



Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Felsefe Dergisi
Bursa Uludağ University Faculty of Arts and Sciences Journal of Philosophy

Araştırma Makalesi | Research Article
Kaygı, 24 (2), 923-948.

Makale Geliş | Received: 02.04.2025
Makale Kabul | Accepted: 05.07.2025
Yayın Tarihi | Publication Date: 30.09.2025
DOI: 10.20981/kaygi.1669017

Sibel KADIOĞLU

Dr. | Ph.D.
ORCID: 0000-0002-0714-7270
sibelflsf@gmail.com

Emel KOÇ

Prof. Dr. | Prof. Dr.
Gazi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Felsefe Grubu Eğitimi Bölümü, Ankara, TR.
Gazi University, Faculty of Education, Department of Philosophy Group Education, Ankara, TR.
ORCID: 0000-0001-6358-0581
emelkoc@gazi.edu.tr

Reflections of the Existence States That Would Make Being Oneself Possible in the Current Age in Kierkegaard's Philosophy

Abstract: Kierkegaard, one of the most important thinkers of 19th century Europe, marks a turning point in the history of philosophy, both in his life and in his ideas that transcend his time. Kierkegaard's critical approach to modern philosophy and Enlightenment thought, considered the starting point for existential philosophy, also formed the basis for his understanding of truth and ethics. Kierkegaard's views on truth, ethics, and religion essentially focus on a single problem, the problem of 'being oneself'. Kierkegaard sees 'being oneself' not as an abstract, rational essence or ideal, but as a concrete, existential, vital state of being. To what extent is it possible to 'being oneself', which in Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence stands out as a possibility for modern people? Kierkegaard addressed the problem of 'being oneself' on an existential basis, questioning it within the perils of the age he envisioned and seeking a solution. In Kierkegaard's philosophy, there are important states of existence that will bring the possibility of 'being oneself' which is described in various ways within aesthetic, ethical, and religious realms of existence, to our time. These states of existence that will create the possibility for the contemporary individual to 'being oneself' can be listed as individuality, freedom, interiority, passion, attachment, fear, pain and hopelessness.

Keywords: Kierkegaard, Being Oneself, Anxiety, Pain, Hopelessness.

Kierkegaard Felsefesinde Kendi Olmayı Mümkün Kılacak Varoluş Durumlarının Çağımıza Yansımaları

Öz: 19. yüzyıl Avrupa'sının önemli düşünürlerinden biri olan Kierkegaard hem yaşamıyla hem de çağını aşan düşünceleriyle felsefe tarihinde bir kırılma noktası oluşturmaktadır. Varoluşçu felsefenin hareket noktası olarak kabul edilen Kierkegaard'ın modern felsefeye ve aydınlanma düşüncesine yönelik eleştirel yaklaşımı, hakikat ve etik anlayışına da temel oluşturmuştur. Kierkegaard'ın hakikat, etik ve din konusundaki görüşleri, aslında tek bir probleme 'kendi olma' problemine odaklanmaktadır. Kierkegaard, kendi olmayı soyut, rasyonel bir öz ya da ideal olarak değil, somut, varoluşsal, yaşamsal bir varoluş durumu olarak görmektedir. Kierkegaard'ın varoluş felsefesinde bir olasılık olarak öne çıkan 'kendi olma' modern insan için ne kadar mümkün? Kierkegaard "kendi olma" sorununu varoluşsal temelde ele almış, bunu öngördüğü çağın tehlikeleri içinde sorgulamış ve çözüm aramıştır. Kierkegaard felsefesinde estetik, etik ve dinsel varoluş alanlarında farklı şekillerde tanımlanan 'kendi olma' olanağını çağımızda olanaklı hale getirecek önemli varoluşsal durumlar bulunmaktadır. Çağdaş bireyde 'kendi olma' olanağını yaratacak bu varoluş durumları, bireysellik, özgürlük, içsellik, tutku, bağlılık, kaygı, acı, umutsuzluk ve yalnızlık olarak sıralanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kierkegaard, Kendi Olma, Kaygı, Acı, Umutsuzluk

Introduction

Kierkegaard's critical approach to modern philosophy, Enlightenment thought, and Christian doctrine was the forerunner of many of the issues addressed by existential philosophy. He questioned scientific progress as well as rational and logical thinking, arguing that abstract and objective thinking could not provide the meaning of life and existence.

Kierkegaard emphasized subjective thinking, which includes vitality, sincerity, and individuality, in the field of life. Kierkegaard, in his works, depicts existence against inexplicability, incommunicability, and indefinability of existence, values the contradictions and paradoxes of life and states that they activate existence. He deals with different possibilities of existence that in front of the individual and evaluates these possibilities as life options, forms of self or ways of being oneself.

The individual is included in these areas of existence with the free choices he will make in the critical situations he encounters. The following question becomes important here. "Will you live for yourself, for others, or for God?" This study will discuss the states of existence that make it possible to be oneself in Kierkegaard's

philosophy within the possibilities of our time. After explaining what 'being oneself' means in Kierkegaard's philosophy, the general character of the age will be briefly presented. The possibility of 'being oneself' in our age will be evaluated in terms of the states of existence that will make 'being oneself' possible in Kierkegaard's philosophy.

1. 'Being Oneself' in Kierkegaard's Philosophy

Kierkegaard's views on truth, ethics, and religion essentially focus on a single problem, the problem of 'being oneself'. The question, "What is the self?" is a question that contemporary Western culture is still unable to answer (Evans, 2006: 263). Kierkegaard considers 'being oneself' not as an abstract, rational essence or ideal, but as a concrete, existential, vital state of being. He sees this state of being, which is a goal for him, as a holistic process in which people are involved, especially with their emotions. According to him, 'being oneself' does not mean the attainment of a predetermined essence, but a process that involves the choices and actions of the individual in accordance with the truth that he will reveal in his relationship with himself.

Kierkegaard defines 'being oneself' as essentially the self-directed relationship of the individual. (Kierkegaard, 2014: 4). Returning to oneself is a priority and mandatory step for individuals. Being oneself occurs with critical choices and actions at the point where the individual returns to oneself as a movement. Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of choice at this point, stating that 'either/or' refers to the most important reality in the way of 'being oneself'. Although Kierkegaard accepts that there is a given essence in human existence, he states that man can change this given essence in the process of 'being himself'. It is at this point that the individual attempts to make this change between soul and body, finite and infinite, freedom and necessity. The relationship that constitutes the self is not a relationship between two entities, but between pairs of terms that are themselves aspects of the specifically human way of being (Carlisle, 2011: 5). While

Kierkegaard evaluates 'being oneself' as a relational process and synthesis, we see the inclusion of the concepts of anxiety, despair, and pain, which are of great importance in his philosophy, in the process of 'being oneself'. In this struggle, individual should not avoid facing anxiety, despair, and pain and that he must overcome these existential emotions by experiencing them in order 'being yourself'.

'Being oneself' leads the individual to the discovery of his limits as a possibility of existence. This possibility of existence is also an inevitable necessity and a sublime happiness. Nevertheless, not being oneself is the most terrifying form of being lost. While exalting this state of existence, Kierkegaard incorporates the relationship of the individual with God into the process of 'being himself' and gives this process a religious attribute. He states that the individual who ultimately chooses to be himself must see what God really wants him to do; that he must find the truth for himself, the truth for which he will live and die.

2. General Features Characterizing Our Age and the Strengthening Need to 'Being Oneself'

To what extent is it possible for modern man to "be himself," which in Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence stands out as a possibility? In order to see this feasibility, an investigation is needed that takes into account the conditions of the age. The level of civilization we have reached, with its abundant opportunities for communication, transportation, education, health, entertainment, etc., is satisfactory in many respects. However, our search continues with the abundance of tools, possibilities, and opportunities at our disposal. Our incompleteness remains. Modernity has been shaped by scientific and technological developments on the one hand, and human greed and insatiability in world wars on the other.

As a result, the acceptance of science as a common reductive basis has become questionable. Although modern science has enlightened human nature and the world, philosophy's effort to find a global solution to the problems of life on a scientific basis has failed (Popkin, 1996: 236, 237). The inability of the world and

human life to fit within the limits of science and reason necessitated a change of direction and method in philosophy. Contemporary philosophers such as Dilthey, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Husserl, and Marcel have made important critiques of this issue. One of the first heralds of the crisis was Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard states that, according to many, abstract, rational thinking is regarded as the highest form of existence. However, such thinking is a kind of suicide for him (Kierkegaard, 2017: 24,31). It is an important mistake to try to understand and explain the human who has a natural but also spiritual existence, with scientific methods aimed at understanding and discovering nature. For Kierkegaard, the essence of reflection is evasion, distraction, which can be understood as a symptom of spiritual weakness, of a lack of existential courage (Carlisle, 2011: 19)

One of the main factors that characterizes our age is technology, which has made great progress in a suitable environment. Technology is supposed to be a tool to satisfy people's desires and needs; however, today's dominance of technology has become problematic. The machine, made to serve the purposes of the individual, has acquired such power that it is immune to human will. Just like the situation of the sorcerer's apprentice, who could not get rid of the spirits he had summoned, the machine has come out of man's dominion and is operating according to its own internal law (Pappenheim, 2002: 33).

Developing technology brings not only material changes but also social, psychological and cultural changes to human life. In the current age, new forms of communication created by new technologies that remove communication boundaries provide people with both global and personal communication opportunities. New forms of communication, created by new technologies that break down communication boundaries, provide people with both global and personal communication opportunities. The new communication technologies that offer a free communication opportunity, not only in terms of speed or the power to overcome the limitations of time and space, but also in terms of immunity from

moral and cultural pressures, have created a significant change in the personal and social lives of individuals. This new communication mechanism has also changed the way people present themselves to the world and the way they perceive the world. The reality, intimacy, risks and concerns of face-to-face communication are left behind, while the way is opened for comfortable, unlimited, free communication, disconnected from mechanical reality. By changing the way people communicate and relate to each other in accordance with the global and mechanical nature of the age, social media has affected the individual's own identity and self. On social media, what people say is 'I exist' and they paint a picture of who they 'want to be' with the profiles they create and the shares and likes that support it. With its cheapness, ease and ubiquity of access, social media has taken a bigger place in people's lives than anyone ever expected or thought possible.

The great changes experienced have added new problems to human life. Modern human lives in a risk culture in which they are unable to personally give meaning to their life and is subjected to an existential isolation (Gluck, 1993: 217). Kierkegaard characterizes the relations of age as tension and states that this tension exhausts life itself, the fire of enthusiasm and spirituality, by shedding light on these troubles of human existence (Kierkegaard, 2017: 36). According to Kierkegaard, the confusion of the modern age is a kind of dishonesty and everyone is aware of how fraudulent everything is (Moore, 2001: 147). The forms of communication of our age that lack passion and reality also deserve Kierkegaard's criticisms.

Kierkegaard's ideas that will bring solutions to the crisis of the age are embedded in his thoughts that he developed in the context of "being oneself". Perhaps for the first time, Kierkegaard addressed the problem of "being oneself" on an existential basis, questioning it within the dangers of the age he envisioned and seeking a solution. Kierkegaard states that the reason why life becomes meaningless is the suppression of self-anxiety, and sees this as a great danger that could be called suicide. Kierkegaard states that people do not want to reach the real meaning of life;

they do not have the patience to learn what it means to be human and to be guided by self-consciousness (Kierkegaard, 2009b: 11). He points out that in the age that has fallen into the hands of abstraction, no one dares to say 'I' and the world has become too corrupt to hear the voice of an 'I' (Kierkegaard, 2009a: 283, 298).

The 'self-problem', which deepens with the conditions of the age, requires evaluation from different perspectives. Kierkegaard's philosophy includes states of existence that will make 'being oneself' possible for modern people. An inquiry into these states of existence that we encounter in his philosophy, within the conditions of our age, will bring a different perspective to the problem of 'being oneself'.

3. States of Existence that Will Make 'Being Oneself' Possible in Our Age

In the conditions of age, the need to be oneself in the existence of the individual has become even stronger. Although man has come a long way in proving his power over the world with his mind, his imagination has diminished, his inner world has become shallow and superficial. The fragility, sensitivity, and division in his self, and his inability to find himself have increased. At this point, with the deep questioning that has arisen in many areas, there is a greater need to go back to our roots and regain our meaning as human beings, which revives our old search for who we are. This existential pain experienced by people of our age is attempted to be treated with psychoanalyst methods. However, according to Kierkegaard, the attempt to treat the anxiety and hopelessness caused by the suppression of the self through therapy is a futile endeavor.

Psychoanalysis mostly relates to the concept of the unconscious and the act of repression. While examining the phenomena of contemporary societies such as alienation, hopelessness, anxiety, loneliness, fear of deep emotions and lack of activity.(Fromm, 1993: 49). At this point, what is being repressed and pushed into the subconscious is actually the individual's true self. Regarding repression, Kierkegaard states that the individual deceives himself from the state he does not want to be himself, and his self is no longer transparent to himself (Evans, 2006: 23).

The subconscious is formed as a result of deceiving myself about what I am. Along with this misconception, the transparency between me and myself disappears.

Kierkegaard departs from the methods of psychology while addressing common existential problems with psychology. Rather than suppressing the existential symptoms that psychology tries to treat with drugs, it tries to bring them to the surface. It evaluates from a different perspective the existential situations, which are also part of the field of study of psychology, that allow 'being oneself' along with fear, pain and hopelessness. These states of existence are the steps that become evident in his philosophy and life. They are the whole of emotions, thoughts and actions, each of which has philosophical, social, religious and psychological aspects that will carry the individual to the possibility of "being oneself" in our age with Kierkegaard's original interpretation. These states of existence, which will create the opportunity for the contemporary individual to 'being oneself', can be listed as individuality, freedom, interiority, passion, attachment, anxiety, pain, hopelessness and loneliness.

3.1. Confronting Anxiety, Pain, and Despair

Kierkegaard states that preventing 'being oneself' is a futile effort (Hannay, 1998: 329, 330). He considers anxiety, pain and hopelessness, which he deals with at different levels in the areas of aesthetic, ethical and religious existence, as existential situations that allow the individual the opportunity to 'being oneself'. He attributes an existential value to these feelings, which are known to be negative for the individual. According to him, although the struggle with anxiety, pain and hopelessness exhausts a person, only those who lose everything can gain everything. (Kierkegaard, 2015:104). In this struggle, he states that the individual should not avoid facing anxiety, despair and pain, and that he must overcome these existential feelings by experiencing them in order to 'being self '. According to him, as these feelings deepen within the individual, his soul will be exalted.

For Kierkegaard, the life of an individual with a will is shaped by his choices and actions in the face of possibilities. However, the possibilities leading towards the future of the individual create anxiety in the individual (Kierkegaard, 2015: 69). The individual experiences the tension of 'being' or 'not being oneself' in the face of these possibilities. While the uncertainty of possibilities and the future increases the responsibility undertaken, the necessity of making choices causes serious anxiety. Kierkegaard states that the anxiety that turns us back to ourselves is due to the finiteness of our existence (Kierkegaard, 2015: 88). Anxiety, corresponds to the fragmentation of the self, the feeling of not feeling at home in the world anymore. Anxiety is an inevitable state of existence for today's people, and are alienated from their existence and essence, who are cut off from their roots as Heidegger says. Both fragmentation and rootlessness cause anxiety about the 'moment' and the future in people.

Freud's psychological findings on anxiety 50 years after Kierkegaard also support the appropriateness of Kierkegaard's discourse. Kierkegaard's associating anxiety with sin or evil, and his favor of confronting anxiety rather than suppressing it are important common points in his approach with Freud (Marino, 1998: 309). In our age, anxiety is mostly considered as a mental or psychological disorder. Since it reduces the efficiency of the individual in his daily life, it is foreseen to be treated with medication. But Kierkegaard does not certainly think so. Anxiety is not a disorder that needs to be corrected, but a sign that needs to be followed and tracked.

Pain and despair are the other existing situations that will create the likelihood of "being oneself" together with anxiety which must be faced in our age. The pain was discredited in the 19th century in terms of carrying imagination and emotion, and the pain of existence was ignored by modern thought, which denies contradiction and passion. However, human existence contains dialectics and pain within itself (Kierkegaard, 2009a: 323). Kierkegaard underlines that a path full of ordeal and suffering awaits the individual in the process of being oneself. He draws

attention to the difficulties that await people in the life of the world, the source of which is human, and he states that anyone who has not suffered from the cruelty of people can never become a soul (Kierkegaard, 2005: 722). Suffering is a kind of passion for him, a desired, internal, existential state that can carry the individual to the ideal of being himself.

Kierkegaard states that hopelessness should be considered as the result of the self-directed relationship (Kierkegaard, 2014: 24, 25). If a person can get rid of this relationship that is, of himself, despair can be eliminated, but in Kierkegaard's philosophy, this is not a desired result, and it also does not seem to be possible for the self to get rid of himself. With the self-directedness of the self, self-consciousness increases. As the relationship intensifies or the self-consciousness increases, so does hopelessness (Kierkegaard, 2014: 51-55). According to Kierkegaard, this is an opportunity to 'being oneself'. For today's people who regard positivity and optimism as the key to a good life, Kierkegaard's thoughts in this subject, particularly his stunning enthusiasm in the face of despair, are surprising. Most of us have experienced times when the world collapsed on us, and it's hard to listen to all the "think positive" advice in those moments. Kierkegaard tells the individual to despair with his whole being.

Kierkegaard, who states that covering up the despair that a person falls into, will block the way to "being oneself", calls the individual to face hopelessness, anxiety and pain. While deprivation of these existence states is seen as an achievement for people of our age, a call to confrontation will make a significant difference in the individual's relationship with himself.

3.2 Being an 'Individual' Between Alienation and Selfishness Options

In Kierkegaard's philosophy, being an 'individual', one of the states of existence that allows 'being oneself' has a value that is to be the basis for other states of existence. Today, the misinterpretation of being an Individual leads to alienation and selfishness. While Technology and media tools of the age destroy the sincere

and intimate ties that bind people to each other and reveal new forms of attachment that are intangible, the reality of which is questionable, the individual is separated from both himself and the society he lives in. The human being, who has been thrown into the mechanism called modernity, cannot achieve harmony not only with the outside world but even with himself, and suffers from the contradiction he has fallen into (Aruoba, 2005: 56).

The individual's alienation from what is other than himself carries the danger of selfishness. The individual's self-directed characteristics, which have not been trimmed in the socialization process, can cause him to be unable to adapt to the society he lives in, to be unable to establish social relations, to alienate himself from the social structure and others. This alienation can turn into selfishness when the individual takes the risk of harming others, especially for the sake of his own wishes and interests. Each individual can leave an alienated effect on others in order to satisfy his own selfish need.

The fact that everyone is the center of their own world raises the question of where the center of the world will be, which leads to great chaos (Borgmann, 2013: 16, 17). What gives birth to selfishness in our age is not the value attributed to individual existence in the Kierkegaardian sense, but individualism rising on the basis of selfishness. In this respect, individualism is considered as an element that corrupts contemporary Western cultures (Evans, 2006: 275). At this point, a new interpretation of individuality is required, taking the options of selfishness and alienation into account. If the way for the individual to become an individual in existential integrity without becoming estranged from society, others or self was to be paved, the individual would gain a value in a true sense in contemporary societies.

Kierkegaard puts the individual forward in the face of society and prefers being an individual to being a part of the society. The basis of his preference for the individual to the society is the idea of preventing the individual from losing their

own identity because of the society, rather than alienation from the society or breaking away from the culture of which one is a part.

Kierkegaard defines himself as an isolated individuality and therefore states that he is a bad person for the objective age in which he lived. The most important standard of being human is to be an individual, but it was to be a part of society in the 19th century (Kierkegaard, 2005: 560, 689). According to him, every age has its own immortality. Being an individual is preferred to being lost in society by alienating from oneself. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, advocates individual existence, which turns the individual away from selfishness.

Individual existence, which Kierkegaard finds valuable, includes tangibility, vitality, sincerity, solitude, freedom, passion, courage and responsibility. He fills individuality as a category of existence with a different content. For that reason, understanding his philosophy is, particularly relevant to his understanding of individuality. In Kierkegaard, being an individual is also a distinctive element in the relationship with God, since the individual deepens and gains meaning in his relationship with God (Kierkegaard, 2009: 120). He excludes the society as he emphasizes being in the presence of God, being sincere, personal and alone in the field of religion as well. Arguing that "If you want to be someone God hates, you just have to act in groups," Kierkegaard (2016: 27) emphasizes God's call to truth that appeals to the individual.

3.3 Passion as an Opportunity to Being Oneself Against the Trends of the Modern Age, such as Pleasure, Insatiability

An important element underlying the selfishness of the people of our age is their desires fueled by social and economic means and their want for pleasure. People generally desire what is missing in themselves to complete themselves (Gasparyan, 2014: 7). However, this completion is not usually achieved by the satisfaction of desires. Because man has endless desires and the continuation of the established order of the age somehow depends on the continuity of the desire to get

pleasure in man. While man cannot reach the saturation point, especially in terms of material pleasures, keeping desires constantly alive with the technological and social tools of the age causes an unending hunger in man. According to Fromm (2016: 147), even if desires are satisfied, moments of pleasure; In this way, will be unable to satisfy and resolve the inner emptiness and anxiety, loneliness and depression caused by desires. Since what a person has is in danger of being lost at any moment, the desire and passion to have more will always arise for the sake of being away from this danger.

Kierkegaard emphasizes passion as the principle that gives power and direction to people's behavior instead of the desire for pleasure that leads people to insatiability. However, the meaning attributed to passion by age is far from the value given by Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard often expresses his reaction to the lack of passion of his age due to the dominance of abstract and rational thinking. He states that the thing that will protect people from the seductive uncertainty and spirals of such thinking is passion, but that people are deprived of this passion (Kierkegaard, 2017: 24, 37). For Kierkegaard, passion is a feature that makes people authentic (Kierkegaard, 2011: 175). While abstract thought defends the misconception where passion prevents the truth, Kierkegaard states on the contrary; that the passion created on a right basis will enable people to reach the truth (Evans, 2006: 330). Passion is an essential state of existence that carries the individual to a higher existence and makes a person a human being. But our own age is just as devoid of passion as Kierkegaard envisioned.

Kierkegaard states that in an age without passion, everything will turn into things bought and sold with money, and reasonable and partially correct but lacking in vitality expressions and observations will circulate among people. According to him, "There are no heroes here, no lovers, no thinkers, no knights of faith, no great benefactors, no one to experience their validity as primitive." (Kierkegaard, 2009b:

129). Passionlessness leads to mediocrity, the magic of life is lost, and no one to guide or set an example is found. Our age revolves around the satisfaction of desires that can be obtained with money in line with the power of money. What will get the individual out of this vicious circle is the passion that is not dependent on the commodity.

In Kierkegaard's thought, passion attains its deep meaning on a religious basis. According to Kierkegaard, who argues that faith cannot be based on reason and criticizes the search for rational proof of the existence of God, passion is the power that will lead the individual to the existence of God. Passion reaches its highest value with faith, and the most sublime passion is faith. Kierkegaard states that passion, born out of an inner need for God, can motivate a leap into the absurd, which he calls 'faith'. Faith is a miracle that unites the whole life of man in passion, it is passion. Passion is the greatest equalizer of mankind (Kierkegaard, 2011: 90, 176). The meanings that Kierkegaard attributes to many concepts of philosophy with a unique perspective add a significant richness to the intellectual accumulation of these concepts. Passion likewise has a distinct and special meaning in Kierkegaard's philosophy.

3.4. Loneliness and Freedom as a Possibility to 'Be Oneself'

Loneliness and freedom are among the prominent features of individual existence and the possibilities of 'being oneself' in Kierkegaard's philosophy. Both are the states of existence interconnected by their effects. The individual who mostly prefers freedom and stays away from others, social values and norms becomes lonely, and the individual who chooses loneliness becomes free by getting away from the factors that can limit his choices and actions. Despite the intensity of transboundary relationships today, people are often separated and isolated from each other and only come into contact when they can use each other as tools for specific ends (Pappenheim, 2002: 72). These associations, which stand out with

their instrumental nature, still cannot change the reality of the loneliness of today's people.

The basis of the loneliness we face is the increasing ability of human beings to sustain their lives alone, without the need for the presence of others with the tools of the age. In this way, people continue their lives alone in masses, which don't include real bonds, rather than a community. Although this scene is more noticeable in the metropolitan areas of developed countries, it is gaining prevalence as a new lifestyle thanks to the communication technologies of the age.

Along with this critical view, "loneliness" has an important philosophical value. People are alone while questioning the meaning of life alone and reaching this meaning, while performing many valuable actions of life, asking a question and finding the answer. Kierkegaard is one of the first thinkers who questioned the togetherness with others in the face of this value of loneliness. The condition of 'being oneself' and faith is returning to himself and this happens in solitude. Only when one is alone can one discover that God exists. God is not a friend of the delightful human community (Maybee, 1996: 391). The measure of true individuality is being alone for a long time without the understanding of others. However, people are often afraid of being alone rather than having the wrong idea (Moore, 2001: 25).

Kierkegaard also draws attention to the disappearance of individuals in crowds. He believes that "Everyone wants to be together, they want to be scammed collectively, but nobody wants to have an individual existence." (Kierkegaard, 2009a: 298). Loneliness will give the individual freedom and responsibility together with it however, what people try to escape is these burdens of life.

The economic and social order of the age offers people partial freedom. The need for security and order, which is especially essential for people, makes the renunciation of some freedoms voluntary. Contrary to the limitations that exist in the political and social field and, in the field of economy, people of our age are freed,

especially when it comes to desires and wishes for consumption. Such that the traditional, moral and religious principles that limit people are also challenged by the demands for freedom in this area. Therefore, rather than real existential freedom, there is a freedom designed in line with the economic order of the age.

While freedom is rising as an important value with the weakening of the traditional structure, the individual is mistaken about freedom. On the one hand, the tools of the modern age make people feel free, while on the other hand, they turn them into prisoners with their invisible interventions on the power of choice. In this sense, choices made in unpredictability and uncertainty with the limitlessness of options and the responsibilities imposed on the individual make the freedom of the age problematic and do not provide the hoped happiness.

As the free man hesitates when he is; faced with options, he shudders at endless possibilities, fearing that the plausible reasons of today may be the expensive mistakes of tomorrow. For Kierkegaard, just like most contemporary philosophers, the individual is a free and responsible being. He likens freedom or the possibility of choice to the breath of life itself (Kierkegaard, 1992: 173). To be free is to be capable of becoming oneself as spirit, as freedom. In Kierkegaard's works freedom is often represented, metaphorically, as a kind of inward openness or opening, and simultaneously as the inward movements that may occur through this open 'space' (Carlisle, 2011: 7). The value of awareness of freedom emerges when the individual can turn into himself (Kierkegaard, 2016: 86). 'Being oneself' is also a free choice and is based on action. It is activating the power of choice that will turn the individual back to himself, make him discover the truth of his existence, this is where freedom finds its meaning.

3.5. The Other and Attachment in the Context of the Possibility of 'Being Oneself'

An important reality that we will deal with in the face of the loneliness and freedom of the individual is the problem of the other and attachment. Man's escape

from responsibility, freedom, and therefore from himself, leads him to be subject to the choices of the uncertain community called others. Subordination to others is generally accepted as an impersonal form of existence (Pappenheim, 2002: 21). In the world of thought, there are different evaluations of the existence of the 'other' for the individual who is under the obligation to reveal 'being oneself'. For Hegel, who clarifies the problem of the other in terms of the 'master-slave' relationship, the existence of the other is necessary and necessary for the existence of the individual. For Sartre, who describes others as hell, the other is a must for me to find and see myself. I need to be shaped by the gaze of the 'other'. In Merleau Ponty, there is the self first, then the other, and in Jacques Lacan, it is the relationship with the other that triggers the emergence of the self (Gasparyan, 2014: 12). Although Kierkegaard does not deny the existence of the other, he differs from other thinkers especially with the 'other' he identifies.

The presence of the other is important so that I can see what I am not. Learning about things that are not 'I' is an important source of acquiring individual identity (Giddens, 2014: 62). Because of this need, the individual has to co-exist with others; although their presence is disturbing, the individual needs reflection from them in order to find himself and see himself. However, the 'other' carries the danger of losing one's own identity along with this necessity. While Kierkegaard states that most people prefer to be the other in the crowd instead of being an individual, he considers this as corruption and disappearance. According to him, choosing to be like others is treason against God's grace (Moore, 2001: 24). God has given us the right to be 'me'. It is incorrect not to use this right, to dare to be ourselves, to hide in the community.

Along with this negative determination of Kierkegaard towards others, his treatment of the 'self' as an orientation, and a relational process, requires the existence of others to turn to. For Kierkegaard, who the other is in this relationship is a criterion of the individual's self. Most commentators think that this other is God

in Kierkegaard and that Kierkegaard does not put human relations in a positive place in the formation of the self (Evans, 2006: 22). It is clear that the relationship with God is an ideal point in the process of 'being oneself' at this point. Although the relationship with the other is compatible with the relational nature of the self, it is considered that this relationship is insufficient to give the self the criterion of being an individual, for the self must first be attached to itself and to God. Although the relationship with the other is an ethical requirement, in critical moments and critical choices that appear in the context of 'being oneself', the addressee of the individual is himself and God.

Today, it is a problem how the need for 'connection' will be met with the position of the 'other' and how the individual will be connected to himself and the other in a way that will allow him to 'being himself'. While Kierkegaard wants the individual to return to himself and turn towards himself, he does not find an abusive relationship towards the other correct. In Kierkegaard, the individual's relationship with the other, his attachment to the other, is shaped by his views, which he explains in the context of 'neighborly love'.

While Kierkegaard is concerned with how to make our lives meaningful, he also sees attachment as an attempt to gain meaning. Attachment, which is the foundation of 'being oneself', is also healing. Choosing to be attached to something is choosing and accepting who you are in line with what you are attached to. For this reason, it is especially important to whom one is attached to and who is chosen as the other in terms of being himself. In our age, there is a rising 'dependency' on the shallowness, transience and self-interest of attachments. Kierkegaard specifically distinguishes addiction from attachment. It is a must without dependency control. Although addicted seems to have emerged as a result of the nihilism of the modern age, it was Kierkegaard who first expressed it (Dreyfus & Rubin, 1994: 12). Attachment, which Kierkegaard distinguishes from dependence, constitutes a surrender that results from free choice, and this surrender is ideally to God. The

individual, who is exalted to the extent of the other he is attached to, must first of all return to himself and be attached to himself. because it is not possible for a person to love the other without loving himself (Brothers, 1999: 66).

3.6. Love and Sincerity as the Opportunity to Be Oneself

For Kierkegaard, love is the power that will add meaning to relationships and attachments. Love, as a power that creates the possibility of 'being oneself', is also shown as the remedy for the unrest in the inner world of today's people. "Where do we begin to love?" While the question comes to the forefront, Kierkegaard points to the individual himself and says, "Don't forget to love yourself" (Kierkegaard, 2016: 26). According to him, a person naturally wants to choose himself, and in his love for another, the lover actually loves himself (Morris, 1989: 22). Self-love is also a step towards 'being oneself'. If a person loves something, the thing that he loves opens itself to him (Kierkegaard, 2005: 414). If a person wants to establish a transparent relationship with himself, which is the condition of being himself, then he will love himself first so that he can open himself to himself.

For Kierkegaard, the love that takes the individual to the other appears as 'neighbor love'. Kierkegaard, who is critical of being connected by friendship, marriage or institutional ties, approves the 'love of neighbor' with God as the middle term.

Kierkegaard considers a love that excludes God and a relationship with God as a mutual illusion (Moore, 2001: 60). According to him, God is love, God loves and wants to be loved (Kierkegaard, 2016: 91). Every individual is equal in terms of the possibility of loving God and being loved (Kierkegaard, 2013: 20, 30). Kierkegaard also bases his love of neighbor on the love of God. "It is impossible for a person who does not love his brother whom he sees to love God whom he does not see." Based on his motto, he regards neighbor love as perfect and equalizing (Moore, 2001: 57-62). The individual loves his neighbor because of his love for God, this love prevents selfishness and increases the individual's self-esteem.

In Kierkegaard, the most important criterion for being able to connect with love is sincerity. According to him, sincerity is a kind of retreat, a return to oneself. Sincerity with passion is also a unifying force, not a separating force, so unity without sincerity is no different from a herd, and the effect of insincere relationships is no different from the noise of a crowd (Kierkegaard, 2009b: 50, 62). An important element of sincerity is silence. According to Kierkegaard, silence is the essence of spirituality, the inner world. Only those who know how to remain silent can truly speak and truly act (Kierkegaard, 2017: 57). Chattering, on the other hand, is an indicator of extroversion and is far from intimacy (Kierkegaard, 2009b:130).

Kierkegaard also emphasizes sincerity in the individual's relationship with God. Connecting to God with sincere love makes it possible to reach the true nature of God. Sincerity is the relationship of the individual towards himself first and then towards God. (Kierkegaard, 2009a:366). Kierkegaard also states that the capacity for sincerity is equal in people compared to intelligence (Evans, 2006: 180). For this reason, every human being has the same capacity to reach God. If reason were the way to reach God, this possibility would not be equal for everyone.

3.7. Faith and Leaping in the Possibility of 'Being Oneself'

For Kierkegaard, the name of sincere, loving attachment to God is faith. This state of being, which corresponds to a personal experience, contains a paradox that does not allow mental proof (Evans, 2006: 198-200). According to Kierkegaard, it is a passionate and sincere commitment that will make it possible to overcome the paradoxical situation created by the deistic understanding of God in the Age of Enlightenment. It is the contradiction, uncertainty and obscurity that creates passion, and faith, with its content, cannot be transmitted or taught as objective and precise knowledge (Kierkegaard, 2009a: 26). Faith, which Kierkegaard defines as a reciprocal, sincere, subjective and passionate relationship between God and the individual, has qualities that are unacceptable in the age dominated by reason and

science. However, he succeeded in influencing contemporary thinkers with his understanding of faith based on a "sincere devotion".

According to Kierkegaard, 'being oneself' ideally takes place in the presence of God. It refers to a personal call from God, a call that calls each individual to 'being oneself'. According to him, the 'divine calling' may be about sacrificing some possibilities in one's life, such as leaving a singing career to become a teacher. God may not only ask us to achieve the universal good. It may also be a special assignment that will improve our relationship with God. At this point, a vital question is asked according to Kierkegaard; "What does God want to do with me?" (Evans, 2006: 235). Kierkegaard states that in order for the individual to get the answer to this question, to hear the call from God, he must be alone with God, and the person who cannot be alone with God's words cannot understand God's words (Moore, 2001: 52).

The individual is forced into a radical choice by the call from God in the presence of God. This choice and subsequent action may include the sacrifice of the individual. Just like the choice of Prophet Ibrahim! It does not seem possible that this test, which forces the mind, will and perseverance of ordinary people, can be realized for the people of our age. However, there are also extreme cases that show that people are not completely devoid of such actions and decisions. Fromm states that the idea that people are not ready to devote themselves to a good cause is wrong and shows what happened during the Second World War as an example (Fromm, 2016: 135). People can make great sacrifices, including giving up a life, for personal or universal ideals in their lives.

Kierkegaard calls the response to a divine call the 'leap'. The leap is a choice, not a reflection, and that choice is not between gold and silver, not between red and green, but between God and the world (Moore, 2001: 20). This radical choice often seems logical, devoid of any rational basis, having no criteria, arbitrary and absurd (Evans, 2006: 311). There are critical moments in human life that make such

decisions. Giddens (2014: 183, 253) states that critical moments in human life often point to periods of gaining new qualifications and strength. Many critical moments are beyond the individual's strength and may not be easily resolved without resorting to moral existential criteria.

What gives strength to the individual in radical selection is his passion (Brothers, 1999: 55). Such a choice or leap involves risk, so it also requires courage (Moore, 2001:179). Leaping is a free act and it carries responsibility, it has a painful motivation. It is the transition from possibility to reality and it is also paradoxical (Ferreira, 1998: 215-218). Not every choice of man, therefore, carries the value of radical choice. In general, people make predictable choices for reasonable reasons. According to Kierkegaard, whenever a person is tested under an obligation, a possibility of overcoming and leap arises (Kierkegaard, 2009a: 10). The one waiting on the other side of this leap is God. "The trimmer's scythe makes it possible for each individual to jump over the blade, and the attention is God waiting for you. Leap in and you're in the arms of God." (Kierkegaard, 2017: 70).

For the believer, a relationship with God increases obligation. If God asks me to do something and my faith in God's goodness is big enough, I can believe that it is good and right to obey God. According to Kierkegaard, God created us as unique individuals, and we must be willing to respond to the unique commands God gives us as individuals in order to reach our true selves, to 'be ourselves.' We must let God create faith within us (Evans, 2006: 19,24). In this regard, Kierkegaard wrote in his diaries, "It is very important to know that it is your turn in life." (Kierkegaard, 2005: 77) says. He emphasizes the power of personality in ensuring the existential transformation of the individual on the plane of faith (Altman, 2003: 2).

Kierkegaard's understanding of faith seems far from having reasonable value, together with the elements we have emphasized for the people of the age. Hearing a divine call in uncertainty and obscurity, hearing what God wants to do with himself, giving up and sacrificing other valuable things in this direction, poses

difficulties for human beings, who are sensory and rational beings, under the rationality and scientificity of the age. However, an individual who has faced his anxiety, despair and pain, is free, introverted, full of love, and can be passionately connected with the courage he finds in his loneliness will create the opportunity to be himself in our age. The phenomenon of globalization, shaped by the determining power of the economy, has led to sameness, monotony, and the loss of the richness created by differences, rather than leading humanity to unity and solidarity.

Conclusion

In our study, in which we evaluated the possibility of 'being oneself' revealed in Kierkegaard's philosophy within the conditions of our age; the conclusions we reached were that conditions have turned into more of an obstacle. A crisis of meaning, which contemporary philosophers have also touched upon, arose under these conditions. The fact that human existence cannot be understood in a one-sided manner on a rational and scientific basis has turned the rise of humanity into an delusion. The phenomenon of globalization which is shaped by the decisive power of economy has made way towards sameness, monotony, the loss of richness created by diversity instead of leading humanity to unity and solidarity. The current economic and political systems have created individuals who produce, consume, and are pacified by the media tools of the age. The individual has not attained an existence other than that of a cog in the established wheel. The states of existence we discovered in Kierkegaard's philosophy, such as anxiety, pain, despair, individuality, passion, love, sincerity, loneliness, freedom, attachment, and faith, have created opportunities for today's people on the path of 'being themselves'.

Among these possibilities of 'being oneself' for the people of our age, Kierkegaard's emphasis on 'being an individual' is valuable. Being an individual means being a person who chooses, acts, takes responsibility, is introverted, tangible and living. Other states of existence that would allow 'being oneself' accompanied individual existence as pain, anxiety, despair passion, loneliness and

freedom. Kierkegaard also considered love and sincerity as important conditions on the path to 'being oneself.' Finally, there came the steps of leap and faith that became an ideal quality in his philosophy. The point we focus on here for people of our age is the situation of 'leap', which corresponds to radical choice and action that takes place at critical moments of life. Although the point of faith is a state of existence that cannot be realized for every individual, every individual may have to make radical choices at critical moments in their life. People may encounter critical choices and actions in their lives that will enable them to discover their own truths and make this world meaningful to them. This could be a spouse, a friend, or a career choice, or it could be choices and actions that require courage, accompanied by uncertainty and unpredictability, in moments when the full weight of existential contradictions is felt. The choices and decisions made at these moments bring the individual to the threshold of 'being oneself.' The choices that the individual makes inwardly, towards revealing his own truth, will carry him to 'being oneself.'

KAYNAKÇA | REFERENCES

Altman, C. T. (2003). Kierkegaard and Nietzsche: Contrasts and Comparisons. *Philosophy Classics*, Volume IV, Nineteenth-Century Philosophy.

Aruoba, O. (2005). *Benlik*. İstanbul: Metis.

Borgmann, A. (2013). So, Who am I Really? Personal Identity in the Age of the Internet. *AI & Society*, Springer-Verlag London Limited 28(1), 15-20.

Broothers, R. (1999). 'Ethics of Ethics, Law of Laws': Kierkegaard, Levinas and the Aporia of Substantive Identity. *Sophia*, 38(2), 54-68.

Carlisle, C. (2011). Kierkegaard's Despair in an Age of Reflection. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 32(2), 251-279. https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/32228263/Kierkegaards_Despair-libre.pdf accessed 20/01/2025

Dreyfus H. & Rubin J. (1994). Kierkegaard on the Nihilism of the Present Age: The Case of Commitment as Addiction. *Syntese*, 98(1), 3-19. Sci-Hub | Kierkegaard on the nihilism of the present age: The case of commitment as addiction. *Synthese*, 98(1), 3-19 | 10.1007/bf01064023 accessed 15/03/2023

Evans, C. S. (2006). *Kierkegaard on Faith and the Self*, Collected Essays. Texas: Baylor University.

Ferreira, M. J. (1998). Faith and the Kierkegaardian Leap. In A. Hannay and G. D. Marino (eds), *Kierkegaard*, pp.207-256, Cambridge: Cambridge University

Fromm, E. (1993). *Ruh Blim Açısından İnsan Doğasının Özü*. (Trans. by C. G. Bedirhan Üstün) İstanbul: Düşünen Adam.

Fromm, E. (2016). *Sahip Olmak Ya Da Olmak*. (Trans. by A. Arıtan) İstanbul: Say.

Giddens, A. (2014). *Modernite Ve Bireysel Kimlik, Geç Modern Çağda Benlik Ve Toplum*, (trans. by Ü. Tatlıcan). İstanbul: Say.

Gluck, M. (1993). Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age, *History and Theory*. Published by: Wiley for Wesleyan University, 32(2), 214-220.

Hannay, A. (1998). Kierkegaard and the Variety of Despair, In A. Hannay and G.D. Marino (eds), *Kierkegaard* (pp. 329-348). Cambridge: Cambridge University

Hannay, A. (2013). *Kierkegaard*, (trans. by N. Nirven) İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası

Kierkegaard, S. (1992) *Either/Or, a Fragment of Life* (trans. by A. Hannay). London: Penguin.

Kierkegaard, S. (2005). *Günlüklerinden ve Makalelerden Seçmeler* (trans. by İ. Kapaklıkaya). İstanbul: Anka.

Kierkegaard, S. (2009a). *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, (A. Hannay, Trans). Newyork: Cambridge University.

Kierkegaard, S. (2009b), Two Ages, the Age of Revolution, and the Present Age a Literary Review. (Edited and Translated with Introduction and Notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong), New Jersey, Princeton University.

Kierkegaard, S. (2010). Bilimsel Olmayan Sonlandırıcı Notlar, K. Gödelek in 'Kierkegaard' (pp.191-257) İstanbul: Say.

Kierkegaard, S. (2011). *Korku ve Titreme* (trans. by İ. Kapaklıkaya). İstanbul: Ağaç.

Kierkegaard, S. (2013). *Felsefe Parçaları Ya da Bir Parça Felsefe* (trans. by D. Şahiner). İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası.

Kierkegaard, S. (2014). *Ölümcül Hastalık Umutsuzluk* (trans. by M.M. Yakupoğlu). Ankara: Doğu Batı.

Kierkegaard, S. (2015). *Kaygı Kavramı* (trans. by T. Armaner). İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası.

Kierkegaard, S. (2016). *Kendinizi Sevmeyi Unutmayın* (trans. by E. M. Bozer). İstanbul: Aylak Adam.

Kierkegaard, S. (2017). *Şimdiki Çağ: Başkaldırının Ölümü Üzerine* (trans. by B. Tokdemir). İstanbul: Paris.

Marino, G. D. (1998). Anxiety in the Concept of Anxiety. In A. Hannay and G. D. Marino (eds.). *Kierkegaard* (pp.48-76). Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Maybee, J. E. (1996). Kierkegaard on the Madness of Reason, Man and World, *Continental Philosophy Review*, 29, 387-406.

Moore, C.E. (2001). *Provocation, Spritual Writtings of Kierkegaard*, <http://www.bruderhof.com/e-books/Provocations.htm>.

Morris, T.F. (1989). Kierkegaard on Despair and the Eternal, *Sophia*, 28, 21-30.

Pappenheim, F. (2002). *Moden İnsanın Yabancılaşması* (trans. by S. Ak, Trans.). Ankara: Phoenix.

Popkin, R. H. (1996). Scepticism, Humor and the Archipelago of knowledge, *Scepticism in the History of Philosophy*, 17, 235-252.