.

Reflection is derived from inward self-thought according to Kierkegaard. His term “shut-upness” is the attempt of a person to resolve the frustrating dilemmas of life by remaining isolated from all others, relinquishing communication in favor of withdrawal. In doing so a person may also withdraw from common sense reason and accepted reality. This concept of shut-upness can be related to Kant [21] who wrote a section in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* to distinguish between *sensus privatus* and *sensus communis*. *Sensus privatus*, similar to Kierkegaard’s shut-upness, indicates encapsulation of the self in a seemingly self-satisfied, self-preserving world of its own by constructing its own private logic in opposition to accepted reason. *Sensus communis* for Kant signified choosing to participate in the world via dialogue (including self-reflection) in spite of its inadequacies, and share with others without sacrificing the primacy of a differentiated self.

In shut-upness the individual withdraws from others fearing loss of self through any participation. Herein lays a possible confusion. Kierkegaard wants to advocate for The Individual in opposition to The Crowd, yet he does not want a person to withdraw from the world. While some might view this a contradiction and flaw in Kierkegaard’s reasoning, I see it as a subtle point whereby Kierkegaard wants The Individual to be independent of and not dependent upon stated reality to justify his subjectivity. I also detect an influence of Stoicism in this position whereby Kierkegaard recognizes we must accept the condition of the world. Although we cannot control it, The Individual is not to be dictated by it with respect to his subjective thoughts, actions, and commitments. Shut-upness implies an “angst” for future possibilities, and hence, the source of dread in an individual. However, this awesomeness need not handicap an Individual from productive activity. This is because there are two forms of dread.

## Two forms of dread

Kierkegaard argues for two forms of shut-upness that he designates as (1) A lofty form and (2) Full dread itself. The lofty form is to be cultivated as reasonableness possible from stepping back to gain a perspective, withholding judgment until more facts are available, and by responding with a reasoned response and not a reactive one. Kierkegaard [4] writes,

It is of infinite importance that a child be brought up with a conception of the lofty shut-upness [reserve], and be saved from the mistaken kind. In an external respect, it is easy to perceive when the moment has arrived that one ought to let the child walk alone; in a spiritual sense, the problem is very difficult. ... The art is to be constantly present and yet not be present, to let the child be allowed to develop itself in the very highest measure and on the greatest possible scale, and to express this ap-

parent abandonment in such a way that, unobtrusively, one at the same time knows everything.

Dread in its lofty form controls what might become out-of-control responses preventing an individual from simply reacting to every stimulus. Instead of reacting, The Individual monitors an unthinking response by engaging in further reflection and by contemplation arises absolute freedom. This awesome freedom brings with it what Kierkegaard designated as the dizziness of absolute freedom.

The ultimate consequence of all we do in this world ends in unknowing, non-being, and death. Failing to recognize and appreciate these ultimate consequences produces a sense of dread that can be truly overwhelming for the person in a state of absolute shut-upness; one who attempts to ward off any thought non-being and death. A person who cannot appreciate mortality cannot tolerate thoughts of this nature. For The Individual such matters are not intolerable, but recognized as the final conditions of being and becoming. Kierkegaard remarks ironically that one needs to recognize this “nothing” to be something.

The sense of dread is developmental. Its initial awareness in young children is different over time. In clarifying dread Kierkegaard [4] writes,

Dread can be observed in children as a seeking, an adventure, and a thirst, a mysterious.

If we observe children, we find this dread more definitely indicated as a seeking after adventure, a thirst for the prodigious, the mysterious.

Initially awed and overwhelmed by this thirst for seeking, adventure, and mystery in young people, adults may encapsulate themselves in shut-upness as a means of avoiding the awesomeness of this phenomenon. Fearful of what lies ahead is to live in fearsome dread of the unknowing. Such dread may take the form of fear of failure, a search of guaranteed success, unwillingness to try something new, inability to explore new ventures, etc.

Kierkegaard believes that everything in life hinges on dread because humans are a synthesis of body and soul. Following his literary mentor Socrates, Kierkegaard advocates for facing up to, recognizing, and dealing with the matter of dread in spite of not knowing the future and the unknown. We must choose to accept the conditions of life by making choices and doing what we can do to abide in the world. Inasmuch as dread is always present, we must endeavor to persevere. Kierkegaard sees that dread has its place in psychology, and it has such a place because dread is of the spirit. It is of the dreaming spirit. Humans differ from animals precisely because we have a spirit and it appears that they do not have a spirit in the human sense. All that we are to be and become turns on dread because humans are a syn-

thesis of soul and body in life on earth and as a soul in eternity (Socrates).

Dread arises from the awesomeness of freedom and from the painful recognition of both being and non-being leaving us with nothingness to ponder. This dizziness as Kierkegaard puts it arises as a something although a nothing. The omnipresence of Dread can halt all action in word and deed. Kierkegaard argues that Dread produces the demonic in us because our “unfreedomness” does not act on its freedom. He [4] designates the demoniacal as unfreedom “. . . the demoniacal is *shut-upness* [det Indesluttede or Indesluttethed] *unfreely revealed*”. The Dread of freedom leads to shut-upness. Freedom reveals the expansive. Kierkegaard remarks, “In opposition to this I employ the word ‘shut-up’ κατ’ ἐξοχήν for ‘unfreedom’. When freedom comes in contact with shut-upness we become afraid [angst]”.

To live is meet this dread of awesome freedom with courage. To do so we make the “qualitative leap.” According to Kierkegaard, we cannot ease into this matter. We are obligated to make a conscious and deliberate effort; to take action, make movement, begin a task. From such deliberate action, dread is transformed into movement. We meet dread head on. There is no other way possible. Tillich writes in *The Courage to Be* [22], “Courage is self-affirmation ‘in spite of’, that is in spite of that which tends to prevent the self from affirming itself”.

## Summary

This short and limited excursion into Kierkegaard’s view of dread shows he was the bellwether of all later existentialists who investigated being vs. non-being. Many other existentialist writers continued the process. If for no other reason, Kierkegaard deserves to be recognized for his psychological incursions into a realm that is off-limits to all those who by a stubborn refusal fail consider the domain of death and nothingness. Kierkegaard goes unrecognized and is rarely cited by contemporary writers who investigate this domain. This paper serves to bring recognition to the unique but perplexing manner by which Kierkegaard brings his sense of irony and Socratic-like approach to the matter of dread in the specialized way by which to show its manifestations.

In *Being and Becoming*, Allport [23] writes,

“Psychology has little to say about the dread of nonbeing (death) and still less about anxiety over the apparent meaninglessness of existence, which Tillich finds to be the most characteristic anxiety of our times. Because current psychology is one-sided in its treatment of anxiety it falls short also in its view of striving and courage”.

In the years since Allport wrote his monograph, there has been little written that is as profound, mysterious, and complex as Kierkegaard’s much earlier investigations into the concept of dread.

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