



Amitrakshar International Journal

of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research (AIJITR)

(A Social Science, Science and Indian Knowledge Systems Perspective)

Open-Access, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Bi-Monthly, International E-Journal

The Correspondence between Self and Death: Philosophical Contemplations of Jiddu Krishnamurti and Martine Heidegger

Ms. Ayanika Chatterjee¹

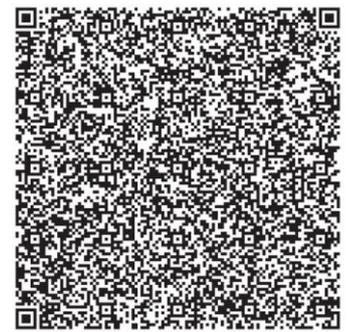
Abstract

Twentieth century philosophical trend has been designated by the diverse yet multifarious philosophical issues. Among such issues the concepts of self and death have long been central to philosophical inquiry. This article will attempt to analyse the concept of Death of two philosophers of twentieth century philosophical trend: J. Krishnamurti and Martine Heidegger. First, this article will try to revisit some major tenets of self and death as illustrated in the literatures of J. Krishnamurti. Second, how the notion of self as Being (with special reference to Dasein) and death have been evolved in the philosophy of Martine Heidegger and third, it will be shown that how their concepts of death get reconciliated with the philosophical thoughts surrounded self. They do possess some similarities and dissimilarities in shaping the said concepts. This article will try to search those harmonies and dissonances and their novelty in depicting the connections between self and death simultaneously.

Keywords: Self; Being; Authenticity; Death, Freedom

In the history of philosophy, the questions regarding self and death have been salient in nature. The philosophical inquiry of these concepts has undergone many shifts in the period of twentieth century. There are some philosophers of twentieth century, in both the east and west, who are often been discussed but researches which combine their modes of philosophising problems seem outcasted in the popular parlance. In case of this writing, two philosophers who have belong to the same era of philosophy i.e. in twentieth century been brought together and plausibly demonstrated the relevance between their thoughts. In the context of these notions like self and death this article will try present a comparative account which enclose two eminent philosophers of this period: J. Krishnamurti and Martine Heidegger. Though in Heidegger's philosophical research the term "Being/being" is more widely used than self, but how these terms are congruent with each other that too will be shown in due course. In Krishnamurti's thought these two are the components which make the ultimate transformation he aims for. Nevertheless, though their methodologies differ still they have come to a plausibly similar decision regarding the interconnectedness between self and death. Interestingly, both the philosophers consider death as a part of their philosophical thinking in which self/being plays a fundamental role in the significance of Death. But with the many similarities there are some dissimilarities in shaping their thoughts.

To enter into the rigorous discussion, it is important to say a few words about the two philosophers; otherwise, in the flow of the conscious subject matter, it will be overlooked or rather not be manifested. Twentieth century of philosophical era is marked by its deep change and multidimensional manifestations. Among many of its philosophical currents like the emergence of philosophy of language, logical and scientific perspectives, phenomenology and structure of consciousness, some philosophers talked about the concepts like self, freedom, death and several more. Emergence of existentialism also one of the emerging trends of this era. In the realm of western philosophy, Martine Heidegger in his *Being and Time* has critically demonstrated the central question of Being and its existential structure while in the east, philosophers like Jiddu Krishnamurti has drawn the illusory notions of self. Hence, both of them were busy in the research related to self and its transformation.



AIJITR - Volume - 2, Issue - III, May-Jun 2025



Copyright © 2025 by author (s) and (AIJITR). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Hooghly Mohsin College, Chinsurah, Hooghly

DOI Link (Crossref) Prefix: <https://doi.org/10.63431/AIJITR/2.III.2025.109-114>



Amitrakshar International Journal

of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research (AIJITR)

(A Social Science, Science and Indian Knowledge Systems Perspective)

Open-Access, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Bi-Monthly, International E-Journal

I

Nature of Self and Death: A Brief Account of Krishnamurti

To begin with the writing, first and foremost pursuit is to give a list of literatures which have been addressed. To compose a backdrop of Jiddu Krishnamurti's concept of Self and Death, *The First and Last Freedom* and *On Fear* have been taken to portray the relation among Self and Death. *The First and Last Freedom* highlights the importance of self-understanding as the path to discover the truth which is not acquired through the external authorities. These external authorities often stifle authentic personal growth and self-discovery. He emphasized on the "choiceless awareness" which allows individual to experience the truth and freedom directly where no societal judgement and selection will play any role. The primary intention of this book is to show how to live a life authentically and meaningfully. Here he focuses on the inward journey to the utmost freedom and deeper understanding. *On Fear* provides a profound insight into the nature of fear and its pervasive impacts on individuals lives. In this book, too, he showed how fear along with dependence on authoritative structures and societal expectations can obscure individual's perception and understanding of their true selves.

In the philosophy of Krishnamurti, the notion of self and personal transformation is often similar to each other. In order to manifest the nature of self, Krishnamurti clearly stated that self is a procedure in which the entire questions of one's life has been critically examined with immediate experience. Through his concept of self, he has been beautifully portrayed a complete picture of a lived life. Thus, his teachings impacted over the contemporary issues. He thought that the entire process of identification is the essence of self. The name, the form, the organism, certain characteristics identified with me by thought is self and this 'me' which I possess constitutes the self. Hence, the basis is the acquired experiences i.e. lived experiences. The movement of thought is also identical with identification and thus the essence of self. He envisioned self as a construct formed through the process of identifying with thoughts, experiences and societal impacts. When the identification comes to an end or the movement of thought gets stopped then it will be the state of Death. Death is the movement of continuity to the next life. The cornerstone of the self is the movement of thought in time, in distance and all the conflicts, miseries, confusions, doubts which are created by thought. When these thoughts come to an end this is a form of Death. More specifically, the self is the main ground of psychological sufferings, conflicts and fear. Continuous movement of thought sustains the self. To transcend this, he mentioned the choiceless awareness, this is a state of pure observation where the self gets disappeared and a sense of freedom and understanding get manifested. In the notable work of Krishnamurti, *Commentaries on Living*, he sets the milieu that life is synthesized through the philosophical and practical insights. Moreover, he emphasized the concepts of awareness and understanding and that will lead people to the harmonious existence. Here, one should maintain the fact that the concept of awareness and the concept of introspection are not identical. Krishnamurti strictly differentiates between these ideas. By introspection, he meant looking within oneself, examining oneself. "In that action, there is always an accumulative process, the 'I' examining something in order to change it, so there is always a dualistic conflict and therefore a process of frustration. There is never a release; and, realizing that frustration, there is depression." (Krishnamurti, 1975, pp 172-173). On the contrary, awareness is totally different: "Awareness is observation without condemnation. Awareness brings understanding, because there is no condemnation or identification but silent observation." (Krishnamurti, 1975, p. 173). He never understood self as separated from the world, nevertheless, by adopting the process of meditation he always rather segregated self from the prevalent thoughts.

Krishnamurti explored the concept of "self" rigorously. In the book, *The First and the Last Freedom*, he questions, "Do we know what we mean by the self? By that, I mean the idea, the memory, the conclusion, the experience, the various forms of nameable and unnameable intentions, the conscious endeavour to be or not to be, the accumulated memory of the unconscious, the racial, the group, the individual, the clan, and the whole of it all, whether it is projected outwardly in action or projected spiritually as virtue; the striving after all this is the self." (Krishnamurti, 1975, p. 76). He believed experience tends to strengthen the self and it becomes part of the psychological structure of the self. "The more you are entrenched in your experience, the more does the self get strengthened." (Krishnamurti, 1975, p.78). Krishnamurti believed the collaborating with self, experiences contribute to continue and strengthen the ego. "Is it possible for the self to be completely absent now? You know it is possible. What are the necessary ingredients, requirements? What is the element that brings it about? Can I find it? When I put that question "Can I find it?" surely I am convinced that it is possible; so I have already created an experience in which the self is going to be strengthened, is it not? Understanding of the self requires a great deal of intelligence, a great deal of watchfulness, alertness, watching ceaselessly, so that it does not slip away. I, who am very earnest, want to dissolve the self. When I



Amitrakshar International Journal

of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research (AIJITR)

(A Social Science, Science and Indian Knowledge Systems Perspective)

Open-Access, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Bi-Monthly, International E-Journal

say that, I know it is possible to dissolve the self. The moment I say “I want to dissolve this”, in that there is still the experiencing of the self; and so the self is strengthened.” (Krishnamurti, 1975, p.79). Comprehending the self, demands considerable intelligence and a high degree of vigilance, requiring continuous observation to prevent it from evading our awareness. However, the very act of stating that one wish to dissolve self, indicates that the experience of the self persists, thereby inadvertently fortifying it.

As it is said earlier, introspection, regarded as a method of self-improvement and personal growth, cannot ultimately yield truth, as it inherently involves a process of self-isolation. In contrast, awareness represents a condition in which truth can emerge specifically, the fundamental truth of our daily lives. It is only by comprehending the realities of everyday existence that we can truly progress.

Once it has asked to Krishnamurti, that if there is death, is that the end of everything? Krishnamurti often explored the notion death, emphasizing that the understanding of Death can lead to a profound transformation in living. Nevertheless, Krishnamurti always possesses a concept of Death where it is not merely the cessation of physical life but also involves the ending of psychological attachments. With this he finds the interconnectedness between Self and Death the most. Fear of Death arises from our attachment to continuity. Here these attachments to continuity means the desire for the self, with its memories, experiences and identities to persists. He thought that the true understanding of Death involves observing and letting go of our attachments and fears in the present.

Illustrating the concept of death he has brought a second concept: the concept of fear which should be highlighted. For Krishnamurti, the relationship between fear and death is deeply intertwined with each other and has an impact on human psyche's attachment to continuity. Nevertheless, he mentioned, the fear of death arises from our clinging to identity and the continuation of the self as we know it. He argues that this fear is primarily connected to the fear of unknown i.e. what is perceived as self. He also emphasized that the cessation of fear comes with the deep understanding and acceptance of impermanence. Here, the crux of his own doctrine of freedom lies: when one confronts and transcends the fear of death, then only s/he will lead a life with actual and right understanding of awareness, compassion and vitality. In explicating this link between self towards death by analysing the concepts like fear, freedom or rather to put together these concepts under the purview of a common understanding he actually solves a perpetual struggle. In the language of Krishnamurti we find, “To observe is the censor who does not want fear; the observer is the totality of all his experiences about fear. So the observer is separate from that thing he calls fear; there is space between them; he is forever trying to overcome it or escape from it and hence this constant battle between himself and fear—this battle that is such a waste of energy.” (Krishnamurti, 2004, p.13). Predominantly, he states that the true understanding and freedom from fear come when one realize that the observer is fear and there is no separation between them. He identifies the observer and observed, they are one and the same, there is no vacuum between them. The distance between the observer and the observed dissolves and the futile battle ceases. “The observer is fear, and when that is realized there is no longer any dissipation of energy in the effort to get rid of fear, and the time-space interval between the observer and the observed disappears.” Here, the congruence between self, fear and death is manifested. The thought of Death threatens the attachment, the continuity and thus creating fear whereas this fear is intertwined with the concept of self. Moreover, he talked about physical death and stated to eradicate the fear of this physical death he brought the idea of “psychological death” through which one transcends the fear of physical death. “We have hard time in understanding Krishnamurti because he is often talking about psychological freedom, psychological death, psychological ending and he doesn't mean technically ending. Psychologically free means being free of par conditioning.” (Blau, 2012, pp.124-126). Illustrating the concept of “psychological death” he actually highlighted the phenomenon that to live entirely in the present and free from the burden of fear simultaneously. Psychological death denotes to the ensuing process of letting go of the psychological constructs that reformulate our identity. It is basically an undivided awareness of the present moment. By reformulating fear, he expressed the link between living and the awareness of death. Hence, this state of psychological death is a transformative state where the transformation reveals to a life of greater authenticity.

II

“Being towards Death”: A Heideggerian Collocation of Words

Martine Heidegger, a famous philosopher of 20th century, was known for his contributions to enrich the philosophical trend in the West. In addition to this, his influence was strongly recognized on the philosophers, historians, sociologists of twenty first century too. Heidegger's main work, *Being and Time*, primarily envisions the basis of phenomenology, existentialism. Heideggerian treatment of phenomenology was strictly different from his predecessors as his concept of phenomenology include the means through which one can understand the fundamental



Amitrakshar International Journal

of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research (AIJITR)

(A Social Science, Science and Indian Knowledge Systems Perspective)

Open-Access, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Bi-Monthly, International E-Journal

and existential structures of Being. In general, existentialism deals with the nature of human nature and the existence of individual beings. Here, in Heidegger's philosophy, the question of Being become a big concern of thought.

The question of Being has played a pivotal role in shaping his thesis. Heidegger noticed that from the time of his predecessors the concept of Being has always been seen as an abstract entity. For Heidegger, to understand Being properly, it is never possible to dissociate Being from the world. Unless the nature of Being has been understood with reference to world, the actual meaning of Being has always been misled. When the meaning of Being has been grasped or acquired then it must be grasped as a part of the world. He argued that human beings are always Being-in-the-world. Nevertheless, human existence is entirely engaged with the world. This view is completely bipolar than the traditional view. In short, traditional view refers subject and object as separate entities on the contrary Heideggerian view connotes a far integrated experience of existence.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger clearly points out the different meanings of the spellings of Being with capital B and the being with a lowercase b. "If one writes Being with a capital B in English, it suggests some entity; indeed, it suggests a supreme Being, the ultimate entity have therefore decided to translate *Sein* by "being" with a lower-case b." (Dreyfus, 1991, p.11) For Heidegger 'Being' is not an entity among other entities. More specifically, he explicitly mentions that his Being with a capital B is not God or divine being like entity for fear that if anyone may interpret the Being as a metaphysical substance or a supreme (God-like) Being. Instead this meaning denotes everydayness, a verb-like sense of "to be", potentially diluting its ontological significance. The relation between Being (*Sein*) and being (*Seiende*) is the cornerstone of his existential ontology and understanding this relationship is the main job to manifest his project depicted in *Being and Time* all through. Michael Gelven, a commentator of *Being and time* in his work had said, "Heidegger has two Introductions: the first examines the meaning of the question of Being; the second explains his procedure and methodology." (Gelven, 1989, p.23) This language too, initially, imprints the relationship between Being and being in Heidegger's *Being and Time* is one of foundational reliance and mutual disclosure. Being is the underlying condition that makes the existence of individual beings possible.

Heidegger, predominantly, in his philosophical discourse, mentioned a term: *Dasein*. It is often translated as "being-there". This *Dasein* refers the everydayness of being which is non-abstract by its nature and its most intentional feature is to live a self-selected life with all its possibilities. "The way to justice to the fact that *Dasein* is Heidegger's name for us and yet avoid the centrality of human individuals is to see that what is to be studied in *Being and Time* ultimately is not *Dasein* but *Dasein's way of being*." (Dreyfus, 1991, p.14) Heidegger is not primarily interested in studying human beings as individual entities but rather in understanding *Dasein's way of being*. This *Dasein's way of being* refers to how human existence projects and interacts with the world. *Dasein* is fundamentally "being-in-the-world" with an inherent understanding of its temporality. Hence *Dasein* is always projected towards the future by its possibilities: it tries to become something. This attitude of *Dasein* aligns with a notion which he called "being-towards-death". The awareness that one's life is finite and death is an inevitable phenomenon. Thus, *Dasein* is always engaged with its authentic existence and strive to fulfil its potential. To carry forward this discussion it is necessary to unveil the nature of **authentic existence** and **inauthentic existences**. When *Dasein* is true to its own potential and makes choices that manifest its genuine self which acknowledges its finitude, confronts its own morality and takes responsibility for its existence then it is acquainted as authentic existence. Conversely, when *Dasein* is merely conforming to external expectations and absorbed in the everyday world simultaneously then it will be treated as inauthentic existence. Heidegger represents this state of existence by designating "the they" or *das Man*. For Heidegger, living according to "the they" individuals are no longer true to their own potential and possibilities. Inauthentic existence manifests a sense of mediocrity in human behaviour. Though by name it is inauthentic mode of existence but still Heidegger admits its significance in his philosophical orientation: by recognising and transcending its influence to move towards authenticity. Because in authentic existence too stepping away from the dictates of *das Man* is necessary. Gradually following this method the notion of one's own mortality or being-towards-death has been manifested. For him, the authentic state of *Dasein* involves recognizing that being is not static but always in a state of becoming or unfolding. This method of becoming adheres with the concept of temporality. *Dasein* is projecting itself toward possibilities, and among these possibilities, death stands as the most certain and ultimate one. "In temporality, however, the constitutive totality of care has a possible basis for its unity. Accordingly it is within the horizon of *Dasein's* temporal constitution that we must approach the ontological clarification of the 'connectedness of life' - that is to say, the stretching-along, the movement, and the persistence which are specific for *Dasein*." (Heidegger, 1962, p.427) Predominantly, temporality provides the unified framework through which *Dasein* understands its being in a



Amitrakshar International Journal

of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research (AIJITR)

(A Social Science, Science and Indian Knowledge Systems Perspective)

Open-Access, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Bi-Monthly, International E-Journal

continuous process. “Stretching-along” manifests the dynamic, interconnected nature of human existence. Dasein always moving toward the possibility of its death.

III

The Interconnectedness between Self and Death:

Krishnamurti and Heidegger’s Parallel Walk

Finally, in the hindermost section of the article, a comparative analysis of Jiddu Krishnamurti and Martine Heidegger will be undertaken surrounding the pivotal role of self in shaping the concept of death in both the philosophers. To maintain the exact intension of the subtitle of the article two things have to be presented at the commencement of the present section. Parallel walk reflects the walk which is simultaneously go with the hand by hand but it can never be amalgamated with each other. Though their methodologies differ, one being rooted in spirituality and the other in existential philosophy, both regard the concept of self or existence as a cornerstone in their discourses – ultimately leading to the exploration of the concept of death. The concept of freedom manifests in their philosophical stands, for Krishnamurti, freedom is not an end goal but a constant state of interrogation, promoting individuals to transcend fear, authoritative dictums and attachment from external pressure and leading to the liberation from the ego. According to Heidegger, freedom is deeply tied to the concept of authenticity and our relationship with existence. Nevertheless, living in alignment with one’s true potential while acknowledging the inevitability of death. Gelven mentioned “Death, of course, does reveal the terrible temporality of our existence. Because death focuses upon our own existence rather than upon the inauthentic they-self (for the they-self does not die) it becomes the ground for authentic existence. Death, then, becomes that important phenomenon which can expose the authentic and ontological basis of human existence.” (Gelven, 1989, pp. 139-140). Both the philosophers, Krishnamurti and Heidegger see death as a gateway to freedom, though their methodologies were different. They were confronting and understanding death as an essential phenomenon to achieve a profound state. Interestingly, if one take both of them simultaneously in this discourse s/he will may notice the philosophical concept of intersubjectivity has been pivotal in shaping the discourse, highlighting the importance of shared understanding. Since intersubjectivity is a philosophical tool which emphasizes shared understanding. While analysing their perspectives, it reveals that, despite employing diverse methodologies, their shared focus on shaping the concept of the death self (existence) holds significance. For Heidegger, by confronting death as an inevitable and personal reality, one transcends the distractions of everyday life and gains the freedom to take responsibility for the existence. According to Krishnamurti, death, is not an end but a transformation and understanding which leads to the ultimate freedom of a mind that is unconditioned. Conversely, if one examines the discord among these philosophers, one must understand the spiritual methodology of Krishnamurti, who focuses on self-awareness and dissolution of ego while the existential methodology of Heidegger grounds his perspective in the existential structure of human existence and the concept of authenticity. In short, both Krishnamurti and Heidegger view self as the central to the question of death and thus situates the notion of freedom. Both emphasize a move away from inauthentic or ego-centred existence toward a state of awareness and authenticity although their methods and language differ. Krishnamurti’s spiritual and psychological lens complements Heidegger’s existential and ontological framework, creating rich intersubjective connotations in their resonance.

In this article it is intended to mention a fact that the philosophical discourses related to self and death in Krishnamurti and Heidegger are two distinct and different streams which flow seamlessly toward a same direction but being associated in different genres of philosophy (Krishnamurti is deeply rooted in spiritualism and Heidegger in existentialism), the means of philosophizing the problems or the perception of the matter get differentiated but strictly aligned in a single thread.

References

1. Blau, Evelyne, 1995, *Krishnamurti 100 Years*, (Weininger, B. I., 1995: Interview), New York, Joost Elffers Books, pp. 124-126 and Bulletin, America, Krishnamurti Foundation of America, No. 86, 2012. p.10
2. Critchley, S. and Schürmann, 2008, *On Heidegger’s Being and Time*, Steven Levine (eds.), Abingdon, Routledge.
3. Dreyfus, Hubert, L. 1991, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time (Division-I)*, Cambridge: Massachusetts, The MIT Press.
4. Gelven, Michael, 1989, *A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time (Revised Edition)*, Illinois, Northern Illinois University Press, Sections 1-8.
5. Heidegger, M. 1962, *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (trans.), Oxford: United Kingdom, Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
6. Krishnamurti. J. 1975, *The First and Last Freedom*, New York, Harper San Francisco.



Amitrakshar International Journal

of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research (AIJITR)

(A Social Science, Science and Indian Knowledge Systems Perspective)

Open-Access, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Bi-Monthly, International E-Journal

7. Krishnamurti J. 2004, *On Fear*, Chennai, Krishnamurti Foundation India.
8. McManus, Denis (eds.), 2015, *Heidegger, Authenticity and the Self*, Abingdon, Routledge.
9. Mulhall, Stephen, 1996, *Heidegger and Being and Time*, London, Routledge.
10. Zimmerman, M. E., 1981, *Eclipse of the Self*, Athens: London, Ohio University Press.

