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## **The Comparative Study of Self-Knowledge in Soren Kierkegaard and Baba Afdal Kashani**

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### **Abstract**

Soren Kierkegaard and Baba Afdal Kashani are two philosophers having axial philosophical arguments on self-knowledge. Kierkegaard's philosophy is learnt through its contrast with Hegel's, as he believes that the truth is subjective. He severely denies learning through objectivity and sees the only path to faith and reaching self-consciousness to be subjectivity in the thinking process, which leads to inwardness. Stages of self-consciousness, after the ecstatic stage, in Kierkegaard' opinion, include stages of rational ethics, religious ethics and faith. Self's perfection in his judgment is attained through trusting in God. In the faith stage, however, an individual reaches beyond "self". The definition of anxiety, despair and sin in his opinion, are causes which lead to a leap to the subsequent or the former stage in the self-consciousness stages.

Baba Afdal Kashani, however, knows the best way to reaching self-consciousness to be through philosophy. In reality, his practice can be explained with the composition of philosophy, mysticism, intellect and deed. He sees a rather important role for intellect and thinks highly of rational thinking, with the difference that the existence of intellect is the knowledge and understanding of self, and objectivity is only accredited when it is reached through subjectivity. This is because the human being consists of all beings and the path towards objectivity passes through self-consciousness. Baba Afdal too, perceives the humans' self-consciousness to fall in three levels of praiseworthy deficient, blameworthy deficient and the utmost level.

Keywords:

Subjectivity, objectivity, self-consciousness, self-knowledge, Kierkegaard, Baba Afdal.

## 1. Preface

One of the most important and practical types of awareness, in the eyes of most clerics, philosophers and mystics is self-consciousness, thus one of the two main mottoes of Socrates- the well renowned Greek teacher and philosopher- being "know yourself". Despite the importance of this argument, however, there exist different views toward the definition of soul or self and the approach to achieving self-consciousness or self-awareness. Many of the western and eastern philosophers have also- against Socrates' belief who regarded self-consciousness to be the goal of philosophy- discarded this matter and self-awareness has never been their axial concern. For this reason, in this paper, the identity of knowledge of self-consciousness (the essence of cognitive self-consciousness) is studied from the point of view of two philosophers from the east and the west, whose main concern has been the idea of self-consciousness

Although, at first glance, without a doubt, these two philosophers belong to two different philosophical categories, selecting them for the purpose of this study was for the following reasons:

- Self consciousness is an axial topic in both of their views. Kierkegaard is mainly known as the father of existentialism and his main concern was the importance of self to the point that existence in his view is the same as self. Baba Afdal, too, in all his books and literature, knows his goal to be stating the importance of self-consciousness for the prosperity of humanity and he categorizes human beings depending on their level of self-consciousness. (Nasr, 1983)

- Both are theologians. Baba Afdal is an Islamic scholar and Kierkegaard is a Christian, and in their views and theories, they both use divine and holy books and scriptures and are influenced by their own religious views.

- Both of them have apparently experienced self-consciousness. In Kierkegaard's biography, it is apparent that he has undergone difficult experiences that have helped him in documenting and achieving his views on self-consciousness. Baba Afdal has also been regarded as a thinker and an intellectual in his time, and has had many tutees; much evidence of his different experiences have also been reflected in his works.

- Both of them are somewhat considered literate and poets. Kierkegaard has accomplished works and research in the field of literature. Baba Afdal has written a vast collection of quatrains, and uses his poems in a lot of his publications. Therefore, their language is, to some extent, similar to each other.

- To date, no comparative study has been conducted between Baba Afdal and Kierkegaard.

## 2. Background Work

In recent decades, research over self-consciousness has increased. Studies have been conducted in the field of self-consciousness and its relationship with philosophy. (Ghorbani, Ghara Maleki & Watson, 2005) In psychology, too, investigations have been carried out about self knowledge. (Ghorbani, Watson, 2006)

Moreover, in the field of self knowledge, papers have been published in Kierkegaard's view (Amy, 2000) and the area of the comparison between Kierkegaard's stance and the eastern philosophers, specially mysticism and sophism too, have been studied. (Grøn, 2004), (Bektovic, 1999)

However, regarding Baba Afdal Kashani, most of the topics have been about his biography and historical issues and very little concerning his philosophy. (Zaryab, 1990), (Gharaie)

William Chittick, in a book titled "the heart of Islamic philosophy, the quest for self knowledge in Afdal al din Kashani", after introducing and looking into the views of Baba Afdal, has engaged in translating a considerable part of his bibliography to English. But no work has been done in the area of self-consciousness from his point of view. In the field of comparative studies, too, in an article, feminism in Plato's (270) and Baba Afdal's (1213) view have been examined. (Cooper, 2007)

At the international conference on Mulla Sadra in 1999, William Chittick presented an article titled "The Practice of Philosophy in Baba Afdal and Mulla Sadra"; he also gave a lecture on "everlasting of soul in Baba Afdal" in 2003. Also in the books that were published about poets, Baba Afdal was named as a sophist poet. However, regarding the subject of self-consciousness, little work has been done on Baba Afdal's point of view (Pourjavadi, Wilson, 1987 )

To date, no work has been done on the comparative study of self-knowledge from Kierkegaard and Baba Afdal's views. This research pays attention to this area for the first time.

Noticing the little and limited research that was done on Baba Afdal Kashani, viewing self consciousness as he perceives, a greater understanding of this philosopher can be helpful. Moreover, since the comparative study of Baba Afdal and Kierkegaard is taking place for the first time, its results are fruitful in other comparative researches and in deepening the understanding of self-consciousness.

The problems that were discussed here are as follows:

1. What is the meaning of "self" in self-consciousness as described by the two philosophers? And what do they mean by soul and spirit?

2. How does one reach self-consciousness in one's mind?

And through analyzing the answer and the methods of these two philosophers, we arrive at this problem so the relevance between the bases of epistemic, philosophical paradigm and self-consciousness theory is discovered.

First, as a descriptive approach to these two issues, the differences and similarities in the two philosophers' views are studied.

### **3. Specification**

#### **3.1. Study of the meaning of "self"**

##### **3.1.1. The reason behind the word "self":**

Baba Afdal, takes "self" and "soul" to be the same and knows "self", as essence and reality of a person and sees the word "self" the same as root. He knows root as that from which comes being's provision for everything below it, and that would be God. Therefore, reaching "self" -- i.e. God or complete self -- means reaching root and reality and essence, which in turn means reaching God.(Maraghi Kashani, 1958)

Kierkegaard in the definition of "self", identifies it with a relationship which relates itself to its own "self". (Kierkegaard, 1989) He boldly takes self and spirit to be the same but soul to be in need of body. In Kierkegaard's view, origin and source of self is in God and the relation that relates self to one's self is made by God, for this

relationship to remain, "self" (incomplete) is to be connected with a power that constructed the whole relationship.(Kierkegaard, 1989)

Therefore in both philosophers' view, for "self" (incomplete) to carry on being, needs to reach God and the accomplishment of self-consciousness (complete self) is connecting with God.

### **3.1.2. Self synthesis:**

Baba Afdal knows "self" to include body, anima and intelligence, and intelligence to be the third part which is not included in the body and the potency of body to be all intelligence's eternal radiance.(Maraghi Kashani, 1958) In Kierkegaard's view, "self" is the syntheses of finite and infinite, temporal and eternal, freedom and necessity, ideal and real, body and spirit.

From this point of view, these two intellects are incompatible with each other. Maybe its root can be traced to the fact that the foundation of Kierkegaard's philosophy is dialectic and in dialectic links, two sides are needed. But Baba Afdal does not share such basis and also in his philosophy, in the definition of "self", there's a need for a third person whose existence is eternal and is connected a divine source. Therefore, existence of intelligence provides answers for these needs, as intelligence is God's eternal radiance. It is a radiance that stands through His majesty's endurance!

### **3.1.3. The relation between body and spirit:**

In the end, Baba Afdal fuses the physical existence with the spiritual existence, through knowledge; flesh reaches the level of nature and from that to the level of self and intellect. And in this state of existence, covered bodies arise and join the spiritual bright. Baba Afdal knows the passing from physical levels, even from the solitary body and animalistic and humanistic, to be necessary for reaching the growing soul and animalistic soul and humanistic soul, and after that reaching the rank of intellect.

Therefore, in Baba Afdal's opinion, the path to reaching spiritual existence is through exceeding the physical existence and body and even in the way of self consciousness too, paying attention to body and developing it will cause it to reach intelligence and self consciousness. Therefore, since Baba Afdal is considered an Islamic

philosopher, he does not concern himself with sophism ways. And the finite side of human in the path of growth and self consciousness is deemed necessary. Although in his opinion, even lifeless things and plants and animals, too, knowing or unknowing, enter the path of self awareness but the physical aspect is also of importance for joining the spiritual side and for reaching self-consciousness.

Kierkegaard sees "self" as a synthesis, but the important point is that he, on the contrary to most religious people, does not find the body and the temporal and changeable side of humanity merely necessary for worldly aspects, rather he believes that to have a correct relationship with God, both temporal and eternal aspects in humans should be considered. Kierkegaard persistence on the multi-dimensional aspects of human is because the worldly element is ground for constant change and development and reaching self. And, indeed, it is the finite and mortal and possibility aspects of self that creates the basis for perpetual alterations or repetition in "self".

Therefore, Kierkegaard, contrary to the Christianity of the church finds attending to body and temporal aspects of humanity, necessary. Maybe this can be considered Luther's impact on him.

#### **3.1.4. To be one thing:**

Baba Afdal's method in attaining self-consciousness is also being one thing. Duality of body and soul in his view is only through attributes and the way to becoming one thing (or becoming a unified-self) is knowing, and knowledge, too, is recognizing the selfhood of self in reality and certainty and from this, one reaches resurrection which is a world of knowing.(Maraghi Kashani, 1958, p.305) On the theme of certainty, Baba Afdal writes: "certaintyWhat is known in certainty is one through essence."(Maraghi Kashani, 1958, pp. 238- 237) and certainty is a place where there is no conflict and that is the unified-self. And in his opinion, human is in anxiety when observing but himself and not being able to be one thing.

To be one thing or a unified-self is one of Kierkegaard's important recommendations to the point that he published a book with the name "Purity of Heart is To Be One Thing". He declares that to be one thing, man should travel from outside to the inside or from object to subject and the real good is also in "self" and therefore a self, free of

variance can be achieved and subsequent to this stage, one reaches the purity of heart. (Kierkegaard, 1956)

Therefore in the basis of being one thing and unified-self, both philosophers have similar views and researchers can utilize their thinking to better comprehend the unified-self and the paths to reaching it.

### **3.2. Process of Achieving Self-consciousness**

#### **3.2.1. Stages of Self-consciousness:**

Baba Afdal categorizes the levels of humans in self consciousness into the three levels of: praiseworthy deficient, unpraiseworthy deficient and the utmost level. Kierkegaard also in his theory groups stages and courses of life into 3 levels of ecstatic, ethical and faith. Although, the level of ecstatic in his view is without self but in his many writings he speaks of this stage because by passing this stage, self-consciousness and higher levels can be reached.(Kierkegaard, 1940)

Perhaps the three stages of Baba Afdal and Kierkegaard can somewhat be considered based on each other. In Kierkegaard's ecstatic level, the main reason for living is pleasure. In Baba Afdal's unpraiseworthy deficient, both animal potencies –the predatory and the beastly- give commands to the human potency too. Kierkegaard's ethical level includes ethical wisdom and religious ethics. In Baba Afdal's praiseworthy deficient, a group of them are under the influence of the practical intellect and the other group use intellect in the ethics of God's rule. In Kierkegaard's faith level, the only important thing is God's will and this is the utmost level of self-consciousness that self connects to God. In Baba Afdal's utmost level, one reaches the end of self-consciousness that is the unification of the intellecter, the intelligible, and intellect and self reaches God's root.

Perhaps the reason for such similarities and comparability of the self knowledge stages from the point of view of these two philosophers is their sheer and deep concern towards self-consciousness, and since both have attempted to pass these stages, they have managed to find shared experiences and stages in this path. Also their references are their holy books and Christianity and Islam are both Ibrahmic religions and therefore have many similarities.

### **3.2.2. The Method of reaching Self-consciousness:**

As previously discussed, one general similarity between the views of Baba Afdal and Kierkegaard exists and that is the blunt view of both toward knowing "self". In fact in both their views, "self" is pertained to knowing. But the difference between these two great philosophers is in the way of knowing in the process of self-consciousness.

From the view of Baba Afdal, intellectual analysis and philosophy are grounds and basis for showing "self" to ourselves. In fact, in his opinion, with the comprehension of universals one can reach disengagement. He clarifies that achieving self-consciousness becomes correct and capable through two things, namely struggle and disengagement.

Struggle is that [the seeker] persevere in affliction so that he may acquire fixity, and through fixity he can find that there is an eternal existence. But in disengagement, he separates things one by one from himself, and will grasp what remains are his own reality and essence, which does not endure by another but by him.

Therefore, Baba Afdal finds two paths of knowledge and practice as functional in reaching self-consciousness and his way is a mixture of practical and theoretical ways. He also believes that all the objects and knowledge and awareness from it can be found in self, and in this regard, finding things in self means awareness from them and since the minor world (self) is equal to the great world, by having objective knowledge of self, in a subjective way we have reached self-consciousness and in this respect, his manner can be known as "objective thinking inside self" or can be known as a mixture of objective and subjective comprehension.

However, Kierkegaard defies the objective ways and considers passion and subjective and inwardness to be the means through which self-consciousness can be reached. In fact, maybe the subjective way of Kierkegaard could not also be considered to be achieved from subjective thinking, rather it should be considered in the order of feeling and becoming. Therefore, the only way possible for reaching self-consciousness is the subjective and intuitive way and paying

attention to reasoning and object and the objective understanding only works to separate one from self and faith.

Kierkegaard knows self reflection to be the first step of self-consciousness. He not only does not see the intellectual reasoning as resultant to self-consciousness, but sees engaging in them as a cause for furthering from faith and self awareness. He persists on the two paths of recalling and repeating, for reaching the self-consciousness and truth. Recalling is of the type of Plato's recalling; it means that the path of returning to the truth is returning to the memories of that truth firmed within us. (Kierkegaard, 1989) The other way is repetition. That means that by perfecting the picture of "self" in one perpetual change, "self" constantly evolves to a new self, and this repetition should never stop.

One of the reasons that Kierkegaard utilizes such a method is to oppose the famous philosophers of his time, Hegel in particular. He defies paying attention to things in whole and only knows truth to be reachable through subjectivity. Also since the faith of Christianity has some paradoxes that are not explainable by intelligence and reasoning, he sincerely denies all basis of faith over reasoning and objective comprehension. But the acceptable religion of Baba Afdal is completely in phase with intelligence and reasoning.

### **3.2.3. Action and Reaching Self-knowledge:**

In general, the existential philosopher on the contrary to common tradition speaks of such a practical knowing in contrast to theoretical knowing. The basic feature of this knowing is action or contribution. We cannot know things only by observing it. For example, in Kierkegaard's opinion, when Abraham at the level of faith, after surrendering himself to will of God and putting himself in front of the sword of acting based on God's will (even this will is opposite from ethic), could bring his "self" close to the utmost manifestation of self-consciousness which means spirit. (Kierkegaard, 1985) He believed that the relation to truth without suffering is impossible. In fact in his opinion, only actions associated with pain, suffering and loneliness can bring us to knowing and self-knowledge. He explained that in any level of life's way, when man will have the consciousness about himself, he is on a huge suffering and loneliness.

Baba Afdal clarifies two ways for achieving self-consciousness; through struggle and disengagement. In struggle, the seeker perseveres in affliction so that he may acquire fixity and attain higher knowledge. Even in disengagement, man by separating things one by one from himself could reach to his real “self”.

Therefore, both of them believe in such a knowledge that is derived through action because their philosophical system is based on their personal experience in reaching self-knowledge. But Baba Afdal, in addition to this, supposes that intellectual and philosophical knowing has an important role in reaching self-consciousness.

#### **3.2.4. Anxiety and Irony:**

In Baba Afdal’s opinion, certainty is finding things in “self” and before it reaches self, it is anxious and muddled. This is called doubt (Maraghi Kashani, 1958, pp. 238- 237). And one is in anxiety when observing but him and when he knows his “self”, there is no anxiety and doubt and he is in position of certainty.

In this paper, three concepts in Kierkegaard’s theories –Anxiety, Despair, Sin- are known as irony or agents that is lead to leap in levels of self-consciousness. Kierkegaard supposes that anxiety results from freedom and free will, and the more you experience the state of anxiety, the more you receive the total dimensions of your freedom. But to immunize yourself of total anxiety that means madness, you must have a non-intellectual leap to faith realm. Therefore, man will be saved from mad and inward rupture by his inward connection to God. Also in his opinion, anxiety is useful because it can lead to deeper self-knowledge and a qualification leap for moving to new levels of self-knowledge.

Therefore both of them suppose anxiety as irony or agents that is lead to leap in levels of self-consciousness, but there are some differences. Kierkegaard knows anxiety in a direct relation with self-consciousness and says the more the self, the more the anxiety. And even one of the methods to know the psychology of self and to find the rate of human’s freedom and free will is anxiety. But Baba Afdal knows anxiety as knowledge about outside and other than self.

Maybe the reason for this difference is that Kierkegaard is a phenomenologist and psychology states are important to him, and he

named at least two of his books (Kierkegaard, 1989, 1980) as psychological analysis of self. But Baba Afdal thinks epitomical and philosophical to anxiety and certainty.

#### **4. Explanation**

##### **4.1. Background Knowledge of these two Philosophers**

Socrates believed that the final aim of philosophy is self-knowledge and “know yourself” was one of his two main mottoes. (Malekian, 2002, p.20) (Kwak, 2001) After him, Plato paid great attention to self-knowledge too. He believed that self’s source is in the past. Gradually, philosophers neglected self-knowledge’s importance in contrary to other philosophical, logical and natural subjects. Aristotle paid attention to humanism and his manifest “About Soul” has explored the subject of soul in detail.

Baba Afdal wrote during a period when several figures were bridging the gaps between philosophy and Sufism. Avicenna (d. 428/1037) had shown some of the directions this movement could take in a few of his works like “Hekayat haye Takhayoli”, “Al-Isharat Wa L-Tanbihat” and “Mabahes e Mashreghiye”. Ghazali had employed philosophical terminology to express concepts derived from Sufi training. (see, for example, Ghazali, *The Niche of lights*, translated by David Bachman (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1998)) And Sufi martyr, Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani (d. 525/1131) had shown a sophisticated mastery of philosophical theory. Among Baba Afdal’s contemporaries, Suhrawardi followed many of Avicenna’s leads and Ibn al-Arbi made full use of philosophical terminology in his theoretical mysticism. (Chittick, 2006, pp. 9-10) Baba Afdal employed the philosophical and logical terminology of Avicenna and for this reason we can call him “mashai”. Among the philosophers, he only notified Aristotle and Hermes by name, and translated some of their books. Given the nature of the works of the Greek authors that baba Afdal chose to translate into Persian, he may deserve the label “Hermtizing” given to him by Henry Corbin. (Corbin, 1960, p.13)

Descartes believed that we have the awareness of self without any medium and before experiencing the object. But Kant believed that inwardness experiences can only be possible through outside experiences. But in his transcendent philosophy in which self does not

have a time-wise identity, one is considered an individual for he is an ethical self-conscious free existence. But in Kant, the transcendent I is always the subject and never the object. In Hegel's philosophy, truth is absolute spirit and this spirit is searching for absolute self-consciousness.

Kierkegaard, who had background knowledge of philosophers such as Descartes, Kant, Hegel, etc., found that the problem of his age has not been solved with those philosophical theories and the human individual has been further forgotten. Therefore he denies all of this philosophical background, and even rises to fight thinking and reasoning and believes that subjective thought and inwardness is only of the category of intuition and becoming.

Of course Kierkegaard could not reach this level without being influenced by the thinkers before him, and one of the great formative influences on Kierkegaard was Martin Luther. (R. Jolivot, Introduction to Kierkegaard) There are many ideas which are common to them both, such as sin as the opposite of faith, and the idea of faith as the 'the leap into the absurd' and also for Luther, religion was not something dependent on external agents and intermediaries, but something altogether spiritual, personal, inward which the behavior first experiences personally as serenity of conscience. (Thomas, 1957, pp. 49-50) Also there was a 'mutual influence' between Kierkegaard and Schelling amongst the foremost in the revolt against Hegelianism. (Encyclopedia Britannica (14<sup>th</sup> Edition), vol 2, p.833) But the great influence was from John George Hamann (1730-1788). (Lowrie, 1938, p.164) For Hamann faith is something different from Reason and is best thought of as an immediate awareness like sight. (Pfleiderer, The Philosophy of Religion, p.197) Thus philosophy becomes a strange sort of pedagogues to lead us to positive faith. (Thomas, 1957, p. 55) Yet another thinker must be mentioned as a powerful influence on Kierkegaard – he is Lessing and Kierkegaard explained his admiration of Lessing in the PostScript. (Thomas, 1957, p.57)

Anyway Kierkegaard 'shifted the balance from the object to subject, from the objective world of idea to the person who has those ideas. It does not meet Kierkegaard's case to say that it all began with Descartes and was carried further by Kant. Since for both Kant and Descartes the self, the subject, is merely an abstract and empty dynamic

centre, and all the importance is given to the periphery of the objective system. To Kierkegaard the subject is the concrete and entire person.' (Haecker, 1937, p.24)

Therefore, in explanation according to this antecedent, Kierkegaard denied and negated philosophy, he views inwardness and direct knowledge as the only way to reach real knowledge and reality.

In contrast, Baba Afdal did not fight or deny the opinion of his prior philosophers; on the contrary, he, by adjusting these ideas, conducted the Aristotle philosophy to self-knowledge and further more knew philosophy as the way to reach total existence and self-knowledge. Although he has not explained philosophy as the only method, he sees the role of thought and reason irreplaceable (Maraghi Kashani, 1958, p.241) and knows the accomplishment of all things to be attaining the intellect. (Maraghi Kashani, 1958, p.607)

#### **4.2. Their Procedure for Self-Knowledge:**

##### **4.2.1. Difference with Common Thinking Tradition:**

Both of them had a distinct method compared to their contemporary common thinking tradition. Baba Afdal's philosophy from beginning to end had been based on self-knowledge and this is the reason for his difference, whereas Kierkegaard was renowned for opposing his contemporary thinking tradition, thus being known as the pioneer of the existentialism movement. The movement that was considered a protest to its previous philosophical and mental systems and these protests were often regarding extremist tendency to intellectualism, industry and technology, politics and common religion organizations which have deprived the freedom of thought and action from human and have forced him to go with the stream and coordinate with society. So Kierkegaard with a different definition of knowledge and truth, rose to fight with these systems.

##### **4.2.2. Religion-Independent Viewpoint:**

The principles and theories, which have been presented by Baba Afdal, are conformed to Islam and Quran in his view. For example, in self-knowledge and finding object in subjective knowledge, he cited examples from Quran, but generally, when he had introduced the way to reach to self-knowledge in detail; his ideas were on the basis of his

personal and the prior philosophers' ideas. Therefore, he has a religion-independent viewpoint.

Kierkegaard is a philosopher – although, maybe he, himself, does not accept this- so apart from his religious beliefs and belongings, he attends to a philosophical thinking that sees religion from an outside point of view. As a matter of fact, it is his personal and philosophical thoughts that have given direction to his religious reflections and with his philosophical and personal reflections; he comes to a theory that might not have much accordance with Christian teachings. Although he constantly insists that the way he proposes is desired by religion as well.

#### **4.2.3. Addressee's Of Remarks:**

Baba Afdal emphasized that his words are not addressed to the complete human who has been given the felicity of the final goal nor is it addressed to who does not have the wont and worthiness to become complete. Rather, his talk is with the folk of the middle level. (Maraghi Kashani, *Madarej al-Kamal*, 1958, p.6)

Kierkegaard did not select the way of intellectual reasoning, because the way could not help the aesthetic people and those who do not have the wont to become complete. Rather the analysis of these psychological states can lead them to a kind of self-reflection and bring them to self-consciousness and other stages of life's way. Therefore, Kierkegaard's addressees are greater than Baba Afdal because willing and intention to reach perfection is the first condition for Baba Afdal's addressees. Because, the philosophical way and intellectual reasoning cannot help one who has no will to reach perfection like an ecstatic being.

#### **4.2.4. Intellect and Intellectual Reasoning:**

Baba Afdal assumes an important role for intellect and deems rational thinking wise as well, with the difference that the self's awareness, knowing and finding are the intellect's existence and even the other existents are the things found by the intellect. (Maraghi Kashani, *Madarej al-Kamal*, 1958, p.22) Of course he distinguishes between different people's intellect in terms of quantity, but conceives that the intellect is a radiance that stands through its Endurance-giver \_majesty is his majesty! (Maraghi Kashani, *Madarej al-Kamal*, 1958,

p.23). He believes in the genuineness of intellect and wisdom; deems intellect the sole path to salvation; and seeks the utmost perfection in the unification of intellect, intellector and intelligible. In his opinion the merit of the rational reasoning is to know self, which is a feature of intellecting soul, for, the "self" cannot be known except by the "self". Therefore, in his view, if one wishes to achieve, then proofs and rational reasoning are ways to do so (though other ways are not denied either), whereas they are not functional for those who don't wish to achieve. On the other hand, Baba Afdal talks about the proof of the soul since he regards the attempt to prove as a feature of intellecting soul, i.e., it's the soul that attempts to prove the soul and this very attempt is a proof of intellecting soul (Maraghi Kashani, *Madarej al-Kamal*, 1958, pp.23-24). Thus in some cases, he finds rationalism and proof to be misleading.

Also in Baba Afdal's view, philosophy is the most direct means of achieving the true Humanity. When people meditate on the philosophy truths, they will be drawn to look into themselves and come to understand that they already possess everything that they seek (Chittick, 2006, pp.10-11) because when generals become mooted in philosophy, man comes to disengagement and from this way will achieve self-consciousness.

Kierkegaard was seriously objecting attempts to rationalize the sense of religiousness and being Christian, and also the idea that every believer must be supported by a reason.(Kierkegaard, 1957) In his opinion, the religious belief is not only unachievable by intellect and the wisdom is unable to perceive it, but it's essentially nonintellectual. He is basically in disagreement with any kind of intellectual thinking, not just which, but also any type of thinking that is based on the separation of object from the subject. (Kierkegaard, 1989, p.20) But this opinion of Kierkegaard goes back to his personal reflection in existential philosophy that has objected to any objective, intellectual and scientific knowledge because these knowledge that have been prescribed for all, are unacceptable for conducting the human beings and leading them to the truth.

Thus this is one of the situations that these two thinkers clearly disagree on.

#### **4.2.5. Subjectivity is Truth:**

Baba Afdal supposes when knowledge is acceptable that the person have found it in his “self”. Therefore the credibility of knowledge can be based on its belonging to the subject. So surely this idea can be believed to be equal with “Subjectivity is Truth”. Also he believed that if we couldn’t find something inside, that thing doesn’t exist, because in his view, self comprises all types of existence and certainty is finding things in “self”.

Subjectivity is an important and basic concept in Kierkegaard’s philosophy. (Hacker, 1997) He thinks that we shouldn’t find truth outside the “self”. (Kierkegaard, 1989, p.20) because only subjectivity is truth.

Therefore both are the same in this idea although the way of reaching subjectivity in them is different. But we might be able to know them as relativist. One of the results of this interpretation of truth is individualism, meaning that any value is dependent on the individual. Of course, Kierkegaard, authorizes man in selecting his way of life, as opposed to individual relativism. For example, when man selects the ethical way, he has accepted that there is one ethical rule that all must obey. So the only difference between Kierkegaard and absolutists is that there is no obligation to select the ethical way, and man is free to choose the way of faith or even the ecstatic way.

### **4.3. Basics of Knowledge**

#### **4.3.1. The Level Worthy of Being Referred to as Existence:**

Considering that Baba Afdal is Avicennist in his philosophical basis, in his view “self” could be implied to any soul possessing existent (meaning existents which at least have movement and growth, whether the vegetal, animal or the human soul) (Maraghi Kashani, Rahe Anjam-name, 1958, p.65). Of course, Baba Afdal believed in a level of existence for things. The lowest level in existence is potential being, it is the existence of material things in the matter, such as the existence of the tree in the seed (Maraghi Kashani, 1958, p.58) and elsewhere, he calls it possibility, whose existence has been concealed (Maraghi Kashani, 1958, p.21) However, in cases having neither the life of movement nor the life of sensation, “self” is not implied.

Kierkegaard did not apply self or existence for a man remaining in immediacy until he had the power of reflection for change. Don Juan represents pre-reflective life in its temporal atomism and consequent unceasing change. (Connell, 1985, p.109) When man reflects inside and goes to the irony level, the first level of self existence can be implied to him because after this he could reach self –consciousness.

But Baba Afdal adds an independent and very important theory to the discussion of self-knowledge: he believes that self includes all types of existence and because of that, applies a type of existence for lifeless things, since “self” even includes them.

Kierkegaard, however, did not believe in this idea and he knows self as a relation which relates itself to God, because of which he did not imply self to infant and immediate aesthete.

#### **4.3.2. Object of Knowledge:**

The apprehension of many philosophers prior to Baba Afdal except Socrates and Plato, was not the knowledge “self”. The object of knowledge for Aristotle was the knowledge of “soul” and human. Whereas for Baba Afdal, it was that of “self”. And the utmost of self-knowledge is unification of intellect, intellector and intelligible. Therefore, both the subject and object of knowledge, along with the intellect, all become “self”. For Baba Afdal, knowing is being, truly to know is truly to be, and truly to be is to be forever. (Chittick, 2006, p. 44)

In Sartre’s opinion, in “cogito ergo sum”, one knows himself in the presence of another, because in cogito the existence of others is discovered therefore he finds himself between all minds. Also in Kant, the transcendent I, is always a subject and never an object of knowledge. But in Kierkegaard, the subject and the object of knowledge are “self”.

#### **4.3.3. Existence of Outside World:**

Although both Baba Afdal and Kierkegaard believed that subjectivity is truth, but they believed in existence of the outside too. But Baba Afdal supposes that the object and the whole world can be found in subject and “self”, because human is a total existence. So their

belief in subjectivity wouldn't refer them to denying the object like Idealists.

#### **4.3.4. Free Will and Intention:**

Baba Afdal at the beginning of all his advices and letters encourages men to know themselves and believes that his addressees are not those who have not decided to reach perfection. So man's decision is an important point that is based on his intention and will, and even the way to reach it, is perfectly free. Of course in Islam, it has been emphasized that man has free will to select his life's way and Baba Afdal was not a Fatalistic, so he considers man's free will as an acceptable notion in life's road.

Kierkegaard also believed in man's free will. Of course, sometimes he knows faith as a given one. Leap in his idea is based on will and leap means a decision \_a free personal decision\_ because Christianity is a selection. But then he continues that God will give the blessing of this selection.

### **5. Summary**

#### **5.1. The Positions of Similarity**

- Both of them have an important role in self-consciousness movement.
- Their philosophical method differed from their contemporary common mental tradition.
- Their philosophies are centered and focused on self-consciousness
- The object of knowledge in both of them is "self".
- Both believe that the truth is subjectivity.
- Both believe that there is connection between body and spirit in self-consciousness road.
- Both of them have believed in existence of outward too.
- Both believe that for "self" (incomplete) to carry on being, it needs to reach God, and the utmost level of self-consciousness (complete self) is connecting with God.
- The stages of life's way in Kierkegaard theory are ecstatic, ethical and faith levels. The levels of human in self-

consciousness from Baba Afdal's view are three levels of praiseworthy deficient, unpraiseworthy deficient and the utmost level. These two theories have some similarities.

- Both believe that freedom and free will has an important role in reaching to self-consciousness.
- Both believe that the way to reach unified self and to be one thing is return to self.

## **5.2. The Positions of Opposite**

- Baba Afdal considers soul to be the same as soul but Kierkegaard knows self and spirit the same and soul to be in need of body.
- Baba Afdal knows "self" to include body, anima intelligence and intelligence to be the third part, which is not included in the in body. However, in Kierkegaard's view, "self" is the dialectic syntheses of finite and infinite, temporal and eternal, freedom and necessity, ideal and real, body and spirit.
- Baba Afdal knows anxiety as knowledge about outside and other than self. But Kierkegaard knows anxiety in a positive relation with self-consciousness and says the more the self, the more the anxiety.
- In the points that they differ from their contemporary common mental tradition, they oppose one another. Kierkegaard defies and denies that mental tradition, but Baba Afdal, while preserving the body of intellectualism and philosophical thinking, reforms the content of it in the direction of self-knowledge goal.
- In using philosophical method for reaching self-consciousness, they are in opposite positions. Kierkegaard defies objective thinking and reasoning but Baba Afdal supposes that philosophy is the best way for reaching self-consciousness.
- In the connection between body and spirit, they have some anisotropy in their thinking. Kierkegaard believed that for a true relation to God, both the temporal and eternal aspects of human must be noticed. But Baba Afdal fuses the bodily existence with

the spiritual existence, which is through knowledge; flesh reaches the level of nature and from that to the level of self and intellect. And in this state of existence, covered bodies arise and join the spiritual bright.

## **6. Conclusion**

We can conclude two basic points from this paper. In fact, in comparing their views on self-consciousness, there is a common shared point in their views and an incident of disagreement.

1- They share in subjectivity looking to knowledge category. So, firstly, their philosophies are centered and focused on self-consciousness and the object of knowledge, in their view, is the "self". Secondly, both believe that the truth is subjectivity; therefore the self-consciousness is the true form of knowledge. Since their goal is to reach this truth, they both believe that, in order to achieve self-consciousness, people should follow a set of stages.

2- Despite these fundamental common views, the two philosophers disagree in how to achieve self-consciousness. Kierkegaard's approach to self-consciousness is based on feeling and intuition, and he believes that using intellectual reasoning not only won't reach person, but it is an obstacle through the road of self-consciousness; even more, he believes that they are actually barriers to achieve self-consciousness. In fact, in Kierkegaard's view, self-consciousness is to actively play in the events not just to observe; so it belongs to the category of practical intellect. So in a sense, his definition of subjectivity is not even subjective thought, rather is of the type of emotions and becoming, based on intuition and direct knowledge.

In contrast, while Baba Afdal emphasizes subjectivity, he finds the most direct means to reach the real self to be intellect, intellectual reasoning and even philosophy. So, he, in fact, accepts the objectivity way, provided that we discover the external world in ourselves and precede the objective travel in our internal world. In his opinion, understanding, knowledge and awareness of anything is nothing but finding it inside the "self", because he believes that everything that exists is in man's "self" and the human is the all-encompassing being of all existence universes. So the perfect existence can be found in the

"self". Thus we see that Baba Afdal's centre for human "self" is wisdom such that his ultimate self-consciousness is the unification of the intellect or, the intelligible, and intellect. Of course, he also emphasizes on the practical wisdom and the knowledge obtained in practice as a result of attempts and patience in disasters. Meanwhile, noticing universals and reaching disengagement through theoretical wisdom are also necessary, in Baba Afdal's view, toward achieving self-consciousness.

Thus the difference between the two philosophers lies in the approaches they introduce to reach self-consciousness.

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