

## Individuality of pain and despair in the midst of a prevalent disaster; An Anti-Climacusian Approach

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**Abstract:** As Kierkegaard has explained, humankind's pain is recognized with its individuality. But, what happens for the pain during a prevalent disaster, and what changes does it go through? Can generality of a disaster always help anyone to endure the pain? Does the generality leave any room for helping those who are all affected? Is there no difference among all kinds of pains in terms of their requirements for enduring or overcoming the individual pain? Such questions lead us to reconsider the relationship between the individuality of pain and the generality of calamity based on Kierkegaard's meditations, especially because he himself did not engage with this issue exactly. In his book, *Sickness unto death*, signed by a pseudonym called Anti-Climacus, as a representative of a special existential condition, he takes a look at the meaning of pain that is deeply related to concept of despair, which is the basis of our analysis. In this article, by using an approach we call "Anti-Climacusian", we conclude that the individuality of pain in the context of a general disaster may prevent the lonely person from pursuing a three-staged dialectical movement to set free from despair.

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**Introduction:** When we talk about a public disaster, one of the issues we may encounter is the fact that within such situation, the known forms of social relations are not working as previous, or not working at all. Furthermore, in personal level, a person's habits and familiar relations with others are affected in such a way that the individual gradually feels lonely in the situation of suffering, while such feeling is intensified by the escalation of the social chaos. This feeling, in other words, can be called as "individuality of pain", a sort of pain which is unique for every individual and affects his or her existential condition in different manners, all of which is caused by prevalent disaster.

In order to analyze this situation with a philosophical approach, we propose Soren Kierkegaard's ideas in his book "sickness unto death" as a conceptual basis of our existentialistic reflections. His nickname in this book, Anti-Climacus, is generally known to represent a truly Christian

existentialistic standpoint through his entire thoughts. The Anti-Climacus's main concepts are "despair" and "becoming self." By the means of these two concepts, he represents a three-stage dialectical logic of selfhood and despair, and it introduces standing before God by believers as its final step. In this way, several forms of despair prohibit the self from his internal evolution and these barriers can be evoked by many different motivations which the self may encounter in a prevalent disaster. Although, the notion of individuality is not mentioned by Anti-climacus himself, both "becoming a self" and "despair" can be used as conceptual tools to explain our idea on the individuality of pain.

**Methodology:** Our question is this: can we describe the individuality of pain and despair in the midst of the prevalent disaster, using an Anti-Climacusian approach?. To answer this question, with the help of text interpretation patterns, we refer to kierkegard's

original writings and search an anticlimax approach there. Although much research has been done on Kierkegaard's view on suffering, we encounter with this differently since we are concerned with the individual pain in the context of pervasive disasters. For this, we have to reconstruct his views to get an appreciate answer.

**Findings:** It seems that in the first stage of the three-stages dialectic, a person who is suffering may feel despair of the infinite by being trapped into his own imaginations or hallucinations about a non-actual desirable reality. This despair takes him away from concrete reality and causes him to suffer from his own mental loneliness. On the other hand, by forgetting the possibility of imagination, the person may become a soulless man, and in this situation he/she will be incapable of imagining any other possibility than suffering. Such a person is caught in the despair of the finite. In the second stage, after the person apprehended

both imaginary and actual possibilities, he/she is still in danger of despair of the possible. It means a fruitless attempt to set himself free of the actual disastrous situation by any kind of inappropriate actions. On the contrary, if the individual falls in the despair of the necessary, he/she is practically surrendered to the actual situation, even if he/she knows several rationally possible theoretical solutions. In these two situations, the individual is still alone, even if any suffered mass surrounds him. The reason is that he/she is unable to relate himself meaningfully to anyone other than himself. Once the suffering person finds himself in such a dilemma between the possibility and the necessity, he realizes his temporality. All of his efforts are subject to the boundary of time, and so the only real opportunity to continue to hope is that willing and acting mean the presence of the eternal in one's life, i.e., standing alone before God. It is the only form of individuality which is not a despaired loneliness, but the creation of a



true self, even in the midst of the prevalent disaster. Individual pain is not making one fall into despair, but a kind of necessary element of being a true self.

### Discussion and Conclusion:

For Anti-Climacus, the radical evil and pain is the despair which lead person to various forms of loneliness. We have, however, found dialectical forms of concepts that reveal the nature of the mentioned pain in all three stages, based on the existentialistic situation of suffered person. In this regard, after a detailed description of the possibilities of despair caused by the prevalent disaster, we reconsidered the core notion of individuality and its relation to pain, loneliness, despair, and faith. We have tried to show that Anti-Climacus, by passing us through two stages of dialectical synthesis of our two distant realities of the self, can lead us to some sort of salvation form such pain, but his main concern is to become a true self. Becoming a self is a kind of inner loneliness, provided by what he calls

standing by the God, or in the other words, by the presence of The Eternal within the temporality of The Temporal.

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