A
KIERKEGAARD
CRITIQUE

An international selection of essays interpreting Kierkegaard

BY

F. J. Billeskov Jansen - James Collins - Hermann Diem - Cornelio Fabro - Paul L. Holmer -
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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

i. THE LITERARY ART OF KIERKEGAARD ..
   by F. J. Billeskov Jansen

ii. KIERKEGAARD AND CONTEMPORARY EXISTENTIALIST PHILOSOPHY ....
    by John Wild

iii. ON UNDERSTANDING KIERKEGAARD ...
    by Paul L. Holmer

iv. KIERKEGAARD'S POSITION IN HIS RELIGIO-SOCIOLOGICAL SITUATION........
    by Liselotte Richter

v. KIERKEGAARD AND POLITICS ........
   by Howard A. Johnson

vi. KIERKEGAARD AND LUTHER ........
    by Johannes Slok

vii. IS THE CATEGORY OF THE TRAGIC ABSENT FROM THE LIFE AND
    THOUGHT OF KIERKEGAARD?.....
    by Pierre Mesnard

viii. KIERKEGAARD AND NIETZSCHE ..... 
    by Gregor Malantschuk

ix. SARTRE'S CONCEPT OF FREEDOM CONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF
    KIERKEGAARD'S THOUGHT ......
    by Regin Prenter

x. FAITH AND REFLECTION IN KIERKEGAARD ........
   by James Collins

xi. FAITH AND REASON IN KIERKEGAARD'S DIALECTIC ........
    by Cornelio Fabro, C.P.S.

xii. KIERKEGAARD'S DOCTRINE OF THE PARADOX ........
    by N. H. Soe

xiii. THE PROBLEM OF OBJECTIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY IN KIERKEGAARD
by Valter Lindstrom

xiv. KIERKEGAARD'S BEQUEST TO THEOLOGY
by Hermann Diem

xv. KIERKEGAARD'S DIALECTIC OF IMITATION ..... 
by Marie Mikulova Thulstrup

xvi. THE COMPLEX OF PROBLEMS CALLED "KIERKEGAARD"
by Niels Thulstrup

xvii. THANKSGIVING AS A SYNTHESIS OF THE TEMPORAL AND THE ETERNAL...
by Paul S. Minear
FOREWORD

Few things more forcibly impress upon a man a sense of his finitude than does his encounter with books in a tongue he cannot read. It is vexatious to be confronted with a book or article which might conceivably be of the greatest value to him—if only the "foreigner" who wrote it had had the kindness to write it in the reader's own language! But there is the book—its letters so bafflingly arranged—a distressing, stern reminder of our finitude. The book we want to read must remain, in most cases, a closed book forever.

As a service to those in many lands who can read English and are interested in Søren Kierkegaard, the editors of this present work have corralled essays interpreting him, essays which originally appeared in Danish, French, German, Italian and Swedish, and have hitherto been "locked up" in those languages for all those who did not possess the proper sets of keys.

Many of these essays were "locked up" in still another sense. They had first been published in learned journals and quarterlies of a technical character—and usually of a severely limited circulation. To us it seemed a pity that certain of these studies should thus be lost to a wider world. This applies also to several articles in English which are here included. The fact of their being written in English presents no problem to people who can read that language, but the other problem is still in force: the essays are all but buried in sometimes fairly obscure periodicals, little known beyond the borders of the land of their origin, of which only a few copies were printed, and thus might easily escape the attention of scholars in other lands.

What is here offered, therefore, is an international "roundup" of Kierkegaard studies which, in our opinion, deserve a wider audience and preservation in more permanent form. Casting modesty aside, each of the editors has ventured to include an essay of his own. This arrogance will, we feel, be forgiven us—out of the reader's sheer affection and gratitude toward us for having made the other essays available.

With so many things being written about Kierkegaard nowadays and in so many different lands, this book might easily have been three times its present size without any loss in quality. Out of perhaps fifty worthy candidates, we were obliged to select only seventeen. Every exclusion was painful. Yet this book does rescue from relative oblivion seventeen essays, each of which has something fairly new to say about Kierkegaard. Certain facets of his mind which hitherto have not been given sufficient attention are here exhibited. Novelty, however, was not the only criterion. Aspects of Kierkegaard's thought often discussed before are represented in this symposium, either because the article goes deeper than is common in such discussions or else because it suggests a quite different line of interpreting data already well known. Another factor determining our selection was the principle of correlation; that is, we deemed it important to include several essays of the "Kierkegaard and . . ." type (e.g., and Nietzsche, and Sartre). Finally, we wanted a balanced presentation, one which would reflect the fact that Kierkegaard was not only a theologian or a philosopher or a poet but all three.

While boasting of what this book has to offer, we will add that not the least of its merits is the fact that it presents in English translation for the first time many extended quotations from Kierkegaard's Papirer which until now have been available exclusively to Scandinavian students.

It goes without saying that the editors do not necessarily agree with every point made by
every contributor-obviously so, for the contributors are not always in agreement with each other. And after all, it is a great mistake in any realm to read only things with which one agrees. But that we like these essays should be evident from the fact that we selected them. And we are thankful that we had not the slightest difficulty in persuading a house to publish them.

It will be noted that a majority of the essays included stem from the year 1955, the Centenary of Kierkegaard's death. Much that is good has appeared more recently, but of this we can take no account. For the seventeen essays-our limit-were asked for and were received in 1956, with publication planned for 1957. Unforeseen and wearisome delays, over which neither the editors nor the publishers had any control, have held the book up until now. Belatedly, these centennial studies interpreting Kierkegaard are made available, but in no case are the essays "dated." Here applies the saying,"Better late than never."

This, then, is our meagre contribution toward overcoming, for certain people, the language barriers and therefore the enforced insularity of much of our scholarship. The editors wish it to be understood that they do not set themselves up as experts in all of the languages represented in this book. It was their very inexpertness which compelled them to enlist the help of several translators, and for this help they are deeply grateful.

Here it will be in place to identify briefly the contributors. Briefly, for if all of their distinctions were to be mentioned, the Foreword would be so long that five of the essays would have to be deleted.

It is notorious that Kierkegaard entertained a profound distrust of "the professor." He put hardly more reliance upon the paid, professional holy men, the priest and the parson. The following list will make clear that it is into just such hands he has fallen in this book. Kierkegaard knew that this would happen. Three years before his death he entered in his Journal (X4 A 628 f.) the following "Sad Reflection."

In one place in a Psalm it is said of the rich man that he heaps up treasures with great toil "and knoweth not who shall inherit them." So shall I leave behind me, in an intellectual sense, a capital by no means insignificant-and, alas, I know also who will be my heir. It is he, that figure so exceedingly distasteful to me, he that till now has inherited all that is best and will continue to do so: the Docent, the Professor.

Yet this also belongs to my suffering as a necessary part of it-to know this and then go calmly on with my endeavor, which will bring me toil and trouble, and the profit of which, in one sense, the Professor will inherit. "In one sense"-for in another sense I take it with me.

Note. And even if the "Professor" should chance to read this, it will not give him pause, will not cause his conscience to smite him; no, this too will be made the subject of a lecture. And again this observation, if the Professor should chance to read it, will not give him pause; no, this too will be made the subject of a lecture. For longer even than the tapeworm which was extracted from a woman (according to a recent advertisement in which the husband expresses his gratitude and gives the length as 100 yards)-even longer is the Professor, and the man in whom the Professor is lodged cannot be rid of this by any human power, only God can do it, if the man himself is willing.

It is good for parsons and professors to be stung by irony of this ilk. Yet the "scientific" investigation of Kierkegaard is inevitable.

Kierkegaard was fully aware that his works would be "studied and studied," and he would not have wanted it otherwise. Nobody writes unless he desires to be read and discussed. Of course, Kierkegaard has had to put up with a lot of nonsense. Detractors who misunderstand him are not more numerous than admirers who misunderstand him, and both do him disservice, leaving little to choose between. What Kierkegaard tended to overlook, however, was the fact
that men would arise who, out of one allegiance or another, would make a responsible attempt to understand him, interpret him, and criticize him. Yet he did not overlook this completely. In a journal entry from 1850 (X3 A 680) he wrote:

"Often I think sadly of the fact that a man endowed as I continually find myself on the outside, as something superfluous- an impractical exaggeration. The problem is quite simple: Life has not yet become confused enough to compel people to make use of me properly. . . . But they will eventually discover that it will end with conditions becoming so desperate that 'desperate' people like me and my colleagues will be sought to render help." Here, then, are the seventeen "desperate" persons who, having recourse to the "desperate" Kierkegaard, have found succor, even though most of them have also found something to criticize.

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Niels Thulstrup is Pastor of St. Nikolai Church, Holbaek, Denmark and Secretary of the S0ren Kierkegaard Society.
John D. Wild, Ph.D., is Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University.

We wish to express particular gratitude to William H. Kennedy, Esq., a multi-lingual man, who is Executive Secretary of the Episcopal Committee for Foreign Students on the East Coast of
the United States. Refusing compensation, he has checked for accuracy the translations from French, German and Italian.

Despite the talents of the translators, the skill of Mr. Kennedy, and the vigilant eyes of the editors, it must be confessed that the English style of some contributions falls inevitably short of the felicity achieved in the original articles. Yet this is not troublesome, as long as the meaning is clear. In other words, we have aimed at intelligibility and accuracy—and generally speaking have achieved it. On the other hand, nobody in his right mind would set this book before young pupils as a model of English style. The task, as we have conceived it, is to understand Kierkegaard, not to provide a copybook for aspirants to eminence in the field of English letters.

In one sentence: We have done something but not really very much to conceal the fact that, for example, a German is a German, a Frenchman a Frenchman, and a Finn a Swedish-speaking Finn.

Indeed, we have not done a great deal to conceal the fact that certain persons whose mother tongue is English are not in every instance masters of style in their own tongue! Style, to be sure, is important. But not here. Here it is of importance only that Kierkegaard, himself so concerned with the problem of communication, be communicated. The editors hereby relieve the translators of all responsibility for any changes in their translations which we, in our editorial capacity, have ventured to make. If something sounds strange, the reader is asked to blame the editors, not the translators!

It would be a long list indeed if we attempted to set down the names of all the people whose special knowledge and skills have, in one way or another, contributed to the preparation of this book.

Even when we limit the list to those who worked longest and hardest, seven names appear: Enid Belding, Carolyn Joy, Edith Neftel, Eleanor Kouwenhoven, Lore O'Leary, Arthur Buckley, William H. Crawford, Jr. With so many helpers involved, one might think that the editors were left with little or nothing to do. We acknowledge that we belong to the Tom Sawyer school! We get other people to do the writing, other people to do the translating, other people to check the references. Finally, we have secured the services of Lee M. Capel to do the proof reading. He assisted the Danish editor in the final phases of the work, while the American editor circumnavigated the globe for the purpose of visiting every Province of the Anglican Communion. For this assistance,"Thanks," we say in English, and "Mange Tak," we say in Danish.

Also to be thanked emphatically are the editorial boards of the various publications in which the articles first appeared. They were most co-operative and generous, readily assenting to our request for permission to reprint.


Professor Collins' essay was first read at the Kierkegaard Festival held at the University of Chicago in November, 1955. Subsequently it was published in The Journal of Religion, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1, January, 1957, pp. 10-19.

Professor Diem's essay, translated from the German by Thora Moulton, first appeared in Antwort Festschrift zum 70 Geburtstag von Karl Barth, 1956, pp. 472-489.


Canon Johnson's essay first appeared in The American-Scandinavian Review, Autumn 1955,


Dr. Malantschuk's essay, translated from the Danish by Margaret Grieve, first appeared in Det danske Magasin, 1955, pp. 381-396.


Professor Minear's essay was first read as a paper at a Kierkegaard Colloquium held on November 11, 1955, at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York. It was subsequently published in The Anglican Theological Review, January, 1956, pp. 4-14.

Professor Prenter's essay, translated from the Danish by Margaret Grieve and H. R. Harcourt, was first published in Ordet og Aanden, 1952, pp. 177-189.

Professor Richter's essay, translated from the German by Walter Eckstein, has not been previously published.

Professor Sl0k's essay, translated from the Danish by A. Rousing, was first published in Kierkegaardiana II, 1957, pp. 7-24.

Professor S0e's essay, translated from the Danish by Margaret Grieve, was first published in Nordisk Teologi, Festskrift till Ragnar Bring, 1955, pp. 102-122.

Mme. Mikulova Thulstrup's essay, translated from the Danish by H. R. Harcourt, was first published in Dansk teologisk Tidsskrift, 1958, pp. 193-209.

Pastor Thulstrup's essay, translated from the Danish by Margaret Grieve, was first published in Det danske Magasin, 1955, pp. 369-381.

Professor Wild's essay was first read as a paper at a Kierkegaard Colloquium held on Nov. 11, 1955, at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York. It was subsequently published in The Anglican Theological Review, January, 1956, pp. 15-32.

For the method of citation used in these essays and accompanying notes see the "Bibliographical Note" which follows the last essay in this volume.

Our major thanks are of necessity directed to the distinguished and learned authors who, entirely without remuneration, allowed us to include their essays. They come from many countries and represent widely different religious and philosophical commitments.

Going a "second mile," some of the contributors gave their own time and resources to see that a translation was produced. All as a Kjerlighedens Gjerning—a work of love.

HOWARD A. JOHNSON
January, 1961

niels thulstrup
Postscript:

The editors had hoped to have this volume ready in time to please the Reverend Canon Walter Lowrie, d.d., r. af D., and Honorary Member of the Søren Kierkegaard Society. In this hope we failed. For on August 12, 1959, this indefatigable interpreter and translator of Kierkegaard died full of years and full of faith. He was in his ninety-second year and had been at work at his desk until within six days of his death. Two new books, the product of the last two years, will be published posthumously.

Having taught himself Danish at the age of sixty-five, the man who as early as 1930 styled himself a "superannuated clergyman" proceeded to bring out twenty-seven books in the next twenty-seven years. Fourteen of these were translations from the works of Kierkegaard, and two of these were biographical studies: the massive biography in 1938, which the late Professor Eduard Geismar hailed as "the best single volume on Kierkegaard in any language," and a Short Life of Kierkegaard in 1942, which has now found its way into Dutch, German, and Japanese.

In the thirties and early forties Dr. Lowrie carried on this prodigious labor with scant support from his environment. Indeed, when no publisher could be persuaded to undertake the risk of launching an author who at that time was virtually unknown in England and America, Lowrie himself paid to have the books published. "Having confidence in this enterprise," he remarked a few years ago, "I was undismayed when at one time I was out of pocket to the amount of eighteen thousand dollars." Subsequent history has shown that his confidence was not misplaced. Professor J. V. Langmead Casserley has given it as his opinion that the translation and publication of Kierkegaard's writings is "perhaps the most important episode in twentieth century English publishing." And W. H. Auden has said: "To the Oxford, Princeton, and other presses who have been making Kierkegaard available in English, we and our children owe a debt which we could not repay even if we remembered it."

Kierkegaard, however, was not the only thinker to engage the interest of the man who for twenty-three years was Rector of the American Church in Rome. He has written on Rudolph Sohm, Albert Schweitzer, Karl Barth, Gustav Theodor Fechner, Hamann, and Vladimir Soloviev. But that is less than the half of it. Lowrie's authorship also includes impressive and critically acclaimed tomes on Christian art and archaeology, ecclesiastical polity and problems of church unity, liturgies, and New Testament interpretation.

The story of his many and varied achievements can be read in a Festschrift called Dr. Lowrie of Princeton & Rome which nine of his American friends presented to him "in acknowledgment of a debt" on his eighty-ninth birthday. The editor of that book required Dr. Lowrie to make a complete bibliography of all his writings. At the end of this list he offers a comment fully characteristic of him: "I have enumerated nearly one hundred items; thirty-eight books, and fifty-nine substantial articles in reviews. It would be tedious to write, or even to read, a bare list of the more trivial items I have contributed in the course of a long life to daily or weekly papers. Most of them I have kept, but I haven't the heart to count them. Suppose they amount to one thousand and one that would be a sorry record for eighty-eight years, as compared with many a columnist who turns out a column a day! My output comes to barely twelve items a year, or one a month, in the course of a long and misspent life."

The scholarship which won for him an international reputation is something which Lowrie himself regarded as "incidental to my vocation as a parochial pastor." It is, in fact, as a wise spiritual counselor and a trenchant preacher that scores of people who have never read his books and who perhaps could not understand them--including many people who do--that he is chiefly remembered with gratitude.
Walter Lowrie, priest and pastor, scholar and teacher, Knight of Dannebrog and Knight of the Faith, is gone from us now, and the sense of loss is great. It is, of course, only for ourselves that we are weeping, not for him.

Dr. Lowrie long bore the reproach of being a "lover of Kierkegaard." It now seems difficult to believe, but once upon a time, not so long ago, it was a highly dubious thing in the United States of America and especially among Episcopalians to take Kierkegaard seriously. But this reproach is now one of his chief distinctions. Let us make sure, however, by listening to Dr. Lowrie himself, in what precise sense he was a lover of Kierkegaard. In A Short Life of Kierkegaard he explained himself as follows:

Having been so indiscreet as to admit that I am a lover of Kierkegaard, I would have it known that this is the Kierkegaard I love—not the dissolute and despairing youth, nor the returning prodigal, nor the unhappy lover, nor the genius who created the pseudonyms, but the frail man, utterly unfitted to cope with the world, who nevertheless was able to confront the real danger of penury as well as the vain terrors his imagination conjured up, and in fear and trembling, fighting with fabulous monsters, ventured as a lone swimmer far out upon the deep, where no human hand could be stretched out to save him, and there, with 70,000 fathoms of water under him, for three years held out, waiting for his orders, and then said distinctly that definite thing he was bidden to say, and died with a hallelujah on his lips. I could not love him as I do unless I could venerate him, and I learned to venerate him only when I saw that he had the courage to die as a witness for the truth.

November, 1961
I

THE LITERARY ART OF KIERKEGAARD

BY F. J. BILLESKOV JANSEN
Translated from the French by Margaret Grieve

I

Most readers of Kierkegaard's work, preoccupied above all with discovering his thought, fail to realize how much attention the author paid to construction and style. His concern for form is not limited to the general plan of a book or article but manifests itself in every turn of phrase. Each feature of his writing is calculated and premeditated, even the violent outbursts which seem most spontaneous. The all-powerful reflection which played so subtle and complicated a game with the pseudonyms also controlled the variations in form within each work.1

Kierkegaard was acquainted with literary forms from his earliest youth. He was born in 1813 and grew up in an age when there flourished in Denmark a veritable cult of the art of writing, both in prose and poetry. Denmark's great literary critic of the time was Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1790-1860), an ardent disciple of Hegel.

From his judgments of taste there was no appeal. He served as a model for the young Kierkegaard when, in 1834, he made his literary debut in the critical journal published by Heiberg with a highly ironical article on the intellectual powers of women. Kierkegaard's first book,2 a criticism of a novel by Hans Christian Andersen, was in fact an article grown too long for Heiberg's journal. In that book Kierkegaard adopts with all sincerity the role of the philosopher-aesthete in his reflections on literary matters. Nevertheless he does not attain in his first work the precision and verve of his master. In his early formative years Kierkegaard wrote in two different styles: the first, designed for the public, is the stilted style which we have just mentioned; the second, for himself alone, is the simple and inspired language of his Journal.

As early as 1835 this personal style, vivacious and poetic, was fully developed; that is to say, when not preoccupied with writing about literature or the public but with his own future, his vocation, and his whole spiritual life, Kierkegaard was already a master of language, a writer, an artist. About 1841, when preparing his academic dissertation, Kierkegaard decided to make his personal language a literary style. In accordance with university regulations a dissertation had to be written in Latin; in certain cases, however, this requirement could be waived, and Kierkegaard applied for a dispensation before submitting his manuscript to the faculty-not because of any deficiencies in his knowledge of Latin but because he had discovered the power of his mother tongue to express philosophical concepts. The Concept of Irony (1841) is indeed written to a great extent in a language rarely found in university dissertations. "They will reproach me for the freedom of my style," Kierkegaard wrote in his Journal, but added, "the reader will have to forgive my gaiety, and the fact that I sometimes sing to my work in order to lighten my task."3

A wealth of poetic images occurs throughout the philosophical discussion, and one is conscious of reading a spoken and not a literary idiom. Familiar expressions and plays on words abound, and the syntax is extremely flexible. In its style even more than in its content The
The author, however, subsequently wished *Either/Or* (1843) to be considered his first book. It is at any rate the first of Kierkegaard's works in which both his thought and his art are revealed in all their depth and variety. *Either/Or* is an extraordinary book; one might almost say that it is unique of its kind. As a novel it is unlike any other, and yet it does not exist in a vacuum. Just as the ideas in it reflect the reactions of Kierkegaard the philosopher to the current opinions of his age, so the form-or rather the multiplicity of forms—reflects the influence of the shape and character of the contemporary novel.

In Germany and the countries of the north the publication of Goethe's *Wilhelm Misters Apprenticeship* (1794-1796) was an event of the greatest importance. The German romantics regarded it as the prototype of the modern novel and each strove to create in his own manner a universal novel in which the young hero sets out in search of adventure and the world of his dreams. Twenty-five years after the *Apprenticeship* Goethe published *Wilhelm Misters Travels* (1821-1829) in which the writer, then advanced in years and wisdom, accepts the world of realities.

In the eyes of Kierkegaard's generation *Wilhelm Misters* appeared as one complete and unified work, the philosophical novel par excellence tracing the spiritual evolution of an individual, the history of a man and at the same time of an idea.

In February, 1836, Kierkegaard obtained the latest edition of the works of Goethe. From his Journals we learn that he read almost without interruption the six volumes containing *Wilhelm Misters*. He wrote down several passages from it and in March, 1836, tried to summarize what he considered to be most "masterly" in the work. He admired the skill with which the author had developed a providential philosophy in such a way that it exists at first independently of the central character but finally becomes incarnated in Wilhelm himself. "That is what makes this novel more than any other seem a perfect whole. It is indeed a mirror which reflects the whole world, a true microcosm." It is obvious that in Kierkegaard's opinion *Wilhelm Misters* is a novel in which the history of a man and the formulation of a doctrine merge into one. It is in this work that Kierkegaard found the perfect example of the symbolic tale and of the character who is at the same time an idea, a type, and a man who by virtue of his mode of existence represents humanity. Kierkegaard did not make his own novels philosophical biographies in the manner of Goethe, but he created characters symbolizing different outlooks on life, like the "aesthetic" and the "ethical" types who form the two poles in *Either/Or*, and, later, the "religious" type as presented in Stages on Life's Way (1845).

It was not solely because of its presentation of symbolic character that Kierkegaard took *Wilhelm Misters* as his model. This vast work was for him, as for all the romantic writers of the day, the prototype of the "universal novel"; that is to say, it offered a framework into which every literary form could be assimilated. The extracts of it which Kierkegaard made indicate that in the course of his reading he paused at certain places where the narrative is interrupted. "The study of 'Hamlet and its Production' should be noted in particular," he writes, and further on he notes that "the Confessions of a Beautiful Soul' are full of the most profound observations." Goethe's vast novel contains collections of letters, short stories and tales which the characters read for their own entertainment, and finally a diary, "Leonardo's Tagebuch." It is worth noting that in the
edition read by Kierkegaard the novel comprises several parts almost unrelated to the whole which are nowadays omitted in most editions. A group of brief reflections is also to be found at the end of Book II of the Travels: "Betracht-tungen im Sinne der Wanderer. Kunst, Ethisches, Natur," and at the end of Book III there is a similar series of aphorisms: "Aus Makariens Archiv."

It is easy to discover numerous examples of forms peculiar to Goethe in the two great novels by Kierkegaard. Our intention is not, however, to compile a list of comparisons but to reveal the originality of the Danish writer: this lies in the art with which he combines analysis of human character and literary forms. The first part of Either/Or begins with a series of exclamations and paradoxes grouped together under the title "Diapsalmata," a word which, according to Kierkegaard,7 means in this context "refrains"—that is, variations on the theme of tedium as experienced by the aesthete in the face of the drabness and monotony of existence.

There follows an extremely varied collection of literary and dramatic studies, together with eloquent and inspired discourses, and the volume concludes with the "Diary of the Seducer." The second part, containing an exposition of the ethical attitude to life, is composed of only two discourses, written in the form of letters and of considerable length. The contrast between the two parts is intentional. The aesthete has no firm base in life on which to rest: he seeks pleasure from the passing moment and is consequently led to experience only despair. His life, like his philosophy, has no order.

It is therefore logical that the way in which such an incoherent conception of life is expressed should itself be chaotic. In the general introduction to Either/Or the pseudonymous editor states that the first part contains "a number of attempts to formulate an aesthetic philosophy of life, as this permits of no single coherent exposition."

This contrast in form is pursued even in the minutest stylistic details. The aesthete expresses himself by means of exclamations and incoherent outbursts or else in flights of lyrical and ecstatic eloquence. The language of the man of principles is entirely different. Although there is no lack of fervor, his words are calm and harmonious, his sentences well-balanced, and when using poetic imagery he has recourse not to the turbulent visions of the "Diapsalmata" but to scenes of domestic life reminiscent of the genre pictures of contemporary painting.

In Stages on Life's Way Kierkegaard's awareness of the expressive qualities of different styles is even more acute. We shall mention only one of the many examples of this to be found. In the diary entitled "Guilty?/Not Guilty?" Kierkegaard has inserted six short stories each of which is written in a particular style. With unrivaled skill he imitates in turn the Old Testament ("Solomon's Dream" and "Nebuchadnezzar"), Herodotus ("Periander"), Shakespeare's King Lear on the heath ("A Leper's Soliloquy") and the contemporary Danish novel ("A Possibility"). So great is the concern for style in these perfect pastiches that a gulf seems to separate the writer of the Diary from the six tableaux which he presents as his own work; the stylistic virtuosity here has to some extent had an effect contrary to that intended by the novelist.

III

In his philosophical and theological works Kierkegaard changed his method. The characters in Repetition and Fear and Trembling (both published on October 16, 1843) are already less autonomous than those in the great novels which we have just discussed, and in later treatises the analysis of human types is used only as a means of illustrating a concept or idea which is the real subject of the book. Just as Kierkegaard's first philosophical work bears the title The Concept of Irony, so all his subsequent works are named or could be named after the concept examined in
Contrast is one of the stylistic effects for which Kierkegaard had a particular preference. In June, 1844, he published two books on similar subjects but written in contrasting styles. The Concept of Dread deals with the fall of man and Philosophical Fragments with revelation. The first of these two works is an attempt to examine a theological problem from a psychological standpoint; in it Kierkegaard develops his own point of view while discussing the problem in Schleiermacher and other theologians. It is an exposition in conformity with all the rules: the subject matter is divided into chapters and paragraphs, and quotations and technical terms abound. In order to destroy the theological theories of his age, Kierkegaard borrows the very form used by his adversaries. With an irony which is most pungent in the introduction and epigraph, he makes his book resemble as closely as possible the textbooks of the theological faculty. In the presence of this learned treatise on the fall of Adam, one has the impression of reading Latin—the Latin which Kierkegaard had rejected for his dissertation.

Philosophical Fragments, on the other hand, is a book in the Greek style. Both the basic problem and the method of argumentation are borrowed from Socrates:

How far does the Truth admit of being learned? With this question let us begin. It was a Socratic question, or became such in consequence of the parallel Socratic question with respect to virtue, since virtue was again determined as insight. ... In so far as the Truth is conceived as something to be learned, its non-existence is evidently presupposed, so that in proposing to learn it one makes it the object of an inquiry. Here we are confronted with the difficulty to which Socrates calls attention in the Meno... one cannot seek for what he knows, and it seems equally impossible for him to seek for what he does not know. For what a man knows he cannot seek, since he does not even know for what to seek.8

It is as if we were listening to the voice of Socrates, an illusion which is never destroyed. Proceeding in the same manner as the Greek philosopher, the author allows the discussion to develop by stages: "Now we shall take our time, there is in any case no need to hurry—we shall discuss this question as the Greeks would have done."

The discussion, however, is Socratic only in form, for its content is directed against Socrates. Here Kierkegaard proceeds in exactly the same way as in The Concept of Dread: he avails himself of the enemy's weapons in order to combat him. A Platonic dialogue generally begins with a Sophist or young man submitting a postulate which Socrates then disproves, but in the Philosophical Fragments it is Socrates himself who propounds the thesis destined to be imperceptibly refuted. This time it is Socrates who believes himself to be in possession of some knowledge; the other, who takes his traditional role. This other, though never named, is Jesus Christ. Kierkegaard adopts and exploits with exceptional skill the Socratic indirect or ironic method of argumentation in order to prove that man does not possess in himself the truth about his own being, as taught by the Greek master, and hence that he can know this only through divine revelation.

To this slim volume Kierkegaard attached the vast Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments (1846), six times larger than the small work of which it was made the supplement. Yet another contrast! Here the indirect method is replaced by the direct method, and abstraction by a concrete exposition of historical facts. The problem is no longer how to define revelation, i.e., Christian doctrine, but how "I, Johannes Climacus, now thirty years of age, born in Copenhagen ... am to become a Christian."9

In 1848 Kierkegaard wrote two works in which once again a certain similarity in theme is
combined with a contrast in literary method. The Sickness unto Death, which appeared in 1849, begins in the Hegelian manner with the vaguest of all abstractions, a metaphysical definition of man, and continues with a series of character studies which together form a brilliant portrait gallery of every type of sinner. Despair is here shown to be an awareness of sin which leads the sinner to salvation. In Training in Christianity, the publication of which was postponed until 1850, Kierkegaard intends to rouse the reader by means of shock tactics. In words of the utmost gentleness the writer dwells at some length on the invitation which Jesus Christ addressed to all mankind:

"Come hither to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Then, when the invitation has been accepted and rest and peace seem close at hand, the interpreter of Christianity cries halt. In brutal tones he announces that the invitation comes from the poorest and most despised of men who lived among beggars and lepers over eighteen hundred years ago, and that this deluded vagabond invites us to become his contemporaries: he demands that we, far from being scandalized at his behavior, should believe that he is God himself.

Thus, at the alluring prospect of a peace beyond comprehension the gates of Paradise seem to open-to release a tiger which springs at the throat of those who have answered the call of Christ without once reflecting upon its significance. Training in Christianity heralds the attack upon the Church, but before discussing the controversy which ensued, a third and by no means least important facet of Kierkegaard's work must be examined.

IV

The novels and philosophical-theological works of Kierkegaard were published under various pseudonyms. At the same time, however, from 1843 onwards, he wrote a long series of edifying discourses under his own name. For the majority of readers these discourses appear from a literary point of view to be one homogeneous mass. If, however, they are examined more closely it becomes evident that they belong roughly to three different groups, and Kierkegaard took pains to find a distinctive attribute for each: his discourses are successively "edifying," "Christian," and "godly."

Kierkegaard's edifying discourses resemble the sermons of Bishop Mynster, the fashionable preacher of the day, but the philosopher does not attempt to emulate the eloquence of the pulpit: he speaks in a low voice, the tone of which is gentle, intimate, almost tender.

In 1847, a volume of considerable size and import appeared. It was entitled Edifying Discourses (of Varied Tenor) and, one could add, of varied styles. In one very lengthy discourse the author's purpose is to show that "purity of heart is to will one thing." The thesis posited, the argument follows, divided and subdivided into numerous sections, until the conclusion is reached. Here it is by reasoned argument that the writer seeks to capture the mind; but if it is the voice of the philosopher which makes itself heard in this treatise, it is, on the contrary, the "poet" who has composed the three discourses on the lilies of the field and the birds of the air.

In one of these discourses Kierkegaard relates both the delightful parable of the lilies bowed low with care and that of the woodpigeon. The collection ends with seven short essays grouped together under the title "The Gospel of Suffering: Christian Discourses." In the severity of the ideas expressed, these discourses are akin to the Works of Love: Some Christian Reflections in the Form of Discourses, written in the same year, and to the Christian Discourses which were published the following year. Most of the "Christian" discourses by Kierkegaard have an entirely
different character. Both gentle persuasion and skillful argumentation are jettisoned in favor of the striking phrase, the unusual image and the paradox. One section of the 1848 collection is therefore appositely called "Thoughts which Wound from Behind—For Edification."

The "Christian" discourses were written for an elite among the public, but in 1849, Kierkegaard decided to write from that time on for the ordinary reader. He returns to his favorite theme The Lilies of the Field and The Birds of the Air in a volume bearing the subtitle Three Godly Discourses. This time he no longer relates stories but attempts to bewitch the reader with the magic of his lyrical prose. Each sentence is given a primitive cadence and certain words are repeated at regular intervals so that our brain finally reproduces unaided the leitmotivs of the discourses; when this occurs the missionary writer has achieved his purpose. In three discourses written in the same year Kierkegaard raises before our eyes with the art of a sculptor three figures: the High Priest, that is, Christ (Hebrews 4:15); the Publican (Luke 18:13); and finally the Woman who was a Sinner (Luke 7:47).

The "godly" discourses are the first of Kierkegaard's writings in which he uses a popular style of eloquence. For Self-Examination (1851), consisting of three religious discourses, has the subtitle Recommended to this Present Time and has as epigraph the following Biblical text: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (II Corinthians 5:11). Here for the first time Kierkegaard attempts a popular exposition of his theological ideas, and in so doing he was influenced by the sermons of Luther, whom he greatly revered at this time. The language in this treatise is richer and fresher than in the preceding ones. In a "second series," written in 1851-1852 but not published until after the author's death in 1855, the popular tone is accentuated. Judge for Yourselves! contains two discourses of which the first in particular ("On Becoming Sober," based on I Peter 4:7) is written in a style approaching brusqueness. Two months before his death, however, and still engaged in battle, Kierkegaard published a sermon which he had delivered in a church in Copenhagen in May, 1851. The text comes from the Epistle of St. James (1:17): "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." This epilogue to the religious discourses has no distinctive attribute: Kierkegaard calls it, simply and pathetically, "A Discourse."

Both in Training in Christianity (1850) and in For Self-Examination (1851) Kierkegaard revealed to his contemporaries the disparity between the religion they practiced and true Christianity as he conceived it. He waited three years for a response—would the Church recognize the gulf which separated it from the Christian ideal? Kierkegaard covered the pages of his journal with feverish notes but published nothing before December 18, 1854. On that date a daily paper in Copenhagen printed an article by him attacking Martensen, Bishop of Zealand, who, at the death of his predecessor Mynster, had called the latter a "witness to the truth." This expression, however, had come to be regarded by Kierkegaard as a synonym for the true Christian, that is, the martyr. A controversy ensued. Until May, 1855, more than twenty polemical articles flowed from Kierkegaard's pen, and, when the space allotted to him in a daily paper proved too limited, he proceeded to issue a Pamphlet (May 24) and later a review entitled "The Instant," of which nine editions were published in the course of four months.

The tenth edition was ready for printing when, on October 2, Kierkegaard was hospitalized for an illness which caused his death on November 11.
In this supreme struggle which exhausted his physical strength Kierkegaard exploited all the resources of his art. Abandoning the indirect method of the pseudonymous works as well as the persuasive tone of the religious discourses, he deliberately adopted the attitude of aggressor: henceforth his role was that of a reformer.

The attack against the official Church was violent, uncompromising, a struggle to the death.

The most striking fact to be noticed from a literary point of view is that Kierkegaard never at any time lost control over his means of expression. As much care is given to style as to the other aspects of his writing, sometimes even more. In Judge for Yourselves! Kierkegaard had written a short tale, the story of a theological graduate in search of a livelihood, but only in "The Instant" did the tale receive the final touch which transformed it into a masterpiece of irony: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." The novelist in Kierkegaard placed himself wholeheartedly at the service of the agitator; it is in fact due to his poetic gifts that Kierkegaard became so great a pamphleteer. The sallies and paradoxes of the "Diapsalmata" are transformed into the most biting invectives; the genre-imagery so dear to the man of principle becomes discordant even in form; in place of the parable we find a legend created out of diverse elements by the outrageous imagination of the polemist: Imagine a witness to the truth ending his life of martyrdom on a gridiron upon which he is gradually roasted by a small fire. Imagine then the community deciding to consecrate the memory of this martyr by holding a feast on the anniversary of his death; on this occasion a fish is to be grilled in each house, the best part of which is to be sent to the parish priest!

Flagrant insults accompanied by proper names, veiled sarcasms, and ironical allusions follow each other in rapid succession in the articles of "The Instant." On his deathbed Kierkegaard refused to receive the sacrament from the hands of a clergyman. Nevertheless his funeral took place in conformity with traditional practice, although before the open grave a violent protest was made by a young nephew of Kierkegaard over the presence and concourse of churchmen. He began to recite passages from "The Instant":

We are all Christians, nothing we say can alter this. Even if a man solemnly declares that he is not a Christian but dies leaving just sufficient to pay for the funeral rites and the reverend parson, all his pronouncements will have been in vain—he is a Christian and will be buried as a Christian, so certain is it that we are all Christians.

Thus Kierkegaard, the "magister" of irony, as he called himself when referring to his academic dissertation and university degree, had the last word at his own funeral.

NOTES

i. A more detailed exposition and more comprehensive documentation of the ideas presented in this article will be found in my book Studier i Søren Kierkegaards litterære Kunst, Copenhagen, 1951.

2. Af en endnu Levendes Papirer (From the Papers of One Still Living), XIII, 45-100.

3. Ill B 2, 3.


5. I C 73.

6. I C 72.
7. Ill B 173.


KIERKEGAARD AND CONTEMPORARY EXISTENTIALIST PHILOSOPHY

BY JOHN WILD

Existentialist thought began more than one hundred years ago with Kierkegaard's scorching attack on Hegel, the ruling modern philosopher of that time. While ignored by his contemporaries and forgotten for a lifetime, he was then rediscovered in Europe after the First World War. His works have now been translated into almost every important language, and his thought has been criticized and developed by many able, philosophical successors, including Heidegger, Jaspers, Berdiaev, Marcel, and Sartre. Much as he would deplore such a comparison, it is certainly true that his influence is now much more extensive and pervasive in the West than that of his great opponent. In the light of these developments it is clear that existentialism is something more than a reaction against Hegel. It is far deeper than this. It must rather be understood as a movement of profound criticism and rebellion against a basic failure of analysis which pervades the whole history of post-Cartesian philosophy. This is a neglect of that obscure region of being to which we still refer by such terms as the "subjective."

For modern thought whatever is actual is an object present there before me. The me, before whom it is brought, is either treated as a peculiar subjective object, or else denied. Thus Hume, trying to find that object or impression which is responsible for the personal pronoun, has to give up in despair.\(^1\) There is no subjective object.

Hence the self must be denied. For Kant, the most existential of modern philosophers, the subjective self is not denied. It really exists. But it is "noumenal," that is, unknowable by any of the standard objective modes of human knowledge. By introducing dialectic, or motion, into his conceptual objects Hegel thought that he could do full justice to subjective existence, and claimed that he had taken it up into his sweeping panorama of world history.

At this point Kierkegaard intervened with deadly penetration.

Full justice is not being done to subjective existence. There may be some sense in which Hegel as an existing person can be "taken up" into a conceptual system of his own construction. But surely something is omitted, not only by Hegel but by other "objective" philosophers of the modern tradition. "All the profounder thinkers," Kierkegaard says in his Journals, "are agreed in placing evil in isolated subjectivity-objectivity being the saving factor. Oh depths of confusion. No-the whole concept of objectivity which has been made into our salvation is merely the food of sickness. . . ." \(^2\) He realizes the extent to which this detached objectivity has penetrated into our common sense, and is amused at those who become so objective that they seem to achieve an almost permanent detachment from themselves. In conversation he sometimes felt that he was talking not to the man himself but rather to some distant relative, a second cousin, or perhaps an uncle.

He notes the striking contrast between the great ascetic system of Schopenhauer and the actual categories by which he lived.
Usually the philosophers (Hegel as well as the rest), like the majority of men, exist in quite
different categories for everyday purposes from those in which they speculate, and console
themselves with categories very different from those which they solemnly discuss. That is the
origin of the mendacity and confusion which has invaded scientific thinking.

Kierkegaard called this a lack of reduplication, and found it exemplified in Hegel's attempt to
absorb Christian Faith as a mythical step in his great objective system. But authentic Faith is not
an object from which one can become detached in order to gaze at it from a distance. It is rather a
way of thought which must be duplicated in personal existence. How different it is to talk about
Christianity, even to admire it from an objective point of view, and really to exist as a Christian.

This is the origin of the term existentialism. Modern philosophy has failed to come to grips
with the human subject as lived from within. It has tried to deny it, to evade it, to detach it from
the world. But nevertheless this subject exists. It cannot be denied, and hangs over the whole
succession of objective systems like a threatening cloud, breaking in at unexpected moments with
shattering gusts of storm. It is inescapable, and yet unresponsive to all the prevailing modes of
approach. How is it to be identified and grasped? Here, I think, is Kierkegaard's fundamental
philosophic insight. It is not a peculiar kind of property or thing, nor any set of properties. It is
rather a mode of existing. In evading the "subject" modern thought has been evading the act of
existing, and this is no small evasion. To be right about everything but existence is very far from
being right. As Kierkegaard puts it in his Concluding Unscientific Postscript:

The way of objective reflection makes the subject accidental, and thereby transforms
existence into something indifferent, something vanishing...

It leads to abstract thought, to mathematics, to historical knowledge of different kinds; and
always it leads away from the subject whose existence or non-existence, and from the objective
point of view quite rightly, becomes infinitely indifferent. Quite rightly, since, as Hamlet says,
existence and non-existence have only subjective significance.

By ignoring the "subjective" we have been ignoring existence.

This lived existence cannot be squeezed into a "private corner" of some vast objective
framework nor into a momentary now in time.

It is far too basic and pervasive for this, and is bound to explode with devastating
consequences. We cannot escape from subjectivism by evading the so-called subject. We must
rather go into this "subject" and find out what and how it really is. The whole confused notion
needs to be rethought in the light of the given data.

Kierkegaard initiated this process of re-examination and reformulation, and glimpsed many
of those revolutionary consequences which have been confirmed and deepened by the studies of
such authors as Jaspers, Marcel, and more especially by Heidegger in his great book, Sein und
Zeit. In this disciplined and painstaking work of phenomenological description, the confused
terms subject and object are scrupulously avoided for the sake of clarity, and many of
Kierkegaard's brilliant insights into the structure of lived existence are developed and analyzed
with painstaking accuracy.

These insights are best understood in the light of four further trends of post-Cartesian
philosophy: 1) the restricted view of immediate empirical data associated with British empiricism
and especially with Hume; 2) an emphasis on human nature in general, the essence of man
abstracted from its temporal act of existing; 3) a view of the mind as a substantial container
divorced from the world of changing things and persons; and 4) a radical separation of value
from fact.

I. THE RESTRICTED EMPIRICISM OF HUME
By turning his attention to the forbidden regions of the so-called subjective, Kierkegaard succeeded in focusing certain obscure and neglected data of lived existence such as mood and feeling, choice and repetition, human temporality, anxiety, despair, and death. In many cases he was able to shed additional light upon them and to show that prevailing modes of interpretation were oversimplified or definitely distorted. Because of the accepted view of these data as contained within a "subjective" mind and the terminology associated with this view which he never completely outgrew, Kierkegaard's penetrating analyses of these data have often been called "subjective" and irrational. He is supposed to have concentrated on peculiar experiences of his own, and to have indulged them by the construction of fantastic interpretations. This is far from the truth.

It is true that he is analyzing phenomena of inner existence long considered to be "subjective" and readily fitted into influential frames of reference. But his method of dealing with these data is eminently objective and rational. He is simply trying to describe them without distortion, precisely as they are given. "The majority of men," he says, "are subjective towards themselves and objective towards all others, terribly objective sometimes—but the real task is to be objective towards oneself, and subjective towards all others." He is a great phenomenologist, analyzing confused regions of personal existence with penetrating clarity, and revealing their necessary connections with one another. Far from being a lapse into subjective bias and irrationalism, his philosophical work is a triumph of rational description and analysis, an original penetration of reason into depths of experience long languishing in the dark obscurity of the obvious. These investigations have led to a fundamental questioning of traditional views of the human "subject," and to such a radically novel view of human existence as we find in Heidegger's Sein und Zeit.

II. THE HUMAN ESSENCE IN ACT
AND A NEW VIEW OF TIME

Classical treatises on man like the De Anima and Aquinas T-Tactatus de Homine have given us penetrating analyses of human nature in general, the universal essence of man, abstracted from the act of existing. This essence has been carefully divided into its component characteristics. Each faculty has been separated from the rest and exactly described. The human mind may have to proceed in this way, by chopping a thing into its formal parts and examining them one by one. But it is not these conceptual fragments that exist. We are never confronted with such universal fragments of man. We are confronted with an individual person in the act of becoming, with all his faculties in operation all at once. Kierkegaard is an empiricist, interested in what is actually given. Hence we find him sharply attacking the abstract essentialism of traditional philosophy which has concentrated on abstract essences or structures, and has often confused them with being.

He says in his Journal:

What confuses the whole doctrine about being in logic is that people do not notice that they are always operating with the concept of existence. But the concept of existence is an ideality, and the difficulty is of course whether existence can be reduced to a concept. . . . Kant is right that with existence no new essence is added to the concept. He is evidently thinking honestly of existence as irreducible to a concept, empirical existence.6

Kierkegaard is not interested in the abstract essence alone by itself, which never exists. He is concerned rather with the essence as it really is in the empirical act of existing, with all its faculties in operation. He is trying to describe this act and the different ways in which the
operations are integrally held together within it. Such an analysis had never been persistently attempted before, and an adequate vocabulary was lacking. Kierkegaard's importance as a philosopher and phenomenologist lies in the fact that he inaugurated a disciplined effort to perform this task. As a result of his labors and those of his followers, a technical vocabulary has been devised, and results of epoch-making importance have been achieved. We have no time, of course, to give an exhaustive review of these results. We shall select the problem of human time in the attempt to show how certain suggestions of Kierkegaard have finally led to Heidegger's recent formulation of a radically novel theory of existential time.

In dealing with the phenomenon of time the western philosophical tradition on the whole has followed Aristotle in emphasizing the present rather than the past and future. Time is then regarded as a succession of nows, one after the other. This has had a profound and lasting influence on common sense in the West. Thus we think of time as a stream in which what we now call the past comes first, then the present, and finally the future. At any given moment, however, only the present is actual. The past, when actual, was a now, but at this instant it is only a no-longer-now. When actual, the future will also be a present now, but at this instant it is only a not-yet-now. We think of this now-succession as going on indefinitely and containing within itself, as a measure, all the events that ever have been, are, or will be, including our own existence.

As Heidegger has pointed out, this view, when carefully considered, is open to serious questions. Events in time succeed one another. But time does not come after itself. It involves a constant factor, always real. What is this constant factor? Time itself as distinguished from processes in time? The classical theory is not clear.

We speak of the phases or ecstasies of time, as Heidegger calls them, as if one could exist by itself, and be succeeded by another.

But does this really make sense? What is a past without present and future, or a present without future and past? This leads to another question concerning the classical emphasis on the present as alone actual.

If the past and future are wholly unreal what then do we mean by them? Surely we refer to something with some kind of being of its own. Do we do justice to this distinctive character of the future by calling it a now that is not-yet? What is this not-yetness? If neither this nor the past has being, then again: what meaning can be attached to the present? What is left of the present when future and past are subtracted? Finally, if time goes on indefinitely, why do we speak of it as always passing? Why do we not say rather that more and more is coming? These questions are not fully answered by the classical theory.

Kierkegaard began struggling with the problem of time, which he referred to as "the life principle of history," in his early work, Either/Or (1843). He noted how the objective, aesthetic attitude, which also dominates much of what we now call common sense, tends to concentrate on what is now here before me as the essence or time, and how time itself comes to be viewed as a mere succession of nows, each different from the one before. He criticized this as ignoring the actual process of existing which cannot be thus squeezed into a now, as well as the phenomenon of repetition, as he called it, which characterizes the higher levels of human life.

If I would represent a hero who conquers kingdoms and lands, he can very well be represented in the now, but a cross-bearer who every day takes up his cross cannot be represented either in poetry or in art, because the point is that he does it every day. If I would imagine a nero who stakes his life, it can very well be concentrated in the now, not the business of dying daily, for here the principal point is that happens every day. Courage can very well be concentrated in the now, but not patience, precisely for the reason that patience strives with
time.10

He is beginning to see that the lived time of human existence cannot be reduced to a succession of nows running off in time. The past cannot be dismissed as a now-no-longer, nor the future as a now-not-yet. Each of these has a distinctive being of its own, quite different from the present. But no one of these can exist alone without the rest. Thus in The Concept of Dread (1844) he criticizes the Greek view for attempting to understand the past "without defining this by its relation to the present and the future."11

Each phase of time requires the others. But the future enjoys a certain priority, because it is towards this guiding future that authentic existence is moving.

In making this division [between present, past, and future] attention is at once drawn to the fact that in a certain sense the future signifies more than the present and the past; for the future is in a sense the whole of which the past is a part, and in a sense the future may signify the whole.12

Novelty of course is always emerging and replacing what preceded it. But Kierkegaard never attached any great value to novelty as such. This is constantly occurring both in human history and in sub-human nature. Nothing is so old as the new. The most distinctive phase of history is man's capacity to withstand this all-consuming flux of novelty, to stand firm in a final choice, and to repeat it up to the end.

As Kierkegaard puts it:

He who would only hope is cowardly, he who would only recollect is a voluptuary, but he who wills repetition is a man, and the more expressly he knows how to make his purpose clear, the deeper he is a man.

But he who does not comprehend that life is a repetition, and that this is the beauty of life, has condemned himself and deserves nothing better than what is sure to befall him, namely to perish.13

It is only through the repetition of a final choice up to the very end that the past, present, and future phases of existential time may be held together, and human integrity achieved. Otherwise these phases disintegrate, and life becomes a series of separate chunks which succeed one another like a physical process running off in time.

Kierkegaard never worked out these ideas in any detail. They remain undeveloped suggestions. But some of his later followers have worked them out with patience and care. The most important study of this kind is the new theory of time with which Sein und Zeit concludes.14 This theory owes more to Kierkegaard than is commonly recognized by recent commentators, as I hope may be suggested by the following summary.

Time is a structure of human existence which is always stretched out into the ecstasies, as Heidegger calls them, of future, past, and present. Particular events in time are variable and succeed one another, but this ecstatic structure of time itself remains constant as long as we exist. The ecstasies may be held together by a final decision that takes over the whole of life in full responsibility, or they may be allowed to drift apart by indecision and postponement.

The common sense view is an indication of such irresponsibility.

But in either case, they are interdependent and form an integral whole. No single ecstasy can exist without the others.

The past which I have been has a distinctive reality of its own.

My projected future exists in a mode of possibility quite distinct from presents. Neither one, in fact, can be reduced to the present.

Each makes a necessary and irreducible contribution to the temporal being of man. This human time will not go on indefinitely.

It is limited by the final boundary of death. This is why we know that time is ever passing.
My life does not unroll itself in successive parts like other events in time. It is rather true that I am this time.

To waste or lose time is to waste myself. To gain time is to gain an opportunity for existing.

As an exhaustive account of the complex phenomena of time, Heidegger's theory is open to serious objections. One may certainly question whether what he has described is the only time there is.15

But there is little doubt that he has shed much needed light on the phenomenon of human time. He has filled in an important gap in traditional theory, and his revolutionary approach, foreshadowed by brilliant suggestions of Kierkegaard, deserves the attention of all serious thinkers.

III. THE MIND AS A SUBSTANTIAL CONTAINER
AND THE FIELD CONCEPTION OF MAN

Throughout the course of modern philosophy, the human self is been identified primarily with the mind or cognitive subject, nee Descartes, this mind has been regarded as a thinking thing, veiling in lonely isolation, and divorced from the external world of extended objects. The only data immediately available to it are its own private states or impressions. In the intricate and devious discussions of modern epistemology it has become increasingly obscure how any sort of inference to independent objects could be justified. Hence the so-called problem of the external world has become ever more pressing and confused. From this epistemological point of view, knowing the world is the most basic way in which we can become related to it. Thus if doubt is cast, as it certainly has been cast, on whether we can know the world, it is more and more dubious as to whether we can be related to it at all. Solipsism looms up as a formidable skeleton in this closet of modern philosophy, and the so-called "problem of the external world," which Kant called a scandal, grows ever more pressing and more confused.

Kierkegaard felt that this so-called "problem" was wholly artificial, and that it arose from an unnecessary neglect of the datum of human existence. There are many passages which could be quoted in this connection, but a few selections from the Postscript should suffice. Descartes was wrong in thinking that cogito ergo sum is a genuine inference. It is not an inference at all, but a sheer tautology. As he says, "...if I am thinking, what wonder that I am?" the assertion has already been made, and the first proposition says even more than the second. . . . There is no conclusion here, for the proposition is a tautology." 16 Thinking is always given as an existent thinking, belonging to an existent person. Descartes' worst mistake was to hypostatize this thinking as a separate thing, and to neglect the act of existing and its complex structure.

"The real subject," as Kierkegaard says, "is not the cognitive subject, since, in knowing, he moves in the sphere of the possible; the real subject is the ethically existing subject." 17 This existing subject is related to the world in myriad ways besides the knowing relation. Knowing, however, is a necessary phase of his existing, and as such he is necessarily in the world. There can be no isolated, cognitive subject without a world. This is a fantastic construction based on crucial ontological mistakes. This insight of Kierkegaard's has now become a commonplace of disciplined phenomenology.

Thus, in his interesting intellectual autobiography, Marcel says that to him many of the epistemological problems of modern philosophy are "of merely academic interest." Among these, he underscores "the problem of the reality of the outward world as it is stated in philosophical textbooks. None of the extremist forms of idealism which deny this reality ever seemed to me convincing; for to what more certain or more intimate experience could this reality be opposed?"
As Kierkegaard put it, thought is included as an essential phase of personal existence. But existence cannot be included within thought, and also derived from it. This insight into the entitative foundations of cognition led him to make several brilliant suggestions which have since been confirmed and developed by painstaking research. One of the most important of these concerns mood and feeling. In the post-Cartesian tradition of philosophy these phenomena have been interpreted as subjective passions or physiological disturbances occurring within the human organism, having psychic correlates, but possessing little or no cognitive significance. Kierkegaard questioned this influential dogma. In his careful studies of the feeling of anxiety and the allied feelings of boredom, melancholy, and despair (to which he devoted a whole volume), he showed their profound cognitive significance and the manifold phases of existence, both internal and external, to which we have access only though their primordial revealing power.

By sense and feeling, I am aware of the concrete being that I already am, and of the factual situation into which I have been thrown. In addition to these, there is the clearer revealing power of intellectual cognition which manifests itself in many ways.

Kierkegaard sharply distinguishes the abstract thought of science and human discourse, which focuses the essences and possibilities of things, from the pure thought of Hegel, which is supposed to construct and constitute its objects. Against the latter he carried on a persistent and bitter polemic which has often been interpreted as an attack on reason itself. But this is a serious misunderstanding.

The pure thought of Hegel is not reason itself but a misconception of reason. Kierkegaard never questioned the capacity of abstract science to grasp the structure of sub-human objects and to predict abstract possibilities. He did question its capacity to understand human existence and its claim of providing us with an all-comprehensive philosophy. He saw that this kind of scientism was already having a disastrous effect on ethics and religion. This *s clearly expressed in the following passage from his Journals:

I always say: all honor to the sciences, etc. But the thing is that bit by bit people have tried to popularize the scientific spirit, it has forced rts way down amongst the people-true religiousness has gone to pot, and existential respect is lost.19

Abstract science has its place. It becomes dangerous only when, as in the pure thought of Hegel, it tries to identify itself with being as such. "Abstract thought," he says in the Postscript, "embraces the possible, either the preceding or the subsequent possibility: pure thought is a phantom." 20 In addition to these, there is the method of phenomenological description which Kierkegaard himself is using in attempting to clarify the structures of human existence in act.

Understanding is not the product of a mind-thing isolated from the world. It is rather a guiding phase of actual existence. Feeling and understanding are not locked up within a substantial container.

They are rather outstretchings of the human subject, ways of being in the world. They are not separated from, but an essential phase of, my existence. Life and awareness vary together in mutual interdependence. Kierkegaard's attack on the mind-thing theory of Descartes, and his penetrating studies of mood, feeling, and thought as they actually operate in the act of human existing have now been developed by his followers, the existential phenomenologists, into a radically novel field conception of man. Human existence is not enclosed within the limits of a static I-thing. It is rather stretched out temporally into the past which I have been and the future which I project ahead of me, and stretched out spatially into the regions of care which are ordered into my world. This world is not something out there remote from me. It is rather an essential phase of my existence. Without a world there can be no person.
Both Jaspers and Sartre have recognized this with unmistakable clarity. But the most exact and disciplined description of the world structure is to be found in Heidegger's epoch-making Sein und Zeit.

In our last and final section, we shall briefly consider this new field conception of human existence and its ethical implications.

IV. KIERKEGAARD AND EXISTENTIAL ETHICS

When we ask about the ethical implications of existentialism we are confronted with noteworthy paradoxes. On the one hand, it seems to be pervaded by a profound moral feeling which has brought forth cogent criticisms of modern and contemporary culture. Yet on the other hand, the literature is singularly lacking in specific prescriptions and has often been accused with real reason of unmitigated moral relativism. This paradox, I think, is to be explained by the new light that has been shed on the human act of existing. If value is the fulfilment of being, new light on being must lead to the discovery of new values. This in fact is what has happened. Just as the human essence points to what should be done, so the act of existing, when properly analyzed, points to how it should be done. As classical ethics has clarified certain essential values, so existentialist ethics has clarified certain existential values, as we may call them.

These existential values are not so much concerned with what should be chosen as how the choice should be made. They are not virtues or kinds of act, but rather ways of acting that pervade all the so-called virtues, as the first act of being pervades every formal phase of the essence it realizes. As Kierkegaard puts it in Either/Or:

In making a choice it is not so much a question of choosing the right as of the energy, the earnestness, the pathos with which one chooses.

Thereby the personality announces its inner infinity, and thereby in turn the personality is consolidated. Therefore even if a man were to choose the wrong, he will nevertheless discover precisely by reason of the energy with which he chose, that he has chosen the wrong.21

It is important to note that the essential difference between right and wrong is not denied. Our attention is called to another type of existential value that consolidates the personality, that permeates and underlies right acts so far as they are actually performed, and is therefore even more important.

Freedom, for example, is such a value. It is not a kind of act or virtue. Hence it was never sharply focused by classical moral theory.

It is rather a pervasive existential structure, a way of existing that must pervade the whole hierarchy of virtues, if they are to be realized in the fragile and contingent life of man. Unlike recent moral theorists in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, Kierkegaard was deeply concerned with this existential value. As he says in one place, "The most tremendous thing which has been granted to man is: the choice, freedom," 22 and he devoted all his powers of description to the task of clarifying this obscure phenomenon. But its complex nature led him far afield. He found that freedom could not be understood without an analysis of the strange feeling of anxiety (to which he devoted a whole volume), of what we call conscience and understanding, of human time, of death, and human integrity.

We have already commented on some of the results of these novel investigations. Dying just one hundred years ago at the age of forty-two, he was never able to organize these brilliant suggestions into a single coherent pattern. But in 1927 this task was achieved by Heidegger in a disciplined and profoundly original banner. Sein und Zeit has many novel features of its own. Many of Kierkegaard's insights have been deepened and clarified. The synthesis is original. But
the basic concepts have been taken from the Danish author, as we shall try to suggest in the following summary.

As Kierkegaard first pointed out, the strange feeling of anxiety is the gateway to human freedom. As the new phenomenology has conclusively shown, feeling in general cannot be properly understood as a mere subjective disturbance within the human substance.

It is rather a primary mode of revealing which necessarily belongs to human beings. Other types of feeling, like fear, are directed towards specific objects. Thus I am afraid of the visual sickness which threatens a research project in which I am engaged.

What then does anxiety reveal to me? What is its specific object?

If someone asks us in a really anxious moment what it is, we are apt to say: it is nothing. And in a sense this answer is true, for there is no specific object that can be identified as threatening a definite region of care. It is no-thing but rather everything. This is a pervasive or, we may say, a philosophic feeling which reveals to myself alone the desolation of my whole being-in-the-world just as I am.

What then does anxiety reveal to me? It must be something external and beyond me as I am already. But not beyond myself and my world, for this includes everything I am and know. What nonspecific being lies beyond me and yet within me? Heidegger's precise analysis of the evidence points clearly to the answer. It is my own real possibilities looming up before me, my total being-in-the-world as it might be, if I really became what I am.

We may stifle this strange feeling and try to escape from it by busy distractions, or we may freely face it. But in either case, it is a constant threat to that masterful complacency which makes us at home in the world as it already is. If we turn to it and face it, we become silent and we hear the call of conscience.

Like anxiety, conscience seems to involve a peculiar union of personal immanence with transcendence. On the one hand, my conscience is certainly my own, and yet it seems beyond my management and control. I cannot argue with my conscience or arrange it. Hence some have interpreted it as the communication from a supernatural source, others as the expression of induced cultural attitudes. Since Kant, we tend to picture conscience as a courtroom scene in which deficient acts, already performed, are subjected to a cold judicial review in terms of fixed, normative principles. As Heidegger's careful analysis has shown, none of these interpretations fits squarely with the evidence.

Supernatural transcendence is not required to explain this phenomenon. The human person always transcends himself in the sense that he is those real possibilities which he projects ahead of himself, and of which he is always at least dimly aware. The voice of conscience is a call from this real self of mine, so remote from what I already am. This calls to me from beyond myself, and yet from the future depths of myself to take over my lapsed being, to act with real decision, to become what I really am. We speak of the spurs of conscience. This shows that it is no mere ex post facto review but a summons to authentic action. It cannot be exclusively identified with any set of fixed principles for these also, like all phases of my being, may be threatened by the pervasive voice of conscience. It is concerned not only with what I do, but also with how I do it, not only with abstract static form but with concrete form flowing into being. I may listen to its distant call or suppress it by busy talk and argument. In either case, it belongs to me as an existential challenge which pervades the whole of my being in the world. If I listen, I hear it calling me to final decision.

Classical ethics was constantly concerned with moral wholeness or integrity. It carefully studied the different, qualitative components of this ideal whole, and the systematic order into which they must be fitted. Much light was shed upon this ideal essence.
But little attention was paid to those fragile and less obtrusive lodes of existence by which this ideal structure may be sometimes approximated and in some degree at least brought into being. How is human integrity, the wholeness of human existence, to be achieved in the concrete? A moment's reflection on this question will show that we are faced with a peculiar difficulty.

If, as we still think, human life is to be conceived as a successive process running off in time like the orbital revolution of a planet or the growth of a plant, it exists in a piecemeal manner and can never exist with all its parts together at once. At any given moment in my life, I am not all there. There is still more to come. At the moment of my death, I am indeed finished, but then I am not there at all. With such a view of being as being there in the present, it is no wonder that the ancients were unable to work out a cogent answer. But the recent studies of human time, mentioned above, have at last shed some light on this troublesome problem.26

Death is indeed the end of human life. But my death, which is most important to me, is not something which I shall be able gaze at from a detached, objective point of view as something ere before me. It is something I must evade or face right now. I may evade it by living in the present moment, forgetting my past and "choosing" only temporary courses of action which are not seriously thought through and do not commit me up to the very end. When one of these is ended, I may then try something new.

Thus I live through my life in successive chunks, like a process in time which is never all there and achieves no genuine integrity.

Another alternative, however, is open to me. I may face the thought of my death, and in the light of this appraise the whole of my being now. This must include a full recollection of the past which I already am, and an intensive projection of my last possibilities—the most I can do with the whole of my being as it already is. In the light of such an appraisal, I may then choose to act at this moment in an integral way, no longer postponing an ultimate choice, but committing myself with the whole of my being up to the very end. Heidegger calls this kind of philosophic reflection and the life it elicits being-unto-death (Sein-zumTode)?7 It is the only way to human integrity, which is not an event or a set of events, but a way of existing now and at every moment. To all of us it is open—at this moment.

Such is the structure of authentic human existence as it is presented to us in Sein und Zeit. This authentic existence is ever threatened by that mode of impersonal, unanxious oneness which Heidegger has described in his famous account of das Man.28 But this also was anticipated by fertile hints and suggestions of his Danish predecessor.

Kierkegaard was keenly aware of the tendencies which were already beginning in his time to streamline personal thought and action into fixed mass patterns. He saw the danger of these tendencies, and bitterly attacked such Hegelian conceptions as that of objectiver Geist which provide them with a philosophical foundation. The person no longer understands and expresses himself from within. He rather regards himself from a detached point of view, and levels himself down to the sort of thing that anyone can understand.

"For a time," Kierkegaard says, committee after committee is formed, so long, that is to say, as there are still people who passionately want to be what they ought to be; but in the end the whole age becomes a committee. A father no longer curses his son in anger, using all his parental authority, nor does a son defy his father, a conflict which might end in the inwardness of forgiveness; on the contrary, their relationship is irreproachable, for it is really in process of ceasing to exist, since they are no longer related to each other within the relationship. In fact it has become a problem in which the two partners observe each other as in a game instead of having any real relation, and they note down each other's remarks instead of showing firm
devotion.29

Truth is accessible to the individual intellect alone. Authentic existence results from personal choice and from personal zeal in following it through. But modern society is dominated by leveling forces which water down the undiluted truth to the sort of thing that anyone can understand and tone down the pattern of life to what anyone can approve. As a result of his own experience, Kierkegaard sees the Press a? one of the most potent of these standardizing forces. In a well-known passage of the Journals he writes:

The demoralization that comes from the Press can be seen from this fact. There are not ten men in every generation who socratically speaking are afraid of having a wrong opinion; but there are thousands and millions who are more frightened of standing alone even with an opinion which is quite right than of anything else. When something is in the papers it is eo ipso certain that there is always a good number of people having the opinion or about to express it.30

Kierkegaard also noted the strange toneless anonymity which seems to pervade the public Press where the authentic ring of personality has been drowned out by an even monotone. We are not presented here with what any definite person really thinks, sees, believes, or really chooses, but rather with what one sees, one thinks, or one prefers. "Indeed," we are told, if the Press were to hang out a sign like every other trade it would have to read: Here men are demoralized in the shortest possible time on the largest possible scale, for the smallest possible price.31

Kierkegaard had a deep sense of social responsibility and believed that it was the duty of a philosopher to take a stand on issues and to act as a cultural critic for his time. Hence he devoted a small volume, The Present Age, to an analysis of those leveling tendencies, as he called them, which were in his opinion the greatest threat to the survival of personal existence. When one reads it at the present time one has constantly to remind himself that it was written not yesterday but more than a hundred years ago, so clearly does he reveal the nature of those daemonic mass phenomena with which we are now so tragically familiar. In this short work we can find not only the germinal concepts underlying Heidegger's well known analysis of das Man but concepts underlying many other existentialist essays in cultural criticism. The best known of these are Jaspers' Man and the Modern Age, written just before the Nazi revolution in Germany, and Marcel's recent work, Man Against Mass Humanity.

As Kierkegaard was well aware, his own thought was finite and imperfect. His attack upon mass standardization and his passionate concern for the individual person often led him towards an existential solipsism which seemed to deny the possibility of inter-subjective communication. He sometimes confused his attack on Hegelian rationalism with an attack on human reason itself. In this vein he occasionally seems to reject objective reflection as such, and thus to deny the very method that he himself uses with such penetration. Unfortunately both of these strains in his thought have been taken over and given exaggerated emphasis by many of his successors. But in him they are only aberrant strains for which he himself has suggested the correctives.

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We have been exclusively concerned with Kierkegaard's philosophical ideas. But we must here remind ourselves that he is first and foremost a religious thinker. His own most original conceptions come from classical and Christian, especially Augustinian, sources.

In developing these notions, he came to see the radical inadequacy of the prevailing essentialist view of man and was led on to serious investigations of his own into the unexplored regions of personal existence. These soon produced results of striking novelty and radical importance. Far from being a quixotic leap into the irrational, they are, as a matter of fact, a triumph of empirical insight, which has been confirmed and further developed by qualified observers.

These insights bear on the ultimate structure of being. On the continent of Europe, they have
inaugurated what is for modern thought a new kind of ontological discussion. This discussion is still in flux. Whether it will bring forth a radically new ontology is not yet clear. But that it has brought forth a radically new approach to the being of man can no longer be called in question.

It is founded on the seminal insights and fertile suggestions of the lonely Danish thinker whom we are honoring today.

NOTES


2. Journals, No. 1042 (X2 A 401).


8. From the Greek c&orawu (outstretchings).


10. Either/Or II, 114 or Anchor, II, 138 (II, 147 f.).

11. The Concept of Dread, p. 80 (IV, 396).

12. The Concept of Dread, p. 80 (IV, 395 f.).


17. Ibid.

18. The Philosophy of Existence, p. 87.


22. Journals, No. 1051 (X2 A 428).


25. Sein und Zeit, sec. 54-60.


27. Sein und Zeit, p. 308.

28. Sein und Zeit, sec. 27.

29. The Present Age, pp. 17, 18 (VIII, 86).

3i- Ibid.
Every author imposes limitations upon his readers, which limitations are a function of his style and language, of his subject matter, and, furthermore, the way in which all of these are related. Kierkegaard is no exception to this rule. But what distinguishes him is that he noted such matters and frequently commented upon them, referring repeatedly to his own writings. However, with ironic disregard, the immense volume of scholarship upon his writings seems almost systematically oblivious to the importance of these peculiarities and to the literature which Kierkegaard himself provided about them. Of course, no author's words are obligatory for the reader, not even, strangely enough, if they happen to be true. Indicative sentences even if true are not imperatives. The many scholars whose entire lives are expended upon other men's past deeds and writings are in fact free to disregard any author's suggestions about the mode of reading and understanding and are free to adopt others if they so choose. This freedom has been exercised with Kierkegaard and will undoubtedly characterize future treatment of him too.

The array of university professors and professor-aspirants has apparently a kind of general method, or at the most a couple of them, which are undoubtedly honorable, scholarly, sound, and objective. All of these are words of praise. They denote the qualitative requisites of the scholar's craft and honor. Also, these words symbolize the requirements for the manipulation of lives and thoughts according to the learned community's rules. It is, however, a very wholesome thing once in a while to shake oneself a bit and ask in a spirit of detachment just what this major industry amounts to anyway. Indeed, this is to touch the point about which laughter comes the hardest. If nothing else, the solemnity that goes with pursuing the truth, that inheres in learning because it is so foreign to the majority, that attaches to such constancy of effort, to checking of sources, to meeting objections, to exhausting the evidence-this solemnity is enough to quiet the discomfiture of most scoffers just as the smell of incense temporarily inhibits the clerical jokester. But there is an irony about scholarship and not least in that which concerns Kierkegaard. For despite the character of his argument and the literature designed to present it, he, too, as one might well expect (most of us professors being what we are!), is now subject to the argument which says: another man's writing cannot be understood without historical knowledge about the man and his writings. In effect this means that we cannot understand the sentences in the author's works without knowing other true sentences about the man, the books he read, the books he did not read, the places where he lived and visited, and again, distressingly enough, the places where he did not live and did not visit. There is no a priori limit which can be imposed on this lengthy prolegomena, and, if there were, it certainly would not be in the interest of the scholars to state it. But all of this raises the question of what it means to understand an author's works, and especially one who wrote what Kierkegaard did.

This question is distressingly elementary. It is perhaps the sign of maturity not to question any longer one's presuppositions but rather to act upon them. And whole battalions of scholars,
not questioning the propriety of what they are doing, are again at work—they have now discovered Kierkegaard. Flattering as all this is to Denmark and to the faithful corps in Denmark who knew all the time that he was really worth it, nonetheless, and at the risk of evincing dreadful immaturity, I am here going to question the presuppositions of historical scholarship with respect to Kierkegaard's writings and, using Kierkegaard's own categories, ask where it is all going and why.

For whatever else might be said about Kierkegaard, this much at least is true, namely, that he proposed a theory of understanding which is novel and intrinsically significant. If it is true, it probably engenders his irony towards scholarship and professors and ought to be regarded for whatever it is worth; if it is false, it ought to be so argued. But nothing this clear is apparent. Instead, the scholars seem to say that Kierkegaard is a great author and full of truths and then adopt methodologies which are in large part compatible only with the falseness of Kierkegaard's argument.

No one can quarrel if historical knowledge is pursued for its own sake. For knowledge does not need any other justification than that which its possession provides. But this is not what is said on behalf of scholarship about another man's writings. Then it is usually, if not always, argued that historical knowledge is instrumental to understanding the author's writings. If anyone asks, "How much knowledge?" the answer is, "All that can be had." This provides an interesting picture. About Goethe, Kierkegaard, and Kant—in fact, all the greats in literature and argument—the scholars would make one believe that their arguments, their sentences, their creations, have to be placed among the scholars' sentences about them in order to be understood. It is true that sentences about a man and about his books are either true or false and that some kind of evidence is necessary to determine which. But, according to most scholars who seem either unwilling or unable to admit the limited role which such sentences might have, the sentences about an author must be read with the sentences which the author himself wrote, and this, presumably, in order to understand the latter. This view seems to presuppose the belief that all sentences, at least if true, refer to the same thing; or, if not this belief, then the belief that there are no essential differences, no levels of language. More naively, it supposes that the issue or question which engaged the author is the same or is translatable into the same as that which engages the historical scholar who writes some time later. This is to disregard the fact that sentences about other sentences (even if both are true) do not augment the truth-claim of the first group of sentences.

It is sad to reflect upon the obtuseness of the great ones who write and think so well. They could save countless man-hours of labor if they would only write out these countless prolegomena themselves, thus making understanding of their writings possible without so much ink and talk. But then scholarship would have its taproot cut. One might assume that if scholarship is so important then no creative writer could ever be anything less himself.

Kierkegaard made many droll remarks about the scholars and scholarship, some of them downright derogatory. But it is quite clear from the Postscript and the Philosophical Fragments and numerous places in his papers that he is quarreling not with scholarship in itself but rather with a kind of metaphysics of knowledge, a quasi-argument, which says that all knowledge has a unity and a meaning in totality which no single knowledge-claim has apart from the rest. Any kind of research which is sustained by the view that something different is known when knowledge is extensive or total or which says that future "knowers" will reap a harvest which present knower can, must justify knowledge by reference to hypostatized cognitive objects. When scholars say that one "understands" an author's writings by exhausting the possible knowledge
about the author, then this conception of "understanding" is mythical, an invented and contrived aim. Furthermore, this kind of understanding is usually defined as qualitatively distinct from "understanding" any particular truth-claim about an author or about his books. All of this is reason enough for using the expression "metaphysics of knowledge"; for whatever else "metaphysics" has meant, it has invariably described "totalities" and "wholes" whose qualities are not a summation of the qualities of their parts. Persons who talk about Truth, rather than truths, and "Understanding," rather than what the author said, are quasi-metaphysicians, slightly abused perhaps by the strictures against Being and Reality, but confident, nonetheless, that the future will yield meanings and conclusions for which present lacklustre scholarship is only the preparation.

Scholarship in Europe and America is permeated with convictions like these. Kierkegaardian scholarship reflects it too. Most of it proceeds in accord with the belief that misunderstanding is a consequence of ignorance and that the accumulation of knowledge about antecedents and consequence-and everything knowable- will pay off in the end. Something different in kind will eventuate which no present knowledge thus far quite warrants. It was precisely such inflated views of knowledge, of the truth-claims of sentences, which Kierkegaard was at such pains to deny when he distinguished so clearly between logical claims and those about existence, between historical claims and those religious and ethical in intent.

Besides all of this Kierkegaard obliged the scholars by writing a literature about his literature, thus obviating part of their task. But he did not do it according to the scholar's rules! In fact, his "point of view" so describes the logic and form of the literature as to make this kind of scholarly "metaphysics of learning" irrelevant. He produced not so much historical knowledge as a clue to his literature and an argument about his argument.

This is not to deny, of course, that books can properly be written about Kierkegaard's life and literature. But these cannot, if Kierkegaard's literature is thought to be important and/or true, be connived as parts of a puzzle which, when all pieces are present, is going to be the "Understanding" of Kierkegaard's authorship. And, on the contrary, if Truth is a seamless robe, if it is One, if everything is related to everything and all relations can be known, then Kierkegaard's literature is as worthless as his every argument is mistaken. For it is precisely against such a view that he wrote. Therefore, one is obliged in writing about Kierkegaard to do one of two things: (a), write historical literature about his deeds, his books, the events occasioning either, etc.; or (b), write a critical literature in which one engages the argument, religious and philosophic. In the first instance there is no promise of a systematic consequence unless a metaphysics of learning obtains (and then Kierkegaard is wrong); in the second instance one writes not about the man and his books as much as one translates his language and thoughts into one's own. This latter endeavor has a dignity of its own even though the scholar's community seldom attempts it. Whatever its importance to most scholars, it had an importance to Kierkegaard which was reflected in the very epistemological rudiments by which he articulated his literature.

It is to these I now turn.

II

Kierkegaard is distinguished for his exacting use of distinctions. One of these is the distinction between possibility and possibles, on the one side, and actuality and actuals, on the other. Qualitatively distinct as these are, yet it is the case, as Kierkegaard notes, that they do not differ in essence (i.e., to reflection and thought) but in being (i.e., in fact). Every actual about which I have knowledge has to be given a conceptual existence before it can be known. Therefore, knowledge of the actual is "mediated," because
sensations, percepts, ideas, and thoughts, all possibles, are the media. All cognition of actuality is a translation process, out of actual and factual being into possible and essential being. Kierkegaard nowhere says that a possible falsifies the actual or that the translation process is cognitively illegitimate or unnecessary. On the contrary, without the possibles there is no knowledge at all. All knowledge is mediation; and immediate and contemporaneous knowledge is a contradiction in language. Though Kierkegaard admits that there are sensory intuition and logical intuition yet he is quick to add that neither of these is cognitive of actuality nor does either issue (except by addition of other constituents) in judgments or propositions.

Kierkegaard's critical faculties are never more sharply focused than in those many instances (recorded in his literature and his papers) when he discusses the relationship between the conceivable (the possibles) and the thinker. Such a relationship is an immediate one. The existence of a possible is in the thought which thinks it, and, though possibles may be real, independent of the particular mind which thinks them, Kierkegaard refuses the speculative act by which this is asserted. He neither affirms nor denies the metaphysical status; instead he is content to point out that a possible exists for my thought only when I conceive it.

The relation to a sensation, a percept, is also immediate. This relation cannot be mediated either. For sensations, just like ideas, thoughts, categories and principles, are immediately possessed and acquire a mediating function only when used to describe actuality.

In respect to their cognitive use they mediate an actuality; in respect to their relation to the thinker they are in an immediate relation. Thus there is a kind of contemporaneity obtaining between the tools of knowledge (sensations, ideas, forms, and categories) and the thinker. A thinking person cannot doubt that a possible has existence; for to name it and to think it is to give it existence.

Cognitive doubt concerns properly the relation between possibles and objects conceived or perceived, not the relation between possibles and the thinking subject.

The difference cognitively between knowing a past and a present actuality is that in the former instance there are possibles deriving from documents and sundry sources, in the latter, possibles deriving from sensations. But actuality, past and present, exists to be known only when translated into the media of possibility. However, Kierkegaard was not primarily an epistemologist. He used such systematic considerations as these only to define his other problems and to explicate his critique of other views. This is therefore an important point; for these considerations do in fact determine his language and argument and can be neglected only at the peril of missing his point. Kierkegaard's point of course may not be important, especially if the reader believes otherwise; but if one believes he is worth reading it is well to get him straight.

Granted, then, that there is a contemporaneity between possibles noted and the thinker, this is still not to exhaust all that can be said about possibles. There are possibles which refer significantly to (a) present actualities, (b) past actualities, and (c) other possibles. We can have, in other words, cognitive truth about (a) present events, (b) the past, and (c) defined entities. Kierkegaard recognized similarities and differences between natural science and history on the one side, and mathematics and logic, on the other.

In addition, however, to all of these there is also a kind of possible which is not of cognitive significance. It, like all possibles, exists in an immediate relation to the thinker who thinks it. But if one asks to what such a possible can be referred, the answer is that it can be referred neither to the past nor to the present, at least not in the way that sensations are referred or as are, let us say, the ingredients of historical knowledge. This other kind of possible is not cognitive in function at all. Instead it finds expression as a requirement, a duty, a command, an obligation. Again, just as
sensations and ideas are, as objects of reflection, neutral entities, without intrinsic reference to actuality, so too are the ethical and religious possibles neutral and without intrinsic existential reference. Cognitive possibles get their reference in virtue of an act of the thinker, which act does not change the cognitive agent but effects only the transition from unintelligible to intelligible.

Ethical possibles get their reference in virtue of an interest and a passion of the person. As possibles they too are neutral and without reference. They acquire "reference" only when they are chosen and willed as the model for one's future. These possibles are then significant to the extent that a change in the man is effected.

Kierkegaard is not primarily a metaphysician. He does not believe, apparently, that there is a kind of cognition of actuality which is peculiarly philosophical. Empirical knowledge, i.e., knowledge of actual existence, is only probable, and ideal knowledge, i.e., knowledge of conceived possible existence (such as logic and mathematics), is certain or at least in principle certain. There is no certain knowledge, no a priori synthetic knowledge, of matters of fact or of actuality. Kierkegaard, therefore, has repudiated all philosophies, including Hegel's, which propose to offer cognition about actual existence as if it were cognition about conceived existence. Hegel's logico-metaphysics was therefore wrong in intention, whatever Hegel might also have said in fact, because it sought a single cognitive standpoint whereby past and present, actuality and possibility, and even obligation and fact, were to be described and known.

But Kierkegaard discovered something which gave him as a reflective writer an enormous subject matter and this was the fact that the possibles which are not cognitive but are ethical can still be described. The relationship to ethical possibles is again immediate. The immediacy is here properly passional and emotive. Another major error in philosophy is to treat such possibles as if they were true of objects, as if they were descriptive of actuality, and hence could be synthesized into cognitive unities and propositions. Kierkegaard's books put these ethical possibles into linguistic form without making them tools of cognition. The ethical and religious possibles can be objects of cognition but not tools of cognition. His writing engages the reader in such a way that the possibles stay possibles; they are not translated or synthesized into truths about actualities. Kierkegaard's literature is a presentation of kinds of possibilities, aesthetic, ethical, and religious idealities, which are neither true nor false because they are not cognitive, but are nonetheless meaningful because they depict (in possibility) what any person can in fact become. They are, in short, qua ethical and religious, the objects of interest, of aversion, of emulation, of desire, of enthusiasm.

The relation between Kierkegaard and the possibles was immediate. But Kierkegaard translates the possibles into linguistic form and thus communicates them to another. Then, however, the immediacy is restored. Yet they must be so communicated that the relation between them and the reader or hearer is also immediate.

Every thinking person in turn must make them immediate by virtue of giving them existence in his thought which thinks them and in his language which describes them. For it is undoubtedly true that one does not think and know a possible unless one is able to describe it linguistically. Everything which we have noted thus far argues principally for what we shall hereafter call cognitive immediacy in order to distinguish it from other kinds of immediacy which Kierkegaard notes.

III

But there is of course another kind of immediacy and this Kierkegaard called contemporaneity. In respect to one's own time and place there is historical contemporaneity. This
is also individual, particularized, and incommunicable in its particularity. But then there is the contemporaneity with one's feelings, one's emotions.

One's passions, one's interests and enthusiasms. This latter kind again is individual and particular. Kierkegaard's presupposition is that lidenskab (passion) is ethically regulative, that it defines personality. But Kierkegaard's contention is also to the effect that passion has qualities and that qualities can be known. And it is these which his writings convey to the reader. To say that there are qualities of passion presupposes (a) that qualities are knowable and communicable, (b) that they are communicable as possibles, (c) that their qualities qua possibles are not themselves passions.

All possibles qua possibles are objective, i.e., they can be described. It is Kierkegaard's uniqueness as a philosopher to have said that ethical possibles have as their correlatives, however, human passions. It is Kierkegaard's radicalness to have gone even further and argued that the qualities and intensities of passions are cognizable and are statable as the ethical and religious possibles.

If passions had no qualities, no communication about them could take place. But the distinction between having a passion and having knowledge of the passion is as wide as the distinction between actuality and possibility or the distinction between being ethical or religious and knowing about either ethics or religion.

What does all of this mean to the readers of Kierkegaard? It means that the way to understand him is to know these possibles.

One must make immediate for oneself these possibilities, reflect in them and with them. These are cognitive only of what passions can be; whether one ever realizes any quality of passion or subjectivity (as Kierkegaard calls such) is the reader's responsibility and not the author's. Kierkegaard's point is that when one understands that passion too is an immediacy, which, whether it is aesthetic or Christian, can be had only by being passionate, not by thinking passion's qualities, then it is also clear that to grasp the description of a passion is not ipso facto to be passionate.

Kierkegaard is a thinker and this means that he conveys possibilities. But those which he is interested in are not cognitive possibles. He is not primarily an epistemologist or a logician. He writes instead about those possibles which define requirements leveled at one's immediacy, one's subjectivity, at one's actuality (i.e., one's interest in his own existence). These possibles are multiple to cognition; they are exclusive of each other only when actualized.

Kierkegaard's writings are a public and cognitive mode of creating and describing possibles for the person who chooses to entertain them. And the principal kind of understanding which Kierkegaard's writings demand-and this in virtue of their nature and what they concern-is every reader's encounter with these possibilities. Kierkegaard destroys his own authority as he writes because he so strongly holds to this view. Understanding his writings is not a matter therefore of understanding their author. "To understand" means to grasp the possible implicit in the writing and to grasp this not mediately but by one's own act of reflection. This means also that one states the possible in one's own language.

Otherwise one would have an ironic situation comparable to that on which a man laughs at a joke because others laugh, not because he sees the point himself.

These observations are important now because without them the historians, literary and otherwise, might soon take over Kierkegaard too. At least a protest ought to be sounded on his behalf!

For studies about a man's historical immediacy always have a plausible significance. It seems to accord with the most common and elementary canons of judgment that of course one
understands any man's ideas when one understands his life and times, and, in fact, anything and everything else which affected him. But such a view supposes that the only significant immediacy is the historical immediacy. It supposes too that the immediacy which the given individual was trying to describe was his historical immediacy.

Despite all that can be said about Kierkegaard's attachment to Denmark and his own time, it still is not true that it was this immediacy which he sought to describe. After all he was not a reporter, not a commentator on current affairs. Nor was he either a philosopher of culture or a writer who argued that reflection was limited completely by one's culture. His own historical immediacy was his accidental point of departure for his encounter with the qualitative dialectic of ethico-religious possibilities, and he believed that every man's contemporaneity permitted, but did not require or predispose, the same encounter. Furthermore, Kierkegaard himself denied that historical immediacy was the most significant.

Now, he may have been wrong, and if so he is very significantly wrong and his thesis ought to be openly attacked. But this is not how the scholars proceed. They proceed again as if the recovery of the historical immediacy at best were essential to understanding the author's writings, regardless apparently of the author's asseverations to the contrary.

IV

What this means concretely is that all the knowledge, all the true propositions imaginable, about Kierkegaard's actual historical contemporaneity do not give one any other possibles than those which help one to reconstruct his historical actuality. Now all of his may be, or can be at least, true knowledge. It is, however, important to note as Kierkegaard did that knowledge of another person's actuality, historical or passional, is possibility. Granted that limitation, we have no difficulty in accustoming ourselves to the awareness that the thought of a person is not the existing person.

All such truths—be they about the books he read or the ideas he possessed or the arguments he won and lost—never provide the possibles which are the requirements, the deontological possibles which his literature concerns. For, to get at these is to engage Kierkegaard's argument.

All historical knowledge is in principle either true or false. There is literally an infinitude of sentences which might be true of any person and his time and place. The infinitude or well-nigh infinitude is indeed a methodological and psychological problem: Where shall one start? Where shall one stop? Is the knowledge already possessed justified by evidence? etc. But, and again in principle, there are conceivably some truths about anything historical; and a conviction to this effect probably guides every scholar's endeavors.

All of us proceed upon the notion that all the conceivable truths would, if finally gathered, agree with one another and be free of contrariety and contradiction. The goal (evasive as it is in fact) is always a kind of historical understanding which would never have to be redone because it is adequate to the facts that really are.

Even granted the fulfilment of this desire, all possible knowledge about Denmark, Regina, and Søren, everything about every book and the circumstances of its writing, would still not promise an understanding of Kierkegaard's writings. For the distinctions that matter here are not those between some knowledge and all, nor even between a slightly probable hypothesis and a very probable hypothesis. The distinction is rather between hypotheses (i.e., knowledge about matters of fact) and ethico-religious possibilities.

An analogue from Kierkegaard's own reflection might serve as illustration. He criticized
Hegel for confusing the issue by assuming that the changing content of thought necessitated changing forms of thought. To grasp successive, differing hypotheses about matters of fact does not suppose that the forms of reflection differ equally radically. If it did, then the history of empirical knowledge would also be the history and study of logic. Kierkegaard saw the ridiculousness of this, and his own writings are again a remarkable illustration of his independent grasp of logical principles and even of their description in use. The possibles which he called aesthetic, ethical, religious, and Christian are, like logical rules, neither true nor false. They are not hypotheses about matters of fact. If they were, then evidence would be the ground for asserting them. He asserts to the contrary that there is no transition from historical evidence and historical truths to any one of the possibles noted above. For these possibles are not hypotheses at all-they must be ntuited directly as possibles and as ethico-religious possibles, not are the cognitive possibles previously noted.

Furthermore, Kierkegaard's literature presents genuinely alternative possibles. No amount of evidence can reduce them to one.

But evidence and knowledge do reduce competing hypotheses to the single one which is justified by the relevant evidence. All of this is only to indicate that there is a radical qualitative distinction between understanding a hypothesis about a man, and grasping his language which describes not hypotheses but ethical possibilities.

There is no connection between the two except an accidental and fortuitous one. Or, rather, we should say that the relation between the possibles (ethical, aesthetic, religious, etc.) and any thinker is equally immediate and therefore cannot be commanded in advance by any science. Even that relation when described by another man becomes only a possibility of the relation and not the relation itself.

It is not, therefore, the amount of knowledge I have about another man's relation to such a possibility, even Kierkegaard's, to those his writings describe, which creates the possibility for myself. If anything creates the possibility it is only the other man's writings and not his relation to them.

We mean by a possible anything which is conceivable. Kierkegaard's writings describe possibles and of various kinds and significances. Even Christianity can be conceived and hence is a possibility or a possible. What I am here arguing is that the importance of Kierkegaard's literature lies in the following: (a) it is a presentation of possibles; (b) it is a presentation of a theory about these possibles. In respect to the latter Kierkegaard argues against other theories as to how possibles are encountered, including those expressed by most historical theology, speculative philosophy, and a miscellany of others. It is this theory which is Kierkegaard's own case against the kind of scholarship which argues that only by multiplying historical knowledge can one grasp the Possibles. It is this which if regarded would give scholarship a more "united but fitting role. Kierkegaard may be wrong, but if so he 'ught to be enjoined directly. The real task of Kierkegaardian scholarship, both affirmatively and negatively, is to address this heory and judge it. If it is wrong, then too the literature does not "nd cannot present possibles but only pretends to do so. This is u* a token of how difficult the task would be, for nothing seems ore obvious about Kierkegaard's literature than that it presents Possibles. The other side of the authorship is to encounter the Possibles for oneself, supposing that they are really offered. Then the encounter is direct and not via anything except one's own his. torical actuality-certainly not via Kierkegaard's! This is what Kierkegaard wanted most of all of his readers. But he knew that this would mean that "the individual," the one he spoke about so lovingly as "his reader," would very quickly forget Kierkegaard and instead become engrossed in the qualitative dialectic on his own.
To grasp Kierkegaard's theory presupposes philosophical talent. If he was wrong it will take genuine argument to show its error.

That he may have been wrong about historical details which he uses to articulate his theory again may be admitted without that admission vitiating the theory. His historical actuality was only the occasion for this theory but not its reason. For the theory is about possibles, not actuals. The possibles are his reasons for his theory.

To grasp these possibles (and not the theory) as requirements is Kierkegaard's wish for his readers. This does not ask for philosophical talent as much as it does an ability to read and to respond with fitting passion. If this can actually happen, the truth of his theory seems to follow almost as a matter of course.

My argument is therefore a plea for a kind of understanding which fits the literature. One can admire and even emulate the industry of the historical scholar without claiming for it the wrong telos. A wrong telos is one which asks that historical knowledge be the explanation and understanding of a requirement or a task or even of the theory about the task and obligations. A wrong telos is one which seeks the possible in the actual, an obligation in a fact, the language of morality and faith in the language of history and facticity. Kierkegaard perhaps deserves study as a personality. But the slightest regard for his literature presupposes that if his argument is correct, then the study of his personality is not the understanding of his argument.

It is interesting to note in this connection that Kierkegaard did not believe that the languages used to describe possibles, cognitive or ethical, had to be significantly different one from another. The imperative mood roots finally, if Kierkegaard is right, in the passions of the person, not in the sentence. Therefore, all sentences in which possibles are defined are properly in the indicative mood.

The obligatoriness and imperativeness of ethical and religious language are misunderstood if they are assumed to be qualities of the sentences, of the possibles; instead they are actually qualities of the person who passionately wills a possible to be paradigmatic for his historical actuality. The logic of ethical and religious language is the same logic as that of other indicative sentences; but such language requires a theory which describes its use, and this use is fundamentally different.

In conclusion, however, another remark becomes appropriate.

Kierkegaard believed that the glory of being human was to realize in one's own personality the most pervading of passions and enthusiasms. Among these, those of Christian quality were the truth for him. It is well to have the reminder (which all of us who write in this volume ought to be able to give ourselves) that Kierkegaard's entire writing career was expended not to make us scholars but to help us use our scholarly aristocratic abilities to grasp the possibilities which his aristocratic talents so deftly described. To grasp these possibilities is to exemplify a quality of passion.

If it is true that the myriad of volumes which are historical in orientation must necessarily be read in order to understand Kierkegaard's writings, then it behooves the historian to explain that Kierkegaard's theory about the possibles-the "stages on life's way" -is an erroneous conception. For the point which that theory makes is the simultaneity of "stages" to the thinker who writes about them and to those who read about them. The historical origin of that theory is not the understanding of that theory any more than Kierkegaard's historical contemporaneity (actuality) was a possibility or than the mediated ethical reality of another is the immediate encounter with duties and obligations for oneself.

But if all contemporaneity is historical (the relationship between a man and his time and place) and if the contemporaneity with aesthetic, ethical, and Christian possibles cannot exist as a
passional immediate subjectivity, then historical understanding is all that there can be. This, however, has yet to be shown, and until that day most historical scholarship about Kierkegaard has whatever intrinsic worth any kind of true sentences may have; but the extrinsic worth of historical scholarship as an aid to understanding Kierkegaard's writing is little.

NOTES

1. The entire essay, The Point of View for My Work as an Author, designed apparently to protect Kierkegaard's literature from conventional scholarly modes of reading. The essay is biographical only in the merest of showing that nothing biographical violates the plan of argument.

2. Philosophical Fragments, p. 61 (IV, 267).

3. Philosophical Fragments, pp. 64-71 (IV, 271-278).
Let us begin by listening to Kierkegaard himself:

I am not an apostle who brings something from God with authority.
No, I serve God, but without authority. My task is: to make room that God may come. [S. K. adds in the margin: My task is not to make room by commanding, but to make room through suffering.]

It is therefore easy to see why I must, quite literally, be a single individual man, item: be held in great weakness and fraility.

For if that which was to make room were to come at the head of a battalion or two-humanly speaking, it would certainly seem as though to make room were the best and safest thing to do. But then he who was to make room might himself usurp the place, might take up so much room that God could not come.

My task is to make room-and I am, if you will, the police. But in this world things are so arranged that the police come with authority and make arrests; the higher police, however, come suffering and demand rather to be arrested.1

We begin with this quotation in order to make clear from the start that to understand Kierkegaard's position in its religio-sociological situation does not mean to "relativize" it according to psychological and religio-sociological perspectives; it means the reverse: to re-establish the validity of such perspectives by means of the perspective introduced by Kierkegaard. In no sense do we hold that Kierkegaard was conditioned by or can be judged on the basis of his specific situation. On the contrary, Kierkegaard is significant precisely by virtue of the fact that he has fashioned the criteria by which our own spiritual situation can be clarified. True psychology and sociology must take into account man's freedom and the fact that freedom first announces itself in the form of dread. Only thus is it meaningful to say that non-decision, non-commitment between good and evil, is sin. The concrete human being is always a synthesis of time and eternity, something about which "objective" science knows nothing, since science with its abstract criteria gets no further than a comparison of man to the animals. And this is true not only of psychology but also of sociology. By abolishing freedom, one completely negates the category of the qualitative, and, by using the scientific causal explanation, one negates not only religion but ethics as well. We have received more and more freedom during the course of the last hundred years: social, economic, sexual freedom, freedom of work and freedom of opinion, and yet we feel how inner freedom has increasingly lost its meaning and been displaced by the
growing bureaucratic, omnipotent state.

Kierkegaard, on the other hand, discovered and maintained that man, in every decision, chooses whether he will remain in the natural state of "objective science" or whether he will affirm the call of eternity, the call of dread which freedom alone makes possible in the moment of decision, when man not only reflects back into the past but opens himself to the unknown of the future. The category of decision, therefore, is also constant repetition as a "forward-directed recollection." We shall begin our inquiry with these presuppositions taken from Kierkegaard himself.

Our age suffers from crises of collectivization. In family life, in public and social life, and in the life of the churches, the relation of the individual to the group has become problematic. Kierkegaard was one of the first to foresee this crisis and to reveal the roots of the problem. We shall soon see how wrong it is to dispose of Kierkegaard as being an individualist, subjectivist, and pessimist who negates a limine all idea of community-as if his intellectual attitude were akin to Nietzsche's aristocratic isolation of the genius.

He himself writes in his Journal:

There is no one to whom I reproach anything, they have not understood me. Even at the present time I cannot rid myself of the thought, which I have had from the very beginning, that perhaps every man thinks about God in his own thoughts. I have never overlooked any man, never even the least of them, a man-servant or maid-servant- the man who is "before God" must, deep down in his soul, tremble at the thought: what if in return God were to overlook you. This is j^d remains my misfortune: humanly speaking I have made much too uch of men. I have perhaps behaved as though I ignored them-oh, imply because I hardly dared admit how much I was concerned for ^m-so as not to be looked upon as completely mad. tr ^rectangle to have forgotten to say good morning to a servant girl could j uble me like a crime, as though God might abandon me-and then am persecuted for my pride.

I have seen a duty in everything, and God has always been present for me-but no one seems to have had duties towards me.

This passage reveals not only Kierkegaard's sense of responsibility for his fellow man but also the central insight which is the key to his understanding of the problem of community. According to Kierkegaard, this problem can be answered only in terms of man's relation to God. This relation to God requires individuality, requires that man take himself seriously as an individual; indeed, it demands the rediscovery of the category of "the individual" in the age of mass man.

Between existence as spirit-man and existence as animal-man there is a whole difference of quality. However, in our sense-perception there is nothing to be seen of this difference. The collision lies in the fact that the animal-men pounce upon the spirit-man or are goaded into fury by him. If I were to talk about it in the Greek manner, I would have to say that this spectacle amuses the gods exactly as a hunt amuses men.

It is really more amusing because that which is in question is, so far as sight is concerned, a Naught. And seen as a hunt, this fight is also much more magnificent than a hunt usually is; for what do a few hundred dogs matter as compared to these legions of animal-men. From a Christian point of view, this thing has to be considered in a different way; this collision is the education of the spirit-man, his examination, also his mission, in so far as he has the task of bearing witness to the fact that man is spirit-a task which, in the course of the centuries, in relation to an increasingly polished bestiality, has become more and more urgent, but also more and more strenuous.

But let us not forget that Kierkegaard's message was a Christian message, and that he wanted
to illuminate the relation of the individual to the group from the viewpoint of the New Testament.

In Works of Love he gave expression to the Christian affirmation of the idea of community. He showed that love of neighbor is the Christian expression for true community. Christian love, however, is not what people generally take it to be; it is not the same as doing good to one another. Only conduct toward God, decision in the sight of God, can show what true love is. This decision, however, is the decision of the individual.

When everything has become quiet around man, solemn as a starlit night, when the soul is alone with itself in the whole world, then it is not an outstanding man who meets the soul, but it is the eternal power itself, it is as if the heavens open and the ego chooses itself, or rather receives itself. Then the soul sees the highest that no mortal eye can and that never can be forgotten; then the personality receives its lighting which ennobles it for eternity. Man does not become another ne different from the one he was before, but he becomes himself. As nei-and though he be heir to all the treasures of the world owns nothing of his inheritance as long as he has not come of age, so even the richest personality is nothing before he has chosen himself, whereas, on the other hand, the poorest personality is everything when he has chosen himself. For the great thing is not to be this one or that one, but to be oneself; and every man can be that if he wants.

The solitude of our decision for God becomes the key to a true relation to our neighbor as the New Testament understands it. To love God means to love one's neighbor in the sense of feeling a responsibility for his relation to God. Kierkegaard would have us take the same view of our social problems, whose burning reality he by no means ignores. He refers to Christ as the model who completely sacrificed himself for the temporal and eternal needs of his fellow man; and only when the individual sacrifices himself for his neighbor, without any thought of reward, can one speak of Christian love. In the age of the mass man, however, one can achieve this love only by the individual's discovery of himself, by interpreting himself as an individual before God, and by assisting others who are engulfed in a mass society to rediscover themselves as individuals before God.

"The masses": that is really the aim of my polemic; and I learned that from Socrates. I wish to make people aware, so that they do not squander and dissipate their lives. The aristocrats assume that there is always a mass of lost men. But they hide the fact, they live withdrawn and behave as though these many, many men did not exist. That is what is godless in the superiority of the aristocrats; in order to have things their own way they do not even make people aware.

But I do not want that. I wish to make men aware of their own ruin.

And if they will not listen to good then I will compel them through evil. Understand me, or at least do not misunderstand me. I do not mean that I am going to strike them (alas, one cannot strike the masses); mean to make them strike me. And in that way I all the same compel them through evil. For if they once strike me they will be made aware; for if they once strike me they will be made aware; for if they once strike me they will be made aware. And in that way I all the same compel them through evil. In that respect I am completely dialectical. There are already many who say "why other about Mag. Kierkegaard, I'll teach him." Alas, but all that about mowing me that they do not bother about me, or bothering that I

Quid know that they do not bother about me, only proves their dependence. That is perfectly true if one is indifferent enough. But people show their respect for me by the very fact of showing me that they do not respect me.

People are not so completely depraved as really to desire evil, but they are blinded and do not really know what they are doing. Every thing depends upon luring a decision from them. A child may be rebellious against his father in small things for a long time, but if once its father can drive it to a real revolt it is far nearer salvation. That is why the rebellion of the masses is
victorious if one gets out of their way, so that they never notice what they are doing. The masses have no real opinions and so if they happen to put a man to death they are eo ipso brought to a standstill, are called to their senses and are made to think.

The reformer who, as it is said, fights against a powerful man (a pope, an emperor, any individual man) must aim at bringing about the fall of the powerful; but the man who, with more justice, takes arms against the masses, from whom comes all corruption, must see to it that he himself falls.4

It seems appropriate 1) to begin by clarifying the religio-sociological structure of our time from the point of view of the science of religion, in order to see whether it justifies Kierkegaard's antithesis between the individual and the mass man, and then 2) to show in what a deep and extraordinary sense Kierkegaard was the first to realize this situation and how he defined his position in relation to speculation as well as in relation to objective science.

Finally, by employing Kierkegaard's categories, we may be able 3) to clarify the relation between theology and the science of religion, which has been obscure since the time of Barth.

The age of the mass man has a special aspect which German sociology of religion calls the Unheilsituation des Einzelnen, a phrase which refers to the individual's situation of "non-salvation."5

The individual, engulfed by mass man, sinks back into a pre-individual collectivism of archaic or magic conceptions like fate, etc.; judgments do not rest on rational deliberation but are predominantly motivated by emotion. Even among "high" religious forms of community, superstitious sentiments characterize the behavior of the individual in the age of the mass man. In universal religion the proclamation of salvation occurs through the establishment of great religious, individual personalities who address themselves to all individuals. The individual man, who has outgrown the "vitalistic" community and its form of salvation, finds himself in a situation of "non-salvation" from which he endeavors to escape by appropriating the salvation of universal religion. Originally, many individuals formed themselves into select, religious communities, the churches, which were sustained by a level of development in which simplicity of emotional life together with unconditional submission to authoritative revelation predominated. Here we find simplify and ingenuousness untouched by "relativizing" intellectual culture. Life rests uncompromisingly on the foundation of a universal religion of salvation. The world and its culture is consciously rejected.

Gradually, however, the true universality of "high" religion is transformed through organized expansion into a corporeal universalism, i.e., the masses invade the religious community. Thus mass man in the first sense originates when the motive for joining the religious community is no longer a pure, conscious, religious decision but a mixture of emulation, expediency, and objective or impersonal necessity. We can speak of mass man in the second sense as soon as the religious organization reaches the stage of reflective culture and ventures to incorporate the concepts of reflection into its simple and immediate religion. The masses are unable to comprehend this transformed religion; they interpret the newly created forms in their own fashion, and the religion of mass man appears.

Thus we distinguish between two concepts of mass man. On the one hand, there is the vast number of people who have not yet grasped the richness of the message of salvation of universal religion, and are still enmeshed in the coUectivistic conception of vitalistic religion, and also those who in subsequent generations were born into the "high" religious organization without ever having faced the subjective moment of decision in favor of this faith.

The step toward individual religious decision is the existential experience of only a few; the overwhelming majority of the "high" religious community is religiously unproductive,
tradition-bound, and guided by custom and authority. Upon closer examination, their religion proves to be a "popular faith" [Volksglaube] which is but an antechamber within "high" religion and basically still Primitive religion.

The second form of the religious mass man arises in the age of technology and industrialization which releases man from all ties * vitalistic as well as spiritual religion, and reduces him to a product of the mechanical process of leveling. Such men are colorless J^nings, not consciously creative individuals as in "high" religion, these are the masses which Gustave Le Bon and Ortega y Gasset have written about. These masses too are radical, but not as in the original community. They are without tradition and turn to any »rrr» of society which promises improvement of their economic existence, for they are wholly without religion and exclusively attuned to the secular. Among them are found only the remnants of "popular faith" in the form of superstition. The concrete manifestations of religion among today's city dwellers form a mixture of our first and second sense of mass man. Among the half-educated there are partial regressions to pre-individual, vitalistic religious forms as, for example, Nazism with its belief in fate, "Germanic religion," and faith in everything German. But the enforced cults of the state and secular ersatz religions of all totalitarian regimes, as well as the family and group egoism of advanced societies, also exhibit anachronistic regressions to vitalistic religious conceptions.

It was in this connection that Kierkegaard felt compelled to combat in his own day the institution of the state church in which decisions were no longer made individually, but where salvation, as in vitalistic religion, was simply posited along with membership in the community, and the state with its state church guaranteed eternal bliss:

From a rational calculation of the relation between one egoism and another it will be clear that it is the most prudent egoism for all of us- that we are all Christians. And so it is only correct that in order to prevent all further squabbling the state take over Christianity. That is, after all, why we have the state. As soon as the state takes this over then all quarrelling comes to an end and at the same time everything will be better provided for. After all, we see this in all manner of ways.

If there should be street lights after dark, then every houseowner, or two between them, could have one lamp and provide for it themselves: but this will be a failure; no, let the state take this over, that is something reliable. And so it is also the right thing that the state take over Christianity, together with eternal bliss, then we can rely upon it. Moreover, this also gives us a feeling of security and therefore has something tranquilizing about it. Because eternity is something like another continent-now if a single person should have to cope with something like that, no, that is nothing for a single individual to settle with a whole world. This we see every day. Let us assume that a man here in Denmark is unfortunate enough to have a law suit in Italy: that is about the same as to lose it, because this means an individual against an entire country. It is something different if he has the good fortune that Denmark, through diplomatic channels, takes an interest in his cause; then everything is all right, and why? Because here it is a question of country against country. And so with eternal bliss; the cause is too serious to be undertaken by an individual (the idea of Christianity, it is true, is that the seriousness is just this: that the cause should be taken over by the individual, that the cause is too serious to be guaranteed by an abstractum); no, let the state take over the cause, let it underwrite our being Christians, and that bliss will therefore certainly be ours: that is certainly a great comfort. The alternative is too terrible, to think of a single man, a man here from our town as an individual-and now this colossal thing: another world-here one cannot hope to get through, but the state, that is something, that is a power-if this power guarantees, then one will get through after all.6

Kierkegaard saw in the institution of a state church the conformity of the individual to mass
man. If it is the task of the spiritual community in "high" religion to call the individual out of his
mass condition, then the effect of the state church is to level the individual and reduce him to a
mass creature incapable of decision.

Thus it was established by the state as a kind of eternal principle that every child is naturally
born a Christian. As the state obligated itself to furnish eternal bliss for all Christians, so, to make
the whole complete, it also took it upon itself to produce Christians. And as you can work by
machine on a much larger scale and at the same time with much more accuracy than by hand, so
the state delivered, generation after generation, an assortment of Christians: each bearing the
manufacturer's trade mark of the state, with perfect accuracy one Christian exactly like all the
others, with such accuracy, I say, that the heart of every manufacturer would leap with joy to see
such an incomparable level of accuracy in production. The point in Christianity is that man is
spirit, and spirit is differentiation in itself; the infinitely sublime idea of Christianity is that every
Christian become a Christian in different ways and by different means-always differentiation-just
as God so desires, he who (a hater of all insipid copying) is inexhaustible in the creation of
differences. But then the state took over Christianity, and the point of being a Christian became:
the greatest possible uniformity of a factory product. It is, incidentally, rather curious that the
God of Christianity and the state have, as it were, one thought in common: ooth wish to keep
control over their subjects-this, after all, is the task of the authorities. The trouble, however, is
that God, the infinite concretion, keeps control with infinite ease and is not afraid to lose control
if he permits differences; no, his majestic security finds expression precisely in the fact that he
can keep control by differentiation everywhere. The state, being not quite as secure, desires the
greatest possible uniformity-for control's sake.7

Kierkegaard's attacks on the cult of the family have basically the same origin. Birth, baptism,
confirmation, marriage, and death have in reality again become opportunities for salvation in the
vitalistic religious sense. The character of spiritual religion with its knowledge of the condition of
"non-salvation," the individual's selfdecision with its conscious avowal of the extraordinary: all
this has been lost.

As the state constitutes the higher egoism, or the calculus of individual egoisms and
reflection in egoism, one can easily see into what good hands Christianity came when it was
taken over by the state. And how comic that something whose point is individuals, is taken over
by something whose point is number. By taking over Christianity, the higher egoism has
probably looked at the matter in the following way: In so far as there are in every community
individuals who expressly insist on being true Christians in contradistinction to others, this must
be considered a kind of reprehensible egoism, and it is the task of my state to persecute it because
I am a hater of all egoism and endeavor to exterminate it (with the aid of a higher egoism). If one
wants to be a Christian in that way, it is lack of public spirit and civic virtue; the good citizen
does not want anything for himself but everything in common with other citizens.

Naturally such men must be considered criminals. However, as their crime is not directed
against the highest good of the community, namely, money and the security of property, one does
not need to use the highest degree of severity. Yet, they have to be punished. Anyway, it is and
remains a kind of disorder or improper conduct in the state; the fact that individuals want to be
particularly seriously engaged in their personal affairs, this in itself is a crime. The state takes
over Christianity and now demands (in the true interest of its subjects which the state always has
at heart) and also for the sake of order, that all are equally Christians, and endeavors to supervise
this in the most persistent way.8

The mass man is dominated by the unconscious; he is credulous, given to fantasy, one-sided,
and in need of guidance. He wants to be led in moral matters and to renounce decision making.
Convention and a watered-down mass ethic characterize the institution of the state church. Sophistry and scepticism are the marks of the synthesis of state and church—a synthesis that is always a compromise.

The state is human egoism in its wider dimensions, constituted in such a clever and ingenious way that the egoisms of individuals cancel and correct each other. Certainly, to this extent the state is a bulwark against egoism—by representing a higher egoism which overwhelms all individual egoism, so that the latter egoistically must understand that in their own interest it is, after all, the most prudent thing to live in the state. Just as we speak of an infinitesimal calculus, so the state is the calculus of egoisms, but always so that egoistically it seems to be most prudent to agree to be in this higher egoism. But this is, after all, something quite different from the ethical renunciation of egoism. Yet the state reaches no further; thus to be corrected by living in the state is just as questionable as to be corrected by living in the house of correction. In the state one becomes perhaps more prudent in one's egoism, one's enlightened egoism, i.e., in one's egoism in relation to other egoisms; but one does not become less egoistical and, what is worse, one gets spoiled by looking upon this civic, official, authorized egoism as being virtue. In this way the state is even demoralizing, since it confirms one in the belief that it is wise to be a wise egoist. Higher than this the state does not go; and one must really call it dubious—considered as moral education and development. Moreover, the state is continuously involved in that Sophistry which had so much occupied the Greek Sophists: that wrong, on a grand scale, is right; that concepts, in a peculiar way, reverse themselves or pass over into their opposites; and that it only depends on doing this on a grand scale.

Furthermore, the state is continuously subjected to the scepticism which holds that the numerical determines the concept, and that truth is the greatest number. And on this basis the state is supposed to be the place for the moral development of mankind, the right medium for virtue, the place where a man may really become virtuous. In reality, this place is just as strange for this purpose as shipboard in a storm would be for a watchmaker or an engraver. Therefore, Christianity is never of the opinion that a Christian should live in the state for the purpose of becoming morally ennobled; no, it predicts that this means he will have suffering. In thieves' Latin, however, it is naturally maintained that the state is ethically ennobling—for in this way one is perfectly assured that nobody will cast suspicion on authorized egoism and the fact that it might not be virtue.

The attitude of the clergy is conditioned by the demand of the leaderless masses for authoritative guidance, and it must be said that the state church and its servants have met this demand in full. The prophetic type of individual, however, polemicizes against this because he seeks a universal proclamation of salvation which leads away from existence as mass man. Hence Kierkegaard's polemic against the clergy, especially Bishop Mynster who, with his mixture of Christianity and Goethe, embodied a "cultivated Christianity" which had shed the severity of the Christian demand.

So now he is dead.

If only it had been possible to persuade him to end his life with the Admission that what he represented was not really Christianity, but a mitigation of it: that would have been most desirable, for he carried a whole age along with him.

The possibility of this admission had therefore to be kept open to the last, to the very last, lest he should perhaps make it dying. Therefore he had never to be attacked; and I had to submit to everything, even when he did such desperate things as in the case of Goldschmidt, for no one could tell whether it would not have an effect upon him and so move him to make the admission.

Dead without having made that admission, everything is altered; now it merely remains that
his preaching hardened Christianity into a deception.10

Every great "high" religion is constantly menaced by the danger of paganism; magical "popular faith," from earlier levels of religion, clings to and surrounds all the institutions of the period of the universal proclamation of salvation to the individual. The mass man in "high" religion is a continual remnant from the age of "popular religion" [Volksreligion], reviving primordial experiences and tendencies from the dawn of religion. Thus, a kind of antechamber religion originates which so mollifies the radical demand of the prophetic individual as to make it practicable for the masses: be it ethical demands, obligations imposed by the cult, or the basic attitude toward what God demands of man. "The Christianity of the New Testament no longer exists," says Kierkegaard. Everywhere one finds only compromise, in opposition to which Kierkegaard again raises the radical challenge to the individual. This is the basic argument of all Kierkegaard's objections, not only to Catholicism, but also to Protestantism:

The retreat we have to make is of a very curious kind.

Back to the monastery out of which Luther broke—that is the truth—that is what must be done. That does not mean, however, that the Pope is to win, nor is it the papal police who are to lead us back there.

The fault with the monastery was not asceticism, celibacy, etc.; no, the fault was that Christianity had been moderated by making the admission that all this was considered to be extraordinarily Christian—and the purely secular nonsense to be considered ordinary Christianity. No, asceticism and everything that belongs to it, is only the first step, only the condition: to be able to be a witness to the truth. Therefore, the turn that Luther made was in the wrong direction; it should not be made easier but harder. It has therefore always worried me whether it could really be the case that God was on the side of the Lutherans; because wherever God takes part the achieved progress will be recognizable from the fact that the demand has become greater, the work harder.

On the other hand, whatever is human will always be recognizable by the fact that the work has been made easier and that this constitutes progress. The fault with the Middle Ages was not monasticism and asceticism, but that worldliness had really conquered because the monk paraded as the exceptional Christian.

No, first of all asceticism (gymnastics), and then the witness to the truth: that is quite simply a Christian—and good night all you millions and billions and trillions.11

Living "high" religion is always individual, personal, and spiritual but in the case of the mass man individual moments recede in favor of collective features, and inwardness of decision is replaced by a customary emphasis on external forms. Kierkegaard describes in deeply moving words the youth who, inspired by his striving for the absolute, rushes out into life only to end in philistinism, which is always satisfied with second best because the ideal seems unattainable. Similarly, "high" religions relax their original rigor with their increasing dissemination and expansion, although they had originally been founded in order to drive out such moderation. To use Kierkegaard's expression, they lose their "primitivity."

Every man is primitive from the start because primitivity is the possibility of "spirit." God knows this best, having created it so. The relation of all earthly, temporal, worldly prudence to this is: to annihilate primitivity. The relation of Christianity to this is: to follow the lead of primitivity. Kill your primitivity, and you will, in all probability, get on well in the world, perhaps even make your fortune—but eternity will reject you. Follow your primitivity, and you will suffer shipwreck in temporality, but eternality accepts you.12

By "primitivity" Christianity, of course, does not mean all the boasts about intellectuality, being a genius, and the like. No, primitivity or spirit is: to stake one's life; first, first, first the
Kingdom of God. The more literally a man can do this in action, the more primitivity.13

Hence Kierkegaard concludes that the mythological element has regained the upper hand in Christianity. Every matter can be interpreted in more than one sense, even the matter of whether this applies to the imitation of Christ or not.

Without imitation, Christianity is mythology, poetry. In our time the freethinkers attack Christianity and call it mythology, poesy. Then come the defenders (the rescue squad fighters, one might call them satirically, when one considers what this means in case of fire), the official proclaimed; they curse and swear and protest that this is an abominable potion, and that for them Christianity is anything but mythology, poesy, fjut, but-their pronouncement, considered as a whole, always omits rt?e- "Ration (even their preaching suppresses it almost entirely and ^\textsuperscript{TM}\textsuperscript{ir} lives express about the opposite of the imitation of Christ); ergo Christianity to them, in spite of all their protests, is mythology, poesy.14

But Kierkegaard also makes upon himself the same high demand and acknowledges that he too does not fulfill it. It is for this reason that he does not call himself a prophet, an apostle, or a religion genius:

In frightful inner suffering I became an author. And so I was an author year after year; I suffered too for the idea, in addition to what I suffered within me. Then came 1848. That helped. There came a moment when, overcome with blessedness, I dared to say to myself:

I have understood the highest. In truth, that is not given to many in every generation. But almost at the same time something new rushed upon me: the highest of all is not to understand the highest but to act upon it. I had certainly been aware of that from the very beginning, and I am therefore something other than an author in the ordinary sense. But what I was not so clearly aware of was that, by having means and being independent, it was easier for me to give existential expression to what I had understood. When I understood this I was ready to declare myself a poet, namely, because I have had means which has made action easier for me than for others. But it all comes to this, that the highest is not to understand the highest, but to act upon it, and, be it noted, with all stress upon it. Then I understood properly for the first time that "Grace" must be introduced or else men are stifled just as they are about to begin. But "Grace" must not be introduced in order to hinder endeavor; no, it comes again in the form: the highest is not to understand the highest but to act upon it.15

His task is exclusively an individual one, never previously assigned, and this is why he must remain alone:

My task is so new that there is literally nobody in the 1800 years of Christianity from whom I can learn how I ought to proceed. For all the extraordinary figures who came before me worked for the purpose of extending Christianity. But my task has as its purpose the arresting of a mendacious expansion, item also in the direction that Christianity will have to slough off a mass of nominal Christians. None of these extraordinary figures has, therefore, stood so literally alone as I, to say nothing of having recognized it as his task to remain alone. For if there must be a halt, it is easy to see that the fewer the persons employed for effecting the halt, the more easily the task is achieved.16

Kierkegaard is therefore a determined foe of all mediocrity, of this attitude of: "up to a certain point"; he presents to his contemporaries Christianity with its utter lack of compromise, its originality, or, as he calls it, its "primitivity." Everyone must become again a contemporary of Christ, and must live with scandal and paradox, or else his Christianity is mere hypocrisy. This is the way it is presented in, for example, The Instant.17 And what the ordinary man is then left with is despair, eternity's call to him. In The Sickness

Unto Death Kierkegaard concludes that there is not even one man in the present time who
lives without despair, without a restlessness a pervasive feeling of discord, a disharmony, a dread of something unknown, a dread of some possibility resulting from the very fact of existence itself, or a dread of himself. As physicians say that one lives with a disease in the body, so one lives with a spiritual sickness which only occasionally flares up and makes itself known to us by a certain inexplicable dread. Neither within nor outside today's Christianity is there a man who lives without despair. One is fundamentally in despair in so far as one is not a true Christian, that is, in so far as one has not grasped salvation and is not continually appropriating it. To many, this appears paradoxical, a gloomy exaggeration and a disturbing way of looking at things.

Through mass existence, mass religion, and the state church, man tries collectively to throw a veil over this perspective. Kierkegaard, however, recognized that it is precisely this point, which is usually kept dark, that must be illuminated. Superficial observation does not perceive the condition of "non-salvation" of the individual man - a condition which, in the higher stages of culture, demands of every man an ever growing insight. We live constantly in the moment when this security is breaking down. But the mass man does not understand what the category of "spirit" is, and science has already accepted into its terminology this mass conception which places man on the same level as the animals, and hence is no longer able to recognize the intensified form of the condition of "nonsalvation." It is symptomatic of our times that millions of people assert that they know nothing, and want to know nothing, of this despair. Thus, cultural religion is again transformed into false natural religion, and false despair is mistaken for authentic spiritual despair. Authentic despair is a basic fact of existence which cannot be temporarily limited as can physical disease. It is a kind of fever which persists throughout life. Authentic despair is related to the eternal. Through it man becomes truly spirit. True security and repose exist only in God, who overcomes "non-salvation" through final salvation which was already present from the beginning of the world. The pretense of not having or noticing despair > s the worst and most dangerous form of this very despair. Man as spiritual being is always in a state of crisis. "Eternity," says Kierkegaard, "demands of you and of every one of these millions and millions only one thing, whether you have lived thus despairing or not." 18 Despair, since it is thoroughly dialectical, is the sickness which is the greatest misfortune not to have had, a true Godsend to have had, although it is the most dangerous disease of all if one does not want to be cured of it. He who says without affectation that he is in despair is dialectically closer to being cured than all those who consider themselves not to be in despair. The mass man lives without becoming conscious that he is spiritually conditioned and therefore feels quite secure and content with life, which is precisely what despair is. The few who admit that they are in despair are the deeper natures who become aware of themselves as spirit, and whom difficult experiences and terrible decisions have helped toward such an awareness.

That sort of life is gambled away which has never become conscious of itself as spirit or which, similarly, has not become aware of the fact that there is a God and that man, his own self, exists for God—an infinite gain which one can reach only through despair.

What misery, that so many spend their lives cheated of the most blissful of all thoughts. What misery, that the masses of men busy themselves with everything else and dissipate their energies on the spectacle of life. What misery, that one heaps men together and betrays them instead of splitting them off, in order that every individual may gain the highest, the only thing that makes life worth living. It seems to Kierkegaard that he could weep in eternity that this misery is so. In this fashion he expresses the misery of mass existence. To him it is a horror that the greatest danger of the illness lies in its being hidden—not simply that the sufferer conceals it lest it be discovered by someone else, but that it is so hidden within a man that he himself is not aware of it. And he asks what will happen on the day of judgment when Eternity says: I do not
know you; or, still worse, when it recognizes you and leaves you alone in your despair.19

It is obvious that Kierkegaard cannot be measured by the "relativizing" standards of Psychologismus and Sociologismus which, after all, embody the type of objective science which dissects and explains man through his environment and situation, while cancelling out the freedom, spirit, and eternal destiny of man; no, with Kierkegaard the case is reversed. Thus, ordinary psychology could analyze and "relativize" Kierkegaard himself only "from the outside" as it were: it could evaluate only negatively his tie to his father, the breaking of his engagement, his melancholy, etc., but was unable to understand the positive aspects of the voice of spirit and eternity which were awakened in him by those events. Similarly, the condition of "non-salvation" of modern man must not be regarded only negatively. Alongside the obsolete type of science,* new type of science is being established, one which attempts to include in its portrait of man the irrational and that which can never be rationalized; at least some scattered beginnings have been made in the social sciences (Geisteswissenschaften) and also in natural science (quantum mechanics). In psychoanalysis contributions have been made by C. \}. Jung, Viktor Frankl (logotherapy), Igor Caruso, and Wilfried Daim. Sociology has not yet advanced this far, but it is about time-at least in the field of the sociology of religion-that some of Kierkegaard's conclusions were taken seriously. In place of the quantitative method, which believes that it knows everything in advance and yet is nothing but the old Sophistic revolt which ignores the essence of man and considers only that part of him which can be counted and measured, we need a new sociology of religion which places Pascal's logique du coeur alongside the logique de la raison and which accepts into its calculus freedom and grace as powers in life. Kierkegaard has again and again shown us how this can be done:

To be Christian is to believe in a providentia specialissima, not in abstracto but in concreto. Only he who has this faith in concreto is an individual. Everyone else debases himself into a mere example of the species: he is without courage and humility, he is not hurt enough and helped enough to become an individual.20

Kierkegaard recognized the secret of the difference between quantitative and qualitative analysis:

There is in reality only one single quality, and that is individuality.

Everything depends upon it and hence it so happens that everyone understands qualitatively about himself what he understands only quantitatively about others. This constitutes individuality, but not every man wants it.21

The whole problem is due to the fact that man, a spiritual being, is seen exclusively in terms of the categories of natural science, and it is forgotten that a science of spirit (Geisteswissenschaften) demands quite different categories:

From the natural sciences there will spread the lamentable difference between simple-minded people who believe simply and the scholars and «half-educated who have looked through a microscope. Then one can no y * Kierkegaard's attitude to this is treated in the author's article in Ziehen der Zeit, November, 1955: "Kierkegaard und das Zeitalter der *chnokratie." longer, as in the old days, speak simply and directly about the Highest and address all, all, all men, no matter whether they are black or green' whether they have large heads or small ones: one must first see if they have brains enough to believe in God. If Christ had known about the microscope, he would first have examined the Apostles.22

Kierkegaard in fact deserves to be recognized as the pathfinder or pioneer of a new methodology of the social sciences precisely by reason of his standpoint on the philosophy of religion, the summit of the pyramid of the sciences of the spirit:

One can very well eat lettuce before it has started to grow a core; and yet the fine crispness
and the delicate curling of the core is something quite different from the leaves. So it goes also in
the world of the spirit. Industriousness is responsible for the fact that an individuality can so very
seldom grow a core (or heart); and, on the other hand, the thinker, the poet, the religious one, who
really has "grown a core" will never be popular-not because he is difficult, but because to achieve
this requires quiet and long, hard work, intimate self-knowledge and solitude. Even if I were able
to say in a loud voice something which everyone would highly esteem, I would not say it, if it
had to do with religion, because it is a kind of religious indecency to suppose that everything
depends on shouting loudly; whereas true religion depends solely upon quiet talking with oneself.
Alas, everything now is reversed: instead of its being important for religion that every individual
walk alone and enter into his closet, there to converse softly with himself, one believes that
everything depends on shouting.23

Here is another example of the way in which Kierkegaard sensed, as it were, how much the
method of the natural sciences missed the essence of the problem:

Let us imagine the greatest criminal who ever lived, and then, that physiology at that time
had on its nose a pair of spectacles more powerful than heretofore so that it could explain the
criminal, i.e., that the whole thing was a natural necessity, that his brain was too small, etc.- what
a horror at such an acquittal and exemption from further accusation, compared to the judgment
Christianity would pass on him, namely, that he would go to hell if he did not repent and be
converted.24

Man, by such a procedure, sinks to a lower than animal level; indeed, he is degraded to a
machine. The religious dimension of man, existence in its God-dimension, as Kierkegaard
expresses it, must be missed the more since, instead of stillness and individuality, only noise and
quantity can be registered. In fact, everything is turned upside down:

"I actually believe that lying is a science, said the devil, when he attended lectures in Kiel."
Bishop Mynster was so amused when I spoke to him about this yesterday. I had something else
on my tongue, but did not say it, because then Mynster would hardly put this proverb into
circulation, and that is what I would like to have. It was on my tongue to add: I have always said
that lying is science, truth a paradox.25

Kierkegaard's standpoint may be suitably characterized by recalling Plato's simile of the
cave. The science of man which has so far prevailed (of which Guardini once said that current
sociology, psychology, and anthropology, with their statistical-analytical method, never grasp
man but only his ghost because they focus upon man out of himself, rather than man out of God)
may be compared with the erring masses in the cave who merely count and measure and consider
as real the visible and audible qualities of the shadows on the wall of the cave. The upward
journey out of the cave is managed through dialectic, the existential dialectic of Kierkegaard,
which once again calls the individual out of the masses and places him before God as an
individual.

There have, no doubt, been many more gifted and penetrating authors than I, but I should
like to see the one who has reduplicated his thought more acutely than I have in dialectic raised to
the second power. It is one thing to be penetrating in books, and another to redouble that which is
thought, dialectically, in existence. The first form of dialectic is like a game played for nothing,
for the sake of the game; reduplication is like a game where the pleasure is intensified by playing
for high stakes. The dialectic in books is merely that of thought, but the reduplication of that
thought is action in life. But every thinker who does not reduplicate the dialectic of his thought is
for ever developing a deception. His thought never receives the decisive expression of action. He
may attempt to correct misunderstandings in a new book, etc.; that does not help, for he continues
in the deception of communication. The ethical thinker alone can, by acting, protect himself
against deception in the act of communication.26

And the arrival outside the cave is the "pathos of distance" which Kierkegaard and every authentic philosophic and prophetic existence assume in relation to the mass man. It is standing as an individual before God. Only then do the sun of the divine Agathon and the true objects of perception come into view. The position of standing outside the cave is not arrogance but love, as our opening Quotations from Kierkegaard have shown. It is the love which is peculiar to God, when, through millions of years, he sees individuals living among the mass man and calls them out into an

Ecclesia invisibilis to form the true community which knows how to combine solitude with spiritual solidarity, a process which has to be repeated again and again in view of the intensified paganization of "high" religions.

This process renews itself continuously as ebb and flow. The prophetic figure, who takes his stand against the silting up of Faith in the conceptual and emotional world of mass religion, becomes always more conscious and increasingly necessary. In the conflict between the believing individual and the increasing religious indifference of mass man, the last embodiment of this prophetic idea is Kierkegaard.

The greatness of Socrates was that even in the moment when he stood accused before the assembly of the people of Athens, his eye did not see the masses but only individuals. The superior intellect sees only individuals. But, alas, we men in general are sensual beings, and as soon as there is an assembly our impression changes: we see an abstraction, the multitude, and we become different. But to God, the infinite Spirit, all the millions who have lived and still live do not form a multitude; he sees only the individual.27

NOTES

i. XI2 A 250.

2. journals, No. 769 (IX A 55).

3. XI1 A 225.

4. VIII1 A 23.

5. [The phrase Unheilssituation des Einzelnen, for which there is no ready English equivalent, carries many overtones. It points to the fact that the self-the unique and irreplaceable human being as a person-is everywhere threatened, imperiled, in this day of technology and urban concentration and of multiple pressures to conform. Ortega y Gasset, Berdyaev, Heidegger, and Denis de Rougemont are but a few of the many writers who have called attention to this sinister phenomenon. The last named has summed it all up neatly by saying that "the mal du siecle is 'depersonalization.'" Unheil cannot escape its history of theological connotation. It refers to something unholy, unhealthy, un-
savory. It connotes lostness, perdition, "non-salvation." It means to be in a situation tending toward disaster. Remembering how Germans Kierkegaard's religio-sociological situation

sometimes speak of "Das Unheil," it means-quite colloquially-to be in «a devil of a fix." -Eds.]

6> XI2 A 111, p. 118.
- XI2 A 112.
8. XI2 A 111.
n. XI1 A 134.
12. XI1 A 385.
13. XI1 A 386.
14. X4 A 626.
15- X4 A 545.
16. XI1 A 136.
19. Ibid.
20. XI2 A 259.
21. VA 53.
22. VII1 A 197.
23. VII1 A 205.
24. VII1 A 182.
25. X4 A 337. [The reference to Kiel in Kierkegaard's "proverb" is no doubt polemically directed at either J. L. Heiberg or H. L. Martensen or both. Heiberg was once a lecturer at Kiel University (1882-1825), while Martensen was awarded an honorary degree of Dr. theol. from
the same institution. (1840).-Eds.]

26. VIII 1 A 91.

27. X 3 A 476.
KIERKEGAARD AND POLITICS

BY HOWARD A. JOHNSON

No one who is interested in Søren Kierkegaard—or in politics can fail to be interested in the year 1848, for that is the year, said Kierkegaard, whose "actual events, almighty as they are, have cast light on my thesis." 1

The events in question were Germany's war with Denmark and the whole rash of revolutions in Europe that year, including Denmark's bloodless revolution by which its absolute monarchy became a constitutional one. And Kierkegaard's thesis was that "the crowd, regarded as a judge over ethical and religious matters, is untruth." 2

Kierkegaard suffered in some respects from an astonishing political myopia, but coupled with it was an even more astonishing political far-sightedness. If the positive values enshrined in constitutional monarchy and in democracy were hidden from him, he was fully clairvoyant of the harm the human race would suffer from that whole movement which bore the proud device "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." The Kierkegaardian forecast was this: When men have liberated themselves from God, their struggle for equality produces only equality in mediocrity, and instead of fraternity we end with convention-ridden collectivism. Unless re-won for Christianity, man cannot escape the descending logic which reads: from monarchy, to democracy, to communism—i.e., the abdication of selfhood and the monstrous standardization and regimentation of life.3

As Kierkegaard saw his century, everything seemed to converge in a grand conspiracy against the individual human being. "Each age has its own characteristic depravity. Ours is perhaps not pleasure or indulgence or sensuality, but rather a dissolute pantheistic contempt for the individual man." 4

Behind this puzzling declaration lies Kierkegaard's distrust of the French Revolution, the machine, and Hegel. We shall examine each of these in turn.

Kierkegaard was no advocate of evil kings, and he knew that abuse of power brings upon itself the nemesis of revolution; but he detected that the real evil of his time was its desire to be quit not simply of kings but also of God.5 What takes the place of God is "a superstitious belief in the saving and beatifying power of the understanding," conjoined with a trust in the future—with a trust, that is, in the power of man, given time, to achieve, by the exercise of his unaided reason, a socio-political Utopia. This, declared Kierkegaard, is "the pretense that the temporal will explain in time what in time must remain a riddle, which only Christianity can solve."6

In these times policy is everything. Between this and the religious view the difference is heaven-wide (toto caelo), as also the point of departure and the ultimate aim differ from it toto caelo, since policy begins on earth and remains on earth, whereas religion, deriving its beginning from above, aims to transcend the earth and thereby exalt earth to heaven.7

In this passage Kierkegaard contrasts the Christian outlook with an outlook we have learned to call "secular." Secularism, as James A. Pike, the present Episcopal Bishop of California, puts it, is thisage-ism, this-age-is-all-there-is-ism. It regards man—his origin, his duty, and his
destiny—as completely earthbound. Reducing man to the single dimension of his social value, it eliminates the supernatural altogether. Instead of the ancient and orthodox trilogy, "Nature, Man, and God," we are left with only man and nature. But this man, because he has brains, can harness nature and here on earth build "heaven." "Eternity is done away with, and the stage for the perfection of all is transferred to the temporal":8 this is Kierkegaard's accurate description of secularism in its optimistic-humanistic form. He makes the same point more devastatingly when he remarks that in our era "committees are pretty nearly everything." 9

Since there is no God, no revealed moral law, no absolute, men are left in sole possession, and it is up to them, in parliament assembled, to determine the truth by balloting.10 This entire conception rests on "the proposition that the race is the truth and that this generation is the court of last resort, that the public is the discoverer of the truth and its judge." u For "race," however, we must write "crowd" or the "multitude" or the "masses." For the majority rules, and vox populi is vox dei! This "accounts for the fact that Nowadays this absurdity finds a place in the State: 'the multitude,' an absurd monster or a monstrous absurdity, which nevertheless is physically in possession of power, and besides that has an extraordinary virtuosity in making everything commensurable for the decision of the hands upraised to vote or the fists upraised to fight." ^

It was the absolute modern man wanted to abolish. Or rather, he found his absolute in Reason. But "Reason"—though spelled with a capital "R" as if it were a god or goddess—turned out, on closer inspection, to be the autonomous reason of men met together in general assembly to determine the truth by ballot... or by bayonet.13

Kierkegaard's opinion was that if this is allowed to have its way, we may expect sinister results. "To establish man-made ethical absolutes must end in the complete denial of absolutes." " For if men acknowledge no law higher than that of their own creation, and if, out of fear of majority rule, no one dares to be "angular" enough or "primitive" enough to rise above "the parrot-wisdom of trivial experience" 15 (for it always involves a species of martyrdom to break with the majority), then we have the situation in which a man finds it "too venturesome a thing to be himself, far easier and safer to be like the others, to become an imitation, a number, a cipher in the crowd." 16 But thus the whole of existence is in danger of sinking down into a gray mass of "average behavior." "In Paris," said Kierkegaard, "they believe in the saving power of mutiny." " If enough people do a thing, it's right! And so it comes about that ethical standards are derived simply by computing the tabulated statistics of what people generally do. Public opinion and public conduct-influenced as they are in the twentieth century by the professional polls, surveys, and reports—afford fearful confirmation of Kierkegaard's prediction: Statistics will replace ethics.18

Perhaps now we understand Kierkegaard when he says of his age:

This is what it aspires to: it would build up the established order, abolish God, and through fear of men cow the individual into a mouse's hole. . . . When the established order has come to the point of deifying itself, then in the end use and wont become articles of faith, everything becomes about equally important, or custom, use, and wont become the important things. The individual no longer feels and recognizes that he along with every individual has a God-relationship which for him must possess absolute significance. No, the God-relationship is done away with; use and wont, custom and suchlike are deified. But this sort of God-fear is just contempt for God; it does not in fact fear God, it fears man.19

Quite in the spirit of Kierkegaard, Robert M. Hutchins, former Chancellor of the University of Chicago, remarks that the Battle Cry of the Republic now is "What will people say?" Kierkegaard's detestation of "the others," the majority, the crowd, is due to the fact that "it renders the individual completely impenitent and irrenonsible, or at least weakens his sense of
All of this, thinks Kierkegaard, is a legacy of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and what we can expect of the Industrial Revolution is a drastic acceleration of the whole process. Although he stood only at the beginning of the machine age, Kierkegaard feared the coming mechanization of life with its inevitable concomitants: the tedium of assembly-line existence, the anonymity of big cities, the threat of still further depersonalization. In his many scorching denunciations of "Philistinism" or the bourgeois spirit (which today we know as suburbiana),21 we have the principles of criticism which already Kierkegaard had begun to apply to the great urban and industrial masses, although it was left to later men like Ortega y Gasset, Huxley, Orwell, Gheorghiu, and Heidegger to spell them out in detail. The desire of the French Revolution, laudable as it was, that all men might be equal succeeded only in launching what Kierkegaard called "the leveling process." But this effort did not level up; it only leveled down. Kierkegaard gave humorous vent to his fear of the leveling process in a machine age when he scribbled in his Journal an entry under the heading, "A double leveling down, or a method of leveling down which double-crosses itself":

With the daguerreotype [which had just been invented] everyone will be able to have their portrait taken-formerly it was only the prominent; and at the same time everything is being done to make us all look exactly the same-so that we shall only need one portrait.22 The form of expression here is trivial, but if anyone wishes to know *ow seriously Kierkegaard feared "the leveling process" as a force contributing to the creation of the "faceless multitudes" he has only to read the book called The Present Age.

Whenever this multitude is set upon the throne, says Kierkegaard, "the art of statesmanship will become a game. Everything will turn upon getting the multitude pollinated, with torches and weapons, indifferent, absolutely indifferent, as to whether they understand anything or no."23 In a manufacturing age it is, of course, possible to manufacture everything—even public opinion, e mightiest dictator the world has ever known. "Of this public *th0*!" writes the great Kierkegaard scholar David F. Swenson, ^ e modern press is both servant and master, both creature and th 3 ^^ves a tongue to the impersonal impulses generated by ? multitude, and so intensifies their power and extends their scope. Press and public are thus a mutual fit, and the essential faults of the one are also the essential faults of the other." 24 Kierkegaard writes:

If there were only one speaking trumpet on board a ship, and this was in the possession of the pantry-boy, and if everybody looked upon this as a perfectly natural and proper state of affairs: what then? Everything that the pantry-boy had to say: "mouse in the larder," "fine weather today," "Lord only knows what's wrong in the ship's hold," etc., etc., would be published abroad through the speaking trumpet. The captain, on the contrary, would be limited to the use of his own natural voice, for what he had to say was of course not so important. At times he would be reduced to begging the assistance of the pantry-boy, in order that his commands might be made audible. At such times the pantryboy would feel at liberty to revise the words of command; so that passing through him and his trumpet they would become nonsensical and misleading. The captain would then be compelled to strain his voice in competition, but without success. At last the pantry-boy would become the master of the ship, because he had the speaking trumpet.-Pro dii immortales.25

And then-if the one and only speaking trumpet should fall into the hands of the "vested interests," a demagogue, or the Führer...!

With these last words we come within sight of what was, in my judgment, Kierkegaard's most prophetic political insight. He understood that the real trouble with secularism is that man can never remain merely secular. Inevitably man is religious and will turn religious again; and if
it is not the Christian religion to which he turns, it will be daemonic religion, religion horribly twisted and distorted. The trajectory of man's fall is from theism, to humanism, to materialism. But that is not yet the end. There's no stopping this thing. The next step, inevitably, is a new kind of religion. The race which has abolished the old Absolute will presently invent a new one. And Kierkegaard knew what the new absolute would be. He learned from Hegel that it would be the State—a State that demanded of its citizens uncritical allegiance, unconditional obedience, religious devotion, and self-immolation.

Kierkegaard perceived that people would give themselves to this wildly, fanatically, religiously, like men possessed. In his Journal for 1848 he wrote:

In contradistinction to the Middle Ages and those periods with all their discussion of possession, of particular men giving themselves to evil I should like to write a book: On Diabolic Possession in Modern Times and show how mankind en masse gives itself up to evil, how nowadays it happens en masse—That is why people flock together, in order to feel themselves stimulated, enflamed and außer sich. The scenes on the Blocksberg are the exact counterparts of this demoniacal pleasure, where the pleasure consists in losing oneself in order to be volatilized into a higher potency, where being outside oneself one hardly knows what one is doing or saying, or who or what is speaking through one, while the blood courses faster, the eyes turn bright and staring, the passions and lust seething.

Denis de Rougemont asks the question, "What could Kierkegaard be thinking of when, in his bourgeois, pious and comfortable Denmark, he wrote these prophetic lines?" And he answers:

"Kierkegaard understood better than anyone and before anyone the creative diabolical principle of the mass: fleeing from one's own person, no longer being responsible, and therefore no longer guilty, and becoming at one stroke a participant in the divinized power of the Anonymous." 27

Men who have boasted of their freedom and self-sufficiency discover presently that they cannot bear the burden of this autonomy, and so there is a violent swing of the pendulum to authority and submission. The three big totalitarian movements of our generation, Communism, Fascism, and National Socialism, came as political religions-religions of salvation. So far as I am aware, Søren Kierkegaard was the first man to understand their religious character.

French Socialism appeared in the 1830's. The Communist Manifesto came in 1848. On paper, these movements were outspokenly atheistic, anti-religious. But their atheism deceived the world into thinking that this was mere political opposition to any form of religion whatsoever. The world was fooled by this. Not Kierkegaard.

In 1849 he wrote:

It will become evident, as that which lay at the basis of the catastrophe, that it was the opposite of the Reformation: then [at the Reformation] everything had the appearance of religious movement but showed itself to be political movement; now everything appears to be politics out will explicate itself as religious movement.

For all their apparent atheism, Kierkegaard discerned that Socialism and Communism were essentially religious, that they were deifications of the State, and that they would appeal to the masses by their claim to be saviours. Hence, the struggle to come was to be a struggle between competing religions of salvation. And with good reason, as history has shown. Kierkegaard feared that secular man, mechanized man, depersonalized man would easily succumb to the blandishments of a totalitarian State which offered him security but at the price of his freedom.

All of this Kierkegaard saw implicit in Hegel. What he saw there was the philosophical justification, in imposing form, of a State which, since it was the incarnation of Absolute Reason, must bend all individuals to its will—and break those who would not be bent. But with sure
instinct, Kierkegaard knew that a society which acts on the assumption that society is everything and the individual nothing always degenerates into the kind of society which destroys individuals and ultimately itself. And when this had happened, then would come the mood of nihilistic despair—this mood which makes our world completely uncertain and completely unpredictable. Anything can happen. For the race, said Kierkegaard, will be so exhausted by the convulsions through which it has passed that people will again be "open." Open, that is, to infection from any quarter. This could be good infection. It could be bad infection.81

Kierkegaard hopes for the former. The man who anticipated and attacked the foolish doctrine of Inevitable Progress was not himself so foolish as to believe in Inevitable Regress. If there is to be real victory, it must happen by means of priests; neither soldiers nor police officers nor diplomats nor political projectmakers will be capable of it. Priests will be required . . . who can break up the "masses" and make them into individual persons.32

Kierkegaard is convinced that if only each human being could be helped to become conscious of himself as standing "before God," strictly accountable to God and deeply loved by that God to whom he is precious as a unique and irreplaceable individual, the impersonal thing called "the public" would disappear. Instead of anonymous, irresponsible masses, there would be persons personally related to the personal God, a God of justice and love who demands the transformation of society and provides resources for its renewal. Such people could no longer be stampeded like cattle by daemonic totalitarian movements. Motivated by love of God and neighbor, they would become critical and constructive citizens of the state, not fanatical devotees of the State. "And this is my faith," wrote Kierkegaard, that however much there may be that is confused and evil and detestable in men who have become that irresponsible thing without possibility of repentance which we call "the masses," there is just as much truth and goodness and loveliness in them when one can get hold of the individual—Oh, and in what a high degree would men become—men, and lovable men, if they would become individuals before God!

And therefore he says: "Religion [i.e., Christian religion] is the true humanity." ss

NOTES

1. From "'That Individual'-Two 'Notes' Concerning My Work as an Author" in Point of View, p. 122 (XIII, 641). Cp. the "Supplement" bound up in the same book, pp. 159-164 (XIII, 539-543).

2. Point of View, p. 116 (XIII, 637); cf. also p. 122 (XIII, 641).

3. This motif occurs many times—sometimes explicitly, sometimes by inference. Cf., e.g., Preface No. 3 and the Postscript to On Authority and Revelation, which is the title Walter Lowrie has invented for his translation of The Book on Adler.


5. "The misfortune of our age—in the political as well as in the religious sphere, and in all things—is disobedience, unwillingness to obey. And one deceives oneself and others by wishing to make us imag-
ine that it is doubt. No, it is insubordination: it is not doubt of religious truth but insubordination against religious authority which is the fault in our misfortune and the cause of it." On Authority and Revelation, p. xviii (VIII B 27, p. 78).

7- Point of View, p. 109 (XIII, 631).

8. Training in Christianity, p. 218 (XII, 247).


10. In 1848 S. K. wrote (IX A 4): "Balloting (which is essentially the life-principle in government by the people; the numerical) is the destruction of everything great and noble and holy and lovable and, above all, of Christianity, since it is a deifying of worldliness and an infatuation with this world. Christianity is the exact opposite. (1) Purely formally. For Christianity is eternal truth, and this abolishes balloting together. As eternal truth, Christianity is entirely indifferent as to whether something has the majority behind it or not. But in the abracadabra of balloting, the majority is proof of truth; whatever lacks it is not truth, and whatever has it is truth. Frightful spiritlessness! (2) Realiter Christianity is directly opposed. For Christianity, as militant truth, assumes that here in this wretched world truth is always in the minority. Consequently: from the Christian point of view, truth is in the minority; according to balloting, the majority is truth. Indeed!"


12. On Authority and Revelation, p. 193 (IX B 24, p. 324). Lest Kierkegaard sound more conservative than he actually is, let me hasten to note (1) that he fully acknowledges the competence of parliaments and people in all purely material and temporal matters [cf. Point of View, p. 112 (XIII, 634)] and (2) that by "crowd" Kierkegaard does not imply an invidious distinction between aristocracy and rabble. "Good God! How could a religious man hit upon such an inhuman inequality! No, 'crowd' stands for number, the numerical, a number of noblemen, millionaires, high dignitaries, etc.-as soon as the numerical is involved it is 'crowd,' 'the crowd.'" Cf. p. 11477. (XIII, 63571).

13. S.K. would have agreed entirely with Gordon Keith Chalmers (in The Republic and the Person) when he says that we were right in wanting liberty but wrong in forgetting that "what has really made possible the liberty of the individual has been not only its root in truth but the
constancy of human agreement about the relation of man to God, right and wrong, good and evil." But in "the era of the abolished absolute" (Chalmers) we are "emancipated from all restraint (so to call it)," for now there is nothing which "unconditionally stands fast" (S.K.). "Require the navigator to sail without ballast-he capsizes. Let the race, let each individual, make the experiment of doing without the unconditional-it is a whirlpool and remains such." Cf. Point of View, p. 163 (XIII, 542).

14. Peter F. Drucker in a brilliant article on "The Unfashionable Kierkegaard" in The Sewanee Review for Autumn 1949: "The ethical position is bound to degenerate into relativism."

15. Sickness unto Death, p. 64 or Anchor, p. 174 (XI, 173).

16. Sickness unto Death, p. 51 or Anchor, p. 167 (XI, 165). In this way the ground is prepared for men to take refuge in "the collective idea" and "the principle of association" whose logic is: Individually we are nothing, but by the strength of united effort we shall attain the goal. Cf. The Present Age (En literair Anmeldelse). Especially worthy of study is the analysis of envy as "the negative principle."


x§ VII A 15 and VII B 213.

10. Training in Christianity, p. 91 and p. 93 (XII, 110, 112). Cf. the whole of VIII 1 A 598, from which I translate only the following: "The communists here at home and abroad fight for human rights. Good; so do I. Precisely for this reason I fight with might and main against the tyranny which is fear of man. Communism leads at best to the tyranny of fearing men (only see how France at this moment suffers from it); precisely at this point Christianity begins. The thing communism makes such a fuss about is what Christianity assumes as something which follows of itself, that all men are equal before God, i.e., essentially equal. But then Christianity shudders at this abomination which would abolish God and in his place install fear of the masses, of the majority, of the people, of the public."

20. Point of View, p. 114 (XIII, 635).

21. Cf., e.g., The Concept of Dread, pp. 83-86 (IV, 400-403); Postscript, p. 486 (VII, 537); Sickness unto Death, p. 49 ff. and p. 63 ff. or Anchor, p. 166 ff. and 174 ff. (XI, 164 and 173 ff.).


24. Cf. Something About Kierkegaard, 1st ed., p. 151 ff. The long quotation in the next paragraph is taken from Swenson's convenient collection of some of the passages in which Kierkegaard laments that "one great mechanical discovery after the other has made it possible to expound doctrines impersonally in increasing measure," with the result that "there has been collected in modern states a huge inorganic precipitate: the multitude. No one ever really comes to grips with this huge mass." For a study of the role of the Press in creating the phantom Public see The Present Age, p. 37 ff. (VIII, 98 ff.).

25. VIII A 135.


27. The Devil's Share, p. 141.


29. "The strength in communism is obviously the ingredient of region, even Christian religion, but demonically held." Cf. X6 B 41.

30. It would take an entire doctoral dissertation (the world is still baiting for a good one) to document this point properly. Meanwhile, one may consult Dr. G. Malantschuk's article, "Kierkegaard and the Talitarians" in The American-Scandinavian Review for Autumn 1946— an article still extraordinarily valuable in spite of its having been cruelly abbreviated; one should also read Reinhold Niebuhr's section "The Loss of the Self in Idealism" in The Nature and Destiny of Man and N. H. Soe's Karl Marx og Marxismen. In S.K. himself, cf., e.g., Journals, No. 1050 (X2 A 426) and Sickness unto Death, p. 192 ff or Anchor, p. 248 ff. (XI, 256 ff.). Curious that hardly anyone has called attention to the political implications of Fear and Trembling. Cf. Problems I and II.

31. Cf. IX B 10, p. 311 and X6 B 41; several passages in The Present Age; Preface No. 3 and the Postscript to On Authority and Revelation; and the hilarious letter No. 186 in Breve og Akstykker.

32. X8 B 40.
VI

KIERKEGAARD AND LUTHER

BY JOHANNES SLOK
Translated from the Danish by A. Rousing

I

A Lutheran theologian who is also a student of Kierkegaard must at times be confronted with the question: What really is the relation between Luther and Kierkegaard? The question may be asked on the basis of a narrow confessional interest for the purpose of "saving" Kierkegaard for Lutheran orthodoxy, or for the opposite purpose of showing how far removed he is from Luther, and perhaps even in agreement with Catholicism. However, the question may also be asked without any ulterior motives of a confessional nature. Both Kierkegaard and Luther were gigantic religious thinkers. It is difficult to read any of their works without being persuaded, convinced, or at least impressed. It is therefore quite natural to pause to consider the problem: In what respects are their religious views of life in internal agreement, and in what respects do they differ?

This question may be put in two wholly different ways. One might ask: What was Kierkegaard's own attitude toward Luther?
To what extent was he in conscious agreement with him, and on which points did he consciously differ from him? Investigations of such matters, which can reveal a good deal about Kierkegaard, have been made repeatedly, concluding with the unmistakable fact that Kierkegaard became increasingly critical of Luther until, during the last years of his life, he launched a violent attack on some of Luther's doctrines. The attack is partially explained by the well known ascetic views which Kierkegaard gradually adopted, views which Swe rise to a special problem in the interpretation of Kierkegaard.

In this connection I would like to emphasize that Kierkegaard's knowledge of Luther was of a strangely accidental character. This is not unusual for Kierkegaard; somewhere in his Journals he complains of it himself. It is very difficult for him to concern himself objectively with another author: he invariably views him from his own positions and, accordingly, he sometimes fastens upon quite accidental and unrelated things. He had a tendency-of which he was well aware-to evaluate others on the basis of highly arbitrary associations which might be aroused by some peculiar phrase or the like. Moreover, as far as Luther was concerned, Kierkegaard's study of him was rather one-sided. Luther's great theological, philosophical, and polemical works apparently did not matter much to him.

Even though he had read these works, his writings give no evidence that he was deeply concerned with them. On the other hand, he was a constant reader of Luther's Postil, and, let it be noted, he read it for edification. It occupied a prominent place in the edifying literature of both Protestant and Catholic origin which he read constantly—a literature always showing a more or less pietistic strain. The very fact that Kierkegaard read Luther for devotional purposes undeniably had a decisive effect on his interpretation of Luther.

A third factor in Kierkegaard's view of Luther is the enormous psychological difference
which existed between the two men. Luther's warmth and exuberance, his enormous polemic vigor—which was quite different from Kierkegaard's—struck the Dane as something tinged with naivete. It is his constantly recurring objection that Luther lacks dialectical sense; he has, says Kierkegaard, now one thought and now another, but a union or mutual dialectical balancing never occurs. Kierkegaard entertained no doubt as to Luther's genius, but regarded it as "immediate," and it is well known that this is no compliment on Kierkegaard's lips. Confronted by Kierkegaard's piercing reflection, Luther invariably gets the worst of it—at least in Kierkegaard's view. It may be well to add that Luther was not inferior to Kierkegaard as a philosopher; quite the contrary, but he was a philosopher of a wholly different temperament, and it was to some extent impossible for Kierkegaard to appreciate this.

With these facts in mind we must realize that given the attitude Kierkegaard adopted toward Luther, nothing has as yet been decided as to his Lutheranism; he may very well have been more Lutheran than he himself realized. The question of his Lutheranism must be decided on quite a different basis, and it is this basis which I wish to consider next. The problem may be formulated as follows: regardless of what Kierkegaard personally thought of Luther and of how his views on him may have changed over the years, it may be asked whether Kierkegaard has any essential points in common with Luther in his approach to the problems of life and his conception of Christianity, or whether his situation is so different that it is actually meaningless to compare him with the great reformer.

II

In dealing with the problem thus formulated, we must first consider a further circumstance which is admittedly obvious, but whose scope is nevertheless not always wholly respected. Every philosopher is intimately bound up with his own age and his own situation, although this does not apply equally in all cases. With Luther and Kierkegaard, however, this is eminently true. Both their philosophies arose from thoroughly personal problems, largely posed to them by their contemporary surroundings; indeed, both developed their philosophies in constant polemical reaction to these surroundings. While we may concern ourselves with, for example, a Thomas Aquinas or a David Hume without knowing much of their personal situations, we have no prospect of success in understanding Luther or Kierkegaard unless we consider their philosophies against the background of what we might call their polemical situations.

Obviously, an author who expresses his opinions in thoroughly polemical terms, directed against certain phenomena, cannot be understood unless we take pains to understand those phenomena.

If we blithely consider an author's opinions in isolation from the phenomena against which they are directed, we at once distort his opinions; even if we reproduce them with strict accuracy, they nevertheless become distorted and one-sided.

Accordingly, it is impossible to make a direct comparison between Kierkegaard and Luther. The peculiarity exists—as Kierkegaard himself pointed out with untiring energy—that they were in diametrically opposed situations, and, therefore, the directions their Polemics took were also diametrically opposed. As this difference IS fundamental, it will be helpful to begin by sketching those features in Luther's situation which are essential in this connection.

It was by virtue of Roman Catholic monasticism, as it had developed towards the end of the Middle Ages, that Luther became a reformer. By accepting the idea of this monasticism and—because in his complete inability to accept compromise—carrying it to its logical conclusion (or, as Kierkegaard would have put it, by testing the truth and adequacy of monasticism in his
own existence), Luther finally arrived at his conception of the claims of human life, and this at the same time determined the direction of his polemic.

His criticism was directed against monastic life and the Church which advocated it—or, rather, against that conception of Christianity of which monasticism was a natural consequence.

We may determine monasticism as a special elaboration of the medieval community's division into estates. From a historical point of view, monasticism has obviously a great variety of sources. It has its roots in the Oriental inclination to a life of passive, introspective contemplation; it is closely related to the deep-rooted Greek conception of God as being outside the world so that man's relation to God is fundamentally otherworldly; it arose amid the social and economic difficulties besetting Egypt in the second century a.d., with the resultant cultural fatigue and loathing of "life in the world." But fifteenth century monasticism, with its variegated origins, was elaborated in close relation to, and as a special instance of, the classification of estates which played a decisive part in the medieval outlook on life.

Now, it may be difficult for us fully to realize the extent to which the division into estates determined life for the people of the Middle Ages. In contrast to a class in modern society, a medieval estate was not merely an economic or occupational classification of the population. Its roots struck much deeper, indeed, so deep that the division into estates constituted the starting point in understanding man. Human beings differed in that each was born to the conditions and rights of his own estate. The estate determined the conditions of his life and himself as a human being. This is very different from the modern starting point, the thought that all human beings, in spite of all barriers of class distinction, are nevertheless actually and essentially alike with regard to rights, duties, dignity, and conditions—a thought that seems self-evident to us.

It was in this fundamental sense that the clergy and the monastic orders had come to comprise an estate. They alone constituted the reflógi. Admittedly, a Christian life could be lived "in the world," but only incompletely and dependency. In the proper and independent sense of the term, a Christian life was possible only for the members of the clergy, who alone were able to observe the universally binding precepts expressed in the Decalogue and the counsels of the Gospel which, as Christ told the rich young man, should be followed to attain "perfection."

By this division of higher and lower, perfect and imperfect, dependent and independent, the spiritual and temporal estates were placed in relation to each other in accordance with an extremely ingenious scheme which had gradually been created by the philosophers of the Middle Ages. It was not only the population which had been divided into various estates in this way, but all imaginable fields of existence had been divided into a hierarchic, dualistic ordo which, with elegant equilibrium, did justice to both sides. Monastic life was, therefore, not a mere accident, created by certain historical causes, a phenomenon which had been added to the medieval community as a foreign element and which did not otherwise belong to the medieval conception of life. On the contrary, life behind the wall of the monastery was the climax of the Middle Ages, and, consequently, the monastery was the place where the Catholic philosophy was to stand its test.

This test Luther supplied. For-and this must be emphasized Luther did not enter the monastery for illegitimate reasons. He did not enter it because of a purely personal desire, or because he lacked vitality and courage to live a worldly life or because he was a dreamer, or the like. Luther entered the monastery because he felt that it was necessary in order to become perfect—because he would not acquire his "gracious God" so cheaply, that he might doubt whether God really was gracious. However loud the claims that Luther's struggle in the monastery was pathologically conditioned, and how ever irritating to his father-confessor and abbot were his scrupulous anxiety and endless soul-searchings, nevertheless, through that struggle he realized
that the entire monastic system was radically wrong and with great difficulty arrived at a fundamentally different conception of human life.

What, then, is this conception? It consists, first and foremost, in the idea that the nature of a man cannot be determined by something external. As the famous formula has it, it is not the eventual good works that make man good. This idea is a direct expression of the experience Luther gained in his monastic existence. The formula "to have a gracious God" obviously means "to become good." Only a man who is good has a gracious God, and the goodness of a man is manifested by the fact that God is merciful to him.

But in this problem of finding a gracious God, Luther can invoke his own experience: it is impossible by any good work to obtain a gracious God, i.e., it is impossible by any good work to become good.

Luther's characteristic invoking of his own experience reveals his dependence on the time in which he lived. Only a century or two earlier such an attitude would have been unthinkable; thus, he cannot imagine that Francis of Assisi would have invoked his experience or referred to his conscience against the assertions of the Church. Something had happened in the meantime: it had been discovered -in good part because of the psychological introspection of German mysticism in the late Middle Ages-that the individual and his conscious mental life constituted a specific and valuable world which, independent and autonomous, might be maintained against all external authorities. The question of authority had thus become more complex. The unrelinquishable claim to an external authority-indispensable for Christianity as a religion of revelation -had to a far greater extent than previously to be weighed against the equally unrelinquishable axiom that any legitimate authority must manifest itself in the individual as an inner conviction.

Luther's experience had told him that a man does not become good or acquire a gracious God by works, not even by the most intense efforts. Consequently, what man is—whether good or evil must be determined by something quite different from works and quite independent of efforts. A distinction must be made between the acts a man does (and what he becomes by having done them) and the total determination which precedes any act, giving each subsequent act its qualitative character and determining in an absolute sense what the man is.

The consequences of this distinction are far-reaching. We are not dealing here with the simple and obvious ethical consideration that the moral quality of an act is not to be judged in terms of its purely external objective content. An act may be purely legalistic, in complete agreement with a law or a command, and yet be ethically doubtful, for it may have been based on impure motives, e.g., for the sake of self-assertion, appearances, or the like. Or the result may turn out to be quite different from what the person performing the act had imagined. Luther's doctrine is not concerned with the distinction between the work and its content on the one hand and the disposition or motive on the other; it is much more profound. It says that since no work, by either its external or its internal aspects, determines the nature of the individual, this must have been determined beforehand by something quite different.

Similarly, the act itself does not become good or evil by virtue of itself, by either its external or its internal aspects, but only by virtue of that which beforehand determines the individual who does the act. It is the man who is good-beforehand and by virtue of something quite different-who then does good works. In other words, the quality of goodness of a work depends on the quality of goodness of the individual who performs it. Accordingly, before we speak of particular, concrete, finite, ethical acts, i.e., good or evil works in the ordinary sense, we must first decide what, in a deeper sense, qualifies a man, and hence a work, as good. We must find the formal principle of goodness.
It is generally known that at this point Luther refers to faith.

A total inner disposition must be a religious phenomenon. Luther therefore resolutely resolves the problems by saying that man, who is totally qualified religiously only by his relation to God, is determined wholly as good, not from his own relation to God, but from God's relation to him. What man is, is determined when he becomes nothing, rejects himself and all his efforts, and then starts afresh, outside himself, in God. This start, says Luther, is a promise, and one is related to a promise that is not determined by effort and toil, but only by confidence. Accordingly, an accepting faith corresponds to the words of the promise; the proper beginning to our salvation is a faith which clings to the word about that mercy which comes to us prior to and entirely apart from our own efforts. (Si enim promissio est, ut dictum est, nullis operibus, nullis viribus, nullis mentis ad earn acceditur, sed sola fide. Ubi enim est verbum promittentis dei, ibi necessaria est fides acceptantis hominis, ut clarum est, initium salutis nostrae esse fidem, quae pendent in verbo promittentis dei, qui citra omne nostrum studium, gratuita et immersa misericordia nos praeventit, et offert promissionis suae verbum.) 1 Thus, faith is no feat; it is, so to speak, what remains when man has abandoned himself and all his feats.

Faith, then, is the sole total act which man can undertake. Only of faith can it be said, to use an expression of Kierkegaard's, that it is not an approximation. An approximation never comes to the end of the road. But faith, since it is not a single effort directed toward a definite aim, is at once at the end of the road, and man is, in an absolute sense, good.

The first consequence of this, and in Luther's opinion a very essential one, is that a fundamental equality of all men is established. That there should be some who belong to the clergy and others to worldly estates is, he says, "a very subtle and hypocritical invention" by which nobody should be frightened, for "all Christians belong to the clergy, and there is no other difference between them than that which follows solely from their office." 2

The second consequence is that man is now able to do good works.

The formal quality of goodness in a good work derives from the fact that it has been done by an individual who, by virtue of faith, in an absolute sense, and in advance, is good. Luther uses the metaphor of the feudal system: A work becomes good only by acknowledging as "overlord" the one work which is good in and of itself: faith, the source of all works.3 But just as faith establishes a fundamental equality of all men, so also with all works. Faith cannot be bound up with or assigned by fiat to one or another specific work; it must either manifest itself in any work-or in none at all. But when it is manifested in any work, the empirical content of the work is indifferent in the sense that the content entails no consequence for the goodness of the work and cannot be used as a criterion for distinguishing the relative goodness of works. The work may, therefore, be the most trivial thing-for example, taking up a straw-and yet be good if it has been done in faith.4

But does the judgment of the goodness of a work on the basis not of the work itself but of the faith in which it was performed mean that the content of the work is a matter of indifference?

Obviously not! On the contrary, Luther's polemical interest seizes upon this point. The good works are the prescribed works and not those we have contrived ourselves. It is clear that he directs this point against monasticism: with unflagging power he asserts that all its ascetic penances and pious works are inventions of man himself, and evil, and abominable to God. The individual need not ponder what good works he must do, for this is unequivocally prescribed. In the passage referred to above Luther says that there are no good works other than those prescribed by God and no sins other than those forbidden by God; a man who wants to know and do good works need only know the commandments of God.

What is most interesting to us in such thoughts as these is not that Luther operates with what
one is tempted to call a dialectical relation between a work's formal quality of goodness-a
goodness derived from outside the act itself-and its prescribed content.

What interests us most is that the prescribed content, which is naturally taken from the
precepts of the Decalogue, is, for Luther, colored by the habit of thought of the feudal system
which inevitably formed the background of his own thinking. The commandments of the
Decalogue are the lines along which a man may live his life within the estate to which he is born,
in the vocation he has been given, and in the office which he consequently holds. This emphasis
on the status quo reflects Luther's opinion that the contemporary community of estates, divided
into various strata and degrees of authority, was an arrangement or order created by God.

It must certainly be added that he did not, like Hegel, go to the extreme of identifying the
positive community with the order God had created and willed; he knows very well that the
positive community may be wrong and need revision. However, the similarity between the divine
order and the existing society is so great that through reforms and revisions the latter can
approximate the former, and the community in its own right can in all circumstances assign man
his duty and demand obedience. Thus Luther has no difficulty in solving the problem which still
puzzles some philosophers, viz., how to arrive at moral norms which are valid in themselves. For
Luther the norms are at hand in given commandments which fit in with a society stratified in
accordance with fixed forms, offices, and degrees of authority, so that if only the formal quality
of goodness is established, there can be no problem of where to discover valid norms.
Accordingly, Luther can express the view that "a Christian who lives in this faith has no need of a
teacher in good works, but whatever he finds to do he does, and all is well done." 8

Now the question arises whether the distinction between the fundamental goodness which
precedes any good work and the good work itself, which must necessarily be something
subsequent, does not make the work altogether superfluous. However, this question will be asked
only by a man who has not yet liberated himself from the erroneous idea that a good work is an
act which makes the doer good, and that consequently the primary purpose of a good work is to
make the doer good. If this were the case, then the distinction between a work and its goodness
would obviously render works superfluous; but it is not the case. Luther would reject this idea by
distinguishing between the inner man who by virtue of faith is totally justified and the outer man
who lives on "earth in this bodily life and must master his body and associate with people" and
who therefore must not be idle and aimless, but, by fasting, watching, and working, be
disciplined and purified of his evil desires.8

However, the decisive feature is that Luther not only determines the formal goodness of a
work and its factual content but also declares its purpose, and this provides the fundamental
reasons for his assertion that man is to work and avoid idleness. For the very reason that the work
is not an invention of man or a special effort which is to produce a particular effect on a man
himself, but is to be refracted in a given commandment and in a concrete occupation in existence,
in office and calling, it is objective in the sense that it *s motivated by its purpose. But this
motivation by purpose is of a dual nature. First, the objectivity of the work is directed toward the
achievement of a certain external result: the doctor wants to conquer a certain disease, the
shoemaker to make a pair of shoes, etc. But by its relation to an office and calling any such
particular aim also incorporates the general purpose which it has in common with every other
work, viz., to serve one's neighbor. And, naturally, it is the latter which Luther wants to
emphasize. For it is essential that by virtue of the orderly conditions of existence, the stratified
structure created by God, this latter general purpose need not necessarily be identical with the
factual intention of the acting individual. Even if the individual in his sinfulness acts only from
selfishness, to earn money or the like, existence is arranged in such a way that one's neighbor is
served all the same.

Thus, as this latter general purpose and the actual intention of the individual do not necessarily coincide, it becomes possible for Luther to determine what it means, in a Christian sense, to love one's neighbor. To love one's neighbor is not simply to perform special, carefully calculated acts but is intimately related to the work of one's calling. Seen from without, any work of one's calling is an expression of love for one's neighbor, inasmuch as the content of the work of love is precisely the work of one's calling.

But it does not become an act motivated by love until its general purpose, i.e., reserve one's neighbor, has become identical with the private intention of the individual. But that is possible under only one condition: by virtue of faith, prior to and independent of the act itself, a man must have become good. For if this has not occurred, he cannot separate the work from his selfish purpose and make it available to his neighbor; he needs it for himself; he needs it to assert himself, to make himself secure, or-and this is refined wickedness-he needs the work to make himself good. It then becomes an act in accordance with the law which can never justify for the dialectical reason that in exploiting such an act in order to become justified, one has thereby transformed it into the most refined form of self-exaltation and self-interest, and hence completely deprived one's neighbor of it. Thus, charity is related to faith in such a way that it is only because faith satisfies one's indispensable need for a total quality of goodness that one's works are of use to one's neighbor.

To understand the relation between Luther and Kierkegaard there is one further point which must be emphasized. Coming from his monastic struggle, Luther took it for granted that his own gigantic religious effort to become justified was, to some extent, a fundamental, vital interest of everyone; as a gracious God was the central question for him, so must it be for everybody else. However, when, in the 1520's, he started the practical organization of the churches in Saxony, he discovered, to his great surprise, that "people" did not give a thought to justification but lived in sheer selfishness, never asking the question how they might obtain a gracious God. To use a common dogmatic term, they had no consciousness of sin. Furthermore, in these circumstances the Gospel, which, after intense struggles, he had come to understand, and wanted the people to share, had become meaningless and superfluous. The Gospel is only for the broken of soul. Therefore, he resolutely insisted that the law must be proclaimed. People must be confronted with the commandments; they must learn to tremble and realize that if salvation is not established by means other than their own efforts they are sinners doomed to everlasting damnation. For this reason, says Luther, St. Paul gave the law a second function: to teach man to recognize sin so that he may be humbled to accept grace and faith in Christ.

The conception here outlined of the relation between faith and works is, I think we must grant, central for Luther. It conforms partly to the view of life characteristic of the environment in which he grew up and which necessarily formed the background of his thinking, and partly to his consequent personal problem. Naturally, I have endeavored to present it so as to lay the ground for a critical comparison with Kierkegaard.

III

Kierkegaard's age and environment differed from those of Luther.

The community of estates, which was a matter of course to Luther, had by Kierkegaard's time disappeared. A new set of ideas had come into being and, be it noted, been reflected in the organization of society. In this connection there are two of special importance.

The first was the idea of the essential equality, and the second was the idea of human freedom of all human beings. The first, the idea of equality, had its roots far back in time, but it
was because of the epoch-making work of two philosophers that it had become Universal property, a conception whose validity nobody doubted.

Rousseau had proclaimed it in the stratified community of prerevolutionary France, and Kant had elaborated it more profoundly, imparting to it an ethical content: man has dignity by virtue of his citizenship in a higher world; he has the possibility of ethical self-determination, autonomy; and therefore he must liberate himself from the world of the senses and from the domination of his capricious will. Thus, the idea of equality became first a political program for the abolition of special privileges of certain estates and for the equality of all men before the law, with equal rights and duties.

Second, it became the starting point for ethical deliberation—the determination of the ethical claim on man must be based on the idea of the fundamental equality of all men in spite of differences resulting from specific and accidental circumstances.

In Kierkegaard's view, the idea of equality was essential. As we have already pointed out, the idea of equality played a part in Luther's philosophy as well, as it applied to men—all men were equal in that they all belonged to the clergy, differentiated only by the office—and as it applied to works—all works were equal in spite of their highly variegated content because the quality of goodness of any work derived from something external and prior to the work, i.e., from faith. But for Luther this idea was only an introductory determination in ethical life leading to the decisive assertion that it is the neighbor who is to be served by a work, which, through faith, is totally determined as good. Kierkegaard, by contrast, makes the idea of equality central. To base one's life on differences becomes identical with perdition; salvation from perdition is possible only by basing one's life on an inner self-determination within differences, for only this self-determination is universal, and only in this does a man become universal. Consequently, Kierkegaard differs from Luther in his definition of the word "calling." For Kierkegaard a calling is precisely the interplay between the differences, on the one hand, which make an individual a particular and concrete human being and, on the other hand, the inner self-determination by which the individual takes charge of himself in his differences and through them becomes universal. Therefore, man's relation to his calling in itself is designated as duty: it is the duty of every human being to have a calling. Only on the basis of this essential point is it possible to make the further assertion that through his calling a man stands related to other human beings: when his existence expresses itself in the works of his calling, he is for others, and for others the development of his life becomes significant.

The result of this preliminary analysis is that Kierkegaard's thoughts on this point are very similar to Luther's. Both operate with the same basic concepts: the equality of human beings and the ethical relation among them. But the center of gravity is different in Kierkegaard's thought in that he places the emphasis on equality. We must find out why this shift occurred. This brings us to the second significant idea which had come to the fore in the time interval between Luther and Kierkegaard: the idea of human freedom. There is an intimate relation between the ideas of equality and liberty. It is conspicuous in the political formulation of liberty and equality as the leading principles of democracy; it is revealed by the fact that the same philosophers, Rousseau and Kant, formulated both ideas and placed them in their mutual relation. For Kierkegaard this relation constitutes the basic problem, and thereby Kierkegaard is far more than Luther—a modern thinker. The concept of freedom penetrates all aspects of Kierkegaard's thinking; by following his explanations of the concept of freedom it would be possible to unfold his entire philosophy, but here it will be sufficient to consider only one aspect.

For one thing, freedom means that man is not bound to any hard and fast objective forms. The fundamental attitude toward existence, to society, to rights and duties, to office and calling,
which imparted a fundamental security to former ages, including that of Luther, had by Kierkegaard's time crumbled away. The community had become secularized. The powers that be no longer owe their origin to God. Sovereignty belongs to the people itself; the institutions through which authority is exercised are exclusively cultural products, and their authority is based on agreement. In consequence, the far-reaching thought that existence is an order created by God had become empty or at least dubious. It was no longer possible seriously to conceive of the given forms as "eternal" and valid in themselves, the claims as divine. Human life had become relative, deprived of its validity and transformed into sheer arbitrariness. Therefore the problem was for Kierkegaard far more painful than it was for Luther. The latter had still been able to take for granted that ethical requirements were self-evident and valid, that existence was true and genuine, and that therefore the problem was to provide not existence which was available, but merely the formal quality of goodness which no work could produce. At first, Kierkegaard faced the same problem as Luther. He, too, realized that the determination of man cannot be derived from some Internal feature, and that every work must therefore be preceded by something else which in an absolute sense can determine man.

But for Kierkegaard this does not solve the problem. No direct elation can be established between faith in Christ and fulfilling external commandments in serving one's neighbor through one's calling, for the requirement is not, in the usual sense, anything external. In the relationship which must precede life in the world, more must happen, so to speak, for Kierkegaard than for Luther; the work itself must be produced. This explains the shift in emphasis in Kierkegaard's thought which we have already noted. In the circumstances under which Kierkegaard worked, because he was alert to the climate of his time, his whole interest became focused on that inner realtionship of self-determination by which the individual is totally decided, for this fundamental act decides not only the formal quality of the individual but also the content of the existence he shall live; only in this act is life established and hence available.

In this connection I wish to call attention to a fact which has always appeared to me remarkable. On the basis of what we know of his education, his reading, his character, and his problem, one would expect Kierkegaard to have adopted a purely ascetic point of view, claiming that life in the world is sheer vanity and without validity and that the world is evil; accordingly, the individual must take refuge in the pure inwardness of religious life-one would not be surprised had Kierkegaard rebuilt the fallen walls of the cloister.

The remarkable thing is that in spite of all his preparation and impulses he did not do so. It was as if something compelled him to refrain from taking the step which would otherwise have been natural to him. "The part played by Divine Providence in my authorship," he calls it himself. What, then, did Kierkegaard do instead? Undaunted by a situation more painful and more precarious than that of Luther, he mobilized all his dialectical powers to enable him to enter into actual life. It is this intention which I personally find the really interesting, the really significant, thing about Kierkegaard, the value of which remains whatever judgment one may pronounce on his final solution to the problem he faced.

But because of their different situations, from this point on Kierkegaard's thinking followed a path different from Luther's. His attempt to show that the individual in inner self-determination meets God and thereby not merely becomes a self in truth but also is given back to life in the world, authentic life, full of contentall this is here presupposed as something well known.

There is another noteworthy feature of comparison between Kierkegaard and Luther. For Luther, ethical life and the fulfilment of the Christian commandment of love of neighbor unfold themselves in the works of a man's calling, without any further considerations and determinations, because this externality is unequivocally and obviously the commandments and
ordinances of God. For Kierkegaard, however, such is not possible. The external js never unequivocal and obvious; in a sense quite different from Luther, it is created only in the act whereby the individual determines himself. And, as far as the actual obligation of one individual to another is concerned, Kierkegaard lays the emphasis elsewhere; to put it another way, the individual has a dual obligation.

Not only is the individual under the obligation to fulfill the claims made by the existence to which he is restored, but that obligation is preceded by another primary obligation to help one's neighbor to live in the same way, i.e., by virtue of the same inner self-determination. To understand the new twist given by Kierkegaard we must remind ourselves that, for Luther, the individual's relationship to the ethical is simply a matter of his being made good, apart from works, in order for him to do good works. This is true also for Kierkegaard. But, in addition, Kierkegaard held that the same prior determination applies regarding a man's relationship to his neighbor, because the external forms through which people deal with each other are, in Kierkegaard's view, purely conventional. Persons cannot deal with each other authentically—although conventionally, of course, everything goes easily enough—unless they have made the forms of interpersonal behavior real to themselves by reaching beforehand-each for himself, separately, in a private but decisive way—a view of life which both share. Therefore, the individual cannot merely associate with his neighbor through the structure of existence, but must first of all respect his neighbor's act of self-determination and then, most importantly, help him to achieve it. Obviously this is meant not in the sense that one individual is to perform this act on behalf of the other—for, even were it possible, which it is not, it would be an infringement upon the other's freedom—but in the sense that he shall, so to speak, force the other to a point at which this act must be undertaken—or refused.

Now while it cannot be denied that Kierkegaard's interest to a great extent focuses on this point, still, it must be understood that it is this point which also forms the background for his formula, s frequently the subject of attack, that love of one's neighbor consists in assisting him to love God. The phrase "to love God" is, so | speak, the act of self-determination in Christian garb. Only by loving God is it possible to live the given concrete life within the framework of certain ethical obligations. This is how Kierkegaard ust have viewed the matter, because he lived in the middle of the nineteenth century and must, therefore, have had to determine the content of Christianity on the basis of that set of problems which prevailed then. Consequently, it is meaningless to contrast Luther with him as a matter of course without taking due account of all the factors. He could not adopt Luther's solution of the problem simply because it presupposed a conception of the structure of existence which it was no longer possible to accept. That this is the case appears from the fact that the Lutheran ethic of one's calling had in the course of time changed into what Kierkegaard calls philistinism—a change which was not merely accidental but in complete agreement with cultural developments. Life, serving one's neighbor through one's calling, had been transformed into one of bourgeois complacency in which relative duties and relative rights had obliterated the awareness of an unconditional obligation upon man.

Accordingly, Kierkegaard was, to a far greater extent than Luther, under the pressure of having to proclaim the Law before he could proclaim the Gospel; he had to set forth the requirement in its infinity in order that life in finitude could be jolted out of bourgeois emptiness and made authentic. As previously pointed out, the relation to the absolute which must precede life in relativity implied more to Kierkegaard than it did to Luther; consequently, for Kierkegaard, the Law which must first be proclaimed is, in a certain sense, more exacting. It must become independent of life in the world; it must have a content and a significance of its own.

However, this does not invalidate the assertion that its function remains the same, viz., to
restore the individual to his given existence in concrete duties and concrete rights.

NOTES


5. Ibid.


IS THE CATEGORY OF THE "TRAGIC" ABSENT FROM THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF KIERKEGAARD?

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Translated from the French by Margaret Grieve

I. THE BASIC IDEAS OF DOCTRINE

When reading the principal works of Kierkegaard, the historian of philosophy is inevitably confronted with an important problem. Even without wishing to classify at all costs a rebellious writer under some factitious heading, one is compelled to admit that the man who has been called "the father of existentialism" has a certain unquestionable resemblance to the moralists of modern times who have tried to define the meaning of existence and to estimate its import. Resembling even more closely, as he does, those who have made this attempt with fear and trembling, irony or contempt, Kierkegaard can sustain comparison with Unamuno, who on several occasions has declared himself to be his disciple, or with Nietzsche, whom many regard with justification as his true counterpart and adversary. Now the cornerstone in the work of both these authors is the concept of the tragic. Nietzsche evokes the "Birth of Tragedy" and proceeds from this to define the nobility of a virile attitude to life as opposed to the degrading meekness of Christianity, the religion of timorous slaves, while Unamuno begins with a tragic sense of life, peculiar to the historical Christian, and ends by endowing Divine Perfection itself with the exigencies of a deeply pathetic mentality. It might be assumed that Kierkegaard would have elaborated a doctrine of the tragic which would allow us to choose between these two "rivals." In this respect, however, his principal works fail to provide the anticipated solution. The books Either/Or and Stages on Life's Way develop the idea of three basic realities, the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious, which appear ipso facto to exclude the possibility of a tragic mentality. But worse is still to come. In the Postscript, which contains a systematic presentation of Kierkegaard's thought, the passages of transition occurring between the basic stages are extremely varied in character; sometimes irony prevails, sometimes humor, and an important place is given to the category of the "pathetic," which governs the spiritual ascension we are urged to follow. Finally, in the subsidiary works grouped around the dialectical production, stress is placed on the importance of fear and trembling, of vocation and dread. It would indeed appear as if the idea of the tragic were absent from the profound elaboration and written expression of Kierkegaard's thought.

Nevertheless, the more we learn about Kierkegaard and his work, the more improbable this absence appears. An assiduous study of the Papirer and of the author's first works leads to the inevitable and significant conclusion that Kierkegaard had roots deep in the history of Greek philosophy, roots which were firm enough to provide the foundation for his first attack on Hegel, before the development of his reflective powers and the deepening of his Christian faith had furnished him with the means to destroy his opponent. In his first tactical operation the young "theologian" opportunistically utilized against Hegel the teaching of Socrates, which Hegel himself had resuscitated in order to counter the excesses of Romantic thought. In this conflict
Kierkegaard revealed deep understanding not only of irony, in the strict sense, but of the vis comica which became so much a part of him that the historic Socrates was finally eclipsed behind the figure of Aristophanes.

Hegel, however, had also a theory of tragedy, and in this field he ought not to be less vulnerable to attacks based on the Poetics of Aristotle than he had been to those based on the Dialogues of Plato in respect of irony. It is therefore not surprising to find that the best pages written by Kierkegaard on the concept of the tragic follow closely, in time, his large dissertation on The Concept of Irony, and that these still retain the character of a polemic directed against the great, vanquished adversary of his awakening.

Many critics, in their zeal to classify Kierkegaard as a religious thinker, tend to underestimate the importance of Either/Or, which nonetheless made the author's reputation, and to reduce the aesthetic and ethical stages to mere dialectical opposition, as yet not associated with the profound philosophical thought of the Protestant theologian. At the other extreme, the literary critic often dwells at length on the plastic qualities of "The Diary of the Seducer" where, in his opinion, all the potentialities of the encounter between Kierkegaard and Regina were exploited in their true domain. As a result, the rest of the first part of the work is generally neglected, and wrongly so. The "Immediate Stages of the Erotic" and those endearing "Shadowgraphs," the brides of sorrow, have an importance which unquestionably entitles Regina to share the fate of Elvira, of Margaret, or of Marie Beaumarchais. The evocation of these characters, accompanied by the muted chords of Don Giovanni, proves that the whole of this first part of the book must be taken extremely seriously and that in the case of this writer it corresponds to a doctrine of active participation in the sphere of real existence. It is precisely at this juncture-between these two essays and continuing their train of thought-that the following undeservedly neglected note occurs: "The Ancient Tragical Motif as reflected in the Modern. An Essay in the Fragmentary."  

II. THE CONCEPT OF THE TRAGIC IN ANTIQUITY AND IN THE MODERN ERA

In this short essay the reader is first struck by the constant reference to Aristotle. Following the example set by Lessing in the Hamburgische Dramaturgic, where the German writer repudiates the pseudo-Aristotelian theory of a moralizing type of tragedy popular during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France, Kierkegaard returns to an interpretation of the Poetics based on a direct study of the text. From this he borrows the famous definition: "Tragedy is the imitation of an action of noble character, limited in scope but complete in itself, expressed in a language reflecting the special characteristics of the various parts, an imitation which is effected by characters in action and not by means of narration and description and which, by rousing pity and fear, produces the catharsis necessarily stimulated by these emotions." (Poetics, VI). He borrows too not only the illustrious example of the character of Oedipus but also the entire social, religious, and moral atmosphere evoked by Aristotle. The latter rightly insists upon the fact that the first aim of tragedy is to present a character capable of retaining his personality throughout a dramatic action in which the hero, because of certain unavoidable occurrences and in conformity with a logic beyond his control, passes from happiness to misfortune (VII) without having really merited this fate (XIII). He has, notwithstanding, committed a fault or "grave error" necessitating a punishment which will serve as a warning. It is precisely the sight of this dereliction in a hero both blameless and possessed of free will which fills the spectator with a pleasant and salutary sympathy.

Kierkegaard stresses each one of these points. He reveals with great orthodoxy the epic
nature of the outer fabric of Greek tragedy.

The hero is not only an individual graced with exceptional qualities, but he is also an important citizen of his town, a member of a renowned family (even if renowned only through crime and punishment), and sometimes even a member of the society of gods and demi-gods. It is thus a "very substantial" individual-one forming, so to speak, a true microcosm—who is placed in the center of the action. Through a tragic occurrence, often occasioned by forces beyond his own control, the hero finds himself in violent conflict with the substantial reality of the macrocosm, the basic categories of town, family, and natural law. Almost at once the anger of the gods protecting world order is provoked—a blind anger without ethical character—which causes the downfall of the hero. A sorrow, itself substantial and akin to the external facts which have engendered it, weighs upon the hero whose action and suffering are equivalent to the progressive destruction of a small, condemned world. Kierkegaard successfully summarizes the principal characteristics of Greek tragedy when he says "that the action does not issue exclusively from character, and that the action does not find its sufficient explanation in subjective reflection and decision" and stresses from beginning to end its "epic substantiality." 8

The critic may now ask how much of this can survive in the modern mentality. The first difficulty to be faced is the reconstruction in the modern world of the framework for the tragic action.

All the substantial human groupings have in fact been destroyed by revolutionary action and replaced by artificial societies before which or in the midst of which the isolated individual assumes a comic rather than a tragic value.4 In order to counter this aesthetically degrading position the modern hero can be rehabilitated in two ways: either from within by being made solely responsible for his own fate, or from without by being treated as the incarnation of a universal dynamism. The Hegelian philosophy oscillates continually between this Pelagian individualism and inhuman pantheism; but the tragic is not present in either of these cases, for one of the two conflicting elements lacks the necessary substantiality:

If an individual is isolated, then he is either absolutely the creator of his own destiny, in which case nothing tragic remains, but only the evil •• or the individuals are only modifications of the eternal substance of existence, and so again the tragic is lost.5

In order to reach a valid concept of the tragic Hegel's views must be abandoned, just as they had to be in order to obtain a valid concept of irony.

Here too the direction to be followed is indicated by Christianity.

Consciousness and not naturalism must provide the elements of a solution. It must be recognized that the emphasis on subjectivity prevailing since the beginning of the Christian era is due to the change in outlook wrought by that era. Today the elements of tragedy are to be found only within consciousness. Hence the following significant lines:

The tragic hero, conscious of himself as a subject, is fully reflective, and this reflection has not only reflected him out of every immediate relation to state, race, and destiny, but has often even reflected him out of his own preceding life. We are interested in a certain definite moment of his life, considered as his own deed. . . . Hence modern tragedy has no epic foreground, no epic heritage. The hero stands and falls entirely on his own acts.6

Such a concept of the tragic would, however, risk identification with the ethical view, if the irrational and transcendental nature of the Christian doctrine (later called by Kierkegaard Religiousness B) did not come to the rescue of the individual isolated within his own consciousness. No less is required to accomplish this change in perspective than an evocation of Christ and a comparison between his teaching and the "comic" pretensions of contemporary "saviours."
On the other hand, the appearance of Christ is in a sense the deepest tragedy, because Christ came in the fullness of time . . . and he bore the sins of the world.7

As the redemption implies both a reunited universe and a divine hero atoning by his infinite suffering for faults for which he has assumed responsibility without being to blame, the prerequisites of tragedy are again established and the moral arithmetic of ethical individuality is superseded. The doctrine of original sin draws the Christian even closer to the hero of antiquity who, like the descendants of Oedipus, was generally afflicted with inherited guilt.8

An authentic and austere Christianity, stressing the doctrines of original sin, redemption, and the communion of saints, would therefore provide the basis for a modern concept of the tragic reflecting the concept evolved by antiquity.

But actual use in modern times of the best classical tragic themes would necessitate not only slight adjustments but important transpositions in the plot if inwardness and the drama of consciousness were to be achieved. Kierkegaard gives an instructive example of this in his portrayal of a modern Antigone; in his view a feminine character in particular is able to create an impression of substantiality great enough to bear sorrow and of inwardness profound enough to feel pain.

Kierkegaard retains the first part of the story: the crimes and triumphs of Oedipus; but for the latter part he substitutes the hypothesis that Oedipus reigned happily over Thebes for a number of years. We are asked to imagine that everyone is content and peaceful with one exception, Antigone, who has discovered her father's secret and has since lived in mortal fear of his criminal past and of the terrible repercussions which cannot fail to ensue.

Acceptance of this secret lends a profound significance to Antigone's existence, making her "the bride of sorrow." Even the fact that Oedipus dies at the height of personal happiness and success in no way alters the attitude of the priestess of this secret but rather tends to increase the spiritual tension of this virgin. We are then asked to imagine that Antigone is in love and that she is ardently pursued by her lover. Can she accept his advances, can she marry him and bring him her pain as a dowry? Or can she confide in him the secret which has come to be the very touchstone of her consciousness? Unable to do either of these things, she rejects her lover in order to remain faithful to her father-only on her deathbed will she be able to confess her love.

The essay closes with a description of the "thorn in the flesh," which is to be found like a signature at the end of all the author's most important existential utterances. It is obvious that this story is only a transposition of the author's own life and that, by portraying himself in the guise of Antigone, Kierkegaard had no difficulty in defining with precision the realm of the tragic in the modern era.

III. KIERKEGAARD'S TRAGIC CONSCIOUSNESS AS EXPRESSED IN HIS JOURNALS

The scheme of life realized by the modern Antigone through placing the emphasis on consciousness does not cancel, for all that, the relation to one's contemporaries any more than it cancels the fundamental relationship with God. On the contrary, the taut consciousness more than any other needs to realize in a kind of dialogue the benefits of the catharsis promised by Aristotle: man's opposition, God's understanding-these are the things Antigone requires in order to live, that is to say, in order to maintain her personality. Kierkegaard is able to draw on his own experience to describe the benefits she anticipates. In the same way that "the leap into the religious," experienced as divine grace and mercy, brings the balm of forgiveness, so also "the leap into human life," represented by the incomprehension of the masses, fills the misunderstood hero with
the "soothing melancholy of the tragic disposition."

It will be seen that the change from the ancient to the modern concept of the tragic, with the consequent emphasis on inwardness, has the effect of transferring catharsis from the mind of the spectators to the mind of the hero himself. Kierkegaard, however, does not arrive directly at this important modification. He prepares the way for it by creating in his first existential writings an imaginary audience of Symparanekromenoi, friendly shades whose wholehearted sympathy and understanding provide his consciousness with the human screen onto which it can project its own likeness; that is to say, they offer it precisely what authentic experience has refused it. The essay on the concept of the tragic is, however, divided into two parts by an admonition to these spectators, which is not without importance for an understanding of the endeavor.

Here Kierkegaard likens the tragic consciousness of the modern hero to "a need to romance about the personality" 9 and extols before his assembled sympathizers "the art of writing posthumous papers" as a perfectly adequate means of realizing this ideal.

The passage therefore contains an incitement to write a work which would satisfy the needs created by the tragic perspective of the wounded consciousness while remaining completely inaccessible to the inquisitive public: a "posthumous" work, that is to say, a work which would in a radical sense be beyond the comprehension of "contemporaries." Here it is not a question of rousing and converting the reader, as is the purpose of the doctrinal works of Kierkegaard, one section of which aims at direct communication and the other at indirect communication with the reader. Here it is a question of escaping from the reader in the course of an entirely personal self-justification. The following remark in the Journals is a reminder of this: "After my death my papers will throw no light at all on what really filled my life." 10

As regards Kierkegaard's literary activity, his speech to the "Meeting of the Symparanekromenoi" can be regarded as a vindication of his Journals and an explanation of their tone. The intimate diary has nearly always been for its authors a means of self-justification. As recent studies have shown,11 it has been favored in particular by inactive, nervous, or sentimental characters, since it allows them to exhibit a purity of intention which they have generally been unable to demonstrate in daily life. It has always been the haven of wounded souls and the tool of vengeance of the misunderstood where the nature of the misunderstanding can be analyzed in the manner most favorable to the author. Here, however, we are in the presence of a man whose vocation from the beginning seems to have been the assertion of the rights of individual consciousness and its transcendental aspirations over mass mentality and convention. The deeper this conflict becomes in Kierkegaard's life and works, the greater is his desire to retrieve from it, at least in the Journals, the prize of the solitary consciousness, which permits the author "to romance about his personality," to give it its true meaning, and to enjoy at least the one remaining pleasure in a life of controversy: that of experiencing the soothing melancholy of the tragic consciousness.

This is, in fact, the course of events. In the very first pages of the Journals a concept of the tragic involving "misunderstanding" is elaborated which leaves no doubt as to the finality of the views expressed in the Journals nor as to the application in Kierkegaard's case of the new existential category:

To be misunderstood is the height of tragedy. Consequently, Christ's life was the supreme tragedy, misunderstood as he was by the people, the Pharisees, the disciples, in short by everyone, in spite of the sublimity of his message. Hence the tragic quality of Job's life: surrounded by friends who misunderstood him and by a wife who mocked him, his suffering was boundless. Hence, in La Famille Riquebourg [a one-act drama by Scribe, translated by Heiberg in 1832] the tragic position of the wife whose love for her husband's nephew compels her to
disguise her feelings under a false coldness. Hence, in Goethe's Egmont (V, i), the genuinely tragic character of the scene in which Clara is finally misunderstood completely by her fellow townsman... Hence the tragic quality of the see of the "hypochondriac" and of the "man filled with aspirations toward a world beyond" who falls among people unable to understand him.

As early as two or three years before the meeting with Regina, Kierkegaard became interested in the idea of a "master-thief," Cartouche, the redresser of wrongs, regarded by public opinion as an ordinary bandit when he is in fact a philanthropist only in need of wholehearted and understanding love to set him upon the straight path again: "The master-thief is often conscious of the disastrous nature of his position: appearing dishonored in the eyes of the world, he feels himself misunderstood (his tragedy)."

Even while Kierkegaard was still at the aesthetic stage of his development, leading a brilliant and dissolute life, the hollow, clownlike nature of his success and the false idea he was giving others of his personality caused him much anguish. "In my own way," he wrote, "I fuse tragedy and comedy: I am witty, people laugh—and I weep."

Kierkegaard also takes from tragedy the idea that existence itself corresponds to a clearly conceived and defined role. "The tragic hero is created to give expression to an idea." On this point Kierkegaard never alters his opinion. Even in his first notes he attacks from this point of view the existence of the aesthete, whose dispersed effort never expresses a fundamental conviction or idea.

This rebuke is finally directed at Goethe: "At no single point has he realized the idea." Kierkegaard, on the contrary, never ceases to remind himself of the need to incarnate his own ideal:

As for me, I am concerned with two things: (1) to remain at all costs intellectually true, in the Greek sense, to my "life's idea"; and (2) to ensure that, in a religious sense, the pursuit of this idea is as ennobling as possible.

This notion of a "life's idea" is indeed that which the author illustrated by the example of Antigone, the tragic heroine whose wish to guard her painful secret became the meaning of her existence.

Kierkegaard also has a secret to guard, but this secret does not prevent contact with fellowmen, since the "thorn in the flesh" is to some degree the prerequisite of a pathetic vocation. It does, on the other hand, imply an estrangement from contemporaries and guarantees to a certain extent their "misunderstanding," both of which are necessary to the tragic personality. As the tension in Kierkegaard's troubled consciousness becomes accentuated by his deepening religious mood (together with the psychosis which he elsewhere called hypochondria), this dominating idea finds expression in attitudes of an increasingly tragic kind. At first Kierkegaard prefers to regard himself as an ironic Socrates entrusted with the task of reminding his countrymen through his anti-Hegelian polemics of the gravity of existence and reflection. But the Great Earthquake and his unhappy engagement to Regina cause him to change countenance: throughout the period dominated by this event he appears to himself as the new Antigone, fettered by her tragic secret and torn by the necessity of guarding it at all costs, even at the price of her love.

Nevertheless, after the brutal shock administered by the struggle with "The Corsair," Kierkegaard is not content merely with deepening his religious experience as reflected in all his later work; he also tries to grasp the significance of his attitude of "general hostility to the whole of society." It is astonishing to find how much importance the philosopher attaches, in his Journals written between 1846 and 1849, to the most insignificant manifestations of public opinion concerning his own person and to the need for continually explaining the polemical
relationship which this signifies. The only allusion in the Postscript to the tragic category gives the reason for his concern: a state of "contradiction" with contemporary society, he says, which produces the "isolated" type of individual, can be equally well interpreted in the sphere of comedy and in the sphere of tragedy.

The tragic and the comic are the same in so far as both are based on contradiction; but the tragic is the suffering contradiction, the comical, the painless contradiction. 1*

Hence the care taken by the philosopher in the valuable notes accompanying and explaining the publication of the Postscript to replace the term "contradiction" by the term "misunderstanding," which implies suffering and consequently guarantees the authenticity of the tragic. "How wearisome is this existence all the same!

I am convinced that no one, no one understands me." 19 And further on:

When I consider the decisive moments of my life, it seems that the fate reserved for me is to be always misunderstood by others. Even the reasons for my decisions will never occur to anyone. In a sense there is torment in this total misunderstanding when one lives by efforts as intense as mine.

Kierkegaard's tragedy is, moreover, heightened by his steadily increasing conviction that, in order to maintain his aggressive relationship to the "de-Christianized" world, it is his duty to prove himself an "active Christian," when in fact his real doctrine consists, as we have repeatedly shown, in safeguarding the incognito of the religious thinker, the transcendency of Christ, and in establishing himself existentially on the equivocal plane of humor. The journals, however, testify throughout to the evolution of the dangerous ambition to erupt into public life and expose through the persecution of the innocent sufferer the false Christianity of the clergy in appointed offices. There comes first an affirmation of the unusual conviction that Christianity itself is a role to be assumed in the face of collective "misunderstanding":

Mankind in general has no conception of what playing a character means or of the difference between saying to a man that one will assume such and such a role and actually planting oneself before him in that role, doing of course one's best to remain in character.

He reveals the full extent of this ambition when he remarks, "To be a Christian is almost the same as saying: to talk and act like a Christian." A second remark states categorically that there is no difference "between docere and the fact of being this or that." M

The alarming accentuation of tragic values in Kierkegaard's Journals makes it increasingly necessary for him to evoke a new ideal capable of replacing the modern Antigone, then exhausted from constant use since 1843. The same personality is, however, still recognizable in the new symbolic figure described in the notes written in Berlin between May 5 and May 13, 1846. The pattern of the tragic hero's life is always based on Kierkegaard's own, but this time the disguise is thinner than before:

"Let us then imagine even such an unhappy creature, one who has been in this plight since birth. . . ." There follows a long account of the trials and tribulations which provide a new version of the "thorn in the flesh." This unhappy creature wanders alone and misunderstood through life without ever seeming to experience man's supreme joy: a relationship of equality with his fellows.

Then he died, but whatever the pronouncements of the parson or of those attending the funeral, thanks be to God, the truth is different and the supreme joy has not been denied him. 21

This is an astonishing text containing a fascinating idea which Kierkegaard had not before then dared to express on paper: the idea that the unhappy man in question at last found with God himself this relationship of equal to equal!

It is therefore no surprise to find that the second part of this important text contains, like the
second panel of a diptych, a life of Jesus Christ conceived in such a way as to identify it completely with the tragic fate of the unhappy creature described in the first part:

Not merely in death was he nailed to the cross; in life itself he bore the heavy cross of "misunderstanding," a misunderstanding so overwhelming that his whole life would seem to have been in vain, that it would seem as if he had come in vain to the world, if death had not been the ultimate goal.22

That the purpose of the above text is to liken Christ's mission to Kierkegaard's own is beyond doubt in view of a third, wholly unambiguous statement:

If Christ returned to the world today they would possibly not put him to death, but instead they would cover him with ridicule. This is martyrdom in an age of reason; in the ages of feeling and passion they put you to death.23

From the beginning of the Journals the tragic relationship is conceived as a relationship between "them" and "you." The climax of opposition is reached if "you" play the role of Christ. It is indeed this role that Kierkegaard's anxious megalomania drives him to adopt with increasing témérité:

At all times Christendom needs someone who expresses Christianity absolutely and unrestrainedly. Such a man should be regarded as an alcoholometer, this is to say, by the way in which he is judged by Christendom it should be possible to measure how much true Christianity is contained in the Christians of that moment. If it is his fate to be killed, Christianity is then worse than Judaism at the time of Christ, as the scandal then was infinitely greater, Christianity being an absolute novelty—whereas now Christendom has at least some knowledge of it.

If it is his fate to be insulted, ridiculed and taken for a fool, while a whole contemporary generation of clergymen (who of course dare not speak out unrestrainedly) are honored and taken for true Christians, then Christendom is an illusion. In short, his fate constitutes the verdict: it is not what he says, but what is said about him. This is the wholly modern type of judge.25

In other words, Christendom is to be judged by the tragic relationship existing between it and the refractory Kierkegaard. The philosopher's hypochondria engendered an increasingly imperious need for radical condemnation, and the provocation of this is the series of violent attacks launched in the last period: from the Mynster-Martensen scandal to the explosion of "The Instant." Unfortunately this pathological attitude is not capable of expressing the depth of religious sentiment which is its pretext, and Kierkegaard removes himself from Christ precisely to the extent that he plays the prophet. Through lack of ethical seriousness the relation of opposition loses its authentic substantiality, and, through a fatetll stroke of that irony of history which was the subject of his first analysis, the apparent sacrifice of the poet turns tragedy into comedy.

Kierkegaard's work and character must therefore not be judged in the light of the tragic, which was never more than a borrowed category in this psychodialectic. The true doctrine of the master is given by the relationship of the three stages of development and by the progressive estrangement of the religious thinker in his infinite transcendency: the subjective categories which fit him best are defined by the "anguish" of a difficult vocation and by the "humor" which enables him to conceal the various fluctuations of his consciousness in the course of its laborious efforts to realize the ideal. It must not be forgotten, however, that this whole important work of fine literary construction and spiritual realization is the product of "an unhappy individuality" struggling with its own psychophysiological faults and with the sin of the world. Hence the tendency towards such a compensatory movement which arises in the evening of a struggle too severe for so frail a champion, and the continual temptation to project back onto the aesthetic plane a religious dream incapable of realization in the absolute form he chose to impose upon it.
The category of the tragic should guarantee this winding course an exemplary dignity in the eyes of the world, and procure at least for the battered consciousness the salutary balm of a sweet melancholy.

Our conclusion, then, is that we have been right to exclude the idea of the tragic from an objective presentation of the life and work of Kierkegaard, as this category is contrary to the spirit of his doctrine and was never capable of assimilation by the man himself in a really authentic manner. But beside his true visage this "unhappy individual" possessed a shadowy face which brought discord into both his message and conduct.27 Attentive contemplation of the reflected image, presented in the Journals, of this evil inner daemon in no way alters our interest in this writer. On the contrary.

To the sincere admiration which we already cherish for the philosopher of existence and for the poet of the religious, we must henceforth add the sympathy required by his sick but nevertheless fraternal consciousness.

NOTES

1. Either/Or, I, 113 ff. or Anchor, I, 137 ff. (I, 135 ff.).

2. Either/Or, p. 122 or Anchor, p. 148 (I, 148).

3. Either/Or, p. 116 or Anchor, p. 141 (I, 139-140).

4. Either/Or, p. 118 or Anchor, p. 143 (I, 141-142).

5. Either/Or, p. 130 or Anchor, p. 158 (I, 158).

6. Either/Or, p. 116 or Anchor, p. 141 (I, 139-140).

7. Either/Or, p. 116 or Anchor, p. 140 (I, 139).


17. This was the chronological sequence of events: the attacks by The Corsair lasted from Jan. 2 to July 17, 1846, reaching their first climax at the end of January; the Postscript appeared on Feb. 27, 1846, and seems to have given rise to a second campaign of polemics.


20. IX A 51. It will be seen that two years sufficed to destroy the indirect communication which is the very pivot of the Postscript and of Kierkegaard's philosophy.

21. VII A 144.

22. Ibid.


24. It is important to grasp the full meaning of this adverb which always signifies with Kierkegaard "in a total and transcendental manner."

25. IX A 165.


27. This has not prevented me from indicating the complexity of Kierkegaard's personality and thought in my studies of the man and his Work. Thus my first book, Le Vrai Visage de Kierkegaard, Paris: Beauchesne, 1948, juxtaposes the doctrinal synthesis and the syntheses of the foment and of recollection; and my last, Kierkegaard, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa philosophie, Paris: P.U.F., 1954, concludes on the mystery of the fate of the subjective thinker.
The theme, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, has by this time been treated in many different ways and from many different angles.

This is not surprising since the life and work of these two thinkers have had a decisive impact upon the intellectual discussions of our time. Kierkegaard, and after him Nietzsche, experienced the full desolation of modern man's instability, and each sought in his own way to find new paths to tread. Both began by recognizing the fact that Christianity had lost its power over men and that the consequences of this would be felt in every sphere of life. Both were aware that in such a situation men seek new outlets, and they regarded it as their life's work to search for new paths which would lead modern man out of the confusion created by the leveling of all values.

Although their points of departure are in some respects the same, the ways they take lead in entirely opposite directions. They continually encounter the same problems but interpret them quite differently, depending on the basic idea dominating their thought.

It is therefore very instructive to examine the many points of contact in their philosophies and the different solutions they reach; here, however, I shall confine myself to a study of them from one central point of view, that of religion.

As already mentioned, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche came to recognize that Christianity, which had influenced all spheres of life in our civilization for almost two thousand years, was on the point of losing its power over the minds of men. Both realized what terrible consequences this would have: Kierkegaard had premonitions of the catastrophes to come, and Nietzsche, in his book, The Joyful Wisdom, states under the pseudonym of "the madman" that "God is dead . . . and we have killed him," and then asks: "Is there still an above and a below?" Further on he says: "But this event is still on its way, it is still on its journey and has not yet reached the ears of men."*

For mankind a period is at hand which is characterized by what Kierkegaard calls the "leveling" of values and which he analyzes in detail in A Literary Review.2 Nietzsche uses the term "nihilism" to characterize the same period-an age in which, as he says, "the highest values lose their validity," and there is no goal, no answer to the question "why." 3 He discusses this subject most comprehensively in one of his major works, The Will to Power.

It is thus in their assessment of the cause of the approaching age of upheaval that these two thinkers are in agreement. Their disagreement begins when they discuss how the leveling process, or nihilism, can be checked; it is at this point that their ways lead in opposite directions.

It is very important, though difficult, to discover what factors in each of their lives prompted the choice of direction each made.

There was a time in their youth when both stood undecided and hesitant before entering upon the ways which led them to take up a position for or against Christianity. Perhaps the question as to why a person adopts a certain point of view can be answered only by that person himself. I
shall, however, mention one factor which I believe to be of great significance in Kierkegaard's Christian and Nietzsche's anti-Christian attitude.

God and Christianity became an indestructible reality for Kierkegaard by reason of the dominant influence of his father. Abraham's sacrifice of his son, as recorded in the Old Testament, was repeated in Kierkegaard's own life—with Kierkegaard himself as the sacrifice.4 The profound spiritual upheaval this produced in the young thinker prevented him from ever reaching Nietzsche's conclusion that God is dead. As God was for him a frightening reality, Kierkegaard was forced at an early age and in a decisive manner to consider his attitude towards Christianity.

With Nietzsche, on the other hand, the case is different. As far as we know, his youth contained no harrowing event which could fill him with horror and convince him of the religious reality. The Christian influence to which he was subjected in a Protestant vicarage was not strong enough to make a lasting impression on his deeply meditative nature. It should not, however, be forgotten that in spite of the liberal outlook upon Christianity with which Nietzsche began his youth, it was not easy for him to shed the last vestiges of its influence. When, therefore, we encounter Nietzsche * a later date as a bitter opponent of Christianity, we must remember that he is the same man who, in his youth, could express the ecstasy of Christianity. I shall quote here one of his poems from the year 1862, which reveals the eighteen year old youth still strongly influenced by Christian truth:5

Thou hast called me:
Lord, I hasten to thy throne and there remain.
Blazing with love thy compassionate eyes
Gaze sorrowfully into my heart:
Lord, I come.
I was lost, perplexed and dejected, Destined for Hell and torment.
But I saw thee from afar, And thy glance, intense with life, Lighted constantly upon me:
Now I come gladly to thee.
I am filled with horror at the dark power of sin,
And I cannot look back.
I must not lose thee,
At night, terrified and oppressed, I see thee,
I see thee and I cannot let thee go.
Thou art so gentle, true and kind,
So loving, thou dear Saviour of sinners!
Appease my longing,
Let my soul and my thoughts rest in thy love
And remain for ever with thee.

The notes dating from the youth of Kierkegaard and of Nietzsche reveal how both zealously carried out comprehensive studies of the past and how both came across the same problems and tried with deep psychological insight to imbibe the spiritual atmosphere of past ages. After reading Nietzsche's early notes, one gains the impression that he had set himself the same task as Kierkegaard, which was to discover a theory of stages that would enable him to understand the diversity of human attitudes to life.

Their courses of development from the time when each emerged as an author are perfectly clear. Guided by an inner consistency they both describe in their writings a series of attitudes to life on a rising scale—in Kierkegaard's case with a Christian and in Nietzsche's case with an anti-Christian tendency. Kierkegaard depicts the journey of a human being back from modern
uniformity and creates, under cover of pseudonyms as well as in his own name, one of the most brilliantly reasoned series of literary works in the world.

Nietzsche proceeds in the opposite direction: through nihilism, atheism, and scepticism he approaches a point of view which expresses the very greatest enmity towards Christianity and seeks to base the values of life on an atheistic outlook.

It was of great importance for both of them that at the beginning of their literary careers they discovered certain philosophers who influenced the course of their thought. In Kierkegaard's case it was in particular the philosophy of Hegel which stimulated an examination of his own position. The mixture of Christianity and philosophy in Hegel's works incited Kierkegaard to think clearly and consistently upon the relation between these two and at the same time to stress the paradox of Christianity in contrast to all human knowledge. He discovered that Hegel in his philosophical method abused logical thought, and this was for him a reminder of the wariness with which logical conclusions should be drawn. Perhaps we owe it largely to Hegel's inconsistencies that Kierkegaard has such a well-grounded and strictly logical method of thought. Thus, indirectly, he learned from Hegel. He did not, on the other hand, require any information from Hegel on the problems of life, as he possessed this before encountering him.

In the case of Nietzsche it was Schopenhauer who exercised the greatest influence. Schopenhauer's philosophy, a precursor of modern existentialism, represents a kind of European Buddhism. It provided Nietzsche with a basis on which to work and filled the empty space created by his abandonment of Christianity. By means of this philosophy he tried, so to speak, to find himself, and it formed an important stage in his life, but it is significant for Nietzsche's later relationship to Schopenhauer that he came to adopt a position which was exactly opposite to Schopenhauer's. The latter's will to resignation, to impotence, is replaced in Nietzsche's thought by "the will to power" and self-assertion. He discovered in Schopenhauer's philosophy a basic trend which he later combated and characterized by the word "decadence." For him this term covers all movements away from an affirmation and acceptance of this world as it is, movements in which the goal is redemption from this world. He found the contrast to the decadent type in the heroic being who triumphs over all life's difficulties, the man who is firmly entrenched in this world and appreciates life.

For a time this attitude brought him into sympathy with Richard Wagner, who in his early music glorified the strong triumphant being, as in his trilogy The Ring of the Nibelungen.

In the heroic man-the superman, as he later called him-

Nietzsche found the human ideal which he was seeking and which he wished to place in the stead of old Christian ideals, since these in his opinion, had become outworn.

Thus Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, each in his own way, discovered the ideals which they considered would be able to surmount the leveling of values-and here we have arrived at a fundamental difference between the two.

The main question for both of them was whether and how a new point of departure, a new beginning for a man's life and work, is possible, and, in a wider sense, what a man's relationship should be to the laws and standards he obeys. The interest of both philosophers centered in this question. In Kierkegaard's words we shall call the whole problem the problem of repetition, about which he surmised, under one of his pseudonyms, that it would come to play a prominent part in the philosophy of the future.6 The problem of repetition, or, in religious terminology, the problem of rebirth, means for a man a new beginning and a new basis for life.

The ways taken by both thinkers with regard to repetition reveal their diametrically opposed attitudes.

For Kierkegaard the problem of repetition is closely linked with the Christian doctrine of sin
and grace. Clearly and coherently he explains and stresses the importance of the ethical commandments in order to lead man to an understanding of grace. Man obtains a new beginning since he obtains forgiveness. Everything is new, everything is forgiven—this could be taken as the basis of Kierkegaard's Christian interpretation of repetition.

Nietzsche's formula for a new beginning reads quite differently and is expressed in the statement "everything is permissible." To take the point of view that everything is permissible means that there can be no question of sin and forgiveness. Man is in a permanent state of innocence, and the whole of life can be considered under what Nietzsche calls die Unschuld dies Daseins—"the innocence of existence."

For Kierkegaard the problem was to achieve repetition through an intensification of the claims of ethics; for Nietzsche the most important thing was to jettison the burden of the commandments laid down by the law and bequeathed to us by the past. In the first pages of Thus Spake Zarathustra, which was intended as an introductory guide for overhuman aspirants, it is maintained that the expression "thou shalt," which occurs in the commandments, is the greatest obstacle to achieving the superhuman ideal.

With a reference to the New Testament's pronouncements on becoming like children, Nietzsche erects steps by which his overplan can reach the innocent state of a child. First of all, he states, "the soul" must be transformed into a camel and as such be loaded with all that is heaviest in the world. There is, however, one thing to which the camel is unequal and that is to declare war on the old values, to reject the "thou shalt" of the commandments and replace it by "I will." For this purpose a second transformation is required: a transformation into a lion which can with a lion's courage overthrow "thou shalt." Only when "thou shalt" has been overthrown can the third transformation take place, which brings with it the innocence of a child and the possibility of beginning life again from the very start.

With the abolition of "thou shalt" the superman is free; everything is permissible to him; he no longer has a lawgiver above him, for he is his own lawgiver and judge. He has the courage to live with an awareness of the fact that everything is permissible, but this can only apply to those who have had the same courage to overthrow "thou shalt." For "the many-all too many," as Nietzsche says, the superman must create laws, he must govern them with might and give a meaning to their lives.

The diametrically opposite attitudes of the two thinkers to the claims of ethics have further consequences. Both are aware that from recognition or rejection of eternal standards there follows either an affirmation or a denial of a transcendental reality. The direction in which Kierkegaard moves leads to a belief in transcendence, while for Nietzsche the reality of this world is the only reality. This settles simultaneously the question of the meaning each attributes to life. For Kierkegaard with his Christian attitude the question is easy enough to answer: eternity is the goal and meaning of earthly existence. In Nietzsche's view the existence of the superman is the meaning and goal of life. In a polemical statement directed against Christianity, which promises the resurrection of all things on the Last Day, Nietzsche maintains that "the goal of mankind cannot "e at the close of history but in its highest examples." With Kierkegaard, belief in a transcendental reality also settles the problem of man's determination and survival, but for Nietzsche this is by no means the case, since he recognizes the earthly temporal life alone. Nietzsche feels himself, in his own words, to be Caught between two voids, the infinite past, in which he did not exist, and the infinite future, in which he will not exist. A sinister "thingness and annihilation await the individual who does not believe in eternity, as this alone can withstand the river of time. A desperate attempt to escape this, Nietzsche clutches at the doctrine of eternal repetition or recurrence, that is, at the belief that everything which is now in existence has
existed in precisely the same way countless times before and will repeat itself again and again within an infinite period of time. I agree with the interpreters of Nietzsche who maintain that this belief in eternal recurrence is adopted by him as a surrogate for the immortality of the soul. In order to save his individual existence from perdition and extinction in nothingness, he is forced to have recourse to a belief in eternal recurrence. Nietzsche maintains that it was in the year 1881—as he wandered in the mountains by the Silvaplana Lake in Switzerland, "6,000 feet beyond man and time," as he expresses it—that he suddenly conceived the idea of eternal recurrence. It is, however, a fact that he had already become acquainted with this idea at an earlier date—he even mentions it in his treatise dating from the year 1874, The Use and Abuse of History, in which he has obtained it from the Pythagoreans, but he could equally well have obtained it from Heraclitus, the philosopher of Greek antiquity whom he esteemed so highly. Moreover, the idea of eternal recurrence was already known to the Indian philosophers. After further consideration it will be seen that the idea of the eternal recurrence of all things will always be a possible loophole for philosophers who regard the visible world as the only reality. We have an example of this in modern materialism in so far as it recognizes only material things as real. In The Dialectics of Nature, by the Marxist philosopher, Friedrich Engels, we find a concept resembling Nietzsche's: We have the certainty that matter remains eternally the same in all its transformations, that none of its attributes can ever be lost, and therefore, also, that by the same iron necessity with which it will exterminate the earth's highest creation, the thinking mind, matter must somewhere else and at another time again produce it. Nietzsche even believed at one time that this could be proved by the natural sciences. If we consider eternal repetition or recurrence from an existential angle, it appears perfectly logical that in this view the emphasis should be placed on the value of individual moments in life, particularly on those moments which can be wholeheartedly accepted. These moments are a substitute for eternity. Nietzsche, too, speaks with ecstatic enthusiasm of the individual exhilarating moments in earthly life, as for example in several very poetic passages in Thus Spake Zarathustra. I shall quote here a statement which appears in his other major work, The Will to Power: If we accept a single moment, we have not only accepted ourselves but the whole of existence. For nothing stands isolated and alone—neither in ourselves nor in things—and if our soul has ever once quivered and sung with joy like the string of a harp, then the whole of eternity must have been a condition of that event—and the whole of eternity was, in that one moment of acceptance, affirmed, redeemed, justified and ratified. But is this idea of eternal recurrence as attractive as Nietzsche maintains? We have a fair amount of evidence to show that he himself dreaded its consequences, particularly the recurrence of what is meaningless and insignificant. It can also be asked whether eternal repetitions are desirable when they bring forth nothing new. Here Nietzsche confirms Kierkegaard's view that a daemonic obsession with temporality breeds emptiness and boredom. The same evaluation of eternal recurrence is to be found in Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov, where it is said that "Our present earth may have been repeated a billion times—and the same sequence may have been repeated endlessly and exactly the same to every detail, most unseemly and insufferably tedious. . . ." One consequence of Nietzsche's outlook is that the individual disappears entirely as an independent being and becomes a mere cog in the huge machinery of the world with its eternal repetitions. The German philosopher therefore retreats into the last refuge of paganism, a belief in an inexorable fate, in which man is entirely at the mercy of blind forces. For Kierkegaard the case is different. He recognizes not a blind fate but the living spiritual reality which can always provide him with new tasks: One can become glutted with and weary of all that is temporal and earthly, so that it would be torment if it were to continue into all eternity. But he who has an eye for the ideals has in the very moment of beholding them only one prayer to God: eternity. This prayer is
heard at once, for ideals and eternity are eternally inseparable. Since Nietzsche regards himself as the defender of the purely temporal life to the exclusion of every other possibility, he is compelled to abandon the traditional concept of truth, the aim of which is to find with the aid of thought the inner coherence in all the relationships of existence. He wishes to use thought only to Serve his particular conception of life. With him thought loses its function as a means of arriving at truth, which must therefore be Subordinated to a definite conception of life, and his later philosophy ends quite consistently with a denial of the concept of truth. It is instructive to read in this connection certain chapters of The Will to Power. I shall quote a single statement: "Truth is a kind of delusion, without which a certain type of living being cannot live." It will again be noted that the case is just the reverse for Kierkegaard. Trained in the Greek mode of thought and warned indirectly by Hegel's philosophy, he gives us the most logically reasoned presentation of the problems since Aristotle. In view of his rejection of the traditional concept of truth, Nietzsche's philosophy can justifiably be called a philosophy of subjectivism, and in this connection I would draw attention to its affinity with the extreme subjectivism of Max Stirner. It would be quite wrong to confuse-as is so often done-Kierkegaard's presentation of subjectivity with Nietzsche's subjective conception of truth. One could summarize the difference between the two philosophers by saying that Kierkegaard's subjectivity is a blend of truth and what is individual, whereas Nietzsche's subjectivism is a blend of what is arbitrary and what is individual. For Kierkegaard it is truth, which determines and transforms the individual; for Nietzsche it is the individual who determines what truth shall be. The divergent tendencies in Kierkegaard and Nietzsche can be still further demonstrated by applying the theory of stages to the whole of Nietzsche's achievement. If it is true that Kierkegaard has depicted, or at any rate mentioned, every conceivable attitude to life within the sphere of human existence, then it should be possible to find Nietzsche's attitude among them. We shall now look at Nietzsche through Kierkegaard's eyes. In the first place, Nietzsche belongs to the class of people who have knowledge of the eternal but who wish to remain within the sphere of the aesthetic and make the aesthetic the one reality. It is therefore understandable that from this position he is forced to attack trends which go beyond the aesthetic. With Socrates and Judaism there arose an awareness of the eternal which placed the aesthetic on a lower plane, and it is interesting to note that Nietzsche is much concerned with these two phases in the history of the world and that he adopts a polemical and deprecatory attitude towards them-in complete contrast to Kierkegaard. Nietzsche's standpoint can be still further established in accordance with the theory of stages in that his attitude is one of despair since he lacks belief in eternity. In the course of his development he passed through increasingly intense forms of despair such as those described by Kierkegaard in The Sickness unto Death. The most characteristic form taken by Nietzsche's despair is that analyzed by Kierkegaard under the heading "The despair of willing despairingly to be oneself-defiance." Here with great accuracy a state of mind is portrayed which has a striking resemblance to Nietzsche's. For those who doubt whether Nietzsche's condition was in fact one of despair and defiance, Ludwig Klages' book Nietzsche's Psychological Achievements is recommended; it is written from the point of view of modern psychology and as far as I know has not been influenced by the works of Kierkegaard. In the section of The Sickness unto Death just referred to, we can single out for special attention a passage in which the expert will at once discern features characteristic of Nietzsche who, driven by a daemonic urge, wished to establish himself as his own master and experiment with a new code of ethics. The despairing self, we read, acknowledges no power over it, hence in the last resort it lacks seriousness and is able only to conjure up a show of seriousness when the self bestows upon its experiments its utmost attention.... The self is its own lord and master, so it is said, absolutely its own lord, and precisely
this is despair but is also what it regards as its pleasure and enjoyment. . . . The self wants to enjoy the entire satisfaction of making itself into itself, of developing itself, of being itself; it wants to have the honor of this poetical, this masterly plan according to which it has understood itself. And yet in the last resort it is a riddle how it understands itself; just at the instant when it seems to be nearest to having the fabric finished, it can arbitrarily resolve the whole thing into nothing.21 It is beyond doubt that Nietzsche's state of despair is also despair in its most extreme form, that is, an indignation at Christianity which maintains that Christianity is "untruth." Kierkegaard calls this form of despair the sin against the Holy Ghost. The Sickness unto Death contains the principal point of view from which Kierkegaard would have launched a criticism of Nietzsche, but interesting remarks also occur in his other works which seem almost to anticipate Nietzsche's position and show the consequences it entails; a closer examination of these, however, is beyond the scope of this work. In his writings Kierkegaard has thus evoked Nietzsche's spirit without ever having known him-Nietzsche was only eleven years old when Kierkegaard died in 1855-3nd we can with certainty surmise how he would have judged Nietzsche. But how would Nietzsche have judged Kierkegaard? Unfortunately, Nietzsche's attention was drawn to Kierkegaard by Georg Brandes only two years before the cloud of madness descended upon him, and he never managed to read Kierkegaard's works or to comment upon them. If we wish to imagine how he would have expressed himself about the Danish philosopher, we must refer in particular to his criticisms of existential attitudes of mind resembling Kierkegaard's. Of the thinkers about whom Nietzsche has expressed an opinion, Pascal is of a type most akin to Kierkegaard. Almost certainly Nietzsche would have accused Christianity of having destroyed so gifted a person as Kierkegaard as he accused it of destroying Pascal.22 At the same time, as in his estimate of Pascal, he would have had great respect for Kierkegaard's fusion of fervor, spiritual depth, and honesty. It is also certain that Nietzsche, with his great psychological insight, would have discovered that Kierkegaard's works present a superior description and analysis of the depths of the human soul. We can now consider the ultimate consequences of the thought of the two philosophers. Seen from a humanistic point of view, Kierkegaard concludes by overstressing the eternal. For him things temporal are a strong temptation, which is perhaps one of the reasons that he finally turned so violently against man's attachment to everything temporal; it is, in fact, his means of defense against the lure of the world. From his opposite position, Nietzsche overstates the temporal or life as it is; the other element in the synthesis of a man's life, the eternal, therefore claims its due. The violence with which Nietzsche attacks Christianity in his later writings, particularly in The Antichrist, reveals how much power Christianity still exercised over him and how weak and impotent he felt against it. Thus, in their final periods, these two thinkers combat precisely what they feel to be temptations for them. Thus, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche arrived from Christian beginnings at two extreme points of view. Kierkegaard became-as he himself believed-a tool in the hand of God for presenting Christianity once again in a true and compelling manner. Nietzsche-as Kierkegaard's antithesis-went the way of indignation to its bitter end. Some interpreters of Nietzsche maintain that, when we criticize Nietzsche's attack upon Christianity, we should remember that he drew a sharp distinction between Christ and the subsequent interpretations of his doctrines-particularly the "version" given by St. Paul.23 In Nietzsche's works, St. Paul is treated as the great enemy who transformed Christ's gentle personality and teaching, making him into a Saviour expounding the doctrines of sin and grace which Nietzsche hated so passionately. In my opinion, the fact that this philosopher speaks with comparative mildness about Christ himself does not mean that he is more in favor of Christ than of Christianity as developed by St. Paul and the other apostles. When Nietzsche presents Christ as a harmless, gentle teacher, he is reducing Christ's whole
significance, which in itself constitutes a strong, indirect attack upon Christ. We must therefore conclude that Nietzsche went the way of offense in every respect with such consistency and thoroughness that no one, in his own words, could ever rival him. That Nietzsche never managed to achieve that emancipation from a relationship with the eternal, which was precisely the aim of the superman, is, however, quite another matter. His unfinished war with the eternal can be taken as direct confirmation of the truth of Kierkegaard's conception that man is a combination of the temporal and the eternal. In spite of all his bitterness, Nietzsche could never cease thinking about the eternal, and this terrible spiritual tension alone would have broken his spirit even if illness had not intervened. In conclusion, a few words about the significance of the works of the two philosophers. Kierkegaard's attitude and his own understanding of his attitude are clear enough; he wished to point the way to a renewal of the Christian mode of life so that the same force which once transformed the whole world could again operate in the years to come. In the welter of voices recommending new ways, Kierkegaard's honest and forceful words are gaining ever increasing recognition.

But what must be our attitude to the problem of Nietzsche? He affects each one of us. If we accept Kierkegaard's view that every man bears within him the seeds of every attitude to life, then we have the seed of Nietzsche's attitude within us. In the light of this we can also understand Stefan George's remark that Nietzsche shouted out our own madness so long and so vehemently that his heart finally burst. Through Nietzsche we are brought face to face with every consequence of atheism and so it is easier for us to make our own decision when confronted with the great "either/or." It is to Nietzsche's credit that he-unlike so many superficial atheists-does not stop halfway and openly or covertly cling to some value in life, but frankly declares that without God existence has no meaning and that in such a case all standards disappear and everything is permissible. Nietzsche's significance lies in his exposure of halfhearted attitudes and modern superficiality.

I am in complete agreement with Karl Jaspers when he says in his book Nietzsche and Christianity that this philosopher leads us to the edge of a void, that he reveals to us the abyss and thereby helps us to seek firm ground. Jaspers also advises against tangling with Nietzsche unless the would-be student is already in possession of a firm place to stand.

I shall supplement Jaspers' statements by saying that only after we have been introduced through Kierkegaard's work to the problems with which both philosophers wrestled can we derive benefit from a study of Nietzsche without incurring the risk of being swallowed up by the void towards which he leads us. Kierkegaard's work provides us with a map over the trackless and dangerous regions to which we are led by Nietzsche's thought.

In summary, one can say that Kierkegaard's constructive and coherent thought contains a positive answer to the questions raised by Nietzsche's subversive and fragmentary philosophy.

NOTES


2. The major part of A Literary Review has been translated into English under the title of The Present Age. Cf. p. 27 ff. (VIII, 91 ff.).

4. Søren Kierkegaard's sacrifice of Regina is usually given as a parallel to Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, but one can with equal justification, on the basis of certain statements by Kierkegaard, speak of the sacrifice of Søren by his father.


6. Repetition, p. 3 (III, 193).


8. Werke, VI, 33 ff.


15. Werke, XVI, 378.


22. Werke, XV, 34, 421.


24. Werke, VI, 224.


IX

SARTRE'S CONCEPT OF FREEDOM CONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF KIERKEGAARD'S THOUGHT

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Translated from the Danish by Margaret Grieve and H. R. Harcourt

In the Concluding Unscientific Postscript human existence is defined as a synthesis of the eternal and the temporal. Kierkegaard prepares the way for this definition in his earlier pseudonymous works from Either/Or to The Concept of Dread by describing man as "spirit" when his mode of life is ethical (or religious) in contrast to "non-spirit" when his mode of life is aesthetic, as in the case of the philistine, the speculator, and the mystic. The second part of Either/Or points out how the eternal and the temporal are fused in the ethicist as he subordinates his concrete existence, the "temporal," to the absoluteness of the ethical demand, the "eternal," and thus "chooses himself in his eternal validity." The point at which the temporal and the eternal intersect in the ethical (religious) choice of the absolute antithesis between good and evil as the basis of life, is "the instant"; and the act itself in which the eternal and the temporal are united in "the instant" is freedom.

These few very brief remarks on Kierkegaard's concept of freedom must suffice as a background for the following examination of Sartre's thought.

Sartre, like his German counterpart Martin Heidegger, is a phenomenologist and ontologist. His first philosophical works revealed the strong influence of Husserl, the first exponent of phenomenology; but later he followed Husserl's pupil and successor, Heidegger, in combining an ontological approach to philosophy with a phenomenological method.

The ontological approach, which is extremely old-it predominates both in ancient and medieval philosophy-begins with the question "what is being?" which is regarded as the fundamental problem of philosophy. This approach does not concern itself with the problem of discovering the qualities of individual things in their diversity (this is not the task of philosophy but of the other sciences) but of discovering what it really means to say that something is.

The philosophy of the Middle Ages, particularly Thomism, made use of a so-called analogy of being in its ontology. Thomas was fully aware that the word "being" does not have the same significance at all the various levels of existence in its ordered entirety.

The being of a stone does not have the same fullness as man's being or God's being. God's being is infinitely exalted in fullness over the being of every created thing. Thus there is no direct similarity in quality between God's being and the being of created things. The verb "to be" does not have the same weight and significance when used about God as it has when used about things.

There is only an analogy-a similarity in dissimilarity-between God's being and the being of created things. The Creator's being is as different-even in its similarity-from the being of created things as he is superior to them. Analogia entis, or the multiplicity of the concept of being, is characteristic of medieval philosophy in its Thomist form.

In contrast to this, modern philosophy is characterized by an ontology with a monovalent
interpretation of being. According to this, being is determined singularly, and the character of being is understood from the being of things. "To be" means to be in the same way as the things we find around us. Man himself is therefore conceived of as an actual thing, although certainly of a special kind, composed as he is of heterogeneous principles, that is, of soul and body. But in principle man is, as modern philosophy understands it, in the same way as things are. This monovalent conception of being is expressed most sharply in the dogma of scientific positivism. That which is is determined by science. Only that which can be perceived by the senses and rationally ordered within the scientific system of concepts, is. Everything else simply is not. It merely possesses an imaginary being.

The philosophy of existence is a protest against this ontological monism. Its fundamental contention is that man is in an entirely different way from things. The philosophy of existence of Heidegger and Sartre had many precursors. Rickert's and Windelband's and not least Dilthey's attempts to establish a special logic of history and the humanities in contrast to the epistemological theory based chiefly upon mathematics and the natural sciences, prepared the way for a conception of man's being as something different from that of natural objects both qualitatively and categorically.

In France the philosophy of Bergson, among others, pointed in the same direction. It was, however, the philosophies of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche which had the profoundest impact; moreover, the fact that Kierkegaard's influence was combined with Nietzsche's was of decisive importance in determining the effect it had upon Heidegger and Sartre. The same also applies to the third important existentialist philosopher of modern times, Karl Jaspers.

A basic axiom which underlies the philosophy of these thinkers is a new affirmation of the multiplicity of being, although this affirmation is not the Thomist one in which the contrast between the being of the Creator and that of created beings is emphasized.

Instead, the contrast is between the mere presence in space and time of things or natural objects, and the existence of man as a free and acting being in the concrete situations of history. The fact that things are merely "present" while man "is existing" indicates two completely different kinds of being. They are different both in dimension and in category.

This dualism between nature and man compels Heidegger, and after him Sartre, to readopt the ontological approach to the problem which in more recent philosophy, and particularly since Kant, was completely superseded by the purely epistemological or noetic philosophical approach. The very fact that the multiplicity of the concept of being is affirmed makes the ontological problem of vital importance. Both Heidegger and Sartre build up their principal philosophical works as ontological analyses. By means of an analysis of human existence in its dissimilarity from non-human reality, they try to discover what in fact being really means. Their aim is fundamentally ontological. That is, they wish to establish a universal ontology transcending all particular ontologies (as "ontology of nature," "ontology of history," etc.).

In this ontological approach to the problem both philosophers make use of the phenomenological method. This method consists in reducing every cognition of an entity to an immediate intuition, a Wesensschau as Husserl called it, where the entity is able to reveal itself as it really is. The phenomenological method, first applied by Husserl in demonstrating that the structure of the cognitive consciousness itself is "intentionality," i.e., that it is directed towards an entity outside itself, consists merely in describing the phenomenon, i.e., that which manifests itself to the intuition of the mind as it really is-and nothing else. Hence the term phenomenology. Both Heidegger and Sartre maintain that this is the only valid method for understanding human existence. All prejudices, and particularly scientific prejudices, must be discarded in order for human existence to be apprehended intuitively and with an open mind for what it is and then
described as such-not interpreted according to scientific, psychological or sociological dogmas and defined so that it can be fitted into one or another preconceived scientific system.

The philosophies of both Heidegger and Sartre thus consist in an analysis of human existence accomplished by means of the phenomenological method for the purpose of solving the basic ontological problem: "What is being?" Heidegger proceeds in this way in Sein und Zeit and Sartre in L'Etre et le neant.

We shall not give a detailed account of Sartre's philosophy here; what is of interest to note, however, is the relationship between his concept of existence and Kierkegaard's.

In his ontology Sartre distinguishes between two quite different planes of being: I'en-soi, that which is in itself, i.e., the outer world, the world of things, and le pour-soi, consciousness, the human world, or as he often calls it, using Descartes' expression, le cogito.

The peculiarity of the being of man in contrast to the being of "things" is that man is not immediately what he is, as "things" are, but must realize his being. Man is not what he is, and he is what he is not. Here Kierkegaard's influence is at once discernible. Existence is the realization of human being in time. This, however, means that man's being consists in annihilating his immediate being. Man's being is annihilation, neantisation. As man constitutes himself as man, he places himself in opposition both to the outside world (he is not this outer world, he annihilates it as an existence possibility for himself) and to his own immediate existence as a part of this world. In order to exist, man must continually annihilate what he "immediately" is and become that which he as yet is not.

This annihilating function is man's freedom or man's transcendence. Man can transcend or set himself above his immediate existence.1

According to Sartre, all human relations and functions are to be understood on the basis of this fundamental being of man. We will not go into this subject in detail, but mention must be made of Sartre's conception of man's relationship to his fellow men, for this is of particular interest. The moment I come into contact with a fellow being, the first thing that happens is that he observes me.

But to be observed by another is to be treated as an object, to be treated in fact as en soi, as a thing. This is precisely what the existing individual must not and will not be. He wishes to be pour soi, i.e., active freedom. The appearance of the fellow man therefore discloses the fundamental discord in man's being, a discord between that which is directly given, i.e., that which I "immediately" am and which my fellow man can observe and command, and that which I will (or should) be but have not yet become. My relationship to my fellow man must now consist in neutralizing his observing glance, and turning him who would make me his object into my object. Love, hate, indifference, desire, masochism and sadism are all forms which are assumed by the immediate contact with fellow men-and they are all forms of conflict. Indeed, the relationship of each man to his fellows always takes the form of a conflict. But in this conflict the conflict in my own being, which is likewise the conflict in the whole of existence, is revealed, namely, the conflict between l'en-soi and le pour-soi.2

In the fourth part of L'Etre et le neant Sartre discusses in detail the concept of freedom and it is here that a comparison with Kierkegaard is of great importance.

Freedom itself is man's very being; it is the annihilating activity through which man becomes man. Freedom, however, is not a property of the will; if this were so, then free actions of the will could be contrasted with other actions which are absolutely determined. No, man is always entirely free, although this by no means excludes the possibility of determination. The motives which determine actions are not themselves the causes of these actions in the scientific sense. That is a naive misunderstanding.
It is only through man’s free actions and decisions that motives gain their motivating force, which in turn determines definite actions. Therefore, it is precisely these determined actions which ultimately have their basis in freedom.

The real free action is not the single act through which man achieves first one thing and then another. The real free action is the basic act which underlies all other actions and makes possible each individual free action; it is the act which creates the basic motive for the particular motives of all individual actions. It is this free fundamental act which makes possible all determination, for the expression "the determination of individual actions" means precisely that these actions spring from and express, or symbolize, as Sartre likes to say, this fundamental act of freedom. This basic act is a choice in which man chooses what he shall in fact "be." 3

The similarity with Kierkegaard's conception of choice, in which the self becomes conscious of its own eternal validity, is obvious.

But does Sartre mean the same thing by this fundamental act of freedom as Kierkegaard does by the fundamental ethical choice in which the person chooses himself in his eternal validity?

No—Sartre does not mean this. On closer examination it becomes apparent that Sartre's fundamental free act does not correspond to the basic choice of Kierkegaard's ethicist, but corresponds, on the contrary, to the aesthete's lack of spirit, i.e., to the lack of continuity and meaning in his personal life. The chief characteristic of choice in the sense intended by Sartre is that it is entirely free, that there can be no value which determines it. The choice is not determined by any eternal value, as with Kierkegaard; on the contrary, it is the choice itself which creates the value. Consequently, in Sartre's view, the fundamental choice can be reversed at any moment, and the fundamental character which determines actions can at any moment be totally altered by a new choice. The dread [Angst] and melancholy [Tungsind, literally, heavy-mindedness] which penetrate the whole existence of Kierkegaard's aesthete, precisely because he does not choose to place himself under his eternal determination,—i.e., he refuses to acknowledge himself as spirit—this dread and melancholy are regarded by Sartre as that which constantly accompanies choice. "Dread," he says, "which, when it is disclosed, reveals our freedom to our consciousness, reveals the constant variability of our basic aim. In dread we understand our choice and ourselves as unmotivated, unjustifiable, always conscious that at any moment we can suddenly alter our choice and allow the stream to flow in the opposite direction. Thus we are continually threatened by our own choice and consequently by the possibility of becoming completely different people." 4 This is not the way Kierkegaard's ethicist speaks, but it is just the way his aesthete does. Here is the lack of meaning and coherence which characterized the aesthete. It bears the stamp of capriciousness and is "unjustifiable" in the same way as the aesthete's life, which is the very embodiment of possibility, like the word Schnur, which sometimes means a string and sometimes a daughter-in-law and, Kierkegaard asks, why should it not also mean a camel or a dust brush as well.

It is true that Sartre also has something to say about man's "facticity," as he calls it, something which corresponds in a certain Way to Kierkegaard's statements about the concrete self which is accepted in repentance. Sartre also says that man does not create his own being but chooses it. 5 Man's facticity (which, according to Sartre, indicates living continually "in situation," being bound to one's own individual body, one's geographical and historical setting and the complete contingency of death, etc.) 6 this facticity obtains an entirely different function in Sartre from what it does in Kierkegaard's ethicist. With Kierkegaard's ethicist, facticity is the concrete task of man's eternal obligation, and therefore the ethical relationship to facticity is repentance. It is just the opposite for Sartre. Here facticity is derived from the arbitrary character of the free action. The arbitrary choice of freedom must confront itself with a given situation.
Otherwise it is not a free action.

Sartre can even say: the function of the factual situation is not to compel me to do something but to make it possible for me to disregard it, to create an entirely new situation by my free action.7

This is just the opposite of what Kierkegaard understands by repentance, but it coincides exactly with the views of Kierkegaard's aesthete on the given reality-the views, for example, of "the young man" in "The Rotation Method" in Either/Or, Vol. 1. In his essential instability and changeability the aesthete seeks continually to disregard the given reality-the opposite of accepting it in repentance.

Thus the self which, according to Sartre, is chosen in an act of freedom, is not an eternal or absolute self like that chosen by Kierkegaard's ethicist; it is not the self in its eternal validity. Sartre calls that self which is the result of a free choice an "intelligible character." Kierkegaard's absolute self, or the self in its eternal validity, can be discovered only when each individual acknowledges the supremacy of the ethical demand which occurs only where there is a God-relationship (thus Kierkegaard is able to say that the ethicist repents himself back into history, back into himself, back to God, or rather, that the self is grounded transparently in God).

Sartre's intelligible character, however, is certainly not an empirical fact; it cannot be demonstrated empirically by psychological analysis, since it lies at the base of all empirical and psychological phenomena of consciousness and determines them; but it can be detected by means of what Sartre calls an existential psychoanalysis. In the same way in which Freudian psychoanalysis regards conscious actions as masks and symbolizations of unconscious impulses and seeks to uncover the hidden source of conscious actions by means of a special method of interrogation, so also does Sartre's existential psychoanalysis regard conscious actions as the symbolizations of this hidden intelligible character, which can be discovered by careful and judicious observation of the individual. What is to be realized by the act of freedom? Not, as in the case of Kierkegaard's ethicist, man's eternal determination. On the contrary, according to Sartre, the free man tries to lay the foundations of his own existence; he tries to make himself the creator of his own life; in fact he tries to be God. "To be man means to reach toward being God. Or if you prefer, man fundamentally is the desire to be God." 8 The existential psychoanalysis seeks to show how all actions are "translations" of this fundamental desire. This is demonstrated in an astonishing manner which I shall not go into here. But the point of interest for us, because it again leads us directly into the world of Kierkegaard's aesthete, is that Sartre regards all human actions as expressions of a definite selective taste. Our taste leads us to choose what we believe will endow us with being; each choice based on taste is therefore a translation and a symbolization of the basic urge, the will to become one's own God. This does not differ greatly from the philosophy of pleasure which is the mainstay of the aesthete's outlook on life. The difference between these two philosopher's conceptions of the choice is typified clearly in the fact that Kierkegaard, on the one hand, bases his doctrine of choice and the self it evokes on the individual's ethical choice between indifference to and recognition of the absolute ethical antithesis: good-evil;

Sartre, on the other hand, bases his doctrine of choice on the way in which a man thirsting for life chooses between what appeals to his taste and what does not.9

Sartre's choosing subject, freedom's subject, would seem to be one of the representatives of "non-spirit" in Kierkegaard's sense of the term. Sartre himself is a modern version of Kierkegaard's aesthete with the aesthete's principal characteristics: melancholy and despair. But instead of accepting this despair and bringing it under an ethical determination in repentance, Sartre, like Kierkegaard's aesthete, defiantly and daemonically retains the total meaninglessness
of "non-spiritual" existence. The final sentences of the principal exposition in Sartre's L'Etre et le néant are extremely interesting and instructive when compared with Kierkegaard's statements, and could well have been uttered by the aesthete in Either/Or. They read as follows:

Every human reality is a passion in that it projects losing itself so as to found being and by the same token to constitute the In-itself which Scapes contingency by being its own foundation, the Ens causa sui Which religions call God. Thus the passion of man is the reverse of that of Christ, for man loses himself as man in order that God may be born.

But the idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain. Man is a useless passion.10

In conclusion we would point out one further important distinction between Sartre and Kierkegaard, which is in fact a recapitulation of what we have already said in demonstrating that Sartre's philosophy is identical with the aesthetical view of life as it is asserted by "a" in Either/Or. Kierkegaard presents his conception of existence in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, a work intended as a direct challenge to every attempt to create a system of existence, a rational and harmonious scheme of man and things.

Existence cannot be understood systematically but only in the ethical choice. Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence is therefore subjective existential thought. On the other hand, Sartre's philosophy of existence, like Heidegger's, is embodied in a fundamental ontology of phenomenological structure. What does this mean? It means that Sartre is striving to achieve a philosophy which will again seek to encompass the whole of existence with man at the center. Phenomenological ontology does in fact mean a new system of existence. When writing philosophy Heidegger and Sartre are what Kierkegaard would have called objective speculative philosophers. It is therefore not accidental that Kierkegaard's aesthete is the existence-type embodying Sartre's concept of existence. The absolute self of the ethical existence is present only at the moment of the ethical choice and cannot be grasped by any such ingenious psychoanalysis. If phenomenology and psychoanalysis alone are employed, and merely with a view to writing a fundamental ontology—a "system," as Kierkegaard calls it—then only the aesthetic will be apprehended, that which man is immediately. However much freedom and choice and dread are discussed, the choice will only be between given possibilities, a choice whereby a person flits from one aesthetic possibility to another, or, as Sartre puts it, from one taste to another.

Sartre is the modern heir of both Romanticism and Hegelianism. Thus, there is no doubt as to the attitude Kierkegaard would adopt towards him if Kierkegaard were alive today. Sartre uses Kierkegaard's ideas to defend the very positions which Kierkegaard strove so passionately to invalidate. Sartre is a modern version of the philosophy of "non-spirit," or spiritlessness. The daemonic characteristics of nihilism are much more apparent in him than in Kierkegaard's contemporary adversaries. Nietzsche stands behind Sartre. Sartre is also a product of the twentieth century. His main philosophical work therefore ends by renouncing the ethical seriousness which above all else was Kierkegaard's very pathos. In the epilogue to L'Etre et le néant Sartre has inserted a brief section with the title "Ethical Implications," which is not without interest in connection with Kierkegaard.11

Here he maintains that ontology cannot provide moral codes. It is only concerned with that which is; imperatives cannot be derived from its indicatives. This, moreover, is further proof that Sartre aims at being an objective thinker. Existential psychoanalysis, however, can only reveal what ethics are and what their existential structure is; it is an "ethical description" in which the meaning of human actions is shown to lie beyond the antithesis between egoism and altruism. The fate of ethics in Sartre's existential psychoanalysis must be the renunciation of the spirit of seriousness, Vespri de serieux, the abrogation of the view that values are transcendent and that
consequently man's various external actions can differ in value. The serious men must become either hermits or popular leaders—and Sartre has no sympathy with either of these types. They do not realize that all human activity has the same purpose, namely, to sacrifice man so that causa sui may emerge. Existential psychoanalysis teaches us that values are not outside and above man, but that man is the only source of all values.

Sartre, who is modern existentialism's most celebrated spokesman, is therefore not a present-day representative of Kierkegaard's thought but a modern representative of an attitude to life and a philosophy which Kierkegaard did all in his power to combat.

NOTES


2. See the interesting section "The Look," pp. 252-302 (310-367), and the section "Concrete Relations With Others," pp. 361-430 (430-508).


6. Being and Nothingness, p. 494 ff. (570 ff.).


The great masters of Christian thought lead us back eventually to the relation between faith and natural reason. Their preoccupation with this problem is not an accident, for it expresses the abiding concern of the Christian mind with the impact of divine truth upon human reality. Different aspects of the tension between faith and reason come to the fore in response to the various historical conceptions of God and man. It is one of the sure marks of Kierkegaard's authenticity as a Christian thinker that he should be engaged constantly with this issue. From his early years as a theological student, down to the bitter years of public strife, he never ceased probing into the connection between faith and reason. He made this question a central focus in his general program of restoring the genuine meaning of the basic Christian terms.

Consequently, when we come to assess Kierkegaard's significance for us at the present time, we are led unavoidably to consider his thoughts on the interrelation between Christian faith and human reason. Without ignoring the influence of his position upon more recent theological developments, our attention must be directed primarily toward his own views. This concentration upon the Danish thinker's own notions is necessary, both because they are sometimes misunderstood and because they do not escape the requirement of being considered within their historical context. Especially in their polemical and corrective aspects, they are bound up with certain special intellectual conditions which no longer shape the atmosphere of Christian thinking.

It is noteworthy, for instance, that Kierkegaard himself does not usually formulate the problem as that of faith and reason. It is more customary for him to speak about the relation between faith and reflection or between existence and pure thought. This is not an insignificant terminological shift. Rather, it indicates his sensitivity toward the actual way in which the problem was being posed in his own day. Given the attempt of the Hegelian philosophers to reinterpret faith and reason in terms of an idealistic theory of pure thought and dialectical reflection, Kierkegaard had to make a new formulation of the perennial Christian theme of how faith stands related to our natural understanding. Three phases in his analysis of faith and reflection call for special inquiry. What relations obtain between faith and reflection and the first two spheres of existence? How does Kierkegaard's opposition to Hegelianism affect his view of faith and reflection? Does some sort of reflective activity persist even at the level of Christian faith or the religion of transcendence? Once these questions are examined, some responsible conclusions can be drawn about the relevance for us of Kierkegaard's work.

Despite the admirable efforts of Dr. Lowrie, Professor Swenson, and other English translators, many people still find it easier to read about Kierkegaard in secondary studies than to
persevere with the sources. One reason for their reluctance to risk a throw with the Danish
Socrates himself is the widespread opinion that he abounds in ambiguities and contradictions,
whose import can be unraveled only by the experts or dons. There is some basis in fact for this
prejudice, owing to Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms and his technique of indirect
communication. But, even had he composed all his writings in the direct manner of his religious
meditations, a residual difficulty would still remain. His mind is many-leveled in its structure, and,
to enter into communication with it, the reader must learn to hold several perspectives
simultaneously before him. This mature use of intellect certainly runs counter to some prevailing
currents in modern education which accustom people to think along one groove and to forsake
the rigors of comparative analysis. The reader who is trained to drain out the rich diversities of
meaning and flatten out the problems of human existence will find Kierkegaard obscure and
confusing even in his best passages.

Yet the remedy does not consist in denuding him but rather in enlarging our own vision to
include the several reaches of human freedom. Fundamentally, Kierkegaard is forced to
recognize several meanings for human life and its basic language, only because of his fidelity to
the ways of freedom. Men give different interpretations to their modes of existing, and they use
the common human terms to express different scales of value. Responsiveness to this situation
overrides any inclination on Kierkegaard's part toward sheer virtuosity of style and complexity of
thought. Analogous and conflicting meanings are found in his writings mainly as a consequence
of his study of human freedom and its modes of expression.

Still, he does not abandon us to a condition of moral and semantic anarchy. His theory of the
three spheres of existence is an attempt to do justice to the actual diversity and yet achieve some
unity in the light of a Christian evaluation of man and existence. He bids us make a constant
comparison between the aesthetic, ethical, and religious ways of appraising human life and
expressing its ideals.

He keeps us alert to the alternatives of human freedom in approaching the central issues of
existence.

The educative effect of entering into dialogue with Kierkegaard is immediately apparent
when one tries to discover his position on faith and reflection. His prime concern is not to lay
down a definition of them and then measure the distance of other doctrines from his own. Since
he is considering faith and reflection existentially, or in respect to the uses of human freedom, he
takes an inductive and practical approach. He describes their role within the different spheres of
existence, in order to remove the impression that the problem is a purely speculative one having
interest solely for professional theologians. By uncovering the presence of some sort of belief and
reflection in every mode of existence, he establishes the broadly human importance of
determining various contextual meanings for belief and reflection. In this way, he makes us
concretely aware of the analogous ways in which men relate them and of the persistent tension
between the two in all the stages of existence.

In the initial or aesthetic sphere, faith signifies a man's immediate attachment to life, his
animal conviction in the reality of the world and perhaps of its supreme principle. Kierkegaard
was unwilling to base religion upon faith in Schleiermacher's meaning of a spontaneous feeling
of dependence upon a primal source of being within the universe, for such a faith is a purely
natural and determined act, whereas religious faith is a gift from God and a free response of
man.1 Furthermore, this spontaneous attachment to the universe and its absolute principle is a
naive and uncritical attitude, which stands in need of rational justification and extension. It is
destined to be transformed into something more perfect, into a philosophical explanation which
may well be of a pantheistic sort. This marks off aesthetic faith definitively from the religious
faith of the Christian: the latter is not an immature point of departure but the goal of all the strivings of existence. It is not a moment within reason's own development but a reach of decision and truth beyond reason's proper scope.

This critique is valuable today, when many people defend religious faith primarily on the ground that faith is required in every practical act and even in the scientific outlook. Kierkegaard has no quarrel with such an argument, as long as it pretends to be nothing more than a suasion directed against a naive sort of rationalism.

This approach breeds confusion, however, if the radical difference between aesthetic and religious faith is overlooked. There is no direct transition from our working animal faith to religious faith.

Hence Kierkegaard protests against the inference that Christian faith must be subordinated eventually to scientific and philosophical knowledge. Such a naturalistic inference is based upon an inadequate study of the different existential conceptions of faith.

Religious faith will pass away, but only to the eternal vision of God and not to temporal forms of knowledge.

There is also a type of reflection found in the higher degrees of aesthetic life. At its peak the aesthetic mind is dedicated to a refined pursuit of pleasure in its most exquisite moments. A person of this sort is constantly surveying the possibilities for his own temporal ease and enjoyment. In some degrees he overcomes the original blind attachment to vital forces and achieves a certain reflective grasp of himself. But aesthetic reflection is an inwardness lacking in the ideal principle, since it does not relate the self to any permanent standard of social conduct or to the demands of God.

It is a defective self-understanding, since it isolates a man from his responsible connections with others. This type of reflection stresses an imaginative toying with possibilities at the expense of the ability to make decisions concerning the actual world. Out of such reflective acts are born the everlasting playboy, the self-centered epicure, and the sterile doubter.

The careful Kierkegaardian descriptions of these human types should render us cautious about lending indiscriminate praise to the reflective mind. If the educational process aims only at arousing reflectiveness in students, then it falls short of its full purpose. Education must include a comparative and critical inspection of the different ways in which men can become aware of their nature and destiny. There is an educational responsibility to provide at least the evidence for making an independent appraisal of the various types of reflective existence. "Reflectiveness" is a polyvalent term, which does not carry with it its own inherent justification. Kierkegaard agrees with Socrates that the unexamined life is not worth living, but he adds that some ways of conducting the self-examination of one's life are worth more than others. His position is realistic, since he does not allow the general praise of reflective living to overshadow the fact that men become reflective in conflicting ways, which need to be evaluated.

Indeed, from the dynamic standpoint of personal development, he recommends ethical reflection as a means of overcoming the defects of both aesthetic faith and aesthetic reflection. The ethically grounded individual subjects our vital allegiances to a careful critical scrutiny and, at the same time, raises the level of reflective concern from momentary personal pleasure to conformity with universal moral law. Ethical reflection drives home two ineluctable facts of our human situation: the individual's distance from the moral ideal and the need for a free decision to attain the eternal ideal. It dissolves the aesthetic dream that the individual man naturally coincides with the conditions of his enduring happiness and that there is some technique available for eluding the strenuous test of moral freedom.

In bringing the individual into a more demanding relation with the moral standard, the
ethical mind is critical of the purely aesthetic mode of reflectiveness. The latter attempts to evade the norm of eternity. Ethical reflection assures us that man is a prisoner neither of time alone nor of eternity alone. He is a temporal being whose spiritual center impels him toward eternity. The decisive function of ethical reflection is to make us aware of eternity as the goal of our temporal freedom and the measure of our moral striving. Freedom is dedicated to aims that are not wholly temporal and self-centered, as the aesthetic mind pretends.

How, then, does ethical reflection bear upon the reality of faith?

Kierkegaard does not provide a perfectly clear answer to this question. After portraying the knight of ethical faith as bearing the banner of eternity in the thick of temporal strife, he becomes dissatisfied with his own symbolism. The cause of Kierkegaard's uneasiness is not difficult to locate. Ethical insight is a mode of natural knowledge. It requires a disciplined will to attain, but still it can be acquired through our unaided efforts. Kierkegaard could not say simply that aesthetic faith is overcome by ethical reflection, without seeming to imply that natural knowledge and effort are unconditionally superior to faith. Yet he could not remain content with an ethical faith which is nothing more than a practical expression of the hope generated by ethical reflectiveness. For then there would be nothing transcendent and freely donated by God in faith: it would be reduced to a purely natural extension of our knowledge of moral ideals.

Kierkegaard's hesitations are sometimes more illuminating than his firm assurances. In the present instance we can see how important it is to discriminate between the several meanings of faith.

There is a legitimate sense in which one can have ethical faith. This is the individual's confidence in the integrity and ultimate strength of his moral ideal or the social group's confidence in the practicality and humaneness of its social aims. In Kierkegaard's acceptation such faith is the offspring of natural moral insight and does not lead necessarily to a religious outlook. It is only mixing the categories of life to identify religious faith unqualifiedly with our passional adhesion to personal and social moral ideals. What John Dewey describes as our common faith is an instance of ethical faith or social dedication to an ideal ascertained by ethical reflection and scientific techniques. Although it is a definite type of faith, it remains distinct from what Kierkegaard regards as the religious and Christian modes of faith.

Ethical faith partakes of the limitations of ethical reflection.

Kierkegaard calls the latter "the first reflection," in so far as it introduces the ideal norm into human motivation. But ethical reflection does not determine whether the moral law is itself grounded in a personal God, to whom we owe our primary obedience. The person-to-person relationship upon which religion rests cannot be established solely by means of ethical reflection and faith. Despite its emphasis upon decisive action, the ethical mind is likely to become lost in endless reflection upon the unconditional demands of moral law and the inadequacy of our human resources. This paralyzing comparison between moral norm and human action brings the purely ethical life to a standstill through what Kierkegaard refers to as an "overdose of repentance." The curious feature of this repentance, however, is that it does not concern past deeds so much as future attempts to satisfy the moral standards. Ethical reflection leads to a sort of despair, precisely because it leaves out of account the ultimate relation between the personal God and the individual man as a sinner open to personal redemption.

Beyond both ethical reflection and ethical faith lies a "second reflection or double reflection," which is a movement of mind that brings the eternal moral law into personal relation with free, finite individuals existing before God. But such a reflection can operate only within the mode of existence constituted by religious faith.
Before examining religious faith and reflection in themselves, some mention must be made of the idealistic philosophies of religion which provided the negative background for Kierkegaard's thought. Although he had read Hegel's lectures on this subject, his main concern was with the more popular expositions of philosophy of religion by men like Martensen and Erdmann. They rendered the formulas of Augustine and Anselm unavailable to Kierkegaard by adapting them to the exigencies of the idealistic program. The desperate note which sometimes sounded in Kierkegaard's discussion of faith and reason resulted from the seemingly successful appropriation of all the terms and formulas of Christian thought by the systematic whole of absolute idealism.

The venerable maxim "I believe so that I may understand" was interpreted to signify that religious belief is the first step on the road to a total philosophical system of knowledge. Faith can be taken in various senses: as Schleiermacher's immediate feeling of dependence, as Jacobi's intuition of the divine, or as Hegel's absolute content under the form of feeling and representation. In whatever meaning assigned to it, however, faith connotes an undeveloped condition whose inner dynamism demands completion and transformation into philosophical knowledge. The perfection of man's relation to God is found not in the halfway house of religious faith but in the terminal edifice of the philosophical system, where scientific insight is at last attained concerning the proper relation between man, nature, and God.

Hegel himself claimed that the ideal content of faith is final and that Christianity is true, revealed religion. But he reserved for philosophy the privilege of embodying this content in the only ultimately adequate form as scientific knowledge. The impetus of the spirit does not culminate in the Christian faith but-at least for the few who can apprehend it-in the philosophical knowledge of idealism. What is the principle of distinction between believers and knowers, between those who remain satisfied with the penultimate religious expression of the spirit and those who press onward to its final actualization in philosophy? Hegel's answer highlights the distinction between reflection and reason or pure thought.

Relying upon finite reflection, the man of faith perceives the contrast between the finite and the infinite and also regards it as a hard and fast distinction. The attitude of faith and religious worship supposes a permanent otherness between God and the human spirit. For its part, philosophical reason recognizes the partial validity of this distinction and nevertheless denies that it is ultimate. From the comprehensive vantage point of pure speculative thought, the underlying identity of finite and infinite spirit is seen.

Philosophy of religion is nothing other than the purifying of faith, the dialectical removal of the veil obscuring the identity of the finite and the infinite. Thus, for those who succeed in transforming finite reflection into the absolute truth of reason, faith itself becomes transformed into speculative philosophy or scientific theology.

What is most significant for our present inquiry is the correlation established by the Hegelian philosophers of religion between faith and reflection, as distinguished from speculative certainty and reason or pure thought. If the contrast had been drawn simply between faith and reason, Kierkegaard might well have embraced a sheer fideism or an extreme voluntarism in order to save Christian faith from engulfment in philosophical reason. Instead, the idealists paired faith with a type of reflection which is committed to the irreducible difference between God and the finite individual as well as to the unqualified need for religious worship. This suggested to Kierkegaard that religious faith must retain its integration with some sort of reflective activity rather than cut itself loose from all connection with reflection. His close involvement in the
post-Hegelian movement not only made him suspicious of the claims of reason and speculation in the area of religious faith but also led him to correlate religious faith with the factor of reflectiveness and objective reference. Finite reflection is constituted not only by a subjective attitude but also by an affirmation concerning the actual being of God and man.

IV

The position of Kierkegaard in respect to the spheres of existence and the idealistic philosophy of religion provides the indispensable background for understanding three of his well-known descriptions of religious faith: (1) he refers to religious faith as the absurd or the paradoxical; (2) he calls it an immediacy after reflection; (3) he characterizes it as becoming contemporaneous with Christ. The first description marks off religious faith from Hegelian philosophies of religion; the second one differentiates it from the first two stages of existence; the third one brings out the specific character of Christian religious faith. It is clear that all three aspects of religious faith entail a certain view of the nature of religious reflection.

1. In scanning the texts where Kierkegaard refers to religious faith as a sacrifice of the intellect and an acceptance of the paradoxical and absurd, one must pay careful attention to the context.

The most incisive statements of this view are found in his early Journals, when he is undergoing the crisis of Romanticism, and in the works pseudonymously attributed to Johannes Climacus. The latter represent what today might be called the standpoint of cultivated secularism. Johannes Climacus is by no means hostile to the religious outlook. He makes a sincere effort to understand it and differentiate it from other attitudes. He describes religious faith sympathetically but from the outside, as seen by a non-believer.

Hence he is more successful in stating what it is not than what it is in positive essence. Somewhat humorously he points up its striking contrast with idealistic philosophies of religion. If they embody the consistent whole of systematic truth, then religious faith is absurd in its stress upon the individual, his sin, and his otherness from God. If certitude comes only from dialectical, necessary demonstrations based on the identity between the subject and the object, the finite and the infinite, then religious faith is supremely uncertain, unobjective, and paradoxical. For it insists upon the contingent, the given, and the irreducibly finite, to the point where they cannot be demonstrated by means of dialectical incorporation into a total system.

Speaking in proper person as a believer, Kierkegaard indicates the basic reason that religious faith cannot be assimilated to any "rational truth," in the idealistic sense. Such assimilation depends upon some sort of dialectical identity between the divine and the human spirit. In this sense of rationality or conceptual adequacy, theism and Christianity belong outside the pale of rational truths and certainties. Moreover, the distinctively Christian religious faith rests upon the Incarnation, which is a free union of the temporal and the eternal in the person of Christ. This union is not subject to any necessity and demonstration. Similarly, the act of Christian believing remains free, in the sense of not being coerced by any philosophical inference or dialectical development. It is not the intellect alone which leads to faith, since freedom always includes an act of passion or will.

Kierkegaard sometimes speaks as though the intellect were positively excluded from the act of faith. Yet all that his opposition to idealism and pantheism requires is that faith not be regarded as the necessary outcome of a demonstrative process, in which reason alone is operative. He uses the weapon of intelligence to defend the irreducible distinction between the finite individual and
This suggests that there are other ways of viewing the intellect than the one dictated by the presuppositions of Hegelianism. It also opens up the possibility that a philosophical theism may establish the truth of God's actual being and nevertheless refuse to subordinate divine freedom, historical contingency, and the act of Christian faith to a necessary dialectic. Kierkegaard explores the ways in which the solitary individual can make this refusal, but he leaves unexamined the ways in which a philosophical doctrine can be based on the same refusal. To this extent he remains the victim of the idealist interpretation of the history of philosophy.

2. The description of religious faith as an immediacy after reflection is indigenous in Kierkegaard's own theory of the spheres of existence. His intent is neither to exclude reflection entirely from religious existence nor to identify the latter simply with immediacy, but rather to specify the precise relation between religious faith and the various sorts of immediacy and reflection. Religious faith is not to be confused with aesthetic immediacy, in which the spontaneous awareness of God is fused with a feeling for life and one's own well-being. To reach the truly religious standpoint, the act of reflection must intervene decisively in various ways. Aesthetic reflection enables one to become aware of the innumerable imaginative possibilities for the self and the boundless region of inwardness. The maturing self must also submit to the discipline of ethical reflection, which measures the immediately given situation by a norm and underlines the distance between imaginative possibilities and the free act of moral decision. Nevertheless, the values of immediacy or attachment to the actual cannot be emptied out through the operation of reflection. Religious faith is a mode of immediacy, in so far as it involves a total practical commitment to an actuality other than human thought. Yet the actuality to which the religious believer is committed by his faith is that of God and not of the finite self or a separate moral ideal.

The manner in which religious faith comes "after" reflection has to be carefully determined. The two varieties of reflection directly concerned are the aesthetic and the ethical, to which may be added the non-existential reflection of the idealist systems. Religious faith is "after" these types of reflection in the sense that it does not precede them as a prologue or as a nascent state tending to become transformed into them. Viewed in the perspective of the stages of existence, these reflective activities are subordinate to the act of religious faith. And yet this faith does not come "after" them in the way that a conclusion follows from its premises or a dialectical synthesis from its prior phases. There remains a radical discontinuity between every philosophical reflection and the act of religious faith. Kierkegaard expresses this discontinuity by the metaphor of a leap. No matter how intense and thorough the preparatory work of aesthetic and ethical reflection and how penetrating the philosophical analysis, the believing mind is not carried over by their momentum alone to the commitment of faith. It requires a leap, a free intervention of the will, a practical insertion into existence at the point of its intersection with eternity.

Once having made these qualifications, Kierkegaard is freed from any need to maintain that faith follows after reflection in such fashion as to exclude it entirely. He states explicitly that reflection is good in itself and capable of being redeemed in the religious sphere. He calls for a religiousness sufficiently powerful and supple to control the great forces of reflection. There would remain an unavoidable opposition between religious faith and a purely speculative and systematic type of reflection, which reduces everything to a problem in speculation and robs man of his ability to act. But the central energy of human reflection can be made to build up one's inwardness and dedication to existential truth, thus serving the ends of the life of faith.

In his religious discourses Kierkegaard sketches the operations of religious reflection or
The conscientious man does not spurn the objective findings of the sciences concerning nature and man's place therein. But he is anxious also to consider the subjective, practical relation of man to other realities through the use of freedom. Religious reflection is that second sort of reflection required to bring ethical norms into relation with the individual self and the personal God. Once it comes into play, there is a reintegration of ethical reflection itself within the ambit of religious existence. Hence the religiously reflective individual has a grasp upon the ethico-religious truths of existence: he perceives himself as an individual and a sinner existing before God and standing in need of his aid. Reflection is here no enemy to action but its essential condition, for it makes a man heedful of those concerned truths which govern the religious disposition of his freedom.

We are given no straightforward answer by Kierkegaard to the question whether aesthetic and religious reflection can be similarly harmonized. He felt it to be his doom, and not his glory, to be a poet as well as a thinker. The poet or aesthetically reflective mind grasps an ideal in its imaginative possibility and then proclaims its worth in persuasive words, regardless of his own practical relation to this ideal. Kierkegaard was sensitive to the opportunity for hypocrisy on the part of a religious poet, who might arouse others to the demands of religious faith, without himself conforming to them.

And yet he acknowledged his vocation to be that of the poet of the religious, the poetic reflector of religious existence. To avoid dishonesty, he tried to combine a severe reading of the Christian ideal with an insistent reminder that he himself was only a striver and pursuer. He also came to recognize that the religious witness embodies another way of communicating religious truth to others, since the witness may be quite lacking in poetic genius and yet be powerfully persuasive through his example. In his personal life and thought, however, Kierkegaard never quite succeeded in reconciling the mode of communication proper to the religious witness and that of the honest poetic reflector of religious existence.

The final note of religious faith as a becoming contemporaneous with Christ helps to resolve the difficulty of aesthetic reflection in the religious sphere. The attitude of the man of faith is one of constant becoming or striving to follow Christ, but it includes no claim to being in a state of perfect conformity with the truths he confesses. Hence, in presenting the Christian way to others, there is an inevitable disproportion between the demands of the following of Christ and the life of the Christian exponent, whether he be poet or witness. Because it is a process, the act of faith has a temporal aspect to it. But it does not consist either in going backward in time or in moving toward an indefinite future. We make our encounter with the Lord of time and history in the instant or act of believing itself. The contemporaneity consists in the mutual response of freedom between the finite individual and the God-Man, in whose divine person time and eternity meet in a primary way. Christian religious faith is distinguished precisely by the authority of Christ, who alone can rightfully place an unconditional demand upon the personal freedom of man. The special inwardness of the Christian man of faith consists in his practical commitment to the actuality of the Incarnation, with which he is constantly striving to conform his thoughts and deeds.

Because of his own intellectual situation, Kierkegaard deliberately stressed the act or subjective how of faith over the content or objective what of faith, without excluding the latter. Today, however, we are no longer in danger of supposing that Christianity is demonstrated by some philosophical system. Indeed, since Kierkegaard's time the trend has been in the other direction. Naturalism has raised the suspicion that no philosophical approach to God is possible and that no rigorous mind can accept the Incarnation as a strict truth. Hence, many religiously inclined people are timid about acknowledging any role of intellect and any intellectual content in...
religious faith. In view of the changed atmosphere, the contemporary function of the Socratic gadfly would seem to be to stress the what of faith and the function of intellect in the act of believing. And yet this should not be done in such a way as to lose the gains undeniably made by Kierkegaard.

V

There seem to be three principal gains. First, Kierkegaard has taught us to recognize that faith and reflection have several depths of meaning. After sharing his company for a while, we are not likely to pass uncritically from one usage to the other or to make altogether loose comparisons. He has disclosed an abiding human need for the different sorts of faith and reflection at various phases in the growth of the self.

In the second place, he has brought out the distinctive nature of religious faith and reflection. One would have to be entirely unmindful of Kierkegaard's work to attempt the assimilation of them to other existential attitudes or to any philosophical doctrine.

One may perhaps develop a philosophy of religion in the descriptive sense—this is what the pseudonymous Johannes Climacus does.

But the descriptive approach to faith and reflection never leads to the subordination of the act of faith or the truth of the Incarnation to some philosophical system.

And, finally, Kierkegaard has made us all his debtors by connecting Christian religious faith with the actuality of the God-Man and of man as fallen and redeemed. Instead of following Hegel's lead in reducing the Incarnation to our need to believe in a concrete way, he suggests that the person of Christ in his divine and human natures provides the essential condition for our act of faith.

This does not render any the less important our inward appropriation of existential truth. But it does bring home to us the fact that there is something—or, rather, a divine-human someone—to appropriate and build ourselves upon. Yet we should not use the language of unmitigated appropriation but rather that of love. For the reflective man realizes that faith is quickened only in love or the giving of person to person through free interchange. It is the finalizing goal of this interplay among all the factors of religious existence which Kierkegaard indicated in his remark that the most complete subjectivity coincides with the most complete objectivity. Men can at least aim at some remote analogue of the divine way of joining subjective intensity with objective vision.

Perhaps it is in the notion of interplay or existential tension between the several factors of faith and reflection that Kierkegaard is of supreme relevance for us today. Professor Tillich has been exploring the points of conflict and possible reconciliation between the attitude based on Biblical religion and that fostered by the search after ultimate reality. Kierkegaard's contribution is to bring out that there are several ways in which one can engage in reflection. If the attempt to supply a general theory of being be undertaken in a spirit that renders impossible a distinct revelation from God or that reduces the responsibility of will and decision to a purely speculative system, then there is bound to be conflict with Christian religiousness. But there are other routes for the inquiry into being to follow. Kierkegaard's analysis of the various types of reflection and of their relations to religious and moral faith suggests that the personal attitude of the thinker is decisive for the relationship. Our task today is to examine the possibility of engaging in a general intellectual study of the real, without severing the bond between reflection and action or clouding over the openness of reflection to revealed faith.
NOTES

i. Journals, Nos. 78, 125 (I A 273, II A 91).

2. The classic portraits of the reflective type of aesthete are drawn in Either/Or, I, 251 ff. (I, 315 ff.) ("Diary of the Seducer"), and in Stages on Life's Way, p. 188 ff. (VI, 207 ff.) ("Quidam's Diary"). On the social level, Kierkegaard also analyzes the divorce between reflection and passion or the factor of will and decision in practical affairs: The Present Age, pp. 3-16 (VIII, 74 ff.).


4. This point is a basic theme in Fear and Trembling, p. 81 or Anchor, p. 65 (III, 118).

5. The anatomy of repentance is studied in Either/Or, II, 148-149, 210-211 (II, 190-191, 271-272). A correlation is established between the quality of reflection and the different sorts of despair in The Sickness unto Death, p. 43 ff. or Anchor, p. 162 ff. (XI, 160 ff.).


7. Philosophical Fragments, pp. 29-30, 47 (IV, 230-231, 251); Postscript, pp. 182-189 (VII, 188, 197). It is also remarked, however, that in the act of faith, reason and the incarnational content are on good terms. Cf. Philosophical Fragments, pp. 38, 43 (IV, 241, 247).


9. The Present Age, pp. 13, 47-48 (VIII, 83, 104). Religious reflection constitutes a twofold relating of the self to God, through the natural religions of immanence ("Religiousness A") and through the Christian revelation of the transcendent God ("Religiousness B"). In The Sickness unto Death, pp. 43, 129 or Anchor, pp. 162, 211 (XI, 160, 217) Kierkegaard establishes a proportion between one's grasp upon God and one's reflective awareness and free control over oneself.

10. Cf. e.g., Edifying Discourses, I, 100-101; III, 15-17, 39 (III, 334-335). In the era of the Enlightenment and Idealism, the struggle was
"between reflection and simple, immediate Christianity; now it will be between reflection and simplicity armed with reflection." Cf. Journals, No. 813 (IX A 248).

11. The chief purpose of Training in Christianity is to suggest that we become contemporaneous with Christ through an increase in inwardness and personal attachment to him. Kierkegaard now recalls (pp. 227-228) the impropriety of regarding the Christian discourse as a reflection (Betragtning), in the purely speculative-aesthetic sense of an objective consideration which omits the relation of I-and-Thou between the speaker and his hearers, and which obscures the striving on the speaker's part to live up to his own message. Christian religious reflection must be based on personal inwardness or reduplication of the truth, an interpersonal rapport with other men, and a frank acknowledgement that one is always in process of becoming contemporaneous in spirit with Christ.
"I am and I have always been a religious author":1 this was Kierkegaard's definition of himself in 1850, when his thinking had become fully mature. In his Journal of the same year he defined the central point of his literary activity in the following terms: "It is clear that in my writings I have given a more precise determination to the concept of faith." 2 This text does not go further, but it is well known that for Kierkegaard, as for every Christian, the problem of faith is identical with the problem of existence, i.e., with the problem of the meaning and dialectic of our fate. The problem of faith is, therefore, the fiery ordeal of Kierkegaard's thought. It is the more so since the official exegeses of his works—by Protestant, Catholic, and even atheist authors—all more or less refuse to grant any philosophical or theological consistency to faith as it is conceived by Kierkegaard: it is supposed to be merely a violent evasion, as much from the sphere of reason as from that of truly theological faith, an empty protest thrown by Kierkegaard into the face of his contemporaries. Hence philosophers and theologians, Protestants and Catholics, aesthetes and moralists, religious mentalities and declared atheists—all feel uneasy in the presence of his writings, all avoid criticism or earnest considerations which would oblige them to revise their peculiar positions on an essential point which seems necessarily to remain intangible.

Kierkegaard's theology, little or badly known in our Catholic circles, has been interpreted as a limited or personal crisis of the Protestant soul. However, according to the confession of Kierkegaard himself, and today of the more celebrated Protestant theologians—just as it was recognized by Bishops Mynster and Martensen in their day—this new theology of faith gives rise to an indictment of the whole Protestant conception of life. Probably for this reason Kierkegaard's writings, after a great vogue in Germany toward the end of the past century and in the first decades of the present one, are today less popular than they were in German theological circles.

Even in Denmark the interest in Kierkegaard seems to be weakening, while the prestige of the venerable name of Grundtvig, the national genius of Danish religion, is increasing.3 This change of positions is easy to understand: Grundtvig was a pastor and all his work was centered around his Church. On the latter, he has written remarkable pages which sound in certain respects like Catholic ecclesiology. Of Kierkegaard, on the other hand, one has the impression that he leaves the Christian alone and abandoned at the mercy of the giants and dragons of philosophy, politics, and unbelief, and of the whole army of the seven deadly sins.

At first sight, to be sure, these fears and reservations do not appear groundless. From the beginning to the end of his work Kierkegaard never ceases to declare that "truth is subjectivity." Reason and philosophy have done nothing and do nothing but eliminate God from the human consciousness, since they lower him to their level. The object of faith is the absurd, the hatred of
the world, the paradoxical, the irrational. The essence of the Christian life is suffering, persecution, martyrdom. Finally—and I do not intend to enumerate here all of Kierkegaard's theses but only to trace their essential plot-Christianity, as demanded by this "terrible book" which is the New Testament, has never existed, and has not yet been realized.

These propositions, taken literally, sound heterodox for every confession, especially for the Catholic doctrine. Sometimes Kierkegaard purposely sought this effect; sometimes he did not take all the precautions necessary to avoid it. It is therefore easy to find him contradicting himself, even on crucial issues, and easy to expose his inability to master the problems released by his principles.

Nonetheless, Kierkegaard's work is anything but negative: certainly it is the most remarkable among the religious works of the past century and takes its place between that of the convert, Newman, and that of the atheist, Nietzsche. Many of Kierkegaard's terms and problems acquire consistency and invite a more accurate and comprehensive study when placed in their proper context. The following considerations aim at a brief examination of the problem of faith in Kierkegaard's works: what is the meaning and the value, what is the exact nature of this "more precise determination" referred to in the text cited at the beginning of this article?

The reading of Kierkegaard's texts placed in their context and in the doctrinal development of which they are all a part is all that is needed to demonstrate my thesis (I believe, however, that we can reach a definite conclusion); we can dispense with direct polemics with the exegetes in either camp. The investigation will be rigorously limited to the problem of faith in the terms here indicated- a problem which I, in contrast with almost all other authors, am persuaded must be given content and an absolutely positive solution. I regard it as equally necessary in this exegesis to guard against a methodological tendency which, in the light of the actual knowledge of Kierkegaard's life and work, seems totally inadequate.

Kierkegaard may continue to evade classification, he may continue to appear neither Catholic nor Protestant. That is not the essential problem. On the contrary, Kierkegaard reiterates over and over that he has no intention of founding a school or creating a system but only wants to be the voice of a revival which will shake a lazy, soporific, and misguided Christendom. My modest opinion is that this voice, this "cry in the night," has often achieved its purpose, and the problem of faith it presents constitutes, essentially, a return to the authentic Christian position—even, if you will, a return to the Catholic and Thomistic position, at least on some points.

This is precisely the sense of the present investigation.

Before proceeding to a study of the texts it is useful to recall how great a responsibility has been assumed by the Kierkegaard renaissance and by its legitimate or spurious imitators. This Kierkegaard renaissance has too often reduced the meaning of Kierkegaard's work to its "negative moment"; it has not perceived or has not wanted to perceive its initial positive moment, however explicit; and it has neglected the final moment, which is also positive. It has accepted the dialectic of existence in order to destroy the prevalence of abstract thought, but it has disregarded the ground provided by Kierkegaard as the sole basis of operation; finally, it has expressly renounced the essential purpose to which Kierkegaard subordinated every step of his dialectic. Contemporary existentialists have pillaged Kierkegaard's writings without scruple. They have borrowed themes and terms but only in order to empty them immediately of their specific content and to throw on the market of European culture, under these same labels, one or another of the innumerable products with which modern man tries to reaffirm immanence. It was precisely against the latter that Kierkegaard threw the catapult of his dialectic of the "religious author."

Let us consider as an example the exegesis of Kierkegaard made by Karl Jaspers, which has
received very wide attention. In Jaspers' view it is Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, after Hegel, who have molded the new image of contemporary man: for Jaspers these two spirits, masters of psychological analysis, have in common a problematic of existence rooted in the most radical experience. Kierkegaard is exhibited as a mind shaken in its honesty as a philosopher in the presence of nothingness, shaken to the depths, by reason of his love for existence and for everything which participates in it. Thus Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are the prophets of the same intellectual movement which is to give to modern man, in a radical sincerity, that vision and that horizon of being which in the end belongs to him. The authentic "interpretation" (Auslegung) of being is, for them, manifested only in cipher and does not allow of exclusive formulation. For Nietzsche being is capable of infinite interpretations, and for Kierkegaard being is always accessible to a new comprehension; and every new interpretation will constitute a new, previously ignored reality. But life in temporality can never be exactly understood by man. "No man is able to penetrate into his own consciousness." 8

Jaspers is certainly not unaware of the point of divergence between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Let us grant that they both rebelled against any rational system through love of the freedom of the individual. Let us also grant that both were scandalized by the Christianity of their environments and that they were the implacable critics of a corrupted and equivocal Christianity, and finally, that they were in favor of a thoroughgoing purification. We must immediately add that the ontological horizon of this singular act and the nature of this purification are entirely different in the two thinkers: for one, man "before God" (for Gud), and for the other, man in the place of God (Gott ist tot); the passionate invocation of the heroic Christianity of the martyrs on the one hand, the denunciation of the evangelical message, on the other hand, as the cause of all the inferiorities and all the misery of western man.

These are radical criticisms, but they are rooted in soils which are radically different. It is useless to insist on a fact which is evident even from the titles and from the first pages of their works.

More serious and honest, the theological Kierkegaard renaissance has seen in Kierkegaard essentially the Christian and the theologian of the infinite distance between the creature and the Creator, or, rather, of the "infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity." 7 Karl Barth, as a result of his profound study of Kierkegaard's dialectic, has reached the conviction that Kierkegaard was "essentially Catholic." Indeed, in the last edition of his Kirkliche Dogmatik, now in process of publication, he relegates him to the background and no longer refers to him except as a polemist. The truth is that Barth's and Kierkegaard's teachings on faith and on the relations between faith and reason 8 cannot be made to agree.

Hence we shall try to discover what is this "more precise determination" of faith mentioned in the passage previously quoted. It is easy to get lost in the forest of Kierkegaard's writings, so complex are the terms and so subtle are the analyses and the dialectic.

In order not to lose ourselves and to follow the true way we shall use Kierkegaard's own formulas, limiting ourselves to indicating the fundamental theme. This, at any rate, I believe cannot be called into question.

**SUBJECTIVITY OF TRUTH AND THE (SECOND) IMMEDIACY OF FAITH**

In a text of the same year, 1850, immediately following the one we have quoted and which may have been written on the same day, Kierkegaard explains that the "new situation" peculiar to Christianity and to faith concerns not a quid (hvad) but a quomodo (hvorledes); it is a question of
a new quomodo of the old quid (X3 A 593). In a prior text written in 1849, this quomodo of faith is explained specifically in terms of Kierkegaard's literary activity and of the polemics arising from it. This text is of capital importance since in it Kierkegaard makes the "how" of faith coincide with what he always called the "subjectivity" of truth and, at the same time, guards against a pernicious reservation that his critics introduced into this notion. The "subjectivity" in question, which is the object treated in the large Postscript of 1846 by the pseudonymous Johannes Climacus, must be understood neither in a phenomenological, empirical, or transcendental sense, nor as a reflection of the subject on himself, nor as creativity of the subject.

The subjectivity of existence is, on the contrary, the resolution or decision of freedom to break the circle of immanence by the very assent to transcendental Truth, followed, as we shall see later, by the decision to conform to it in temporal life.

In the following passage Kierkegaard had already vindicated the originality of his theology of faith:

In all that is usually said about Johannes Climacus being purely subjective . . . , people have forgotten, in addition to everything else concrete about him, that in one of the last sections he shows that the curious thing is: that there is a "how" which has this quality, that if it is truly given, then the "what" is also given; and that is the "how" of "faith." Here, quite certainly, we have inw ardness at its maximum proving to be objectivity once again. And this is an aspect of the principle of subjectivity which, so far as I know, has never before been presented or worked out. [Journals, No. 1021 (X2 A 299)]

In like manner, in a passage immediately following under the title "Dialectic," Kierkegaard tries to explain further the meaning of this "subjectivity." It involves personal effort: it is the need for works in order that faith may really be the living existence of such a truth and may not end in scorn of God. Kierkegaard writes:

Among the pious, subjectivity is suspect, for it would seem that, as soon as the least thing is conceded to it, it at once becomes something meritorious; it is for this reason, they say, that objectivity must be stressed.

Well and good. In order to keep subjectivity in its place, it is taught correctly that nobody is saved by works but by grace - and, corresponding to that, by faith. Well and good. But can I do nothing by myself with reference to becoming a believer? Here one must either answer immediately with an unconditional No (and this gives us election by grace in a fatalistic sense), or one must make a little concession. The situation is that we are always suspicious of subjectivity, and in the very moment of establishing that man is saved by faith, we at once conceive a misgiving that too much has been conceded. Hence there gets added: But nobody can give himself faith; it is a gift of God, for which I must pray. Well and good. But can I myself pray, or must we go further and say, No, this thing of praying (and consequently of praying for faith) is a gift of God which no man can give himself, but must be given to him. And what then? Well, then, it must be given to me rightly to pray that I may rightly be able to pray for faith, and so forth. There are many, many envelopes-but there must be a point somewhere or other where we are brought up short, having at last met subjectivity. That men should make the scale so big, so difficult, can be praiseworthy as an expression of the majesty of God's infinity; but to exclude subjectivity cannot be done unless we want to have fatalism. [X2 A 301]

It is understandable that, faced with such texts, Karl Barth has retreated.

Kierkegaard's "principle of subjectivity," however, is the opposite both of the creative subjectivity of modern philosophy and of the Protestant and Lutheran subjectivity in their common acceptance of the sola fides, whether it is understood as a profession of faith in some
recognized ecclesiastical reality or as the simple inwardness of "fiducial faith." "The mistake of the religiousness of our time," writes Kierkegaard toward the end of 1849, "is that faith has been made into 'inwardness' in such a degree that in reality it has completely gone out. Directly or indirectly, life has been permitted to take on a purely worldly character, and instead of faith we have substituted assurance about faith" (X2 A 207). This attitude is called by Kierkegaard "objectivity," and implies for him an inversion of the situation and a relocation of its domain. What is essentially a task of the will has become an affair of the understanding, and what is essentially a dialectical situation has become a direct and immediate movement. It is not surprising therefore that modern theologians, inspired by Hegel, have aimed "to go beyond" faith and to aspire to rise (Aufhebung) above it. But this is a return to paganism. We may therefore conclude that the subjectivity of faith is for Kierkegaard identical with vindication of the absolute pre-eminence of faith over science in the essential moment which is made manifest in the freedom of the will known to all within the intimacy of the act of faith.

But let us proceed with caution. For Kierkegaard, faith is the most arduous act that man can accomplish. It is the act by which he really becomes a "new creature," but it is also an act within the reach of everybody, offered to all, exempting no one from its requirements: it concerns alike the existence of all and of each one.11 For this reason Kierkegaard interprets his task as that of unmasking both the confusion created by modern philosophy in its attempt to absorb faith into science, and the fundamental obscurity which is found in Luther himself, for whom faith, in fact, is reduced to "something immediate, to a vitality, to a fidelity tenacious in its preservation of hope and confidence through the stages of this life, a fidelity for which different men are variously endowed" (IX An).

The difficulty inherent in the act of faith is of an order completely different from that inherent in a judgment on some doctrine which is to be either followed or rejected. In the case of a doctrine, man finds a structure already present in the object, and in his understanding he has a power, proportionate to his intellectual level, to penetrate and explain this doctrine; it is a movement which takes place on a straight line or in concentric circles.

The act of faith, on the other hand, implies a total break with the rationality of the immediate and requires the passage into a sphere which is absolutely incommensurable with that of the natural man even though he be the most gifted genius. The act of faith requires, therefore, a "leap" (Spring) which carries man into a sphere where the criteria of the finite world lose all value-nay, where these criteria are rejected. For the object of faith, the revelation of God to man, is for human reason the absurd, the paradoxical, the incomprehensible. Thus, if a man decides to embrace faith, this will not happen because of evidence intrinsic in the demonstrations, but because of a "Thou must," presented to the will, which it alone is able to realize. Therefore the act of faith in its order constitutes a new and absolute starting point. It is this that Kierkegaard calls the new reality, the "second immediacy": it differs not only from the first immediacy of experience and of rational mechanisms (the dialectic of the finite), but also from the Socratic existence and its dialectic of inwardness which was not successful in overcoming either doubt or immanence (truth as "anamnesis").

To this second immediacy, proper to faith, belongs what Kierkegaard calls the "double dialectic," the "reduplication," the "double risk or danger." 12 The believer is truly like a fish out of water, panting, on the verge of death, martyr of the "martyrdom of faith."

Because of the opposition between the sphere of reason and that of faith, in the latter all values change their signs; they are inverted.

Reason and its pretended values become, for the believer, the "negative" moment. The object of faith is precisely that which is improbable to reason, and the fact of believing, as the Postscript
states, has "become light by means of a weight." 13

What counts in faith is not speculation but abnegation. It is not doctrine or the knowledge of
an object, but the person and the authority of the one who announces it. Christianity is involved
with authority and it is strange that Luther should have remained completely silent about this. For
Kierkegaard this is a firm and unshakable point. Luther, however, was not a dialectician. In his
sermon on the Epistle for the Fourth Sunday after Easter, he develops the principle that with
regard to faith one should take into account not the person but only the words: even if an apostle
should teach differently from the Holy Scripture he ought not to be heard. Certainly, but Luther
should have been a little more prudent. For there is no doubt that Christianity came into the world
in a different way, by establishing the person as superior to the doctrine. How can I find out
whether something is the word or doctrine of God? If Luther answers: by proving the
doctrine-then everything is lost; Christianity is reduced to a human invention.

It is just the opposite when I bow down to the authority of someone. Therefore, the person
matters more than the doctrine. 14

In truth faith is rooted in the authority of him who speaks. It is based, therefore, on the
person, and faith is the relation of a person to a person and not to the theoretical evidence of a
demonstration.

Every belief is essentially dialectical in so far as it brings truth by meta-rational ways.
Theological faith is doubly dialectical: dialectical in its essence, since both the Person (e.g.,
Christ) to whom this faith is related and the object to be believed coincide and are in the most
tense opposition to reason; dialectical in its object, since the "absolute paradox" requires the
renunciation of the predominance of reasoning reason. On this peak of theological faith man loses
all support coming from finitude; he is launched "outside of himself and outside of the world,"
completely abandoned to the authority of the One in whom he believes.

Faith is, quite rightly, the "point outside the world" which is able to move the whole world. It
is easy to see that the point outside the world is that which emerges through the negation of all
points within the world. The syllogism which, from the fact that there is no righteousness in the
world, but sheer unrighteousness, would prove that there is a righteousness-which must,
consequently, be outside the world: here is the point outside. This is the syllogism of faith. Take
the absurd. Denying the adequacy of conceptual thinking forces one outside the world to the
absurd-and here is faith. But faith, alas, for a long time is no longer to be found in the world-and
therefore it does not move the world any more. Faith has allowed itself to be fooled and has
become a point within the world. The most it can do, therefore, is to move like some other point
within the world; it brings about a few transactions based on probability. It can occasion a few
minor episodes-but it does not move like the point outside. 15

The field of abstract being, in which Hegelian dialectic originates, is one thing; the sphere of
personal existence in which concrete man moves is quite another. In the first case we are in the
calm of "mediation" (Vermittlung); in the second case we are in the "becoming" which proceeds
from free choice. It is in this choice that man, according to Kierkegaard's terminology, becomes
"spirit."

Man becomes spirit only by means of the act of faith which enables him to overcome the
limits of his finitude; he can find salvation only in the "absolute risk" of believing, i.e., of losing
every relation to finitude, of throwing himself into the arms of the Absolute.

What carries man to faith is not the evidence provided by concepts, but passion for the ideal,
inward conviction.

In Kierkegaard's conception of man two levels are clearly distinguished-that of nature
(Socrates) and that of grace (Christ). levels: a) the conception of modern philosophy, of
anthropological rationalism in all its forms, leading to Hegel's philosophy of history which
deforms both man and God by resolving them into the identity of abstraction; b) the Greek
conception, which corresponds to the "purely human": Socrates stresses existence, Plato and
Aristotle deepen the ideality of being and the reality of motion as basic facts; c) the Christian
conception, which determines even more deeply man's being (as spirit) inasmuch as it shows him
as a sinner, and, by deepening the relation between man and God and between God and man,
completely reverses the criteria of natural reason.

Certainly a faith exists, and one may even speak of faith in the sphere of pure nature. It is the
Socratic faith ("Faith in the wide sense," Kierkegaard says), which is defined as "an objective
uncertainty held fast in . . . the most passionate inwardness." Socrates' unshakable faith in the
immortality of the soul, even when he goes to death, does not arise from a logical necessity but
from the inwardness of his being, with the assistance and the "negative" vigilance of God. But
only Christian faith is considered by Kierkegaard to be faith in the strict sense. For it is the
"objective uncertainty" maintained in the very moment in which the absurd is the critical point in
the passion of inwardness, and this very passion is the relation of inwardness elevated to its
highest degree.16

But we cannot perfectly grasp the meaning of this determination and the internal dialectic of
the act of faith until we have first studied the "object" of faith-for Kierkegaard, contrary to all
appearance, makes his analyses on a rigorously metaphysical level, faithful to the Thomistic
principle of the specification of acts by means of objects. And this takes us into what Kierkegaard
calls "Lessing's problem."

THE OBJECT OF FAITH (THE PROBLEM OF LESSING)

In the preceding pages we have pointed out the various stages through which faith proceeds
in its centrifugal path, so to speak, in its progression toward the object; we shall now seek to
retrace this path in the inverse direction, proceeding from the structure of the object to the
dynamism of the act. What do we mean by this?

The distinction between Socratic faith and Christian faith is first of all, for Kierkegaard, a
question of object. The object of Christian faith is the "paradox," and the paradox is an entirely
new category, completely foreign to the Greek mind, and, in general, to the human mind as such.
How can man accept as true that which he cannot understand? And how can he take as absolute
and divine truth precisely that which stands in sharpest contrast to the evidence of reason?
Kierkegaard described this conception of the paradox in direct response to Lessing's problem and
elaborated it as the Christian answer to that problem.

Lessing asked (and he is referred to in the Philosophical Fragments): Is an historical point of
departure possible for an eternal consciousness; how can such a point of departure have any other
than a mere historical interest; is it possible to base an eternal happiness upon historical
knowledge? 1T In this way Lessing gave expression to the scruples, or rather, the scandal of
reason confronted by revelation. Kierkegaard makes this formula the theme and argument of his
Philosophical Fragments (1844), in which he considers for the first time the problem of Christian
truth in a technical way. The extensive Postscript, published two years later, is a complete
development of this problem. In the course of human history Christianity alone has given an
answer to this problem, and it is only the true Christian who, as his own individual life story
unfolds, can utter it. Christianity teaches specifically that the Eternal has appeared in time, that
God has become man in Christ; it teaches that Christ's Redemption has won eternal salvation for
man; and it teaches as well that man can be saved by faith in Christ and can thus attain eternity in
time. This is the answer to Lessing’s problem. The act of faith is a "leap" which faith alone can make, thanks to the "choice" provided by freedom.

It is specifically this truth which constitutes the "essential paradox" of Christianity. Two opposite categories are united in the concept "paradox" which results, explains Kierkegaard, "from combining qualitatively heterogeneous categories." Let us take the example of original sin.18 Heredity is a natural category, guilt is an ethicospiritual category. But how-reason will ask-is it possible to juxtapose these two categories in such a way as to permit us to say that one inherits what, by its very nature, cannot be the object of heredity? It must be believed. The paradox, in Christian faith, always depends on the fact that it is that which is "before" God (for God). A measure and a criterion of measure which are superhuman intervene, and only one relation to these is possible-that of faith (X2 A 481). Similarly-and this is the essential paradox which is at the root of all the others-God himself, eternal and immutable, "changes," so to speak, through the Incarnation of the Word, and enters time; he has a beginning in time, he has appeared in the form of a man-even in the form of a servant-and, what is more, he came to suffer for men.19 Can there be a more evident infraction of the principles of reason than the affirmation that the eternal is in time, that the immutable is born and dies, that God atones for man's sin? Let us consider the paradox of the remission of sins. Sin, once committed, acquires a definite place as an historical fact, and must always remain what it is and what it was when it was committed. Now, with the remission of sins, sin is obliterated: the omnipotence of divine mercy removes it from history.20 There is an identical (or, in a sense, inverse) paradox in the case of original sin, as we have seen. Thus, the law or the criterion (negative) of all Christian truth is in reality: to put a stop to reason, to break the logical chain of rational sequence, and, in a certain sense, to lead reason to despair. Faith's affirmation of the simultaneous presence and position on the ontological ladder of opposed categories (in an essential opposition) is, in a certain sense, a greater embarrassment to reason than the simultaneous, but merely logical and abstract, affirmation of being and non-being.

For non-being, as such, does not exist; it is only a logical element of discourse, not a reality or an "object" of thought. This is the reason that, even in the Hegelian dialectic, non-being constitutes only an abstract point of logical exchange; it is only a "transitory moment." The paradox of faith, however, constitutes the very reality of faith and the specific object of the act of faith.

It is by the paradox as such that the believer is drawn to believe and not by any logical evidence. If he were not convinced of the absolute transcendence of the object of faith and of the break with the sphere of reason that it causes, he would not believe but rather would seek some evidence in the sphere of reason-at least some probability, some likelihood. Therefore it may be said that one believes only because the object of belief is made manifest as a paradox, as the absurd, as contrary to reason. And Kierkegaard, both in the Postscript and in the Philosophical Fragments, employs the formula: "to believe by reason of the absurd." 21

In Kierkegaard's phenomenology of the act of faith this absolute incommensurability between the two spheres concerned with the object of faith causes the tension (Sp&nding)-the "uneasiness" (Uro)-which is for man, as we have said, the opposite of the adherence to faith.22 In the chaos of the Protestant theology of the nineteenth century nobody affirmed the supernatural character of the act of faith, whose ground and principle are in God alone, better than did Kierkegaard. The conviction of the believer is not the work of nature but a gift of grace.

We shall return to this point later. The originality of Kierkegaard's phenomenology consists in the meaning that it gives to the "subjectivity" of the act of faith, in harmony with the whole metaphysics of existence but at the same time in contrast with the philosophy of immanence and
with the essential thesis of Protestantism. In fact the paradox of Christianity includes two "moments": "the moment of the Incarnation," in which God becomes man (descending moment), and "the moment of the Imitation of Christ" (ascending moment), to which the believer is bidden under pain of losing "eternal life."23 Once the Incarnation is assumed, in the domain of grace Christianity posits a commensurability between time and eternity, between the works of the creature and eternal salvation. When Kierkegaard speaks of the "subjectivity of truth" and, in particular, of truth and Christian life, he is talking about personal abnegation, the self-renunciation required of every believer who does not want to receive grace in vain. Kierkegaard adopts as his own the formula of St. James' Epistle (his "favorite" epistle) that "faith without works is a dead faith," and he severely criticizes Luther who allowed himself to reject an apostolic writing simply because it did not square with his personal views.24 True Christian "simplicity" is the Imitation of Christ (X3 A 424). Christ wants imitators not speculators.

Kierkegaard, assiduous reader of the celebrated medieval work, developed that principle into its complete coherence to the point where he can affirm that the essence of the Christian life, if it is to conform to that of Christ, must be hatred of the world-the cross and martyrdom. Protestantism, which has made an accommodation with the world, has suppressed monastic life, ecclesiastical celibacy, and all ascetic practices; it has emptied the Gospel of its content: it believes it can lead God by the nose. But God keeps his secrets to himself. The principle of works, underlined at the beginning of the Journal and in the early writings, is the central object of the works of Kierkegaard's maturity, especially of that jewel of Christological theology which bears the meaningful title Training in Christianity, in which imitation is presented as the only true "contemporaneity" with Christ and the only coherent form of faith. It matters little that Kierkegaard did not use the word "merit" and that sometimes (though not always, however!) he even rejects it with indignation. The doctrine of merit which he is fighting is not the Catholic doctrine, for the necessity of works conceived as "acts of love," as he himself emphasizes, belongs to the most genuine Christian and Thomist spirituality. Moreover, Kierkegaard himself expressly recognizes the plausibility of "merit," in de irae among the Protestant authors of his time, which wrath continues into our own day.

In the Postscript more clearly than in the Philosophical Fragments, Kierkegaard distinguishes between "an objective problem" and "a subjective problem" in Christianity.25 The first is treated in two chapters for the length of about thirty pages: it concerns the Holy Scripture, the Church as a social structure, the history of the Church in its secular duration, and the theologico-speculative reflection. The second problem, with which the rest of this monumental work is concerned, is the subjective aspect of faith which is directly related to the principle of works. It would be impossible to enumerate the sections and the pages of his works and the innumerable passages of the Journals in which Kierkegaard denounces the hypocrisy of "secret inwardness" (skjulte Inderlighed), the reduction of Christianity to a simple "meditation"(Betragtning) of the Sunday worship which is immediately forgotten as soon as people go back home and are immersed, at the beginning of the new week, in purely worldly concerns. In the final assault launched against "established Christendom" (bestaaende Christenhed) in the burning notebooks of The Instant (1855), the themes of imitation, works, and training in Christianity are truly central.26

But, as often happens in Kierkegaard, when the theme reaches a certain degree of development, it comes to an end and even undergoes a process of involution. Because of the lack of a solid theological method and a precise terminology, the profound intuitions of his Christian soul are expressed in inadequate formulas which may even pass from one extreme to the other. It is not then surprising that among the accusations made against Kierkegaard we even find that of
Pelagianism. Toward the end of his life he gives to a fragment of his Journal the following title, which could hardly appear orthodox to any Protestant: "That the principle of works is more simple than the principle of faith." After criticizing in his way the Catholic doctrine of merit (and we now know what value to place on that criticism) the text expounds the principle in question and tries to give it a coherent metaphysico-theological basis:

The moment I mention "works," one thinks at once of Catholicism.

So as not to be misunderstood, I will remark (although perhaps it does not need-or, in any case, ought not to need-remark ing) that naturally everything Catholicism has hit upon in connection with the meritoriousness of works is unconditionally to be rejected. But on the heels of that I say that the works-principle is simpler than the faith-principle.

And why? Because the works-principle begins with the beginning and begins with that which is common to men; the principle of faith begins so far forward that in every generation there are not many who get that far. Hence this principle becomes perfectly meaningless when people will begin with it without further ado. The works-principle begins with the beginning and with that which is usually true, that we ought to be treated in the manner that would serve us best. This is the way we treat a scoundrel: quite simply, we say, "May I see your works?" If he steps forward with assurances to the effect that, in hidden inwardness, he is willing to sacrifice everything, in hidden inwardness longs to sit and sing hymns and fast in the silence of the cloister, while in visible outwardness he rakes in the profits and is the life of the party, then one says to him-this is the simple thing-"No, my dear chap, you must forgive us . . . but we wish to see your works." Alas, but for men like us this is sorely needed.27

But this very important problem is discussed even more precisely in an 1851 text which, under the title, "Faith-Existence," presents almost a summary of the whole Kierkegaardian thought:

Usually the matter is presented in this wise: First a man must have faith, and this must be followed by a form of existence [which corresponds to the faith]. This has contributed enormously to the confusion, as if it were possible to have faith without existence. And we have this notion so firmly fixed in our heads that we have abolished existence- since faith, after all, is far more important. The case is quite simple. In order to have faith, there must first be an existence, an existential determination. This is something I can never sufficiently stress, that faith, that even to get the question raised of faith's coming into there must be situation. And this situation must be brought about by an existential act, a movement undertaken by the individual. Such a propaedeutic has been totally abolished. One lets the individual meander along in his customary mediocre groove-and so eventually he acquires faith, much in the way that a man without needing a situation can learn lessons by rote. But take the example of the rich young man. What does Christ demand as a preliminary? He demands such an act as shall launch the young man out into infinity. Lo, that is what is required: thou shalt venture far out, out on to the 70,000 fathoms of water. That is situation.

Now there can be a question of getting faith or of falling into despair.

For all this, there is nothing meritorious, for you will be shaken in such wise that undoubtedly you'll abandon [the thought of] merit ing anything.

Then there is a second existence which follows as a consequence of faith.

But the first existence must never be forgotten-or else Christianity is thrown entirely out of joint.28

A paradox equivalent to the act of faith: this is a supreme gift of God, an absolute beginning. But, at the same time, there must be in man, who has the perfect exercise of his freedom and spiritual maturity, a corresponding absolute gift of himself to God or "total abandonment"
(Hengivenhed) in God. In this way we believe that we have arrived at the final explanation of the "how" of faith—that is, at what for Kierkegaard constitutes the characteristic feature of the dialectic of existence:

To relate oneself to God, really to be religious, without one's bearing the mark of having been wounded—this I am completely unable to understand. To be able to say to God: "Up to a certain point I will have dealings with thee, I will grant thee a place in my emotions, but no more than that; I will not be a spectacle unto the world [I Cor. 4:9] as a religious person must be, since he, through his relationship with thee, has become heterogeneous with this life; I want to live healthily and vigorously in this earthly life, becoming a complete man in a worldly sense but retaining in my innermost heart an emotion." For he who in truth has related himself to God at once bears the mark thereof, he limps, as it is said, or at least he has acquired a painful dissimilarity from this world. But to relate oneself to God in any other way than by being wounded is, as I have said, impossible; for God himself is precisely this: how one relates himself to him. In the case of tangible and external objects, the object is something other than the way. Many ways are possible. One can perhaps hit upon an easy way, and so forth. In the case of God, how is what. He who does not relate himself to God by way of absolute devotion [Hengivenhed] cannot relate himself to God. In dealing with God, one cannot relate himself to a certain degree, for God is the exact opposite of everything that is "to a certain degree." [X2 A 644]

THE GROUND OF FAITH: AUTHORITY

Saving truth is found only in faith; it is faith itself. The truth of faith is based exclusively on authority and on personality, i.e., on the assent to the paradox of the Person of Christ, the God-Man.

Reason is circumvented since the truth of the God-Man is the "absolute paradox" which destroys reason. The decisive Christian category is obedience. What Christianity confronts man with is an absolutely unconditional and unreserved Thou shalt: the unconditioned must be served unconditionally and without the help of reason or witty demonstrations. Christian faith and reasoning reason are fighting for life and death and cannot be reconciled.30

Similar statements are found everywhere in Kierkegaard's writings, and it is no surprise that his work has been described as irrationalism." 31

Let us choose the following passage, which is one of the most complete analyses of the act of faith:

All this about world-history and reasons and proofs for the truth of Christianity must be done away with. There is only one proof—that of faith. In case I really have a conviction (which is, after all, a determination in inwardness in the direction of spirit), my conviction always has a higher value to me than the reasons on which it is grounded. In actuality, it is the conviction which bears the reasons, not the reasons which bear the conviction. In this respect, the aesthete in Either/Or was right in a way when he said in one of the "Diapsalmata," 32 "Reasons are generally very curious things. If I lack passion, I look down upon them with scorn, and if I have passion, they grow up into something immense."

That of which he speaks, calling it passion, stands for the deeply felt, the inward, which is exactly what a conviction is. As little as a rooster can lay an egg, or at best a wind-egg, just as little can "reasons," no matter how long they continue to consort, give birth to a conviction. A conviction arises from another source. This is what I had in mind when somewhere or other I wrote about the difference between a pathetic and a dialectic transition.33 The process cannot
possibly, consist in holding one's conviction in reserve while pushing forward with the help of reasons. No, one's conviction, or the fact that it is one's conviction, that it is my conviction, your conviction (the personal element), that is the decisive thing. One may speak half humorously of the reasons: "If you really do insist on having some reasons, I gladly put myself at your service. Do you wish to have three or five or seven-however many you desire; but I can say nothing more exalted than this: 'I believe.'" It is like a lover who says, "I love her," and says not a word about his loving her more than others love their sweethearts; neither is there talk of reasons.

Consequently, conviction must take top place, and in this way we get personality; the reasons must be demoted. This is the exact opposite of all modern objectivity. My development or that of any other man takes place in the following way. Perhaps he too begins with some reasons, but this is a lower stage. Then he chooses. Under the weight of responsibility before God, a conviction, with God's help, is born in him. Now he has reached the positive; he is unable either to defend or prove his conviction by means of reasons. It is a self-contradiction, since the reasons are lower down in the scale. No, the matter is transported still further into the domain of the personal: only ethically, personally, can he defend his conviction, i.e., by what sacrifices he is willing to make for it, what fearlessness he has in maintaining it.

There is only one proof for the truth of Christianity: the inner proof, argumentum Spiritus Sancti.

In 1 John 5:9, there is a hint of this: "If we receive the witness of men" (this is the whole battery of historical proofs and considerations), "the witness of God is greater," i.e., the inner witness is greater. And then in 5:10, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." It is not the reasons which support faith in the Son of God, but the reverse: faith in the Son of God is the witness. It is the movement of infinity within itself, and it cannot be otherwise. Reasons do not give grounds for the conviction, but the conviction gives grounds for the reasons. Everything previous to that is preliminary study, something preparatory, something which disappears as soon as the conviction comes and alters everything, inverting the relationship. Otherwise, there would be no repose in conviction; for in that case this thing of having a conviction would mean that you no sooner get the conviction than you have to go over the grounds again. Repose, the absolute repose in a conviction, in faith, is just this: that faith itself is the witness, with conviction creating the grounds. [X1 A 481]

When Kierkegaard wrote this page in his Journal he had almost completed Training in Christianity (1849), in which the Person of Christ is presented as the essential possibility of "scandal" or "offense" (Forargelse) for natural man. It is the Christian alone who, in faith, triumphs over doubt and surmounts the obstacle of the scandal which is the Person of Christ, according to the words of Christ himself: "Blessed is he whosoever is not offended in [i.e., scandalized because of] me." si The possibility of scandal is inseparable from every aspect of Christian life. Divine truth is truth but of such a kind, as we have shown above, that the world is scandalized by it. It cannot be otherwise. It is one thing to cause scandal and another thing to be scandalized, says Kierkegaard. The world causes scandal because it sets in motion all its seductions to rob the believer of his faith. In Christianity the possibility of scandal takes place only in order to strengthen faith and this possibility is identical with authentic Christian proclamation: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock [scandal], and unto the Greeks foolishness" (I Cor. 1:23; cf. X3 A 333). A man who wants to be saved through faith must rise above reason. Kierkegaard has given expression to this fundamental Christian situation in strongly negative terminology. He takes sides with such defenders of Christianity as Tertullian, St. Augustine, St. Peter Damian, St. Bernard, Pascal, the medieval Franciscan mystics, and the pietistic Protestant mystics, who have seen in reason and its infinite artifices a betrayal and a
permanent danger for faith. In order that man may arrive at faith and remain in it there is no need of science or the complicated mechanisms of ratiocination; furthermore, if they were needed, faith would be a privilege of the speculative aristocracy and not-as Christianity teaches-the universal vocation of all humanity.

THE "ABSURD" OF REASON AND THE "PARADOX" OF FAITH

If the position described in the previous pages is in substance Kierkegaard's position, as the passages quoted encourage us to believe, then how can he be accused in authoritative Christian circles of irrationalism? Yet this is an accusation which has been brought against him not only by rationalists, which is not at all surprising, but also by Christians and theologians of every confession who maintain that the position taken by Kierkegaard demands the abandonment of all use of reason in support of faith and implies the final condemnation of apologetics and of all theological reflection; it implies the abdication of reason before as well as after faith.

Such was the actual interpretation of Kierkegaard's theology given by his own brother, Peter, pastor and later bishop of Aalborg, in a monthly pastoral conference at Roskilde on October 30, 1849.

The same judgment is found in a contemporary pamphlet written by one Magnus Eiriksson under the pseudonym of Theophilus Nicolaus carrying the rather pompous title: Can Faith Ever Be a Paradox? And This Because of the Absurd? A Problem Occasioned by the Book, Fear and Trembling by Johannes de Silentio, Who Is Answered through Private Communications of a Knight gjJFaUn, for the Common Edification of Jews, Christians, and Moslems, by a Brother of the Knight of Faith, Theophilus Nicolaus.35 To his brother, Kierkegaard answered with a rather harsh letter showing his disapproval.36 He planned a more extensive answer to Theophilus Nicolaus, which however was never published; the fragments which have been preserved are found in the complete edition of the Papirer-heie I shall give only the more important pages. As to the essence of Kierkegaard's position it seems to me that not the slightest doubt can be entertained. He wants to defend the absolute transcendence of Christianity against the invasion of an illuministic and idealistic reason and wants to destroy the misunderstanding created by the theology of the Hegelian right. The oratorical excesses to which he is sometimes carried by the heat of polemic are tempered and take a more moderate tone in numerous other explicit and very useful passages, where the situation involving relations between faith and reason is described in terms similar to those of traditional theology. Notwithstanding the contrary view of Bohlin, this view has been openly acknowledged by Geismar: it has also been implicitly acknowledged by Karl Barth.

In the following notes we will restrict ourselves to the essential points of the controversy, namely: a) the possibility of apologetics (ratio ante fidem, ad fidem); b) the possibility of theology (ratio post fidem, pro fide); c) the possibility, in general, of a relation and of a positive encounter between nature and grace. a) Possibility of apologetics. There are different kinds of apologetics. It is of the essence of Christianity that reason cannot supply the intrinsic ground of revealed truth. The Hegelian thesis according to which it is Speculation that constitutes the truth of faith not only is no defense but is a destruction of faith. Faith does not rely on science but on authority. Kierkegaard, however, recognizes and affirms categorically that authority is grounded.

When someone says that faith rests on authority, and thereby believes himself to have excluded dialectics, he is mistaken; for dialectics begins by asking how it is that one submits to this authority, whether one does not himself understand why he chose it, whether it was only by
chance.

For in that case the authority is not authority, not even for the believer, if he knows that it was a question of pure chance. [Cf. Journals, No. 482 (V A 32)]

In the same way, in so far as Christ is concerned, the "passion of dialectic" would have liked an absolute paradox:

That the Son of God became man, came into the world, walked around in such wise that nobody noticed it, became in the strictest sense an individual man, who had a trade, got married, etc. ... In that case, God would have been the greatest ironist instead of being the God and Father of mankind. ... The divine paradox [in Christ] is that he was noticed, if in no other way, then by being crucified and by performing miracles, etc.; which implies that he is recognizable by his divine authority, even though it requires faith to resolve the paradox. [IV A 103]

In the justification of authority it is therefore possible to speak of a positivo-positive function of reason: this reveals the authority, the person who has authority, the authority which is required by faith: "Believe in me and in my words."

Here Kierkegaard appeals expressly to St. Augustine, for whom the perfection of Christianity resides expressly in authority, for this is truth in its most perfect form—so much so that if one could have the same truth without authority, it would be less perfect, authority being the perfect thing.

Alas, even Augustine had learned what men need most: authority, precisely what the human race, wearied by the doubts of philosophers and the wretchedness of the world at the time of the introduction of Christianity, had learned. In our days things have changed. A self-styled philosophical Christianity finds that authority is something imperfect, at best something for plebeians, and that perfection consists in getting rid of it—in order to get back to the times prior to the introduction of Christianity into the world. [XI A 436]

For Kierkegaard, then, there is a resolution of the act of faith, a resolution that relies on authority which in turn is guaranteed by outer signs, e.g., miracles. But here, following the Gospel, he distinguishes between two forms, or, rather, two phases of the act of faith.

An initial phase, when one believes because of the miracles which have been seen or for which there is satisfactory evidence.

Another phase, when one believes even without miracles. And this latter is more perfect than the former.

Kierkegaard gives the following comment on the Gospel text:
"Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe" (John 4:48).

Here we see the Tightness of making faith into a sphere of its own. For in case that which we usually mean by the verb "to believe" (to believe that there is a God, a Providence, etc., which is nothing other than to know, or else is that immediacy which likely can be clarified by thought, but is not tried in tribulation or tortured by the absurd)—in case, I say, this were what we mean by the verb "to believe," then Christ's word would be an anticlimax, and Christ himself would be saying the opposite.

For that quasi-faith imagines itself to believe—except that miracles and the like are not for it. It believes, so it is said, in God and Christ, but leaves miracles severely alone. However, Christ arranges the relationship conversely: First comes the faith which believes miracles, believes because it sees miracles, and then the next, which believes in spite of the fact that no miracle takes place. These are the two categories of faith; and here we encounter the absurd, the marks of offense. First to believe that God will allow something to happen which outrages our reason and understanding. It is absurd. And if one then believes that this will happen, then to go on believing, although it does not happen. But if we take away the first category of faith—to believe
because one sees signs and wonders—the spheres are confused, for in this case knowledge and the highest form of faith come to resemble each other. For knowledge, when it is allowed to call itself faith, requires no miracle. On the contrary, it would prefer to be exempt from such a phenomenon, for the miracle is an offense to it. But the highest form of faith is precisely to believe without seeing signs and wonders. This gives us an example of how everything gets confused if we are not careful to make faith into a sphere of its own.

The miracle, therefore, has a place in Christian knowledge, but it must be preserved as such, i.e., as a break in the world of phenomena and a "stop" to reason which tries to explain everything.

Kierkegaard attacks Henrik Steffens, who, in the Religionsphilosophie, had presented a theory which found it logical for the mind that there should be a place even for miracles (VIII A 331); and concerning the celebrated anthropological essay Psyche by G. E. Cams, he sharply criticises modern positivism, which, intoxicated by its new methods of investigation, claimed to be able to explain miracle (VII A 186 ff.; cf. Journals, No. 617). b) Reason and faith. Meanwhile, the work of reason is not excluded from the object of faith as such, although it operates certainly not in order to explain it but in order to prepare and invite man in some way to accept it. Moreover, reason is able to establish that the object of faith transcends reason and cannot depend on it.

Kierkegaard has coined the formula "to understand that it is impossible to understand" which recalls, as he himself notices, St. Thomas' maxim "nothing can be at the same time known and believed." The Postscript, which mainly deals with this problem, expresses at the same time the absolute heterogeneity of reason and faith and the possibility of the former coming to recognize the transcendence of the latter through a certain knowledge of cause.

In his maturity, Kierkegaard re-examined the content and meaning of the Postscript and gave them further precision in the way shown above, arriving at the express recognition of the possibility of theological speculation, naturally in subordination to faith.

Christianity is communication of existence and not only a new doctrine. According to Kierkegaard, the first movement of the Christian consciousness goes from faith to faith, always within faith. But in the benevolence which is its characteristic, Christianity also allows the use of reason provided that it does not go beyond its own limits and that it be satisfied to understand that it is impossible to understand and must not understand. He writes:

The Concluding Unscientific Postscript contains two important points.

A. In the strictest sense, from the Christian point of view, there is no such thing as a science (Videnskab-Wissenschaft) of Christianity; and in any case the Christian scholar must apply for an indulgence before daring to occupy himself with science, since science is not superior but inferior. This is not a new principle, for it is the very principle of Christianity. Least of all is it a new scientific principle which should now be made into the science of the fact that there is no science. No, this principle simply indicates the limits of the Christian conception. The Postscript rightly makes the swing from faith into faith, i.e., into the existential—not to the speculative, and least of all to this as if it were something more exalted. If somebody cannot be content with faith and with remaining at the level of faith, very well, then, there is something more exalted in readiness for him—martyrdom, working for Christianity on an existential scale, to be laughed at, mocked, slain. In a Christian sense, this is the only possibility of going further. Christianity in a rigorous sense is itself the impatience of the existential, the impatience of the eternal. If this is so, then there is no time for science or for becoming something great in the world or for getting married, and so forth. So rigorous can Christianity be. But Christianity can be extraordinarily mild, demanding merely a little receipt from each man severally. If a man feels a desire and an
aptitude for occupying himself with scholarly pursuits—well, there is no objection to that, if only he will acknowledge that it is an indulgence which has been granted him and that Christianity and God in heaven know that Christianity has quite–arrogantly–claim upon him if he were willing. But if a scholar goes so far as to declare that we cannot remain at the level of faith, but must go further 39—to speculation as something higher—well, in that case, the existential security police had better arrive on the scene. . . . This is the significance of the Postscript. Its protest against science is carried through logically.

There is a metabasis eis alio genos. Nowhere does it lecture about the necessity of there being no lecturing. By no means. Everything is transported into the existential plane, and the author himself is an existing humorist. Had the author been a bungler, he would have held forth with a didactic lecture about there being no science and would thus have connived with the fundamental confusion of our age, a superstitious confidence in lecturing. In this way he would speedily have succeeded in being understood; his fortune would be made. By being consistent, he was denied all that, and, well aware that what he had to communicate and had communicated must be put through, he prepared himself to endure martyrdom, which consists in being ignored, year in and year out, regarded as a superfluity, a fool, and so forth. . . . But this is neither here nor there. The main thing is: it must be put through.

This work (the Postscript) represents not more than a moment in the evolution of my literary activity, but an important moment, a work which, because of its content, its artistic structure, and its dialectical consistency, can count upon a significant future.

B. If there is to be a science of Christianity, it must be erected not on the basis of the necessity of comprehending faith but on the basis of comprehending that faith cannot be comprehended. . . . What has here been expounded is what I now understand; in the beginning of my literary activity I did not understand this as clearly as I do now.40 My activity as a writer has served, after all, as the means of my own development and personal education. And just for this reason I have been so scrupulous from the outset, not to get too deeply involved with others, for I understood that I myself was being educated and trained by a superior power.41 c) The positivity of the relation between faith and reason: the unpublished polemics with Theophilus Nicolaus. But isn't the object of faith for Kierkegaard precisely the absurd or at least the paradox, the improbable? Does not faith for him consist in believing against reason? How is any relation possible between faith and reason? This was the objection of his brother, Peter, and especially of the theologian Magnus Eiriksson, who, under the pseudonym Theophilus Nicolaus, wrote the pamphlet referred to above,42 followed by the rest of the critics of Kierkegaard's Christianity.

In his unpublished answer to Theophilus, Kierkegaard, without ambiguity, defines his position, which may be summarized as follows: the object of faith is the absurd, the paradox, which is the inevitable cause of scandal, but only for whoever sees this object from the outside, i.e., for him who has no faith. It is an absurdity which has an existential, not an essential, origin. For the believer, for the man of faith, this object is neither absurd nor paradoxical; by virtue of faith his criterion is God, for whom all things are possible; in the light of faith he sees that this absurd, far from being a contradiction, is the one truth which saves—the supreme example being the Incarnation. Here are the principal passages intended for Theophilus: i. ABOLITION OF DOGMA IN MODERN CHRISTIANITY

Reply to Mr. Theophilus Nicolaus, author of a book thus entitled... . . .

The reply is based, among other things, on your own words, p. 178.

"If we were to proceed solely from the dogmas of the Church, we might well believe that, in the last analysis, we cannot escape the necessity of establishing the principle of absurdity as the principle of faith, for these dogmas must almost certainly impress every thinking and religious
mind as containing much that is absurd and paradoxical, in conflict with common sense and reason. . . ."

The new and peculiar turn you give to the affair is that you dismiss the whole of Christianity and then, with a triumphant countenance, inquire: "But where is the paradoxical?" You might better have asked:

"But where is Christianity?" A strange situation, when you think of it!

I, Johannes Climacus, say that I "by no means give myself out to be a Christian" (cf. the Postscript) but let Christianity stand. You reject the whole of Christianity, but continue to be a Christian and, in addition to that, you refuse, as a Christian, to insist upon petty differences (cf. the title page) between Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans.

With respect to the faith of Abraham, of which you are so fond, you will not here be able entirely to avoid the absurd, for the absurd is also present in relation to Abraham. It is for this reason that Abraham is called the father of faith, for to him applies the formal definition of faith, to believe against the understanding, although it has never occurred to the Christian Church to think that Abraham's faith embraced the whole range of Christian faith, for the latter stands related to a subsequent historical event. This is to be said in connection with the difficulties you make for yourself in order to point out a contradiction between two different authors, one of whom devotes himself "lyrically and dialectically" to Abraham, while the other deals "existentially" with the problem of "becoming a Christian": Johannes de silentio, who doesn't/claim to be a Christian but rather announces, "I am not a believer^and the undersigned [i.e., Johannes Climacus], who doesn't claim to be a Christian and makes no bones about not being one. . . .

Finally, a word about your scientific endeavor, which is more or less on the same level as Mr. Magnus Eiriksson's Faith, Superstition, and Unbelief.*3 What we pseudonymms, who, nota bene, insist that we are not believers, declare to be the absurd, the paradoxical, is by you hailed as by no means absurd, but as something much greater than that, "the more exalted reasonableness,"44 although this is not meant in a speculative sense. [X6 B 68, p. 72 ff.]

2. CHRISTIANITY AND DOGMA

He [Theophilus Nicolaus] would come to the assistance of Christianity by throwing all the dogmas overboard, thus abolishing Christianity, and installing in its place the faith of the Old Testament-and this faith is Christianity!

Let us merely get this one thing cleared up so that we two can speedily reach an agreement-an agreement on the fact that our disagreement permits no controversy, since the conflict is of another character, having to do with what Christianity is, not with the fact that Christianity is a paradox, on which latter point we are both agreed. You confess that the paradox resides in authentic Christianity; hence you reject the whole of it and announce triumphantly: "This is Christianity. Where now is the paradox?" More correctly you should say, "Where is Christianity?"

A strange situation, is it not! I say, I am not a Christian (see the Concluding Postscript), but allow Christianity to stand; you reject Christianity and then say, "I am a Christian." You yourself really seem to resemble the man you mention in your book on page 205: "one who, possibly out of sheer religiosity, rejects all doctrines peculiar to Christianity"; that which is peculiar to you is that you nevertheless retain Christianity, continue to be a Christian. . . .

Yet, by throwing Christianity overboard and choosing the faith of Abraham, you do not altogether evade the Absurd-to believe against the understanding-intensified by the fact that even
the ethical in this instance is not duty but spiritual tribulation [Angfegeltelse-Anfechtung], and in addition it is as if there were a self-contradiction in God, or, rather, in his will for Abraham, because at one moment he conjoins the Promise with the life of Isaac and the next moment demands that Abraham himself sacrifice Isaac.

A strange position you put yourself into by your talk about Abraham!

A professed rationalist, determined to eradicate every trace of the Absurd, the paradoxical, the supernatural, etc., you get rid of it, among other ways, in the following way, so odd for a rationalist-a way which is least of all rationalistic. Would it not astonish you to hear the following utterance of Don Quixote: "All superstition, everything that smacks of the Absurd, paradox and such like, must be driven out of Spain. It is for this cause that I and 50,000 knights errant contend!" [X« B 72, p. 81 ff.]

3. THE ABSURD OF FAITH AS A SIGN OF TRANSCENDENCE

When I believe this or that by virtue of the fact that for God all things are possible, where then is the Absurd? The Absurd is the negative determination which secures that I had not overlooked one or another possibility which still lay within the compass of the purely human. The Absurd is an expression of despair: humanly it is impossible—but despair is the negative sign of faith.

Thus with offense and faith-offense is the negative criterion which protects the qualitative difference between God and man; but the believer is not offended—just the opposite, it is he who delineates the concept of offense, but he constantly has the possibility of offense as a negative determination.

But perhaps faith has never before been presented by one who has just as much dialectic as immediacy. He alone is at once aware that the immediacy of which he speaks is the new immediacy, and precisely this is secured by means of the negative sign. Take another relationship.

Blessedness—suffering. Here the correct expression is: true blessedness is to be found in suffering. But it is rarely presented in this way. A man has perhaps himself suffered indescribably before he won through to faith—now he has faith, now everything is sheer blessedness. This presentation shows that he is no dialectician, for he has no indication of where this blessedness of his lies, and it is just possible that he is the victim of an illusion. But his presentation pleases men, for by his help they take blessedness in vain, contenting themselves with faith at secondhand. [X6 B 78, p. 84 ff.]

4. THE ABSURD OF FAITH DISAPPEARS WHEN ONE BELIEVES

The Absurd is not indiscriminately the absurd or absurdities (for which reason Johannes de silentio exclaims: "How many in our time have even a conception of what the Absurd is?"). The Absurd is a category, and accurately and with conceptual precision to define the Christian Absurd requires the most involved thinking.

The Absurd is a category, it is the negative criterion for God or for the relationship to God. When the believer believes, the Absurd is not the Absurd—faith transforms it; but in every weak moment, to him it is again more or less the Absurd. The passion of faith is the only thing capable of mastering the Absurd. If this were not so, faith would not be faith in the strictest sense, but
would be a kind of knowledge.

The absurd provides a negative demarcation of the sphere of faith, making it a sphere in itself. It must necessarily seem to a third party that the believer relates himself by virtue of the Absurd; for after all, the third party lacks the passion of faith. Now Johannes de silentio never claimed to be a believer; on the contrary, he claimed that he was a nonbeliever-in order to illumine faith negatively.

Thus, everything appears to be fairly well in order, and the disparity is that Johannes de silentio is a whole degree more acute and dialectical and better informed than Theophilus Nicolaus, who seeks to correct him. Theophilus has not sufficient dialectical elasticity to procure for the passion of his faith an expression which is negatively just as high as his presumed faith. That is to say, his faith is a far inferior form of faith.

The Absurd and faith -this is the like for like which is necessary if there is to be friendship and if this friendship is to be maintained between two such dissimilar qualities as God and man.

In the category of the Absurd, rightly understood, there is therefore absolutely nothing terrifying. No, it is precisely the category of courage and of enthusiasm. Take an analogy: Love blinds. It is, after all, a bitter story that one becomes blind. Well, then, you can reduce the blindness a little bit so that he does not become entirely blind. But beware that reducing the blindness you don't also reduce love. True love makes for total blindness.

And true faith breathes healthily and blissfully in the Absurd. A weaker faith must peer and speculate just like the weaker love, which lacked the courage to become totally blind, and for that very reason became an enfeebled love, or because it was an enfeebled love, did not become totally blind. [X6 B 79, p. 85 ff.]

5. THE ABSURD OF FAITH AS AN EXISTENTIAL SITUATION AND AS A THEORETICAL CONFLICT

That there is a difference between the Absurd in Fear and Trembling and the Paradox in the Postscript is entirely right. The first indicates merely the personal determination of existential faith; the second, faith in relation to a doctrine.

The author [Theophilus Nicolaus] would do away with the Absurd; he supposes that one gets faith on the strength of a call from on high, a more exalted communication, etc. (pp. 140-143). But look more closely. Johannes de silentio says that he is not a believer—but a "call from on high," etc., can very well be for the believing man nothing short of the Absurd—but for a third party! And it is precisely in this that the unhappiness of Abraham consists, because he is caught in a collision between two calls from above: God's promise respecting Isaac and God's demand that he sacrifice Isaac; a third still "higher call" is not mentioned. The Absurd is the negative criterion for that which is higher than human understanding and human knowing.

The function of the understanding is to recognize the Absurd as such-and then to leave it up to each and every man whether or not he will believe it.

Incidentally, it is one thing to believe in virtue of the Absurd and another to believe the Absurd. The first expression is employed by Johannes de silentio, the other by Johannes Climacus. [X6 B 80, p. 86 ff.]

The above quoted passages refer to what we may call the second dialectical moment of the relations between faith and reason, that is, the moment that we shall call negativo-positive, when things are considered only from the point of view of reason. With the Incarnation we have the coming of the divine mysterium into history, the "leap" from eternity into time and into a particular moment of history (in the "form" of a man): hence, the decisive consequences for
human history which derive from this theological breakthrough of immanence. All this would seem to annihilate reason, because it breaks its direct movement. But by reflecting on this quite unique situation, reason is able to know its own limits and to recognize them: thus, this negativity is also intrinsically dialectical and can have a positive solution, recognizing its own limits, not abstractly-as do skepticism and agnosticism and any other positions which are the prisoners of immanence-but concretely, hence in the presence of the object of faith, whose presence and whose need are discovered and recognized.

6. NO CONTRAST BETWEEN THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

The objection that there is a conflict between the Absurd in Johannes de silentio and in Johannes Climacus is a misunderstanding. After all, in the New Testament Abraham is called the father of faith, and yet it is perfectly clear that the content of his faith could not be that which is central to Christianity, the faith that Jesus Christ has existed.

But Abraham's faith is the formal determination of faith. So also with the Absurd. [X6 B 81.]

We may therefore conclude that the absurd of faith is for Kierkegaard an existential-that is, provisional or dialectical-irrational.

It is such for a man who does not believe and because he does not believe. In an ontological sense it is a meta-rational, that is, it is the object of faith, which, however, truly knows the truth of its object and is even able to convince reason itself.

The third moment of the dialectic of faith presents a new form of effective collaboration between faith and reason: the latter obtains within faith and in the service of faith its own proper sphere of activity, where it is to be respected. During 1850 Kierkegaard, reading Adolf Helfferich's History of Mysticism, discovered Hugh of St. Victor's formula on the relations between reason and faith, a formula which had inspired the best Scholastics, especially St. Thomas.47 Kierkegaard's comment on that formula is the normal development and conclusion of the passages quoted above: he finds that the principle stated by Hugh coincides with the thesis defended in the Postscript and is in substantial agreement with his own convictions. This passage is extremely important and, since it has never yet been quoted correctly, it is worthwhile to quote it now in its original context:

A true sentence of Hugh of St. Victor: "In things which are above reason, faith is not really supported by reason, because reason cannot grasp what faith believes; but there is also a something here as a result of which reason is determined, or which determines reason to honor faith which it cannot perfectly understand." 48

That is what I explained (for instance, in the Concluding Postscript*9); not every absurdity is "the absurd" or the paradox. The effect of reason is to know the paradox negatively-but then no more.

In one of the older Journals50 or on a loose sheet of paper from an earlier period (when I was reading Aristotle's Rhetoric), I was of the opinion that there must be introduced in place of Dogmatics an art of Christian communication. Such a subject was to deal with pistis. Pistis in classical Greek is that conviction (more than doxa, "opinion") which relates itself to the probable. But Christianity, which always turns the natural man's concepts topsy-turvy, and brings out the contrary, lets pistis relate itself to the improbable. This concept, the improbable, the Absurd, ought to be developed; for it is only superficiality to be of the opinion that the Absurd is not a concept, that all manner of absurda are equally well at home within the concept of the Absurd.

No, the concept of the Absurd is properly to understand that it cannot and shall not be
This is a negative category, but just as dialectical as any positive category whatsoever. The Absurd, the Paradox, is so constructed that the reason is by no means able of itself to resolve it into nonsense and show that it is nonsense. No, it is a sign, an enigma, a composite enigma, of which the reason must say, "I cannot solve it, it is not for me to understand it," but from this it does not follow that it is nonsense. Yet it goes without saying that, if one abolishes faith entirely, allowing that whole sphere to vanish, then the reason becomes conceited, and perhaps it will conclude that the paradox is nonsensical. But what would people care if, in another relationship, the class of experts had died out, and now the inexpert discovered that this and that was nonsensical—but faith is the expert in relation to the paradox. It believes the paradox; and now, to recall that word of Hugh of St. Victor, reason can very well be minded to hold faith in honor because of the fact that reason occupies itself profoundly with the paradox's negative conceptual determination.

It is a fundamental error to suppose that there are no negative concepts. The highest principles for all thinking or the proofs of them are, after all, negative. Human reason has limits. There lie the negative concepts. The border warfare is negative, designed merely to repulse the invader. But people have an infantile and conceited idea of human reason, especially in our times, since they never speak of a thinker, a reasoning man, but of the pure reason, and such like, which doesn't even exist, in as much as probably nobody, be he professor or what he will, is pure reason. Pure reason is a fantasy, and a fantastical lack of boundaries finds itself at home where, in the absence of negative concepts, everything can be comprehended-like the witch who ended by devouring her own stomach.

The collaboration of which we were speaking is energetically, but indirectly, stated in a strong criticism against Kant:

Oh, what a delusion on the part of Kant! He maintains that a king should say: "Reason as much as you like—but obey." I know not which should astonish me more, either this example, indirectly given, of a philosopher's contempt for rational thinking (that it should be so im-potent), or this ignorance of human life.

A little earlier in the same treatise, Kant had written that there is only one lord in the world who can say: "Reason as much as you like—only obey." I assume that Kant here means God; and I find it a beautiful thought that God the omnipotent could do it—because he can compel.

But we ought to have a look to see whether God does in fact do it.

And now to apply this maxim to an earthly king and to let it appear as if to reason and to obey were not the most dangerous juxtaposition imaginable, as if reasoning and obedience were not distinct from each other to the point of having nothing in common!

Ten years earlier, in 1842-1843 when he was reading Leibnitz'
Theodicee, Kierkegaard had in substance already reached the same position by recognizing—along with Leibnitz, and in contrast with Bayle—the possibility of an agreement between faith and reason.

In fact, after reading the Introduction of the famous Leibnitzian work, we may well ask ourselves whether Kierkegaard might not be indebted to him for the fundamental inspiration of his specific theology of faith. After writing in his notes (in capital letters, like a headline) that the "Introduction to the Theodicee deals with the conformity between faith and reason," Kierkegaard adds:

On Page 52 Leibnitz uses the expression "to see" of that which one knows a priori of true causes and "to believe" of that which can be concluded from the effects.

What I am accustomed to express by saying that Christianity lies in the paradox, philosophy in mediation, Leibnitz expresses by making a distinction between that which is above reason and
that which is against reason. Faith is above reason. By reason he understands, as he several times remarks, a linking together of truths, an enchainement, a conclusion from causes. Faith can therefore not be proved, grounded, or comprehended, for the link is missing which would make a joining together possible, and what is this but to say that it is a paradox; for this is precisely the desultory feature of the paradox, which lacks continuity, or, in any case, which has only obverse continuity; that is to say, which does not originally appear as a continuity. In my opinion, it must be said of Christianity's paradoxicality and improbability that they are the first form, both in the history of the world and in individual consciousness.

The whole conflict between Leibnitz and Bayle has great reality, and when one compares it with the battle of our day, one is impressed; for we have actually retrogressed. I believe that Hegel did not really understand what it was all about.54

It is Kierkegaard himself who brings his thinking back into the heart of the Christian tradition, as if the explicit content of his texts were not enough to show it. And it is by excess of naivete that all those interpretations of Kierkegaard's dialectic err which stop at his pure negativity. For then the very polemic loses all meaning and all power to awaken. The formula of the Postscript and of the Journals of his maturity, according to which the fundamental relation between faith and reason consists in "understanding that it is impossible to understand" has only a negative value.

Such a formula was preferred by Kierkegaard because it pierced to the heart Hegel's Religionsphilosophie and enlightened rationalism in general. It is symptomatic that he employs it also against Kant, the critic par excellence of Pure Reason and the classic author of the "philosophical faith," who did not want to seek the existential truth in what was beyond reason, God's authority. As to the problem of evil and the Kantian theory of "radical evil," Kant refuses to surpass reason, however difficult the problem may be. Kierkegaard writes:

There is only one mistake in Kant's theory of radical evil. He does not make it clear that the inexplicable, the paradox, is a category of its own. Everything depends upon that. Until now, people have always expressed themselves in the following way: the knowledge that one cannot understand this or the other thing does not satisfy science, the aim of which is to understand. Here is the mistake; people ought to say the very opposite: if human science refuses to understand that there is something about which it clearly understands that it cannot understand it-then all is confusion. For it is the duty of the human understanding to understand that there are things which it cannot understand, and what those things are. Human understanding has vulgarly occupied itself with nothing but understanding, but if it would only take the trouble to understand itself at the same time it would simply have to posit the paradox. The paradox is not a concession but a category, an ontological definition which expresses the relation between an existing cognitive spirit and eternal truth. [Journals, No. 633 (VIII A 11)]

A passage which I shall quote presently will prove the maturity of the formula here outlined. We already know that in the Christian life there is room for a still larger co-operation between faith and reason, nature and grace, and this time in a clearly positive sense, even if grounded on paradox. In speaking of the Christian rhetoric with which he would have liked to replace the Dogmatics of the Hegelian right wing, Kierkegaard comes close to the Catholic ideas about the function of traditional theology, whose munus certainly is not that of demonstrating dogma but of establishing it as truth revealed by God and of rejecting the attacks from heresy and unbelief as non probantes. Indeed, when St. Thomas speaks of rationes theologicae, he affirms that non sunt demonstrativa sed persuasiones quaedam manifestantes non esse impossibile quod in fide proponitur and that id quod fidei tenetur, propter fidei certitudinem existimatur etiam impossibile alter se habere.55 This expresses in a positive way what Kierkegaard's formula expresses
negatively. Unlike Karl Barth, Kierkegaard would also have subscribed to the Thomistic doctrine of analogy, since he continually employs it according to the Thomistic principle: Res sensibles aliquae vestigium in se divinæ imitationis retinet. . . ita tamen imperfectum quod ad declarandam ipsius Dei substantiam omnino insufficiens invenit (Summa Contra Gentiles, I. c. 8). And if the Angelic Doctor grants to faith some sort of evidence (extrinsic: authority) when he says that the believer non crederet nisi videret ea esse credenda (Summa Theol, IIa Ilae, q. I, a. 4, ad 1), Kierkegaard likewise recognizes the necessity of establishing authority.

He compares faith to a light and to an "interior" illumination due to the divine call of grace. Similarly, St. Thomas also speaks, as has been said, of a lumen fidei: Lumen fidei facit credere ea quae creduntur. Sicut enim per alios habitus virtutum homo videt illud quod est sibi conveniens secundum habitum ilium, ita etiam per habitum fidei inclinatur mens hominis ad assentiendum his quae convenient recta fidei et non alia. These expressions, inclinatur mens hominis ad assentiendum and facit videre, have an exquisitely existential flavor in the sense understood by Kierkegaard.

A decisive proof of the positive function of illumination which faith exercises upon the Christian life is the victory which faith, and faith alone, obtains over anxiety, over the demon of despair, which is the point of convergence of the problem for the man who remains outside faith. A whole literature about Kierkegaard's thought, either superficial or insensible to the existential motives of his dialectic, could have been dispensed with if its authors had deigned to see this solution as the very argument of that masterpiece of theological phenomenology of sin, The Sickness unto Death (1849). r"s admirable essay is the continuation, and in many respects the counterpart, of The Concept of Dread (1844), above all because it develops and determines the principle that "the opposite of sin is faith" and that the only remedy to the fatal madness of despair is the acceptance of faith.67 He, who, instead of withdrawing from sin by resorting to faith in his Saviour, rejects it, becomes the prey of despair (Fortvivlelse), which is for man the true sickness unto death.

In a passage of the same year (1850) but a little later than The Sickness unto Death, in a marvelous and joyous style, Kierkegaard describes the comfort and the illumination resulting from the triumph of faith over anxiety:

That God tries, even tempts a man ('lead us not into temptation") is a thought by which one must not be frightened. The difference is simply how one looks at it. Unbelief, melancholy, and so on, at once grow anxious and afraid and really accuse God of doing so in order that man shall succumb; for, however far a melancholy anxiety may be from thinking such a thing of God, yet in the deepest sense it really does think that, but without knowing it or being conscious of it, just as it is said of a man in a passion that he does not know what he is doing.

The believer, on the other hand, apprehends everything the other way round; he believes that God does so in order that he should stand the test. Alas, and in a certain sense: it follows from this that unbelief, melancholy, anxiety, and so on, usually succumb because they weaken themselves beforehand, and as a punishment for thinking evil of God; whereas faith is readily victorious.

But it is a severe education, the education from inborn dread to faith. Dread is the most terrible kind of tribulation—until the point is reached where the same man is practised in faith (i.e., in looking at everything the other way round), in remaining confident and hopeful when that happens which formerly almost made him faint and expire with dread, and goes freely forward to meet that against which he formerly knew only one means of preservation: to fly, and so on and so forth.

He in whose soul there is an inborn dread can therefore easily have a visionary idea of God's
love. But he cannot make his relation to God concrete. If his idea of God's love has a deeper root
in him, and if he is piously concerned, before all else, to nourish and preserve it, his life can in
many ways, and for a long time, continue in agonising suffering: that in concreto he does not
receive the impression that God is love (for dread continues to overwhelm him and prevents him
from seeing the danger, the trial, the temptation, etc., from the right side, which is that it exists in
order that he shall endure it); whereas he only holds and clings the more firmly to the thought: all
the same God is love.

That is a sign that he is reared to faith. Thus to keep firmly hold of the thought: God is love,
is the most abstract form of faith, is faith in abstracto. And then, in time, he will succeed in
achieving a concrete relation to God.58

KIERKEGAARD, KARL BARTH AND ST. THOMAS: THE
CATHOLIC ACTUALITY OF THE KIERKEGAARDIAN
THEMATIC

Another proof, that I would like to underline, of the positive value of the relation between
faith and reason in Kierkegaard's dialectic, is contained, it seems to me, in the Postscript in the
doctrine of the two Religiousnesses, A and B, according to which man may direct and dispose his
existence in a progressive mode. As opposed to Karl Barth's crude Calvinism which rejects it,
Kierkegaard expressly admits a true form of religiousness independent of revelation, proper to
man in the state of nature, which he calls Religiousness A. The religiousness based on revelation,
on the other hand, he calls Religiousness B. The first-which is the acme of human wisdom before
Christ and was achieved by Socrates has God, the ontological absolute, as its object. The second
has the Word Incarnate, the "essential paradox," as its center. Religiousness A is that of secret
inwardness, it has the pathos at the first power, so to speak. Religiousness B, on the other hand, is
related to the eternal in so far as it has become a historical event (Incarnation) and therefore
present in time: it is the pathos raised to the second power, and this achieves substantial value in
the last dialectic proper of the absolute paradox. For Kierkegaard, Religiousness A is true
religiousness, and in the spiritual structure of man it has the same positive value that it had in the
course of history. Still better: it has a propaedeutic value, which Kierkegaard considers
indispensable in relation to Religiousness B. He gives the importance of a principle to this
propaedeutic: in order to have authentic Christians capable of taking upon themselves the
responsibilities of Christianity, it is first of all necessary to have authentic men ready to fulfil the
duties that come from human nature as such. Religiousness A must already be present, therefore,
before any attention can be given to the dialectic of the other. It is necessary that the individual be
already in relation with the eternal beatitude, in the purest expression of an existential pathos, as
was the case with Socrates, before any question can arise of this dialectic raised to the second
power (Christianity) which throws a man into the pathos of the paradox. Many Christians make
the mistake of wanting to become Christians all at once, without passing to Christianity by way
of Religiousness A and without satisfying its exigencies. But in Kierkegaard's opinion,
religiousness must constitute a more serious, self-sufficient task. What happens when
Religiousness A is no longer the starting point for the religiousness of paradox? Religiousness A
finds itself higher than Religiousness B, because the paradox and the absurd are understood no
longer in an eminent sense, but in a merely aesthetic sense: in order to praise, for instance, the
magnitude and the exteriority of miracles, etc. In this way, says Kierkegaard, man avoids the
martyrdom of faith, he returns to paganism and, therefore, falls back into immanence.59

We must recognize, then, that for Kierkegaard the Theologia Naturalis™ is truly the
indispensable Anknüpfungspunkt for the reception of revealed religion. Thus, if there is a way of reconciling faith and reason which is absolutely unacceptable (Hegel's way), there is also an indispensable way which is beneficial to both of them. Kierkegaard's case, like that of all the great personalities in the history of thought, is situated outside history. If it is true that he finds the sources of his problems in the spiritual situation of his time, the solutions he finds for them put him outside all circles, schools, and cultural affiliations of his time and give him a universal validity. In this study I have tried to direct the exegesis of Kierkegaard toward an understanding of the aims and the inward structure of a work which is, of its kind, perhaps incomparable. A long and close familiarity with Kierkegaard's work has made me realize that it abounds in contrast. I recognize that it is therefore possible to isolate passages not at all in harmony with the essential conclusions of the present analysis. I insist, however, that the method upon which the analysis rests allows me to identify the essential moment of the whole inspiration which guided and sustained the extraordinary energy of that invincible dialectician.

I shall present my conclusions in a paradoxical way, by quoting the following passages of the two authors whom I have studied more than any others, for whom I have a particular admiration, and to whom I feel the closest kinship.

St. Thomas: Duplex est hominis cognitio; una per naturalem rationem, alia quae est supra rationem. Prima non facit beatitudinem, quia, dubia est: unde non satiat intellectum, sed beatitudo debet satisfacere intellectui et hoc habebitur in patria.61 It is a Thomist text, but with a content clearly similar to Kierkegaard's doctrine, especially because of that dubia.

Kierkegaard: "Speculation-Faith":

Speculation can present the problems. It knows that each particular problem is compounded in such wise that it exists for faith and is marked out for faith-and then it puts the question: Will you believe or not?

Furthermore, Speculation can check faith, i.e., check that which in a given moment is believed or is the content of faith, to make certain that no determinations foreign to faith-determinations which are not properly the objects of faith but, e.g., of Speculation-have, through somebody's bumbling and babbling, been mixed with it.

All of this is an extremely involved work. Speculation is gifted with sight-yet only to the point of its being able to say, "Here it is"; then it is blind. After that comes faith which believes that it has the gift of sight in relation to the object of faith. [X2 A 432]

The passage is essentially Kierkegaardian and fully confirms the exegesis of these pages; but it also has a Thomistic flavor, from which the work here outlined receives-especially in the Theologia Viatorum which may be extracted from it-a fulfilment never achieved either before or after St. Thomas.

A final question may be taken into consideration; that is, whether Kierkegaard would admit the legitimacy of theology as a science in the sense of the Catholic tradition of St. Augustine and St.Thomas. In the mature reflection of the Postscript, which we have already quoted above, he explicitly admits its possibility according to the formula: "theological science is allowed as something inferior and subordinate to faith, and this is most genuine orthodoxy." On the other hand, Kierkegaard sometimes-exasperated by polemics and aware that theology was praised more than faith attacks (half a century before Franz Overbeck)62 Clement of Alexandria and also St. Augustine as guilty of having falsified the Gospel, which is "communication of existence," and of having made it the object of scientific discipline. But it is unnecessary to remark, after what we have said and the author himself says of St. Augustine,63 how false this accusation is.

The extremely narrow intellectual environment in which Kierkegaard lived, the lack of direct contact with traditional theology (a single volume, were it even such a remarkable one as
Moehler's, could never be enough), and, let us add, his polemical hypersensitivity, help us to understand the true reason for his variation of expression, from which it would never be just to draw any very significant conclusions. Like Dante with his Virgil and Beatrice, Kierkegaard, in his journey toward eternity, found two guides: sound reason which leads to faith and faith which makes use of sound reason. I have no intention of trying to make a Catholic, much less an unconscious Thomist, out of Kierkegaard. We must remember that he lived in an environment which, both in its traditions and in its spiritual situation, was the opposite of Catholicism and Thomism. The surprising similarity and convergence of his formulas and ours is, then, all the more significant. If we follow Kierkegaard's laborious journey as a man and as a writer, we shall see that the depth of his speculations, the purity of his intentions, "the flame of his love for Christ, incarnate truth, bring him very close to us. Let us consider that, at the same time, his contemporaries—from the aesthete-philosopher Heiberg to Bishop Mynster—banish him from their society. Without trying to anticipate and to make a judgment which is not for man to make, it seems to me that it is not possible for a man—even one with Kierkegaard's genius—to come so close to Truth without being guided by Truth, without being an instrument of a mission whose investiture depends on the only Spirit who inspired prophets and apostles and who guides the aspirations of all "men of good will." Kierkegaard was undoubtedly a disciple of Christ. Growing out of the arid soil of the Reformation, his work may offer precious resources to the Catholic theologian for the use of a phenomenology of theological problems, especially of those related to faith. It may even lead to a revival of traditional theology and offer an integral theology mentis et cordis to modern man.

NOTES

i. Point of View, p. 15 (XIII, 559).

2. Cf. Journals, No. 1147 (X3 A 591). Among those Catholic scholars who have understood the positive aspect of K.'s work I must mention Th. Haecker, E. Przywara, B. Jansen, and Y. Congar. The presentation of K. made by R. Jolivet in his Introduction a Kierkegaard, Fontenelle ed., 1946, is benevolent and comprehensive. For theological problems I would call attention to J. Hamer's substantial analysis, Karl Barth, L'occasionalisme theologique de K. B., Paris-Bruges, 1949, p. 73 ff. (The title of Ch. IX, "La source principale de la pensee barthienne: Soeren Kierkegaard," is certainly not welcomed by the present day Barth!). L. Chestov's books (Kierkegaard et la philosophie existentielle and Athenes et Jerusalem) are, on the contrary, without any critical value, documents of a sickly imagination incapable of controlling itself.


5. K. Jaspers, Psychologie der Weltanschauungen, IV Auf., Berlin-Göttingen-Heidelberg: Springer, 1954: "Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind, and above all Kierkegaard, whom I began to study in 1914, and secondarily Nietzsche, were like revelations. They made it possible to communicate clear insights into every comer of the human soul and all the way down into its origins. In my book, I placed Kierkegaard and Nietzsche side by side in spite of their apparent foreignness to one another (Christian and atheist). Today, it has become so obvious that they belong together that the name of the one reminds one of the other" (Foreword, p. x).

6. K. Jaspers, Vernunft und Existenz, Groningen, 1935, p. 35 ff., 96 ff.; Philosophic, Berlin, 1932, I, p. ix. And also in Die geistige Situation der Zeit (Sammlung Goschen, Vol. 1000), Berlin, 1931, p. 145 ff. In the autobiographical article which appeared in Italian translation first in Logos, XXIV, Naples, 1941 and was later included in the volume La mia filosofia, Turin, 1946, Jaspers declares that he is indebted to Kierkegaard as to one who "... determined in me the consciousness of that original principle which for us today is indispensable, and the consciousness of our historical situation" (p. 10 ff.). A little further on, after having said that "even today we can, in philosophizing, take the movements found in Kant," he adds this general declaration: "we cannot do it truthfully if we leave out of account even for a single instant all that has come to us through the works of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche" (p. 12). On the negativity of Jaspers' philosophy, see C. Fabro, Problemi dell'esistenzialismo, Rome, 1945, pp. 53 ff., 122 ff.; and L'Assoluto nell'esistenzialismo, Catania, 1954, p. 76 ff.

7. Barth's following declaration is well known: "If I have a 'system,' then it consists in the fact that I bear in mind as unswervingly as possible what Kierkegaard has called the infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity, in both its positive and its negative meaning" (Der Rbmerbrief, Zurich, 1940, p. xiii). The change to which Walter Lowrie has called my attention (in the note: "How Kierkegaard got into English," an appendix to the translation of Repetition, p. 185 ff.) is clear in the new edition of the Dogmatik. Barth complains about the tendency to "humanize" theology and adds: "And the question is, in all seriousness, not to say the same about what today, following the pietistic tradition, is claimed as 'existential' theological thinking
and talking" (Die Kirchliche Dogmatik, 6 Vol I/i, Zurich, 1947, p. 19).

8. In the following pages I do not plan to give a complete survey of all the Kierkegaardian texts concerning faith: that would require a considerable amount of space. My purpose is only to investigate the fundamental "meaning" that Kierkegaard wanted to give to his work. I believe with Kierkegaard that the fundamental work on this problem is the Postscript (1846); the important Journals from 1848 to 1850 give all necessary information on the continuity of the theme of this work. At this time Kierkegaard had almost completed the cycle of his philosophical works and his own doctrinal synthesis.


10. From the beginning of his Journal Kierkegaard is concerned with the problem of predestination and clearly sees that the two dangers to be avoided are that of double predestination and that of Origen and Pelagius. See Journals, Nos. 2, 3, 12 (I A 5, 7, 43); cf. also I A 2, 10, 19, 22; II A 399, etc. For Kierkegaard, entirely absorbed by his idea of a militant Christianity, the theory of predestination (Calvinist and others of the same type) is qualified as the dogma of "sedentary piety" and it is one of the signs that Christianity has "lost its elan" (X4 A 180).

11. The principle according to which man does not obtain "perfect equality but before God" (for Gud) is one of the deepest intuitions of Kierkegaard's existentialism and corresponds to the authentic Christian situation. In this life, in the sphere of the finite, men are not equal in their reciprocal relations. One is more gifted than another. "Before God," in relation to eternity, all individual differences disappear and no longer constitute the slightest privilege, since God requires from every man the "choice of his freedom," a choice that is available to everybody in the same way, since it is a matter of will and love and not of intelligence or wit. This truly metaphysical demand is the apex of Kierkegaard's efforts to vindicate the rights of him whom with joy he calls "the common man" (det almindelige Menneske); this demand turns into a strong profession of "realism" (cf. Postscript, passim, especially sec. II. In the Journals the expressions are even clearer. See VII A 144; VIII A 551: "Everybody can become an 'Individual.'" Also: IX A 91, X1 A 420. Another entry to the same effect Journals, No. 1031 (X2 A 348).

12. The thesis concerning faith as the "second immediacy" is al-
ready presented under the pseudonym "Frater Taciturnus" in the Stages on Life's Way and forms one of the central themes of the Postscript. The terminology of "double dialectic," "reduplication," probably has a Hegelian origin. I notice, however, that in the summa of pietism-by"J. Arndt one finds an illustration showing the sun surrounded by two brilliant halos and floating over a landscape with the inscription: "with double motion" (mit doppelter Bewegung).


14. X 2 A 448. The same idea is presented in 1849 with explicit reference to St. Paul:

Here one sees the results of not being dialectical. In a sermon Luther inveighs most violently against the faith which clings to the person instead of to the word; true faith clings to the word no matter who the person is. Well, that is all very well among men. But as for the rest this theory does away with Christianity. We thus receive a doctrine in the ordinary sense, where the doctrine is more than the teacher, whereas Christianity consists of the paradox that the person is all important. Why does St. Paul insist so fervently that he is an apostle "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead" (Gal. 1:1) except to show the difference in kind, which again is authority. In another connection St. Paul can, quite consistently, do away with this difference, when it is a matter of bringing in Christ, in person, as for example when he inveighs against some for saying "I am of Paul," others of Apollos, others of Cephas, instead of all being of Christ (Cor. 1:12). And once again Christianity's paradoxical difference from every other doctrine from a scientific point of view, is that it posits: authority. A philosopher with authority is an absurdity. For a philosopher goes no further than his doctrine; if I can show that his doctrine is self-contradictory, incorrect, etc., he has nothing to reply. The paradox is that the personality is above the doctrine. It is therefore also nonsensical of a philosopher to demand faith. (Journals, No. 1025 [X2A3i2]).

15. X2 A 529. The text goes on to show how the dissolution of Christianity into a "myth," achieved by the Hegelian left wing (Feuerbach, Strauss), is the result of the times and is the condemnation of modern Christianity for having betrayed the Christianity of the New Testament. What is a myth and a fable is not Christianity in itself but the Christianity of our times. (See below the polemic against Theophilus Nicolaus.)


17. It is Lessing himself, who according to the Postscript, suggests to
Kierkegaard the existential nature of the "leap" and the subjective tension. Lessing has said that accidental historical truths can never serve as proofs for eternal truths of reason, and that the transition by which it is proposed to base an eternal truth upon historical testimony is a leap. Lessing has said that if God held all truth in his right hand, and in his left hand held the lifelong pursuit of it, he would choose the left hand. Cf. Postscript, p. 86 ff. (VII, 94 ff.) and Lessing's Ueber den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft, Lachmann ed., I, 36. About the concept of "leap," one should remember Mendelssohn's definition: "To Wonder whether there be not something which not only transcends all concepts, but also lies fully outside the realm of concept, this I call a leap above and beyond oneself." See Postscript, p. 95 ff. (VII, 97 ff.). Mendelssohn's definition is found in "Erinnerungen an Herrn Jacobi" in Jacobi's Werke, IV, 1, Leipzig, 1819, p. 110.

18. Kierkegaard speaks very frequently about the paradox of sin especially in the two works which are, dialectically speaking, correlated: The Concept of Dread (1844) and The Sickness unto Death (1849). In the Journals of 1850 the problem is studied from a theological point of view: Kierkegaard takes as the starting point of his discussion Julius Mueller's work, Die Christliche Lehre von der Suende, 2 vols., Gotha, 1842. Cf. Journals, No. 1050 (X2 A 426, 467, 472, 473, 482).


20. Cf. VIII A 673: "To believe in the forgiveness of one's sins is the decisive crisis through which a human being becomes spirit." This is the theme of the text of 1848. Cf. also VIII A 663, 664: "Thy sins are forgiven thee'-this is the cry with which Christians greet each other, and with this cry Christianity marches through the world."

21. The formula was undoubtedly suggested by Tertullian. As we will see later, one of the principal sources or at least a very powerful stimulus of Kierkegaard's thought was Leibnitz's Theodicee. The sentence from Tertullian's De Carne Christi: Mortuus est Die Filius, credibile est quia ineptum est; et sepultus revixit, certum est quia impossiUe, is rightly quoted by Leibnitz in "discours de la conformite de la foi avec la raison" (Liebnitz, Oeuvres, ed. O. Janet, Paris, 1900, II, 59).

22. Kierkegaard frequently uses the terms Frosted and frastfiden to mean the movement proper of dialectic at the second power (double dialectic), that is, the movement coming from an essential negative moment in which the situation is revealed. The corresponding word seems to me to be "repulsion" (respinta), "to repulse" (respingere).
23. To the dogmatic reality of the coming of God or of the eternal into time (Incarnation) must correspond on man's side a relation with the Eternal "in time" through works. "By this contradiction, existence is paradoxically accentuated, and the distinction 'here' and 'hereafter' is absolutely defined by the fact that existence is paradoxically accentuated / for the reason that the eternal itself came into the world at a moment of time, the existing individual does not in the course of time come into relation with the eternal and think about it (this is A), but in time he comes into relation with the eternal in time; so that the relation is within time, and this relationship conflicts equally with all thinking, whether one reflect upon the individual or upon the Deity." Cf. Postscript, p. 505 (VII, 561).

24. See the critique of Luther in For Self-Examination, p. 39 ff. (XII, 353 ff)-


26. Cf. "Index of terms" in the Italian translation of the Journals: contemporaneity, Cristianesimo, imitazione, interiorita, esistenza, etc. (Ill, 499 ff.).

27. XI2 A 301. Hence a paradoxical re-evaluation of the "outward": if human existence is situated in time, its decisions are taken in the presence of the Eternal. If it be granted that truth is subjectivity, in the measure in which this implies "appropriation" (Tilegnelse) of truth in inwardness, and that this diminishes when outwardness increases, there still remains the fact that the absence of outwardness is a temptation. For the less outwardness there is, the more one should fear that inwardness, too, may be totally absent. Outwardness is the alarm clock that awakens him who sleeps, the mother who rises first and awakens everybody, the signal which calls the soldiers to attention, the march of the general who rallies his men for the decisive attack. The absence of outwardness may mean that inwardness is recalling man to himself, but may also mean that inwardness is absent. Cf. Postscript, p. 340 ff. (VII, 370 ff.). This principle is appealed to again later in the discussion on the exaggerations of ascetics in the Middle Ages. Asceticism is, however, appreciated by Kierkegaard, for he saw in the monastic movement "a passion and a respect for the absolute telos." Cf. Postscript, p. 371 (VII, 404).

28. X4 A 114. On this matter see the Postscript which compares the determination of truth (as subjectivity) to that of faith: "Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncer-
tainty. If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith, I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water still preserving my faith." Cf. Postscript, p. 182 (VII, 189). As we shall see, Kierkegaard subsequently gave further precision to this doctrine.

29. There are numerous texts in the Journals about "spiritual abandonment." It is necessary to put them together with those-also very numerous-that speak of "spiritual infancy" or of the "second infancy," which is considered as the characteristic of the children of God. Cf. VIII A 342; IX A 247; X1 A 679; X2 A 134, 320; X3 A 378, etc. Thus, since the first half of the last century, the Protestant Kierkegaard already grasped intuitively this principle of Christian perfection, which some years later, Ste. Therese of Lisieux was to expound in a more serene mood but in an analogous Christological sense, derived from the same sources, the Gospel and the Imitation.

30. The older texts seem to be categorical. Cf. I A 94 and Journals No. 32 (I A 99). However, in my opinion, it is rather that science attempts to explain faith and to absorb it (Hegel: "Speculation is the truth of faith") and to control it. And, under Leibnitz' influence (as we shall see), Kierkegaard soon after discovers the adequate formula to express the transcendence of faith over science.

31. The accusation is so common that every quotation becomes superfluous. Cf. W. Ruttenbeck, Søren Kierkegaard, der Christliche Denker und sein Werk, Berlin u. Frankfurt-Oder, 1929, p. 249 et passim; also Bohlin, who has written a very considerable monograph on Kierkegaard's theology. According to this writer, Kierkegaard's doctrine is that le christianisme n'autorise aucune espece de raisonnement pour ou contre Vutilite de la foi ou son avantage pour l'individu et la societe. Croire vraiment en Dieu c'est se soumettre sans reserve a la majeste de Dieu. (T. Bohlin, Søren Kierkegaard, L'homme et VCEuvre, French translation by Paul-Henri Tisseau, Bazoges-en-Pareds, 1941, p. 171.) For the Catholic camp see the article by P. H. Bouillard, "La Foi d'apres Kierkegaard," Bulletin de Litter. eccUs. de Toulouse, Janv.-Mars 1947. Ignoring the developments in the Journals, Bohlin believes that Kierkegaard ne sait rendre compte du caractère emblement rationnel de la foi (p. 23) and refuses to recognize that for Kierkegaard faith (which, certainly, is not speculation) may be the starting point of a speculation (cf. p. 19, where the author deplors that the Journals are accessible to French readers only in a fragmentary way).
32. In Either/Or, I, 26 (I, 17).


34. These words are the theme of Part II of Training in Christianity, 1850 (XII, 93 ff.) whose outline is given in the Table of Contents. This outline is as follows:

A. The possibility of the offense which has not to do with Christ as Christ (the God-Man), but with him as a mere human individual who comes into collision with the established order.

B. The possibility of the essential offense which has to do with exaltation, for the fact that an individual man speaks or acts as though he were God, says of himself that he is God, having to do therefore with the qualification of God by the composite term God-Man.

C. The possibility of the essential offense which has to do with lowliness, for the fact that he who gives himself out to be God, shows himself to be the poor and suffering and at last the impotent man.

Supplement 1

Thoughts which determine the meaning of "the offense" strictly so called.

J1. The God-Man as a "sign."

§2. The servant-form is unrecognizableness (an incognito).

§3. The impossibility of direct communication.

§4. The impossibility of direct communication is in Christ's case the secret of his suffering.

J 5. The possibility of the offense lies in the refusal to employ (direct communication.

§6. To refuse to employ direct communication is to require faith,

f 7. The object of faith is the God-Man, precisely because the God-Man is the possibility of the offense. [XII, 144 ff.]

35. Copenhagen, 1850. His reading finished, Kierkegaard deprecates in his Journal, the impoliteness of Th. N. who does not take into consideration the fact that Johannes Climacus (the pseudonymous writer of Philosophical Fragments and Postscript) is not a Christian and consid-
ers therefore the problem of faith (the absurd) from the outside (cf. X2A6oi).


37. VIII A 672. This second and more perfect form of faith, presented by Kierkegaard, finds its energetic expression in the Thomistic theology of faith as an infused supernatural habit and in the doctrine of "faith informed by charity" to which Kierkegaard here and elsewhere approaches.

138. Apparently this formula was inspired by Hamann.
39. "To go beyond, overcome, surpass . . ." is an expression derived from Hegel: the allusion is clearly ironical.
40. It is therefore clear that Kierkegaard has undergone an evolution (and we shall soon see in what sense) in the elaboration of the theology of faith and therefore we cannot be satisfied with the formulas of his early writings.

41. X6 B 114, p. 143 ff. This and the following texts, in answer to Theophilus Nicolaus, are translated and published from the original for the first time.

42. The original title of this polemical essay of Theophilus Nicolaus is: "Er Troen et Paradox og 'i Kraft of det Absurde?' et Sprrgsmaal førankdigt ved 'Frygt og Bceven,' of Johannes de silentio, besvaret ved Hjaelp of den Troes-Ridders fortrolige Meddelelser, til fælles Opbyggelse for j0der, Christne og Muhamedanere, of bemeldte Troes-Ridders Broder Theophilus Nicolaus."

43. Kierkegaard refers to the theological essay that Magnus Eiriksson had published under his own name with the title: Tro, Overtro og Van-tro, i deres Forhold og Forstand, samt til hinanden indbyrdes (Faith, superstition, and unbelief in their mutual relation and understanding), Copenhagen, 1846.

44. In his pseudonymous work Theophilus Nicolaus (Magnus Eiriksson) formulates his accusation in the following terms: "As such, the absurd has the power which causes me to believe, with the consequence that whatever the absurd may be, it causes man to believe for the very
reason that it is the absurd, which is completely unacceptable and opens the door to superstition" (op. cit., p. 16). The author professes to hold just the opposite thesis, the thesis of the reconciliation between faith and reason (p. 18); he objects to Kierkegaard that Abraham's faith was grounded on the absurd, for he knew that to God nothing is impossible and that this is true for the faith of every believer (p. 47). However the absurd may be understood, it can never become the principle and the ground of faith. In the Postscript the paradox is Christ, in whom divinity is hidden by his humble life incognito, but then before Christ faith had nothing to do with the paradox (pp. 149, 158). Finally the author accuses Kierkegaard of petitio principii (p. 180). I thank the Directors of the Kongelige Biblotek, Copenhagen, for their kind permission to consult Eriksen's work.

45. In the sense of "revelation," of a sign coming from heaven.

46. From the point of view of reason Abraham finds himself between Scylla and Charybdis. God had promised to bless him in his son Isaac and to multiply his descendants like the sand of the sea. And here now the same God commands him to sacrifice the "son of the promise." Abraham feels his old age and Sarah, at the age of ninety, had conceived Isaac by a miracle. He sees very well the contrast between God's new command and the promise. From the point of view of reason, his obedience is absurd. Let us remark that the Journals of Kierkegaard's maturity contain variations on the theme of Abraham of a psychological and theological interest perhaps greater than those of Fear and Trembling. (Cf. X4 A 338, 357, 458 and X5 A 132.)

47. The title of Helfferich's work is: Die Christliche Mystik in ihrer Entwicklung und ihren Denkmalen, 2 vols., Gotha, 1842. For the influence of Hugh of St. Victor's formula on St. Thomas, see De Veritate, q. XIV, a.2 in fine corp. art., Summa Theologica I/II, q. IV, a.i. On the meaning of the text, which Kierkegaard comments upon and chooses as the formula of his own doctrine of faith, see Th. Heitz, Les rapports entre la philosophie et la foi de Berenger de Tours a St. Thomas d'Aquin, Paris, 1909, p. 76 ff. Also G. Engelhardt, Die Entwicklung der dogmatischen Glaubenspsychologie in der mittelalterlichen Scholastik, Minister i.W., 1933, p. 103 ff.

48. Hugh of St. Victor writes clearly as follows:

Ergo quae secundum rationem sunt et quae supra rationem tantummodo suscipiunt fideem. Et in primo quidem genere fides ratione adiuvatur et ratio fide perficitur quoniam secundum rationem sunt quae creduntur. Quorum veritatem si ratio non comprehendit, fidei tamen illorum non
contradicit. In his quae supra rationem sunt non adiuvatur fides ratione ulla; quoniam non capit ea ratio quae fides credit, et tamen est aliquid quo admonetur venerari fidem quam non comprehendit. Quae dicta sunt ergo et secundum rationem, fuerunt probabilia racioni et sponte acquievit eis. Quae vero supra rationem fuerunt ex divina revelatione prodita sunt; et non operata est in eis ratio, sed castigata tamen ne ilia contenderet. (De Sacramentis I, III, 30; P.L. 176, col. 232.)

On the relations between Kierkegaard and Scholasticism, see Johannes Sl0k's interesting notes, "En Studie i Kierkegaards Erkendelsesteori" in Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift, 1941, pp. 45-56.


50. Cf. Journals, Nos. 513, 514 (VI A 17, 19). The most mature text was written in 1852 and bears the title Pistis-Episteme:

Pistis as used in good Greek (Plato, Aristotle, etc.) is taken to mean something very inferior to episteme; indeed it has reference to the probable. Thus pistis, the generation of belief, also according to the classics is a task of the rhetoricians. Now comes Christianity and elevates the concept of faith to a quite different meaning: faith, understood with reference to the paradox (therefore to the improbable) and in turn meaning the highest certainty (cf. the definition of faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews: Hebr. 11:1), the consciousness of eternity, the most passionate certainty which compels a man to sacrifice everything, even life, for his faith. But what happens? In time Christianity slows down and inevitably old paganism comes back. And now Christianity is obscured by saying that science (episteme) is higher than faith (pistis) while the concept of Christian Faith is located in a sphere of its own, with a quality absolutely higher than the whole classical dualism of pistis-episteme. No, in Christianity the highest thing is faith. Thus, the paradoxical character of Christianity, that of turning the merely human situation upside down even in this case, is quite logically recognized. For, humanly speaking, as it was believed also by paganism, episteme is higher than pistis. For it pleased God to turn to foolishness the wisdom of this world (I Cor. 1:20), to turn the situation upside down (here also there is the possibility of offense) and to make of faith the highest thing. But the misunderstanding may be explained in the simplest way, as I have been saying again and again: Christianity exists no longer, it is just idle talk; it is not even paganism because it dresses itself up as Christianity. [X4 A 635]

51. The starting point of this formula is suggested by Hamann to

Kierkegaard, who writes: "Hamann rightly says: 'As "Law" destroys "Grace" so too "understanding" destroys "faith." ' This is also my thesis.
But in Hamann it is nothing but an aphorism, while, through a continuous struggle, I have penetrated and freed it from traces of philosophy and culture so as to be able to posit the thesis: understand that it is not 'possible' to understand, or (the ethical and pious aspect) that man 'must' not understand faith" (X2 A 225).


53. X2 A 519. This last text concludes the direct demonstration of my thesis. Kant's dissertation here mentioned is Was ist Aufklarung? (1784). For the passages to which Kierkegaard is referring see Kants Vermischte Schriften, 2nd ed., K. Vorlaender, Phil. Bibl. Bd. 46B, Leipzig, 1921, p. 137. The "lord" of whom Kant is here speaking is not God but Frederick the Great, who is quoted later in capital letters (p. 141). Among the rare defenders of the positive value of Kierkegaard's theology is to be mentioned Ed. Geismar (S.K., Biografia e attivita letter aria, Copenhagen, 1927, III, 67 ff.) who strongly stresses Mohler's influence (Athanasius) and through him that of St. Hilarius of Poitiers. It is also necessary to mention the American Kierkegaardian David F. Swenson, strong defender of Kierkegaard's Christianity (D. F. Swenson, Something About Kierkegaard, 1st ed., Minneapolis, 1945, p. 135 ff.). Finally, A. B. Drachmann, one of the editors of Kierkegaard's collected works, has expressed himself in the same way in a series of short but profound essays dedicated to Kierkegaard's thought: "It is necessary to keep together these two moments: freedom and authority, equality and difference, individualism and socialism, reason and paradox" (A. B. Drachmann, "Hedenskab/og Kristendom hos S. K." in Udvalgte Afhandlinger, Copenhagen, 1911, p. 134 ff.). In his last (posthumous) essay on Kierkegaard Th. Haecker arrives at the same conclusion (Der Buckel Kierkegaards, Zurich: Thomas Verlag, 1947, p. 52 ff.).

54. IV C 23. The texts quoted above clearly show, unless we are mistaken, that with a very strong theological sense (even better than some Catholic theologians) Kierkegaard distinguishes the judgment of "credibility" from the judgment of "credentity" and from the act of faith. It is not necessary for me to give here his reasons, but undoubtedly the most important is Kierkegaard's inwardness and the penetration of his spirit into religious reality.


57. Cf. the introduction to the Italian translation of these two works (I Classici del Pensiero, Florence: Sansoni, 1953, especially p. xxi ff.).


60. The polemics between Barth and Brunner on the possibility, within Christianity, of a theologia naturdis is famous. For Barth, it is a sign of a return to paganism, and the Thomistic doctrine of analogy is a diabolical invention: "I believe the analogia entis to be an invention of the Antichrist" (Dogmatik, I/I, p. viii; cf. p. 253 et passim). On the other hand, Brunner defends the positive value of the natural knowledge of God, taking a position closer to traditional theology (cf. Der Mensch im Widerspruch, 3rd. ed., Zurich, 1941, where all the appendices are concerned with this problem: 1. "The likeness of God in the Bible and in the Church," p. 219 ff.; 2. "On the Dialectic of the Law," p. 532 ff.; 3. "On the Problem of Natural Theology and the Point of Contact," p. 541 ff.). It seems that in the first volume of his Dogmatik, Zurich, Zwingli Verlag, 1947, Brunner has turned to the thesis of his adversary. On this matter, cf. La vie protestante, Geneva, Oct. 3, 1947; C. R. de Maurice Neeser finds the present negativism of the author exaggerated.

61. Lectura super Matthaeum, c. XVI, ed. Parm. X, 154 b. And also: Nullus philosophorum ante adventum Christi cum toto conatu suo potuit tantum scire de Deo de necessariis ad vitam aeternam quantum post adventum Christi scit una vetula per fidem (In Symbol. Apost. expositio, ed. Parm. XVI, 135). St. Thomas' entire comment on the first article of the Symbol should be quoted.

62. Cf. Ueber die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie, written in 1873 (1st ed.) under the direct influence of his friend Nietzsche, to whom Overbeck had read the manuscript (2nd ed., Leipzig: Naumann, 1903). The title alone sufficiently shows the limits of the position of the author, and also that of the source of his inspiration, Nietzsche. In later years, Overbeck fell into a more and more radical scepticism (see Franz Overbeck, Selbst-bekenntnisse, Basel, 1941). The editor of these confessions, Eb. Vischer, has given a precise and well documented description of this negative evolution (see especially §J 1 and 3 of the Introduction). Theologians are defined by Overbeck as "half enemies of their own faith, whom the Church keeps always hidden in her bosom" (note of Dec. 12, 1900, p. 159). The difference between this position and Kierkegaard's, from the methodological point of view, is that Kierkegaard's is intrinsically dialectical, and therefore has a moment of real positivity, which is lacking in Overbeck's. Hence, there is in Kierkegaard the possibility of a positive solution of the relation between faith and reason, which from the beginning is precluded by Overbeck.
63. "Augustine has done incalculable harm. For in the end it is on
him that the whole Christian doctrine rests and it was he who altered
the concept of faith." The text goes on to accuse St. Augustine of putting
science above faith. (Against Clement of Alexandria cf. X4 A no.) But
the accusation against St. Augustine is already partly revoked in the text
quoted above (XI A 436) in which Kierkegaard praises St. Augustine for
having founded faith on authority. (Cf. on this subject: C. Fabro: "S.
Agostino e l'Esistenzialismo," S. Agostino e le grandi correnti della filo-
sofia contemporanea, Tolentino, 1956, p. 156 ff.)

64. On the ambiguity of Kierkegaard's dialectic, I have given some
information in the Introduction to the Italian translation of the Journals.
In his great historical work: Die protestantische Theologie in 19. Jahr-
hundert, Ihre Vorgeschichte und Ihre Geschichte, Evangelischer Verlag,
1947, Karl Barth does not even mention Kierkegaard among the Prot-
estant theologians of the nineteenth century, while atheists like Strauss
and Feuerbach are the object of one monograph each, out of a total of
twenty-nine.
Søren Kierkegaard is not only admired; he is also criticized—and not least in ecclesiastical circles. He is accused of not having understood the importance of the Christian message of charity. It is maintained in particular that he wrongly described Christianity as a kind of ascetically conceived imitatio piety, that he made men believe that this alone is real Christianity and is therefore responsible for the fact that many honest people have rejected Christianity as being inhuman. In the same way, it is asserted that he caused the Christian faith to be unacceptable to many by making it appear almost absurd, a sacrificium intellectus which no sane and honest thinker can perform, at least not permanently.

It is not our purpose here to examine how far it is possible to prove historically that from a Christian point of view Kierkegaard's influence was negative, nor is it our purpose to examine whether all the accusations indicated here are in fact legitimate. Our task is limited to examining the last criticism mentioned above: Does Kierkegaard demand a sacrificium intellectus when he speaks of believing by virtue of the absurd or when he repeatedly states that Christianity is a paradox?

The matter had already been discussed in Kierkegaard's lifetime, first of all in Rasmus Nielsen's small Undersøgende Anmeldelse (1849), a critical examination of Kierkegaard's Johannes Climacus and of Martensen's newly published Dogmatics; then in P. M. Stilling's attack on Martensen's attempt to "reconcile" faith and knowledge (Stilling's work appeared in December 1849, but the title page bore the date 1850); and not least in the book by the Icelander, Magnus Eiriksson, attacking Kierkegaard's doctrine of faith as a paradox or as existing by virtue of the absurd, which was published in March, 1850, under the pseudonym Theophilus Nicolaus. The views then held in ecclesiastical circles, which repudiated Kierkegaard's teaching on this point, can be found, for example, in I. P. Bang's Troen og Livet, I, p. 100 ff. (1917). Here the concept of the paradox is described as a piece of "intellectualism" which has become distorted and "hysterical" since it would make of Christianity the acceptance of a dogma "directly designed to cause the human reason to rebel." This interpretation has a particular resemblance to one issued as early as 1868 from a non-Christian quarter by Hans Brøchner in his Problemet om Tro og Widen.

An excellent example of present-day treatment of this question is provided by Torsten Bohlin in his able book published in 1944 under the title Kierkegaards tro och andra Kierkegaardstudier in the section "The Christ-Paradox," which for the most part is a reply to the interpretations given by E. Hirsch and Valter Lindstrom.

Because Bohlin was so distinguished a Kierkegaard scholar, part of the following examination will take the form of a criticism of his interpretation.

A good starting point for a closer acTNina4iojLj3f_KieTkgaard's concept of "the paradox" and "the absurd" is his reaction to the book by Theophilus Nicolaus. This starting point appears to...
me to be particularly suitable because the pronouncements made by Kierkegaard in reaction to that book date from the year 1850, a time when he could look back with comparative serenity upon his then almost completed achievement.

His immediate reaction was expressed in two small entries in his Journals (X2 A 594 and 601). Kierkegaard appears to have realized at once who was behind the pseudonym (cf. X6 B 68, p. 74), and he obviously entertained little respect for Magnus Eiriksson. In his opinion, the pseudonymous work represents "a bungling stupidity" in the presence of "an artistic achievement." The book is finally brushed aside with the remark that its author has failed to recognize the fact that Kierkegaard is not identical with his pseudonyms and that these themselves declare that they have no faith. It is, however, interesting that Kierkegaard should state so plainly (X2 A 594) that "Johannes de silentio" (the author of Fear and Trembling) as a "real thinker" has carried the matter "to extremes."

Kierkegaard is therefore very well aware of this himself.

Of much greater importance are fragments of an unpublished article now to be found in X6 B 68-82. It will be noticed that Kierkegaard here-apparently in contrast to the Journal entries-acknowledges as his own the attitude of his pseudonyms; he declares that he will gladly allow another pseudonym, Anti-Climacus, who "claims to have faith," "to repeat what in fact the other pseudonyms have said" (X6 B 82). He does, however, maintain here also that Johannes de silentio expresses a non-Christian point of view as a "third party" and therefore describes the believer as the one who believes "by virtue of the absurd." "A third party is bound to judge in this way as he is not filled with the passion of faith" (X6 B 79).

The position of the believer is different. For him "neither faith nor the object of faith is in any way absurd." They only become so when doubts begin to arise (X6 B 68). True faith, on the other hand, "breathes healthily and blissfully in the absurd" (X6 B 79).

It is further maintained that "the absurd as such is not the absurd in the ordinary sense of the word." Kierkegaard in fact asserts that the concept of "the absurd" is the "negative criterion of that which is higher than human reason and human knowledge." The task of reason is to demonstrate that such is the case- "and then to leave it to each individual to decide whether he will believe it or not" (X6 B 80). In view of this, one should assume that for Kierkegaard the "paradox" is an expression for what is supra rationem rather than for what is contra rationem.

If one has reached this stage successfully, it will be seen that in order to illustrate the nature of faith, its "healthy and blissful" breathing, Kierkegaard uses the image of the love which blinds. If one is unwilling to become "totally blind," it means that one is unwilling to surrender oneself entirely to the power of true love, and so real blessedness cannot be won. Consequently, it is stated that "in the category of the absurd," "when rightly understood," "there is nothing forbidding." "No, it is characterized by courage and enthusiasm" (X6 B 79). Bohlin emphasizes this and comments: "One can briefly say that what Kierkegaard seeks to do is to contrast as sharply as possible a living religious faith with every kind of rational knowledge." According to Bohlin, faith for Kierkegaard is "a sphere of its own," for, like blind love, it is exclusively passion, which is not concerned with theoretically unresolved contradictions (op. cit, p. 86 £.).

Thus an important aspect of our problem is brought to light:

Does faith conflict with reason? And if so, does reason have no part to play in the passion of faith? Is all understanding rejected in favor of a "blind faith"? Is the role of the understanding concluded after it has demonstrated that faith defies reason?

Closely connected with this is the second principal question requiring elucidation: Is the offense discussed in the works of Climacus an offense in relation to a "doctrine" which is in
conflict With the understanding or reason? That is, is the doctrine of "the Deity in time" a completely irrational combination of the eternal-divine and the temporal-human? Is it the Christology of Chalcedon which is presented in its paradoxical entirety for the "blind" acceptance of the believing passion? Are Bohlin and, with him, many others right when they maintain, as he does (p. 90), that Kierkegaard had "a definite conception of Christ's person, a conception of a metaphysical being full of contradictions"? Is it also true, as Bohlin maintains in opposition to Hirsch, that thought and piety are not inseparably fused in the works of Kierkegaard? (p. 91).

Theophilus Nicolaus had tried to show that the conception of "the absurd" held by Johannes de silentio could not be reconciled with Climacus' doctrine of the "paradox." Kierkegaard replied that this was a fundamental misunderstanding. The two descriptions of faith are, on the contrary, in harmony, but there is one difference between them. In Fear and Trembling we encounter "the purely personal determination of existential faith" ("merely the formula of the passion of faith," "to believe by virtue of the absurd").

In the Postscript, on the other hand, it is a question of "faith in relation to a doctrine" (X6 B 80). It is not surprising that Bohlin (p. 88) regards this statement as direct proof supplied by Kierkegaard himself that his interpretation is correct, that it is a question, therefore, of a kind of "anti-intellectualistic intellectualism."

It is certainly very easy to select quotations from the works of Climacus which appear to substantiate this assertion. In one place Kierkegaard states that: "The absurd is—that the eternal truth has come into being in time, that God has come into being, has been born, has grown up, and so forth, precisely like any other individual human being, quite indistinguishable from other individuals," 2 or "that which in accordance with its nature is eternal comes into existence in time, is born, grows up, and dies—this is a breach with all thinking." 3 One can continue, as Bohlin does, by quoting AntiClimacus. In Training in Christianity it is stated that for a Christian the decisive fact is that a single human being (not mankind as such) is God, and Kierkegaard continues: "There is neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor in the depths, nor in the aberrations of the most fantastic thinking, the possibility of a (humanly speaking) more insane combination." 4 Or one can show how, in the same work, stress is placed on the fact that Christ, this particular person, at the Last Supper "qualifies himself in such a superhumanly spiritual way that he speaks of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, with a suggestion as fantastical as possible of the divine property of omnipresence." 5 Similarly it is stated in The Book on Adler that "the paradox that God once came into existence in time is the Christian faith." 6

This might be thought proof that Kierkegaard really finds the shock to the understanding to be caused by a definite paradoxical doctrine, namely, "the Athanasian two-nature doctrine" as Bohlin calls it (p. 173) and as N. Teisen had maintained as early as 1903.

However, it will at once be noticed that Kierkegaard himself expressly and emphatically protested against this interpretation. AntiClimacus states that "Christianity is not a doctrine. All talk about offense in relation to Christianity as a doctrine is a misunderstanding, it is a device to mitigate the shock of the offense at the scandal—s, for example, when one speaks of the offense of the doctrine of the God-MAN and the doctrine of the Atonement. No, the offense is related either to Christ or to the fact of being oneself a Christian." 7

Yet according to Bohlin, this passage, which Hirsch had already quoted (Kierkegaardstudien, p. 930), cannot really alter the fact that Kierkegaard makes faith an assertion of the metaphysically conceived Christ-Paradox. He admits that Kierkegaard himself obviously does not wish this to be the case but does in fact make it so.

The question now arises as to whether this is true.
Bohlin ought at any rate to have noticed that in the passage just quoted Kierkegaard not only protests against the idea of the offense being related to the "doctrine" of the God-Man but in the same breath mentions the misconception which finds the offense related to the "doctrine" of the Atonement. It is true that Bohlin has quoted (p. 80) a passage (IV A 112, i.e., a note from 1843) in which Kierkegaard says that "the paradox of the religious" arises in the Atonement, and that he likewise refers to a remark in the Postscript (p. 201 [VII, 210]) on "the paradox of the forgiveness of sins." He does not, however, appear to have seen how important and fundamental this is. Towards the end of the Postscript it is stated that "the paradox is that Christ came into the world in order to suffer." 8 This is of such importance to Kierkegaard that it is repeated almost word for word in a Journal entry from 1847 (VIII A 273). Similarly, in The Book on Adler (VIP B 235, p.66) it is stated that "the paradox is precisely that God revealed himself in suffering." Other passages of a similar nature could be mentioned.

In his book Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi (1952) Søren Holm has pushed to extremes the conception which was first evolved by Bohlin. He maintains, it is true, that there is an essential distinction between the views of Climacus and Anti-Climacus on this question. Anti-Climacus recognizes a "sacred history"; he can write a Vita Jesu. Johannes Climacus, on the other hand, conceives the paradox as something in the nature of a point and therefore devoid of content. Holm says that "the absolute or God in time has for him merely the nature of a point, it is the meeting of eternity and history at a single point. For him the paradox is, so to speak, the mathematically unextended point at which the line of eternity from above intersects the horizontal line of time and relativity, and this point indicates the 'absolute event,' the cause of which is not to be found in the context of immanence" (p. 113).

Furthermore, he states (p. 115) that in the Climacus works the paradox is "a single point outside the normal historical line of events." Holm is even so bold as to maintain (p. 115) that "it is a question of something which cannot belong to the real world of history" any more than a point can have extension.

This last assertion, together with comments upon the views held by Anti-Climacus, leads Holm to suggest the possibility that Kierkegaard in his understanding of the Incarnation was a fictionalist more than anything else. One will find no parallel to this in Bohlin.

The latter naturally knows Kierkegaard too well to state categorically that the Climacus works contain a rigid conception of the paradox as something in the nature of a point. He is content to say more cautiously: "The God-Man-who is at once the point and the absolute-is a specific expression for the abstract metaphysical element which constitutes one aspect, and a very important aspect, of Kierkegaard's concept of the paradox" (p. 85). He maintains also that "when Christ as a historical individual is described in the light of the paradox, his image becomes altogether pale and timeless." As proof of this Bohlin also mentions several Journal entries from 1849-1850 (that is-contra Holm-from the period after Anti-Climacus). The first passage mentioned (X2 A 643) contains an assertion by Kierkegaard that the God-Man "must become an extremely abstract human being" if he is to exist for each individual human being. Kierkegaard continues: "This is what he, in fact, is: he is literally nothing." Kierkegaard does not, however, mean by this that Christ had to become a "pale and timeless figure," as Bohlin maintains, but that he had to appear as a perfectly ordinary being who did not through the nature of H.i's appearance resemble one group of beings more than another. Knud Hansen, who twice quotes this entry in the Journal (Søren Kierkegaard, I>1954, p. 268 f. and p. 282), also took this to be the meaning of the passage; that he misinterpreted in another sense Kierkegaard's conception of the God-Man is a matter which will be discussed later.

In the other passage which Bohlin quotes (X1 A 49 and 435), it is stated that Christ "stands
in the relationship of a tangent to the world." Thus it is clearly affirmed that "the absolute" is "the point" (det Punktuelle). This passage, however, cannot by any means be utilized in the manner of Bohlin. Kierkegaard illustrates his meaning with a reference to Jesus' saying that he had nowhere to lay his head. His meaning is that Christ was and remained a guest, a stranger, a foreigner on earth, a conception which could, of course, be interpreted as indicating a lack of interest in Jesus' earthly life, but which in no way goes beyond the meaning of a statement by Jesus as recorded in Matthew 17:17.

The significance which, as we have seen, Kierkegaard attaches precisely in the Postscript to Jesus' suffering and Atonement is in itself sufficient counterproof of the conception that the cause of the offense for Kierkegaard, at least in the Climacus works, must be the orthodox dogma of the Incarnation in its metaphysical harshness. If Christianity is to be called a doctrine, which Johannes Climacus prefers to avoid, it could be called a doctrine of the Atonement as well as a doctrine of the Incarnation.9 Moreover, Hirsch has already demonstrated in a conclusive manner (p. 703 ff.), as far as I can see, the untenableness of this conception for which Bohlin and in particular Holm made themselves the spokesmen. To repeat his arguments would be superfluous. Kierkegaard, it is true, maintains that the historical details of Jesus' life are not nearly so important as the details concerning the life of Socrates.10

But this should be the natural point of view of those whose conception of Christ is in line with Pauline and Reformation teaching. This comparative lack of interest in the historical truth of all the details handed down about the life of Jesus does not, of course, prevent Kierkegaard from saying that "the order" in which one arrives at faith is as follows: "In the first place, each man must have some knowledge about Christ," and then he must decide to "turn to Christ in prayer." If, on the contrary, one believes that an image of Christ which is as accurate as possible is of prime importance, then Christ is in fact being treated "as if he were a purely historical person who lived eighteen hundred years ago" (VIII A 565). Or, as it is stated in an entry from 1846: "The historicity of the redemption must be certain in the same sense as any other historical thing, but not more so, for otherwise the different spheres are confused." It is also stated (VHP B 89, p. 189 f.) that, while Christian communication "has an element of knowledge inherent in it as its basis," it cannot be classed primarily "under the communication of knowledge but under the communication of enabling power," and therefore "the knowledge which is transmitted in this communication is something preliminary."

It is, however, of decisive importance for an understanding of the whole problem to realize that when Kierkegaard, particularly in the Climacus works, gives special attention to the Incarnation of the God-Man as if this were of the greatest importance, it is not due to a particular predilection for an "Athenasian two-nature doctrine" and the "shock" this apparently gives the understanding. If one has such an impression, then the whole purpose of these works has been misunderstood. What is most important for Climacus is the problem raised by Lessing of eternal salvation being dependent upon something historical, of eternity being encountered in a decisive way in a fact which, since it is historical, must appear relative, fortuitous, and merely "temporal." It should be obvious-at any rate to all present-day theologians-that by a stroke of genius Kierkegaard has thus hit upon the central problem in his attack not only upon Socrates and Plato and upon Hegel but upon all nonChristian doctrines of salvation either of a philosophic or of a purely religious nature. Notice also how Kierkegaard himself, in his draft of the Philosophical Fragments (V B 1, 2) says: "This is and remains the principal problem with regard to the relationship between Christianity and philosophy. Lessing alone has indicated it. But Lessing also knew what ought to be discussed better than Tom, Dick and Harry among modern philosophers." With this we might compare the following passage from the Postscript:
That an eternal blessedness is decided in time through the relationship to something historical was the content of my experiment [i.e., the Philosophical Fragments] and what I now call Christianity. ... To avoid distraction again, I do not wish to bring forward any other Christian principles; they are all contained in this one, and may be consistently derived from it, just as this determination also offers the sharpest contrast with paganism.12

In this connection one thinks of the attack which Emil Brunner makes in The Mediator on all "idealisms" or that which Rudolf Otto in Indiens Gnadenreligion und das Christentum and H. Kraemer in The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World make upon those non-Christian religions which most closely resemble Christianity. All of these are, in fact, in line with and were influenced by the attack here launched by Kierkegaard.13

Once it is understood that "Lessing's problem" and not the one decided at Chalcedon is the central problem for Kierkegaard, light will be shed on a relationship which certain scholars have, in my opinion, misconstrued or at any rate partially misinterpreted. It is well known that, at the time when he was preoccupied with the ideas which eventually took shape in Philosophical Fragments, Kierkegaard often asked himself whether Christ's life realized to the full the absolute paradox. In an early entry (IV C 84, probably from 1842-1843), it is stated that the God-Man is "the final paradox" and that this paradox "is to be developed from the idea alone while due consideration is given to Christ's appearance in order to see whether this is sufficiently paradoxical." In an entry from 1843 (IV A 103) it is asserted that "the absolute paradox would be that the Son of God became man, came to the world, lived in it in such a way that none could discern his true nature, became in the strictest sense an individual human being who had a livelihood, who married, etc." An echo of this "radical attitude" remains in the final version of the work. It is, however, quite obvious that this is not taken seriously but is only mentioned in a kind of logical mock contest as "the self-irony of the Reason." 14 Bohn is perhaps justified in saying that in an entry from 1843 (IV A 62), Kierkegaard dwells somewhat "uneasily" upon the question as to whether "the highest ethical paradox" would not have been that Christ had lived entirely within the framework of normal human life. It is, however, significant that Kierkegaard never for a moment seriously considers depicting Christ's life and deeds in a way different from that of the Gospels. Knud Hansen is therefore entirely wrong when he repeats continually (see, for example, p. 267) that for Kierkegaard "passion" is the highest authority. If this had been true, then the description of the God-Man's paradoxical existence would have been completely different. No, the highest authority for Kierkegaard is quite simply the teaching of the Bible on these matters, interpreted fundamentally according to the ecclesiastical theology he had learned from his father and not least from the sermons of Mynster. It is therefore senseless to ask (as Knud Hansen does, p. 276) whether Kierkegaard takes as his starting point the paradox and from it proceeds to define faith as passion, or whether he takes passion as his starting point and then "from among Christian dogmas selects the paradox as the one most capable of maintaining high intellectual tension." Neither contention is correct. Whoever fails to see this has not understood Kierkegaard's meaning on this essential point and therefore has no notion of his significance in theology.15

Another extremely important point can be expressed in a slightly different way: in Philosophical Fragments it is asserted that the Incarnation "is a folly to the understanding and an offense to the human heart." 16 Here the offense caused by the paradox is not seen in relation to the mind but to the heart. Kierkegaard (Climacus) does not elaborate this further. That this remark should occur in this particular work is astonishing and therefore worthy of attention. It indicates, undoubtedly, Kierkegaard's awareness of the fact that the Incarnation, as he understood it, does cause "offense" as it wounds human self-confidence. It offends man by revealing that he "is in untruth" owing to his very nature. Basically, it is not the understanding which is
compromised; the offense goes deeper, it cuts to the heart.17

To obtain a more accurate understanding of Kierkegaard's concept of the paradox, it is, of course, necessary to consider statements he made on other "paradoxical" doctrines as well as on the Incarnation. It is interesting that the man whose view of Christianity was, in spite of everything, somewhat influenced by the spirit of the Enlightenment (see, for example, his joy over the Evangelical Christian Hymnal), nevertheless can say that it is no easier to understand or grasp Providence than it is to understand the Redemption 18-"both can only be believed." Cf. Journals, No. 602 (VII1 A 130). In one place it is said that "the essential paradox is precisely the protest against immanence," 19 and later in this connection (particularly p. 138) that the apostle, in contrast to the religious genius, "has paradoxically something new to contribute"; his message is not, like that of the genius, "an anticipation of what may eventually be developed in the race," but "the qualification 'apostle' lies within the transcendental" [cf. On Authority and Revelation, p. 112 (VIP B 145), where it is affirmed that the "qualification 'an apostle' belongs in the sphere of transcendence, the paradoxical religious sphere"]). It is on similar lines that Kant's theory of radical evil is criticized: "He does not make it clear that the inexplicable, the paradox, is a category of its own." 20 With this we should compare the Journals No. 1061 (X2 A 481) where it is emphasized that, however paradoxical it may seem, original sin (Arvesynd) is guilt, which is the same as saying that that which, according to its definition, is ethical (guilt) can be inherited (cf. also X2 A 483) •

Very illuminating are a couple of entries from 1851 (X3 A 702 and X4 A 422) in which it is asserted that "the human understanding of the divine" demands that, if the Bible is really the holy scripture, "there must be agreement in every least detail." The human way of reasoning requires "direct recognizability."

By quoting these last mentioned passages we have disclosed a most important aspect of Kierkegaard's conception of our problem.

The paradox is frequently an expression for what Luther often meant by the theologia crucis (see in particular Walther von Loewenich's Luther's theologia crucis (1929). Time and again one is reminded of this expression and struck by the similarity of interpretation given on this point by these two Christian preachers, otherwise dissimilar in so many respects. This is perhaps most noticeable in a footnote in the Postscript where it is stated that "revelation is signalized by mystery, happiness by suffering, the certainty of faith by uncertainty, the ease of the paradoxical religious life by its difficulty, the truth by absurdity".21 a bit later we read that if uncertainty is taken from the believer, the result will be "an aesthetic coxcomb, a devil of a fellow, who wishes, speaking loosely, to fraternize with God, but who, speaking precisely, stands in no relationship to God whatever." 22 It is, in fact, not only in Kierkegaard's discussion of the paradox that the theologia crucis idea often occupies a central position; the same idea is expressed in all that he says about Christ's incognito, the lowliness of the God-Man, and God's condescending to suffer. This is particularly the case in Training in Christianity, where so much is said about "the offense."

It should now be clear that Hirsch was justified in refuting the accusation of intellectualism leveled against Kierkegaard by indicating the correspondence between Kierkegaard and the Johannine conception of truth (p. 698). It is in fact incorrect to maintain, as Bohlin does (p. 185), that the Johannine conception of truth is isolated in Kierkegaard's thinking from "the way" and "the life."

Ragnar Bring is right when he states that in the case of Kierkegaard it is not really possible "to distinguish between an empirical and a paradoxical line of thought." 23

We are now in a position to understand whether Kierkegaard regards the paradox as
conflicting with reason in the strictest sense of the word or as above reason, and if so in what way. What, in fact, does Kierkegaard mean by speaking of "the crucifixion of the understanding" (X2 A 349)?

In my opinion, Bohlin is quite mistaken in saying (p. 88) that with Kierkegaard the paradox sometimes (e.g., Journals, No. 1033 [X2 A 354]) becomes "identical with irrational/practical experience, which cannot be explained by concepts and which is only acquired through faith." As far as I am aware, no passage requires such an interpretation. On the contrary, I would venture to affirm that it is characteristic of Kierkegaard to say, as he does in an entry from 1849 (X1 A 427), that "it is not difficult for them to understand Christianity, but it is difficult for them to understand how much self-discipline and self-denial Christianity demands.' Similarly, he says time and again in the Postscript that "Christianity as a thought-project is not difficult to understand; the difficulty, the paradox, is that it is real." 24 When he states repeatedly (cf., e.g., X1 A 561, 609 and 616) that the important thing is "to understand that faith cannot be understood," this has nothing to do with "irrational practical experience" as opposed to clear thinking. It is merely the way in which the honest thinker expresses his recognition of the fact that the content of religious doctrines cannot be proved necessary, in the manner of a Hegel or a Martensen, from one or another given premise, and that, for this reason, there cannot be a Christian dogmatic system. It is not possible, for example, to deduce from one or another recognized fact the necessity of the Incarnation. This does not mean that we are faced with irrational practical experience; we are faced, rather, with a message, something which comes from outside, a revealed proclamation, the logical necessity of which can never be understood by us even though, as Kierkegaard remarks half ironically (Postscript, p. 190 [VII, 198]), it may be understood by God himself. Compare the entry in the Journals, No. 1061 (X2 A 481), where it is plainly stated that "the paradox in Christian truth" is always associated with the fact that "it is the truth as it is for God." This is the meaning behind the scornful words flung at Martensen (1850) describing him as deserving to be "flunked," since he demands,"with complete aplomb in manner of expression, countenance and voice," "that the paradox should be explained to him in straightforward terms" (X6 B 143). Reason is not killed; "reasons can be given to explain why no reasons can be given" (X4 A 356). Kierkegaard is therefore angered by statements to the effect that he, in contrast to Martensen, will not think about faith (X2 A 596).

Bohlin quotes the passage previously mentioned (X6 B 79, p.85 ff.) in which Kierkegaard compares faith with the love which blinds, and on this he bases his interpretation of Kierkegaard's statement that true faith "breathes healthily and blissfully in the absurd." He says: "Because faith is a sphere of its own, because- like blind love-it is exclusively passion, which above all else can appreciate the spiritual content of the paradox, faith does not itself take offense at the absurdity inherent in its object." This interpretation is not, however, valid. Kierkegaard asserts plainly and objectively that there is "no self-contradiction" in the idea that "Christ was God in the guise of a servant" (X2 A 529, p. 383).

This completely unambiguous statement suffices to show how entirely mistaken it is for Bohlin (p. 85), and many others with him, to maintain that the paradox represents "a theoretically contradictory conception."

In actual fact, however, this is made clear in the numerous pronouncements delivered by Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms to prevent the misunderstanding that "the absurd" as the object of faith is the same as "the absurd in the vulgar sense of the word" (X6 B 80). In as early a work as the Philosophical Fragments it is expressly stated that the mind can examine the fact of the Incarnation ("the Deity in time") and "the individual's particular relationship to the Deity." 25 Something quite different must be said in the case of the meaningless, for that is not only "an
absurdity," like the genuine paradox, but also "contains a self-contradiction." The latter (in this connection it is the idea that a man could generate faith in another man and so become "God" for him) is pure "twaddle" and therefore lies on an entirely different plane from the paradox of faith. Similarly, it is asserted in the Postscript that there is something which must be described as "nonsense," and no man can believe this "against the understanding, for precisely the understanding will discern that it is nonsense and will prevent him from believing it; but he makes so much use of the understanding that he becomes aware of the incomprehensible and then he holds to this, believing against the understanding." 2«

Climacus is therefore talking very loosely when he says that the paradox wills "the downfall of reason" or that "the paradoxical passion of reason," "without rightly understanding itself," "is bent upon its own downfall" or that "reason yielded itself" or "sets itself aside." OT If this were taken in the radical sense insisted upon by some scholars, it would be impossible to distinguish between the meaningful paradox of faith and that which is nonsensical or absurd in the vulgar sense of the word.

In this connection a Journal entry from 1850 (X2 A 354) is very instructive. Here it will be noticed that Kierkegaard uses the expressions "the absurd" and "the improbable" interchangeably. He states that: it is superficial to suppose that the absurd is not a concept, that by it can be meant all kinds of absurdities.... The absurd, the paradox, is so composed that reason by itself can in no way turn it into nonsense and show it to be nonsense; no, it is a sign, an enigma, a composite enigma, about which reason is forced to say: I cannot solve this, it cannot be understood, but this does not mean at all that it is nonsense. But of course if faith is discarded and this whole sphere ignored, reason will become presumptuous and will perhaps conclude: ergo, the paradox is nonsense.28

Further on: "Reason is obliged to hold faith in honor as reason probes/ into the negative definitions of the paradox," that is, as it comprehends the fundamental incomprehensibility of the paradox.

The object of Kierkegaard's criticism is clearly indicated by the following words: "Pure reason is fantastic, and the boundless and fantastic belongs to a realm where there are no negative concepts, where everything can be grasped, like the witch who ended by eating her own stomach" (X2 A 354). Obviously, it is the appropriation and interpretation by "speculative philosophy" of the process of redemption which is here the object of attack.

There also exists an entry in the Journal from 1842-1843 (IV C 29), in which Kierkegaard supports Leibnitz's contention that faith is not in conflict with reason but above reason. Bohlin (p. 81 and p. 168) refers to this passage but asserts that the paradox here does "not yet" mean the antirational but the "discontinuous," that which has not arisen in the heart of any man.29 It is, however, a fact that Kierkegaard, as we have already mentioned, was still able to say the same thing in 1850 (X6 B 80), and in a Journal entry from the same year (X2 A 354), he applauds a statement by Hugh of St. Victor in which the latter says that the object of faith is "a thing which is above reason." It is precisely in commenting on this that Kierkegaard says that faith is related to "the improbable" (cf. above).

This, of course, does not mean that Kierkegaard is in complete agreement with Leibnitz. He is certainly not a representative of "rational" supranaturalism. He felt it his duty to establish faith as the improbable, something which the understanding can never find plausible and which is therefore, in this sense, absurd or paradoxical. Again and again he emphasizes that God could not have arranged it otherwise if he wished to win man's faith rather than his rational understanding. He finds, indeed, great satisfaction in stressing the paradoxical, the improbable, the absurd in faith in order to show that by following Christianity man reaches the highest state of tension
through passion, subjectivity, and insecurity, the passion of existence and choice. As demonstrated, for example by K. E. Løgstrup, Kierkegaard can assert that no attitude to life is so well adapted as is Christianity to man's true nature, which is a constant process of becoming, existence, subjectivity, and risk.80

In the Postscript he says:

Suppose . . . that subjectivity is the truth, and that subjectivity is an existing subjectivity, then, if I may so express myself, Christianity fits perfectly into the picture. Subjectivity culminates in passion, Christianity is the paradox, paradox and passion are a mutual fit, and the paradox is altogether suited to one whose situation is to be in the extremity of existence.31

And again: "Existence in what has been understood cannot be directly communicated to any existing spirit, not even by God, much less by a human being." 82 In this sense one can agree with Løgstrup that "the necessity for the paradox can therefore be explained" (p. 109). The essence of man's being is for Kierkegaard not ratio but "subjectivity," "the real subject is not the cognitive K . . but the ethically existing subject." 33 Even if the ratio is extremely dissatisfied with the paradox, the latter nevertheless fits man, an existing being, as well as a glove fits the hand. In this sense it is possible to maintain that the works of Climacus provide a rational apologetic for Christianity (a fact of which Kierkegaard himself may not have been fully aware), but naturally this "apologetic" lies on a completely different plane from a "rational" supranaturalism a la Leibnitz or Locke or their disciples.

We have examined Kierkegaard's conviction that the thoughtcontent of Christianity is not nonsense but is clear and understandable within the sphere of faith. But, as stated in X6 B 79, the sphere of faith is a "sphere of its own." In this sphere "the absurd is not the absurd-faith transforms it." It is therefore interesting that Kierkegaard should state in the Postscript that whatever is not absolutely the believer's own thought "never can become his own thought (in a direct sense)." 34

With this the main point may now be regarded as established.

For Kierkegaard, as for Climacus, Christianity is-naturally-a message coming from outside which brings salvation. Since it comes from outside, this message does not originate in the heart of any man. It is, moreover, the opposite of what ratio would expect and therefore of what the pagan world imagined it to be. Ratio wishes, as far as possible, for a theologia gloriae (something directly recognizable for what it is), but God reveals himself in humiliation.

Ratio is particularly offended by the assertion that something eternal should be associated with and depend on something historical, that eternal life has come into existence in history and therefore encounters the individual in a historical situation where he hears a "dated" message. All this is incomprehensible to man, so that he, by an exercise of his understanding, can never make such ideas his own. These are and remain ideas which are "foreign to the ego." He can easily contemplate them but never in such a way that he can conclude that the message is necessary or probable or even plausible. He is continually baffled by it. His mind and particularly his heart, his self-esteem, are offended by it, but this is precisely what prevents him from mastering eternity and thereby his own existence in peaceful security. He must always venture beyond what he can master and control through knowledge. He must believe without being able to understand. He is continually "existing," but it is due to this very fact that he becomes acquainted with a form of existence which allows man's essential self to unfold to its fullest extent. If God had acted as the speculative thinkers imagine, life would have come to a standstill, it would have stagnated in aloof contemplation and comprehension. Theologia gloriae is theologia beatorum, but theologia cruris is and remains theologia viatorum.

Kierkegaard's views on these problems cannot be understood unless it is realized that in his
own way he wishes to say essentially the same thing said by Karl Barth, particularly in his early period, when the latter proclaimed that man never possesses faith or the Holy Spirit and never knows God. Faith, the Holy Spirit, and saving knowledge must always be given anew. We are continually striving to acquire the message or the Spirit or the strength of God or the new life, but finitum is not capax infiniti so as to make this process of acquisition possible. Faith always belongs to God, it is his gift which remains forever new. New every morning is the grace of God; it is never something which is our due or is inherent in us.

The difference between Barth and Kierkegaard is that Barth chooses to regard the matter "theologically" and therefore speaks of God's free grace and of our constant dependence upon it. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, chooses to speak from a "psychological" point of view and therefore dwells on man's "passion" and his need to venture far out where reason is beyond its depth and where everything must be risked—where nothing is guaranteed or even guarded by "probabilities."

Kierkegaard is fully aware that the believer can reflect on the thought-content of his faith. In this sense Christianity's teaching can perfectly well become "his own thought," but always only in the sphere of faith. These thoughts are even such that he can easily explain them to the uninitiated. According to Kierkegaard, they are in no way complicated. But the uninitiated will reject them as absurd, and as soon as the passion of faith is weakened (Barth would say, as soon as God's mercy ceases to support faith), the believer himself will also consider them absurd.

Kierkegaard does not give much consideration to whether these ideas within the sphere of faith are logically interrelated or not. When he assails the dogmatic "system," his attack is directed in particular against all attempts to make the Christian doctrine plausible or even straightforwardly rational. It is not immediately obvious to what extent he would also disassociate himself from the view that the believer, reposing "healthily and blissfully" in his faith, can perceive the inherent logical connections between the articles of his creed, the "dogmas." A closer examination of this special problem is beyond the scope of this study. Here we shall only refer, on the one hand, to his statements in, for example, the Postscript, p. 330 (VII, 357) to the effect that all Christian concepts can be deduced logically from the Christian answer to Lessing's problem. On the other hand, it is quite obviously his opinion (most clearly expressed in The Concept of Dread) that the fact of sin cannot be deduced from the Christian doctrine of Creation. Neither does he believe, of course, that the Incarnation and Atonement can be deduced from the reality of sin. But perhaps he would really maintain that from the Incarnation, correctly understood, the whole of Christian "dogmatics" can be derived.

All closer study of Kierkegaard, whether of his pseudonymous works or those written under his own name, will reveal how faithfully he adheres throughout to the "dogmatics" which was considered in his time to be comparatively orthodox. It is extremely seldom that he consciously differs from this, as is the case to some extent with his doctrine of original sin in The Concept of Dread, but even here it is characteristic that as soon as the problem is delivered over to dogmatics, the author becomes silent (p. 145 [IV, 473]). Only when the conflict with the Church approaches does he become aware that his attitude stands in some contrast to Luther's, and in the attack on the Church itself there are, as we know, a few utterances which contain some—but even then very restrained-criticisms of the Apostles themselves.

If Kierkegaard's essential doctrinal orthodoxy is not taken into account false interpretations will ensue, as in the work by Holm previously mentioned, not to speak of crude misconceptions such as those with which a man like Johannes Hohlenberg goes so far astray (see, for example, Den ensommes vej, 1948, p. 135 ff.).
Kierkegaard belongs to the same family as Karl Heim when the latter writes—to Barth's horror—in the preface to the first edition of Glaube und Denken (1931): "We have sufficient dogmatic textbooks which serve as excellent introductions to the doctrine of the evangelical Church." He continued to believe for an amazingly long time that what Mynster preached on Sundays really was correct. If certain interpreters of Kierkegaard were right (Hohlenberg can again serve as an example), then Kierkegaard must have been incredibly obscure.

Our purpose here is not to maintain that Kierkegaard was justified in presenting the Christian answer to Lessing's problem in the form he chose. In my opinion he was fundamentally mistaken, but the mistake was one he shared with the whole of the relatively orthodox theology of his time and the classical theological tradition, a mistake which it would be foolish to hold against him.

Kierkegaard did, after all, stick to "natural theology." He believed that, apart from and previous to the fact of the Incarnation, it was possible to know something about the nature of God's eternity and existence. He had learned this from the Greeks as well as from the theologians. He therefore believed he knew how paradoxical is the idea of the eternal God appearing in a temporal, historical form.

If he had understood that in actual fact we know God only in the Incarnate Christ, his presentation would have been essentially different, and it would have become clearer to him both that the Christian doctrine of salvation by Christ alone is in fact "an offense to the human heart" and that faith, which has learned to know the eternal and divine where alone it is perceptible, has neither the right nor the need to call the doctrine of "the deity in time" paradoxical. Faith breathes "healthily and blissfully" in the encounter with "eternity" in the Incarnate Christ, but only because faith has learned that reason's "Greek" conceptions of "eternity" are false. But it must be remembered that faith knows this only because it continually allows itself to be instructed. Kierkegaard was, in fact, right in saying that "it can never become his own thought (in a direct sense)."

The remarkable ("paradoxical") fact is, therefore, not that "the eternal" can become "temporal," "historical," and "relative," but that if, in accordance with its nature, "the eternal" could not do this, it would not, in fact, be "the eternal" but only man's selfmade and therefore foolish conception of "the eternal." The task of eliminating the "Greek" from the Christian mode of thought, which has been initiated so significantly in Lundensian agapi theology, must also in this connection be carried through.


NOTES

1. With regard to such arrogant expressions of Kierkegaard's, it is necessary to point out that they occur as purely private entries in a diary.
If this is not taken ad notam we do Kierkegaard an injustice. For the earlier relationship between Kierkegaard and Eiriksson, see Breve og Aktstykker, I, 181 ff. and the commentaries on this in II, 79 ff. where attention is drawn to Eiriksson's violent attack on Martensen, made at an earlier date.

2. Postscript, p. 188 (VII, 196).


4. Training in Christianity, p. 84 (XII, 103).

5. Training in Christianity, p. 102 (XII, 121).


9. Cf., e.g., Postscript, p. 339 ff. (VII, 368 &). 

10. Cf., e.g., VIII A 565 and Philosophical Fragments, p. 87 (IV, 296). Cf. also Training in Christianity, p. 124 (XII, 145).


13. For a further explanation of this, see my article "Forløsningstanker i Kristendom og Hedenskab" in Livers Gaade-Korsets Gaade, 1947. It would be impossible and useless to mention all the scholars who have failed to understand Kierkegaard's central problem. Among recent philosophers one may mention Knud Hansen who says: "The important thing for Kierkegaard about this dogma [the doctrine of the Incarnation] is in fact only the assertion itself that God became man, or more correctly: it is the absurdity of this assertion which is important." Strange that so knowledgeable and honest a scholar can go so far astray. An even more hopeless misunderstanding—to mention an older scholar—is H. Høffding's idea that Kierkegaard (Søren Kierkegaard som Filosof, 1892, p. 68 f.) can "demand from subjectivity a definite content, a definite objective faith, only through an inconsistency." Høffding continues: "The important thing is that this has the character of a struggle for truth; the object of this struggle is unimportant." It is difficult to imagine a more obvious misinterpretation of Kierkegaard. The latter's own comments on the Postscript in Point of View ought to be sufficient for all who take Kier-
kegaard seriously.


15. G. Brandes had already said that the idea of the Christian paradox not being paradoxical enough had "obviously" caused Kierkegaard much concern (cf. Brandes Samlede Værker, II, 343). This, however, is not apparent in Kierkegaard himself.


17. The "existential" difficulty of believing (in contrast to a restricted concern with the "intellectual" difficulty) is expressed in an entry from 1846 [Journals, No. 608 (VII A 151)] by means of a quotation from Pascal: "It is so difficult to believe because it is so difficult to obey." Or, as it is stated in 1847 [Journals, No. 630 (VIII A 7)]: it is a complete "misunderstanding" to think that "objections to Christianity spring from doubt." They arise from "insubordination, disinclination to obey, a revolt against all authority." Cf., e.g., VIII A 331 and IX A 427.

18. When Bohlin, in Kierkegaards dogmatiska dskddning, 1925, p. 235, says that the paradoxical nature of faith is as great in the case of the "tragic hero"-who has to offer his child for the sake of a higher ethical purpose and still retain his belief that God is eternal goodness and love-as it is in the case of the "knight of faith" in Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard would in all likelihood have agreed with him, at least in later years if, perhaps, not in 1843; cf. also the way in which, as early as The Concept of Dread, p. 144 (IV, 471), he speaks of "finding repose in providence" (cf. Per Wagndal, Gemenskapsproblemet hos Søren Kierkegaard, 1954, p. 42).


28. A part of this is to be found in Journals, No. 1033.

29. "Has not arisen in the heart of any man" is the way the Danes translate a phrase occurring in I Cor. 2:9. The whole of IV C 29 deserves attention.


32. Postscript, p. 244 (VII, 260).


34. Postscript, p. 514 (VII, 572). The parenthesis is important. In a certain sense the idea is of a faith become the believer's own in that he can reflect on it with his ratio. Basically, however, it is continually foreign to him. It is never his property as something understood and therefore appropriated.

It was inevitable that the intellectuals of Copenhagen in Kierkegaard's day should sometimes compare and contrast him with Martensen, nor was Kierkegaard-as we can see from his Journals-unaware that such comparisons were going on. He notes that current opinion held that, while Martensen stressed the relationship between thought and belief and wished to think about faith, he, Kierkegaard, took no interest in such problems. It is not surprising that Kierkegaard finds such judgments strange. He points out that he had produced a wealth of pseudonymous writings devoted to the investigation from various angles of the problem of belief, defining the realm of faith and attempting to determine its heterogeneity with respect to other spheres of spiritual life. And how had these investigations been carried out? With the aid of dialectic and thought. He goes on to claim that there is hardly a single writer who has thought about faith in such measure as he who has not been occupied simply by thoughtless speculation about individual dogmas. He claims that he, on the contrary, had really "thought," concluding that indeed one must first clarify the entire problem of faith. Finally, he speculates that his own writings contain some dialectical analyses of particular points of an accuracy never before attained.1

This note in Kierkegaard's Journal throws light upon a number of statements which at first sight seem contradictory and which have occasionally been quoted out of context in attempts to define the essential principles of his philosophy. Such statements are of two kinds. In some of them, Kierkegaard claims to represent a special and definite interpretation of Christianity. In others, he states that he has nothing new to offer and that, regarding the problems of intellect and religion, he is not unlike a spy "in a higher service," 2 whose task is to examine the ideas of "existence" and "Christianity." Statements of the latter type also tend to approve of the doctrine generally taught. Though the tension between these statements cannot be eliminated, Kierkegaard's note on Martensen still makes it possible for us to find a single principle under the apparent contradictions. Kierkegaard is aware of the special character of his analyses of Christianity which were arrived at through a dialectical analysis of faith. But it is the total synthesis rather than the individual dogmas that he interprets in this special way, and this total synthesis must also reflect back upon each individual dogma. When these new views are consistently applied to the realm of faith, ideas such as "existence" and "Christianity" will again acquire a fundamental significance.

What, then, is new and original in Kierkegaard's understanding of Christianity? What factors are stressed in his delimitation of the realm of faith? To put it briefly, his main object is to determine accurately the relationship between the so-called objective and subjective elements of Christianity. His thought always revolves around the tension between the objective and the subjective.

This is the point, he suggests, where we must radically change our way of thinking if the
message of Christianity is not to be wholly distorted.

Students of Kierkegaard will agree that he was intensely preoccupied with this very problem. But the determination of his essential contribution to its solution is a highly controversial subject.

It has often been suggested that Kierkegaard avoids objectivity and that his philosophy is characterized by an extreme subjective bias.

It is no doubt true that he energetically combats all interpretations that make Christianity into an objective doctrine or that regard it as a complete solution of all problems of existence. He employs all his dialectic skill to prevent the inclusion of Christianity as a mere product of the human spirit in speculative or philosophical or theological systems, however prominent the place assigned to it. He also combats the attempts to guarantee the reliability of the objective element of Christianity, whether these attempts be directed towards philosophical demonstrations of its truth or towards exegetical demonstrations of the genuineness of Biblical texts. Nor does he approve of Grundtvig's theories concerning the unfailing objectivity of the "Living Word" in the Church, of the confession of faith, and of the Word in connection with the Sacraments. All such endeavors are, according to Kierkegaard, more than questionable in their tacit assumption of the importance of a reliable, objective authority and of the ease with which the subsequent assimilation of faith and doctrine is to take place. Nothing less than superstition, he says, is involved in the immediate reliance upon authorities who wish to liberate man from an inner dialectic in the acquisition of truth. Christianity will cease to exist if it is, by one means or another, transmuted into an objective doctrine. Thus opposing all trends towards objectivity, Kierkegaard conceives the thesis that "subjectivity is truth." Even this, however, does not make him a protagonist of pure subjectivity, as I hope presently to show.

Kierkegaard's thought is not, in fact, exclusively dominated by the argument in favor of subjectivity and against opinions that unduly emphasize objectivity. On the contrary, he tries to do justice to the objective element of Christianity whenever possible. Thus, simple assessments of the relative dominance and balance between subjective and objective considerations will not alone suffice to reveal the originality and greatness of Kierkegaard's analyses of the dialectic of faith.

If we wish to approach the core of Kierkegaard's philosophy, we must begin by observing that his writings are permeated by an increasingly conscious effort to overcome the difficulties caused by the dualism between objectivity and subjectivity in presentations of Christianity throughout the history of Christian thought. More and more clearly he grasped that it was impossible to arrive at the essence of Christianity by way of the two concepts of objectivity and subjectivity as they had been traditionally defined. On vitally important points his decisive analyses aimed at destroying this false and deceptive distinction in the interpretation of Christianity. This does not mean that he refused to discuss the problems traditionally analyzed in terms of objectivity and subjectivity.3 On the contrary, with the aid of new ideas, terms, and formulae he tried to throw new light upon those very questions and thus upon the Christian message as a whole. Only a few examples can be given here to illustrate the extent to which his entire interpretation of Christianity is colored by these efforts.

Let us first examine a few contexts in which Kierkegaard regards the relationship between man and God "from below," and in which he thus dwells upon traditionally subjective aspects of faith.

In Kierkegaard's writings there is a systematic tendency to speak of man in a way that reveals man's inescapable attachment to God.

This tendency is, for instance, one of the characteristics of Either/Or. It is perhaps most clearly revealed in the passage where Judge William, the representative of the ethical mode of
life, describes the necessary choice between aesthetic and ethical principles. This choice can be said to involve man's choice of himself "in his eternal validity." Together with several other important anthropological ideas, the idea of the self seems to have been borrowed from German idealism, and it might be presumed that Kierkegaard at the same time borrowed the German idealists' subjective orientation and tendency to isolate the individual man in his efforts to develop and perfect his own personality. But this would not be true. When Kierkegaard speaks of man as spirit and self and as equipped with conscience, he in fact succeeds in incorporating man's inescapable relationship to God into an anthropological framework. In the passage on choice Kierkegaard has Judge William emphasize that man's choice of himself in his eternal validity at the same time involves man's reception of himself in an "immediate relation to the eternal Power." The choice results in an indissoluble interplay between divine activity and man's personal engagement: "When I choose absolutely, I choose the absolute, for I myself am the absolute. But in complete identity with this I can say that I choose the absolute which chooses me, that I posit the absolute which posits me; for if I do not remember that this second expression is equally absolute, my category of choice is false, for the category is precisely the identity of both propositions." 

But here Kierkegaard also succeeds in overcoming a subjectivism which reckons with a relationship to God but which restricts that relationship to man's spiritual life. Kierkegaard is not guilty of a spiritualistic view which regards man's external relations as independent of his relationship to God. Such views have often come to prevail if the relationship between God and man has been thought of as a relationship between an objective God and subjective man. The anthropological analyses by which Kierkegaard sets forth man's inescapable relation to God serve also to illuminate man's equally inescapable ties to a definite history, a definite environment, and a definite topical situation. As spirit and self, man is wholly concrete, and a God-to-man relationship that ignores this concrete aspect has, according to Kierkegaard, lost its ethical character. This, he says, happens, for instance, in mysticism. Though the mystic is in love with God, he in fact refuses God's love by refusing the existence and the reality that God has granted him.

After this review of the anthropological analyses in Either/Or, it is hardly necessary to point out that in Kierkegaard's philosophy man's relation to God and his dependence upon God's creative will are not predetermined and fixed dogmatic axioms anthropologically applied. Instead, Kierkegaard describes through pseudonyms how man experiences the relation to God existentially from below and how it first manifests itself as an ethical demand when man is faced with the choice, the "either/or." But it must also be emphasized that for Kierkegaard such interpretations of man's conditions of life do not grow out of a neutral philosophic analysis of existence in the traditional sense. As a "subjectively existing thinker," Kierkegaard reports the experiences of the conditions of ethical and religious life as experienced by a man who himself has agreed to the ethical demand and to the religious mode of life.

He starts out by assuming that man can seize ethical truth only through a decision to act-the leap of faith-and that a thinker can never transcend the conditions imposed upon man by existence in respect to man's relationship to this truth.

All that has been said above about Kierkegaard's ideas concerning objectivity and subjectivity in connection with the choice and the anthropological analyses is applicable to the whole pseudonymous discussion of the stages of human life. In The Point of View for My Work as an Author (1848), Kierkegaard says that the Concluding Unscientific Postscript is preoccupied with "The Problem"-the problem of all his writing-how to become a Christian, and that the book shows how all of his previous works illustrate this problem. Here he is clearly conscious of the
definite conception of Christianity that follows from his ideas of how one becomes a Christian. Thus a determination of the Christian's "how" also determines the "what" of Christianity. Through a description of different life-positions of men who in his opinion may be said to "exist," Kierkegaard seeks to arrive at a determination of a Christian's "how" which clearly reveals the unique features of Christianity while simultaneously preventing the metamorphosis of Christianity into an objective doctrine or a timeless metaphysic.

Kierkegaard's existential dialectic can thus not be divorced from Christian dogma; on the contrary, it is based on Christian doctrines. It is equally impossible to divorce his Christian views from the existential dialectic, which shows the corpus of dogma in a special light. Existential categories and dogmatic analyses are inseparably intertwined in Kierkegaard's thought. With the aid of his existential dialectic he wishes to present general conditions, abbreviations or categories for human life conditioned by contacts with the Christian message. These analyses have a twofold purpose. Pedagogically, they are to destroy the illusion that a mere knowledge of Christianity suffices to make a Christian; but at the same time their purpose is to clarify the significance of the Christian dogmas. The background for this statement is the awareness that man, a temporal being subject to earthly conditions, must incessantly realize the eternal course marked out for him, the Creator's will applied to human life. However, God's will cannot be formulated in advance with the aid of fixed ethical principles. It is man's duty to discover it in his particular topical situation with all the risks attendant upon choice. This eternal, determined course of man is the only absolute truth one can meaningfully discuss. And this truth cannot be tunelessly possessed; it must be reached by an existing man who is subject to incessant change and growth. It can therefore be said that truth exists for individual men only when they themselves manifest it in action. A person whose relationship to truth is marked by an infinite interest or by an infinite passion is, in Kierkegaard's terminology, subjective. Thus Kierkegaard arrives at his thesis concerning the identity of subjectivity and truth. This thesis is valid also in respect to the message of Christianity concerning Christ as the eternal, decisive truth. In Christ, truth is personified; in Christ, truth lives a human life. But a man can know Christ as truth only when Christ becomes his life, his life-giving and lifenourishing force.

All this suggests the fallacy of the opinion, occasionally presented, that Kierkegaard's search for truth culminates in a subjectivism in which the strength of subjective emotions is used as a criterion for different degrees of truth. On the contrary, Christianity does not lose its essential features through the thesis of subjectivity. Kierkegaard's Christianity is not, as some commentators have asserted, a diffuse and indeterminate welter of emotions. Emotional engagement is the universal basis of all devotion, says Kierkegaard in The Book on Adler, and the qualitative characteristics of Christianity in contradistinction to other religions must be made clear by further definitions of terms. In order to express oneself Christianly, there is required, besides the universal language of the heart, also skill and schooling in the definition of Christian concepts, while at the same time it is of course assumed that the emotion is of a specific qualitative sort, the Christian emotion.

In his repeated discussions of the stages of human life Kierkegaard arrived at increasingly precise definitions of these Christian concepts. The line between Christian inwardness (Inderlighed) and all other kinds of inwardness is clearly drawn with the aid of these stages, and the Christian faith is presented as being focused upon a single object, Christ in his character of the absolute paradox.
When the concept of subjectivity in the Postscript was criticized, Kierkegaard noted that accurate definitions of the "how" of faith also determine its "what." He added that inwardness or subjectivity, here presented in its extreme form, proved to be identical with objectivity. This was, he continued, an application of the principle of subjectivity which, to the best of his knowledge, had never before been expressed in that way.13

In another note Kierkegaard stressed that, like his contemporaries, he wished to escape "the untruth of subjectivity." But he knew that the remedy should not be sought in objectivity, which in a religious sense equals a return to paganism. According to Kierkegaard, the untruth of isolated subjectivism disappears if man is able to stand before God as an individual, as a person en face de Dieu, as den Enkelte. If this is emphasized in applications of the idea of subjectivity, the same note adds, we may very well speak of subjectivity as the saving agent, for God can be regarded as the absolutely compelling subjective principle.14

In these notes Kierkegaard has—perhaps more clearly than anywhere else—claimed that his conception of subjectivity is designed to overcome the fatal oscillation between subjectivism and objectivism in the interpretation of Christianity, and that he wishes to make it impossible for others to use the question of objectivity versus subjectivity as a fixed and generally recognized categorization in discussions of faith. Though his discussion is carried out in terms of the concept of subjectivity, he has used the concept, as he himself stresses, in a way different from the traditional. Thus Kierkegaard's subjectivity has come to include what has often been regarded as the objective element of Christianity: "At its very climax, inwardness has again proved identical with objectivity." 15

This also appears in his discussion of God as the absolutely compelling subjective principle. Thus, the traditional distinction between subjective and objective elements of Christianity is turned the other way round. But this does not mean that Kierkegaard, like some of his contemporaries, allowed God and man to be fused together into a higher entity.16 Nor did he wish to follow Feuerbach in seeking the origins of Christian revelation in the hearts of men or of mankind.17 He wanted to emphasize the personal relation between God and man, together with God's sovereign activity in this relationship, and it was with this in mind that he refused to recognize the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity as a valid basis for characterizing the relationship between God and man.

At this point a further explanation may be necessary. Even if Kierkegaard tried to avoid the distinction between objective and subjective elements when discussing problems traditionally treated in those terms, he did not succeed in escaping them in his interpretation of Christianity. To refute the too facile identification of general religious emotion with Christianity, he stressed the special qualities a religious emotion must possess to be classified as Christian. In the same spirit he could also point out that one must not confuse subjectivity and objectivity, religious emotion and revelation.

Christianity exists before any Christian exists, it must exist in order that one may become a Christian, it contains the determinant by which one may test whether one has become a Christian, it maintains its objective subsistence apart from all believers, while at the same time it is in the inwardness of the believer. In short, here there is no identity between the subjective and the objective. Though Christianity comes into the heart of ever so many believers, every believer is conscious that it has not arisen in his heart. . . .18

That Kierkegaard was unable to avoid the distinction between subjective and objective is in no way surprising. He was struggling under the weight of a long tradition. But to arrive at the core of his thought it will not suffice to refute the usual charges of subjectivism by answering that Kierkegaard achieved a balance between the subjective and the objective aspects of Christianity,
but the spirit of the age compelled him to stress the subjective ones. It is true that Kierkegaard's thought contains a balance between subjectivism and objectivism, but this observation is insufficient for an adequate definition of the originality of his contribution as a Christian thinker. References to intellectual climate also fail to penetrate deeper than the surface of Kierkegaard's activities. He tried to prevent both the conception of Christianity as an objective truth which can be acquired without personal engagement and the volatilization of Christianity into amorphous subjective emotions. By identifying subjectivity and truth in the presentation of the stages, Kierkegaard wished to tie together the "what" of Christianity and the "how" of the Christian into one indissoluble whole. The force behind Kierkegaard is the same that once drove Luther to formulate the famous words of the Large Catechism: "It is the confidence and faith of the heart alone that make both God and an idol, and these two, God and faith, belong together and must be joined into one."

"When the question of truth is raised subjectively," Kierkegaard has Johannes Climacus say in the Postscript, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship; if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true. [Cf. Postscript, p. 178 (VII, 184, 5).]

When applied to the knowledge of God, this means that we objectively recognize the true God while we subjectively recognize that an individual stands in a relationship to a certain something in a way which constitutes a man-to-God relationship. For those whom science has not quite succeeded in confusing there can be no doubt as to which side truth stands on. Climacus gives an example to illustrate his viewpoint.

If one who lives in the midst of Christendom goes up to the house of God, the house of the true God, with the true conception of God in his knowledge, and prays, but prays in a false spirit; and one who lives in an idolatrous community prays with the entire passion of the infinite, although his eyes rest upon the image of an idol: where is there most truth? The one prays in truth to God though he worships an idol; the other prays falsely to the true God, and hence worships in fact an idol.

Kierkegaard's comments upon Jesus' words, "And as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee" (Matt. 8:13, A. V.) should also be regarded as further illustrations of the thesis of subjectivity as truth, which is aimed at combining God and faith into one indissoluble entity.

God's love, Kierkegaard writes (e.g., in Worfes of Love), is both the greatest mildness and the greatest severity. God's love is mildness to the loving and humble, but to the hard-hearted his mildness is severity. The mildness of God's wish to save the world turns into the greatest severity to those who do not wish to receive salvation, a severity even greater than it would have been if God had wished only to judge the world instead of to save it. "God's relationship to man is at every moment to eternalize that which at any moment is in man." 21

In the manner of Luther, Kierkegaard could write about the ability of faith and unbelief to change everything, about God as love to the believing and anger to the unbelieving, and about God being shaped by our conscience. 22 Kierkegaard is as eager as Luther to emphasize that in his relation to man God is sovereign. But at the same time he is at least as eager as Luther to emphasize that God's sovereignty is not manifested in human life in a dead and mechanical way but in a personal relationship, where God realizes his actions concerning man through man's own personal decisions and reflections. 23 All major ideas cited in the present paper to illustrate Kierkegaard's views on the discussion traditionally stated in terms of subjectivity and objectivity bear further witness to this double interest.

Another relevant concept to which Kierkegaard himself attached a decisive importance is the idea of the individual, den Enkelte.
He called den Enkelte his own category and asserted that Christianity stands or falls with this category, and he predicted that this category will play a decisive part in the future of the Christian Faith.2*

The problem which forms the subject of the present paper gives us a good approach for explaining the significance of the problem of den Enkelte—a significance so profound that Kierkegaard does not hesitate to regard this concept as the category of Christianity. If subjectivity is understood as meaning the individual before God, one may well speak of subjectivity as the saving agent, he says in the above-mentioned note in his Journal. Actually, it was unnecessary for Kierkegaard to stress that the question was of the individual before God. To Kierkegaard, the divine relationship of an individual person was consistently included in the very idea of den Enkelte. To be conscious of oneself as den Enkelte in fact means that one acknowledges God's message to oneself and that one takes this message seriously. This is the attitude necessary for man's contact with Christianity. It is not possible to become or to be a Christian in any other way. For it is impossible to be a Christian only as a number in the nameless crowd. The individual man must learn to dare to be himself before God. If he is to be a Christian, he must not forget "what his name is before God."

On the other hand, Christianity must also be proclaimed in a manner which makes its message clear to den Enkelte. Kierkegaard shows how Christianity is warped when its message is interpreted as applicable to mankind rather than to the individual. While Christianity tells us, for instance, that the individual man is a sinner, if the category of the individual is ignored the idea of sin is distorted into a doctrine of sin in general and into a speculative theory of sin as negation. The idea of judgment disappears, and immortality turns into a subject for discussion of man's immortality in general. In Christianity, however, the central problem is the immortality of the individual, though many men are afraid of acknowledging this for fear of the consequences entailed by having to accede that God is sovereign over man and that man is responsible to God for his actions.

Den Enkelte is a category for the missionary, not in his relations to the heathen but in Christendom itself, "to make the change, which lies in being and becoming a Christian, a more inward change," says Kierkegaard in a note.25 Hence Kierkegaard's stressing of den Enkelte stamps his own total conception of Christianity just as much as references to mankind and seeking refuge behind objectivity, according to him, distorted contemporary views of Christianity.

I have emphasized Kierkegaard's stress upon den Enkelte as the receiver of the Christian message to show how he views man's position in the God-to-man relationship "from above" when considering the traditionally objective elements of Christianity. In Kierkegaard's writings there is a consistent tendency to speak about God, Christ, and the Christian message in a way which makes clear that God, the active and sovereign God, ties man to himself in creation, salvation, and judgment.

In the previously cited note on the significance of subjectivity Kierkegaard states that his age is to be saved through subjectivity.

But before this happens, the untruth of subjectivity must be eliminated and man must penetrate to subjectivity in the sense of being an individual before God. Immediately afterwards he reformulates the same statement by saying that his age must be saved through subjectivity, i.e., through God, as the absolutely compelling subjective principle. Characteristically, he is able to define the meaning of man as den Enkelte as identical with the idea of God as compelling subjectivity. And it will hardly be necessary to point out that this phrase is not meant to be taken as a mere pun or a sudden whim. On the contrary, it is an expression of a concept that governs all
of Kierkegaard's thought. All that he has to say about man's relation to God is overshadowed by his certainty of the impossibility for a man ever to approach God as a more or less neutral, unengaged observer. God cannot be sought as an object outside man. In his relation to man, God can never appear as object, only as subject.

From a formal point of view, Kierkegaard here seems to defend an idea supported by the German idealists. But the precise definition of this idea was applied in a way which actually made it one of the weapons that Kierkegaard directed against the Hegelian form of idealism. In terms of idealism, the ultimate significance of this thesis implies that man's most profound introspection simultaneously yields a knowledge of the absolute or of God, because in his highest sphere of activity as a rational being man participates in God. In Kierkegaard's thought, however, the idea of God as subjectivity leads to a recognition of the helplessness of man, one of God's creatures, in the power of the omnipotent and sovereign Creator. As God's villein man is never free enough to stand outside God's realm and to view God from a distance. On the contrary, man can only learn to know God in so far as he learns to know God's will as applied to himself. This prevents man from regarding God as object. If God were like an external person, he could be reasoned with, and man would master the situation in a completely different way. But God does not thus reason with man.

When he speaks to him, "he uses the individual himself in order through him to say to him what he would say to him." 26 As the compelling principle of subjectivity, God always retains the initiative in respect to man and engages him as existing subjectivity, as den Enkelte. God is subject and therefore exists only "for subjectivity in inwardness." 2T

Kierkegaard expresses the same thing in the Postscript by emphasizing that Christianity is not a doctrine but an existential communication designed to play a part in man's existence and to change it, never allowing a man to stand aside as a disinterested spectator.28 Because of this character of the Christian communication, it is wrong to change the communication into speculation (Betragtning), as Kierkegaard emphatically states in Training in Christianity. "Christian truth cannot properly be the object of 'reflection,' " he says, "for Christian truth, if I may say so, has itself eyes to see with, yea, is all eye. ... It is that which is looking at (Betragter) me to see whether I do what it says I should do."

Christian truth cannot properly be the object of reflection "because it has ears to hear with... . One cannot talk about it as about an absentee or as a thing present only objectively, for, since it is from God and God is in it," it is present in a special sense whenever spoken about.29

The ideas of God as compelling subjectivity, of Christianity as an existential communication, and of Christian truth as an active inspector and listener open the way to an understanding of Kierkegaard's thesis that Christianity or the Christian principle is the following or imitation of Christ. The principal significance of this thesis, which forms the core of all of Kierkegaard's thinking after 1846, is not to suggest that Christianity is primarily an ethical ideal or that the Christian element consists in a definite mode of life. Rather, it finds essential Christianity in man's being confronted by and united with Christ as Pattern and Redeemer during the course of his life.

One of the foundations of this thesis is Kierkegaard's emphasis on the idea that Christian truth is not available to us as a ready-made product, but Christ himself is truth in the sense that his life is truth, and this truth actively interferes with human life. From his own side, man can acquire this truth only by unceasing change and growth in the concrete situation of each moment. As truth, Christ is a road, and man can only acquire truth by following him on this road. Kierkegaard also expresses the same principle when he states that Christ must become man's life.30 Actually, the thesis that Christianity is imitatio Christi is nothing but another expression
for the thesis of subjectivity as truth.

When Christ actively interferes with man's life through his summons, "Follow me," he cannot remain at a distance as an object for reflection nor can he stand back in man's memory as an object of the past. Instead he makes himself contemporaneous with man as Pattern and Redeemer, being at the same time both humiliated and elevated. The man who is prepared to suffer this contemporaneity with the judging and forgiving Christ must believe in him.

Therefore Kierkegaard says in the "Invocation" with which Training in Christianity begins that contemporaneity with Christ is a prerequisite of faith which, when precisely defined, is faith itself.

What is contemporaneous with you is real for you, he says in the same work. This "for you" is a condition characteristic of all truth and all religiousness.31

The contention that faith is conditioned by and consists in contemporaneity with Christ is based on Kierkegaard's idea of God as an eternally present contemporaneity in man and on his emphasis upon man's duty of being contemporaneous with himself. When the idea of contemporaneity is applied to the determination of the content of the Christian faith, Kierkegaard wishes to make it impossible to speak about the object of faith, fides quae creditur, as an entity at rest and divorced from what is traditionally known as subjective faith, fides qua creditur. But he makes it equally impossible to speak about faith as "a piece of individual devotion," which could be separated from God's actions in judgment and grace.32 Christ himself is in faith, he is the life of the faithful. The believer and Christ are joined in a personal relationship, not in a relationship between subject and object but in a relationship of an "I" and a "thou."

Kierkegaard joyfully noted that Luther's emphasis on the words "for thee" was conceived with the same aim as his own emphasis on the significance of den Enkelte.33 As we have noted, Kierkegaard labeled den Enkelte his own category. In the same manner he spoke of contemporaneity with Christ as the ruling thought of his own life. There is no rivalry between these two conceptions. On the sociological level, the category of den Enkelte can be said to have the same significance that contemporaneity has on the historical level.34 In both instances the question is one of overcoming the misleading associations which the use of the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity introduces into discussions of man's relation to God. Kierkegaard uses both concepts, den Enkelte and contemporaneity, to bring alive one idea: as a compelling and existence-changing personal force, the eternal truth challenges the serious and devout individual in the course of his life.

A discussion of the consequences of Kierkegaard's development during the last years of his life falls beyond the scope of the present essay. If it is true that his views were altered in favor of imitative piety in the medieval sense, these changes must obviously and fatally have influenced those aspects of his interpretation of Christianity that are connected with problems of objectivity and subjectivity.

NOTES

1. X2 A 596.

2. X6 B 220 and Point of View, p. 87 (XIII, 612). Cf. Journals, No. 1029 (X3 A 635) and X5 B 107.

3. Per Ljøsfinning has interpreted one of the present author's earlier


8. Cf. Johannes Sі0k, Die Formbildungen der Sprache und die Kategorie der Verkiindigung, 1951, p. 7071. In Die Anthropologie Kierkegaards, 1954, p. 29, Sі0k characterizes Kierkegaard's views as existentialist. It is correct to protest against Kierkegaard's inclusion in the traditions of philosophical idealism, but all discussions of Kierkegaard's existentialism should be accompanied by the above reservations.

9. "But with repect to believing (sensu strictissimo) it holds good that this 'how' is appropriate only to one as its object." Postscript, p. 542 (VII, 605).

10. The former trend is apparent, e.g., in the Kierkegaard studies of Hermann Diem, and not least in his recent Die Existenzdialetik von S0ren Kierkegaard, 1950. Diem makes a distinction between existential dialectic and theology as well as between existential categories and dogmatic analyses. He is mainly interested in the former, his opinion being that Kierkegaard's thought was focused upon man's existence rather than upon theological systems. The latter trend appears, e.g., in Torsten Bohlin's analyses of Kierkegaard's views.


15. Journals, No. 1021 (X2 A 299).

17. See, e.g., Postscript, p. 513 ff. (VII, 570 ff.).


20. Postscript, p. 178 ff. (VII, 184 ff.). Once it has been demonstrated that it was vitally important to Kierkegaard to join the "what" of Christianity and the "how" of the Christian, the fallacy of the position reflected by Torsten Bohlin in Kierkegaards tro och andra Kierkegaardstudier, p. 60, will be apparent: "The task of defining the Christian elements of Kierkegaard's message and manner of presentation is really so comprehensive and involved that there is no plausible reason to prevent us from a certain division of labor. Thus 'the objective existence of Christianity apart from all believers,' i.e., revelation and the content of the Christian Faith, is examined separately, and the criterion 'that determines whether a person has become a Christian' is critically analyzed afterwards."


23. Cf. e.g., Martin Luther, De servo arbitrio, W.A. 18, 695 ff. and 753 ^

24. Journals, No. 723 (VIII1 A 482). This entry was afterwards added as an appendix to Point of View, p. 130 ff.

25. Ibid.


27. Postscript, p. 178 (VII, 185).


29. Training in Christianity, p. 228 (XII, 258).

31. Training in Christianity, pp. 67-68 (XII, 84).


33. VIII1 A 465.

34. Per Lønning, Samtidighedens Situation, 1954, p. 251. [Per Lønning writes: "The category of den Enkelte can be said to have the same significance in the sociological realm that the category of contemporaneity has in the historical. In both cases the concern is to prevent man's running away from the responsibility of choice through trusting in impersonal and unreal guarantees. ... To meet Christ as his contemporary and to meet him as den Enkelte are two sides of the same thing, or, more exactly, two expressions for the same. The 'masses' and history are the two false guarantees which men use to protect themselves against the paradox."-Eds.]
Kierkegaard was very well aware of his significance for posterity.

But he—who suffered so deeply from the misunderstanding of his contemporaries—certainly did not expect to be better understood by the generations to come, "in which admiring professorial rogues and the priestly pack turn the life and efforts of the dead to profit for themselves and their families." * One must not overlook such admonitions, particularly if one is a pastor and a professor of theology and intends to discuss Kierkegaard's bequest to theology. And there is no point in simply being annoyed by the fact that Kierkegaard conceived the notion of publishing the following invitation in the newspaper:

If there should be five or six like-minded persons who would make it their obligation to attempt with me to understand the New Testament simply and without any pomp and ceremony, and to strive ingenuously to put its commands into practice, I propose to hold meetings for divine service in which I shall interpret the New Testament. Admission will be free for everyone except the clergy. For a clergyman there would be an admission fee of 10 talers per meeting, which would be dispensed among the poor. It seems to me that those who have given up the following of Christ and have turned him into money must pay something occasionally to hear a real sermon for once. If by chance a professor of theology should wish to attend these meetings, he would pay 20 talers each time.

That does not seem to me unreasonable, when one considers what it means to be a "full professor" in Christ's Crucifixion or an "associate professor" in The Stoning of Peter and Paul.

We, as theologians, shall not be able to cast off the suspicion that in regard to Kierkegaard we are to be counted among the sons who decorate the graves of the prophets their fathers killed. Therefore, before we attempt to answer the question posed in our discussion, we must first take into consideration the fact that, in any case, each of us as a theologian has his own personal convictions.

Indeed, Kierkegaard considered it possible, after all, that somebody in the next generation might be "inspired" by Kierkegaard's own example, though he modestly conceals this possibility by addressing an imaginary reader and appealing to him to become a witness to the truth.

See to it that you take your life's examination, obediently submitting to the final test, to be sacrificed. . . . Don't worry about the ill treatment which will be meted out to you by your contemporaries, nor the vileness of the dons . . . who, without suffering themselves, will make a living out of teaching about your sufferings. . . . No, see to it that you take your examination. If you take it, this is eternally and infinitely decisive. Maybe it will then happen, maybe not, that an individual in the next generation can be inspired by your life to be willing to take his life's examination.

There will happen to him what happened to you. The nature of the examination neither can nor ought to be altered; but at many a moment it will perhaps encourage him to think of you, just
as you had found encouragement in relation to one or another of the deceased.3

It is just possible that even theologians might consider this as addressed to themselves. In any case, one can properly discuss Kierkegaard's bequest to theology only in the light of our having to stand examination—a position in which life places theologians too.

Kierkegaard put the minister and the professor of theology in the same category, so we stand squarely in the middle of the cause he championed. He regarded it as a very grave objection to ministers that they act as professorial parish-clerks of a sort, who also serve science and think it beneath their dignity to preach. It is no wonder, therefore, that preaching has come to be regarded as a pretty poor art. Nevertheless, preaching is the most difficult of all arts, and, essentially, it is the art which Socrates extols: the art of being able to converse. From this, of course, it does not follow that there must be someone in the congregation to make answer, or that it might be a help to have someone regularly introduced to speak. When Socrates censured the Sophists by making the distinction that they were able to talk but not to converse, what he really meant was that they were able to say a great deal about everything, but lacked the factor of personal appropriation. Appropriation is precisely the secret of conversation.4

And to this we shall add immediately, because it follows the same line, what Kierkegaard wrote about Martensen's Dogmatik, which appeared in the year 1849:

In the entire Dogmatik of Martensen, at least in the part which I have read, there is not one single sentence which is an honest yes or no. It is the old sophistical weakness to be able to speak but not to converse. For a conversation presupposes immediately a you and an I and such questions as demand a yes or no. A speaker explains: on the one hand—on the other; and meanwhile the hearer and the reader are distracted, so that they do not even notice that they are actually learning nothing.5

As concerns the inability to converse—the reproach which Kierkegaard levels at the clergy as well as at dogmatics—it is basically a matter of insufficient appropriation or assimilation of the stated word. Thus, one of the most important cues in the process of coming to terms with Kierkegaard is given. To begin with, this is nothing new for the theologian. That living must supplement teaching; that believing must supplement thinking; that doing must supplement believing—this has always been known. Whenever in church history theologians seemed to have forgotten this in their concern for "pure doctrine," a reaction in some form of "awakening" has always followed. In this Kierkegaard acknowledged his agreement with Luther and writes in his Journal in 1847:

Amazing. The category "for thee" (subjectivity, inwardness) with which Either/Or concluded (only the truth which edifies is truth for thee) is precisely that of Luther. I have never actually read anything by Luther.

But as I now open his Postil—right away in the Gospel for the First Sunday in Advent he says "for thee"; that is the important thing.6

In the same way, the "for me" plays a decisive role also in presentday German theology, witness Luther as well as Kierkegaard. For Kierkegaard—and in this respect also he has many predecessors and successors in church history—concern for right doctrine retreated into the background in the face of the "for me" to the extent that he could say: "On the whole, the doctrine as it is presented is quite correct. I have therefore no quarrel with this. My contention is that something should be made of it." 7

That Kierkegaard did not take part in discussions of dogmatics, however, by no means indicates his indifference to dogmas of the Church. We need only draw attention (1) to the fact that he says of the Philosophical Fragments, for example, "that such exertions are made [in that book] that one would think that something extraordinary, and as a matter of fact new, was to
come of it, whereas all that came of it was nothing but old-fashioned orthodoxy in a suitable
degree of severity";8 or (2) to the emphasis in The Sickness Unto Death on the fact that sin is not
negative but positive, and to his comments on this: "Therefore, orthodoxy insists that there must
be a revelation from God in order to teach fallen men what sin is, a revelation which, quite
consistently, must be believed, since it is a dogma";9 or (3) to the distinction he makes between
dogmatics and all metaphysics in the introductory theory of learning in The Concept of Dread, in
which he says: "Faith is the organ for dogmatic problems." 10 Kierkegaard made such substantial
use of the work in dogmatics that, without constant reference to it, his pseudonymous works
would not be conceivable.

In this connection, however, it must be noted that Kierkegaard, in spite of his repeated
references to "orthodoxy," conceives of the essence of dogmatic assertion in a very different way
from that of the orthodox theologians. For him dogma is the communication of the message in
which the revealed will of God is set down and made binding for mankind—a communication,
therefore, which, because it springs from revelation, conveys knowledge which is in no way
directly accessible to mankind but must be believed against reason. Therefore, if dogma is the
communication of the historical event of revelation and not in any sense a metaphysical or
ontological truth (whether attained through revelation or not), then it must be further
communicated because of its very nature. From this one can assume that when Kierkegaard says
that as to doctrine he is concerned only "that something be made of it," he means dogma must be
communicated so that its truth can be assimilated. So for Kierkegaard, everything centers around
the problem of communication.

This is what is new and peculiar to his work in contrast to earlier dogmatics. One cannot
successfully apply the usual scheme for subjective assimilation of objectively established
teachings, since in the first place the "objective" teachings are already a communication which
modifies existence, and furthermore, "subjective" assimilation consists exclusively in the proper
reception of this communication. The teachings, just as does the sermon, come under the category
of the dialectics of communication, which Kierkegaard treated penetratingly in an outline of
lectures in 1847,11 in which he states: "Man owes it to God to present truth in its truest form." 12

Hence, doctrine becomes a problem of preaching from the very beginning and not only later
when the question of its assimilation arises. However, Kierkegaard does not use the term
"preaching" in this connection but speaks of "Christian communication," and he treats this as a
special case in general communication. Whether that is possible and whether in doing so he can
do justice to the nature of Christian preaching in sermon and teachings remains to be seen. He
differentiates between simple "transmission of knowledge" and "transmission of ability," or
rather the transmission of

"ability to feel obligated," which as ethical communication is superior to all other forms of
communication, as he learned from Socrates. Again within the framework of ethical
communication of ability, the Socratic element is to be distinguished from the Christian. In the
Socratic dialectics of communication the persons involved in conversation help each other to
penetrate into themselves in order to find in themselves the truth, whereby the teacher and the
motives for teaching become, as a matter of principle, unimportant, because each person can and
must find the truth within himself. The Christian element must now be built into this Socratic
form of communication. Kierkegaard says of this:

The difference between education in ethics and education in ethicoreligious matters is simply
this: education in ethics concerns itself with nothing more than what is universally human, but
religious (Christian) education must contain knowledge. Ethically speaking, man has by nature
knowledge of the ethical; but man, from the Christian point of view, does not by nature have
knowledge of things religious; here a little communication of knowledge is first necessary, but
then the same relationship enters again as with ethics. The instruction, the communication, must
not have to do with knowledge, but is education, practice, instruction in the arts. Credit is due me
in the pseudonymous pieces for having discovered the maieutic method within the Christian
realm.13

This communication of knowledge, however, is to be "only a preliminary one." This
procedure might be interpreted in the following way: in this communication of knowledge, its
contingency, in the concrete sense of the word, eventually becomes a matter of indifference, and
it is then only a question of that intangible contingency with which all general truths sometime or
other, somewhere or other, emerge historically for the first time. After completion of this
communication of knowledge, the Socratic relation between communicator and communicatee
again comes into play, but with a difference: the communicatee, although he was not able to find
the important object of knowledge in his "memory," can now, after having been taught it, affirm
it as true through his existence by Socratic procedure.

This is the way in which Kierkegaard was interpreted in the field of modern existentialism
and also in the field of theology. If the contingency of communication is of only temporary
significance, the philosopher can disregard the fact that it is the Christian existence of the
believer which Kierkegaard wanted to train. After the initial communication of the history of
Christianity is completed, and after it has had its effect in clarifying the destinies of human
existence, one need no longer distinguish between Christian and human existence; then there
remains only the matter of structural relationships of human existence as such to deal with.15
With the help of the philosophers' analysis of existence there is then the possibility for the
theologian not only to point out the "place in life" of the declarations based on faith, but also, by
so doing, to find criteria for judging these declarations. That Kierkegaard could be interpreted in
this way is certainly his fault to some extent. A considerable number of single assertions of his do
point in this direction; but one would indeed always have to ask himself whether he was not on
the wrong track, because in this interpretation all of Kierkegaard's intellectual and emotional
impact on the real existence of the thinking individual is lost, and the thinker who contemplates
existence from the outside has taken the place of the thinker actively engaged in existence.17 In
any case, the theologian who interprets Kierkegaard in this way could scarcely be tempted or feel
himself compelled to lead an attack, Kierkegaard-style, on the Church; but with these new criteria
he is afforded the opportunity simply to interpret the whole tradition of ecclesiastical teachings in
a new light and to trace such assertions back to their basic existential import.18 The "for me," so
important to Kierkegaard, seems thereby to be preserved; but here again the question arises as to
whether, from Kierkegaard's point of view, the "for me" is not rendered completely ineffectual,
since his concern over the effecting of dedication and assimilation, which he treats in his
"Dialectics of Communication," is now turned into teachings about assimilation.

One cannot help considering this interpretation a misunderstanding of Kierkegaard, arising
from a premature desertion of his dialectics. In his inquiry into the dialectics of communication
Kierkegaard brings to the problem another entirely new point of view by emphasizing the fact
that Christian communication, in contrast to ethical communication, must be carried out with
authority; and he says in this connection: "The communicator has authority by virtue of the
communication, which is here the primary concern." To what extent must this communication
be made with authority? Here it is not a matter-at least not primarily a matter-of that sort of
authority on which the truth of the teachings must be accepted, but rather of the assertion and
acceptance, without dispute, of an historical fact: the revelation of God in the person of Jesus of
Nazareth and all that may be inferred from that. This fact in its contingency must be the
determining factor in all Christian communication. That applies not only in the sense that the contingency of this historical fact and of its consequences must be the object of the message (otherwise a regression to the simply Socratic dialectics, as we saw, cannot be prevented), but this contingency must also determine the manner and way in which it is communicated.

The Christian message intentionally places the communicatee in the position of having to decide between faith and offense arising not only as a consequence of the paradoxical content of the message, but also as a consequence of the fact that this message comes to him paradoxically as historical fact, and for this very reason puts him in the position of having to decide. The two, paradox of content and paradox of presentation, must remain inseparable, for if the second were lacking there would be no occasion for offense. The communicatee could either accept the message-perhaps because it answered his needs and wishes and he was therefore ready to make an intellectual sacrifice-or reject it as preposterous nonsense; so that in either case there would be no occasion for offense. If, on the other hand, this paradoxical truth were to come to him in the contingent form of an historical fact and with the demand of the communicator, "Thou shalt believe this," his whole existence would be incited to offense if he did not, in fact, believe it. Therefore, all Christian communication must be fashioned after the paradoxical fact of revelation. Just as Christ, in bringing his message, came before his listeners as an absolute paradox (as God-become-man he is an eternal and at the same time an historical fact), so the corresponding paradoxical fact must come to later listeners in the form of the delegated apostle and later the ordained minister delivering the authorized message, since the apostolic calling and, likewise, ordination make of the communicator something more than he is on the purely historical level. He who deserts Kierkegaard's dialectics too soon at the above-mentioned point must indeed eliminate this point of view as a completely incomprehensible foreign element in Kierkegaard's thinking.20 Kierkegaard knew, however, exactly why he attributed such significance to ordination and says:

Ordination is a teacher's paradoxical transformation in time, by which he becomes, in time, something else than what is involved in the immanent development of genius, talents, gifts, and so forth. Surely no one is ordained from eternity, or able to remember himself as ordained as soon as he is born. On the other hand, ordination constitutes a character indelebilis. What can this mean but that here again time becomes decisive for the eternal, so that immanental retirement into the eternal by way of recollection is rendered impossible. Ordination again has affixed to it the Christian nota bene.21 And of the apostolic charge Kierkegaard says: "By this paradoxical fact the apostle is forever differentiated from all the rest of mankind." This is what distinguishes him from all worldly authority, which is only of a "temporary," a "transitory nature." 22

Therefore, it is the emphasis given the communication by the paradoxical nature of the communicator which gives the Christian message its authority to force the decision between offense and faith, but it is to be kept in mind that this authority is a permanent and not merely a transitory object of importance in the message.

Now one can understand why Kierkegaard considered the moment of knowledge, in contrast to this, as something only temporary in the message. If the listener believes this message, whether it has achieved its effect because of the paradoxical fact of the apostle, or of the Scriptures, or of the ordained preacher, it has been transformed into a communication of ability and obligation which modifies the believer's existence in a new way. However, so that the message must become a communication of ability, and so that it can not remain a mere communication of knowledge, it must be conveyed as something "temporary" which

1 is at all times subject to dialectics. Dialectics asks the communicator how he can prove
the truth of his message and his authority to demand of the communicatee the decision in favor of this message. Even Jesus could give no other answer to this than "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), and "My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:16 ff.), or "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15). To this he adds: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Matt. 11:6). In saying this he confronts the listener with the decision, for even the most certain of all things, a revelation, eo ipso becomes dialectical whenever I attempt to appropriate it. . . . As soon as I take the dialectics away, I become superstitious, and attempt to cheat God of each moment's strenuous reacquisition of that which has once been acquired.23

There is a corresponding relationship between the later communicator and his listener. The communicator cannot prove his authority. What Kierkegaard says of the apostles applies also to the communicator in all forms:

If he could give perceptible proof of his authority he would be no apostle. There is no proof other than his own assertion. And this is exactly the way it must be; otherwise the believer would come into direct relationship with him instead of into a paradoxical situation.24

One must not institute any authority which can prove itself directly as such and thereby elevate faith constantly threatened by offense to the level of a positive certainty. Kierkegaard says: "The protection against the intrusion of dialectics which the Catholic Church deems itself to have in the visible presence of the Pope, we shall here leave out from consideration." 25 But the corresponding attempts of Protestantism to base the credibility of the message undialectically on the authority of the Bible or the Church or its Ministry cannot actually put an end to dialectics either.

For dialectics simply turns and asks—that is to say, questions him dialectically: what is authority, and why does he regard these as authority? It therefore questions him dialectically not about the belief that he has because of his trust in these, but about his belief in these.26

Just as the story of Christ could not put an end to these dialectics even for the eye-witnesses, neither can any fact of the later history of Christianity do so. It is in view of this that Kierkegaard answers the historical question on facts in regard to the revelation with the answer which has now become so famous and notorious in present day theological discussion:

If the contemporary generation had left nothing behind them but these words: "We have believed that in such and such a year God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he Uved and taught in our community, and finally died," it would be more than enough. The contemporary generation would have done all that was necessary; for this little advertisement, this nota bene on a page of universal history, would be sufficient to afford an occasion for a successor, and the most voluminous account can in all eternity do nothing more.

In short: "The successor believes by means of (this expresses the occasional) the testimony of the contemporary, and in virtue of the condition he himself receives from God." 27 Thus, in Christian communication, the authority vested in the apostle, the Scriptures, and the ordained minister is also only that "nota bene of worldwide significance," which suffices to motivate the receiver of the message to believe. He is by all means to believe "because of his trust in these," but he is not to believe "in these." Dialectics cannot and must not end otherwise than in the believer's own believing.

Kierkegaard thought he could in this way solve the problems with which theology saw itself confronted, particularly since the science of history started making inroads into its territory. Particular attention should be paid here to the answer which he gives to the old question raised by Lessing, with which theology has been preoccupied for so long. This question concerns, in the
first place, the problem of how the revelation as a strange historical event can gain decisive significance for faith, and, in the second place, the problem of how historical distance is to be overcome so that the communication of the historical event reaches later man not merely as historical knowledge but with the impact of a contemporary phenomenon. Kierkegaard's answer is to place later man in such a position of offense at the Christian message that, in the process of deciding between offense and faith, he becomes a contemporary of the eye-witness. Thus both of Lessing's questions are answered at the same time.

This solution seems almost too simple to be right. The abovementioned theologians, who deserted Kierkegaard's dialectics too early, pounced with particular predilection on this solution to the Lessing question and with its help gained a free hand for radicalism as a whole in historical-critical research on the Bible, because even the most basic results of this research become irrelevant as compared with the fact of the pronouncement of the event of revelation, the only thing on which faith depends, according to Kierkegaard. But perhaps such theologians have thus made answering the difficult historical question of fact even more simple than Kierkegaard did, precisely because they have not paid attention to the important factor of authority in communication. That is to say, it seems quite questionable whether, under these circumstances, faith still needs the contingent fact of revelation as an event, or whether the way of existence of fear and desperation disclosed only through the revelation, according to Kierkegaard, cannot be shown also simply by an existential analysis of being.

This truth about human existence becomes apparent, to be sure -at least according to the assertion made by the theologians, an assertion which can hardly be attributed to the philosophers-only by way of the historical fact of Christian revelation, which, to be realized, must also be historically conveyed. But the revelation no longer gains its compelling truth and validity solely through its paradoxical contingency as an historical fact which is represented in the likewise paradoxical historical intermediary position of church, teachings, apostolate, and ministry, but also by proving itself to be justified and valid in the existential analysis of the structure of human being. The historical intermediary position thereby loses its "authoritative" significance, and that means for Kierkegaard its significance in forcing the decision between offense and faith. The fact of revelation answers in its significance the findings of the analysis of the structure of human existence. It proves necessary, as a matter of fact, to put human existence into motion by translating it from mere potentiality, shown in the philosophical analysis, into reality. But the communication of knowledge need no longer be effected by authority since it can now appeal to man's potential understanding of existence. It now needs only to become historical tradition, and that happens anyway after the communication of the revelation has been introduced into church history. And all that remains of Kierkegaard's offense at the fact of revelation is a misunderstood remnant: the acceptance of this communication must result completely without reasons. An entirely arbitrary sacrificium intellectus has been made of "offense" in the specific meaning which this concept has for Kierkegaard: impact with the eternal which has now become history. All those historical intermediaries have thereby lost their specific dogmatic meaning. It is still factually held, of course, that knowledge of Christian truth about human existence is brought about through those intermediaries, but after this has happened, this knowledge can be divorced from its source, because it is legitimized by the existential analysis of structure or, in Kierkegaard's terms, by retrogression into human "memory." Those historical intermediary positions not only become thereby meaningless, but they are actually dangerous to the believer, for they could become cause for "obscure superstition." 28

If Kierkegaard had ended his dialectics at that point in the "Dialectic of Communication" where those theologians ceased to follow, he would have spared himself a number of difficulties.
He would then, of course, have had to stop after he had described the problem of existence as an ontological problem and could not have gone on to consider it as a problem of real existence. And in respect to theology, this would have meant that he would never have come into conflict with the teachings and pronouncements of the Church. He did not want this conflict, to be sure, and approached it with fear and trembling. But he could also have spared himself this if it had been possible for him to set aside the eighteen hundred years of Christianity with all its burdensome tradition- as those theologians did simply with a new academic interpretation-and to make them irrelevant by applying St. Paul's w? m of I Cor. 1:29 ff., the "have as if one had not." Kierkegaard could not do this if only for the reason that he recognized the history of enduring Christendom as his own history and was therefore no longer in a position to examine it with the customary theological detachment. He saw all too clearly how the authority of the Christian message had been lost, and therefore he had to begin there.

However, it is indeed most surprising that the very man who concerned himself with the restoration of authority in Christian communication tried quite consciously in all his literary work to manage without that authority. To understand this one must consider the fact that he lived in a situation in which that authority had been misused and through misuse completely corrupted. In such circumstances he considered it possible to draw attention to: authority and to point out its significance only if he, in an emphatic way, did not make use of it himself. In this indirect dialectical manner he actually made the most effective conceivable use of 'authority in Christian communication in all of his pseudonymous works. As proof of this we need only refer to The Concept of Dread, of which the author says:

The present work has taken as its theme the psychological treatment of "dread," in such a way that it has in mente and before its eye the dogma of original sin;29 and, in the short introductory outline of scientific doctrine, shows that sin as a presupposition above and beyond the individual is no longer within the province of any science but is described by dogmatics as original sin. However, dogmatics is not expected to "explain" original sin, "but in presupposing it, it does explain it." 30

What matters most to the author is that "the heterogeneous origin of dogmatics," in contrast to the "scientific totality" of metaphysics,"which one could call ethnic," 31 be recognized and not obliterated as is done by most theologians. Where dogmatics gets its presupposed assertions is not explicitly stated; it is, however, implicit in the author's taking the assertions on original sin from the teachings of the Lutheran Church in order to examine them critically in comparison with the story in Genesis 3. To be sure, the author lets the human phenomenon of dread (Angst) speak for itself, but the decisive factor in his argument is that this phenomenon cannot be understood in and of itself but, with the help of the dogmatic presupposition lying outside itself, is explained as sin.

Kierkegaard nowhere else gives such a methodical account of his procedure as in this piece; but the procedure of training in Christian dogmatic assertion, which he developed and at the same time put to use here, he applied in all of his pseudonymous writings as well. In this way, without using authority himself, he demonstrated the authority of these assertions much more forcibly than the diffident theologians of his time dared, and thereby-again indirectly -he made a considerable contribution to thought on the nature and task of dogmatics. In this, of course, he never lost sight of the task of the dialectics of communication. But in these dialectics dogmatic assertions by no means become ontological categories of existence, as has erroneously been thought;82 rather they determine the existence of the communicatee to motivate him really to exist -something fundamentally different. This is what Kierkegaard has in mind when he says that the merit of his pseudonymous writings is "that he discovered the maieutic method in the
Christian," S3 and in the process maintained both the important object of knowledge and the important object of authority.

To Christian communication belongs, above all, the sermon; and for the sermon the same determining principles of communication as stated heretofore are valid. Corresponding to Kierkegaard's reproach that the theologians deny the "heterogeneous origin" of dogmatics, his reproach in reference to the sermon is that the preachers no longer dare to use the "Thou shalt" with authority.

These two defects are mutual determinants, but it is in the sermon that the damage finally comes to light because it is there the actual decision must be made. Kierkegaard says in The Concept of Dread that "sin does not properly belong in any science. It is the theme with which the sermon deals, where the individual talks as an individual to the individual." S4 Only in the sermon can it be taken into consideration that sin, with all its positiveness, is not an unalterable condition but something to be overcome; because there one is not simply speaking with man about sin but is saying to him with full authority that he himself is a sinner and that it is the forgiveness of his sins that is being pronounced to him. The sermon is not merely a communication of truth but it is something that is happening between God and man which corresponds to the event of revelation itself. Therefore, the sermon does not present the truth it contains as argument and does not appeal to the insight of the listener for its attestation but it exerts authority in addressing him.

Authority is a specific quality either of an apostolic calling or of ordination. To preach simply means to use authority; and that is exactly what is completely and utterly forgotten in our times.35

> But the same ministers who, in their sermons, do not dare to exert the authority of their office (which they would have to do above all in respect to themselves, in questioning their own existence) entrench themselves in a false way behind their authority when they have to answer for their own existence. Kierkegaard's objection to the existence, or, more exactly stated, the lack of existence, I of the minister has nothing to do with the usual demand for model moral behavior or with the "devoutness" of the minister. It is much more a matter of the minister's no longer being a human "I" and I therefore not noticing that no real person can exist by the nonsense he preaches. This, of course, in so far as it is not merely comical, falls under moral categories; for the sort of laziness and thoughtlessness manifest here, which gets along without any professional moral conviction and is therefore not aware that the "I" has to take its stand in preaching, is essentially dishonesty.

However, Kierkegaard does not state the case in such a way as to require attestation of the authority of the message in the personal existence of the minister. If he did he would thereby, inIReed, disavow his thoroughly orthodox understanding of ordination.

He does, however, battle against the opposite possibility "that the speaker should thus to a certain extent cease to be an I and (if it were possible) become a thing."86 For if the minister represents only a thing about which one must not ask in relation to his own existence, the minister can no longer address another person as an existing "I" either:

So it is that the "I," who was the speaker, dropped out; the speaker is not an "I" things are being spoken about, observations made. And as the "I" fell out, so also the "thou" was done away with, thou, the hearer, the fact that thou who sittest there art the person to whom the discourse is addressed. Indeed, it has almost gone so far that to talk in this personal fashion to other people is regarded as "a personality." . . . The speech is not about me, the speaker, it is hardly I that speak, it is merely a reflection, and it is not to thee, the hearer, it is spoken; it is a reflection.

Whether I do what I say is none of thy business, it scarcely is my business, for surely I owe
to myself the same consideration I show to every other man, not to indulge in personalities; whether thou, the hearer, dost do what is said is not my business, scarcely is it thine: it is a reflection, and at the most the question is whether the reflection contents thee.37

Kierkegaard told the readers of the pseudonymous works with increasing clarity and sharpness that such "sermons" without authority were no sermons. Furthermore, not stopping there, he did what seemed to follow logically and himself preached in his Edifying Discourses, which were concurrent with the pseudonymous works and which, as the work progressed, increasingly fulfilled his requirements for a real sermon. Some of these he himself delivered in church. In these discourses-whose significance for Kierkegaard's work is generally overlooked-he actually gives with his right hand what with his left hand he gave only in an indirect way and with ironical detachment in the pseudonymous works. That his heart is in these works is shown in the often repeated prefatory remark: "to that individual [hiin Enkelte] whom I with joy and gratitude call my reader."

Kierkegaard himself, however, always emphasized the fact that these discourses were not "sermons," because a sermon must have a preacher, and the author had no authority to preach.38 Actually, in these discourses, in exactly the same way as in the pseudonymous works, he lays unmistakable claim to the importance of authority in Christian communication-in the pseudonymous works by calling upon dogma, in these citing the Biblical text and using it as argument in the way he does-and thereby stays in line with his dialectics of Christian communication. Why did he then consider it so important that the "discourses" not be regarded as "sermons"? This can be understood in the same way as his unauthorized use of the authority of dogma in the pseudonymous works:

Kierkegaard, in view of the misuse of the sermon by preachers, does not want his "discourses" called "sermons"; this is in itself an indirect criticism of church sermons that is basically much sharper and more scathing for those who understand it than all that he later said directly against the sermons of the ministers. So the pseudonymous works flow into the "discourses," as Kierkegaard himself said in Two Discourses at the Communion on Friday in 1851:

A gradually progressing activity as a writer, which had its beginning in Either/Or, seeks here its definite point of rest at the foot of the altar, where the author, who personally knows best his imperfection and guilt, does not by any means call himself a witness for the truth, but only a peculiar sort of poet and thinker who, "without authority," has had nothing new to bring but would read the fundamental documents of the individual, human existence-relationship, the old, well-known, from the fathers handed down-would read it through yet once again, if possible in a more heartfelt way.39

But in his dialectics we have one last step to go, a step which for Kierkegaard became more and more significant. This step concerns the material in these dialectics on the communication of knowledge. Kierkegaard is, after all, not a missionary to the heathen, but must instead introduce Christianity into Christendom, where, though the communication of knowledge has long since been made, it seems no longer possible, because of the misuse of authority, to force the decision between offense and faith by means of this communication. Since the communication already made cannot be unmade, all of Kierkegaard's efforts are now directed toward revitalizing this communication of knowledge dialectically. In so doing he calls into question the false authority under which the communication is concealed in order to restore genuine authority.

Kierkegaard's wish that his "discourses" not be considered "sermons" is therefore by no means a mere strategy; but he poses in all earnestness the question of whether one must not preach against Christianity in order to recreate the authentic situation between offense and faith.
Therefore he gives to a "Christian Discourse" of 1848 the sub-title: "Thoughts Which Wound from Behind-for Edification," and says in the preface: "The Christian cause is in need of no defense, it is not served by any defense-it is aggressive; to defend it is of all misrepresentations the most inexcusable-it is unconscious crafty treachery. Christianity is aggressive; in Christendom, as a matter of course, it attacks from behind." 40

Not only did the pseudonymous works increasingly become attacks from behind but, moving in the same direction, Kierkegaard doubled his demands of the dialectics of communication in respect to the sermon. The importance to him of the dialectics becomes particularly clear in his criticism of Luther, which comes back repeatedly to the point: "Luther was no dialectician; he always saw only one side of the matter." 41 He sees in Luther's sermons especially the dialectical weakness of calling for humble endurance on one Sunday and on the next Sunday offering solace instead of doing both at once. In discussing this, Kierkegaard refers to a passage in Works of Love in which he treats of the difficulty of saying dialectically opposite things at the same time and adds: "But I cannot emphasize strongly enough: this is not an easy thing. I have now drilled myself constantly in this, and yet I can often catch myself digressing in an un-Christian way." 42 In the same passage in Works of Love *a he says that Christian speech should be like "handing another person a terribly sharply whetted two-edged sword:" that is to say, speech "must always make offense possible." For it must be remembered that one is now speaking in a Christendom sunk "in the spell of delusion," where the situation is no longer as it was when Christianity came into the world and could in itself be recognized as containing the possibility of offense. Now it no longer suffices that this possibility be contained implicitly in the form of presentation for the listener to discover; instead, it must be communicated directly and explicitly as a constant warning that the hearer cannot directly accept what is said and thereby receive grace but must be guided into following Christ. The ideal requirement of Christian speech-which Kierkegaard himself said he had never achieved in spite of years of practice-consists in this: at the very moment in which it offers Christianity it must also directly make clear the possibility of offense. Therefore, it must not only talk about the listener's situation between the twin possibilities of offense and faith, but must place him in that situation-and in order to do this it must first create that situation.

It is obvious that more is involved here than merely a practical theological problem in the technique of preaching. The demands made of the sermon are doubled dialectically in such a way that practical difficulties arise with which even the high degree of dialectic skill of a Kierkegaard cannot cope. It will be noticed that he not only attempts to put to use these ideal requirements of Christian discourse in such discourses themselves, but he then voices them again in the form of a discourse about proper discourse. He himself thereby unintentionally reduces his requirements to an absurdity, and at the high point of his dialectics he achieves exactly what he wanted to overcome: talk about offense. However, since in his dialectics the prime concern is method, this defect in method must be indicative of a weakness in the argument itself. The weakness probably lies in the fact that Kierkegaard, in an attempt to make the authoritative Christian message of the sermon more authoritative with the maieutic method of discourse, had to sacrifice that which had until then been decisive for him, the important object of authority by which the fact of the revelation is attested as historical fact. There remains then nothing more except that the communicated truth, already dialectically duplicated in the form of communication, should be duplicated once more in the person of the communicator. The speaker must force the decision between offense and faith by expressing the communicated truth in his own existence. This has the further consequence that the "communication of knowledge" along with the object of
authority is abandoned. Between the communicator and the communicatee there is no longer anything which, outside and regardless of the existence of both, is true and valid. The truth is a way of existence on the part of the communicator, which, to be sure, according to his assertion, owes its reality to the event of revelation. But that "historical nota bene," which protects the revelation from becoming a general eternal truth and prevents the communicatee from searching for this truth in his "memory," is no longer there.

In so far as he accepts the communication and believes it the truth is for him his own real existence, which corresponds to that of the communicator and in turn, therefore, to that of Christ himself. So the believer becomes contemporary with Christ in such a way that all the historical mediators such as church, teachings, apostle, ministry, etc., lose their significance. And the necessary next step is then the radical demand: "It is a question of no more and no less than a revision of Christianity; it is a question of obliterating eighteen hundred years as if they had never existed"; for all that they have brought is not only irrelevant to faith but is a constant obstacle to it. Thus, the way from the dialectics of communication to Kierkegaard's last great attack on Christendom is formally clear.

But at the same time, all this has another side-its content. We call attention once more to his criticism of Luther's "undialectic" sermons. What Luther cannot do is announce simultaneously the summons to follow Christ and the offer of grace. And Kierkegaard attempts to outdo him and to rectify this defect by means of a communication of the Christian message which is to make it impossible for the communicatee to receive grace without at the same time being led to follow Christ. Kierkegaard knows the right sequence of grace and the following of Christ, of course: "Heterodoxically one must say: conversion precedes and determines the forgiving of sin; to be orthodox one must say: the forgiving of sin precedes, encourages the person to be converted to the truth."45

But because he tries to do the dialectically impossible-to bring about both at the same time and in such a way that the receiver cannot misuse grace-he is practically forced to invert the sequence.

For this reason also the much discussed question of the right relationship of grace and the following of Christ in Kierkegaard's works is difficult, or rather, impossible to answer. As long as he is making statements on teaching everything is in accord. But one cannot say the same of Kierkegaard's dialectics of communication as a whole. When we consider the thrice-repeated, solemn preface to Training in Christianity-which was so extremely important to Kierkegaard-with its admission by the editor that he could not live without grace, no one will doubt that it also applies to Kierkegaard's personal existence. But he said of the second edition of the work, which appeared during his battle with the Church, that it would have been better if the preface had been left out.46

That he could even consider such a possibility is thoroughly characteristic of the insoluble problems in which he had involved himself dialectically: for him the refuge in grace is there now as before.

But are others to be deprived of it, because they are not ready to make the "admission" in the way Kierkegaard demands? And if they should make this "admission," what could then hinder them from turning precisely this into the most cunning form of self-vindication? If it is still true, as Kierkegaard asserted earlier, that the "knight of faith" can look like a narrow-minded townsman, one can hardly prevent a narrow-minded townsman from passing himself off for a knight of faith. And it is just possible that he is. If Kierkegaard wants to prevent the misuse of grace, then he has no alternative to establishing outwardly perceivable criteria for judging the following of Christ-above all for judging the lack of the same -which then automatically become
requirements for grace; thus the relationship of grace and the following of Christ is reversed.

Hence, the overthrow of formal method in Kierkegaard's "Dialectics of Communication" has its counterpart, as far as content is concerned, in an insoluble confusion of the relationship of the following of Christ and grace. The laying aside of eighteen hundred years with all the historical intermediary positions of church teaching and pronouncement leads to a kind of "contemporaneity" with Christ in which it is no longer merely a matter of overcoming historical distance but in which every single Christian must become a Christ himself.

In retrospect, the question arises as to whether this last reversal in Kierkegaard's "Dialectics of Communication" does not go back to a mistake in setting up the problem. As we saw, Kierkegaard treats Christian pronouncement as a special case of general dialectics of communication and then proceeds from the fundamental difference between communication of knowledge and communication of ability; Christian communication comes under the second heading. But he says incidentally of communication of ability, almost as if it were self-evident, that one could also define it as a communication of "ability-to-feel-obligated." In this difference between ability and ability-to-feel-obligated lies the whole problem of the relationship between the following of Christ and grace, between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Kierkegaard was, to be sure, very well aware of this-it was, in fact, his basic concern, not only in his works but in his own life. But the question remains whether, by treating Christian communication simply as a special case of the dialectics of communication of knowledge and of ability, Kierkegaard does not make it impossible for himself to grasp the difference decisive for Christian pronouncement and must therefore end with a dilemma in respect to the sermon and the teachings of the Church.

NOTES

1. XI2 A 32.

2. X3 A 121. [Incidentally, he did not publish it-and never intended to. This Journal entry bears the title: "Something Poetic: A man inserts the following as an ad in the daily paper." -Eds.]

3. X5 A 18.


5. X1 A 566.

6. VHP A 465.

7. Xs A 635.


10. The Concept of Dread, p. 1771 (IV, 32207.). Cf. H. Diem, "Dogmatik und Existenzdialektik bei S0ren Kierkegaard," Evangelische Theo-
11. VHP B 79-89.

12. VHP B 88, p. 177.

13. VIIPB8213.

14. VHP B 8529.


17. Cf. the difference between the problem of the existentiel in Kierkegaard and the problem of the "existential" in Heidegger referred to by Heidegger in his Sein und Zeit, 1927, p. 235, n. 1; cf. also H. Diem, Dogmatik, Ihr Weg zwischen Historismus und Existentialismus, 1955, p. 23 ff.

18. Hans Jonas, particularly, gained quite a few followers for this movement through his "Die hermeneutische Struktur des Dogmas" in Augustin und das paulinische Freihheitsproblem, Göttingen, 1930; cf. H. Diem, Dogmatik, Ihr Weg zwischen Historismus und Existentialismus, p. 27 ff.


24. "Of the Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle" in The Present Age, p. 159 (XI, 124). The same quotation can be found in On Authority and Revelation, p. 117.
27. Philosophical Fragments, p. 87 (IV, 295).
31. Cf. The Concept of Dread, p. 18 ff. (IV, 323 ff.).
32. I.e., by Wilhelm Anz.
34. The Concept of Dread, p. 14 (IV, 320).
35. The Present Age, p. 1490 (IV, n8n).
38. Postscript, p. 244 (VII, 260).
39. This quotation, together with the Two Discourses for which it is a preface, is in For Self-Examination, p. 5 (XII, 313).
41. X* A 394.
42. X1 A 651.
44. IX A 72.
45. VII A 167.
47. VIII2 B 83 and 8529.
If one reads the replies of Kierkegaard's contemporaries to his last writings (the attack upon the Church) and compares them with the reactions one hundred years later, there appears to be a similarity on one point: almost all the reactions express either scandalized or apologetic astonishment. It can be established that Kierkegaard's contemporaries, because of their proximity to Kierkegaard, took his critique of Christendom much more seriously than is done today, without, however, their having known very much about his previous writings. A modern reader has the advantage of having access to Kierkegaard's Journals, which not only deny the allegation of his contemporaries—that he was a heartless man but provide a singular opportunity for tracing the development of his thought. The difference between the reaction of his contemporaries and the modern reaction to Kierkegaard's attack on the Church is best observed in the fact that, while his contemporaries referred to Kierkegaard with a certain respect for and recognition of his brilliance (not least out of fear of his reply), today he has become a virtual "topic" about which one can retain a scholarly neutrality; if any personal factors appear in a modern critique they have the dubious advantage of being without "contemporaneity," which played such a large role in Kierkegaard's thought. Because of this, many critics either put forth a clumsy condemnation or, what is worse, dismiss him with a modern psychiatric diagnosis without bothering to find a coherence in his thought as a whole.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the relationship between the final part of Kierkegaard's work and his previous writings. Some are of the opinion that Kierkegaard was influenced by foreign thinkers;1 others find that there occurred an unconscious shifting in his thoughts and conceptions.2 The present inquiry will point out a definite coherence in Kierkegaard's thought as a whole, which, of course, does not revolve around a single point but develops throughout his work, and which does not abandon its premises. It is apparent that the attack upon the Church, as the last period in Kierkegaard's authorship is called (although it ought to be referred to as "the challenge"), has its roots far back in Kierkegaard's work as an author. His basic intention: "My task is to revise the definition of a Christian," 3 as he expresses it in The Instant, points back to the dialectical, poetical plan of Either/Or. Of course, one must not naively assume that Kierkegaard conceived in advance a master plan for all of his writings-Kierkegaard also underwent a development. A development presupposes a continuous line and a faithfulness to premises; this is the case with Kierkegaard, as will become apparent when we trace the development of the thoughts in the final works of his literary production.

In order to avoid a misunderstanding, it is important to keep in mind the avowed purpose behind Kierkegaard's literary activity as he himself understood it. He calls himself a corrective. What does he mean by this? For Kierkegaard, a corrective is a deliberate exaggeration, calculated to call forth a reaction. As Kierkegaard says, it would be very easy to include the reaction in his work, but thereby his message would become entirely ineffective. From this point of view,
Kierkegaard can hardly be reproached for his final exaggeration, a sharpening of the problem, since it did not occur unconsciously or by mistake; on the contrary, it was intentional. In 1853, at the time when he realized that "the Christian requirement must be proclaimed," he also perceived that "the next generation will constantly need an 'opposition' to the corrective." 4 In Kierkegaard's journal entries themselves we find an oscillation from the one extreme to the other, and it would be a mistake to consider the individual thoughts as completed or undialectical, as if they were his final words on the matter; he himself realized this: "Dialectical as my nature is, it always looks as if the opposite thought were not present—but just then it comes forth strongest." 5 In other words, Kierkegaard knew the answers to his demands, and his apparent one-sidedness in the authorship proper was entirely deliberate by virtue of the above-mentioned motives.

The Christian requirement which Kierkegaard proclaims precipitates a revaluation and underlining of the New Testament message concerning the imitation of Christ, suffering, dying unto the world, "the cloister," asceticism, martyrdom, and grace. Kierkegaard is aware of the problem as early as Part II of Either/Or, where the ethical pseudonym expresses himself negatively on mysticism. The Postscript's watchword, "All honor to the Middle Ages," disposes of the cloister movement and asceticism as childish religiosity; but as early as the spring of 1845, after hearing a sermon warning against asceticism, he perceives that asceticism is precisely that which his age lacks.6 After 1847 the thought of the imitation of Christ appears in Christian Discourses and thereafter both in the authorship proper and in the Journals. It is easier to trace the connection of these thoughts in the Journals, as is done here, because of a longer pause in the issuance of the published works.

At first we find Kierkegaard hostile, as Protestants traditionally are, to the idea of the imitation of Christ, but gradually, through the development of his own thought and with the New Testament as his authority, he comes to a deeper understanding of it. (His readings in the mystics along with accounts of mysticism, which he began around 1847, seem to have provided him with historical material but not to have influenced his appraisal of mysticism. We shall not concern ourselves with that here.) He begins to be preoccupied with the question of whether the demand for imitation is equally binding upon all men or merely upon a few. His answer to the question is similar to Thomistic teaching7 (although there is nothing to indicate that he was familiar with it): the demand applies to all men, but only those few who undertake it freely are bound by it to a special degree.8 When, in that work which is attributed to Johannes Tauler, Die Nachfolgung des Armen Lebens Jesu Christi, Kierkegaard comes across a comment on the classical Thomist distinction between the evangelical counsels and the evangelical commands,9 he recognizes it as his own thought which he had previously expressed: the requirement is for all although it is only fulfilled by him who is a Christian to an extraordinary degree. It is interesting that in 1847, while Kierkegaard speaks against "the penance of the Middle Ages" as a meritorious bodily self-torture 10 and deprecates asceticism, he nevertheless advises acting according to this principle. It is evident that only the concept of its being meritorious is condemned, not the action itself, which is the renunciation of the world, for he can write:

.. . Such a person understands that he must constrain himself a little, but gradually God helps him, the man himself assisting, to renounce everything for the sake of God. ... It is each person's own fault if he has not wanted to let God help him in this respect. . . ,M

He begins to be increasingly preoccupied with asceticism, "the cloister," and renunciation of the world, and the apparent conflict between Christ as Pattern and Christ as Redeemer becomes unavoidable. In 1849, when Kierkegaard is becoming more and more insistent on contemporaneity with Christ as a crucial factor in the imitation of Christ, it does not escape his notice that the concept of the imitatio Christi, unless properly handled, must conflict with the
dogmatic understanding of Christ's death as effecting man's salvation. Without abandoning the category of contemporaneity, and thereby the demand for imitation of Christ, he holds that it is easier for men to become Christians since Christ's death, because of its expiation for sin, than it was in the days of his flesh; thereby acknowledging the correctness of the doctrine of reconciliation. But it is his intention to be merely a corrective; therefore his age will hear from him only the proclamation of "the other side of Christ, that he is the Pattern." We can see that the deliberate one-sidedness in Kierkegaard's final action is already being worked out at this time.

The concept of self-denial, however, is not yet clarified in Kierkegaard's thought. He dismisses "scourging" but does not inquire about its purpose; he approves of asceticism as "a reduction of the necessities of life to a minimum." It was because of Christianity's hostility towards life that paganism called it odium generis humani." This charge is true, says Kierkegaard, and to him it appears so terrifying that he dares not proclaim it openly. The reason behind his restraint is his uncertainty about imposing the severest Christian demands-poverty and chastity-upon all men. It is the God-relationship which determines this, and he who does not have a direct God-relationship is not permitted to be an exception.

Therefore, in 1849, Kierkegaard's own basic point of view comes close to Thomism. He insists on the imitation of Christ (asceticism and strict self-denial), which holds good for all men but is not unconditionally binding upon those who do not have a primary God-relationship. The demand for imitation must nonetheless be proclaimed to his age as a remedy for the age's complacent reliance upon salvation as the sheer gift of Christ.

In the following years, while searching for his own place in Christianity, Kierkegaard reflects upon the exterior signs of imitation. He realizes that an authentic God-relationship cannot avoid leaving its visible mark upon a man and that this is what must be brought to the fore; for we have had a little too much, he says ironically, of this hidden inwardness. The distinctive mark of imitation is not the act of being a bloody sacrifice, but an inward suffering, a bloodless martyrdom, which because of its isolation is the most dreadful of all. This is the suffering encountered in the process of "dying unto the world," a theme earlier stressed, for example, in Works of Love; it must now be seen under the category of contemporaneity with Christ. In accordance with his own dialectical method Kierkegaard now leaves out of consideration Christ's death as a saving factor; therefore, asceticism is evaluated positively as a true worship. Authentic imitation is emphasized and differentiated from a mere outward imitation, a copying of Christ's life. The purpose of asceticism is distinguished from the outward performance: "Christ did not teach poverty as an end in itself, but poverty for the purpose of witnessing to the truth."

In the manner characteristic of dialectical thinking, we are again confronted with the problem of the relationship between imitation and divine grace. Here the problem takes on a new dimension; Kierkegaard realizes that although "grace" has been badly misused by his age and "taken in vain," as he puts it, nevertheless it cannot and must not be omitted from the proclamation. But who has the right to proclaim it? asks Kierkegaard. Only he who himself belongs among the true imitators. It is obvious that here Kierkegaard makes the authenticity of the proclamation and its content dependent upon the proclaimer's personal God-relationship. But what is grace? It is simply this: that a person has permission to die unto the world and be saved. When it is understood in this way, God's grace awakens thankfulness in a person, and it is precisely thankfulness which eo ipso leads to the imitation of Christ. It comes about because of joy. Therefore, this kind of imitation has nothing in common with a legalistic demand for imitation binding upon everyone.

During this period (1850-1851) Kierkegaard is not thinking of grace as that which Christ's
death means for men seen from the point of view of dogmatics; he conceives of it as thankfulness on the part of men, a thankfulness called forth by God and operative in the subjective side of the human God-relationship. But the objective side, "Christ as gift," comes forth again and takes its place in that ordering of things which costs Kierkegaard so much inward struggle, especially because of the recognition of his own helplessness ("I am not able to do it"), Kierkegaard holds fast to this division until the end, although later he swings dialectically from one side to the other. The sequence for the progress of the Christian, according to Kierkegaard, is as follows:

I. Imitation, in the direction of a decisive action, whereby the situation for becoming a Christian comes into being; II. Christ as gift [the response to which is] faith; III. Imitation as the fruit of faith.

Imitation as the first step, i.e., in the direction of self-discipline and asceticism, must occur through the person's own free decision, in order to "develop a sense of the need for grace" and ethically to "keep order" within Christendom. This distinction between the two types of imitation—a figurative or token one for beginners and then the stricter dying unto the world appropriate to "that individual" who has received grace and acts on the basis of it, motivated by a eucharistic joy—permits Kierkegaard to keep the severe demands of imitation from falling upon all men. The real "dying unto the world" occurs only by virtue of faith and grace. But the question of whether all are called to be Christians in the proper sense of the word Kierkegaard answers in the affirmative, since everyone can bring himself into the situation in which he becomes aware of his need of grace. It is a question of volition whether or not a person will set forth on the path to Christianity. This thought emerges even more strongly later on and is part of the background against which the final part of Kierkegaard's authorship must be seen.

The exact nature of "dying unto the world" Kierkegaard examines thoroughly. In 1852 and 1853 he is considering anew the connection between the imitation of Christ and grace, understood subjectively and objectively, both as an invitation to follow God's will and as the saving death of Christ. He again comes to the conclusion—through personal suffering and reflections on his role as a Christian—that God's grace to man must be understood as God's mercy, which does not, however, demand the impossible of man.

Life itself was not demanded from those whom Christ healed. It was only the apostles who, because of their immediate relationship to God, were able to endure superhuman sufferings. We see that the real dying unto the world emerges again, but dialectically and at a distance, because it is maintained that only an immediate relationship to God gives a person not merely the possibility but also the permission and the strength for the severe imitation of Christ. Ordinary individuals can only guess God's will for them with the help of their understanding (and herein is also my responsibility, says Kierkegaard). It would be presumptuous for someone to act as if he had an immediate relationship to God unless in fact he had one. On the other hand, "that individual" who does stand in a direct relationship to God is exempted from listening to his understanding, which, after all, would almost certainly be opposed. In his earlier published works Kierkegaard asserts that Christianity is contrary to the understanding. We can see that this assertion is now significantly revised—though only on the existential plane and not with respect to the object of faith. It applies only to the apostles, the distinctive Christian imitators. It follows necessarily, says Kierkegaard, that the New Testament, which sets forth these severe demands, cannot be normative for all men. We see that once again he finds himself in proximity to the Thomistic distinction between two ethical planes. Kierkegaard reckons himself among ordinary human beings (in 1853); if God demanded martyrdom of him, which is the proper and final form for dying unto the world, this sacrifice would not be the result of his own will and therefore not his responsibility; but without a direct God-relationship, which
Kierkegaard claims he lacks, he has no right to become a martyr. So there must be "grace in the first place; if not, I must either go literally out of my mind, or else despair." 8T

The idea of Christ as the Pattern takes shape along with these reflections. Kierkegaard considers it naive of the Middle Ages to have wanted to set up Christ as the pattern for all men, since at best they could only copy him in externals.38 Christ cannot be the pattern in a literal sense of the term because of his qualitative difference from mere men. Since the New Testament nevertheless demands imitation of the Pattern, grace is necessary. Luther also stressed this, although he reduced the demand. Nor can an apostle be the pattern in a literal sense, because other men lack his qualification, his special God-relationship.39 Nevertheless, Christ as Pattern must be stressed!-because, confronted with the Pattern, a man learns to recognize his helplessness and thereby is led to pray for grace.40

This thought is the background for Kierkegaard's little essay entitled "Armed Neutrality" 41 which was never published. He sees his task as an author to present the ideal picture of what it means to be a Christian. He himself is not a Christian "raised to the second power," as he puts it, but even if he were it would be a secret between himself and God. Kierkegaard thereby defends himself against the objection that a person who does not call himself a Christian can hardly instruct others about Christianity. It must also be pointed out that certain entries in the Journals indicate that Kierkegaard himself attempted an exercise in asceticism. He gave it up, no doubt because of a certain feeling of solidarity with his fellow men.42 In the fall of 1853 we learn that he had been living an ascetic life for a year and a half in order to test himself; but he became disappointed. Asceticism seemed to his dialectical intellect like "sophistry." Furthermore, Kierkegaard was clearly afraid of winning recognition: "Dare I give all my efforts a worldly end and win worldly advantages by preaching Christianity-which is the renunciation of the world?" 43

From 1853 on, the problems develop in the form of reflections on Christianity's place in the world. Kierkegaard's greatest objection to the mediaeval mind is that at the same time that it broke with the world it also fled from the world; thereby it avoided persecution and, on the contrary, gained recognition and respect. (The historical correctness of this conception is another question.) The task of a Christian (in the strongest sense of the term) is to renounce the world and at the same time remain in it and be sacrificed. But Kierkegaard's age renounced the world, yet remained in and of it.44 Therefore: "Back to the cloister, from which Luther broke out!" In other words, back to asceticism and self-denial:

"Enough of reducing demands! It's time they were increased!"

Faithful to his earlier understanding of the steps involved in the Christian life, he insists on "first of all, asceticism (that is, gymnastics) and then the witness to the truth, and that, quite simply, is a (Christian." 4B The mutual relationship between man's effort, grace, and the real imitation (renunciation and dying unto the world) is the same as he held it to be previously, but now the picture of renunciation is painted in more vivid colors and in several shades.

Christianity is-and wills-heterogeneity, separateness from the world;46 therefore, a man must renounce the world47 in which he lives a sinful existence because of the Fall. The Fall has degraded man, and the degradation continues endlessly through repetition.48 The Fall called forth God's punishment; man was cast out of Paradise. Therefore, this world is referred to quite logically as a penal establishment. What is worse, a collective defense against God prevails in this prison: the Christian concepts have been adulterated and Christianity's suffering has been replaced by enjoyment.49 But besides being a penal establishment, the world has another function: it serves as a place of examination. Man is examined in this existence "for eternity." If a person wants to pass the examination he must suffer, because the positive relationship to truth
brings with it eo ipso suffering 50-particularly the specific Christian suffering which consists in coming into opposition with other men.61 We see that this thought corresponds exactly with the description of the disciples' relationship to the world in Matthew 10. Therefore, the meaning of life, according to Kierkegaard, is to be found in the possibility of suffering. One cannot avoid suffering when the eternal and the temporal collide. Suffering is, therefore, the distinctive mark which indicates that the collision has taken place.52

Suffering arises in human nature which contains two elements animal and spirit. The animal element, which was previously called nature or the temporal, must be checked and transformed;55 that is to say, the true Christian will obstruct the propagation of the race. "In which respect dost thou desire to propagate the race, is it qua animal-creature? Or qua spirit-man?" asks Kierkegaard; and he answers: Propagation has nothing in common with a spiritual person; therefore, a Christian ought not to marry.54 Kierkegaard by no means turns this demand into a law; he seeks merely to purify the concept "Christian." This becomes apparent when he asserts that a person who has the most fervent wish to imitate Christ completely simply cannot think about getting married, for love towards God excludes sexual love, eros. Eros is the expression for the highest form of human egoism-and Christianity is in mortal combat with egoism.55 Apart from any other considerations, "a Christian has absolutely no time to marry." 56

Therefore, Christianity means literally the end of the world. To the objection that, if everyone remained unmarried, man would become extinct, Kierkegaard replies ironically, "What a pity!" 57 Christianity should act directly to terminate the continuation of the world; this is its task. Therefore, it is appropriately called odium generis humani. Kierkegaard emphasizes Christ's words about the single state being the highest (Matt. 19:12), and only grudgingly does St. Paul permit marriage (I Cor. 7).58 Therefore, Kierkegaard reproaches Luther for de-emphasizing the demand and turning Christianity into Judaism 59 by picturing the Gospel as a mild teaching about an earthly happiness which awaits the man who becomes a Christian. Fruitfulness and propagation belong to Judaism where those who fear God are happy and blessed and where the promises apply to this earthly life. But Christianity's kingdom is not of this world.60 God is not determined as spirit in Judaism, therefore man receives his reward in time. But "in Christianity God is spirit and therefore so terribly severe-out of love; for he demands that man also be spirit. . . The God of Love is more severe than the God of Law." But the reason for this difference between Judaism and Christianity lies in their differing orientation to eternity. Essentially Judaism is the temporal without the eternal; in Christianity everything is directed towards eternity.61 Established Christianity is not Christianity at all, but merely a "refined Judaism," 62 or "Judaism with the admixture of adulterated Christian ingredients." 63

This development of thought is absolutely logical. On the basis of statements in the New Testament, Kierkegaard asserts that when a person chooses eternity, the temporal ceases to be for him. The fact that there arose a Church after the death of Christ testifies, according to Kierkegaard, to the continued existence of Judaism.

Fellowship is not possible in Christianity itself, he says; every person is a "single one" (Enkelte). Christianity is, therefore, absolutely unsocial. Only the temporal unites, for "the thought of being sacrificed does not establish a society." 64 The apostles formed a society because they had already reduced the demand. They were entirely willing to be sacrificed, but they hoped it would not be necessary.

They wished to preserve the temporal along with the eternal.65 We see how the category of the "single one" as a formal designation for a Christian is consistently carried out to the most austere conception of Christianity. Christianity wills the end of the world; therefore a church is merely a new Judaism and, viewed from the standpoint of true Christianity, an impossibility.
Kierkegaard's contemporaries had already interpreted his final appraisal of Christianity, which they knew from The Instant and the corresponding newspaper articles, as expressing a distinction between two types of Christianity: a mild and a severe, ideal form.

In a rather confused article Pastor Fog6 put forth this interpretation, which Professor Rasmus Nielsen casually mentioned in his defense of Kierkegaard.67 In one of his rough drafts for The Instant, Kierkegaard protests strongly against this interpretation; his public answer comes in The Instant, No. 5.69 According to the New Testament, says Kierkegaard, there is only one kind of Christianity. It is no use popularizing Christianity by fabricating two or more softened versions of it, for in so doing, the struggle against the temporal is evaded. If we compare this with Kierkegaard's thought in Training In Christianity, for example, where he still defends "the Establishment" (which, however, he retracts in one of his newspaper articles ː), we see clearly how the dialectical purification of the concept of Christianity continues. Earlier, Kierkegaard had also meant to retain marriage and the possession of personal property within the compass of the concept "Christian," if only one took refuge in grace. These too are now cast aside as belonging to Jewish religiosity. It must be admitted that a reader might easily receive the impression, particularly from the Christian Discourses, that Kierkegaard actually does allow two types of Christianity, similar to the double moral standard of Roman Catholicism: one type for the apostles and the other for ordinary men.

Eventually, however, he realizes that the Establishment must also be attacked from the Christian standpoint.

Kierkegaard draws support for his demands from the New Testament. His interpretation of the New Testament does not change but is clarified gradually. He also goes through a process of maturation-like so many theologians. One aspect of the New Testament is emphasized and placed in the center of the stage-everything depends upon which prevailing theology it is that determines one's assumptions and reactions-and all other aspects are thrust aside to the periphery. Unlike Luther, who had underlined the principle of faith and Pauline theology, which had been neglected by his age, Kierkegaard emphasizes the imitation of Christ carried out in works, and he chooses the Synoptic Gospels over and against St. Paul-who himself was not the Master, only an apostle. He speaks about contemporaneity with Christ, not with the apostles-that would have led him back into the Church. Thus he stresses the imitation of Christ and ignores the practice of the apostolic Church which in his judgment reduced the demand. He expresses his view of the New Testament most clearly in a rough draft for an issue of The Instant: Even the apostle was guilty of wanting to win the crowd and placing a value on large numbers, whereas becoming a Christian concerns the "single one," the extraordinarius. The apostle gave way to the human, which continued its intrusion into Christianity in such a way that today Christianity is entirely overcome by the temporal, nay, it has disappeared. Men are Christians in name only. They are unable to fulfil Christianity's severe demand. Kierkegaard takes as an example the requirement of remaining unmarried: when the crowd "could no longer endure it," they all married, and finally all these many "Christians," those "who could not decide to obey unconditionally," became like a power over the apostle. Kierkegaard interprets as a prohibition of sexual cohabitation a passage in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:27-28): "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." The context of Kierkegaard's remarks shows that he is attempting an elaboration of the Old Testament commandment that the sin of adultery has its origin in man's desire and intention, in human nature. Contrary to the usual practice,
Kierkegaard here identifies the idea of "coveting" with that of adultery, as he finds that Christ himself has identified them in this saying. If this is correct, Christ's teaching must indicate a double opposition to the Old Testament commandment, a revaluation not only of the idea of adultery, but also of sexual covetousness, which was permitted in a matrimonial form in Judaism. Yet the greatest proof of Christianity's decay is the prodigiously large number of Christians. Even the desire to preach Christianity to others is ill-fated. The only thing about which a person ought to inquire is whether he himself will become a Christian.

The New Testament Christianity with which Kierkegaard supports his demand is therefore the testimony of the Synoptic Gospels. It is based upon Christ's utterances themselves, upon logia, not upon the testimony of the apostles—but this reciprocal love, which has to do with intensity, not extensity, is the basis of all the sufferings of the imitator, according to Kierkegaard, and it leads unmistakably to martyrdom. The Pattern points the way to martyrdom; it is the Christian's destiny. Because of the distinction Kierkegaard maintains between the Gospels, which he stresses, and the Epistles, which he relegates to a subordinate position, he is able to maintain that the New Testament emphasizes the imitation of Christ more than the efficacy of Christ's saving death.

Kierkegaard's conception of the nature of suffering and sacrifice also undergoes a development. The emphasis upon the process of dying unto the world apparently diminishes. The emphasis shifts from ascetic purification to suffering, which arises when a person is persecuted for the sake of Christianity. In 1855, we find Kierkegaard denouncing monastic asceticism, understood as spiritual exercises, as being non-Christian because it is not the most severe form of suffering. The most terrible suffering of all is persecution; it is the specifically Christian suffering which has Christ as its Pattern. At first glance it looks as if asceticism for Kierkegaard were an impermanent stage which is superseded by the suffering a person undergoes for the sake of Christianity. But if we ask what actually is this Christian striving which is capable of calling forth persecution and which at the same time is the distinctive mark of the Christian life, we come back again to renunciation and dying unto the world. The suffering which a person endures in dying unto the world is now considered inferior to the suffering which accompanies persecution, but it necessarily precedes the latter and prepares for it. Thus, being a Christian becomes the "most terrible of all agonies," and it can only be compared with a human vivisection: the person is continually dying.

Thus dialectically armed, Kierkegaard enters into his final action, the occasion for which, as is well known, was Professor Martensen's characterization of the late Bishop Mynster as a "witness to the truth." Kierkegaard formulates his plan of action in this way: "The whole problem must be dealt with radically, the terrain must be cleared, it must be made thoroughly evident that Christianity does not exist." The final part of his career, the challenge to official Christianity, must be viewed from two perspectives. In the first place, he assumes that all are aware of Christianity's adulteration, but they will not admit it openly. Therefore, there exists a silent agreement among them that no one shall admit it out loud. On the basis of this assumption, Kierkegaard demands an honest confession, an admission about the real state of affairs. His task, as he conceives it, is to expose the fraud and demand honesty. But this must be viewed in connection with another aspect of the problem, namely that becoming a Christian is, according to Kierkegaard, a question of will. As late as September 23, 1855, while The Instant was being published, he writes:

Only a "man of will" can become a Christian. For only a "man of will" has a will that can be
broken. . . . [Man] has obtained a new will . . . which no longer is his own will, but with the passion of his own broken will-radically altered-he wills another's will. The possibility of becoming a "man of will" is present in every man.88

A person must be aroused to will Christianity; God makes use of this act of willing. It is man who wills, but God gives content and direction to the act and binds a man to obedience. But how is "will" awakened in a person? Through training. Here we see that Kierkegaard turns back again to the practice of asceticism without, perhaps, calling it asceticism.

What does Kierkegaard's demand to his age mean when it is viewed from these two perspectives? On the basis of The Instant and the newspaper articles—which are calm and serene in comparison to the attack in the Journals-only the first demand for an honest admission of the situation appears. Through a description of both the loftiness of the ideal and reality's relation to it Kierkegaard wishes to open men's eyes and obtain from them an admission that they are living infinitely removed from the Christianity of the New Testament. As was shown at the beginning, he intentionally poses the problem stringently; he sharpens it and makes it one-sided. There is not a single positive statement about Christ as a gift of grace! But a corrective, as Kierkegaard calls himself, must be one-sided. In the discussion of Kierkegaard's attack on the Church it has already been suggested that he had a pedagogical aim.89 It is certainly true beyond any shadow of a doubt that Kierkegaard consciously and methodically, like an inspector or a policeman,90 leads men through self-knowledge to a positive relationship to New Testament Christianity. In this he is faithful to his usual method of finding men where they exist and leading them toward a definite position, using the resources and thought forms available from their own sphere of existence.91

But the fact that in the published writings of the attack on the Church Kierkegaard makes use of his own journal entries indicates that if he had lived longer he would undoubtedly have continued his pedagogical advance with the publication of his final thoughts as well, demanding not merely an admission, but also a deliberate decision for Christianity. A person who has made the admission must necessarily ask himself what he must do next-one cannot live indefinitely on an admission. It is also Kierkegaard's express hope "that there . . . might again be individuals who could endure New Testament Christianity." 92 He undoubtedly thinks of "the admission" only as a signal for decision, a deliberate decision for Christianity on the part of an individual. It is the duty of the Christian "detective" not only to detect the forgery but also to arrest the forgers and lead them back to God.93 Unfortunately, Kierkegaard's death cut short his work as an author before it was completed.

If one uses the term "pedagogical" with reference to Kierkegaard's final challenge, it must be construed in accordance with his understanding of the term: A person should be shocked (scandalized, offended) by the absolute loftiness and severity of the ideals—and this will provoke a definite reaction. This is the onesided task of the corrective which was pointed out in the beginning of this essay. But if the admission had occurred, and if Kierkegaard had lived longer, it would have been necessary for him, according to the rules of his own dialectic, to return to the demand for imitation. Then, employing a different pedagogical approach, he would have spoken of the actual way to Christianity, as he speaks of it in the Journals. Then he would have called for asceticism and the preliminary imitation designed for a strengthening of the will, then again the need for grace, and finally the severe imitation.

If we allow this speculation about what would have followed from where Kierkegaard left off, we cannot avoid the supposition that it would have been necessary for him to go the way of the apostles and take notice of Christ's words: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matt. 28:19). Kierkegaard himself emphasized that the evangelical message applies to all men. Ought one to allow the masses to remain ignorant of Christianity? By no means. But then
Kierkegaard would have had to revise his view of the masses. Precisely by virtue of the pedagogical aim, steps must be taken to bring the crowd under control—not for the purpose of salvaging the temporal but for the purpose of giving the crowd, through preaching, a possibility: the possibility that at least some of the individuals will separate themselves from the crowd and become Christians in the proper sense of the term.

When the crowd is subjected to evangelization in this way, will it not be natural to protect the true seeds of Christianity against the temporal and "the world"—in a cloister, for example? Various historical solutions are to be found for the problem of the relationship of the masses to Christianity, whose severe demands the masses are not able to fulfil. There is, for example, the Roman Catholic Church's wise and pedagogical doctrine of the double moral standard and its doctrine of the spiritual guaranty for the crowd of believers, which is secured through the Church's authority as the corpus mysticum Christi. There is the Danish Grundtvigian rescue of the helpless man with the help of the sacraments.

There is also the Lutheran "charge the bill to grace." One can also see a remarkable pedagogical solution in the case of the old Unitas Fratrum in Bohemia, where, in resemblance to the primitive Church, no distinction was made between two kinds of morality, but rather between two grades of membership in the Church.

(The Reformed Churches have not particularly troubled themselves about solving this problem.) But the question of what Kierkegaard would have done must remain unanswered. He wished to be a corrective and to proclaim the highest, the true Christian ideal; therein he perceived his task. When he is compared with other Christian prophets, Kierkegaard must be considered among the ranks of the mystics, for it could be shown that their ideas of self-denial and imitation coincide in many respects with Kierkegaard's own.94

Kierkegaard's message may be summarized as follows:

In the ecclesiastical situation in Denmark in the middle of the last century, Kierkegaard found a Christian hypocrisy. The Christians enjoyed this worldly life in "Jewish" fashion; and they confused the happiness of this world, which is the reward of those who fear God in Judaism, with the Christian promises. At the same time, quite as a matter of course, they counted on being saved by Christ. Kierkegaard perceives that what the age needs is a personal effort on the part of every individual, a striving towards becoming a Christian. This must be a personal effort towards the imitation of Christ, beginning with asceticism and proceeding to a general strengthening of the will and after that to the actual dying unto the world in the strength of God's grace.

The relationship between grace and the imitation of Christ goes through various phases of dialectical development. By emphasizing the Synoptic Gospels at the expense of the Epistles, Kierkegaard describes "pure Christianity," which in itself brings the end of the world. At any rate, it obstructs the propagation of the race in the case of the individual Christian when he does not marry. The picture of Christianity which Kierkegaard presents publicly is characterized by suffering to the point of martyrdom as the mark of the true imitation of Christ.

Kierkegaard's pattern of thought is undeniably logical, although, in my opinion, it does not reach its dialectical conclusion. But it contains no unconscious shifting of ideas, no distortion or perversion. If one does not want to accept Kierkegaard's results, one must necessarily alter the premises.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Eduard Geismar, Stfren Kierkegaard, Hans Lfv-
2. See, for example, Valter Lindstrom, Efterfoljelsens teology hos Søren Kierkegaard, 1956. The author of this article was herself guilty of a similar misunderstanding in an article in Kierkegaardiana, 1955.


4. Attack upon "Christendom," p. 90 (X1 A 640); Journals, No. 957 (X1 A 658); X8 A 62; XB A 106. [The Journal entry X1 A 640 deserves to be quoted in full: "He who must apply a 'corrective' must study accurately and profoundly the weak side of the Establishment, and then vigorously and one-sidedly present the opposite. Precisely in this consists the corrective, and in this too the resignation of him who has to apply it. The corrective will in a sense be sacrificed to the established order. If this is true, a presumably clever pate can reprove the corrective for being one-sided. Ye gods! Nothing is easier for him who applies the corrective than to supply the other side; but then it ceases to be the corrective and becomes the established order."-Eds.]

5. X1 A 246. This can be considered as an explanation of what Kierkegaard means by the term "dialectical": an interaction between a thought, or a one-sided extreme, and the correspondingly opposite extreme.

6. Journals, No. 517 (VI A 39); cf. VHP A 403.

7. Summa theologica, la Ilae, Q. CVIII, art. IV; Ila Ilae, Q. CLXXXIV, art. III.

8. VHP A 572.

9. VHP A 587.
10. VHP A 116; cf. 126.
12. X1 A 132.
14. Journals, No. 889 (X1 A 156).
15. X1 A 156.
17. X1 A 547; cf. 644.
18. X1 A 155.
19. X1 A 485.
20. X2 A 644.
22. X3 A 303.
23. X3 A 171.
24. X3 A 342, 401.
25. X3 A 776, 767.
26. X3 A 409 et passim.
27. X3 A 278.
29. X4 A 293; cf. 291 et passim.
30. X4 A 459.
31. X4 A 369; cf. 366.
32. X4 A 656; cf. 412, X5 A 53 et passim.
33. Journals, No. 1288 (X5 A 89).
34. Cf. the first of Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises: "Has a man the right to let himself be put to death for the truth?" In English this is to be found as a supplement to The Present Age, p. 77 ff. (XI, 67 ff.).
35. X» A 95.
36. See also the study included in this volume by P. Cornelio Fabro, which traces a development in the relationship between faith and reason in S.K.'s thought and compares Kierkegaard's later position with the Thomistic solution of the problem.
37. Journals, No. 1289 (Xs A 96; cf. 101).
38. E.g., X5 A 103, X3 A 776, XB A 88.
39. X5 A 88.
40. Ibid.
41. Journals, No. 1029 (X5 B 107).
42. E.g., Journals, No. 1294 (X5 A 85, 86, 146).
43. Journals, No. 1294 (X5 A 146).
44. X« B 235.
46. XI2 A 165, 172 et passim.
47. XI1 A 102, 143 et passim.
48. XI2 A 201.
49. XI1 A 289, 291 et passim.
50. XI1 A 353, 363 et passim.
51. XI1 A 563, XI2 A 341.
52. XI1 A 377, 357 et passim.
53. XI2 A 149 et passim.
55. Journals, No. 1386 (XI2 A 151, 154). The Journals entry provides only a brief excerpt.
56. XI2 A 231.
57. XP A 153.
58. XP A 295, 313.
59. XP A 572.
60. XP A 151 et passim.
61. XP A 299.
62. XI2 A 131.
63. XI2 A 241.
64. XI2 A 10; cf. 14.
65. Ibid.
67. R. Nielsen in Fazdrelant, No. 8, Jan. 10, 1855.
68. XI3 B 102.
70. Attack upon "Christendom," p. 54 f. (XIV, 78 f.).
72. XI3 B 175.
73. Ibid.
74. I Cor. 7:9.
75. XI» B 175.
76. A church tradition, still represented, for example, in G. Kittel's Theologisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament, I, 771 f., explains the word gyne (woman) as "another man's wife." On the basis of this tradition, Kierkegaard's understanding of the text is rejected, e.g., by Eduard Geismar (S.K., VI, 43). But there is no philological basis in the text for this interpretation. Logically, the situation very well may involve an unmarried woman and a married man. The Old Testament refers to all sexual cohabitation outside of marriage as adultery. Furthermore, Kierkegaard's interpretation is much more correct when one stresses the basic intention of Christ's saying, his extension of the conception of sexual sin. The question remains as to whether covetousness itself is a sin, or whether the sin is dependent upon the sinner's lawful or unlawful relationship to the object. It is not without interest to read the interpretation of the text in the commentary on Matthew by Hermann Olshausen (Biblischer Commentar I, 1837, p. 220), which
Kierkegaard had in his library; it speaks of covetousness in man's heart in general, not of "another man's wife."

77. XI3 B 175, p. 292.

78. Kierkegaard did not make use of New Testament textual criticism. He was obviously not interested in the dating of the manuscripts and the origin of the Gospels. Cf. Postscript, pp. 25-35 (VH> 15-25). From his point of view it is tragi-comic to think that it was the early Church which composed the Gospels.

79. XI1 A 414.

80. XI1 A 462 et passim.

81. XI2 A 86, p. 93.

82. XI2 A 396.

83. XI2 A 392.

84. XI2 A 422.

85. XI2 A 21, p. 23.

86. XI2 A 85.


88. XI2 A 436. Cf. XI1 A 400.

89. Cf., for example, Per LIsInning, Samtidighedens Situation, 1954, p. 273.

90. Journals, No. 1401 (XI2 A 36; 250).

91. Cf. Point of View, p. 27 ff. (XIII, 568 f.).


93. XI2 A 36.

94. I hope to be able to publish such an investigation later.
XVI

THE COMPLEX OF PROBLEMS CALLED "KIERKEGAARD"

BY NIELS THULSTRUP
Translated from the Danish by Margaret Grieve

It is frequently asked whether anything still remains to be discovered about Søren Kierkegaard. A comprehensive literature already exists with his name on the title page in one or another connection, and hardly a month passes without the addition to this of new books. Both in the Scandinavian countries and in the world at large editions and translations of his works, his posthumous papers, and now also his letters multiply like rings on a pool of water.

Widely differing introductions to his works are to be found in a great number of languages, and it is only right that such introductory guides should be prepared for new readers. Scholarly treatises appear in such numbers in literary, philosophical, and theological journals and as separate books that critical surveys of the research made into Kierkegaard have become as great a necessity as the Geschichte der Leben-Jesu Forschung or the history of the research into St. Paul, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, and Kant.

Would one not be justified in thinking that the subject must soon become exhausted? Have not Kierkegaard's life history and personality been studied in such detail by biographers, psychologists, and psychiatrists—in fact turned completely inside out—that no one wishes to hear any more about this somewhat unbalanced or at any rate inveterately introspective and indefatigable writer from the incurably bourgeois Copenhagen of the nineteenth century?

Have not his ideas been so often examined, reported, summarized, and criticized that there is now a danger of repetition, superfluous variations to the point of triviality on a well known theme?

Such remarks are often made by people who are not interested or who protest openly against any form of contact whatever with Kierkegaard. These questions do not arise either for the ordinary reader of Kierkegaard, the individual reader whom he valued so highly, or for the specialist or research scholar. They are aware of problems which cannot be solved by evasion, and they know what it means to make even the very slightest progress in understanding the vast and complex problem Kierkegaard presents.

At the heart of this problem are the works of the man himself.

Behind stretch their many varied antecedents, psychological, literary, and otherwise. Together they form the early history of the works. In front lie their dissemination and influence, which are equally varied and have continued right down to the aesthetic, philosophical, and theological debates of our time. Here we are confronted with three problems which no research scholar would be so bold as to maintain have as yet been solved completely and satisfactorily.

Every reader who has tried even once, with greater or less profit, to study a work of Kierkegaard's will have perceived that the writer was undeniably a polemist. He wrote continually in protest. This applies not only to the period of the attack upon the Church; all his previous vast achievement, including both the pseudonymous works and those issued under his
own name, is critical. He rebelled against late romantic aestheticism, against idealistic and particularly Hegelian philosophy, and against bourgeois Christendom, placing in their stead what he finally called "The Christianity of the New Testament."

It is obvious that if Kierkegaard's works are approached without some previous knowledge of these various intellectual and spiritual movements and their representatives, the reader will certainly find much in them which he cannot understand. Knowledge acquired from an ordinary popular textbook is not sufficient, nor is it any help to know Kierkegaard's adversaries only through his own descriptions of them. This would be almost the same as trying to understand the thought of Aristotle and the scholastic philosophers only through Luther's comments on them. A special detailed study is usually required if a genuine and thorough understanding is to be obtained not only of everything that Kierkegaard refuted but also of everything that he himself advocated. All this belongs to the antecedents of the works. Even to discover and appreciate all the specific antecedents of a single work requires considerable and extensive research. Without a detailed knowledge of speculative psychology as it was at that time and of certain books by J. E. Erdmann and Karl Rosenkranz, to name only two writers, it is hardly possible to understand fully such a work as The Concept of Dread. If certain treatises in a number of neglected theological and philosophical journals are not studied, some details in Philosophical Fragments which the reader may think he understands will not in fact be understood, since he will be ignorant of the situation and context in which they were written. In short, we must know and read what Kierkegaard knew and read if we are not to be satisfied with only a partial understanding or complete misunderstanding of the works in question.

The works are central, and the problem or task is the same for the ordinary reader as for the specialist and research scholar, namely, to proceed from an understanding of each detail to an understanding of the whole, and again from each work to the author's whole achievement, so that an attempt can be made to place that achievement in still larger fundamental, systematic, or historical contexts. Analysis must precede synthesis; but complete understanding of an individual work, its purpose and the method used to realize that purpose, is also of decisive importance for a correct interpretation of its detail. The justice of this point of view can be illustrated particularly well in the case of Philosophical Fragments.

The principal theme of the book is the relationship between philosophical idealism and Christianity. It begins with a summary of the Platonic conception of the way in which man finds the right relationship to the highest truth. For experimental purposes the Christian view is placed in juxtaposition to the Platonic and the consequences of both are developed, with the result that the relationship between philosophical idealism and Christianity is shown to be one of complete contrast. While explaining this fundamental relationship, Kierkegaard reveals his attitude to the problem-first raised by Lessing in the religious and philosophical discussions of modern times-concerning the relationship between revelation and history, and to the problem-which had become particularly topical in his own time because of the interpretation given by Hegel and his theological disciples-of the relationship between revelation and reason. Kierkegaard, however, does not deal with the problems in the above order. The question propounded on the title page plunges us immediately into an examination of the problems as raised by Lessing; the preface leaves no doubt as to the author's attitude toward speculative idealism; and in the first chapter of the book we are given, as a formal point of departure, an extremely brief exposition of Platonism, i.e., philosophical idealism, and its doctrine concerning the way in which man finds the right relationship to the highest truth.

In order to obtain an even relatively adequate understanding of the historical background to Philosophical Fragments it is necessary to begin where its author began or, better still, slightly
further back with Leibniz's distinction between "rational truths" and "empirical truths," for it is on this distinction that Lessing bases his polemical writings on religious history. It is equally necessary to know the essential features of the philosophical and religious thought of Kant, Fichte, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Strauss, and Feuerbach, and, in particular, their attitude to the problem raised by Lessing. Strauss's quotations from Lessing drew Kierkegaard's attention to the problem, which he then placed in a wider context.

He explained his attitude to the right wing Hegelians in the preface to Philosophical Fragments and in so doing returned to his sources, namely, Plato as the father of idealism and the New Testament as the earliest testimony of Christianity. These are the general historical antecedents of the work, and a detailed analysis can be given of the part they played in determining its purpose and construction. To antecedents in a more restricted sense belong the studies and reflections which Kierkegaard elaborated, often with the execution of his literary plans in mind. Mention must be made in particular of his studies in the history of philosophy in the years 1842 and 1843.

Nevertheless this knowledge, which must be regarded as indispensable for an understanding of the work as a whole, is not sufficient for an understanding of its detail. It is often important to know about significant variants from the completed work in Kierkegaard's drafts and manuscripts. Similarly, it is important to learn what factual knowledge he had about various thinkers, philosophical and theological movements or problems on which he gives an opinion in Philosophical Fragments. Here it is particularly important to know his attitude to German speculative idealism and its various exponents, including the Danish disciples of Hegel. These are the special literary antecedents of Philosophical Fragments, its historical present and immediate past. Plato, Aristotle, and the sceptic philosophy of the ancients do indeed belong to the general antecedents in so far as western philosophy is incomprehensible without them, but because of the manner in which they are included in the dialectical argument in this one particular book of Kierkegaard, they must be regarded here as special antecedents.

Once these various antecedents are established, once the purpose, method, and composition of the work are grasped and its detail analyzed and understood, it is possible to try to place it in a wider context. In this case there are two possibilities: first, the context of Kierkegaard's own achievement; and second, the context of the history of philosophical and religious thought. In the latter instance the dissemination and, in particular, the influence of the work can be followed up to the present day. A book such as N. H. Søe's Religionsfilosofi (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1955) can be regarded as a characteristic—though by no means unique—example of a modern work written under the decisive and positive influence of Philosophical Fragments. One would be justified in mentioning all dialectical theology in this connection.

What has been said here about one particular work of Kierkegaard's applies equally to almost all his writings. The problems in them, however, though fundamentally the same, differ in practice to a great extent. In spite of the work of three generations, hardly any specialist would maintain that this enormous mass of individual problems has yet been solved, and these are still only the purely historical problems within the complex "Kierkegaard," which is here taken as a general designation for the collection of works which fill a total of thirty-five volumes in modern scholarly editions.

There are three aspects to the problem: a historical aspect, which has been discussed above, a systematic aspect, and one which concerns criticism. The first two are closely connected while the third borders on the problem which can be called the application or the actual significance today of Kierkegaard's ideas in philosophical, theological, and literary debates.

Although it is obvious that Kierkegaard plays a decisive role in modern existential thought,
be it philosophical or theological, it is equally obvious that no man today can safely and justifiably use Kierkegaard's thoughts as points of departure or as positive or negative links in his own posing and arguing of the problems unless he is fully clear about what Kierkegaard himself meant. It is not difficult to ascertain that several modern thinkers, even some amongst the most famous, discuss the validity of Kierkegaard's ideas on the basis of a very fragmentary knowledge of them, often acquired from translations which cannot be regarded as entirely reliable. Application and criticism presuppose in principle a systematic interpretation, which in turn is closely linked with a purely historical, objective, and unbiased examination and understanding of Kierkegaard. It is necessary to begin with this, and as historical research rests on primary sources, study must be based on scholarly editions of these sources.

Kierkegaard's writings in Danish fill thirty-five volumes, which contain his "Collected Works," his "Papers," and his "Letters and Documents"; this enormous collection is for us identical with Kierkegaard. In recent years the scholarly activity of editors of Kierkegaard has entered a new phase with the publication in Danish of Vaerker i Udvalg ("Selections from the Collected Works" in four volumes, Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1950), which are provided with an ample introduction and notes. This line has been continued in special editions of individual works provided with introductions and commentaries, which began with Philosophical Fragments (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1955) and has been pursued first of all with the Concluding Unscientific Postscript. Similar editions are to be found in Germany, and others are being planned.

As previously mentioned, an extremely large number of individual works on Kierkegaard have appeared in the last twelve or fifteen years. There have been short introductions to his life and philosophy, detailed studies of both the man and his work, special treatises in journals, and surveys of research work. Few Danish writers, including those now living, have been discussed in recent years, even in daily papers, to the same extent as Kierkegaard has.

If this collection alone were taken and read and the question again raised of whether a satisfactory solution has not at last been found to the problem "Kierkegaard" (the separate aspects of which have been briefly described above), or whether this research has not at least made such important contributions towards an understanding of the problem that the goal is now within sight-if this question were asked the reply could not be a simple yes or no. A fuller answer would be required, which would in turn require substantiation, and were this undertaken it would be seen that considerable problems still exist for Kierkegaard research to solve.

The historical problem has been suggested, the systematic and critical aspects merely mentioned. It is obvious that Kierkegaard's works are bound by a thousand threads to their period in history.

His choice of words, his manner of constructing an argument, the literary examples, the adversaries, movements, theories, and trends which the works attack-all are to a great extent determined negatively and positively by his times. It is the natural task of research to unravel this tangled web. As previously mentioned, a beginning has already been made with the notes attached to his works, posthumous papers, and letters, and with the much more comprehensive special editions containing extended notes and commentary.

If the most recent introductions and larger works dealing with the whole subject are studied, it can at once be seen that the authors have taken this aspect of the problem too lightly, if they have not chosen to ignore it altogether. It is also they who-presumably in good faith-see Kierkegaard's age through his glasses alone. On the other hand, valuable contributions have been made towards clarifying certain points in various special treatises, but this is far from sufficient. This applies in particular to Kierkegaard's relationship towards thinkers who are less well known
in our own day, but even his relationship to famous philosophers, theologians, and poets is in
great need of closer study. An unusual thinker such as Hamann had a profound influence upon
Kierkegaard, and the spiritual affinity of the two has long been recognized. Kierkegaard also
steeped himself in the writings of the equally unusual thinker Baader, and his relationship to
Schelling has not been properly understood simply because people can quote his famous outburst,
"Schelling drivels unbearably" (in Letter No. 70 in Breve og Akstykker vedr0rende S0ren
Kierkegaard, Munksgaard, 1953). Neither is the significance of Schleiermacher's influence upon
Kierkegaard fully appreciated. Even Martensen undoubtedly had a positive influence upon him in
certain respects, which Kierkegaard himself did not care to admit, and his attitude towards the
master of speculative idealism, Hegel, is a very long and complicated story. The now almost
forgotten Danish disciples of Hegel and his school, such as Beck, Stilling, Adler, and others,
must also be included in the field of vision, and so one could continue at some length.

The systematic interpretation of Kierkegaard's thought, the analysis of each individual
color and group of concepts, has in recent years been the aim of research to a far greater extent
than ever before, at least in the Scandinavian countries. On the whole, these systematic
interpretations, which can be classed according to their particular purpose and method, are
influenced to a high degree by the author's allegiance to one or another theological, philosophical,
or literary movement or school. This means that liberal theological interpretations of
Kierkegaard's conception of Christianity are now to be found side by side with orthodox Lutheran
interpretations, that expositions exist in which Kierkegaard's thought is fitted into an
Aristotelian-Thomist or into a Neoplatonic type of system and that existential theological
interpretations are found beside interpretations showing Barthian, Lundensian, and other
influences. It is possible to discover a certain superficial concord on various points in these books
and perspicacious treatises, but on the profound levels there is most often discord. One scholar
will maintain that Kierkegaard's conception of Christianity is basically incompatible with the
teaching of the New Testament; another will find complete agreement between the two; a third
will take a middle way. Neither are the systematic scholars able to agree as to how far
Kierkegaard ought to be considered a philosopher or whether his thought really belongs to the
domain of theology. In a treatise upon the historical significance of his philosophy an attempt has
been made to prove that there is a similarity between this and the Platonic as well as the Kantian
or neo-Kantian form of philosophical idealism; on the other hand, in a monograph on his
conception of man, his anthropology, it is maintained that there is a fundamental difference
between the anthropology of the idealists and that of Kierkegaard.

Concepts and groups of concepts are analyzed and combined to form a cosmos, a perfect,
ordered whole. A modern research scholar knows the terminology of speculative idealism as well
as its anthropological and psychological categories and concepts. He is also acquainted with a
modern psychology and aesthetics based on biology. He has likewise a thorough knowledge of
the pseudonymous part of Kierkegaard's work in particular, and he sets himself the task of
studying a small limited section of it. The task is accomplished in such a way that the categories
and concepts in his chosen section are analyzed and placed in a reciprocal relationship.

This is successful as far as it goes; but as the writer does not know, or at any rate does not
recognize, any absolute standards in Kierkegaard's case, he is in fact unable to find a meaning in
the concepts which he examines so astutely. If, after reading some such book on Kierkegaard,
one asks oneself the straight question whether this study has increased one's understanding of at
least some part of Kierkegaard's thought, the answer must, unfortunately, be essentially negative.

There is, however, no doubt that, in spite of the basic objections which can be raised with
full justification to most of the systematic interpretations of Kierkegaard which have appeared in
recent years, much valuable work has been accomplished in certain respects by the analysis of concepts. There is a very marked difference in quality between the theological and philosophical interpretations of Kierkegaard evolved at the time of the first world war and those of our own day. The demand for accuracy has increased.

A few criticisms can, however, be leveled against almost all of them. In the first place, it must be regarded as unfortunate that these interpretations depend to such a large extent on "confessions" both as regards method and result. In extreme cases the object of research, the texts in question, are subordinated entirely to their subject, the individual interpreter. As against this it must be insisted that the method of research and the attitude adopted—in so far as it is only a question of interpretation and not of assessment—should be adjusted to suit the given object of research and not vice versa. In the second place, it should be noted that in a systematic interpretation of Kierkegaard's authorship, which is the only thing we are concerned with at the moment, the writer must constantly bear in mind and take into consideration both the stable and the variable factors.

What are these factors in Kierkegaard's authorship? They can be summarized briefly as follows:

The two stable factors in his work are:

1) the claim of the New Testament witness that the revelation of Christ is in itself the truth which judges and saves and will be so for each individual person;
2) the individual person in his concrete situation, which involves the risk of deciding for or against the truth of this claim, with the theoretical and practical consequences which ensue.

The two variable factors are:

1) the individual works and groups of works, each regarded as a whole and seen in its concrete polemical context, which is not the same in every case;
2) the development of the man Kierkegaard as a thinker, his various adversaries and interests, his changing terminology and ideas.

If due consideration is given to these factors, which are latent or apparent everywhere in Kierkegaard's works, then it is certainly quite impossible to base an interpretation of the whole of Kierkegaard's thought on a single category or concept, either on his concept of synthesis (i.e., that man is a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal) or on his conception of, for example, "the situation of contemporaneity"; but a greater understanding of the complicated truth will be acquired, which is after all the aim of all scholarly research. If due consideration is given to these factors, then difficulties arise for the research scholars who, with great erudition and perspicacity, often with pedantry and less often with brilliance, try to place Kierkegaard's ideas either in their entirety or singly in a historical context.

Criticism, or the assessment, of Kierkegaard's ideas is often closely associated with their application. It presupposes in principle both historical research and systematic interpretation. Before Kierkegaard's ideas can be criticized, i.e., before their basic validity and import can be examined, it is necessary to understand his purpose, aim, and method, his breaches and bonds with history. Critics have frequently made their task too easy by resting content with hasty, transcendental criticism. What is immanent must come first and relevant standards must be applied to the transcendental. A criticism of Kierkegaard's ideas based on a system which is totally incommensurable with them—the word "system" is not used in its speculative sense but in the sense of a symbolic cosmos formulated linguistically—has a fateful tendency to become a criticism not of Kierkegaard's ideas but of a fundamental misunderstanding of those ideas. From positivist, neo-Thomist, and existentialist quarters objections have been raised against Kierkegaard from a philosophical point of view, and the same has been done by theologians past
and present. Liberal theologians, orthodox Lutherans, and the Barthian and Lundensian schools have criticized Kierkegaard's views, objecting either to individual points or to his thought as a whole, according to each critic's interpretation of that whole.

With respect to content there is in fact only one yardstick of values for Kierkegaard, namely, the authority which he himself appealed to and quoted: the Bible, and in the Bible particularly the New Testament; similarly, with respect to form to his only yardstick and criterion are the principles of classical logic. It therefore follows that the two fundamental questions a critic can raise in connection with Kierkegaard are: Is his attitude partially or totally in accordance with or in conflict with the New Testament? And is his train of thought, starting from the initial premises and taking into consideration the determining factors mentioned above, partially or totally consistent or inconsistent? The purely historical questions as to whether Kierkegaard has, for example, interpreted one or another philosopher correctly are not matters for discussion in this connection, as Kierkegaard's attitude to the various philosophers is a given fact.

As far as actual use of the ideas is concerned, this presupposes in principle historical research, systematic interpretation, and critical assessment. It is a serious matter when, for example, Kierkegaard's criticism of the Hegelian system is taken as a criticism of logical empiricism, particularly when this is regarded not as a method but as a metaphysical system of antimetaphysical character. It is serious because the users themselves, whether philosophers, theologians, or mere agitators, who covertly or openly allege as their authority a thinker who on no account wished to be considered an authority, too seldom make sure of the precise import of the statements and views they attribute to Kierkegaard before using them.

This means that the problem presented by Kierkegaard, with his works at the center, must first be studied from a purely historical point of view, and this is the urgent task-one might almost say special duty-of Kierkegaard research in Denmark, a task which has become most important at this time when the application, criticism, and systematic interpretation of Kierkegaard's ideas are making headway and attracting attention. One must proceed from analysis to synthesis, and, vice versa, from a complete understanding of the purpose, aim, method, and determining factors of the works one must be able to indicate the position from which the detail should be regarded. Kierkegaard is bound to his age by a thousand threads, but the purpose of research is not merely to ascertain this fact in each separate instance. Personal experiences; the perusal of mythology and legends, of Greek tragedians and philosophers, of Church fathers and mystics; the study of figures such as Don Juan, Faust, and Ahasuerus; the study of Shakespeare, Hamann, Lessing, and Goethe, of the German romantic poets and philosophers, of the speculative thinkers, of contemporary Danish literature in the broadest sense—all these have been used for a definite purpose: first and foremost for discussing problems which are not merely of transient interest but always current, problems concerning the individual and his relationship to himself, his fellows, the world, and God. The way leads in two directions, from the infinitely great to the infinitely small—not in poetry but in reality, which no one can escape—and from the infinitely small to the infinitely great.

The role of the Kierkegaard research scholar is fundamentally that assigned to the teacher in the Socratic view as described in Philosophical Fragments. Only for himself can he make the decisive choice, a choice which each honest reader of Kierkegaard is compelled to make: a choice not for or against Kierkegaard, who is merely a fortuitous historical incitement to this, but for or against the highest truth which neither has been, is, nor ever will be in the possession of any human being—the truth which is proclaimed in the New Testament witness to Jesus Christ.
The centennial of Søren Kierkegaard's death brings into conjunction two things which are incommensurable. On the one hand, it evokes our personal and corporate gratitude to this man, a gratitude which is nonetheless real for all its tangible subjectivity. On the other hand, it marks an exact measurement of temporal succession, which is nonetheless significant for all its impersonal objectivity. Apart from our indebtedness it would not occur to us to number the years. Apart from chronological transience we would not be reminded of time-transcending indebtedness.

This conjunction of two incommensurable yet inseparable factors has reminded me that on both sides we stand at some distance from the thought of S.K. himself. The contour of his thanksgiving is quite different from ours, as is also his appraisal of the significance of temporal succession and measurement. It may therefore be worth our energy to explore together his understanding of gratitude and its relation to time. The justification of such an enquiry depends primarily, of course, on whether thanksgiving was in fact of decisive importance to S.K. himself. That it was is a firm conviction of mine.

Another conviction is this: that the interpretation of S.K. has suffered from a neglect of attention to such categories as gratitude.

Often the historian of ideas goes astray most radically when he ignores what was actually the inner passion of a particular thinker.

And this is what has usually happened in studies of S.K. Nothing is more constitutive of Kierkegaard's self-awareness than his thankfulness, yet few things are treated so seldom in books about him.

His thought was in constant motion away from and back toward this magnetic pole. The very center of his thought was the awareness of God-relatedness as constitutive of the self. And to him no activity was more creative or revealing of the self than the act of gratitude. I am convinced that a more discerning appraisal of this act leads to an enhanced appreciation of his mind and spirit.

Let us begin by paying heed to his own testimony:

I have had more joy in the relation of obedience to God than in thoughts that I produced. . . . My relationship to God is a reflectionrelationship, is inwardness in reflection, ... so that even in prayer my forte is thanksgiving.

Why should S.K. have had more joy in his relation to God than in anything else? Surely because to him life itself is constituted by God-relatedness. Existence as a person is impossible apart from this relationship. Nothing is more native to true selfhood, therefore, than prayer. If life is God-relatedness, then nothing creates and sustains life more directly than prayer and in nothing is life more fully embodied than in prayer. The man who reflects about this life until his relationship to God becomes "a reflection-relationship" will naturally move in the direction of giving thanks.
To S.K., therefore, thanksgiving was not the minimal act, the introductory step, the glib opening of a conversation which immediately gives place to more pressing concerns of petition, confession, absolution, or intercession. It was the end as much as the beginning, the saturating medium of petitions and confessions, the deepest fountain of forgiveness and intercession. As in his praying, so too in his living and thinking, the external visible actions were but the outward side of this inward relationship to God, a relationship dominated by gratitude.

But some will protest, "Have you forgotten the constant tension, the bitter controversy, the unremitting melancholy in his story?

Are these the marks of a man whose consciousness was oriented inwardly by gratitude?" The apparent incongruity here may stem from differing ideas of what thanksgiving really is. To S.K giving thanks is not an easy response of the heart, but one of its most difficult movements. Prayer springs not from an unreflective self but from the self concentrated in intense reflection and double-reflection. To be empowered to give thanks at all times and for every circumstance is a seal of redemption which lies on both sides of strenuous effort and profound suffering. The enemies of gratitude are most implacable, devious, and deceptive, and these enemies already hold a beachhead in man's own mind. The ingratitude of Adam can be named and exorcized only by the gratitude of Christ.

Only by the strength which is made perfect in weakness can a person become victor in a subtle struggle with Satan wherein the ultimate decisiveness of victory is completely hidden by the unobtrusive silence and the misleading triviality of the battlefield. In short, the telos and consummation of God's entire "training in Christianity" is nothing less than the full release of praise to God for his inexhaustible bounty.

It is easy for us to treat gratitude as a response of men to men, which only for the religious man and at his option is gradually extended to include God as its object. This makes it all too natural for us to treat thankfulness as relatively nonessential in defining man's selfhood. But for S.K. thanksgiving is authentic only when it expresses man's total being, i.e., his God-relatedness. God is never the third party in an act of giving thanks. From him alone comes every good and perfect gift. From him comes nothing but good and perfect gifts. It is quite impossible to grasp in any paragraph the wealth of S.K.'s discourses on this theme. This wealth lies nearest the surface, perhaps, in his expositions of the Bible, whether he is dealing with Job or with James, whether he is meditating on the Apostle Paul or the disciple Judas, whether he is analyzing the sin of Adam or the obedience of Christ.

The overwhelming and inexhaustible wealth of God's gifts surely lies behind the choice of a motto for The Point of View:

What shall I say? My words alone
Do not express my duty.
O God, how great thy wisdom is,
Thy goodness, might and beauty. [Brorson]

To S.K., however, God does much more than place man in his debt and then wait for him to return thanks. God is the subject as well as the object of thanksgiving. It is he who is active in the movement of the grateful heart. His Spirit is vocal in the Abba, in inexpressible deep yearnings, and in the whole process of reflective inwardness. Gratitude articulates simultaneously the nothingness of man and the sufficiency of God, who is at work in man to create something out of nothing. To give thanks is an expression of inwardness, and inwardness is "the determinant of the eternal in man." 9 "If every man does not essentially participate in the absolute, then the whole game's up." 10
This participation in the absolute, however, preserves the qualitative distinction between the thankful man and his God. Kierkegaard recognized that the Apostle's rhetorical questions must be answered in the negative:

Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counselor?
Who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?

On the other hand, S.K. realized that although we cannot repay God's gift, we can respond to God's gift of himself in his gift. Man can stand in fear and trembling, in trust and surrender, in repentance and reverence. These responses to God are forms of gratitude, forms in which the God who is active in the giving of thanks is one and the same God as the God to whom thanks are given.

Man can never act, even in the giving of thanks, without dependence on God who has given him not only the gifts but also the power to thank God. This is why S.K. found a childish delight in offering his whole work as the work of a spy in gratitude to God. He handed his entire authorship back to God "with more diffidence than a child when it gives as a present to the parents an object which the parents had presented to the child." He was diffident, but he was joyful because he knew that God would not be so cruel as to take the gift back and say "This is my property." 12

Man's thanks are genuine only if he makes "an honest effort... to do something by way of compensation, without shunning any sacrifice or labor in the service of truth." 1S To be thankful is to be faithful, but this faithfulness will always fuse inward seriousness which glorifies God with an inward jesting which destroys any selfimportance. The more earnest a man's response, the more must he appropriate humor to protect the God-relationship.

This welding of earnestness and humor is imperative if the grateful man is to avoid the twin traps of absolutizing the relative and of relativizing the absolute. Genuine gratitude relates a person simultaneously to the absolute and the relative, to the universal and the particular, to God and to the men he meets on the street.

Without seriousness and humor gratitude easily becomes the occasion for getting lost either in the infinite or in the finite. These were very real dangers for S.K., dangers which made genuine gratitude one true antidote to "the sickness unto death." He overcame despair by an activity of thankful faith, in which every particular gift was the expression of the one incalculable gift, every discrete "happenstance" was related to divine governance, and the relationship to every person was a particular instance of the relationship of both persons to God.

Although Kierkegaard never allows us to forget that gratitude is God-relationship, neither does he forget that this relationship embraces all of man's other relationships. In teaching a man to be grateful God employs not only the lilies of the field but also the cup of water and the neighbor. And there was one neighbor for whom S.K. was especially grateful, "that individual whom with joy and gratitude I call my reader." 1B We recall that S.K. addressed many of his discourses to that individual. We recall, too, that his Danish public found these discourses neither witty, clever, nor of great theological or philosophical significance. They took with great excitement what he held out with his left hand, but scorned what he offered with his right. We must concede that in New York as much as in Copenhagen, in 1855 as much as in 1855, these discourses in his right hand are still virtually ignored. Yet S.K.'s word remains true. He is grateful for anyone who takes gratefully what he holds out with his right hand. S.K. insisted that this reader contributes more than the author. Now, I am sure that among us there should be at least one who qualifies as "that single individual." That individual would say: "No, the author contributes more than I do. I am indebted to him." Both of these statements, of course, can be true at once-in fact, both are always true where gratitude works its miracle of abundance. Each person
is convinced that the other's contribution is the greater. Thanksgiving celebrates a relationship
which destroys quid pro quo logic and creates a qualitative increment of debt in some sort of
infinite proportion to the reality of gratitude. By gratitude to one another men participate in the
infinite beneficence of God and in the mysterious process by which the prodigal Father imparts
everything to sons who have nothing.

Gratitude, then, is a miraculous event wherein God's abundance becomes available for all
and human cups run over in glorifying God. This event demonstrates how intrinsic is the
interplay of subjective and objective factors. The act of thanksgiving is genuine only to the
degree that it is fully subjective, only when it is the act of the real self at the very roots of its
selfhood. Any retreat from subjectivity is as destructive of gratitude as it is of the self. Only as it
is my deepest embodiment of deepest indebtedness is it gratitude at all.

But the more fully subjective I become in recognizing this debt, the more fully I recognize
that it is a debt owed to Another.

Thanksgiving at its deepest level turns the most reflective self outward toward its source and
its sustaining power. The pervasive joy of the grateful heart is joy over Another's amazing grace
and unwearied faithfulness. The subjective act breaks the bonds of self-centeredness and frees the
self to obey the first commandment.

Both the reflection and the double-reflection become inherently dialectical, so long as they
spring from gratitude and produce gratitude. It is before God that an individual becomes the
individual, and the individual before God most fully is himself, most fully realizes the divine
image, most fully appropriates his vocation and his destiny, when he gives thanks to God.

It is my conviction that we are in the habit of undervaluing the ontological weight of this
gratitude. We assume that a man has the option of giving or refusing to give thanks and that
whichever option he chooses he remains the same person. His choice has little to do with his
existence, with the issue: to be or not to be. But Kierkegaard recognized a genuine ontological
reality in gratitude.

A man does not exist and then become thankful. Rather, in and through his thankfulness he
becomes a man. In gratitude his Godrelationship gives birth to a self-awareness and a
neighbor-awareness which together constitute him as a self.

Between man and God there is at once an infinite qualitative distinction and an unbreakable
bond. The prayer of gratitude appropriates and preserves both the relationship and the distinction.

The acknowledgment of total indebtedness is a simultaneous recognition of dependence and
distinction. The grateful self discovers that the synthesis of relationship and distinction is the
source not of confusion and of disorientation but of order and reorientation, the very substance of
selfhood. Gratitude discovers that the relation to the God who is qualitatively different is a
relation which constitutes the self as a self. Prayer discloses the spirit as the bond which unites
the temporal and the eternal in man, because the prayer of thanksgiving is the act of this spirit.16

Existence is bifrontal. To be as bifrontal as existence requires an existing spirit. Always
giving thanks to God means that a person is becoming this existing infinite spirit. Reflective
prayer is the supreme activity of "the subjective existing thinker." 11

An alternate way of stating this is to recall S.K.'s definition of the self as a synthesis of the
temporal and the eternal. By his gifts to man God participates in temporal things. The gifts are
temporal, but God gives himself wholly in all of his gifts. The Incarnation and the Atonement
constitute the measure in which he is present in all of his gifts. Between each of his temporal gifts
and his eternal life there is an infinite, qualitative difference and yet an unbreakable, intimate
relationship. His creative works glorify him as their Creator. None of these works is more fully
qualified to glorify him than is the creature made in his image. Man, shaped in his image,
"becomes himself" by the gratitude expressed in praise and obedience. His gratitude signals the fusion in the spirit of infinite poverty and infinite riches. The cry of thanks is the birth cry of a person who is created out of nothing. At this moment he becomes conscious of his own mysterious, miraculous existence as a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal. The act of acknowledging his dependence on God is the initial act of self-recognition.

By its intrinsic nature, therefore, the act of thanksgiving defeats various tendencies in the self to escape its rooting in either the eternal or the temporal. On the one hand is the tendency to treat the temporal as insignificant and to desire "in time to be merely eternal." But if a cup of cold water is a divine gift, if a moment of suffering yields an eternal weight of glory, then it is sinful for a man to make himself temporally as light as possible so that the weight of his eternal self may be heavier. This is a movement away from gratitude, away from selfhood, and toward a fantastic existence. Gratitude makes it impossible to equate the temporal with the sinful, for everything temporal becomes good when it is received with thankfulness. In a similar fashion the act of gratitude destroys all despairing views of time as the infinitely vanishing succession of present moments into the oblivion of the past.

On the other hand, the grateful heart will reject every temptation to escape the eternal by obsession with the temporal. It will not tolerate a worldliness which defines man wholly by temporal categories or limits man's horizons to temporal process. Nor will it accept the removal of the eternal to an abstract, distant boundary which impinges at no point on daily decisions or on the progress of universal history. Thanksgiving celebrates the presence of the eternal within the confines of the temporal. It relates man immediately to the eternal. It articulates the truth that there is more joy in heaven over one individual who relates himself inwardly to God than over a universal history which is related only externally to the eternal. Thus is man freed from enchantment with either the temporal or the eternal because he knows himself to be a synthesis of the two.

Although gratitude thus prevents any destruction of the synthesis, it does not permit man to determine precisely the boundary between the separate elements. The act of thanksgiving so unites the temporal and the eternal in man that only God is in a position to determine precisely the points where they meet. When a person tries to dissolve the synthesis he is destroying himself. He is seeking to form a conception of God in his own likeness rather than allowing God to re-form him in God's likeness. This is why a man can never trust his own ability to separate good gifts from bad, his infinite indebtedness from his immediate debts. The measure of gratitude is whether man thanks God at all times and for everything. To be thankful in these terms requires a teleological suspension of the finite understanding. This, at least, was S.K.'s experience.

In my God-relationship I have to learn to give up my finite understanding, and therewith the custom of discrimination which is natural to me, that I may be able with divine Tmodness to give thanks always.

This madness, however, is a divine madness because it is a mark of man's willingness to live in the only element which provides the proper air for his lungs. It marks the transition of the self into "the true liberation from finitude." This liberation is so amazing that the freed heart will forget its desire to dissolve the synthesis. Because the synthesis is realized through the giving of thanks, it will be preserved better by respecting the dialectical boundaries of earnestness and humor than by curious efforts of the speculative mind to assign to the two elements in the synthesis a quantitative weight.

The truth of this may become more apparent if we think for a moment of the links between thanksgiving and love. Both love and gratitude are finite expressions of an infinite indebtedness. Both are expressions of the self as a synthesis. Neither can be etherealized into the eternal or
It is bound and free to give itself away. He who loves is in debt to the beloved. By loving he comes into the relation of infinite debt. Christianity begins with what every man must become: the free, indebted lover. Love grounds man's selfhood in God's eternal telos. Listen to the parable:

When a fisherman has caught a fish and wishes to keep it alive, what must he do? He must at once place it in water. . . . Why? . . . Because water is the natural element of fish. . . . The natural element of love is infinity, inexhaustible, immeasurable. If therefore you wish to preserve your love then you must take care that by the aid of infinite indebtedness, ensnared by liberty and life, it remains in its element.

Gratitude, love, freedom—these have an ontological density which constitutes the very being of those who participate in the eternal history. Where the self remains in this native element of indebtedness, liberty, and love, there takes place the teleological suspension of the historical. For the historical restricts life to the lifespan, restricts love to one's immediate neighbors, restricts human freedom and human gratitude to temporal categories alone.

But when by thanksgiving and love the heart is bound to God, it shares in an "eternal history" which does not end with the grave.

The span of earthly love constitutes only "a very little section within that eternal history." The debt binds the debtor to a teleological history which includes the temporal and simultaneously transcends it. One measure of the teleological suspension of the historical is the transformation in the meaning of the past, the present, and the future. Let us consider the tense which was so central in Kierkegaard's own experience: the future. To him, the future is the mode by which the eternal has chosen to have dealings with the temporal.

Apart from its relation to the eternal, the future does not really exist. Yet this nonexistent future confronts man as the realm of the possible, the inscrutable, the manifold, the indeterminate. This future generates anxiety and dread. This dread, in turn, creates a false self, a self which considers itself dependent upon the contingent. Obsessed by the future, the self restlessly but vainly seeks "to force or to coax from the mystery its explanation." It becomes more and more enslaved to the temporal, less and less capable of gratitude to the eternal for the temporal. The self moves farther and farther away from itself, i.e., from the synthesis of the eternal and the temporal.

But when in faith the self accepts itself as God's creature, the future is overcome. This victory over the future is the source of freedom and love. It is celebrated by the act of giving thanks. The recognition of total gratitude transforms the self and the self's relation to the future. One's coming days remain crammed with manifold possibilities, but these contingencies are subordinated to the reality of God's promise. Expectation of the future becomes the point at which the eternal meets the self in redemptive creation. The self is reconstituted and liberated. Its preoccupation with the future is replaced by the freedom of gratitude. Thankful to God for its future, the self becomes itself in the present act of obedience and love.

How this happens may be seen if we recall that gratitude recognizes that the gift of life always moves in one direction only—from God toward man, the man who faces forward. The future owes nothing to the self; rather the self owes everything to the eternal (i.e., the future). Man has no claim on God; God's claim on man is absolutely prior and total. To the grateful man, therefore, the future is not the occasion of sin-producing dread, but the point at which God's gift prompts man's gratitude. The door through which the eternal seeks to enter is not the nameless,
boundless future, but the very real tomorrow. This tomorrow condenses the spatialized conception of the future into one Day, which is near enough to demand urgency and distant enough to demand patience. The eternal future (which embraces the whole of time) thus produces a teleological suspension of all temporal futures.

God's "tomorrow" subordinates the temporal and redeems it by filling the time with its proper content: "the eternal history of love." By gratitude man lives out of the resources of this eternal history where time is filled by eternity. By gratitude man "enters eternity forwards," and this is what S.K. means by repetition.30

Repetition is to give thanks always.

By disclosing a new future, the activity of thanksgiving discloses as well a new present and a new past. Having conquered the future, the grateful self comes to understand how the present—that vanishing atom of time—can become as well an atom of eternity, and how the past is preserved not in the present but in the eternal.

Perhaps the best example of how thanksgiving sublimates past, present, and future into the eternal is offered by Kierkegaard himself. Every day, according to The Point of View, he "ascertained and convinced [himself] anew that a God exists." Every day he repeated "my prayer of thanksgiving for the indescribable things he has done for me, so infinitely much more than ever I could have expected." By his grateful prayer he voiced his amazement "at God, at his love, and at what a man's impotence is capable of with his aid." S.K. had no fear that eternity might be tiresome,

"since it is exactly the situation I need so as to have nothing else to do but to give thanks." 31

And at the end, as he looked back over his personal story with its offenses against God, its travail, and its fruit, he wrote, ... one thing concerns me absolutely, is more important to me than the whole authorship, and lies closer to my heart, namely, to express, as sincerely and as strongly as possible, what I can never be sufficiently grateful for, and what, when once I have forgotten the whole authorship, I shall unalterably and forever remember—how infinitely much more Providence has done for me than I ever had expected, could have expected, or might have dared to expect.32

We must bring to an end a task which is endless because its theme is endless. My study has strengthened my conviction that thanksgiving was so central to Kierkegaard that no one is qualified to interpret him who does not enter into his understanding of gratitude. The study has increased my indebtedness to him by making me especially thankful for his depth-analysis of thanksgiving. It has made me realize more deeply how the present commemoration of his life and death, as a temporal item in our own God-relationship, may also contribute to that synthesis of the eternal and the temporal which is the substance of our very being.

NOTES

1.  Point of View, p. 68 f. (XIII, 599).
4.  Edifying Discourses, I, 35 ff. (III, 45 ff.); II, 27, 45 ff. (IV, 25,
41 ff.); For Self-Examination, p. 228 ff. (XIV, 293 ff.).


10. The Concept of Dread, p. 102 (IV, 423).


13. Point of View, pp. 7, 8 (XIII, 553).


17. Postscript, pp. 75, 83 (VII, 69, 78).

18. Postscript, p. 54 (VII, 47).


20. The Concept of Dread, p. 135 (IV, 461 f.).


24. Works of Love, p. 120 (IX, 171).

28. The Concept of Dread, p. 80 (IV, 396); Postscript, p. 271 (VII, 293).
29. Edifying Discourses, I, 8 (III, 21).
30. The Concept of Dread, p. 80 (IV, 396)
31. Point of View, pp. 66, 67 (XIII, 597),
32. Point of View, p. 154 (XIII, 534).
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

References in this volume to the Danish editions of Kierkegaard's 1) collected works, 2) papers, and 3) letters are to the following editions.


In conformity with international practice, references to the Samlede Vcerker are cited simply by listing the volume in Roman numerals and the page in Arabic numerals, e.g., I, 142; II, 89; III, 188; etc. References to the Papirer are cited by listing the volume in Roman numerals, one of three group-letters in capitals (A for journal, B for manuscripts and drafts, C for reading and study notes), and each particular entry in Arabic numerals, e.g., I A 33, II B 20, HI C 25, etc. When a particular entry extends several pages, a page reference is added, e.g., I B 2, p. 160; XI2 A 111, p. 118; etc. There is, therefore, no possibility of confusing a reference to the Samlede Vcerker with a reference to the Papirer, since the latter will always have a group-letter inserted between the volume and page reference. Kierkegaard's letters are cited as Breve og Aktstykker followed by the volume in Roman and the page in Arabic numerals. In this volume references to published English translations are cited first, followed by the corresponding Danish references in parentheses; where no English translation exists only the Danish reference can be given. The latter occurs especially with references to Kierkegaard's Journal ("A" entries in the Papirer), since only a small portion of this material has been translated into English.

References in this volume to English translations of Kierkegaard's works are to the following editions. The abbreviated form of the titles, appearing below in brackets, are adopted throughout the volume.


5 Christian Discourses; and the Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air; and Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays. Trans, with introd. by Walter Lowrie. Oxford University Press, 1940. [Christian Discourses]


11 For Self-Examination; and judge for Yourselves! and Three Discourses: 1851. Trans. Walter Lowrie. Oxford University Press, 1941- [For SelfExamination]


The Instant. See above Attack upon "Christendom."


See above For Self-Examination.


17 The Point of View, etc., Including The Point of View for My Work as an Author, Two Notes about the Individual, and On My Work as an Author. Trans, with introd. and notes by Walter Lowrie. Oxford University Press, 1940. [Point of View]

18 The Present Age and Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises. Trans.
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