

## Chapter I : Introduction

### Recognizing Protagonist's Survival amid Daydreams and Realities

This thesis focuses on *Solo*, a novel by Rana Dasgupta that portrays the life and daydreams of a 100-year-old man Ulrich. Ulrich, being a protagonist, finds the essence of his life amidst the dreams he foresees in his youths and the realities he is destined to survive in the present. Notwithstanding the title *Solo*, this novel also focuses on duality— realities versus daydreams, science versus music, communism versus oligarchy and success versus failure of the very protagonist. Ulrich, the blind man feel existence in the present in daydreaming his bygone days. This research answers why the blind man undergoes such remembrance in terms of daydreaming. One of the focal contentions of this project is that Ulrich cannot avoid those memories because they were traumatic in nature deeply inscribed in his mind.

By referring to the theoretical concepts of Heidegger, Sartre, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Alan D. Schrift, Walter Kaufmann and other existential theorists the research assesses that protagonist earns the way of his present living amidst his daydreams and realities he faced. Moreover, the research assesses that present situation is the result of his traumatic past. The moments and events Ulrich recounts in the chapters "Life" and "Daydreams" are the traces of traumatic memory. By highlighting it, the novel asserts that Ulrich's sense of indulgence in the relics of past is his search for lost roots, broken tradition, and wasted ambitions. Remembering these very things are the only way of his survival. The study brings into the light the protagonist's trauma of the past. Though the novella apparently seems to be the recollection of past the research tries to characterize those recollections as the properties of traumatic-self, traditions, ambitions and lost love. Moreover, the study aims at showing those means of

traumatic recollections as the easy outlet to spend haunting, troublesome moments of solitude and old age.

The tale revolves around Ulrich, a Bulgarian Chemist, who reads a story in a magazine before losing his vision. Inspired and shaken by a newspaper report about the traumatic death of parrots that had preserved the lost tongue of a wiped out population, Ulrich decides to share his story in two movements: 'Life' and 'Daydreams'. Movement 'Life' gives the story of Ulrich, his parents', his passions', his friends', his professional and personal relationships and how he loses everything. The panoramic first moment "Life"—with chapters named after chemical elements—is followed by the magic-realist second, "Daydreams"—that has chapters named after sea-creatures. Liberated from the constraints of history and geography in the astonishing and vibrant second half of the novel, Ulrich re-imagines the leftovers from his past and escapes his mundane existence through his daydreams where he is absolutely, incredibly free.

The book divulges in a story based on Bulgarian periphery. As the plot starts, Ulrich, presently a blind chemist on his tenth decades passed the waves of pang and the difficulties throughout his life. Recently, creating home narratives, he daydreams to avoid the bitter and harsh experiences of the past. The century old man mourns over the various historical hard time of his community. In the novel, Ulrich, leads us through the twists and turns of his country's turbulent century and his own, equally engaging story of enlightenment, career, love and damaged marriage life. Morrow writes that *Solo* is "the story of a struggling and damaged nation discolored by empire, monarchy, revolution, Fascism and Communism and ends in daydreaming" (57).

One of the greatest difficulties in the novel is that Ulrich the hero of the novel is bound to live a terrible life— without sight, in 100th year in the backdrop of horrible memory. He survives remembering those bitter moments that he went on. Those memories are a way of life, or say a pastime for him. Ulrich indulges much on the relics of past in order to spend and pass on the old, solitary, haunting and troublesome moments of hundred years. Going through these memories of the past is an easy means to avoid the old moments. This occurs not for one time but several times. Though he is haunted by past, he cannot have an inhalation without it. Remembering those happenings of his bygone existence is a way of life he is going on at present.

In part one, Ulrich reads a story in a magazine before losing his sight. Inspired and shaken by a newspaper report about the traumatic death of parrots that had preserved the lost tongue of a population wiped away, Ulrich decides to share his story, which he can still recollect in two movements. "Life" (where the chapter headings are named after chemical elements because of Ulrich's thwarted love of Chemistry)— a collection of Ulrich's life and "Daydreams"— the story of some enthusiastic but failed youths in loose interconnection with the first chapter. It recounts the acidic memories of a poor, blind, hundred year old Bulgarian chap, including his musical ambitions, dashed by his father, and his passion for Chemistry blocked when financial problems ended his studies in Berlin. Overtaken by World War II and the Russian invasion, Ulrich becomes a cog in the Soviet Machine managing a chemical plant. Meanwhile, his marriage failed, his son has disappeared and his mother's life was shattered by her experience in a labor camp. When Communism collapses things only get worse as the gangsters take over. Ulrich grows up in prosperous but politically unstable turn-of the century Sofia. His mother lives in 'disharmonic sadness' and Ulrich's musical leaning is set straight by an authoritarian father who is himself destroyed later in the First World War and the Balkan in its wake.

Ulrich's Chemistry study in 1920s Berlin is interrupted by sudden poverty and he returns home, where his best friend is executed in anti-national reprisals. His marriage fails and his son is detached from him. Ulrich's mother, despite being anti-Nazi is sent to a labor camp by the new Communist regime. Dasgupta has a neat way of sketching enormous traumas, says, "The former villains were cast in bronze and put up in the parks, and all the stories changed"(148). When his mother returns from the camps, broken, Dasgupta inks, "It came to each of them to wake up, screaming in the night and these submerged in the agonies were a form of silent compact"(164).

When Bulgaria have fate to be "the chemical engine of the socialist countries" (94), Ulrich is enlisted in the great five-year plan and has no choice but to become a star worker, spending obscure hours inside the new engine of this brave new world, until 'the rivers ran with mercury and lead and hummed with radioactivity' (159). When he retires, he gets a gold watch and sent packing from the office where he works. He sets up a chemical laboratory in his flat, but the police dismantle it. However, the undead leaders clung to office, the regime collapses, and Ulrich drifts in the lawless, 'aftertimes' of thuggish opportunism. Then, he accidentally blinds himself with acid.

Thus, the section "Life" gives the story of Ulrich, his parents, his passions, his friends, his professional and personal relationships and how he loses everything. For him, these moments also count greatly in present. The remembrance of those days is the only leftover in his reality that is the basic source of his survival. The panoramic, first movement is followed by the magic-realist second.

The part two "Daydreams" (the chapters named after sea creatures) unfolds a story of Khatuna; an enthusiastic lady guided with ambitions who later tied the knot with Kakha; the underworld gang. Khatuna was mingled with her poet brother Irakli and a talented turn musician

Boris. However, the first and the second section seem little bit not in connection. "Daydreams" is set to be followed by fates of three young people who are not Ulrich's lost children but might have been. Boris is born in dead-end village and raised by a grandmother and gypsy musicians. Feisty Khatuna is determined to elevate above the general misery by becoming a gangster businessperson's mistress. Like so many bright young East Europeans in the 1990s, he committed suicide not because he fails, but because he was tainted by a failed society messed with chaotic behaviors.

The three connect in New York, where Boris becomes a musical sensation and where readers are unsurprised to find the old Ulrich walking into their lives. When he meets his first love, a Jewish girl from Berlin long dead in the Holocaust, she points out that this is only a dream. Ulrich replies, "It's not only a dream. There is far more to us than what we live" (331).

Meanwhile, in Tbilisi Khatuna marries her previous boyfriend, one of the gangster warlords later murdered. Khatuna and her poet brother Irakli meet Boris in New York, where the talented musician Boris becomes a runaway success. As Boris' success grows out of control, tragedy strikes again. Dasgupta marries the two sections to create an extraordinary encapsulation of life. In "Daydreams", Ulrich liberates from the constraints of history and geography in the astonishing and vibrant second half of the novel, re-imagines the relics from his past.

Ulrich, wanted to be musician but his father halted. Ulrich wanted to be a greatest chemist, but the family failing fortunes snatches away the remotest possibility of Ulrich completing his education from the University of Berlin. Ulrich left the university. His best friend Boris is arrested on charge of sedition and he is executed for his communist beliefs. Ulrich marries Boris' sister Magdalena and they gave birth to a son, she, however, deserts him because he is unable to provide her with suitable standard of living. His intellectual mother, Elizavita, is

sent to concentration camp. Elizabetta shares her horrible experience of concentration camp with Ulrich, "Bulgarian soldiers are cutting off the breasts of our young women. They are throwing young Bulgarian men into oven" (88). Ulrich's engineer father dies of humiliation. Ulrich never gets what he desired. He lost his wife, he lost his child, his friends, his professional and personal relationships and he loses all his life for a terrible holocaust. Post-retirement, he loses eyesight trying to open a bottle of sulphuric acid in his shabby home laboratory. Thus, *Solo* hums the inner and outer melodies of a life lived solo, a trauma until it becomes a discordant symphony of human conditions. This lifts it from a freak show to the kind of novel that reminds us why we always need to tell the extraordinary stories of people's ordinary lives.

*Solo*, the Winner of Commonwealth Writers' Prize 2010 got a huge clap from the literary circles. The novel entails many surreal images. Andrew Staffell, a reviewer, in *Time Out London*, says, "To use such technique, Marquez is best known. Dasgupta too uses surrealism in a better way to expose traumatic episodes. Only the most-gifted writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Jonathon Safron-Foer can hold the surreal and real in a satisfying equilibrium" (8). He even mentions, "Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is best known for its surreal images, and *Solo*, now came about to replace Marquez" (8).

In the novel, the narratives of severe oppression in history and the story of pop-culture, celebrity hangover are exhibited at a time. Commenting in its overall thematic structure and contents, Stephen Morrow, in *Literary Journal*, remarks:

Essentially, this work is a meditation on regret. In "Life", Ulrich makes it to Germany but is forced home by his mother's sorrowful letters. His talent is forgotten amid a landscape of factories. Then, "Daydreams" clears the air. The sedimentary structure – layering stories of opportunity and oppression– makes

*Solo* a double pleasure – readers can enjoy Dasgupta's imagination but must also confront problems of celebrity and commerce. Part historical fiction, part heartbreak and part pop-culture. (57)

According to Morrow, the novel is about the history of the Bulgarian society and the pop-culture. The novel is about nostalgia for the past unsuccessful life. His ambitions and talents are easily forgotten. He has to forsake his dreams to obey his father.

The novel collides in modern-day New York. The second half of the novel throbs to a twenty-first century beat, with pieces of real life cleverly purposed to create an echo effect. Few could have written a story of love, loss and aging in a single thread. Critic Patty Welty writes, "With an intriguing bifurcated storytelling device, this is a novel of dazzling ideas and emotion in which Dasgupta comes to astonishingly beautiful and original conclusions about love, loss and aging. And his protagonist realizes, there is far more to us than what we live" (22). Patty's view is not disrupting, as she reviews, the novel's narration is amazing with great quality of surrealistic emotions and idea.

Similarly, it would be more fascinating to review the novel from the protagonist's side. Overtaken by World War II and the Russian invasion, Ulrich, the protagonist becomes a cog in the Soviet Machine, managing a chemical plant. Meanwhile, his marriage failed, his son disappeared and his mother destroyed by her experience in a labor camp. *Kirkus Reviews* appreciates the novel, "It's a fine piece written through protagonist's eye. It is intricate and imaginative, a remarkable novel of music and science, politics and passion, that bridges history and modern times" (73). According to this review, the novel touches the important aspects of life such as education, politics, history etc and creates a good link between the history and the modern times.

Similarly, Harper Collins, the publisher of novel, assesses *Solo*, "Ulrich, who has nothing to give away but failure, finds solace in the fact that all success stories, and here, he cites Albert Einstein who abandoned wife Mileva, his daughter and his schizophrenic son, are surrounded by failures" (8). According to this review, the novel happens to be an account of loss and pessimism. The failures pervade the novels in many ways, the failure of the revolutions on the one hand and unsuccessful attempts of the protagonist to reach ambitions and his family's continual efforts to come out from the poverty on the other hand. Ulrich, being pressurized along with his traumatic past, tries to provide himself some solace by comparing his life with that of Einstein as both of them were from same generation having some collective traumas.

According to the critics mentioned above, the novel is rich in contents, is able to capture the reality of the then society in which it was set in. It deals with the wide varieties of the social reality from family poverty to love through political revolution to business world. Apart from this, the present research looks at the novel from different perspective. It examines the novel from the perspectives of dreams and realities putting the existential principles in its centre. The protagonist at present cannot forget the past because they are inscribed in his mind in such a way that they disturb his present living, which gives rise to the traumatic experiences.

The history of conflict-ridden Bulgaria besieged by war and communism, the social upheaval and uprisings are presented in parallel through an ordinary person's point of view. A critical analysis of the novel comes up with an argument that makes clear the protagonist's recollection of past events and the moments is the affirmation of the culture, tradition, society and his failed career. The novel traces the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Communists' successful resistance of Fascist forces in 1944, and 45 years later, the fall of Communism. Such turbulent and tumultuous changes ruin Bulgaria, misguided Communists erase much of its



heritage and the state-enforced prohibition of music drives it underground. Dasgupta also chronicles the environmental consequences of transforming Bulgaria into the chemical factory of Europe. This age of atrocity is followed by another that of gangster-style capitalism, and as always, people invested with authority demonstrate the destructive side of their power. A dreamy and realistic vision emerges in the novel.

This research emphasises why the history, society, tradition and culture are important for Ulrich and why he gets engaged on them intensely? It tries to respond the query why the protagonist gets engaged too much with the residue of his past? What essence does he see in memorizing all his yesteryears?

Ulrich is seeking his essence and existence between haunting and troublesome moments he had to live with. He is after the pursuit of his own life which was socially, politically and culturally troubled. The assumption of the research is that the past memories become the best platform him to create his existence.

The research is divided into four chapters together with the conclusion. This first section introduces the novel and its critical receptions. Then the second chapter will discuss about the theory of existentialism which is a methodology of the research. In it, the issues of existentialism, identity and loneliness will be excavated relating it with the theme of the text. The third chapter will be engaged discussing the theme of dream and reality in the novel. It will elaborate the characteristics of the major character Ulrich and find the way how he engages in pursuing his life with the help of memory and daydreams. The final chapter will discuss the findings of the essay relating the narration and memory as an approach of survival.

## Chapter II: Existentialism, Daydream and Reality

### Existentialism, Identity and Loneliness

Existentialism is a movement or tendency that stresses over individual existence, freedom, and choice. This philosophical trend influenced diverse writers in the 19th and 20th centuries. In existentialism, the individual's starting point is characterized by what has been called by Nietzsche "the existential attitude"(84) or a sense of disorientation and confusion in the face of an apparently meaningless or absurd world. Many existentialists have also regarded traditional systematic or academic philosophy, in both style and content, as too abstract and remote from concrete human experience. It emerged as a movement in 20th-century literature and philosophy, foreshadowed most notably by 19th-century philosophers Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, though it had forerunners in earlier centuries. Fyodor Dostoevsky and Franz Kafka also described existential themes in their literary works.

It gradually took form as a philosophical current in Continental philosophy during the first decades of the 20th century, becoming a widely known movement following the end of the Second World War, especially through the work and fame of Jean-Paul Sartre and several writers. Their work focused on such themes as dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom, commitment, and nothingness as fundamental to human existence. Kierkegaard's *Repetition* (1843) defines what existentialism is, and who the existentialist is by writing:

Existentialism focuses the anxiety—the feeling that there is no purpose, indeed nothing at its core. Finding a way to counter this nothingness by embracing existence is the fundamental theme of existentialism and the root of the philosophy's name. Someone who believes in reality might be called a 'realist' and someone who believes in a deity could be identified as a 'theist'. Someone who

believes fundamentally only in existence and seeks to find meaning in his or her life solely by embracing existence is an existentialist. (9)

People being anxious to their existence are bound to have a belief that there is no core value of something. Such person, believing in this value is to be called existentialist.

There are different definitions of existentialism as given by different scholars. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines the term as follows:

An introspective humanism or a theory of man that holds that human existence is not exhaustively describable or understandable in either in scientific or idealistic terms and relies upon a phenomenological approach that emphasises the analysis of critical borderline situation in man's life and esp. of such intensely subjective phenomena as anxiety, suffering and feelings of guilt in order to show the need for making decisive choices through a utilisation of man's freedom in an uncertain, contingent and apparently purposeless world (Babcock796).

Hence, the existentialism mainly focuses human existence as its major issue. John k. Ryan, who regards the term not having its specific definition, writes in *Encyclopedia Americana*:

The term used to name certain philosophical attitudes and doctrines that have come into prominence since World War 1, particularly German and France. The various thinkers popularly called existentialists differ greatly in important ways even repudiated the name. Hence, there is no single existentialist philosophy, and no single strict definition of the word can be given. However, it may be said that with the existentialist the problem of man is central and way that they stress man's concrete existence, his contingent nature, his personal freedom, and his consequent responsibility for what he does and makes himself to be. (639)

What makes this current of inquiry distinct is not its concern with “existence” in general, but rather its claim that thinking about human existence requires new categories not found in the conceptual repertoire of ancient or modern thought; human beings can be understood neither as substances with fixed properties, nor as atomic subjects primarily interacting with a world of objects. The Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, for whom the crisis of human existence had been a major theme, had influenced both Heidegger and Jaspers. Kaufman W. in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (1968) says, "Kierkegaard came to be regarded as the first existentialist" (12). Because he was the first to explicitly make existential questions a primary focus in his philosophy. In retrospect, other writers have also implicitly discussed existentialist themes throughout the history of philosophy. One of Nietzsche's aphorisms reads, "To live alone one must be either a beast or a god, says Aristotle. Leaving out the third case: one must be both – a philosopher" (44). Insisting that the philosopher must act against the received wisdom of the age, Nietzsche remarks:

Today when only the herd animal is honored, the concept of ‘greatness’ entails being noble, wanting to be oneself, being capable of being different, standing alone and having to live independently; and the philosopher will betray something of his own ideal when he posits: He shall be the greatest who can be the loneliest, the most hidden, the most deviating, the human being beyond good and evil. (130)

Similarly, Individualist political theories, such as those advanced by John Locke, advocated individual autonomy and self-determination rather than state rule over the individual. This kind of political philosophy, although not existential *per se*, provided a welcoming climate for existentialism.

As early as 1835 in a letter to his friend Peter Wilhelm Lund, the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard wrote one of his first existentially sensitive passages. In it, he describes a truth that is applicable for him:

What really lack is to be clear in my mind what I am to do, not what I am to know, except in so far as certain knowledge must precede every action. The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wishes me to do: the thing is to find a truth, which is true for me, to find the idea for which I can live and I certainly do not deny that I still recognize an imperative of knowledge and that is what I now recognize as the most important thing. (28)

The early thought of Kierkegaard would be formalized in his prolific philosophical and theological writings, many of which would later form the modern foundation of 20<sup>th</sup> century existentialism. Soren Kierkegaard as well as Friedrich Nietzsche was two of the first philosophers considered fundamental to the existentialist movement, though neither used the term "existentialism" and it is unclear whether they would have supported the existentialism of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their focus was on human experience, rather than objective truths of math and science that are too detached or observational to get truly at human experience.

Long before coining the term "existentialism", Gabriel Marcel introduced important existentialist themes to a French audience in his early essays "Existence and Objectivity" (1925) and in his "Metaphysical Journal" (1926). A dramatist as well as a philosopher, Marcel, found his philosophical starting point in a condition of metaphysical alienation; the human individual searching for harmony in a transient life. Harmony, for Marcel (1968), was to be sought through secondary reflection, a dialogical rather than dialectical approach to the world, "characterized by

wonder and astonishment and open to the presence of other people and of god rather than merely to information about them" (22).

Simone de Beauvoir, an existentialist, who spent much of her life as Sartre's partner, wrote about feminist and existential ethics in her works, including *The Second Sex* and *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. She remarks that "an ethics of ambiguity will be one which will refuse to deny *a priori* that separate existents can, at the same time, be bound to each other, that their individual freedoms can forge laws valid for all"(79). Although often overlooked due to her relationship with Sartre, de Beauvoir integrated existentialism with other forms of thinking.

### **The Emergence of Existence as a Philosophical Problem**

Existentialism is on some ways an outgrowth of the tradition of phenomenology that goes back to the philosophical works of Edmund Husserel and Martin Heidegger. Like phenomenologists, existentialists wish to evade the endless epistemological problems of the duality of subject and object. Sartre's description of the final goal of an art is that art's efforts are to recover this world by giving it to be seen as it is, but as if it had its source in human freedom. To give the world as it reflects the attitude of phenomenologists: the world is as we experience it. In *Essays in Existentialism* (1993) Sartre addresses the question of the literary work as text. For the literary work to be a work, and not merely black smudges a white paper, he argues it must be unveiled by another subject or consciousness through reading.

Sartre's existentialism was inspired from the works of Heidegger. Though in 1946 Heidegger rejected the effusive labeling of his earlier work as existentialism, it is in that work that the relevant concept of existence finds its first systematic philosophical formulation.

Heidegger (1962) views that the point of departure of modern philosophy was Descartes' notion that a human being is essentially a thinking thing, and that there is nothing to which we have

more immediate access than to our own mind and its contents. This view leaves aside as inessential the fact that we are conscious self interpreting selves, embodied in material, social and historical contexts and above all constrained by our mortality. In the Cartesian framework, "We can establish conclusively that we exist but Descartes never stopped to inquire into the nature of the existence of that entity which we are" (233). This inquiry, Heidegger proposed to undertake, by investigating how this kind of existence is revealed in our actual existence and experience. \existence, this particular way of existing, is different from the ordinary existence of thing in the world around us. The difference is that things are determinate and have their distinctive properties, that is their kind of Being (93). As Hannay (1982) would later do, Heidegger pursued these issues with somewhat doubtful resources of Husserl's phenomenological method. And, while not all existential philosophers were influenced by phenomenology (for instance Jaspers and Marcel), the philosophical inheritance of existentialism is largely attached to the form it took as an existential version of phenomenology (39). Husserl's efforts in the first decades of the twentieth century had been directed toward establishing a descriptive science of consciousness, by which he understood not the object of the natural science of psychology but the "transcendental" (91).

The existentialists welcomed Husserl's doctrine of intentionality as a refutation of the Cartesian view according to which consciousness relates immediately only to its own representations, ideas, sensations. According to Husserl, consciousness is our direct openness to the world, one that is governed categorically rather than causally; that is, intentionality is not a property of the individual mind but the categorical framework in which mind and world become comprehensible (68).

*Fear and Trembling* states phenomenology of realization first, then, explores neither the

metaphysical composition nor the causal genesis of things, but the “constitution of their meaning” (76). Husserl employed this method to clarify our experience of nature, the socio-cultural world, logic, and mathematics, but Heidegger argued that he had failed to raise the most fundamental question, that of the “meaning of being” (73) as such. In turning phenomenology toward the question of what it means *to be*, Heidegger insists that the question be raised concretely. Existential themes take on salience when one sees that the general question of the meaning of being involves first becoming clear about one's own being as an inquirer. According to Heidegger, the categories bestowed by the philosophical tradition for understanding a being who can question his or her being are insufficient; traditional concepts of a substance decorated out with reason, or of a subject blessed with self-consciousness, misconstrue our fundamental character as “being-in-the-world” (179). In his phenomenological pursuit of the categories that govern being-in-the-world, Heidegger became the unwilling father of existentialism because he drew inspiration from two seminal, though in academic circles then relatively unknown, nineteenth-century writers, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche.

One can discover anticipations of existential contemplation in many places but the roots of the problem of existence in its contemporary significance lie in the work of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Our existence is thus essentially temporal, in the sense that we have a past experienced in guilt, and a future anticipated in dread. Time is not here contrary, it stretches towards an indefinite future, on the contrary, it stretches towards an indefinite future limited by death. So our way of being is essentially finite, an ineluctable movement towards ceasing to be. The awareness of mortality is an essential part of *Dasein*.

The way, individual exist, vary. Some engage with the world in awareness of their mortality, they live in a way that is genuinely self-determining and self-revising. Their existence



is more authentic. It is in keeping with their ontological nature. In contrast, there are those who live a life of superficiality and idle chatter, and let their lives be determined by social convention and conformism.

Another basic feature of the kind of existence we have is that we exist in the world. We experience that we belong to a world: indeed, we find ourselves thrown into it, for no discernible reason. We are immersed in this world and deal with the things in it. It is only by subsequent abstraction that we develop our theoretical concepts and regard things with their essential and accidental properties objects of theoretical knowledge, and this in turn makes it possible to think, wrongly, of our existence as if this is of the same kind as that of objects.

The human being is thrown in the world, so he is condemned to be free. He takes this freedom of being, the responsibility and guilt of his action. Each action negates the other possible course of action and their consequences, so the human being must be accountable without excuse. He must not slip away need to take decisions and assume that the human beings cannot find any purpose in contingent fact. His 'being' does not emerge from necessity. If the human being rejects the false pretensions like, the illusion of his existence having a meaning, he encounters the absurdity and the futility of life. Therefore, human beings' role in the world is not predetermined or fixed every person is doomed to make choice. Choice is the thing that human being must make. The trouble is that must often the human being refuses to choose. Hence he cannot realise his freedom and the futility of his existence.

Similarly, Jean Paul Sartre links existentialism with humanism as the existentialist mainly deals with the human life in the world. By analyzing Sartre's views on existentialism, Jostin Gaarder in *Sophie's World* writes:

Sartre said that "existentialism is humanism". By that he meant that the existentialists start from nothing but human itself. I might add that the humanism he was referring to look a far bleaker view of the human situation than the humanism we met in the Renaissance. The key word in Sartre's philosophy as in Kierkegaard's is "existence". But existence did not mean the same thing as being alive. Plants and animals are also alive. They exist but they do not have to think about what it implies. Man is the only living creatures that are conscious of its own existence (378).

### **Kierkegaard: “The Single Individual”**

Soren Kierkegaard developed this problem in the context of his radical approach to Christianity. Nietzsche did so in glow of his thesis of 'The Death of God.' *Fear and Trembling* (1986) states that subsequent existential thought reflects the implications of the concept of 'authentic existence' (87) for religious consciousness. Though neither Nietzsche's nor Kierkegaard's thought can be reduced to a single strand, both took an interest in what Kierkegaard termed "The single individual" (143). Both were convinced that this singularity, what is most my own, “me,” could be meaningfully reflected upon while yet, precisely because of its singularity, remaining invisible to traditional philosophy, with its emphasis either on what follows unerring objective laws of nature or else conforms to the universal standards of moral reason. A focus on existence thus led, in both, to unique textual strategies quite alien to the philosophy of their time—and ours.

It is by revealing the fundamental features of *Dasdein*-of the kind of existence we have-that we can come to understand other kinds of existence we have-other senses of being, and thus answer what Heidegger calls the question of being. By finding the right way of dealing with these questions, Heidegger hopes to overcome the tradition of Western metaphysics that began with Plato. Its main shortcoming is its forgetfulness of being. Traditional metaphysics tends to single out certain privileged entities (the Forms, God, a transcendental self spirit), thereby forgetting the fact that our understanding of being is based on the way we are in the world and related to entities in it. This defect in traditional metaphysics leads to the misguided quest for a definitive theory of everything: a total account, finally, of why things are as they are.

In Kierkegaard, the singularity of existence comes into light at the moment of conflict between ethics and religious faith. Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* (1986) writes, "suppose it is my sense of doing God's will that makes my life meaningful. How does philosophy visualize this!" (141). Drawing here on Hegel as representative of the entire tradition, Kierkegaard (1986) argues that for philosophy his life becomes meaningful when "I raise myself to the universal by "bringing my immediate (natural) desires and inclinations under the moral law, which represents my "telos" or what I *ought* to be" (231). He says,

In doing so I *lose* my individuality (since the law holds for all) but my actions become meaningful in the sense of understandable, governed by a norm. Now a person whose sense of doing God's will is what gives her life meaning will be intelligible just to the extent that her action conforms to the universal dictates of ethics. God's command here cannot be seen as a law that would pertain to all Existence as a philosophical problem appears at this point: if there is a dimension to my being that is both meaningful and yet not governed by the rational standard

of morality, by what standard *is* it governed? For unless there is some standard it is idle to speak of meaning (233).

To solve this problem there must be a norm inherent in singularity itself, and, in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1992), Kierkegaard tries to express such a norm in his claim that “subjectivity is the truth,” an idea that prefigures the existential concept of authenticity (203). He further believes, "To perform the movement of faith subjectively is to embrace the paradox as normative for me in spite of its absurdity, rather than to seek an escape from it by means of objective textual exegesis, historical criticism, or some other strategy for translating the singularity of my situation into the universal" (198). He elaborates:

Because my reason cannot help here, the normative appropriation is a function of my inwardness or passion. In this way, I truly become what I nominally already am. To say that subjectivity is the truth is to highlight a way of being, then, and not a mode of knowing; truth measures the attitude with which I appropriate, or make my own, an objective uncertainty in a process of highest inwardness (143).

In contrast to the singularity of this movement, for Kierkegaard, “the crowd is untruth”. (232). The crowd is, roughly, public opinion in the widest sense—the ideas that a given age takes for granted; the ordinary and accepted way of doing things; the complacent attitude that comes from the conformity necessary for social life—and what condemns it to untruth in Kierkegaard's eyes is the way that it insinuates itself into an individual's own sense of who she is, relieving her of the burden of being herself (245). He says, "If everyone is a Christian there is no need for me to become one" (245). Since it is a measure not of knowing but of being, one can see how Kierkegaard answers those who object that his concept of subjectivity as truth is based on avoidance the objective truths of science and history, however well-established, are in

themselves matters of indifference; they belong to the crowd. It is not insofar as truth can be established objectively that it takes on meaning, but rather insofar as it is appropriated passionately in its very uncertainty. To exist is always to be confronted with this question of meaning (249). The truths that matters cannot, like Descartes' "morale definitive" (221), be something to be attained only when objective science has completed its task.

### **Death as a Major Theme of Existentialism**

Obviously, the philosophy of existentialism would be incomplete without talking about death. As the existentialism makes human existence as its point of departure, human existence cannot be separated from death. So, many existentialist philosophers as well as writers talk about death in their works. As existentialists believe that human beings are thrown on this earth. So, they are free to choose. And, the very freedom of choice creates fear and anxiety. People cannot easily choose the path of death. Consequently, they are likely to be anxious and fearful.

Fear and anxiety are among the most frequently used words to characterize orientation towards death throughout the life span. Investigations typically assume that death universally elicits anxiety. Where manifest fear is not present, defensive denial is inferred. Conscious fear of death is thought to occur only when there is a serious breakdown of the individual's defenses, as in extreme psychopathology. Janet Belsky defines 'death anxiety' as "the thoughts, fears, and emotions about the final event of living that we experience under more normal conditions of life" (7). In other words, as people live their lives day to day, they suffer different degrees of anxiety about death.

The various factors psychologists have studied in attempting to measure death anxiety include: age, environment, religious faith and ego integrity or a personal sense of fulfillment and self-worth. A complicating aspect of studying death anxiety is that actually measuring anxiety as

it relates to these variables has been difficult. The studies in examining death anxiety do not experimentally manipulate the variables, thus limiting conclusions to correlations. An additional confounding factor is the distinctions between 'death' and 'dying'. In other words is the greater source of anxiety associated with death, itself or the process of dying? In spite of these challenges, a number of researchers have reported conclusive findings relating to the impact of the variables noted above on death anxiety.

The whole world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century immersed into the caldron of war. It had to undergo with the bitter experience of two great wars; World War I and World War II. Millions of people were ruthlessly killed during the time. On the other hand, people were wounded more than that number. Human beings lost many things such as: properties, relatives, physical organs. Among them the greatest and most valuable thing that they lost due to war was the hope of life. The crisis of existence engulfed the whole world. It was the death that reigned from the entire world to the core of hearts of people. As a result, the existentialism flourished as a philosophical trend especially after thirties and forties. Jostin Gaarder assimilates the idea and writes, "existentialism becomes especially popular in the forties, just after the war" (378).

Death as a major theme of existentialism becomes popular in literature too in different countries. Albert Camus, Samuel Becket, Arthur Miller, Ernest Hemingway, Eugene Ionesco, Witolt Gombroqicz, Simone de Beauvoir etc are the writers to mention here but very few, who have made death as a main issue in their literature. Camus' "The Myth of Sisyphus" (1986) is an epitome for bearing the existential theme. The book is about a meditation on the theme of suicide. By Sisyphus, Camus vividly illustrates the exact condition of present human life. According to the story, Sisyphus is assigned a repetitive task which lasts through eternity as a punishment for his rebellion against the Gods. Camus starts the story with the following words:

The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of the mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor. He was punished for this in the underworld. Homer tells us also that Sisyphus had put Death in chain (78).

By accepting the God's command he pushes a rock up a mountains, and when he reaches the top, it rolls back down the hill again. Then he has to push the rock up the hill again. In examining the mythical story of Sisyphus, we find the parallel to man's condition in this world which is without meaning. This is the world whose values are self created or at least community created. Moreover, many people in this world do things as repetitive and meaningless as what Sisyphus must do.

However, it will not be justice to forget that Sisyphus indeed becomes ready to accept God's command for continuously pushing the rock especially due to love of life and hatred of death. Sisyphus never wants to die, so he blindly chooses to live no matter how monotonous it is. It can be proved with the lines from the book:

It is said also that Sisyphus being near to death, rashly wanted to test his wife's love. He ordered her to cast his unburied body into the middle of the public square. Sisyphus woke up in the underworld. And there annoyed by obedience so contrary to human love, he obtained from Pluto permission to return to earth in order to chastise his wife. But he had seen again the face of this world, enjoyed water and sun, warm stones and the sea; he no longer wanted to go back to the infernal darkness (67-68).

Similarly, Beckett's *Endgame* also deals with the theme of existential crisis. The play is full

of bareness, destruction, decay and death. Beckett, in this play tries to represent the pathetic and miserable life of modern humans by exhibiting the fictional life characters like Hamn, Clove, Nagg and Nell. The characters named Clove describes the world as going to be finished, and also sees the piles of corpses. He says, "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. Grains upon grains one by one, and one day, suddenly there is a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap" (1050). These lines clearly illustrate the actual contemporary situation of the world where the heaps of corpses are in great number due to the wars. The human life is without any charm and happiness. Among the four characters in the play no one is completely fit and fine since Nagg and Nell are hauled into the congested dust bins. Human is blind as well as lame, and Clove cannot sit. As happiness has deserted all Nell describes the situation by saying, "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that" (1055).

Therefore, we see that Beckett Copes with the question of existence of human life as well as of whole world. Nonetheless, life cannot be completely ended into death or decay as someone desires. It continues to go on even though it lacks happiness. In a sense, we are playing with life either with interest or without interest. At the end of the play, human, who still remains alive expresses: "Since that's the way we are playing it. Let's play that way. And speak no more about it. Speak no more" (1079).

Besides these examples, there are many texts that embrace the theme of death, existence and overall existential crisis. Hence, it can be concluded that death is one of the key elements of existentialism. And the very death is the main source of fear and anxiety.

### **Nietzsche and Nihilism**

For Kierkegaard existence emerges as a philosophical problem in the struggle to think the paradoxical presence of God; for Nietzsche it is found in the reverberations of the phrase "God is



dead” (46) in the challenge of nihilism.

Responding in part to the cultural situation in nineteenth-century Europe—historical scholarship continuing to erode fundamentalist readings of the Bible, the growing cultural capital of the natural sciences, and Darwinism in particular—and in part driven by his own investigations into the psychology and history of moral concepts, Nietzsche sought to draw the consequences of the death of God, the collapse of any theistic support for morality.

Nietzsche sees complicity between morality and the Christian God that perpetuates a life-denying, and so ultimately nihilistic, stance. Nietzsche was not the first to "de-couple morality from its divine sanction; psychological theories of the moral sentiments, developed since the eighteenth century, provided a purely human account of moral normativity" (87). But while these earlier theories had been offered as justifications of the normative force of morality, Nietzsche's idea that behind moral prescriptions lies nothing but “will to power” (189) undermined that authority. On the account given in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1989), the Judeo-Christian moral order arose as an expression of the resentment of the weak against the power exercised over them by the strong. A tool used to thwart that power; it had over time become internalized in the form of conscience, creating a “sick animal” (78) whose will is at war with its own vital instincts.

Thus, Nietzsche arrived at Kierkegaard’s idea that “the crowd is untruth” (79): the so-called autonomous, self-legislating individual is nothing but a herd animal that has trained itself to obedience and unfreedom by conforming to the “universal standards of morality” (82). The normative is nothing but the normal.

It is not only inner states that philosophy can understand as disclosures of being, but also certain social and cultural conditions. The modern cult of technology—a way of relating to the

world that treats things only as objects of domination and consumption, without insight into its own limitations- is itself an expression of nihilism, the only philosophy left for a metaphysical ambition that has come to grief. It is a mentality that can be overcome with a better insight into the true meaning of what it is to be, and with the rejection of what Heidegger called humanism, reason's claim to be able to know that world exhaustively and to put it entirely to human use. The calculative thinking of modern science and the resulting technology can not sensibly be resisted, but it can be transcended by a kind of inner emigration away from the intrusiveness and superficiality of modern life detachment in which one has come to terms with one's own mortality (86).

Yet that is not the end of the story for Nietzsche, any more than it was for Kierkegaard. If the autonomous individual has so far signified nothing but herd mentality—if moral norms arose precisely to produce such conformists—the individual nevertheless has the potential to become something else, "the sick animal is pregnant with a future" (249). Nietzsche saw that in the nineteenth century the highest values had begun to devalue themselves. For instance, the Christian value of truth-telling, institutionalized in the form of science, had undermined the belief in God, disenchanting the world and excluding from it any pre-given moral meaning (256). In such a situation the individual is forced back upon himself. On the one hand, if he is weakly constituted he may fall victim to despair in the face of nihilism, the recognition that life has no intrinsic meaning. On the other hand, for a strong or creative individual nihilism presents a liberating opportunity to take responsibility for meaning, to exercise creativity by transvaluing the values establishing a new order of rank (84). Through his prophet, Zarathustra, Nietzsche imagined such a person as the "overman" (29), the one who teaches "the meaning of the earth" (88) and has no need of otherworldly supports for the values he embodies. The overman

represents a form of life, a mode of existence that is to blossom from the communalized, moralized “last man” (38) of the nineteenth century. He has understood that nihilism is the ultimate meaning of the moral point of view, its life-denying essence, and he reconfigures the moral idea of autonomy so as to release the life-affirming potential within it.

Thus, for Nietzsche, existence emerges as a philosophical problem in his distinction between moral autonomy (as obedience to the moral law) and an autonomy “beyond good and an evil” (144). But if one is to speak of autonomy, meaning, and value at all, the mode of being beyond good and evil cannot simply be a lawless state of arbitrary and impulsive behavior. If such existence is to be thinkable there must be a standard by which success or failure can be measured. Nietzsche variously indicates such a standard in his references to health, strength, and “the meaning of the earth” (81). Perhaps his most instructive indication, however, comes from aesthetics, since its concept of style provides a norm appropriate to the singularity of existence. To say that a work of art has style is to invoke a standard for judging it, but one that cannot be specified in the form of a general law of which the work would be a mere instance. Rather, in a curious way, the norm is internal to the work.

For Nietzsche in *On The Genealogy of Morals* (1989):

Existence falls under such an imperative of style: to create meaning and value in a world from which all transcendent supports have fallen away is to give unique shape to one's immediate inclinations, drives, and passions; to interpret, prune, and enhance according to a unifying sensibility, a ruling instinct, that brings everything into a whole that satisfies the non-conceptual, aesthetic norm of what fits, what belongs, what is appropriate (109).

As did Kierkegaard, then, Nietzsche uncovers an aspect of “My being that can be

understood neither in terms of immediate drives and inclinations nor in terms of a universal law of behavior, an aspect that is measured not in terms of an objective inventory of what I am but in terms of my way of being it" (33). Neither Kierkegaard nor Nietzsche, however, developed this insight in a fully systematic way.

Existentialism differentiates itself from the modern western rationalist tradition of philosophers such as: Descartes in rejecting the idea that the most certain and primary reality is rational consciousness. Descartes argues in his *Meditations on first Philosophy* (1978) that while human can doubt almost all aspects of reality as illusions, humans can be certain of their consciousness, which is therefore the only truth. Existentialism decisively rejects this argument, asserting instead that as conscious beings, human would always find themselves already in a world, a prior context and a history that is given to consciousness and that human cannot think away that world. It is inherent and indubitably linked to consciousness. In other words, the ultimate and unquestionable reality is not thinking consciousness but, according to Heidegger, "beings in the world" (128), this is a radicalization of the notion of "intentionality" (130) which asserts that even in its barest form, all consciousness is always a consciousness of something (138).

At first, it seems hard to understand how one can say much about existence as such. Traditionally, philosophers have connected the concept of existence with that of essence in such a way that the former signifies merely the instantiation of the latter. If "essence" (24) designates what a thing is and existence that it is, it follows that what is intelligible about any given thing, what can be thought about it, will belong to its essence. It is from essence in this sense—say, human being as a rational animal that ancient philosophy drew its prescriptions for an individual's way of life, its estimation of the meaning and value of existence. Having an essence

meant that human beings could be placed within a larger whole, a cosmos that provided the standard for human flourishing. Modern philosophy retained this framework even as it abandoned the idea of a “natural place” (39) for man in the face of the scientific picture of an infinite, complex universe.

Descartes (1978) rejected the traditional essential definitions of man in favor of a radical, first-person reflection on his own existence, the “I am” (73). Nevertheless, he quickly reinstated the old model by characterizing his existence as that of a substance determined by an essential property. In contrast, Heidegger proposes that “I” am “an entity whose what [essence] is precisely to be and nothing but to be” (33). Such an entity's existing cannot, therefore, be thought as the instantiation of an essence, and consequently what it means to be such an entity cannot be determined by appeal to pre-given frameworks or systems—whether scientific, historical, or philosophical. However, there has been heated controversy around Heidegger's tough philosophy of existence. Admirers have found in him penetrating insights into the deeper truths about the human condition and the nature of man. He has been explained for being, "using obscure language, weak arguments and dubious etymologies and there has been debate as to whether his political stance reveals a deep flaw in his philosophy" (89).

### Chapter III: Dream Vs Reality in *Solo*

#### Theme of Dream and Reality in the Novel

One of the principle tenets of philosophy of existentialism is the theme of loneliness or the sense of alienation. Because of the world becomes rude and unfriendly to the individuals as they cannot commit themselves to the choices they make, a sense of alienation from the lives governs their existence. Humanity's primary distinction, in the view of most existentialists, is the freedom to choose. Existentialists have held that human beings do not have a fixed nature, or essence. Each human being makes choices that create his or her own nature. In the novel *Solo*, the central character Ulrich is bound along with the dreams he foresaw and the realities he had to survive. As Kierkegaard says, Ulrich is 'the single individual'. He survives between the dreams and realities resting his head in a quilt of alienation. The only reason he finds to live such an alienated life is the remembrance of his bygone days that was full of enthusiasm, horror, love and bereavement, the broken marriage and family life! Ulrich drowns himself in the memory of his sweet and bitter days that is his daydream and creates his present existence real.

The story unfolds with the upset protagonist, Ulrich. His unhappiness is caused by the recent devastation of parrots. A group of explorers entered the parrots' society speaking the language of the public that were wiped out in a recent catastrophe. Being surprised, those explorers put the parrots in cage and sent them home so that linguists could record the remaining of the lost language. But the parrots, already traumatized by the devastation they had recently witnessed, died on the way. This incident drove Ulrich's mind grave. So, he thought to share his sorrowful story through flashbacks holding traumatic narrative. Thus, "He lives a life with no heirs, and if he has anything at all to leave behind, it will be tangled deep, and difficult to find" (9).

It is actually because of the news of those devastated parrots; Ulrich got some way to share his own experiences of traumatic past seemingly a nightmare, he had to hold throughout his life. It was just a story he read in a magazine about the parrots. However, Ulrich, well known to the sufferings felt what devastation means. The wreckage might have turned him severe so he needed some outlet, which would be paying some therapeutic value. Moreover, "the man felt a great sense of fraternity with those birds. He feels like he carries, like them, a shredded inheritance, and he is too concussed to pass anything on" (9).

Plot is narrated in a linear thread of Ulrich's life, set in 1912-13 Bulgaria involved in the Balkan wars and The World War I. The nation found itself on the losing side. In 1994, the USSR declared war on Bulgaria and raped the tiny nation. Moreover, the country was under Turkish Empire for more than 500 years. The war ruptured everything into collapse; what the people gained was just memorizing their pangs. The research excavates those pangs, that the characters are platforming their memory as a weapon of therapeutic values. The war turned time made people like Ulrich and the other characters traumatic. Thus, the novel exhibits the lives of the character intermingled with traumatic experiences caused by the social and cultural upheavals of the then time in Bulgarian societies. Via Ulrich's nostalgia, the readers are taken with his past life—the very nostalgia has become a pastime for him. He devotes himself to his hey-day, dreams his bygone life and creates a way of existence for the present time.

These days, the man devotes himself to wading through the principal events of his life in order to discover what relics may lie submerged there. Of course, he has no family around him, his friends have all gone, and he knows that no living person is interested in his thoughts. But he has survived a long time, and he does not want it to end with a mindless falling-off. (8)

Ulrich always has certain dreams in his life. He always tries to fulfill it upto his ability, however, he almost fails. Born in an affluent family—his father, a railway Engineer, was among the affluent minorities in Sofia. Much of Ulrich's childhood is spent in train compartments and hotels, following his father's work. Ulrich just remembers those utopia-like days of his childhood. His father's greatest hope to develop Bulgaria to the fullest, Ulrich's days of being alone and lonely and travel with father and all these memories are his daydreams—"his narcissism of childhood" (14). His father used to have boasted upon himself, "You are privileged enough, at a young age, to enjoy the society of talented and influential men" (15). He always uses to pressurize Ulrich, "You will not be a failure my son" (15). But this became a greatest irony—Ulrich failed in every step of his dreams, it could not be a reality!

Ulrich, wanted to be musician but his father halted. He wanted to be a greatest Chemist; but his mother's calling from her dilapidated condition made him left the university. He never got what he desired! He lost his wife, he lost his child, his friends, his dearest ones and thus he lost all his life for a terrible holocaust.

Einstein, Ulrich saw for the first time in Berlin, was screaming with laughter. Dasgupta's enrollment of scientists like Haber, Walther, Bayer and Einstein from history to the fictionalized world seems giving the plot a more sense of 'be-alive'.

Ulrich, in his present has nothing to do. He survives remembering those traumas that he went on with. The traumatic memories itself is a way of life, or say a pastime for him. He is living in the backdrop of such bloodshed memory. Being pressurized along with his traumatic past, he tries to provide himself some solace by comparing his life with that of Einstein as both of them were from same generation having some collective traumas.



As Ulrich dreamt, he had a good sense of enthusiasm in music. His mother saw him humming and she "wondered where this spirit had come from to enter her son" (16). Inspired by mother, the little Ulrich went to learn violin from the Gypsies who come to Sofia. He also studied photographs of violinists playing the music to see how they positioned their fingers. And finally the mother and the son, being hopeful planned to give a solo concert to his father which, they expected, would be a surprise for his father. She hoped, "I think when he sees how much progress you have already made on your own, it will be impossible for him to refuse" (18).

But to their utter surprise, the father became violent in Ulrich's interest on music. He seized the violin from Ulrich's hand and threw it to the flame! He always hated music, said, "You won't do this, my son! I won't have you waste your life. Musicians, artists criminals, opium addicts...You'll end up poor and disgraced. I won't have it" (19). And thus, Ulrich's passion towards music got a terrible end!

Ulrich, the traumatized character in the novel foresees the remembrance of his past days as a way to exist in the present time. In the novel, Dasgupta presents the social and psychological effects of the traumatized mentality of some characters. Ulrich's mother might have been dissatisfied with her husband in case of his social boasting. So, it resulted in her affair with a man from Baghdad. Ulrich got mentally devastated when he saw his mother, being tiny and thin, getting returned from labor camp! Moreover, after Ulrich had to return in the mid of his abroad education his girlfriend Clara Blum, married, began to teach Chemistry at University of Berlin.

Ulrich had to hear it from some other, for she had broken off all contact when she realised he was never coming back. Narrator explains the down-turned psychology of Ulrich's father at middle half part of the novel.

Meanwhile, in the cramped space of Ulrich's Sofia home, his father sat in his chair, showing fewer and fewer signs of life. His leg stump became regularly infected, and every few months little bit more had to be shaved off the end. And his deafness became more pronounced with the years, until he was finally delivered from the music he disliked so much. When he could no longer hear it all, Elizaveta erupted into a festival song. (105)

Ulrich, who was suffering because of his father's boasting, took advantage of his father's deafness, too. He found perverse satisfaction in whispering insults in his ear. He used to utter, "You whipped your son so hard into success, and look what he has become. He has come back to this godforsaken place, and now he will never be anything at all. Your son is a failure. How bitter your disappointment must be" (80).

Ulrich was so much unheard of life that he used to utter, "Only old people are supposed to die. Maybe when they are fifty. Not people who can still play football" (23). He had a close friend Boris with whom he used to have such conversation who was later killed in charge of being a rebel. He also remembers that he kept, for some years, a notebook about his friendship with Boris. He felt that their conversations were so noble that he preferred to save it longtime. Later on, he lost his notebook! He buried his friendship with Boris with remembering "and turned him into a shining icon that glides unblinking through the past without smell or voice" (28).

Ulrich's father later became an army and he lost his leg and the ability to hear. The family crippled into poverty, the nation was turning bankrupt. Ulrich's family had to move into a house with a congested room. Ulrich plans to have his higher study in Chemistry to Germany. He dreams to go to lectures by Fritz Haber and Walther Nernst. He also dreams to breathe

chemistry. Ulrich was leaving his country when, according to Boris, "Bulgaria has already lost the best of its men in the wars, and things are only getting worse" (33). Bulgaria became independent but the internal crisis was not halted. The country was becoming more anarchic.

While day dreaming his past, Ulrich comes to his present repeatedly. In the present state he has nothing in the world except his shadow! He had lost his friends, family, wife and after all, he had given up his dreams. He was residing alone, blind, in a single room that was dilapidated just like his life. His neighbors use to bring food for him, as he could not cook.

Again dreaming back to his past life at Berlin, Ulrich had met the most talented mind of the century. He met Einstein, Fritz Haber, Bertolt Brecht among others. He falls in love with beautiful Jewish girl, Clara Blum with whom he was married and divorced later. While Ulrich was having his studies, his mother wrote a desperate letter begging him to come home. So, "Ulrich dropped everything and rushed to Sofia" (48).

Within his return to Bulgaria, everything had turned before and after. The Bulgarian city Sofia was filled with foreign journalist. The place had become the centre of 'economic collapse' (49). His father had died and mother's economic condition turned worse. His childhood friend Boris was killed being accused as a revolutionary by the Bulgarian government. The condition is set thus:

While the big German companies triumphed through the hyperinflation, which wiped out all their debts, many ordinary investors were ruined. One of them was Ulrich's father, who Germanophile to the end had put the funds remaining from the sale of the old house into German investments. His mother held out for as long as she could, but at last the money dried up for Ulrich's fees and for everything

else too- and she wrote a desperate letter begging him to come home. Ulrich dropped everything and rushed to Sofia. (48)

The economic collapse was burning the country inside. Ulrich's family turned bankrupt. After Ulrich's arrival there was heavy bombing in a cathedral. It divided the Bulgarian time into before and after. The bombardment was such horrifying that the city had never seen so many corpses. Sofia was filled up with foreign journalists. Ulrich's father, handicapped and the bankrupt-turned family became obsessive of traumas then. In such backdrop how Ulrich would get to enroll himself to study in foreign land.

Being home he found his best friend executed in anti-national reprisal. His marriage fails and his son is isolated from him. Ulrich's mother, despite being anti-Nazi is sent to a labor camp by the new Communist regime. She was forced to perform a huge labor there. Mother's trouble used to panic Ulrich. The communist regime cut the breasts of the young Bulgarian women and the men were thrown into ovens. Ulrich again could not get what he dreamt to be a greatest chemist. He loses his eyes when chasing dream, trying to open a sulphuric acid in his scruffy home laboratory. A life turned just a cog in a machine. Dasgupta, thus, has a neat way of sketching enormous traumas in a Communist regime.

Ulrich, wanted to be musician but his father halted. He wanted to be a greatest chemist; but his mother's calling from her dilapidated condition made him left the university. He never got what he desired! He lost his wife, he lost his child, his friends, his dearest ones and thus he lost all his life for a terrible holocaust.

Einstein, Ulrich saw for the first time in Berlin, was screaming with laughter. Dasgupta's enrollment of scientists like Haber, Walther, Bayer and Einstein from history to the fictionalized world seems giving the plot a more sense of 'be-alive'.

Ulrich, in his present has nothing to do. He survives remembering those traumas that he went on with. The traumatic memories itself is a way of life, or say a pastime for him. He is living in the backdrop of such bloodshed memory. Being pressurized along with his traumatic past, he tries to provide himself some solace by comparing his life with that of Einstein as both of them were from same generation having some collective traumas.

The characters turned disastrous at the end of the novel. Its writer's proficiency to reveal that such harmful trauma would never lead some good resolutions in life. Most of the character, dead finally, never got some happiness in their life. They remain always traumatic. In the extreme of life Ulrich no longer laughs at jokes, or weeps at things that are sad, but he finds himself weeping and laughing at other times, for no obvious reason.

Every character always hangs about in an irony. Everybody expect something utopian, engaging themselves in their employment. But for one-and-all it turned un-rewarding. No one's dream came true. Ulrich, his father and mother, Boris, Khatuna, Irakli, Kakha all are turned round-head. Similarly the third person narrative is amazing in the setting of Europe and America linked with some Asian country.

The whole plot revolves in some sort of violence. The characters and the environment around are the outcome of violence. Actually violent act occurs of obsessed mentality. That's why, its result may give pain and suffering to those who are victimized by such event. Violence is the source for creating trauma. Trauma occurs aftermath of violence. It is a haunting memory of the event that tortured physically and mentally. In the novel as Bulgaria turned violent and destructed because of its involvement in the Balkan and The World War the social, political, cultural and economic condition turned bad. When the country was at disaster the hooligans come, and if they can't find the person they're looking for, they just destroy whole city!

Moreover, there was a serious natural effect. The people had to suffer the result of those destructions. They get traumatic life. Because of rapid industrialization and urbanization, "Population was exploding. Doomsayers began to warn of imminent famine, and people dying off in swathes. The Berlin chemist Fritz Haber began to seek a chemical solution to this problem" (42). Likewise, Ulrich himself realized that Bulgaria became a chemical disaster. The rivers ran with mercury and lead, and hummed with radioactivity. Fishing had dried up on the Black Sea coast and, every year, more fields and forests were lost. As an effect to animals, "Bulgarian sheep had miscarriages and died, and the cows went mad. Children were born with cancers and deformities" (160).

The most fierce situation in the novel is Ulrich losing his eye in his earlier age. This is the most 'enticing' trauma- the central character had to hold. The situation is beautifully weaved,

He took them down from the shelf, and, out of some inexplicable desire to see what state the contents were in after all this time, he tried to open one of them. It was sealed tightly shut. After several minutes of wrestling, holding the canister between his knees to keep it steady, the seal broke and the acid burst in his face. He ran to the kitchen to plunge his head in the sink, still full of dishwashing water but the pain remained intense. When finally he could open his eyes, everything was dark. (164)

Thus, Ulrich's life turns violent after he loose his sight. Violence is an action which is intended to hurt people. In fact, it dismantles the general situation or way of life. The act of violence brings disorder, anarchy, killing, pain, suffering and torture to the people. The idea like suicide, matricide, patricide, rape, murder, exile, loot, segregation, pain, torture, jail, crucification all occurred due to violence.

The war-ridden Bulgaria was devastated by violence. Ulrich had to return midway of his Berlin education. The communist intimidation left a torture in the mind of Elizaveta, Ulrich, his father, Boris and many more. Ulrich's father had to lose his left leg. His trouser was empty! Moreover, his ears were damaged by the shells. Ulrich had to watch with disbelief as his father was installed in the house like an incapable infant. The war violence had destroyed the economy. The family had to move into a small house because of poverty. Boris, in a conversation with Ulrich uttered:

Bulgaria has already lost the best of its men in the wars, and things are only getting worse. I cannot stand by and watch. Will I just throw in my lot with the nations, whose governments are more bloodthirsty with watch passing day? They will end up killing us and each other. No: the only chance we have of surviving until we are old, you and I, is the international revolution. It has happened in Russia, it will come soon to Germany, and before long we will have no nations, only international socialism. Then there'll be time for Bach. When there's no more Bulgaria. (33)

Traumatic violence is better presented showing the intimidations of communist. When the violence in society was at its acme, Bulgarian soldiers cut off the breasts of the young women. The young chaps were thrown into ovens. Ulrich's father a pure iconoclastic by nature always led his family through some irony which resulted in trauma. Never realizing what his son Ulrich would prefer, the father always bragged his own hegemony. He used to say "You are privileged enough, at a young age, to enjoy the society of talented influential men-and all you can do is stammer and scratch, and hold your foot in your hand like a fool" (15). Ulrich never got some victory upon his life, he had to kill down his interest of music, he would not get chance to

complete his study in Berlin, he failed to make a happy family—his wife divorced him. But Ulrich father boasted, "You will not be a failure, my son. Whatever it takes, I will not allow it" (15).

The second section of the novel, "Daydreams" itself seem a single story in a thread. In loose interconnection with the first one, it is the chronicles of fervent youths; Khatuna, Boris, Irakli and Kakha. Khatuna and her brother from a worse familial background wanted to be celebrated. To make her dream-come-true she engages herself in relation with the underworld gangster Kakha. The death of Irakli suggests the sorry-full predicament of frustrated poets.

### **Ulrich's Choice of Survival and Its Means**

Most people die before they can witness the historical consequences of their actions. Ulrich, the 100-year-old Bulgarian man at the center of the novel is an exception: he is so ancient he lives in a state of perpetual, confused aftermath. His yesteryears seem so much enticing for the old man Ulrich that he never aims to give up his life. Narrating his past life with himself is only approach that leads him live his life. The swift retelling of the Bulgarian history through many ups and downs the story moves on keeping Ulrich in the centre. Having been the ambitions of himself and the father's pressure too, Ulrich dreams to be competent Chemist. He represents the proud Bulgarian spirit that was crushed by Communism. He is one of many students drawn by a surge of scientific optimism in the 1920s to Berlin, where a chance encounter with Einstein feeds his ambitions of making a great discovery. Tragically, he never finishes his studies in chemistry. Recalled to Sofia by his bankrupt family, he ends up working as a book keeper and, later, as the manager of a barium chloride factory. But he is never completely resigned to anonymity. In one startling section, he weeps uncontrollably when he witnesses any example of



“surpassing human achievement” (229). His pitiable attempts to conduct private experiments are the most moving parts of the book.

Ulrich is alienated from his own past. Certain happy memories, like the one involving Ulrich’s courtship, in Berlin, of Clara Blum, the only woman he truly loved, are presented in a series of beautiful paragraph-long fragments. But these never deepen beyond snapshots. Neither do the other characters, who speak in a lofty idealistic manner, and whose lives, cut short by war or Communism, are mere illustrations of the brutality of Bulgarian history. The overall effect is of reading the summary of a tragedy rather than experiencing it firsthand.

Compared with the capitalist tricks of the “Daydreams” section, the heroism of Ulrich’s life becomes even more impressive. In his last decades, he is stripped of all relatives, denied his private experiments by the government and reduced to homelessness. Yet he goes on. And remarkably, at the end of “Solo,” Ulrich is still alive! He has nothing to live for, he has nobody to share his past, he has lost his friends and relatives, and however he does not give up his life.

The major focus of the novel, thus, is to unravel the author’s ability to handle the subject of torture and trauma via narration and memory which can be described as a day dream. Ulrich’s engagement in day dream is his outlet to create his existence. What would a century old blind man do except remembering and retelling his past? The powerful creation of the characters and the atmosphere, the realistic rendition of torture’s scene, its effect on the family, the psychology of the traumatized people, the illustration of the techniques of relief via narration and memory make the novel good. Characters use the tool of narration and memory to sustain the life, unburden the trauma and get rid of the horrible past.

Responding to the question; Why the history, society, tradition and culture were important for Ulrich and why he gets engaged on them intensely? The researcher comes to a conclusion

that the protagonist's too much engagement with the residue of the past and the essence of his memorizing all the yesteryears was only his approach of survival. If Ulrich would not have used this tool of memory and narration, he, probably would not have been able to find his essence of living.

## Chapter IV: Conclusion

### Narration and Memory: An Approach of Survival

The central character Ulrich, is having his existence amidst daydream and reality. Being a father of a railway Engineer, he is hoped to become a successful person in the future. His father, an influential man in the society, dreams his son's big future.

As per the wish of his family Ulrich tries to fulfill his dreams but he can not help. The dreams he had, his father and mother had, turns bankrupt. Those are not turned into reality. As dreams can not turn into reality Ulrich has a devastating life. He fails in his marriage, he fails in maintaining his family life, his beloved wife-turned-lover divorces him and top of all, his dream of becoming the greatest chemist turns bankrupt when the state of anarchy reaches at the top. Being the loneliest fellow Ulrich has already lost his colleagues and he is the only living man of his generation.

However, the novella apparently seems to be the recollection of past, the research characterized those recollections as the properties of traumatic-self, traditions, ambitions and lost love. Moreover, the study showed those means of traumatic recollections as the easy outlet to spend haunting, troublesome moments of solitude and old age. Remembering those happenings of his bygone existence in a form of day dream is a way of life he is going on at present. Being solitude, Ulrich has been living a life of boredom with painful existence. But learning a traumatic story of some parrots he sees the best way of narration to reveal his own pangs. Its writer's proficiency to reveal that such harmful trauma would never lead some good resolutions in life. Most of the character, dead finally, never get some happiness in their life. They remain always traumatic. In the extreme of life Ulrich no longer laughs at jokes, or weeps at things that are sad, but he finds himself weeping and laughing at other times, for no obvious reason.

Trauma enables one to recount events and perhaps to evoke experience, typically through non-linear movements that allow trauma to register in language and its hesitations, indirections, pauses, and silences. And particularly by bearing witness and giving testimony, narratives help performatively to create openings in existence that did not exist before.

Thus, when his dreams can not be turned into reality, Ulrich has to bear a devastating effect of that in his life. Nothing except memory and narration remains in his life that would cure that effect. He keeps on remembering those bygone days he had sometime. Such practice helps as a mending weapon to Ulrich. He daydreams and narrates in order to heal from the traumatic history. As the best means of healing traumatic sufferings the writer has chosen to engage the character in day dreaming. Ulrich, the century old chap has been creating home narratives. He daydreams to avoid the bitter and harsh experiences of the past. The century old man mourns over the various historical tough time of his community. He also accounts the story of a struggling and damaged nation discolored by empire, monarchy, revolution, Fascism and Communism and ends in daydreaming.

The study brings into the light the protagonist's trauma of the past relating his struggle over dreams and the failure to turn it into the reality. It also looks after the situation Ulrich had to bear when his dreams did not turn into reality. When his dreams did not become real he comes to survive in a brutal state of loneliness and takes the help of memory and narration to create his existence somehow. Thus, the narration becomes the best platform for him to create his existence which he fulfills at least in terms of fantasy and tries to fulfill the gap between dream and reality.

## Works Cited

- Babcock, Philip. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*. Springfield Massachusetts: Marriam Webster Inc, 1995.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Trans. H. M. Parshley. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.
- Beckett, Samuel. "Endgame". *The Bedford Introduction to Drama*. Ed. Lee A Jacobus. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993. 1050-79.
- Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Trans. Justin O'Brien. London: Middlesex, 1986.
- Dasgupta, Rana. *Solo*. Delhi: Harper Collins, 2009.
- Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Trans. John Cuttingham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Ed. James Strachey. New York: Basic Books, 2010.
- Gaarder, Jostin. *Sophie's World*. London: Phoneix House, 1996.
- Hannay, Ardent. *Kierkegaard*. London: Routledge, 1982.
- Heidegger, Martin. "Letter on Humanism" in *Pathmarks*. Ed. William McNeill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 218-23.
- . *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row,

1962.

Jaspers, Karl. *Reason and Existenz*. New York: Noonday Press, 1968.

Kaufmann, W. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1968.

Kierkegaard, Soren. *Repetition*. New York: Princeton University Press, 1983.

---. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

---. *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Alastair Hannay. New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

Nietzsche, Nietzsche. *Human all too Human*. Trans. Alexander Harvey. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994.

---. *On The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kauffman and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

Ryan, John k. "Existentialism." *Encyclopedia Americana*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1966. 449-50.

Samuel M. Keen, "Gabriel Marcel." *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York: Macmillan, 1967. 573-74.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Truth and Existence*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

---. *Being and Nothingness: Essays in Existentialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.