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By Bimala Khanal

Expression of Despair and Death: An Existential Study of Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*

Tribhuvan University

Expression of Despair and Death: An Existential Study of
Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English, Ranta Rajya Laxmi
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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled “Expression of Despair and Death: An Existential Study of Heminway’s *A Farewell to Arms*”, by Bimala Khanal has been submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. It has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Ernest Miller Hemingway

Hemingway is a prominent interpreter of an era of disillusion and meaninglessness in which people put their faith mostly in violence, sexual passion, liquor, bullfighting and the ritual of sports. Intellectual as well as spiritual status of the people was ridiculous. Hemingway advocates freedom of oneself in leading his life reflecting the significant trait of existential philosophy. He came to know the world through his adventures. His experiences; four marriages, bullfighting, deep sea-fishing, big game hunting and participation in World War I, the Spanish Civil War and World War II made him the subject of the news reporter. Focusing sharply upon these social realities, Ernest Miller Hemingway came to exist in the domain of American time. A writer of great genius and immense influencing power, Hemingway was soon able to acclaim his worldwide popularity through the intensive and vigorous writings.

Scott Donaldson sums up Hemingway's fame and contribution and says:

Hemingway became the most public of all American writers; during his life time both slick magazines appealing to the college educated and pulp publication aimed at blue-collar workers kept their readers regularly informed about Hemingway, while syndicated newspaper columnist reported on his travels and opinions. Then, within eight years following his death seven biographers appeared. (6)

Hemingway, born in Oak Park, Illinois, on July 21, 1899, was the son of a doctor-sportsman and of a musician mother. He reserved the legacy of his father in hunting, fishing and sports and of his mother by being a writer who had a keen ear for music of

words. He actively participated in hunting and fishing expeditions in Northern Michigan during his school days. Such experiences of his school days gave a shape to his literary career. During his childhood, he worked as a street boy and he spent several nights in the street. He actively took part in different literary programmes in his school. Consequently, he edited the weekly newspaper named *The Trapeze* which epitomized the writing career of the young aspiring boy. His father had a lake-side house near Petoskey in Northern Michigan where they used to spend the vacation. During summer, he had practices in boxing, as a consequence of that game; he lost the eye-sight of his left eye. While staying at home, he used to assist his father to look after the patients in the settlement. This provided him the subject matter for his later writings.

After graduating from high-school, Hemingway went to work as reporter for The Kansas City Star, one of the best American Newspapers from where he learned “style, like life must be disciplined” (Waldhorn 7). He learned the rules for the business of writing which he never forgot. He gave it up as the World War I broke out in Europe. He had a deep urge to get enlisted in the war but he was rejected because of his poor eye-sight. He joined volunteer ambulance unit in France during the World War I. Hemingway then got transferred to duty on the Italian front as a Red Cross ambulance driver in the summer of 1918, where he was badly wounded by the fragments of an Austrian Trench mortar shell as reflected in the character of Lieutenant Frederic Henry in his novel, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929). This traumatic shock of war frequently recurs in his novels. To recuperate from the wound, Hemingway was sent to Red Cross Hospital in Milan. There he fell in love with a nurse named Agnes Von Kurowsky, seven years senior to him as Catherine Barkley in the novel. He was twice decorated by the Italian Government for his bravery and

volunteer services. As an ambulance driver, he was assigned the task of recovering and bringing back bits and pieces of the dead bodies from the battlefield. Since he had seen war from a close quarter it became a long lasting experience that is existential struggle, revenge and death of war, a recurrent theme in his writings.

Hemingway came back home from the Italian front and married Hadley Richardson at the age of twenty-two. They went to Paris. There he encountered the literary giants of the age like Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein and Sherwood Anderson. He was deeply influenced by them, particularly by Ezra Pound and his style of writings. He had also worked as a correspondent for *Toronto City Star* newspaper. In Paris, he traveled widely for skiing, bull-fighting, fishing and hunting that formed the background for most of his writings.

1.2 Hemingway's Fictions

Hemingway is a careful writer and aims a plain and simple deeply felt and disciplined style which presents characters, objects and actions directly and truly avoiding artificiality and decorativeness. In most of his works, directly or indirectly we find existential perspectives. Hemingway began his literary career in 1923, he visited Spain and became an admirer of bull-fighting. His career as a novelist perfected after the publication of his short stories. *Three Stories and Ten Poems* (1923) and *In Our Time* (1924) which contain war, violence, grief, suffering, bull-fighting and other adventurous task which he preferred much. The stories of *In Our Time* are basically autobiographical. He dealt with contemporary problems caused by the sudden outbreak of war, the despair, hopelessness, defeatism of the age; the disintegration of the traditional value. He expresses his sympathy for the people wounded in the war. His voice is that of a disillusioned man by the loss of hope and faith caused by the devastation of war. His world provided him the subject matter.

Hemingway himself is the prototype of the character Nick Adams. Nick Adam's leg injury is similar to Hemingway's wounding on his knee at the front.

Hemingway later published two books *The Torrents of Spring* and *The Sun Also Rises* in 1926. The former is 'a satirical book' in which Hemingway mocks at Sherwood Anderson, Henry James, H.L. Mencken, Gertrude Stein, and D.H. Lawrence. *The Sun Also Rises* is Hemingway's first successful novel which tells of the moral collapse of a group of expatriated Americans and Englishmen broken by the war, who turned toward escape through all possible violent diversions. Here hero Jake Barnes has been rendered sexually impotent by his wound in the war. Heroine Lady Brett Ashley's true love died of dysentery. In 1927, he published, *Men Without Women* a collection of short stories. It is also the biography of Nick Adams who likes a girl but cannot get her, then he formulates his principle of "pursuit as pleasure" and not, fulfillment. In 1929 Hemingway's next successful great novel *A Farewell to Arms* came which deals with love and war in Italy during the World War I. He wandered in different places and collected experiences for his literary art. In 1932, *Death in the Afternoon* was published in which he glorifies bull-fighting as combat in which participants gamble life in order to be noble. The book *Winner Take Nothing* (1933) has the destruction as its theme. Hemingway's *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935) is a true account of the authors' adventurous journey in Africa. Later, he published *To Have and Have Not* (1937) and *the Fifth Column* (1938), which are about civil war.

Later in 1940 he published a novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* , in which he overpowers the experience of Spanish resistance felt as a concern to all humanity. The novel deals with the complex treatment of the political corruption and futile loss of lives on both sides. After a decade long rest, Hemingway wrote *Across the River and*

Into the Trees (1950), which is a novel of romance different from his other books. This novel narrates the story of a peace time coroner, closely resembling the author, who comes to Venice on leave to go duck shooting to see the young Italian countess he loves and to make a significant pilgrimage to the place where Richard Cantwell was wounded in World War I. He earned name and fame, by publishing *The old Man and the Sea* (1952). This is a parable of man's struggle with the nature and man's noble courage and endurance. Hemingway got the Pulitzer Prize for the book in 1952. He was awarded the Noble Prize for literature in 1954. Mr. and Mrs. Hemingway met two plane crashes in two days but they survived as luck. He was physically very weak in 1960. He was deeply depressed and finally he killed himself in 1961 with his gun.

1.3 First World War and Modern Literature

The time of Hemingway, after great World Wars was disparaging and time of resentment, when the old standards of conduct no longer seemed valid. When the concern for the common virtues had no more meaning than the cozy platitude of a wall motto and responsibility as well as respectability was rather ridiculous. Depicting this time sharply and without compromise, in the idioms of ordinary speech rather than expression of literature, Hemingway become an outstanding novelist and a great literary influence of his time and the next generation. Archibald MacLeish in his few lines admires Hemingway's life: "Veteran out of wars before he was twenty, Famous at twenty-five, thirty a master, Whittled a style for his time from a walnut stick . . ." (qtd. in Baker³⁸). Hemingway got mastery early because of war experiences and his enthusiasm in writing he became famous for his distinct style. Hemingway's favourite characters are men who deal with death and accept its risk.

The First World War began in 1914 and end in 1918. It created crisis in the life of modern men. People fought for consolidating their power but the war caused

only destruction and decay of modern life, civilization and development of infra-structures. Charles Van Doren views in *A History of Knowledge*:

The war itself became a terrible machine for grinding human being into bits and pieces of wasted flesh. It's most famous battles lasted for months, not in the thousands but in the millions. Hundreds of thousands of previously rational animals lived up facing one another and doggedly shot one another to pieces day after day and year after year. And no one could confidently or clearly why it was happening or what it was all about. (291-292)

So, the war was a giant machine which killed whoever it met and destroyed whatever it touched without any reasons and purpose. Good and bad or right and wrong was not evaluated there what was evaluated is how much they could kill and destroy. Post war generations failed to get essence and meaning in their life. They became spiritually barren and weak. The First World War created anarchism, disorder, horror and violence in the modern life. Similar type of anarchism is described by English poet. W.B. Yeats, in his poem *The Second Coming*:

Turning and Turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. (1-4)

W.B. Yeats's poem *The Second Coming* portrays the picture of decay of modern life. There are no rules, regulations and control in the world. Moral, cultural and ethical values are broken. The world is dominated by violence, terrorism and anarchism. Everywhere we can see the colossal of the loss of innocent soldiers and civilian. There was no God to watch over man, to dictate codes of morality or to insure

justices. The culture, the morality and the religion do not support the men. Frederick Nietzsche, pioneer of atheistic existentialism says that there is not any God existed in the universe, if he was, he is dead. People do not believe in God. Professor David Daiches writes in *A Critical History of English Literature* commenting *The Waste Land* (1922) of T.S. Eliot, "...and weaving the themes of barrenness, decay and death, and quest for life and morality which he found in anthropological sources with the Christian story and Buddhist and other oriental analogies, and incorporating into the poem both examples and symbols of the failure of modern civilization-success of desolation, moral squalor, and emptiness" (1133).

Hemingway's writing reflects the discontents of the people after the horror of war, and the disaster it brought in the existing world. Rational as well as intellectual vacuum can be visualized in his writing as a voice of generation. Robert Penn Warren writes:

A Farewell to Arms which appeared ten years after the First World War and on the eve of collapse of the Great Boom seemed to sum up and bring to focus on the inner meaning of the decade being finished. It worked thus, not because it discontents the end results that the life on the decade was producing the dissentient and disasters that were beginning to be noticed even by unreflective people but because it cut back to the beginning of the process. (9)

Peter B. High writes about the impact of the World War I upon the American people "Many young people in the post-World War I had 'lost' American ideals. At the same time American 'lost' many fine young writers like E.E. Cummings and Hemingway because they had moved to Paris. They had grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken" (143).

The war swept away the ideal, faith, belief of the people and all the stories that came into their mind had a touch of disaster in them. The confidence, romance, faith and prosperity of Nineteenth Century, are replaced by doubts, frustration, disbelief and failure. First World War shocked not only European and American people but it darkened the human heart, killed the hope, destroyed the belief and finished the morality.

Chapter 2

Existential Philosophy

2.1 Conceptual Background

Existentialism, one of the most influential philosophical movements of the 20th century, deals with the various modes of human existence in this physical world; it also provides concept about whether people's existence is predetermined or they determine their existence after coming in this universe. The term 'existence' is derived from the Latin root ex 'out'+ sistere from stare 'to stand'(Cuddon 316). Thus, existence means to stand out in the universe that is against us. The word 'existentialism' denotes the theory that human beings are free and responsible for their own actions in a world without meaning. Jostein Gaarder, in *Sophie's World* defines existentialism. "This is a collective term for several philosophical currents that take man's existential situation as their point of departure"(455). So, existentialism focuses man's condition and position. This philosophy is not a single philosophy. It includes several philosophical currents. Again, Gaarder says the view of Sartre:

'Sartre said that 'existentialism is humanism'. By that he meant that existentialism starts from nothing but humanity itself. I might add that the humanism he was referring to took a far bleaker view of human situation than the humanism we met in the renaissance... Sartre said that man's existence takes priority over whatever he might otherwise be. (456)

According to Sartre, existence does not mean the same as being alive. Plants and animals are also alive, they exist, but they do not have to think about what it applies. Man is the only living creature that is conscious of its own existence. In the context, *The World Book of Encyclopedia* describes, "Existentialism is a set of philosophical

beliefs that stress the existence of the human being, the anxiety and depression which pervade each human life". Thus, Existentialism is less of an 'ism' than an attitude that expresses itself in a variety of ways. Because of the diversity of position associated with existentialism, no single strict definition is possible. However, it suggests a major theme that stresses concrete individual human existence. Regarding its subjectivity, individual freedom and choice, Nietzsche explains thus:

Hence there is no single existentialist philosophy, and no single definition of the word can be given. However, it may be said that with man's concrete existence, his/ her contingent nature, his/her personal freedom, and his/ her consequent responsibility for what he/she does and makes himself/ herself to be. (*Subjective Will and Objective Truth* 817)

Really, existentialists concern to the problem of human being. They focus on human's concrete existence, human's personal freedom and their responsibility for choice. In such a situation, the existential belief holds that one has to make choices and create oneself. Chiranjibi Sharma and Nirmala Sharma write about existentialism in *Foundation of Education*, "Attempts have been made to trace the beginning of existentialism in the Greek philosophy, in particular the philosophy of Socrates. According to Dr. Radhakrishna, Existentialism is a new name for an ancient method"(86). Actually existentialism was in Greek philosophy, is now in utilized and will be in future with human existence in a conflict of ideas which history have not yet resolved. The movement of the existential philosophy flourished completely after the ruthless destruction, devastation, frustration and depressions caused by the perilous World War I. As the two great World Wars proved the failure of human rationality, the terrified western people began to think over the role and activities of

individual, which paved way for the further development of this philosophical mode.

Referring to the most influential existential philosophers of the 20th century, M.H.

Abrams says:

After the 1940s, however, there was a widespread tendency especially prominent in the existential philosophy of men of letters such as Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, to view a human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent truth, value or meaning; and to represent human life-in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning, as it moves from the nothingness whence it came toward the nothingness where it must end-as an existence which is both anguished and absurd. (1)

From this extract, it is obvious that the universe is completely fragmented and alienated where the individual has to struggle much to create meaning out of nothingness. Camus, Sartre and Becket believe that life in this universe is fruitless but still, the individuals have to struggle to create meaning out of it.

Existentialism establishes a concept of a “free individual” who tries to be a God when faith of Christianity has been diminished in the Nietzsche's metaphoric declaration that God is dead. The philosophy of existentialism denies having faith on the “corrupted institutionalization.” Nietzsche has seriously attacked the value of transcendental quality by declaring the death of God, the concentration of contemporary ideology is irreparably shattered.

Existentialism has certain similarity with romanticism, vitalistic concept of philosophy as it stands categorically in favour of individualism, subjectivity, introspection and human feelings. Existentialism is not concerned with the perception of man's behaviour's of morality but it also focuses his freedom, his actions and

feelings. It has common interests, common ancestry and common presupposition though it varies with its proponents who even reject the title of existentialism. Existentialism is perhaps a dynamic philosophical attitude to interpret the one's existence. John K. Ryan in *Encyclopedia Americana* defines existentialism as follows;

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

The human being thrown into the world is condemned to be free (qtd. in Sartre, 23). According to Sartre, human being takes this freedom of being, the responsibility and guilt of his action. Each action negates the other possible course of action and their consequence, so the human being must be accountable without excuses. He must not slip away from his responsibilities rather needs to take decisions and assume responsibilities. There is no significance in the world and universe. The human being can not find any purpose of life; his existence is only a contingent fact. His being does not emerge from necessity. If a 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 being's role in the world is not predetermined or fixed:

every person is compelled to make a choice. Choice is a thing that human being must make. The trouble is that most often the human being refuses to choose. Hence, he can not realize his freedom and the futility of his existence. By summarizing this concept Ryan adds:

Man is free and responsible only to himself. As with Nietzsche man creates moral values. Besides being free, man is a finite and contingent being, existing in a world devoid of purpose. The pessimism resulting from this position is likewise expressed by Camus' doctrine of "the absurd." Absurdity or contradiction arises from the clash between human hopes and desires and the meaningless universe into which man has been thrown. (639)

In this way, Ryan focuses on the freedom of choice. Moreover, he finds man as a finite being and shows the human limitation like Hemingway.

Jean Paul Sartre in his book *Existentialism and Human Emotions* defends existentialism against some charges which have been brought against it. Charges as "a kind of desperate quietism" (9), and others "Charge on us is that we put the emphasis "on the dark side of human life" (10). Jean Paul Sartre supplies his views on the definition of existentialism as a reply to the charges against it;

In any case, what can be said from the very beginning is that by existentialism we mean doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition declares that every truth and action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity. (10)

Existentialism is, thus humanism not in the sense that man as the ultimate end but in the sense that he is the creator of all values which is concerned with the approach of subjectivity. It may be termed as a psychological approach, which experiences human

crisis, despair and death instead of focusing on mechanical laws and traditional ethics of society. Though, existentialist philosophers depicted their views, they have not formed a school of thought. They maintained some common concepts through the two extremes of Nietzsche who claimed “the death of God” and Kierkegaard who believed that “God was infinite subjectivity.” There are, in accordance Jean Paul Sartre, two kinds of existentialists:

First, those who are Christian; among whom I include Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both Catholic; and on the other hand the atheistic Existentialists, among whom I class Heidegger, and then the French existentialists and myself what they have in common is that they think that existence precedes essence, or, if you prefer that subjectivity must be the starting point. (13)

Though both these groups try to speak of human existence in a subjective sense, the relationship with God differs. One of them negates the existence of god and his relations with people and the world. This group says that human kind is God. All human functions depend upon his choice. Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. But another group, which conceives of god as the source of inspiration and as the guiding principle, gives god the highest position in the world.

An existentialist is always stranger with others and certainly going to have no patience with conventions. The isolation produces an existentialist. Calling someone an ‘Existentialist’ imposes an essence on them, telling them what they are. This violates their absolute autonomy and freedom and makes it sound like they actually have something important in common. This is intolerable for them. If we live our lives just because of the completely free and autonomous decision we make, this creates nothing that is common with other. If we adopt something that comes from

someone else, this could give us a common basis to make a connected existence. As far as we make new decisions the probability of our connection with others going to decline.

The post war period has been called the age of anxiety. The generation that experienced depression and the Spanish Civil War is the generation that produced existentialist philosophy. The disaster of war, the collapse of values, the prevalence of injustice, and the rise of totalitarian system all these took at the outbreak of the Second World War. Thus, existentialism is developed through nihilism. They established a concept of “new hope” in the mouth of powerful death. The 20th century philosophers and writers found the world as a meaningless wasteland and they tried to formulate existential concept, which regards the subjectivism in a great deal.

Presenting his views on subjectivity, Jean Paul Sartre writes:

The word subjectivism has two meanings and our opponents play on the two. Subjectivism means, on the one hand, that an individual chooses and makes himself; and on the other, that is impossible for a man to transcend human subjectivity. The second of these is the essential meaning of existentialism. When we say that man chooses his own self, we mean that every one of us does likewise; but we also mean by that is making this choice, he also chooses all men. (16)

This extract shows that existence of an individual depends on his/her own choice and it is impossible for an individual to transcend the subjectivism according to Sartre. To incorporate the entire existentialist and their philosophical doctrine in this small research paper is impossible. Hence, I have attempted to deal with the main ideas of some of the profounder to support existential study in this dissertation.

2.2 Theistic Existentialisms

The word 'Theistic' means a group of people who believe upon God or upon Christianity. This group includes the group of people such as Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel. They believe in religious mysticism. According to them, the anxiety of modern man can be entertained when one submits oneself to the will of God without the intervention of Christian doctrine and celestial church. They believe in God and his existence and say that God exists first, and then the man exists. The theistic philosophers believe on the existence of god.

For Kierkegaard, 'God is Truth'. To him, god is infinitive subjectivity and subjectivity is truth. For him, the individual is unique in nature and cannot properly be known or understood in general term. Marcel tries to make a distinction between a mystery and problem, and he says that both hope and love can exist only on the basis of faith. He distinguishes between having and being, linking greater consequence to being and having. Having signifies ownership, which is a burden and an obstacle. Being means freedom from obstacle.

Jaspers speaks of the exposition or revelation of existence; he takes self and freedom as mere illusion. He knows his own self and will as creative, free and original. The existential self is thus associated with consciousness. Jaspers considers that the individual can not become human by himself; self being is only real in communication with another self being. Buber also emphasizes the importance of the relation between self and other.

The roots of existentialism as a philosophy can be traced back to a strict Christian moralist, (Soren Kierkegaard, 1813-1855), who denounced one's identification with state, society, church and the speculative metaphysical system because those institutions did not allow people to exercise their freedom. He says,

“The most tremendous thing which has been granted to man is the choice, freedom” (834). He focuses on the individuality, subjectivity and freedom. By choosing inward and personal character, one makes a leap of faith in God which he regards as an “ethic religious choice” (828). Thus, there are two options for the individual to choose: either he has to choose God and get redemption from the angst, an ethic-religious choice or he has to reject God and go the prediction. But paradoxically enough, the choice is, according to Kierkegaard, criterion less and it is the individual himself who has to fix criteria by making choice. The Christian doctrine and its quest for objective truth have nothing to do with.

Kierkegaard believes in subjective truth. Search for objective truth is meaningless for him. There can not be any truth that is universal, rather it is individual. Instead of one single truth; there are many truths which are personal.

Jostein Gaarder comments on the point and says:

According to Kierkegaard, rather than searching for the truth with a capital ‘T’, it is more important to find the kind of truths that are meaningful to the individuals’ life. It is important to find ‘the truth for me’. He thus sets the individual, or each and every man, up against the ‘System’. (379)

Kierkegaard’s concept of “subjective truth” has influenced the twentieth century existentialists, who always emphasized on subjectivity. Real existence, for him, therefore, is possible only when one becomes aware of the paradoxical presence of God, Christianity and man. Truth and existence are always prior to thinking. True knowledge is always subjective. It is direct and immediate experience. The main theme of Kierkegaard’s writing is ‘truth is subjective’. All existentialist have followed

him in stressing the importance of passionate individual existentialists' action in deciding question of both morality and truth.

Another famous philosopher Karl Jaspers was a prominent theistic existentialist. His philosophical activity was from the beginning influenced by Kant and Hegel, but Kierkegaard and Nietzsche have dominated his thought. Jaspers, as a psychiatrist found that a person could not be treated merely as a "case" but some personal relationship was found necessary. He rejects the scientific reasoning and rational truth.

He distinguishes three different methods of philosophizing. The first is called philosophical world orientation, the second is the elucidation of existence and the third is the metaphysics. Jaspers argued that in the subjective search of his private consciousness, man finds crisis, freedom and decision; they are existence. Aligning himself with Husserl and other philosophers, he regards our consciousness as always intentional. Existence or self in its free being is equated by Jaspers with 'Will'. Jaspers' humanism moved between narrow limits. The question he raised as to what "truth values of life were real but his attempt to answer them suffered from his elitist view" (96). Jaspers further writes:

Each individual is unique. The self cannot be made an object of consciousness because it is 'being oneself', while the world is 'being-there' existence. The self is related to the world. The self, existence, and will are the same. The self is immortal in the sense that being and immortality are the same. The absolute can be known only symbolically. (380)

Jaspers rejected the scientific reasoning and rational truth as:

Existential-philosophy in this light is not on the side of the choice and irrational movements, but rather should be seen as a counterblow to them: and the chaotic and ruinous can just as easily appear in the deceptive garments of rationality as in frank irrationalism. (864)

Jaspers is aware of economic as well as spiritual crisis on the futility of its “welfare state” (854). He talks of true communication with the feeling of other self “My own freedom can only exist if the other is also free” (867). He is in exploration of truth and reality which can speak even in despair, in suicide, in the passion towards darkness, in every form of negative determination. Unlike other existentialists he discarded the self sufficiency of science and empirical observation, and speculation of individual from the communication with other beings. One can not live fully if there is not another being to communicate with, and man is held very much attached with all things around him, Jaspers writes:

We can not have objective possession of truth that is the eternal truth, and because being. There is possible only with other being there, and existence can come into its own only with other existence, communication is the form in which truth revealed in time. (866)

He wants to create balance between rational and irrational movement of self. The truth is that it possesses a perpetual question without which we turn back into the more or less dirty stereotype of self satisfaction which is inadequately thought. The possible truth and reality can sheath in despair, anxiety, suicide, and dark passion. The existential root is not destructive will but a salvation from nihilism because it preserves confidence through its movement.

Martin Buber is a famous religious existentialist and says that a person exists only in relation to God and the World, He says that in life, the love of God must be

expressed through love for each individual. He believes in the power of God who is almighty and is only one object of the sufferers (Warnock).

While talking about existentialism we cannot forget Gabriel Marcel who regards philosophy as a philosophy of a reflection upon reflection to restore the unity of living and thinking. He tries to fill the abyss between subject and object, between what is in use and what is before us. His philosophy depends upon recognition of mystery of being or upon the impossibility of discovering being through objective and rational analysis. He emphasizes upon the faith of God which helps man to overcome out from anxiety and despair.

According to the theistic opinion of Marcel, in faith there is not only the existence of other selves but beyond that we can realize the highest kind of existence that is called God. He writes:

The existence of other selves also is accepted on faith. In these several ways, we realize some presence going beyond the immediate here and now. Ultimately, in the highest kind of faith we realize the supreme transcendence which is called God. Neither the existence of external object nor that of other selves of God is rationally demonstrable. (437)

God is not demonstrable but it is revealed by the direct participation. In other words, God can not be shown to others but we can perceive Him by some effort.

Some religious existentialists Philosophers like Buber and Marcel tried to solve the problem of an individual with the direct relationship with God whereas, others stressed on individual rather than strong religious dogmas.

2.3 Atheistic Existentialism

When the science developed fully and human being started to think themselves as supreme, the concept of 'Atheistic Existentialism' came. Unlike the

theistic existentialists, the atheistic existentialists do not believe in the existence of god. So, Martin Heidegger and the French existentialists including Sartre fall in atheistic group. Obviously, Nietzsche is the forerunner and chief source of inspiration for them who does not believe in the existence of God but believes in the continuous struggle of anti-Christianity. The authentic existentialists repudiate the concept of God as an authentic shelter. Atheistic existentialists continue to create a system in which the individual is paradoxically free and condemned for choosing a rugged path in life.

Heidegger declares that the individual has to face the absolute problem of being that is one has to decide one's own existence to create one's potentiality and make cliché and promises. Sartre praises the freedom of the individual human being. He describes existentialism as a means of confronting the result of world war and issue of world that wants an absolute power like God. He focuses on freedom of choice, commitment and responsibility. Sartre claims that there is no absolute reality at all but in action.

Camus believes that anxiety, despair and crime have emerged from World Wars first and second. The external supports in which the public belief rested in the past were religious in character. Camus, like many other existentialists, believes that decline of religious belief in modern period forces people to realize the dilemma of Sisyphus.

Frederic Nietzsche (1844-1900) one of the most influential philosophers of Germany, makes a critique on the western philosophy. He advocates against traditional Christian thinking and views that "God is Dead". Gaarder remarks "According to Nietzsche, both Christianity and traditional philosophy had turned away from the real world and pointed towards heaven or the world of ideas" (455). He

stresses on world of ideas. Nietzsche declares the “Death of God”. The total independence and isolation of free man is found for the first time in Nietzsche. He is considered as an ancestor of existentialism like Kierkegaard. He regarded objectivity as the chief enemy of understanding; he struggles to establish human freedom and subjectivity.

Nietzsche says that morality is a kind of discipline, which contains a man to act in a manner, which he will not choose but follow. Nietzsche agreed with Kant that morality is essentially a matter of laws. Mary Warnock points out Nietzsche’s point of view:

Nietzsche rejects the whole doctrine of the universalizability of the moral law. For him to legislate means to legislate for one. He rightly argues that universalizing one’s maxim according to the Kantian formula is not a straightforward operation, since an evaluative element comes into the decision to describe one’s act in a particular way. (19)

Nietzsche’s moral philosophy is total rejection of ethical naturalism that equally opposes the ethical institutionalism. The essential truth he talks is men’s choice of their own values and follows ‘Will to power’. Like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche “regards objectivity’ as the main enemy of understanding” (Warnock).

Nietzsche finds all the scientists wrong who think they discover objects like moralists who themselves claim to be correct all the time. His message has two parts: the first is that men ought to choose a different set of values and the second is they can choose a different set of values.

Nietzsche proclaims the death of God and goes on to reject the entire Judeo-Christian moral tradition in favour of heroic pagan ideals. He calls Christianity a slave morality and holds that religion provides no truth because God is dead and

Christianity has become the shelter of weak and disabled people that he hates. In his famous essay, “*The Death of God and Antichrist*”, he centers his arguments against Christianity:

The Christian conception of God-God as god of sick, god as a spider, God as spirit-is one of the corrupt conceptions of the divine ever attained on earth. It may even represent the low water mark in the descending development of Divine types. God degenerated into the contradiction of life, instead of being it's, against life, against nature, against the will to live. (912)

Instead of following the tradition of Christianity, Nietzsche rather does not believe in the existence of God. He proclaims the death of god as a world shattering event. For him, God is not here and there also, there means in heaven. Even if he was there, he is dead now. That is why, there is no authority or God to determine our existence, individual freedom is another focal point to him. An individual, for him, accepts any imposition from any power; rather he is the master of himself to decide for himself.

Nietzsche emphasizes upon the subjective intentions and activities of individual and repudiates objective knowledge and thought. If a man troubles his mind on what other will think about him, he will be no more a man but an instrument, an object. He further writes:

The Objective man is an instrument, a precious, easily injured, easily clouded instrument for taking measurements. As a mirror he is a work of art to be handled carefully and honoured. But he is nor an aim, not a way out nor a way up, not a complementary human being through whom the rest of existence is justified, not a conclusion... or content, a self-less man. (*Subjective Will and Objective Truth*, 817)

In this way, Nietzsche insists upon the irrational and upon the individual who confronts existence heroically, without hypocrisy. If we live our life as a part of the 'herd', we don't develop our own beliefs or create our own values but simply adopt the prevailing belief and values of society. So, we must take our own choice which leads us towards freedom and good action.

Another German thinker, Martin Heidegger, who publicly praises Hitler and Nazism, is a leading figure of atheistic existentialism. He was influenced by Husserl, founder of phenomenological school. Heidegger describes three fundamental characteristics of human in his book *Being and Time*.

The relations of a self to the world of objects and persons are inseparable and constitutive of its existence. According to Heidegger, "anguish controls man's existence. An individual is preoccupied with the inevitability of death. Death is the goal of our existence. Man's being is for death. Nothingness, in Heidegger's approach is connected with the finitude of human being, their essential movement towards their own ends in death" (Warnock 60).

The feeling of dread due to the awareness of death may incite us to flee away from the problems of being, accepting a way of life set by others instead of coming from the problems of being, with it. But if we take the dread of death as an opportunity, we may construct our life unique, and our own. Heidegger argues that the certainty of death makes an individual realize that his existence in the earth must be made useful and better knowing its temporality. Heidegger says:

It would be immature to adopt the facile explanation that nothing is merely the nugatory, equating it with the nonexistent. We ought rather to equip ourselves and prepare for one thing: to experience is nothing

the immensity of that which gives being its license to be. That is, being itself. (*Dread Reveals Nothing*, 61)

The realization of man's finitude was the beginning of his recognition of the concept of nothing that is the realization of morality of man. Mary Warnock comments Heidegger's concept of existentialism as follows:

Heidegger regards this genuine acceptance of the future non-existence of himself as the first step towards the authentic way of life. In accepting it, the human being recognizes that he is alone, distinct from every other person and object in the world, no longer able to turn for supporting to people in general. He must die his own death by himself. So not existing at all in the final end towards which he is moving. In this sense 'Nichts' means "non existence" of "nothingness". (59)

Heidegger uses the word 'Dasein' for human being, literally 'Being there'. It expresses an existence, which is chosen by an individual. Heidegger says that only human being exists but animals and inanimate things do not exist. In *What is Metaphysics?* Heidegger says, "Man alone of all existing things experiences the wonder of all wonders: that there are things in being" (106). He says that all of us have some possible choices and our concern is the world present and future. These choices are made in vacuum but in the world. Heidegger often deals dread as an important concept, which is raised in man as a dread of death. Everyone has it as it is unavoidable and certain.

The most remarkable name in the history of existential philosophy is Jean Paul Sartre who was a French journalist, a novelist, dramatist and philosopher who later became a pioneer of atheistic existentialism. Disclosing atheistic existentialism, Sartre evaluates:

It states if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that being is man, or as Heidegger says, human reality. What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene and only afterwards, defines himself. (15)

Sartre is deeply influenced by the irrationality and contingency of all forms of existentialism. Sartre's one of the major doctrines of existentialism is 'existence precedes essence' which has become vague for those familiar with only the traditional concept of 'essence precedes existence'. According to Sartre, first of all man exists, turns up, appears on the scene and defines himself. For Sartre, "freedom becomes for him an absolute, resting on the individual's own decision as to how will be engaged with the world" (16).

For Sartre loneliness and anguish go together. Existentialism is humanism not in the sense of regarding man as the ultimate end but as creator of all values. A man is choosing and making legislation for the world. According to Sartre, God does not exist, and therefore an individual is alone. He is giving a message to modern individual that each has to determine his values himself enjoying his freedom and responsibility. Sartre elaborates his atheistic views as follows:

Existentialism isn't so atheistic that it wears itself out showing that God doesn't exist. Rather, it declares that even if God exists, that would change nothing. There you have got our point of view. Not that we believe that God exists, but we think that the problem of his existence is not the issue. (51)

Sartre states that if god does not exist, there is at least one thing in which existence precedes essence, and that being is man. He does not believe in the Christian dogma or any ethics. Freedom occupies a central place in Sartre's thought. For him, "man is nothing else but what he makes of himself" (15). A man is free to choose his values and we always choose the good, which will be for all 'in choosing myself, I choose man" (18).

Sartre regards responsibility in utilizing freedom. Everything; which happens to me, is 'mine' according to him. A man is fully responsible for what he does or chooses. He accepts J. Romain's ethics "In war there are no innocent victims". One who gets into war, he has to bear the entire responsibility of this war. The feeling of being in the world makes a man choose or act upon things. Sartre points out his doctrine of responsibility:

Man is anguish. What that means is this: the man who involves himself and who realizes that he is not only the person choose to be, but also a law maker, who is at the same time choosing mankind as well as himself, cannot help escape the feeling of his total and deep responsibility. (18)

Hemingway's hero Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*, stands as a rebel, a protester of mechanized world like Nietzsche who challenged the contemporary religious world by declaring that God is Dead. Hemingway permits Henry to enjoy his freedom opposing the traditional ethic of morality and responsibility. He never fears his actions and their consequences as his beloved Catherine does. Henry is here like Nietzschean Superman with extraordinary quality. Henry's disbelief in God shows clearly his atheistic feeling about choosing his values throughout his action. His concept corresponds with what Heidegger speaks about atheistic existentialism.

Catherine's final achievement of life is more concerned with Heidegger's "freedom towards death".

In *A Farewell to Arms* Henry deserts the army and escapes into his love affair with the English nurse Catherine Barkley, Catherine also makes a choice of deserting her close friend Ferguson while fleeing away to Switzerland from Stresa. Both are free to make their choices according to Sartrean philosophy.

Thus existentialism from its very beginning to the present shows different innovations. The differences lie only in the forms and the relationship with God. All of them subscribe to the thesis that existentialism is an intense and philosophically specialized form of quest for selfhood. Moreover, the present chapter dealing with the particular text *A Farewell to Arms* clarifies the concept of existentialism. Struggle is the tension between life and death. The major characters in *A Farewell to Arms* are focus of the struggle for order and certitude amid the chaos and disorder of modern existence.

Chapter 3

Expression of Despair and Death: An Existential Study of Hemingway's *A*

Farewell to Arms

Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* infuses with an expression of despair and death regarding the contemporary social world engaged in the First World War. There people feel themselves to be obsessed by the violence and causing many deaths and despairs. Despite these casualties and violence, people are compelled to perpetuate their action for and against. Since, the characters in the novel attempt to recuperate from the loss but fail to overcome it. Hence, the protagonist of the novel, Frederic Henry, is engaged to free people from the disastrous war and provides welfare for those wounded lives from the respective sides. But fails to perform his duty and he is injured at the knee.

The narrative unfolds with broad description of a remote village, Gorizia situated at the bay of a river where soldiers' squad on muddy and dusty inland roads burdened with artilleries on their backs. The tractors are filled with the long barrels of guns covered with green leafy branches of vines over them. As the narrator or the protagonist of the novel witnesses the tragic condition of the people engaged in war and the background covered with distortion, he fabricates the existing milieu as such:

To the North ... the vineyards are thin and bare-branched too and all the country wet and brown and dead with the autumn. There were mists over the river and clouds on the mountain and the trucks splashed mud on the roads and the troops were muddy and wet in their rifles were wet and under their capes the two leather cartridge-boxes on the front of the belts... At the start of the winter came the permanent rain

and with the rain came the cholera. But this was checked and in the end only seven thousand died of it in the army. (10)

The setting functions symbolically in the novel because the depiction of the bleak view of mountains and plains almost covered with mists; clouds and dust create some dismal effect to the onlooker Frederic Henry. The personal and the collective experiences that Henry scrutinizes at the war front, is disillusioned by the decadence of the nature and futile human activities. The excerpt taken for analysis further complicates with the sterile nature of outward world and the inner psyche of the soldiers, when the protagonist feels anxiety, boredom and decadence, he draws some scenic ugliness in nature, as such, 'bare-branched', 'all the country wet and brown', 'mists', 'clouds'. These various factors also promulgate the meaning of despair in human life that is full of frustration and discomforts. 'The permanent rain' in the winter brings cholera and it kills 'only' seven thousand before it is checked. Here life sustaining rain is taken as destructive force. The things around the countryside accede the death of people by viral diseases, like cholera, jaundice, gonorrhoea and pneumonia.

As the story proceeds, Henry and his war brothers or soldiers engage themselves by talking about the girls and making fun of each others. There are separate bawdy houses for officers and soldiers to forget the hostility of the perilous world war. They create separate peace in lustful love, wine and baiting in the brothel.

'Priest today with girls', the captain said looking at the priest and at me. The priest smiled and blushed and shook his head. This captain baited him often.

'Not true?' asked the captain. 'Today I see priest with girls'.

'No', said the priest. The other officers were amused at the baiting.

‘Priest every night five against one’. Every one at the table laughed.

‘You understand? Priest every night five against one’.

He made a gesture and laughed loudly. The priest accepted it as a joke.

(12-13)

This kind of repudiation of morality, taunting a priest by a captain is caused by the disillusionment created by the war. All the characters are affected by the war. They negate the cultural and moral values to forget the pain and despair of the war. They often visit brothel, drink alcohol and make lustful love. The act of casual, emotionless sex creates fear of fertility. The soldiers use drinking and lustful love as a means of forgetting the war. They are culturally vile and corrupted. ‘Come on’ said the captain. ‘We go whore-house before it shuts’ (14). Their love is a game. Lieutenant Frederic Henry meets Catherine Barkley, in Gorizia. He falls in love with her at first-sight and this love is not spiritual one that became clear when he says:

I turned her so I could see her face when I kissed her and I saw that her eyes were shut... This was better than going every evening to the house for officers where the girls climbed all over you and put your cap on background as a sign of affection... I knew I did not love Catherine Barkley nor had any idea of loving her. This was a game, like bridge, in which you said things instead of playing cards. Like bridge you had to pretend you were playing for money or playing for some stakes. (32)

The relationship between Catherine and Henry is not rosy because both of them show the idyllic life of the modern people. Regarding the meaning of love and friendship; Stendhal describes his idea, as, “...it appears as a mode of being in the world. Love is a fundamental relation of the for-itself to the world and to itself (selfness) through a

particular woman; the woman represents only a conducting body which is placed in the circuit” (qtd. in Sartre 60). Thus, their relationship appears merely as carnal love.

However, Henry is sleepless man haunted by the physical and psychological despair. So, he derives his sensual appetite into a true love in the later stage. Henry goes to the hospital to meet Catherine when she is not there he feels lonely. He says:

I went out the door and suddenly I felt lonely and empty. I had treated seeing Catherine very lightly, I had gotten some what drunk and had nearly forgotten to come but when I could not see her there I was feeling lonely and hallow. (42)

This shows that Henry is fully upset because of the absence of Catherine. His hopes and charms in life have been thoroughly degenerating. In the absence of Catherine, Henry realizes his pathetic existence. He feels lonely and depress as W.S. Merwin in the poem “Separation”; “Your absence has gone through me/Like thread through a needle” (452). His beloved’s absence and pain of separation has penetrated his mind. The separation seems to have given him trouble, and unpleasant feeling.

Likewise, most of the soldiers find their life occupied with futileness which we can understand when they talk against the war. In the absence of the major, Passini, Manera and other soldiers talk about stopping war. Though, they can not yet express their anti war attitude explicitly in front of their officers, they express it as they be away from the sight of the officers. We can understand how Passini hates war as he says, “There is nothing worse than war” (49). While talking with Passini, Henry talks about the in-human activities of the victorious soldiers. He says, “They come after you. They take your home. They take your sisters” (49). Their discussions indirectly reveal to the inexpressible psychological despair and anxiety of life caused by perilous war. The characters hate war; they hate war mongers; they hate their

absurd life but still they have no way to avoid it. They have been compelled to exist with their absurd life. The farmers who are enjoying their freedom in their field and village are compelled to join the army. Their poor condition compels them to join in the army. They can neither continue to fight in the war nor escape away from it. They are scapegoats. Regarding the war mongers Henry says; “There is a class that controls a country that is stupid and does not realize anything and never can. That is why we have this war” (50). Wars affect not only those who involve directly in the territory. How the war gives physical and psychological threats to the people becomes clear as Henry says, “A big shell came in and burst outside in the brickyard. And another burst and in the noise you could hear the smaller noise of the brick and dirt raining down” (51). When the war takes place, the bombardment can kill any people. In this hostile world people are disillusioned to their culture and to their society as it can not save from the destruction.

Frederic Henry, the protagonist of the novel is disillusioned because of the devastation of war. He is wounded while he is eating:

I ate end of my piece of cheese and took a swallow of wine. Through the other noise I heard a cough, then came the chuh- chuh- chuh - then there was a flash, as a blast-furnace door is swung open, and a roar that started white and went red and on and on in a rushing wind. I tried to breathe but my breath would not come and I felt myself rush bodily out of myself and out and out and all the time bodily in wind. I went out swiftly, all of myself and I knew I was dead and that it had all been a mistake to think you just died. (53)

A bomb blast and makes Henry wounded. At that time he is eating cheese. The battle field is terrific and insecure. People are killed and wounded while they are eating.

Passini gets brutally wounded and at that moment, he does not want to exist as is physical and mental pains become excessive. To show how Passini endeavors to die, Henry says:

Oh, Mamma mia, mamma mia, then Dio ti salvi, Maria. Dio ti salvi, Maria. Dio ti salvi, Maria. Oh Jesus shoot me. Stop it. Stop it. Oh Jesus lovely Mary stop it. Oh oh oh oh, 'then choking,' Mamma, mamma mia'. Then he was quiet, biting his arm, the stump of his leg twitching.
(54)

These statements also reflect how the young soldiers die miserably in the meaningless wars which are fought for a class of stupid, who want to control the country. After their death, these soldiers are paid no respects. They just die as the cattle as Wilfred Owen writes in "Anthem for Doomed Youth":

What passing bells for these who die as cattle?
-only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells; (1-5)

In fact, who-ever die in the war, they get nothing. The dead soldiers get nothing except the firings of guns. Their deaths are just mocked at. J Romain puts his view on war as, "In war there are no innocent victims (qtd.in Sartre 54). Further more Sartre elaborates his idea on war as: "There was no compulsion here, for the compulsion could have got no hold on freedom.... Therefore it remains for me only to lay claim to this war"(55). For him, war is a choice but not the compulsion. He thinks that the war is 'his'. His duty is to continue it.

Characters in *A Farewell to Arms* are rootless and they only live in the very present avoiding their past. They hardly make plan for their future. They have no sense of history and their background. Henry is an American and now serving in the Italian Front as an ambulance driver. Catherine Barkley is a British and working in the American hospital as a nurse. No more information about their family and society is given in the novel. They are rootless and this becomes clear with their conversation as:

‘Have you a father?’

Yes, said Catherine. ‘He has gout. You won’t ever have to meet him.

Haven’t you a father?’

‘No’, I said. ‘A step father’.

‘Will I like him?’

‘You won’t have to meet him’. (138)

Henry and Catherine prefer to live in the present without worrying about the future and avoiding their past link. They don’t want to remember their past. They don’t want to have any connection and link with their family. They are rootless. They don’t have sense of history. They are away from family and society.

Frederic Henry doesn’t want to talk about his father. He wants to forget his father. In the same way, he does not want to see his newly born baby in the hospital in Switzerland. He has not any feeling of fatherhood. He says, “I had no feeling for him. He did not seem to have anything to do with me. I felt no feeling of fatherhood” (280). He does not have the sense of fatherhood. He negates to give him his name though he believes on baptism. “I had no religion but I knew he ought to have been baptized” (282). He does not want to see his son. His son dies but he is neither happy nor sad. He is indifferent to his child:

The baby was dead. That was why the doctor looked so tired. But why had they acted the way they did in the room with him? They supposed he would come around and start breathing probably. I had no religion but I knew he ought to have been baptized. But what if he never breathed at all. He hadn't. He had never been alive. Except in Catherine. (282)

Though doctors try their best, baby dies in the hospital. They feel tired and sad. Henry is father to the child but he is careless about his death. He has no feeling towards his dead child. Henry denies baptizing his son which shows that he is culturally and morally dead. He has no culture or morality. In the same way, both Henry and Catherine do not have a house of their own. They consider a hospital room a house for them. "My room at the hospital had been our home and this room was our home too in the same way" (136).

Negation of religion is another factor of disillusionment and despair created by fruitless World War I. Characters are frustrated. They are despaired. They do not want to believe in the presence of God. They forget presence of God while they are happy in certain action. They questioned even the existence of the God. Henry's love affair in the beginning of the novel enhances his atheistic attitude. As for Catherine she has no religion except for the religion of love, "You're my religion. You're all I've got" (103). Catherine has no religion as such but she thinks the love of Henry itself is religion for her. She prefers lustful love than any traditional religion. She thinks the love itself is religion. Once, Catherine had given St. Anthony to Henry as a part of a private ritual, which has nothing to do with traditional religion. Henry asks her if she is religious, "You're not a Catholic, are you?" No. But they say a Saint Anthony's

very useful” (43). Catherine does not like to be called Catholic but she has Saint Anthony. Little bit she has faith on him as private ritual. Henry says;

I undid the clasp of the gold chain and put it around my neck and clasped it. The Saint hung down on the outside of my uniform and I undid the throat of my tunic, unbuttoned the shirt collar and dropped him in under the shirt. I felt him in his metal box against my chest while we drove. Then I forget about him. After I was wounded I never found him. Somebody probably got it at one of the dressing-stations.

(43-44)

This loss of Saint Anthony given by Catherine is symbolical to the loss of religious faith. People do not have faith on God and God also can not protect the people from the devastation. Other characters like Dr. Rinaldi visits officers’ brothel, does not fear the existence of God. Henry reveals the secrecy about Rinaldi; “Poor Rinaldi, I said.” “All alone at the war with no new girls”. (63) Dr. Valentine also seems to be an atheist who is attracted by the girls and drink even in his duty hours. He opposes ethical morality. He neglects society and social cases in his act of life. While talking to Henry, he talked about Catherine, “I will be a patient here myself. No , but I will do all your maternity work free” (90).

Here is clear that Hemingway characters follow Sartrean philosophy “... it declares that even if God did exist, that would change nothing” (51). They do not fear the existence of God even in committing sensual affairs. They act as there is no God. Their decisions regarding their love and war are their own, no God is interfering them. Catherine leads a life of unconventionality contrasting traditional religious and moral values. She dismisses the need of formal marriage ceremony; she often makes physical relation with Frederic. She rejects the code of the contemporary morality;

“we’re really married. I couldn’t be anymore married” (103). She rejects the value of the Church and the state. “There’s no way to be married except by the church and the state. We are married privately. You see, darling, it would mean everything to me if I had any religion. But I haven’t any religion” (103). She doesn’t follow any moral standards and on the other hand rejects the cultural values. Religion and church affairs are matter of mockery for the modern people. Catherine is not happy with society and even with the God. She has lost previous fiancé in the war. He is killed in the war. So, she is alone in the world. “There is no God to assist him” (qtd.in Henri Peyre,24). The religion do not save her fate. She finds the way of personal choice of about everything.

Hemingway presents the repudiation of religion and morality through his modern characters. For his characters what is moral is “what you feel good after”. They drink a lot and mock the priest of their unit. Rinaldi and Henry tease the priest:

‘What are you eating meat for?’ Rinaldi turned to the priest,

Don’t you know It’s Friday?’

It’s Thursday’, the priest said.

‘It’s a lie. It’s Friday. You’re eating the body of the our Lord. It’s God-meat. I know. It’s dead Austrian. That’s what you’re eating’.

‘The white meat is from officers,’ I said, completing the old joke.

(153)

Henry and Rinaldi compare priest with devil. Priest is a subject of joke in the mess. Priest is helpless in front of those drunkards. When Henry is wounded, the priest visits him in the hospital. The priest encourages Henry to love the God.

‘It does not matter. But there in my country it is understood that a man may love God. It is not a dirty joke’

‘I understand.’

‘He looked at me and smiled.

‘You understand, but you do not love God.’

‘No’

‘You do not love him at all?’ he asked.

‘I am afraid of Him in the night sometimes.

‘You should love Him.’

‘I don’t love much.’

‘Yes, he said. ‘You do. What you tell me about in the nights. That is not love. That is only passion and lust. When you love wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve.’ (68-69)

Henry says he does not love God but he is afraid with ‘Him’. This is perhaps his faith in God is suppressed within him. He can not totally deny the existence of God.

Likewise, Henry’s life is completely deprived of happiness. This becomes apparent as he says, “I haven’t been happy for a long time” (104). Characters engage themselves in such activity to forget the despair and disillusionment of the war.

In *A Farewell to Arms*, characters break morality and culture alienating them from their society and native land. Gordon E. Bigelow in his article “A Primer of Existentialism” writes, “...modern man lives in a fourfold condition of alienation from God, from nature, from other men, from his own true self”(173). Feeling of insecurity made them live away from their land, their people and from themselves too. They leave their culture, morality, religion along with their society and family. The protagonist Henry is serving in the Italian Army in his interest leaving his family to live isolated life. He is rootless and homeless. His interest makes him to choose isolated and alienated life. He engages himself in his job of collecting and removing

wounded and sick from the dressing stations, hauling them back from the mountains to the hospitals named on their papers. Later on, Henry becomes fed up by driving ambulance in the destructive war; he again wanted to escape away from that futile and absurd job. He himself had chosen that life. Now, he is frustrated and despaired and wanted to leave his job. He is disillusioned by the war. When he returns from leave to his unit Gorizia, he finds everything fine; nothing remains bad in his absence.

The whole thing seemed to run better while I was away. The offensive was going to start again I heard. The division for which we worked were to attack at a place up the river and the major told me that I would see about the posts for during the attack. The attack would cross the river up above the narrow gorge and spread up the hillside. The posts for the cars would have to be as near the river as they could get and keep covered. They would, of course, be selected by the infantry but we were supposed to work it out. It was one of those things that gave you a false feeling of soldiering. (20)

Henry has now realized the futility of his job. He wants to escape from this absurdity. He wished and said, "I could go to Spain if there was no war" (38). He wants to escape away from this perilous war. He is physically wounded and spiritually wounded in the war. His wound symbolizes his loneliness and futility. War gives rise to feelings of despair. "I wished to God it was over through. Maybe it would finish this summer. Maybe the Austrians would crack" (38). Henry is fed up with the hostility of fruitless war. He wishes it to end up. So, he can go away to make separate peace uniting with his beloved Catherine. He wants to escape from war to leave so he can live happy life without having feeling of despair. Henry is wounded and taken to the hospital in Milan. There in Milan hospital he has a passionate affair with his

beloved Catherine Barkley. Barkley is transferred there especially to take care of Henry and other patients in that newly formed American hospital. When he reaches to hospital in Milan, he finds no other patients there:

I was alone in the room. It was cool and didn't smell like a hospital. The mattress was firm and comfortable and I lay without moving, hardly breathing, happy feeling the pain lessen. After a while, I wanted a drink of water and found the bell on a cord by the bed and rang it but nobody came. I went to sleep. (77)

Henry is wounded on the Isonzo, north to Plava in his head and legs. Dr. Valentini makes proper diagnosis and Henry becomes well after many days treatments. During his treatment in the hospital, Henry and Catherine enjoy their life there. Henry is well to go to the front.

Later on, Henry avoids the involvement in the army and makes a retreat in Caporetto, and gets united with his pregnant mistress and contrives his way to Switzerland. This realization leads the Caporetto desertion with the sole longing to live longer and happily. He plunges into the flooded Tagliamento to reemerge as a free man and give himself entirely to a life of love. The choice of his retreat is his own who takes a risk to run away from the assigned liability, involves in desertion, which is deep analysis of the text proves to be his central action:

Anger was washed away in the river along with obligation. Although that ceased when the carabinieri put his hands on my collar. I would like to have had the uniform off although I did not care much about the outwards forms. I had taken off the stars, but that was for convenience. It was no point of honour. I was not against them. I was through. I wished them all the luck. (203)

Henry, when he deserts, observe a soldier's discipline. His obligation has been constantly presented as an obligation to the men under his immediate command, and the men under his command have never recognized an obligation to total war. They recognize no meaning in the war and are bound together only by a squad sense and by their immediate respect for each other; when Henry is separated from his men, his obligation is gone. His true obligation then becomes his fidelity to Catherine. This discipline, the form, is never quite capable of subduing the world but fidelity to it is part of the gallantry of defeat.

Likewise, Henry feels tired of life in the front when he could be shot at anytime. Thus, he selects desertion in favour of life. He is in fact terrified with the destruction of war and therefore he deserts it to save his life as he regards life more important than anything else. His disaffiliation is a conscious act of choice by disgust and loneliness. On the other hand, his act is the product of urge to unite Catherine, to make 'separate peace', to impose authentic life in a chaotic world. He rejects all the obligation of war morality with his choice of deserting the army. Henry's desertion in *A Farewell to Arms*, has been commented by Malcolm Cowley in *Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway* :

When Frederic Henry dives into the flooded Tagliamento, in *A Farewell to Arms*, is performing a rite of baptism that prepares us for the new life he is about to lead as a deserter from the Italian Army: his act is emotionally significant, but it is little unconvincing on the plan of action. There are perhaps the only two cases in which Hemingway seems to loosen his grip on reality. (46)

Henry's abandonment of war is apparently illustrated in the above statement. The act of avoiding the horrific war is a kind of redemption for Henry. His plunging into the

Tagliamento River is a way out for gaining new hope and aspiration for his eternal life. It is also a choice of deserting the army and retreat; a choice to be away from the front. It is a deliberate act of Henry because he is well aware of the fact that war ultimately does not bring out the peaceful life.

For Henry, “in one sense choice is possible, but what is not possible is not to choose” (Sartre 41). Henry himself sees some “values” of being in the front and enlists him though he had deep urge for literature. Later, he feels tire of the life in the front where he can be shot at any time. Thus, he selects desertion in favour of life, to express in Sartrean terms “you are nothing else than your life” (33). He is in fact terrified with the destruction of the war and therefore deserts it to save his life as he regards life more important than anything else. This desertion is existential in spirit. He has his freedom to abandon the Italian front and travel as a freeman in the arms of his beloved. His plunging into the flooded river has some symbolic significance. As R. P. Warren in his *Introduction to A Farewell to Arms in Three Novels of Ernest Hemingway* points out:

And from the waters of the flooded Tagliamento arises the Hemingway hero in his purest form, with human history and obligation washed away, ready to enact the last phase of his appropriate drama, and learn from his inevitable defeat the lesson of lonely fortitude. (36)

Henry not only revolts from the front but also from all traditional code of conduct of war ethics. Henry is probably free to make this choice according to Sartrean philosophy. But he is forbidden to disregard war-code and patriotic obligation by the contemporary society.

Henry discards the uniform and puts on the civilian dress on the way to Stresa in order to find Catherine. He dislikes even reading the newspaper about the war. “I

was going to forget the war. I had made a separate peace. I felt damned lonely and was glad when the train got to Stressa” (210). Being on army personnel he should not be afraid of the war. But he deserts Italian Army being terrified with the destruction of the war. He violates the rules and regulations with his choice of deserting the army and runs away from the war to Switzerland. In the same way, Catherine, too, makes a choice of deserting her duty in the hospital, she is interested to go to Switzerland. “Poor Ferguson”, Catherine said. “In the morning she’ll come to the hotel and find we’re gone” (234). She leaves her friend without saying anything. Henry finds Catherine and himself delighted despite Ferguson rebukes;” I’m not cheered by seeing you. I know the mess you’ve gotten this girl too. You’re no cheerful sight to me” (213). Ferguson is very angry with Henry and Catherine. She says, “You’re two of the same thing,” “I’m ashamed of you, Catherine Barkley. You have no shame and no honour and you’re as sneaky as he is” (214). Ferguson is angry and sad that Catherine is pregnant before marriage and not married yet. Henry and Catherine feel isolated being together in the hotel. “We could feel alone when we were together, alone against the others” (216). They were on the threshold of an isolated existence even in each other’s company. Henry expresses his feeling of loneliness and alienation in the following extract:

It has happened to me like that once. I have been alone while I was with many girls and that is the way that you can be almost lonely. But we were never lonely and never afraid when we were together. I knew that the night is not the same as the day: that all things are different, that the things of the night cannot be explained in the day, because they do not exist, and the night can be a dreadful time for lonely people once their loneliness has started. But with Catherine there was almost

no difference in the night except that it was an even better time. If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. (216)

Henry has the dreadful experience of war where he sees the decay of purity from the world, and he himself feels lonely most of the time. It is not only Henry who is depressed by war. But Rinaldi and the priest have also showed the signs of weariness of war. Catherine makes a futile distinction between the army and the Italian army and discloses her anti-patriotic engagement as “It’s not deserting from the army. It’s only the Italian army” (218). We note Henry’s complete disillusionment with the war even before the climax of the horror of war in Caporetto. He discusses the situation of war with his friends, which is supported by current humanitarian sympathy but not with patriotic feeling. In any case, he is a non-combatant and he has a feeling that he is not in danger, war is depicted as a mockery; “well, I knew I would not be killed. Not in this war. It did not have anything to do with me. It seemed no more dangerous to me myself than war in the movies” (38). This shows his participation in the war as a most casual affair.

Henry and Catherine reject society and reject war time responsibility. These two beings have attempted for a separate peace what is precarious and temporary which would end their relationship with the world. Caporetto retreat is anti-patriotic and a trail to reject society getting them into loneliness. However, in the sense of Sartrean philosophy, this action is related to their free choice. They choose to desert the morality in order to fulfill their desire to exist keeping themselves away from the hell of war. In the doctrine *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, war involvement is analyzed in this way, “I would always get out of it by suicide or by desertion: these are ultimate possible” (54). In the urge of living in peace they selected the desertion

and are involved in justifiable activity from Sartrean perspective. His philosophy further assures Sartre, who in *Being and Nothingness* mentions “alienation as one of the true feelings of existence” (272), what Henry follows. Henry’s desertion as: “I am responsible for my very desire of feeling responsible for my very desire of fleeing responsibilities. To make myself passive in the world to refuse to act upon things and upon others is still to choose myself, and suicide is one mode among others of being-in-the-world” (57).

As the doctrine of Sartre “First of all, man exist, turns up appears on the scene, and, only afterwards defines himself” (15). Henry and Catherine also stand on Sartrean posture. They have appeared on the actions that give them the full weight of existence. Before their meeting, Henry has divided his time between work, drink and whoring, but he has never made a clear-cut choice or commitment in his life. Catherine, on the other hand has actually declined such a choice when she had the opportunity of making it with her unrealized love affair that will give them full weight. It is only after Henry is wounded and lies under Catherine’s care in hospital that the choice is made and the action undertaken.

The choice of Henry and Catherine leads them to love and both more orient to the direction of destruction though differently. Their choice make them commit themselves and they move into their happiness when Catherine is pregnant but the happiness is without significant as it leads to death and destruction.

Henry has not meditated and achieved rewards of solace: his entire commitment is to the love affair with Catherine. The choice of loving or hating each other is on their own selection. Hence, Henry and Catherine love each other, they choose each other and the choice is their freedom in Sartrean philosophy “their goal is freedom” (48). They take a risk of this action- love making but unfortunately it

couldn't last for long. Catherine leads the life of unconventionalist contrasting traditional and moral values. She dismisses any need of formal marriage ceremony. She often makes physical relation with Henry. Catherine never hesitates accepting the irrationality in her love affairs. "This is a rotten game we play, isn't it?" (32) She surrenders herself to Henry a: "I want what you want. There isn't any me anymore. Just what you want" (103). While Henry is staying in Milan Hospital for his treatment, Catherine anyhow manages night duties and has illegal relation with him. She does not care about her religion, culture or the morality. This is her choice to live in her own way. Her choice to lead a life of unconventionality united her with Henry. Henry and Catherine escape into their love affair forgetting their responsibilities. Their freedom let them to choose to live as they want. Catherine's affair without marriage is her choice and ethical morality is not regarded necessary and this stand can be interpreted on existential ground. Politics hardly enters in the mind of Henry and Catherine. Henry's choice of joining the army is only because of his interest. Henry's rootlessness and aimlessness resembles the 20th century world. Henry's non-attachment with his family is his rejection of the family relationship. Though, he has been involved in the Italian front, he has neither love for Italy nor has hatred for Austrian. Henry wants to occupy his mind in drink, sports and love to escape from the terrible war. Henry's rejection from family and church prompts his existential urge for loneliness.

Henry's love for Catherine is irrational. They are foreigners living in Italy but also they have to stay under the Italian discipline and law. They repudiate the moral standards. They perform immoral behaviours in the hospital:

'Hello', I said. When I saw her I was in love with her. Everything turned over inside me. She looked towards the door, saw there was no

one, then she sat on the side of the bed and leaned over and kissed me.

I pulled her down and kissed her and felt her heart beating. (84)

Their repudiation is caused by the disillusionment. Their wilderness in the hospital signifies the decay and destruction of cultural and moral values in modern life. They take love as a game, a means to forget the despair and frustration caused by the cruelest World War I. Henry's anti-intellectual mood seen in the novel is declared by himself as "I was not made to think. I was made to eat. My God! Yes. Eat and drink and sleep with Catherine" (204). Henry and Catherine, patient and nurse forget their position and get involved in immoral and illegal physical relationship. They are shameless characters, "we'll have to be awfully careful. That was just madness we can't do that. We can at night. We'll have to be awfully careful. You'll have to be careful in front of other people" (85). Without marriage to have relation is immoral. Their relation is irrational under the law of Italian government.

I worried in the night about someone coming up but Catherine said they were all sleep. Once in the night we went to sleep and when I woke she was not there but I heard her coming along the hall and the door opened and she came back to the bed and said it was alright she had been down-stairs and they were all sleep. (92)

This suggests that Henry and Catherine involve in lustful and immoral relation.

Catherine has loses her identity as a nurse. She almost prefers to do the night duties without taking rest. This is because she wants to enjoy her life with Henry.

Likewise, Henry is the sleepless man haunted by 'nada'. He is the sleepless man –the man obsessed by the death, by the meaningless of the world, by nothingness, by 'nada'. He is despaired. His despair makes him sleepless. This despair is caused by perilous World War I. Henry, the man haunted by nada knows that "the

night can be a dreadful time for lonely people once their loneliness started” (Warren 250). Henry can't avoid his 'nihilism', "I sat in the high seat on the Fiat and thought about nothing" (34).

Catherine Barkley is admitted in the hospital for her delivery. Her condition is not so good. Henry seems to be quite frustrated. He is despaired and thinking as:

Now Catherine would die. That was what you did. You died. You did know what it was about. You never had time to learn. They threw you on and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you. Or they caught you off gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you the syphilis like Rinaldi. But they killed you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around and they would kill you. (282)

Catherine bears dead child and still she is struggling in the hospital bed. Henry is hopeless and depressed at the condition of his beloved. Now, when his beloved is going to die, his suppressive feelings of God comes out. He is hopeless. He remembers God. He says;

Please, please, please, dear God, don't let her die. Dear God, don't let her die. God please make her not die. I'll do anything you say if you don't let her die. You took the baby but don't let her die- that was all right but don't let her die. Please, please, dear God, don't let her die. (285)

Somehow, Henry is sure about her death. He requests God not to take her life. He is ready to do whatever for God if he doesn't let her die. He is helpless and hopeless. Catherine is pale and grey. She murmurs at last, "Don't worry, darling", Catherine said. "I'm not a bit afraid. It's just a dirty trick" (286). Catherine finally accepts the death which leaves no one ultimately in this world. Henry's love and devotion

remains powerless at the end when Catherine dies after giving birth to a dead child. Henry feels helpless, nothing against the sudden, incomprehensible raids of chance of death. For Henry and Catherine, there is no community, no organized activity for dedication of social and political course. Thus, they appear in the stage purely as existential figures. Henry is lonely again after the death of Catherine. Henry is lonely at the beginning, lonely against the world when with Catherine and lonely at the end after Catherine's death. Henry does not die but selects his lonely existence in the world after Catherine's demise. He exists in the state of anguish. "It was like saying goodbye to a statue. After awhile I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain" (287). The perpetuation of being alone pushes Henry into the world of despair.

The symbolic alienation of the Caporetto desertion is not healed by the intensity of Catherine's love and flight. With her death Frederic Henry, the new Hemingway Everyman, is left in a strange land, alone and without direction.

In this way, Hemingway establishes a world at war in *A Farewell to Arms*. The world is chaotic, hostile and terrific. They can not connect themselves with society. People are frustrated. They are despaired. They are physically destroyed and spiritually barren. The faith upon the cultural, religious and social values has been collapsed. So, they break the social and cultural tie rejecting the traditionally accepted religious and moral values. Their repudiation lies on the action of irrational love and sexual intercourse in hospital, killing people without any reason, taunting the priest, remaining indifferent to their family and even to the child of their own and cohabitation without marriage. They are disillusioned by the perilous World War I.

Chapter 4

Conclusion: Disillusionment Leads to Alienation

In *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway depicts the horror of the First World War. People are disillusioned and despaired by the perilous World War I. They are physically and spiritually weak. Their world is chaotic and barren. There is no God to watch, to dictate rules upon them. They are living meaningless life. Characters find the society hostile and indifferent to them. They alienate themselves from the society breaking the cultural and moral ties as they are disillusioned with the war render society.

Hemingway is a prominent interpreter of disillusionment of modern people after the First World War. He has closely observed the war time society, while he was working as an ambulance driver in Italian front. Hemingway, as a representative of a 'lost generation' incorporates almost all the 20th century modern philosophical theories, including the philosophy of existentialism in his novels. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway carefully expresses his own experiences through the protagonist Frederic Henry. Hence, Hemingway's notion can be examined through his choice and its consequences.

Frederic Henry, in *A Farewell to Arms*, joins the Italian army and works as an ambulance driver on his own choice. There he finds his job meaningless and futile. He finds lives in the battle field insecure, unsafe even in the ambulance driving. He himself is badly wounded in his leg by an Austrian mortar shell while transporting the wounded soldiers. So, Henry is disillusioned with the war. He joins the army to get victory in the war but now victory, courage and heroism become abstract and useless word for him. He is disillusioned and despaired with the state and system of the state

too. He finds peace nowhere else in his society. The society is hostile and indifferent for him. So, he makes a choice of deserting the army.

Characters are not only disillusioned by the war, but the nature also is unfavorable to them. Henry cannot escape from the enemy because his car is stocked into the mud. The rain obstructs Henry and Catherine while they go to Switzerland. The rain in the winter brings cholera in the army and thousands of soldiers die of it. The rain is destructive force rather than regenerative one, the spring season which is considered as a season of regeneration and resurrection brings the death of Catherine and her child. Catherine dies after giving birth to a dead child. Henry is half-paralyzed and decayed.

Henry, in *A Farewell to Arms* stands as a rebel and protestor of the mechanized world like Nietzsche who challenged the contemporary religious world by declaring that the God is Dead. Henry never fears his actions and their consequences as his beloved Catherine does. Hemingway permits them to enjoy their freedom opposing the traditional ethics of morality and responsibility.

Hemingway has raised some confusion in *A Farewell to Arms*, as he does not offer a religious solution. It is nevertheless conditioned by the religious problem in the novel. Henry appears in dilemma of faith and unfaith which perplexes the readers. The "inner" objective of religious confusions maintains his atheistic domination which is based on Sartrean philosophy of existentialism.

Hemingway has depicted alienation as a means of revolt in *A Farewell to Arms*. Henry alienates himself from his society. He rejects his family and prefers to live isolated. He deserts the Italian army and flees away with Catherine and he remains alone after Catherine's fatal demise. His loneliness represents Heidegger's doctrine of alienation and loneliness. Heidegger finds his life meaningless and gets no

way to human happiness as Hemingway's protagonist Frederic Henry. In the same way, Henry and Catherine consider love as their religion.

Death is the inevitable theme in Hemingway's novels. For him, 'death' is the ultimate end of life. As life is inevitable, death is also necessary. Hemingway is of the opinion that all the stories end in death. So, in *A Farewell to Arms* Catherine dies at the end of the story. What count for Hemingway is action rather than anxious thought of it. He wants his characters to face death with courage. So does Henry in the novel *A Farewell to Arms*. Despite the attempt of the doctors Catherine dies. Hemingway wants to derive home message that no one is secure from the jaws of death and heartless universe. This is what the bereaved hero acknowledges at last. After Catherine's fatal demise in childbirth in the hospital, Henry goes to his hotel room in the rain.

Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley alienate themselves from their society in order to live happy life. They desert their professions. Their choice leads them to run away from their family and their country. They want to live peaceful life being free from all responsibilities. But all goes in vain. Catherine dies and Henry becomes alone forever. His alienation leads him nowhere.

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