EXISTENCE AND FAITH IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF KIERKEGAARD

by

Raymond J. Pierzchalski, M.A.

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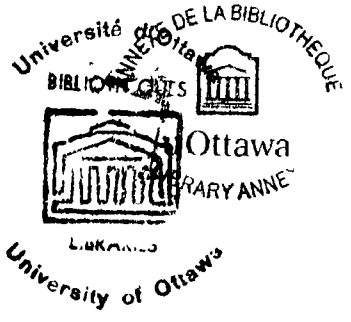

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of This Study

Soren Kierkegaard has come into English translation only recently, within the last decade and a half, in spite of the fact that he was a renown writer of his day, more than a century ago. He exerted considerable influence in France and Germany, as well as in Denmark, so that today he is acknowledged as the Father of Existentialism.

It seemed appropriate, therefore, to ask what is his notion of existence, and what is his ultimate foundation for existence. In a word, how does Kierkegaard, the Father of Existentialism, account for existence and how does he relate existence to reality? But questions like these immediately conjure up a legion of relevant notions, for instance, to mention just a few, the existence of God, the existence of creatures and the existential system.

We propose to investigate Kierkegaard's concept of existence on such related points to ascertain how Kierkegaard arrived at them, if perhaps he attained them by the one main avenue proper to man, namely the intellect. If he takes existence and isolates it, and has it, as it were, come to an essence, then his starting point or foundation for reality is as unintelligible as Hegel's, whom he criticizes, even though Hegel's initial step is precisely the reverse, that is, an essence that comes into existence, with existence always nebulously promised to be established at the end. In either case, however, such an absolute separation of essence and existence as the starting point for the explanation of all reality is unintelligible and will never account for reality, whether one starts with existence or with essence.

But while Kierkegaard may invariably reach an intellectual cul-de-sac, nevertheless he may be saved by Faith in an eternal God, Whose power is sufficient

to account for existence of human individuals and all other realities of this universe. Thus Kierkegaard may be intellectually bankrupt in relation to existence, but he may be saved from absolute bankruptcy by his Faith in an eternal God.

Therefore, we intend to investigate the foundation of Kierkegaard's existentialism, to see if it is properly rooted. We shall evaluate Kierkegaard's concept of existence from the viewpoint of the philosophy of St. Thomas Acquinas, showing that St. Thomas related all existences to Pure Act, the identity of Essence and existence, a completely self-sufficient being. We will show that St. Thomas arrived at Pure Act or God by his use of reason, an intellectual existentialism, and that the Thomistic answer to "What is reality?" is radically entrenched in the intellect. From this Thomistic viewpoint we shall attempt to pass judgment upon the existentialism of Soren Kierkegaard.

Chapter I. Introduction

B. Biography

The universe is teleological. The grass and the trees, the chicken and the horse, in fact all of reality gives evidence of purposefulness. But often enough man does not discern the direction of some created things. As a matter of fact, it is often difficult for some men to discover their own vocation in life. Yet they know that it is not inane.

Some, on the other hand, are readily certain of their vocation and pursue it earnestly. At the beginning of the last century, in Denmark, there was such a man, who felt that his certain "calling" was to teach man "how to become a Christian." He looked upon himself as the Socrates of Christianity, who was to make man "take notice of Christianity."

Soren Aabye Kierkegaard was born on May 5, 1813 in Copenhagen, Denmark. His father was a lowly sheep-herder, who eventually became a prosperous woolen merchant. It is said that his father was a melancholy man, and he long remembered the day that as a shepherd he mounted a hill and cursed God for his wretched life. However, he remained God-fearing, and repented at length for his audacity. As a young man, when Soren heard of his father's transgression, he was sorely moved, in fact he was shocked, and so he joined his parent in repentance. The shock, no doubt, came from the fact that he was reared in the strict pietistic Lutheran tradition.

At the admonition of his father Kierkegaard studied for the ministry, following the footsteps of his brother, who, unlike Soren, persevered, and even became a Bishop. Both matriculated at the University of Copenhagen. Their father died in 1838, and this event also made a deep impression on sensitive Soren, because he was profoundly attached to his parent. Later he reverently dedicated some of his writings in memory of his father. Because it was his father's ardent desire, Soren remained a candidate in Theology and even took his degree, but eventually he abandoned the idea of entering the ministry.

Chapter I. Introduction

Kierkegaard was physically frail and hence he intentionally avoided sports, but his disposition is characterized as very gay and frank. In September of 1840 he became engaged to 18 year old Regina Olsen, who was pretty, happy and bubbling over with life. She became a great admirer of Soren, so much so that she almost worshipped him. But a year after their engagement, Kierkegaard broke it. This was another milestone of his impressionable life because he then ran off to Berlin for three or four months. Incidentally, it was one of the few times that he was away from Copenhagen. Fortunately, before he broke the engagement, Kierkegaard had taken his Doctorate. His dissertation was, "On the Concept of Irony, with especial reference to Socrates."

Kierkegaard's authorship started with the publication of "Either/Or," a work of literature, as distinguished from his philosophical and ethical works. He first wrote under pseudonyms, which allowed him to criticize or defend himself. In a brief span of a few years he published ten or eleven works--religious, psychological and philosophical. Thus he was a public figure in Copenhagen, even before he attacked a politico-satirical journal, "The Corsair." In rebuttal the Journal held him up to ridicule by daily cartoons, so that Kierkegaard was even pointed at and laughed at when he walked the streets. Yet eventually he won his debate because the Journal lost most of its former prestige. But the unprincipled attacks of "The Corsair" made another deep impression upon Kierkegaard and turned him back to religion.

Kierkegaard was truly, then, a religious poet, as he described himself. His writings bear this out; they attest to profound meditation. But reading Kierkegaard's writings is not always an easy nor a pleasant pastime, probably mainly because he belabors the paradox. At times his style is very clumsy and therefore cumbersome, but at other times even in translation it is captivating. After his debate with "The Corsair" in 1845, he worked quietly and assiduously for nine years.

The final external event to change his life was the death of Bishop Mynster, whom he criticized publicly. He wrote an article protesting Professor Martensen's canonization of the Bishop as a "witness for Truth." Once again in the public eye, he then published a series of pamphlets in which he held that Christianity did not really exist in Denmark, in spite of the fact that so many called themselves Christians. He continued this agitation until he died.

In October 1855 Kierkegaard fell in a faint on the street and was removed to Frederick's Hospital where he died on November 11th. In his short life of 42 years he fulfilled his vocation. He wanted to make man "take notice of Christianity;" he wanted to teach man "how to become a Christian." He planned his vocation carefully, and as far as he was concerned, he accomplished this purpose. He said that he became as aesthete in order to capture the ears of the people. After he accomplished this, after he had their attention, he turned from literature to ethical writing in keeping with his vocation. The history of his life seems to corroborate his plan. Nothing was to stop him. Nothing, not even a vivacious pretty girl, could forestall it.

CHAPTER II

EXISTENCE

A. Word "Existentialism"

Man is a paradox, but more than that, man is an enigma because he is an unique synthesis of the soulish and bodily, spirit and matter, a synthesis which lends itself so readily to paradox, if not a whole host of paradoxical notions and expressions about man. Even a casual and hasty perusal through philosophical writings would easily demonstrate this point--such countless references to the finite and infinite, to the temporal and eternal in man, that man must die to live. Philosophers, then, are wont to dwell on enigmas, and they take special delight in paradoxical expressions. Thus they find a most fertile field when they advert to man's composite nature, and Kierkegaard took special pains to till that field.

Kierkegaard, even though he denied that he was a philosopher, was fond of the paradox, and he used it often in discussing the existence of man in Christianity. In the first place he claimed to be a religious poet who was trying to express the enigma of existence in Christianity. His life was dedicated to one proposition, "How to become a Christian," and in his delineation of that project he outlines the numerous times that paradoxical notions invaded his reflections. He points out the paradox of man's relationship to God, the finite as against the infinite, of reason trying to attain to the existence of God, the abstract as against the actual, of man's love of self and his love of God and neighbor, selfness (selfishness) as against selflessness. Perhaps it may not be out of order for a reader to think of Kierkegaard as the poet of the paradox since he dwells on such subject matter at great length.

At the very outset we want to indicate that popularly the word, "Existentialism" does not hold any one connotation, although strictly speaking one might try to defend the position that it has a proper meaning and reference. But in any

case, the recent emphasis on the word "Existentialism" is new, and yet the philosophical study of existence is as old as history. "Existentialism, the philosophical discovery of existence, is nothing new. The history of philosophy is full of it."[1]

However, Kierkegaard is acknowledged as the first poet of recent times to speak of existentialism, in spite of the fact that he would object to any reference to his thought as a system of existence, because his own thesis was that an existential system was impossible. "And so we shall here posit and expound two theses: (A), a logical system is possible; (B), an existential system is impossible."[2] But in any case, it is accepted that Kierkegaard was the harbinger and initiator of the term existentialism, even though the word has assumed or suffered diverse connotations since his own use in the early 19th Century. As Maritain states, "As to vocabulary, it is commonly known that it is chiefly owing to the influence of Kierkegaard that the word existential has become part of current speech, particularly in Germany."[3]

Is it not strange how the Fates also love to have their joke. Here for instance, Kierkegaard, who almost seemed to overwork the paradox in his writings, is the victim of their jest, because everyone assigns the word "Existentialism" to him, and the "ism" implies a system. Thus the man who toiled so hard to prove that an existential system is impossible goes down in history as the father of just such a system. Of course, he is a victim of man's passion to classify things and to put tags on them, frequently enough with little regard for the propriety of the tag. And so it is that the word "Existentialism" has various applications with reference to different philosophers. For instance, Thomism may be called an

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[1]Gustav E. Mueller, "Existence and Existentialism" in The Personalist, Vol. 34, No. 1, Jan. 1953, pg. 26.

[2]Soren Kierkegaard, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript", Translated by David F. Swenson. Princeton University Press, 1944, pg. 99.

[3]Jacques Maritain, "Existence and the Existent". New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1949, pg. 2.

intellectual existential system, just as Kierkegaard's philosophy is identified as an ethical existential system.

Truly enough then, Kierkegaard was the first to use the term repeatedly, and yet he never defined it in detail. "Although modern existential philosophy largely derives from the thought of Kierkegaard, he himself never precisely defined the term. But he stated what existence implied for him."[1] Similarly anyone who expresses his views on existence and dwells at length on the subject is an existentialist, regardless of divergence of his tenets from those of Kierkegaard or anyone else.

It was not too surprising, nor entirely humorous then to read an Associated Press bulletin recently when it reported that

> warring factions of the existentialists clashed in Paris' Latin Quarter in what one group called "Operation Mothball." The aggressive forces were neatly-groomed youths who rode through the district in taxis, pelting mothballs and spraying with disinfectant the long-haired, sloppily-dressed Bohemians who crowd the cafes of the Quarter. The group conducting "Operation Mothball" claims the unshaven contingent in blue jeans and sandals are not true existentialists, but fakers.

This report seems to smack, on the one hand, of the flavor of existentialism presented by Jean Paul Sartre, and on the other hand, of opposition to Sartre, and indicates that widely divergent views are ardently espoused, with mutual deprecation of each other.

Much confusion may easily dwell under the same aegis. The greatest difficulty created by loose interpretation of the term today is the fact that existentialism includes within its scope systems that admit the reality of God, as well as those which exclude Him. The span of connotation is even much wider than the broad scope of a term like "Scholasticism," which DeWulf found so difficult to define.[2] Certainly this is true of modern existentialism because the name is apparently

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[1]Edited by Donald Attwater, "Modern Christian Revolutionaries." New York: The Deven Adair Co., 1947, pg. 21.

[2]Maurice deWulf, "Scholasticism Old and New," Translated by P. Coffey. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1907.

applied without propriety. To us it seems that no system of thought can be existential unless it is founded on that which is always existent, and yet God is found wanting in the tenets of some modern existentialists, Jean Paul Sartre being the most illustrious exponent of this faction.

While it is true that Kierkegaard was the first to use the word, "Existential" and use it extensively, yet he never defined it precisely. This, therefore, left the gate wide open, so to speak, for all who treated of existence to be called existentialists. But it hardly seems to be an appropriate term for any philosophy that abandons God to be called existential, because without God as the source of existence none at all is possible. Surely a foundationless philosophy may be accepted in a land of make-believe where fancy holds sway or even runs rampant, but in reality no source or font of existence means no existence at all.

Inadvertently, or else with malicious intent, a godless philosophy is an injustice to Kierkegaard, the Father of Existentialism. Being herded with others, he may be misconstrued as a result of the implications of their doctrines. In a word, if someone were exposed first to atheistic existentialism, he would most likely conclude that the Father of Existentialism held similar tenets. Of course this may attract a reader or two to Kierkegaard, but in any case it might lead many others to rest in their mistaken judgment. Whereas on the contrary, Kierkegaard was a God-fearing man who dedicated his life to make as clear as possible man's relation to a truly existing God. He was the 19th Century Socrates, preaching reform and teaching his fellowman "how to become a Christian" by knowing himself and his God-relationship.

Initially, therefore, we indicate that Kierkegaard, the Father of Existentialism, is hardly the progenitor of all species of existentialism. This fatherhood is a pronouncement of history, which Kierkegaard must not have anticipated, although he was suspicious that posterity would hold a place for his works. Nevertheless, had his foresight been clearer, he probably would have specified the

meaning of existentialism, so as to tie only similar philosophical thoughts to his toga, but to leave no loose strings free for dissimilar trends. He certainly would have been careful to disinherit a godless philosophy from any claim of kinship to his own reflections, because he vociferously denounced godlessness of his day, and even vehemently inveighed against the shallow acceptance of man's god-relationship by his contemporaries.

However, while he left a loose heritage in the word, "Existentialism," he labored assiduously to give the precise description of existence in his own terms, both philosophic and poetic.

CHAPTER II

B. Description of Existence

Confusion, intellectual confusion at every glance into the books of his day, Kierkegaard found confusion of merely partial truths at each new contribution of contemporary philosophers, and he was always left with the same question in mind, "What about existence?" What is existence, or as he asks, "Is it not strange that there should be something such in existence, in relation to which everyone who knows it knows also that he has not invented it, this pass-me-by not stopping or capable of being stopped even if we approach all men in turn"?[1] These were the questions which kept reverberating in Kierkegaard's inquisitive mind, and finally moved his astute intellect to action because they were mentally challenging and demanding of exhausting analysis. To Kierkegaard, they were an urgent challenge because he daily surveyed his environment as permeated with absolute essentialism and only a promised existence, always promised at the end of the next Hegelian dissertation but never attained. Kierkegaard quotes the systematic philosopher as saying with determined emphasis: "Not until we have reached the end of our exposition will everything become clear."[2] Always the promise of existence--to be explained at the end. But Kierkegaard held that they fell down on the promise, that existence, concrete existence eludes explanation because concrete existence eludes intellectual capture. What man takes in mind is essence, and existence is left behind. Conceptual existence is not concrete existence. Even previous to Hegelian reign the big debate involved conceptual existence. "What confuses the whole doctrine about 'Being' in logic is that people do not notice that they are always operating with the 'concept' existence. But the concept existence is an ideality and the

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[1]Soren Kierkegaard, "Philosophical Fragments," Translated by David F. Swenson. Princeton University Press, 1946, pg. 16.

[2]"Concluding Unscientific Postscript," Introduction, pg. 16.

difficulty, of course, is whether existence can be reduced to a concept. So that Spinoza may be right: Essentia involvit existentiam, namely conceptual existence, i.e. ideal existence. But from another point of view Kant is right that with 'existence no new measurement is added to the concept.' Kant is evidently thinking honestly of existence as irreducible to a concept, empirical existence. In ideal relationships it is always true that essentia is existentia--if one may use the concept existentia at all in that case. Leibnitz's proposition that: if God is possible, He is necessary, is perfectly correct. Nothing is added to a concept whether the thing represented in it has existence or not; that is a matter of complete indifference; it has got existence, i.e. conceptual existence, ideal existence. But existence corresponds to the individual thing, the individual, which even Aristotle teaches lies outside, or at least cannot be reduced to a concept. For an individual animal, plant or man, existence (to be--or not to be) is of quite decisive importance, an individual man has not after all a conceptual existence. The way in which modern philosophy talks about existence shows that it does not believe in the individual's immortality; it does not believe at all, it merely conceives the 'concept' eternity.[1] Repeatedly then, Kierkegaard fretted about existence, concrete existence of another, and especially about the one in existence, the exister. Conceptually the essence of the exister was taken in mind, but not existence, and so this calls for an explanation. What about the concrete existence of the individual exister? For some persons, perhaps even for a neophyte in philosophy or the dilletante, this question may seem abstruse, or else entirely superfluous. But Kierkegaard was not a frivolous man, rather quite the contrary, because for a brilliant mind like Kierkegaard's it was the oil of operation, leading to many hours of profound meditation, and finally a long written report in attempt to answer it.

From the very beginning he had great misgivings about an attempt to analyze existence adequately, and thus referred to his project as an experiment. Before he

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[1] Edited and Translated by Alexander Dru, "The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard." New York: Oxford University Press, 1938, No. 1027, pgs. 357 and 358.

finished the brief presentation in his "Philosophical Fragments," he promised a sequal--"Concluding Postscript"--or as he said, maybe even several sequals, and finally the volume he wrote was four or five times larger than the original.

Either patiently or impatiently Kierkegaard repeated his question, "What is Existence," until he exhausted the detailed references of it, and reflected on all of these ramifications. But while he did not define "Existentialism," he finally did describe "Existence," and concluded that: "Existence is a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal which posits a process of becoming and hence involves an incessant striving. The eternal becomes concrete in the individual in the culminating moment of his idealizing passion."[1] To him, existence is the synthesis of time and eternity, the product of creative activity. Existence was being, the state in which man actually found himself, but he is trying to become solely eternal. Thus existence actually separates man from his most passionate desire, and hence man ought to be most busily engaged in his own becoming eternal. Being a synthesis of eternity and time, existence was a limitation upon man. Furthermore, existence needed a foundation, the eternal was metaphysically necessary if existence were to make any sense at all. The temporal did not serve to explain existence, not of itself, and so there was always this so-called "pass-me-by."

Kierkegaard, as a matter of fact, was strongly impressed by the limitedness of created existence, even the highest and the greatest of this universe was limited, the existence of man, who again and again is reminded by Kierkegaard of his nothingness. He carries this theme at great length, "Last Sunday the clergyman said: 'You must not depend upon the world, and not upon men, and not upon yourself, but only and alone upon God; for a human being can of himself do nothing."[2] He was keenly aware of that finiteness of nature which forbade its absolute accounting for all of reality, as the Hegelian system pretended to do. Thus Kierkegaard railed at length,

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[1]David F. Swenson, "Something About Kierkegaard." Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1945, pg. 129.

[2]"Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 417.

sparing no words to denounce the barrenness of the system, its being devoid of a foundation, i.e. without existence, and that in spite of the fact that each champion of the system was himself an exister. He charged the Hegelians with forgetfulness, being oblivious to their own existences all the while that they expounded their doctrine of the evolution of the absolute. And so he set forth to stand the system upright, on its feet if it stood on its head, and on its head if it pretended to stand on its feet, by asserting the primacy of existence. The existing philosopher, the exister, must begin with existence, "Existence is the child of the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, and is therefore constantly striving--an existing individual is constantly in the process of becoming."[1]

Initially, we showed that Kierkegaard, by failing to be precise in his use of the word "Existential," allowed for the hodge-podge of meanings that ensued, existentialism of today, but when the notion of existence came under his acute scrutiny, he did not fail to delineate it according to his best insight. His project was the resurrection of the notion of existence from the debris of philosophy, which scrapped it long ago, so long ago that its marked description was obliterated. Reverting to Socratic philosophy, Kierkegaard proposed his explanation in order to make an addition to philosophy, to make a progressive step from the last footprint of Socrates, and to assert the primacy of existence.

With his description of existence, therefore, Kierkegaard relates it to reality; and hence we examine this same transition. Thus we have his description, and now we look at the role that it played in relation to the things of this universe--just what is reality.

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[1]Ibid., pg. 79.

CHAPTER II

C. Existence and Reality

In attempting to analyze and explain existence, one must relate existence to reality, a relationship to which Kierkegaard devoted much consideration, examining the more profound "why" of the relationship--why does it make sense that something exists as a matter of reality. Obviously the reality may be viewed, but there remains the problem of explaining it, just as a mathematician may know the answer to a problem by looking in the back of the book, but the unraveling of the problem to establish that answer must still be worked out by him, or just as the reader of the mystery story may know the culprit by turning to the last chapter, yet there remains the whole exposition of the case in order to demonstrate all the motivations involved and how they came to pass.

Thus one can turn either toward or from existence, or at least there seems to be this choice, although Kierkegaard himself disputed the point. For instance, Rene Descartes set out to found a starting point in philosophy, and he went about methodically doubting everything. He even tried to attain the ultimate, namely, to doubt his own existence. But here he was mentally arrested; he realized that to doubt one's own existence was to assert it, because even as he doubted, he thought, and as he thought, he existed. From these notions Descartes formulated his renown conclusion--Cogito, ergo sum. Regardless whether it was a valid conclusion or not, it was an attempt to explain existence, and to attain that starting point which would explain all of reality for him. Certainly it was a tendency towary existence, rather than from it, or at least Kierkegaard saw it that way.

But not so with Kierkegaard himself, because his direction is never toward existence, but rather always from existence.

> I always reason from existence, not toward existence, whether I move in the sphere of palpable sensible fact or in the realm of thought. I do not, for example, prove that a stone exists, but that some existing thing is a stone.

Chapter II. Existence

> Whether we call existence an accessorium--external addition--or the eternal prius, it is never subject to demonstration."[1]

Thus Kierkegaard avoided the pitfalls that ensnared Rene Descartes, and he swung the pendulum completely to the other side from that of Descartes. Both Kierkegaard and Descartes found starting points to explain reality, but from opposing directions. "Where Descartes declared that 'I think', therefore I am', Kierkegaard retorted, 'I am, therefore I think.' For the one, abstract thought; for the other concrete and total existence was the foundation of faith. Both thus accept primary postulates which cannot be proved."[2]

Kierkegaard divorced himself totally from the Cartesian position because he held that existence cannot be captured by thought. To think is to abstract; and to abstract is merely to attain an approximation, but never the certainty necessary for a solid foundation of existence, if such certainty can be attained at all in relation to existence of another. Kierkegaard acknowledged the difficulty of solving this problem.

> Existence, like movement, is a difficult category to deal with; for if I think it, I abrogate it, and then do not think it. It might therefore seem to be the proper thing to say that there is something which cannot be thought, namely, existence. But the difficulty persists, in that existence itself combines thinking with existing, in so far as the thinker exists.[3]

Tenaciously Kierkegaard guarded his existence; at every moment, with every breath that he took, he knew that he himself existed, and he would not allow himself to lapse from this position, his constant charge against the Hegelians, the Dons and the clergymen who while existing preached away existence.

Perhaps Kierkegaard fled from the would-be interrogator who might challenge him to prove that he existed, or that God exists. He would run to his study and doggedly pursue the solution to the problem, writing book after book in order to

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[1] "Philosophical Fragments", pg. 31.

[2] "Modern Christian Revolutionaries", pg. 24.

[3] "Concluding Unscientific Postscript", pg. 274.

prepare a response in case anyone put the "why" of existence up to him. And yet while he was unprepared for a final answer to the inquisitor's question, he found this reflection on existence fruitful because it always brought newly related notions racing through his mind. Viewing the many and varied existing things, he either asked himself, or perhaps was asked in a discussion of the topic, the pertinent point, as to what established these things on this side of potency, i.e. on the side of reality; what threw them across the threshold, so to speak.

But this was exactly where intellectual operation failed Kierkegaard, or rather where he always found it wanting, lacking of a satisfactory solution. He abandoned logic and metaphysics because he claimed that they always fell short of existence. What was all this talk about "Being" which the Dons rolled off their glib tongues.

> In the case of factual existence it is meaningless to speak of more or less of Being. A fly, when it exists, has as much being as God; the stupid remark I here set down has as much factual existence as Spinoza's profundity; for factual existence is subject to the dialectic of Hamlet; to be or not to be. Factual existence is wholly indifferent to any and all variations in essence, and everything that exists participates without petty jealousy in being, and participates in the same degree. Ideally, to be sure, the case is quite different. But the moment I speak of Being in the ideal sense I no longer speak of Being, but of Essence. Highest ideality has this necessity and therefore it is. But this its being is identical with its essence; such being does not involve dialectically in the determinations of factual existence, since it is; nor can it be said to have more or less being in relation to other things.[1]

What is all the discussion for? In the concrete being is existence; ideally, being is essence, but Kierkegaard was not concerned with the latter. Essence had its poets, too many in fact; but existence needed a champion. Concrete existence was out of reach for Kierkegaard's intellect, because for him the intellect solely reached the essence of another. The intellect was short of the goal of existence of another for Kierkegaard; it always rested in mere abstraction which was only an approximation, but never rested in the certainty of the concrete existence of reality outside the individual. Irrevocably he discredits man's highest effort,

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[1] "Philosophical Fragments," Note, pg. 32.

intellectual operation, to attain adequate response to the query of satisfactorily relating existence to reality, and so he charged philosophy and philosophers with desertion of this paramount problem.

> The difficulty that inheres in existence, with which the existing individual is confronted, is one that never really comes to expression in the language of abstract thought, much less receives an explanation. Because abstract thought is sub specie aeterni it ignores the concrete and temporal, the existential process, the predicament of the existing individual arising from his being a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal situated in existence.[1]

It is readily conceivable that Kierkegaard arrived at the point which must have prompted him to ask, "Where do we go from here," because quite obviously he was trying to break away from all that he was taught when he went to schools, and thus he was cutting a new path for himself. His own scholastic background was entirely of Hegelian atmosphere and savor, but here he was breaking away not only from its tradition, but from all proximate history of philosophy, and reverting as far back as to ancient thought.

As he expounded his views, undoubtedly the audience of Kierkegaard's discourse must have interjected the question, "What is Reality"? "What reality is, cannot be expressed in the language of abstraction," he responded, "reality is an inter-esse between the moments of that hypothetical unity of thought and being which abstract thought presupposes." And he continued, "Reality or existence is the dialectical moment in a trilogy, whose beginning and whose end cannot be for the existing individual, since qua existing individual he is himself in the dialectical moment."[2] The abstraction of the knower is always in the realm of possibility and hence never attains this moment of reality. And so any effort to ground existence of things intellectually was doomed to failure in the eyes of Kierkegaard; at best one merely attains an approximation but never certitude, so far as the existence of

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[1]"Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 267.

[2]Ibid., pg. 279.

anything outside of oneself was concerned. With this assertion Kierkegaard wipes off cleanly the slate of history of philosophy, all the way back to Socrates, being halted only by the Socratic principle "Know Thyself," but he does away with all pedagogic inheritences between the "Know Thyself" and his own reflections and meditations. Away with Plato, Aristotle and all intervening thinkers, especially the latest of his day, the Hegelian systematists who were so forgetful of their own very existences. Kierkegaard wanted to progress, but this advance must be made from the place where Socrates himself left off.

Thus Kierkegaard did away with the intellectual approach to existence, as surely as the teenager on the street corner does away with it, when he is confronted with the problem of upholding the "why" of his existence. The omniscient teenager rejects the intellectual approach summarily and stentoriously by responding "Look, if I walk over and kick you in the shin, you will know that I exist, and no further proof is necessary." Of course, Kierkegaard did not belittle the difficulty, but rather, as we saw, he extolled the profundity of it, and yet in the final analysis he too despaired of the possibility of intellectually accounting for existence.

First, we examined Kierkegaard's notion of existential; next, the description of existence; and now, we saw the relation of this notion of existence to reality with the inaptitude of the intellect to grasp existence of existing things, the incapacity of the mind to hold fast to the realities of this universe--with the fastness, the tenacity of certitude. Rather, the mind may never be fully satiated with existences of things, but can only enjoy the samplings of approximation, never the luscious feast of certainty. Is there no such feasting at all; is there no reality that can appease human intellectual appetition; is there no object of satisfaction for the avidity of the human mind, nothing to which it can hold on with assurance and steadfastness.

Chapter II. Existence

Yes, there is such an object, and we already heard Kierkegaard's whispers as to that unique object, the one that alone is real for an existing human being.

CHAPTER II

D. Individual is Real

Intellectual chaos!! Is that the final judgment laid upon rational being; is he always resting merely in approximation to reality and never with a firm grasp of mind? Or is there a reality that he can know which the mind can embrace in complete firmness and satisfaction, without the mediation of abstraction?

There is one reality that escapes the enveloping cloak of approximation and defies it--namely, the individual's own reality. "The only reality that exists for an existing individual is his own ethical reality. To every other reality he stands in a cognitive relation, but true knowledge consists in translating the real into the possible."[1] This is the reality that exists and can be known to exist--truly known with mental firmness--the one reality that does not go down the drain of approximation when it is known. The individual alone is real, and hence one is immediately thrown back to the ancient adage, "Know Thyself."

> The ethical reality is the one reality which does not become mere possibility through being known, and which can be known only through thought, for it is the individual's own reality. Before it became a reality it was known by him in the form of a conceived reality, and hence as a possibility. But in the case of another person's reality he could have no knowledge about it until he conceived it in coming to know it, which means that he transformed it from reality into a possibility.
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> With respect to every reality external to myself, I can get hold of it only through thinking it. In order to get hold of it really, I should have to be able to make myself into the other, the acting individual, and make the foreign reality my own reality, which is impossible. For if I make the foreign reality my own, this does not mean that I become the other through knowing his reality; but it means that I acquire a new reality, which belongs to me as opposed to him.[2]

Thus the individual falls into the unique category of being the only reality, so far as certain knowledge is concerned. The mind of the individual can close in upon his own reality without approximation. His own ethical existence alone is real, and everything external to it is removed from that category. Initiated in existence,

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[1] Ibid., pg. 280.

[2] Ibid., pg. 284 and 285.

the individual then remains in a ceaseless process of becoming, the transition is from esse ad posse because this individual is enmeshed in incessant striving to become eternal.

Let us digress for a moment, however, in order to safeguard Kierkegaard from the charge of advocating an absolute process of becoming, as some do today. For instance, the Latter Day Saints, the Mormons, who are assiduous proselytizers, believe in the absolute eternal process, that is, everyone and everything in motion to greater perfection. Since every being without exception tends toward more and more perfection, even God is in this process. All lesser beings tend toward God, but never actually attain Him, because as one moved toward God, so He Himself because of greater perfection, continues to move and thereby always sustains the breach between creatures and Himself. It may seem as though Kierkegaard lends an encouraging word to the Latter Day Saints, because he favors becoming. However, unlike the Mormons, Kierkegaard holds to a God Who is unmoved. "In so far as existence consists in movement there must be something which can give continuity to the movement and hold it together, for otherwise there is no movement. The unmoved is therefore a constituent of the motion as its measure and its end."[1] God is not a changing being for Kierkegaard, as for the Latter Day Saints, who overlook the fact that any limitation of being is hardly compatible with the notion of God, and who therefore do not embrace an all-active, infinite being, but rather one of least limitation. Hence Kierkegaard cannot be called into their camp, nor charged with the absolute process of becoming.

To revert again to the topic at hand, for Kierkegaard the individual alone was real, and therefore he wanted to be known as the poet of that category. He set out to serve that reality, and even proposed his own epitaph in keeping with it. "Yet had I to crave an inscription on my grave I would ask for none other than, 'The Individual,' and even if it is not understood now, then in truth it will be."[2]

[1] Ibid., pg. 277.

[2] "The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 723, pg. 227.

Of course, he realized that the category cannot be taught, but rather must be lived, and he claimed that it had only been used once--by Socrates. He saw it as his own task, therefore, to try to progress from the Socratic position to the Christian perspective. And so his discovery that the individual alone was real was not the end of his task, but rather only the beginning, just the starting point because delving into the basis of this reality, he found the intellect lacking in the most fundamental "why" of existence. On paper it all looks so easy, the explanation of the "why" of existence is very simply worked out--on paper. One simply puts down that man is the synthesis of time and eternity, and that there must be an explanation. And there he has it--on paper. But in reality when it is a problem of existing finitely and existing infinitely, the matter is not easily resolved, and it is only man's good fortune to discover that existing individually he is such a synthesis. In other words, man is given this synthesis which he is, and he simply has to discover it; he does not have to create existence, nor even imitate it in thought. But of course, on paper the synthesizing is readily and easily done, and just as easily too is there a mapping out of the way for man to become solely eternal.

In actual existence this is the most difficult task of all, but because of man's facility in mediation on paper, he can write off the task very easily. For Kierkegaard the difference between being and becoming is precisely the fact that man is being, that is, he is both temporal and eternal, existence is being, and he is trying to become one, singularly eternal. Being is the synthesis which is trying to become one. The individual is that synthesis, the individual is real, and he knows his own existence with certainty. It is the only reality which he does know with intellectual certainty because he cannot abstract from himself. He is simply asked, as it were, if he will be so good as to exist so as to become solely eternal, because after all, as far as he is concerned, he alone is real, and it is his own utmost concern to attain final happiness, eternity.

Chapter II. Existence

Upon final examination of the notion of existence itself, therefore, we saw that Kierkegaard concludes that the individual alone is real. Man can grasp his own existence immediately, but the concrete existence of every other reality than self is only grasped abstractly by the intellect, that is, only by approximation. The individual alone is real. Thus we examined his notion of "existential," and the description of existence. We saw Kierkegaard's description and the relationship of existence to reality, which ultimately led to the aforementioned conclusion that one's own ethical reality is the only one which can be grasped with firmness of mind, a knowledge that is not mere approximation.

CHAPTER II

E. SOME PROBLEMS OF EXISTENCE

Existence, as a topic of discussion, is one of those impregnated with the yeast of verbosity, along with others which, however, may be more popular, for instance, in sports, in politics and in religion. Yet existence has never lost this fecundity, has never become barren, nor reached a final relationship, regardless of the eons of discussion from the ancients to the present day. In Kierkegaard's own day it became a problem. The problem was what to do with existence.

The immediate trend bequeathed to Kierkegaard was to forget existence, or else explain it away quickly in order to perpetuate essence. Essentialists were hastily dismissing existence, as if the philosophers were handling the hot potato which was speedily handed to the next man, who in turn again did not know what to do with it except to be rid of it. Finally Hegel got rid of it; he simply idealized it, to the sighful relief and satisfaction of all, or almost all. Kierkegaard was one of the exceptions who was not happy with the master's solution to the problem, and so he rightfully voiced his protest. That is to say, Kierkegaard saw the fact that existence was conveniently kicked around until forgotten, in keeping with Kant's assertion that existence adds nothing to the comprehension of a being, adds nothing to the essence. If that is so, then why bother about it--this became the prevalent attitude.

Indifference to existence prevailed. This indifference has not been overcome, not even today. The man on the street, or even a philosopher, views the problem as trivial, the problem of existence, and is apt to term it a silly question because he prefers not to inquire into the why of an existing being. To him, there it is and so being exists. Why make a problem of it; why dig down towards its roots as long as it stands firmly in plain sight. Perhaps we might vindicate or exonerate this attitude on the part of the man on the street, but what about the philosopher. Certainly he should not dismiss the matter of existence so lightly and perfunctorily,

because he knows that philosophies are lived, no matter how poorly rooted or fantastic they may be, or how seemingly unamenable to daily practice. The principles of a philosophy are lived. No idea seems to pass untested by someone or to state this the other way around, every idea at least seems to stir up an experimenter who wants to put it in practice, no matter how widely and popularly it may be rejected. In this case the trend was, and even is, to live out the philosophy of essence, with complete indifference to existence. Dismissal of an adequate explanation for existence led men, from the standpoint of philosophy, into the realm of essences, and the religious repercussion, which Kierkegaard fearfully discovered, led either toward Godlessness or else the deification of man. There was either no creator at all, existence was simply there; or else man was acknowledged as the creator of all; if not entirely by himself, then in company with the infinite which was in him. Being penurious and destitute of existence because of the philosophy of essence, the individual was either groveling despairingly, or else with affluence of creativity pretending to strut proudly, but still despairingly because in either case he lacked the foundation that hopefully assured him of meaningfulness of existence.

Kierkegaard gives his orientation of the problem of existence, and the best view, he contends, that man has of existence is that of his own existence. Thus the individual sets his sights on the existence of man, that is, his own existence, and he discovers two contradictory elements in the composite; he sees that man is steeped in time, that he is temporal; and he sees the eternal element, that man can also transcend time. Likewise he sees that man's strongest passion is to be eternal; man desires eternity.

Man is a synthesis of eternity and time, but he wants to be singularly eternal. Thus if existence is being, that is, the contradictory composite of the eternal and temporal, then man is always becoming eternal. Man is being, but he is in the process of becoming; existence is being, but man wants to remove himself from the composition of being to that of a unity, to become one--solely eternal, rather

than enveloped also in the temporal. Hence being is the composite which man is, and becoming is the process of existence toward the singular goal of eternity. Man recognizes that he is designed for eternity because all his striving is to be strictly eternal, not the synthesis of eternity and time which he is now, and which brings about inevitable transitoriness. If man were rid of the temporal, he would then only be one; he would be eternal and therefore not be bothered with transitoriness. Therefore, what man wants most is to be eternal; he wants eternal happiness; he wants satisfaction with endless duration.

But Kierkegaard found, as we said, that man by being engrossed in essences was going over to Godlessness or the deification of self, and Godlessness certainly held no hope for eternal happiness. Quite the contrary it surely led to despair. Furthermore, neither did the deification of man or humanity, that is, singularly or collectively, hold the hope of eternal happiness because it is always a pretension or usurpation of divinity, the hopeless game of infinity by one who at least secretly must admit finitude so long as he remains in existence, because he is always temporal, no matter how he tries to magnify the eternal element in self. Again with hope utterly lacking there can only be despair. Kierkegaard weighed all these implications and saw that they followed directly from the hasty rejection of, or indifference to any satisfactory explanation of existence. Such was the heritage of philosophies of essences without due regard for existences. Man either fretfully cowered in despairing existence, or boldly flaunted despairing existence. Seeing this problem, therefore, Kierkegaard worked to restore existence, in as much as existence was to restore hope. As long as there is hope, man does not abandon himself to despair. We can imagine Kierkegaard saying, "For heaven's sake, hold on to your life raft, hold on to existence at all cost."

Man exists, and he wants to attain the eternal. Existence, then, needs explanation. This problem is properly and clearly the work of the educated man, the answer man of human inquisitiveness. Even if the man on the street dismisses the

problem in favor of the man in the library, he would still like to know if existence makes sense, and looks for enlightenment on the subject to those who are expected to deal with it, just as the educated man, the man of books, in turn might look to the man on the street for assistance with a mechanical problem. It is one thing to see that a man exists, that he is there, but another to explain the understanding and knowledge of the existence of that man. The problem of the "why" of existence, of what to do with it by way of explanation was never an easy one. History showed this, and it was especially clear in Kierkegaard's day since it was so much easier for men to forget about existence than to hold it firmly in its place. It was simply easier to heap existence on the pile of oblivion than to explain it. Furthermore, this line of least resistance, indifference to existence was not only popular with the uneducated, as it usually is, but also with the erudite. "In modern times, on the other hand, it has become difficult to reach existence. The process of abstraction is easy enough for us, but we also desert existence more and more, and the realm of pure thought is the extreme limit of such desertion."[1] Men found it so easy to scrap existence. It is easy for the untrained man to scrap something that he cannot fit into place, whether it be something intellectual or mechanical. The individual may be repairing a vacuum cleaner and after finishing the task re-assemble the parts only to find one that has not been replaced although the machine seems to operate satisfactorily. Hence he may have no trouble in rationalizing his inaptitude and simply leaving off the part, and we might not charge him with gross inefficiency for doing so, because of his lack of knowledge in relation to the machine. But if the man were a known machinist, an expert mechanic, who did the same thing, we might be shocked, in as much as we expect him to have adequate understanding of machinery and his own activities in relation to it. So, too, Kierkegaard was shocked that the problem of existence was widely left out by those who were supposed to understand it

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[1] "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 295.

best and even to be able to explain it to those uninitiated in intellectual discussions and problems.

Kierkegaard and the man on the street were literally well acquainted. We know that he loved to talk to the man on the street, that this was a special avocation of his. No doubt Kierkegaard found it easy, one way or another, to pose the problem of existence, even if the individual might offer the popular rebuttal that existence is simply there, but it adds nothing to essence, and that it should be taken as it is, without explanation. This fingertip solution was easy--man exists and so existence is there--and it irked Kierkegaard to hear it. Yet he would merely pursue his inquiry as to what is existence and how does one know it. In the first place it is obvious that man's existence is not self-sufficient; it does not explain itself upon being viewed. In fact, the evidence is quite the other way around. In other words, the efficient cause of existence is not explained by its simply being there, although its presence points to efficient causality which needs to be explained. But next, in striving to find the place of existence, Kierkegaard wondered if man could know it with certitude, whether in relation to self existence or in relation to the existence of another. And finally, Kierkegaard's own main concern was the existence of man in a religious environment; that is, for Kierkegarrd the whole problem of existence was specifically the existence of a religious human being who wants to become a Christian.

Man, caught in the glue of time, wants to be eternal, eternally happy, and Christianity offers the goal of eternal happiness. How ought this man on the street carry out his activities in keeping with the proffered goal of Christianity; how ought he live out this existence in keeping with its design, in conformity with its nature? What is the nature of his existence, and can man truly know it and understand it. Kant said that we do not know it, nor can we understand it, and therefore he explained it away. This atomizing of existence was exactly the point that stirred Kierkegaard into action, with his insistence on the retention of

existence rather than letting it slip away. He insisted in spite of the contradiction of existence--temporal man trying to become eternal, or rather the composite of both trying to become singularly eternal. The problem was how to reconcile time and eternity in relation to man. To reconcile it is to know it and to understand it. Can it be explained? Man's existence is dialectical--an opposition of time and eternity, when man wants to be solely eternal, happy without ceasing, happy for endless duration.

CHAPTER III

TRUTH

A. Subjective and Objective

What is the positive role that Kierkegaard assigns to the intellect, or rather that he discovers and predicates about the intellect? We know that the limitation of the intellect was his cynosure, that the intellect failed to attain a state of mind called certitude in relation to existence, save the individual's own existence. The same failure is ascribed to the intellect in relation to God--namely, that reason is unable to arrive at certitude of His eternity, that reason faltered without ever having an unwavering grasp of the eternity of God. But we repeat that Kierkegaard did not deny a proper operation of reason, and we may ask then, according to Kierkegaard, "What is it to know?"

First, Kierkegaard was wholeheartedly Socratic--"Know Thyself," because that is the initial satisfaction of mind. One's knowledge of oneself was firm; it is certain and cannot be shaken, or as the philosoper says from the lecture platform, "The knowledge that the contradictory is impossible." The mind wraps itself around "I exist," "I am," with complete firmness, with certitude. "I can abstract from everything but not from myself. I cannot even forget myself when I am asleep."[1]

Was that the only certitude that Kierkegaard allowed in relation to the intellect; and if that is so, what about all the other knowledge of man? In his estimation man might have certitude of immediacy, direct cognition, but as soon as a man reflected, a change transpired, his certitude disappeared and left him with mere approximation, never the same complete firmness of mind in reflection as when one knows, for instance, that he exists. Why approximation and not certitude?--because the mental grasp of everything else by reflection is an abstraction by immateriality which is a removal from reality and hence a conceptual relationship to existing things. This is not the same as knowing oneself, which is not a

[1] "The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 54, pg. 27.

conceptual relationship, but rather "immediate," a knowledge by direct intuition. We know ourselves immediately; we do not conceptualize ourselves, as we do everything else that we know reflexively. Of course Kierkegaard acknowledges that we know things immediately but this is before intellectual operation of reflection sets in, the reflection that reduces the immediate to the historical, and so we no longer stand in the same relationship to it.

> Immediate sensation and immediate cognition cannot deceive. This is by itself enough to show that the historical cannot be the object of either, because the historical has the elusiveness which is implicit in all becoming. As compared with the immediate, becoming has an elusiveness by which the observer sees a star, the star becomes involved in doubt the moment he seeks to become aware of its having come into being. It is as if reflection took the star away from the senses."[1]

Thus when the mind plays its role in immediate cognition, it is on solid ground, but as soon as it bends back upon itself, reflects, then it loses the solid foundation. In immediacy the person stands as if clearly reading from a blackboard, but as soon as he reflects, obscurity replaces clarity; and the intellect suffers haziness because of abstraction, and the thinker cannot be on solid ground, he cannot be certain because he is now in a relationship of approximation, rather than immediacy.

To some epistemologist, for the purpose of analyzing the notion of truth and how he knows reality, it may make no difference whether the subjective or objective approach is brought into account, but to Kierkegaard it was most imperative to adhere to the subjective approach in order that a thinker holds fast to the fact that he is an existing individual, who here and now in the concrete is making this attempt to ascertain truth; and in a final analysis this means that he is existing and acting in relation to God. In doing so, holding to his existence with full animadversion, the thinker shunts objectivity, puts it off into a siding, as it were.

> Not for a single moment is it forgotten that the subject is an existing individual, and that existence is a process of becoming, and that therefore the notion of truth as identity of thought and being is a chimera of abstraction,

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[1] "Philosophical Fragments," pg. 66.

> in its truth only an expectation of the creature; not because the truth is not such an identity, but because the knower is an existing individual for whom the truth cannot be such an identity as long as he lives in time."[1]

While objectivity is sidetracked by Kierkegaard, subjectivity is placed on the main line and given the green light, and therefore Kierkegaard sounds the warning to beware of all teaching and writing about objectivity of truth, this notion of identity of thought with being; that we must beware of the heritage of philosophy from the day of the demise of Socrates. Identity of thought with being, objectivity, knowledge arrived at by abstraction, all these notions do away with the existence of the concrete individual, because knowledge is "sub specie aeterni," whereas the individual is temporal. Modern philosophy is especially at fault for trying to help the individual to transcend himself objectively, and it is only existence which always exercises its restraining influence. And besides, Kierkegaard considers these modern philosophers as in racing pursuit of non-essential knowledge; they are merely distracting themselves, he charges, from the very purpose of existence--by fantasy, by abstraction, rather than adhering to the knowledge that is essential for an existing individual. "Only ethical and ethico-religious knowledge has an essential relationship to the existence of the knower."[2] This is the central point in the notion of truth, for Kierkegaard. The relationship which an existing individual wants to embrace is his own God-relationship, which is an ethical problem rather than the speculative approach of modern philosophers who forsake the ethical when they drop off the concrete existence of the individual. Kierkegaard found that Hegelians had no ethics, which meant that they were not prepared for action, for decisive action, and for them to know was purely and simply to know, and not a prelude to activity; whereas Kierkegaard asserted that to know was to act, not merely action, not inane action, but rather decisive action, because to know was to act in

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[1] "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 176.

[2] Ibid., pg. 177.

relation to God. "Let us take as an example the knowledge of God. Objectively, reflection is directed to the problem of whether this object is the true God; subjectively, reflection is directed to the question whether the individual is related to a something in such a manner that his relationship is in truth a God-relationship."[1] Concrete existence is active, and decisive action in the Christian era is that activity which is in reference to own's own God-relationship. This is the activity of the man who is trying to become a Christian. For Socrates and now for Kierkegaard the rule is the same, "Know Thyself," the primary knowledge is to understand oneself, which meant, of course, a turning away from objectivity, from mere speculative philosophy.

Since Kierkegaard realized that by turning his back to objectivity, he would shock his contemporaries, the many speculative philosophers, he pretended to offer his thesis unobtrusively, and even rejoiced when his publications were introduced without heraldry. Quite certainly he wanted to turn the pages of history back to Socrates, there to begin anew, but not too brazenly at first. He offers his own work as a mere suggestion--his suggestion is that maybe another view is more presentable than that of objectivity, maybe there is no objective truth. "Suppose that someone wished to communicate the following conviction: Truth is inwardness, there is no objective truth, but the truth consists in personal appropriation."[2] What if the whole marching army of philosophers, who are in the same stride of objectivity, are wrong? What if they are mistaken? Only Socrates took his stride on another foot, and now Kierkegaard wanted to fall in stride with Socrates and to march on for subjectivity. But to march along with Socrates is to walk solely in his company and to raise and extol the banner of subjectivity, when all other are on the side of objectivity.

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[1] Ibid., pg. 178.

[2] Ibid., pg. 71.

Chapter III. Truth

Kierkegaard's notions of subjectivity and objectivity, then, are his own, or his as borrowed from Socrates. But they are not the same as popularly used by philosophers. For Kierkegaard subjectivity is useful, practical appropriation, while objectivity is mere appropriation, mere reflection of an object. And merely to know the truth is not enough for Kierkegaard. One must live the truth.

Popularly, the term subjectivity has reference to the subject who knows, and objectivity is any reference to the thing known.

Planning to build a house, a young newly married couple may spend years in repeated joyful reveries; they may even find it their favorite topic of evening conversation--building their "dream house" in minutest details. They may proceed in two ways, either by making their ideal house entirely different and unique, and thus ideationally planning and designing it so that later the reality will coincide with what they prepared ideally, and ultimately ordering the actual plans from an architect who faithfully records all of their specifications, all of their ideas; or they may devote their Sunday afternoon drives to look around and view already built houses, especially the latest ones which a realty company has "opened for inspection," and there they may peruse already prepared plans of these houses, thus equating their minds to what exists, to an existing house, to a reality. In the former case, the approach is called subjective, the reality is formed from the pattern or design of their minds, from their ideas; in the second case, the ideas of the mind are formed from the reality, the already existing thing, and they have the objective approach to reality. Frequently, we hear the former called "creativeness," human creativeness to be sure, which means that man's effort still rests upon some direct or analogous sense experience. It is not pretended to be creativeness in the strict sense, but only analogously, with the acknowledgement of man's limitations.

Truth is designated in the same ways, either equating the thing or object to the mind, i.e., the thing or reality follows from what is formulated in the mind; or again, the mind is formed from the existing thing itself--in a word, subjectively

or objectively. Kierkegaard was as concerned or even more concerned with subjective truth and objective truth as any philosopher of his day, and he really does not deny the validity of either in the popular sense, as just described, but then he gave an exposition which was his own, that is, his own meaning of subjective and objective, and threw a glaring spotlight on the subjective. He then built his case in favor of his own meaning of subjectivity, and denied a place for objectivity, since it is mere appropriation. Kierkegaard supposedly carried the warning light as to the limitation of the popular notion of objective truth, that it would not serve to ascertain the existence of another, but in fact, he thus made it so limited that he explained it completely away. The intellect in search for truth failed because it attained mere approximation, mere abstraction, whereas the truth is concrete. Mere appropriation was out, objectivity was out, because it was not decisive activity on the part of a concrete exister. Subjectivity is the truth; the individual exister acts decisively in reference to his own God-relationship.

CHAPTER III

B. How and What

Subjectivity is truth. Taking Kierkegaard's own notions of subjectivity and objectivity, we may inquire, as he himself stated it, what if truth is subjectivity. Then the important point is how the individual appropriates it; how he lives it out; what he does existentially so as to direct his nature toward eternity. It is not the "what" that takes on importance but the "how," the acting out of truth in the concrete, and doing so with firmness of mind. And since subjectivity is the truth, man can have such firmness and live his own appropriations, regardless of what might tend to shatter this firmness outside of himself, regardless too of what other individuals might say or do even in relation to the same object from which he made the appropriation.

What if truth is subjectivity. For instance, let us take today's work of art as an example of what Kierkegaard proposed. Several persons enter the gallery of modern art in New York City, and after observing and studying some of the latest works, they stop to discuss a particularly enigmatic painting. One will offer the opinion that it is a man falling down a spiral staircase that is represented; another critic, that it is a dreaming person who is whirled in a distorted gyroscope; a third, that it is an impression of culinary hustle and bustle, a housewife using the all-purpose mixmaster; and finally the fourth, that it is an artistic expression of a scientist hard at work in his laboratory on his newest atomic discovery. Each opinion is received from the same painting, i.e., the objective factor or element remained the same for each observer, and yet they assert diverse subjective impressions. What each one holds subjectively does not coincide with what the others hold, but still each opinion is put forth as the truthful expression of the objective presentation. Later if each observer were to act in relation to that picture--for instance, want to purchase it or merely just talk about it--the activity would be in keeping with the firmness of mind that what is being bought or discussed is

truly what he holds it to be subjectively. Certainly the claim would be made in each case that what is objectively presented is truly the same as the subjective truth which is retained in all honesty. So that the one objective factor is the basis for four subjective views, each of which is supposed to be adequately equated with the painting.

Obviously, the important point for Kierkegaard is "how." How the individual acts in relation to this which is true for him. He may be edified by it, and therefore purchase the picture for his continued edification. It is not the "what" that is said to be true, but the "how." In the art gallery the same "what," the painting is the foundation for four varied "hows," the subjective appropriations of each individual after making an observation. For Kierkegaard the problem was in the "how," how each viewer lived the subjective truth, which he holds with firmness of mind as the proper expression of the painting, as the truth of the matter. "The objective accent falls on 'what' is said, the subjective accent on 'how' it is said. This distinction holds even in the aesthetic realm, and receives definite expression in the principle that what is in itself true may in the mouth of such and such a person become untrue."[1] Thus the what itself may simply lead to complete confusion, to uncertainty, several personal views taken into consideration, but if one, if the existing individual is to act in relation to it--buy it or talk about it--he must have the subjective truth, or else he remains idle and does not or cannot act. Now, Kierkegaard proposed, if inwardness or subjectivity is the truth, the individual makes his decision in relation to the painting, and from that decisive moment on he does not have to advert to the uncertainty that might be caused by the decisions of others in reference to the same object. The individual makes his subjective reflection and impregnates himself with the truth. "In the objective reflection the first step consists in an abstraction from the subject and his subjective interest. For the alternative subjective reflection the task is so to inter-penetrate the

[1]Ibid., pg. 181.

subjectivity of the inquirer with thought that the inwardness thus developed may be the truth, a truth especially revelant to existing human beings."[1]

Kierkegaard wanted to place the individual in a position of action; the ethical interest was foremost in his view. Now if the mind were simply left to reason, i.e., to reasonable operation and activity, it would be restrained, in the case of objectivity being truth, by the fact of uncertainty. The "what" would be a roadblock to any further activity, the discussion would halt action as soon as uncertainty was discovered by expression of several opinions. However, Kierkegaard solved this inactivity. If truth is subjectivity, this inoperativeness is solved because each individual can act according to his own subjective truth, and with a firm mental grasp can discuss or purchase the object, the one a staircase and the other a gyroscope, etc.

Kierkegaard presented the subjective approach to reality in order that the individual might progress ethically, which would be in proportion to his divorce from objectivity. Hence the more uncertainty one encountered, the more he should remove himself from objectivity. However, for Kierkegaard, this did not mean that man should rest in ignorance, idleness and inactivity. Rather he should move to subjectivity in proportion to his removal from objectivity, and the withdrawal from objectivity is also a withdrawal from the intellectual approach to reality, but a turning toward man's other unique power, his will. If the truth cannot be approached by the intellect because of its indigence in relation to objectivity, then because of this limitation of intellect let the will appropriate reality. With such appropriation the individual can carry on his ethical existence.

Radicalism, sheer radicalism in philosophy. Kierkegaard was truly presenting a radical doctrine because he was uprooting the object of the intellect. From the days of Aristotle the accepted teaching was that the intellect embraces truth and the will embraces the good. Now Kierkegaard uprooted traditional teaching and

[1] "Something About Kierkegaard," pg. 123.

shifted truth over to the will. He enunciated such a limitation of the human intellect that finally he removed its proper object entirely and predicated it of another power. His anti-intellectualism seems to leave a denuded intellect, or at least remove it from its former dais; as denuded, it is without its proper object, or at least truth is not the object of the intellect. However, the will became a higher power for Kierkegaard, than held formerly, because it appropriates both truth and goodness. If on the one hand there is a stealing away of object, on the other, there is a generosity, a charitableness in favor of the will from a poet of faith, Kierkegaard, the most ardent admirer of the Father of Faith, Abraham, even though he said of himself that he lacked the faith of his idol.

> After all, in the poets love has its priest, and sometimes one hears a voice which knows how to defend it; but of faith one hears never a word. Who speaks in honor of this passion? Philosophy goes further. Theology sits rouged at the window and courts its favor, offering to sell her charms to philosophy. To go beyond Hegel is a miracle, but to go beyond Abraham is the easiest thing of all. I for my part have devoted a great deal oftime to the understanding of the Hegelian philosophy, I believe also that I understand it tolerably well, but when in spite of the trouble I have taken there are certain passages I cannot understand, I am foolhardy enough to think that he himself has not been quite clear. All this I do easily and naturally, my head does not suffer from it. But on the other hand when I have to think of Abraham, I am as though annihilated.[1]

Faith is the highest passion, and Kierkegaard, the poet of faith, examined it in detail in order to determine its relation to truth. But that was a novel approach to truth, and yet in keeping with his own description of existence and his application of the latter to reality, the individual alone being real. We notice that while Kierkegaard forged his own chain in exposition of existence, he reiterated that his forging was "without authority" and that his work was "an experiment," because it might not at all reflect objectivity. Apparently he wanted no part of his exposition to be authoritative, after the manner of Hegelianism; he disclaimed being a philosopher, a poet yes, but not a philosopher. Was it because he wanted poetic license, or because he was not certain that his radical doctrine had a solid founda-

[1] Soren Kierkegaard, "Fear and Trembling," Translated by Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1945, pg. 42.

tion, that is, approaching truth by the avenue of faith, solely by faith if one is to be certain.

In relation to truth, therefore, we saw that Kierkegaard uprooted traditional evaluation of objectivity, and put forth his own thesis that truth is subjectivity.

Next we saw that if truth is subjectivity, it is not the "what" which one must heed, but the "how," finally noting that the "how" of Kierkegaard is a matter of faith.

CHAPTER III

C. Some Problems of Truth

The great pains of indifference to existence were suffered by religion, and every man should be nothing but religious. Hence Kierkegaard approaches existence from the standpoint of reconciling philosophy and religion, in order to ascertain if man knows this contradiction of his existence, this conflict of time and eternity, and whether there is any understanding of it, whether he can grasp existence with certitude. Kierkegaard starts on the road of epistemology, a problem of knowledge. Is existence intellectually sociable; can it be captured by the human mind, or is it necessarily so elusive that man must march along with Kant and Hegel who said the last word about it, which explained it away in favor of essence? Furthermore, as long as the problem was epistemological, the initial point to determine was "what is truth?" and Kierkegaard indicates that this was the fork in the road of philosophy and religion, each going its own way, with the latter as completely subjective, Christianity is subjectivity, and the former going off into objectivity, and hence the two never again meet. But Kierkegaard's own thesis was that truth is subjectivity, and if philosophers accept this thesis, they will turn down the road of subjectivity and harmoniously go along the path of religion which all men must travel. As far as Kierkegaard was concerned, only one man started to make the proper turn at this crossroad, Socrates with his doctrine of "Know Thyself," and if it was possible, Kierkegaard wanted to make an advance upon Socrates from the point of view of religion. In order to respond to the question, "What to do with existence?" Kierkegaard therefore found it necessary first to answer the query, "What is truth?" Here he was a modern "trailblazer," cutting out his own path. He read and heard that truth was conformity of thought with being, and he himself said that it made no difference if philosophers held to identity of being with thought, or thought with being, the important point was to determine what is being. And even while making the inquiry about being, Kierkegaard repeatedly warns that it is an existing

spirit that asks about the truth--a particular existing human being.

What is being, whether taken empirically or idealistically. If being is empirical, it is unfinished and therefore a becoming. The existing individual can never be eternal, not as existing. If it is idealistic, it is abstract and therefore tautalogical--thought and being are the same. Existing man is not pure thought.

> In that the question of truth is thus raised by an existing spirit qua existing, the above abstract reduplication that is involved in it again confronts him. But existence itself, namely, existence as it is in the individual who raises the question and himself exists, keeps the two moments of thought and being apart, so that reflection presents him with two alternatives. For an objective reflection the truth becomes an object, something objective, and thought must be pointed away from the subject. For a subjective reflection the truth becomes a matter of appropriation, of inwardness,of subjectivity, and thought must probe more and more deeply into the subject and his subjectivity."[1]

The human composite can absorb the samples of time and eternity because it is a synthesis of the temporal and the timeless. Being made up of both, existence, according to Kierkegaard, separates being and thought. Being in the concrete is never divorced from time, whereas thought is removed from time because it is abstract, and therefore leaves off the concrete. When the exister begins to reflect, he may rest in the objective and thus assert an object as the truth, or he may turn to the subjective and thus appropriate something as true. In the objective the truth becomes the object, and thought is directed away from the subject; but in the subjective the truth is an inward appropriation with thought sinking deeper into subjectivity. By subjective reflection Kierkegaard means that the exister not only appropriates something as true, but lives in accord with this appropriation. In a word, the exister is not indifferent to the existence of the appropriation, but rather actively lives the appropriation in as much as it was made for action on the part of the individual's existence. The inwardness was assimilated in order to keep the concrete self busy in concrete activity and hence in existence. Thus the individual wallows in existence by feeding his existential self with appropriations and not simply

[1]"Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 171.

holding an abstraction which leaves off concrete existence and therefore bogs down in indifference to existence.

Kierkegaard also recoiled from the objective because the truth of it was only an approximation. Abstraction left off the concrete and therefore left behind the chance of attaining certitude. Reason only faltered in the analogy of existence, except in relation to the existence of self which is the only real existence for it, and the very foundation for the analogical understanding of the existences of others. Objective reflection, therefore, was entirely unsatisfactory for the religious individual, because to know Christianity did not mean that the person lived its principles, no matter how well he knew the doctrines. Even a bishop with excellent knowledge of Christianity might not be a Christian, so far as Kierkegaard was concerned, in spite of his erudite speculation about it. He might easily be as indifferent to it as the once-a-year at Eastertime church-going man, who insists that he is a Christian. If the grasp of Christianity by both men is objective, they are not penetrating to its existence, but rather merely knowing it, just as they might be wearing it like a hat, the bishop frequently and the other man only once a year. This was the implication which Kierkegaard saw in the relation of objective reflection with Christianity.

Out went objective reflection for Kierkegaard, and thus truth must be subjective. Now if truth is subjectivity, the religious man appropriates Christianity in order to become the Christian by concretely living its principles. In subjectivity the individual is no longer indifferent to the existence of Christianity, but he appropriates it concretely into his own process of existence, in his daily efforts to become eternal, inasmuch as Christianity offers the prize of eternal happiness which is precisely what the man wants. The subjective, for Kierkegaard, is an active appropriation, and not merely the knowledge of an object; the subjective is the concrete use of what is taken in and every thought of the exister goes deeper intothis concrete existence, in this case, of Christianity. In a word, the problem

of truth for Kierkegaard was clearly settled by his rejection of the objective in favor of the subjective, especially also because uncertainty plagued the objective.

Man exists and seeks truth. The truth which the existing individual wants to know is the eternal truth, that is to say, the eternal truth is to be understood eternally. But behold the contradictions, the existing man is temporal and his reason only attains approximation in relation to another. Furthermore, he cannot rend himself asunder; he cannot proceed along the objective way and the subjective way of truth at the same time. Hence Kierkegaard's rejection of the former leaves him with the latter. In thought, if it is objective reflection, it removes itself from the subject, and if subjective, it removes itself from the objective. But in any case, it cannot go along both reflections at the same time and attain truth. And if the existing spirit is to continue in existence and reflect, then the direction is subjective, and truth is subjectivity.

> Spirituality is: the power of a man's understanding over his life. The man who, with a perhaps false idea of God, nevertheless follows out the self-denial which that false idea demands of him, is more spiritual than the man who, in learning and philosophy, has a correct knowledge of God, but upon whose life it has no power whatsoever.[1]

With Christianity as subjective and truth as subjectivity, the man who is becoming a Christian is on the way of truth.

Truth is being. This sounded simple enough, because simplicity is the usual aim of philosophers. However in evaluating the notion of being, Kierkegaard soon saw the simplicity vanishing. Objective reflection led to abstract thought, and abstraction, he held, left out existence. In a word, identity of thought with being in abstract is finally reduced to thought is thought, and if that is what philosophers repeat, then as far as Kierkegaard was concerned, they merely ended in a bit of double talk. Furthermore, if the objective reflection is abstract, thinking the word "being" is not the same as concrete existence, which, for Kierkegaard, must always be retained rather than glibly abandoned. If abstraction leaves off

[1]"The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 1177, pg. 425.

concrete existence of the object, the trick is to hold this existence so as not to pursue essentialism, and thereby become indifferent to existence. But objective reflection cannot seem to perform this trick.

If objective reflection cannot hold existence, subjective must, because knowledge of truth is essentially related to an existing individual. But the objective is abstraction, and thus mere approximation in relation to existence, because objectively the existence is always of another. The approximation is never ending, and therefore never a certainty of truth, never a certainty of being, never a certainty of existence of another--at least never by use of reason. Objectively the interest is on the thought-content and the passion is on the "what," but then there is no infinite decisiveness. Even when the reflection is made as to self, which is quite certainly known directly without reflection, but by that reflection it is only known approximately because it is made into an abstract "what," and all abstraction is approximation.

Objectively reason stops at approximation, but this is removed from the firmness of certitude. In a word, objectivity deals with otherness, and this otherness can only be embraced approximately by an existing being, because the grasp of reason is by abstraction which leaves out concrete existence, and hence forsakes the firmness of certitude. Therefore Kierkegaard easily gave up the search for truth along the objective path because he judged that it was never to be attained if an existing individual relies on his power of reason. Objectivity meant simply to know an object by abstraction, by leaving out the concrete existence--for instance, to know Christianity but without living Christianity.

The other way, however, that is, subjectively, Kierkegaard teaches that an individual can take in being, can appropriate a being, which is his inwardness, and this inwardness is the truth; it is the living of the being, which means that it has existence. The concrete exister takes in Christianity and lives it, and in becoming a Christian he goes on day after day exhausting the temporal until finally completely exhausted of time, he rests in the eternity of Christianity. All along

in his daily living the Christianity that he takes in has an existence. The individual does not merely know Christianity, he lives it; he is not in an abstract relation to it, that is, approximately, rather he is becoming a Christian. Why does Kierkegaard insist on "becoming" and not yet "being"?--because the individual can always fall away from living it as long as he is in time. Only the absence of time allows for the eternal, and the concrete exister is always both temporal and eternal, but trying to become only one, the eternal.

Objectivity is a mere siding, a sidetrack of life which does not help the concrete exister grasp truth firmly, because it cannot; it is always approximation; it does not aid the individual in appropriating the real truth, which means the living of truth. Objectively man knows, but knowing is not being. Truth is not objective, but subjective. In fact, the objective way is repulsive to the rationality of the individual because his reason encounters contradiction, impassable contradiction, and shies away from it. At best the individual is indifferent to objective truth. Certainly one would never say that there is an intense passion where there is indifference. Failing in respect to existence, objectivity also fails in regard to truth.

Subjectively, therefore, the appropriation of truth calls for living it with an intensive passion, and not just passive satisfaction to know it. The accent is on the "how," the individual pursues the truth actively and passionately. The objective is repulsive; it is uncertain; it leaves one inactive, without spirit; it is so paradoxical to reason that it cannot be appropriated; it arouses no passion for it. Human reason is soon enervated by the objective and left limp. But in spite of this, an individual can still exercise passion for truth, not objectively of course, but subjectively, that is, if truth is subjective. In that case, he can still take it in and live it. He can be spirited rather than inert. Passionately, he can live more and more truth, until finally attaining the highest pitch of man's passion, which is eternal and essential truth.

Chapter III. Truth

Truth is subjective, and man is not without spirit. He actively lives his subjectivity, his appropriation of truth, and he does so with resoluteness. This is unlike the spiritlessness of objectivity. The very absurdity of the objective is what gives the individual the certainty of the subjective. If Kierkegaard had the individual soliloquizing his thesis, the individual would say, "So I am in time, but what I want is timeless truth--for instance, that God exists, and I can take this truth in because of my intense passion for it, even if objectively it is absurd, the contradiction of a time creature absorbing the eternal. But so be it! Therefore it is true that God exists, and I hold this truth unwaveringly." There the individual rests. Truth is subjectivity, and he appropriates it, even the highest truth, the most absurd appropriation of an infinite being. Unshakenly the individual holds on to this truth, even more steadfastly than Socratic betting on immortality, since Socratic attainment of the eternal was by recollection, whereas Christian attainment is a going forward in the face of absurdity. While recollection may have been plausible for Socrates, but now since Christianity, taking oneself out of existence by way of recollection into the eternal is pantheism. But since truth is subjectivity, and Christianity presents itself as truth, then Christianity is subjectivity--every man seeking eternal happiness, which is precisely what man wants and exactly what Christianity offers.

What makes a man a man is his God-relationship, and because that is so the first essential truth to be appropriated by the individual, namely, the existence, or rather the eternity of God, but which is the most difficult of all to appropriate. What a headache it is for an exister who counts minutes and hours and days to appropriate endless duration, to accept with certainty the reality of eternal God, when this same exister cannot reach with the certainty of reason the existence of his neighbor, except analogously. To be sure, the exister is certain of his own existence, which is the only reality that he can hold with such certainty of reason. The individual alone is real. But in relation to the existence of another exister he

has difficulties because reason cannot make the achievement of appropriating the existence of another with certainty since reason abstracts. It always bogs down in the mire of abstraction which leaves out the concrete existence of this other exister. Hence if it is so difficult to attain by reason the certainty of existence of a neighbor, how much more difficult is it to appropriate with certainty the eternity of God, in order to rest in the God-relationship which is proper to human nature. Obviously reason cannot make the achievement. Objectivity always stumbles in approximation.

CHAPTER IV

FAITH

A. Truth and Faith

When Kierkegaard moved from objectivity, where else could he go, but to subjectivity. Why was Kierkegaard forced, so to speak, into the close embrace of faith? Why--because so far as he could see, there was no other place to go; there was no other haven to the question of certainty of knowing existence. Poor reason! Poor, poor reason in spite of centuries of plaudits from men, it could never account for existence, because the intellect was chained to concepts, and thus unable to attain what cannot be conceptualized--namely, existence. For Kierkegaard the intellect's paucity, its limitation in reflection is always approximation anyway, and never certitude. "Reason counts and counts, reckons and reckons, but it never attains the certainty which faith possesses."[1] As long as Kierkegaard insisted that the truth of existence was too spectral for the intellect, he had to look for another resting place for it. Therefore he turned to man's other higher power, the will, to see if it might embrace the truth of existence, since he was wholly satisfied that the operation of the intellect was entirely confined to concepts, and thus completely divorced from conceptless existence. Furthermore, if the intellect were to attain knowledge of existence, it would merely be with approximation and not with certainty. Hence faith plays the leading role for him, as he clearly demonstrated in his book, "Fear and Trembling," which exhaustively treats of Abraham, the Father of Faith."For if one makes faith everything, that is, makes it what it is, then according to my way of thinking one may speak of it without danger in our age, which hardly extravagates in the matter of faith, and it is only by faith one attains likeness to Abraham, not by murder."[2]

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[1]Soren Kierkegaard, "Works of Love," Translated by David F. Swenson, Princeton University Press, 1946, pg. 86.

[2]"Fear and Trembling," pg. 39.

Chapter IV. Faith

It was appalling to Kierkegaard the way men accepted faith so summarily and then seemed to go on further, seemed to be able to explain the reasonableness of what they believed, whereas he accepted something on faith because of its unreasonableness. Because of uncertainity and unreasonableness he was unable to go further; in fact, he abandoned reason in favor of faith and hence could not reasonably go on further. That which was a going on for men, i.e., the reasonableness of faith, was retrogression in the eyes of Kierkegaard, a going back to reflection and thus to approximation, rather than certitude.

Faith is everything because when man comes to action, to ethical living in the light of faith, he can do so with certitude, with complete firmness, and not be bothered by approximation which would only allow for uncertainty, for indetermination and indifference. Indifference was Kierkegaard's discovery, one which filled him with disgust, the indifference of man--even to the extreme point of being oblivious of his own existence. Man lived in a world of "what," man was engrossed in essences, but he did not live essentially, according to Kierkegaard's view, because to live essentially as man was to live ethically, to act as a Christian, and never to be indifferent to this ethical existence, never for a moment, nor to pretend to be able to go further than faith, to feign to have more than certainty. That was the language of the Dons which ensnared the indiscriminating individual--the Dons, who attained certainty when they reached faith, but still prepared to go beyond this certainty by their glib explanations of reasonableness of faith. But this was precisely what Kierkegaard could not understand, nor could he stomach it, because he found the road to faith so debilitating, so enervating that there was no going beyond it. Faith was the final resting spa for Kierkegaard, if he could just attain it; it was the end of the journey because in faith the mind was surfeited and enclosed in certainty.

Again we come to a new Kierkegaardian twist, a new turn in the interpretation of faith. "It is clear that in my writings I have given a further definition

of the concept of faith, which did not exist until now."[1] Faith is of the will, but the will is being filled up with truth as its object. It is quieted or put to rest by truth, when traditionally the will is claimed to be quieted by goodness. The truth of existence is to satiate the will by an act of faith. This truth of existence, according to Kierkegaard, has nothing to do with the intellect because existence cannot be conceptualized, whereas the intellect accepts concepts. Hence by his conceptualization man remains in the domain of essences, and existence escapes again.

Because this pursuit of certain knowledge of existence proved futile to Kierkegaard, and finally gave no mental rest whatsoever, he proposed his alternative that decisiveness is rooted in subjectivity. And what is his foundation for subjectivity? In the final analysis he admits that it is: Madness. His objective way led to madness, but also to approximation, and so he prefers the madness of the subjective way because at least he claims to get away from approximation and hold to the truth of existence with certainty. "In a merely subjective determination of the truth, madness and truth become in the last analysis indistinguishable, since they may both have inwardness. Nevertheless, perhaps I may here venture to offer a little remark, one which would seem to be not wholly superfluous in an objective age. The absence of inwardness is also madness."[2] Kierkegaard was trapped in a maze, even though he found two doors, each leading to madness, and yet every poor wretched human creature like himself had to move on because life is a becoming. We recall that Kierkegaard was a trained Hegelian who wanted to account for existence, which his fellow Hegelians ignored or simply promised. Kierkegaard wanted the promise fulfilled because existence was held in abeyance too long, or long enough to drive one to madness. And yet he saw that to know existence of another with certainty was impossible because it was conceptless. Hence if one were to accept

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[1]"The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard,", No. 1147, pg. 412.

[2]"Concluding Unscientific Postscripts," pgs. 173 and 174.

it, this must be done by a movement of the will in the face of absurdity, and the initial absurdity that a Christian must accept is that God came into being temporally. "What now is the absurd? 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."[1] Accepting the God-man's existence, the Christian individual certainly could accept that "pass-me-by" of his own existence, even though in absurdity. But intellectual madness had to be abandoned because it would be confined to approximation, would only lead one "almost to know" the truth, whereas the madness of faith at least gave certainty.

With all these thoughts, therefore, with all these ingredients Kierkegaard gave his definition of truth which is also his expression for faith. "Here is such a definition of truth: An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual." "But the above definition of truth is an equivalent expression for faith."[2] Initiating a pursuit for the notion of truth when Kierkegaard found it, he also found faith wrapped in the same package. This equation of truth and faith could have led him along several philosophical roads which had been traveled and which had their own pitfalls, but he avoided these and preferred his own new road. He does not fall into the scepticism of Hume, nor into the pantheism of Spinoza. However, there was no escape from madness for him, and so he simply puts madness to use, i.e., his attainment of certainty through the absurd.

The God-man is the object of faith and only by faith can the reality of God-man be accepted with certainty. There can be no reversibility to the intellect, no going further, even though truth and faith are equated. Kierkegaard faithfully

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[1] Ibid., pg. 188.

[2] Ibid., pg. 182.

held that truth is subjectivity, and removed from the intellect. To say otherwise would be to rob Kierkegaard of his contribution and to throw him into the history of philosophers of the interim between Socrates and himself, whereas he reputidated these and wanted to make his advance from Socrates. Truth and faith held a unique position for Kierkegaard, in keeping with his definition of existence. "The object of faith is hence the reality of the God-man in the sense of his existence. But existence involves first and foremost particularity, and this is why thought must abstract from existence, because the particularity cannot be thought, but only the universal. The object of faith is thus God's reality in existence as a particular individual, the fact that God has existed as an individual human being."[1] Will is harnessed with the two-fold task of appropriating truth and faith, whereas reflective intellect was relieved of the onerousness of certitude, a burden it was unable to carry for Kierkegaard. Perhaps another way of saying this is in terms of being, which traditionally is given to mean "that which is," but which for Kierkegaard would mean solely "is." Hence he ascribes the "that which" to the intellect--an essence, which can be appropriated by concept, but must then rest in approximation. But the "is" or "being" of Kierkegaard is given over to the will, there to be grasped with certitude by an act of faith, an appropriation that is not only a matter of goodness, since the will embraces the good, but also the truth since the definition of truth also holds as the expression of faith.

Faith is not to be taken only in the ordinary sense of the mind's acceptance of the historical, but especially in the eminent sense of its acceptance of God-man relationship. "Faith is here taken first in a direct and ordinary sense, as the relationship of the mind to the historical; but secondly also in an eminent sense, a sense in which the word can be used only once; i.e., many times,but only in one relationship."[2] In the eminent sense there is the uniqueness in Kierkegaard's

[1] Ibid., pg. 290.

[2] "Philosophical Fragments," pgs. 71 and 72.

definition; it has the primacy that puts it at the head of every other consideration of existence for the Christian, which was exactly what Kierkegaard wanted to ascertain because it gave the existing individual firmness of mind. The "why" of his existence was to be grasped with the firmness of certainty, based on the existence of the God-man, an existence that was contradictory, of the infinite in time, but which is to be decisively embrached by the innermost passion. By virtue, then, of this supreme paradox, by the fact of its absurdity, the movement of faith gives man the impetus to grasp the meaning of "is" with certainty, and thereafter to live ethically, to act like a Christian. Faith has the dual task of discovering this paradox, and then holding it with certainty. "Faith has in fact two tasks: to take care in every moment to discover the improbable, the paradox; and then to hold it fast with the passion of inwardness."[1]

[1]"Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 209.

CHAPTER IV

B. Some Problems of Faith

Truth is subjectivity; reality is subjectivity; Christianity is subjectivity; faith is subjectivity. By divorcing himself from objectivity, Kierkegaard penetrated deeper into subjectivity and used this movement away from reason as his own circumvention of the difficulty of appropriating one's God-relationship with certainty. The objective way failed, and so the answer must rest in subjectivity. What reason cannot appropriate might still be achieved otherwise--by faith. In fact, by faith alone can the individual firmly grasp the existence of another, especially when this other is the invisible, eternal God. No matter how paradoxical a relationship is for reason, it cannot deter faith from taking a firm grasp, not even the absolute paradox that the eternal came into existence in time can stop the movement of faith, the full movement of faith to complete firmness.

The greatest repulsiveness is the very cement of faith; the absurdity of the absolute paradox is the basis for faith's certainty in the truth of God's existence in time. The difficulty is in overcoming reason, in making the movement of faith in spite of the immobility of reason. Faith could accept that God is eternal, even though this might remain unattainable by reason. Eternity is timeless and hence there is no contradiction in God's eternity, but when reason is confronted with the difficulty of accepting eternal God's existence in time, it is rendered senseless. The contradiction is too much for reason; namely, the timeless in time. This arrests reason and prevents it from arriving at certitude in reference to the relationship. But subjectivity is spirited where objectivity is stunned to the point of spiritlessness and inactivity. That is to say, the individual's God-relationship faced a roadblock for reason and yet faith not only passed the obstacle of absurdity but also used it as a driving force to complete certainty in achieving the relationship. The way Kierkegaard saw it, the philosopher of his day ran into despair, but the religious man had a chance to escape despair, and thus may even become a Christian. He may

make an advance from the Socratic way of recollection which,if adverted to in the Christian era, would only lead the individual to pantheism. Rather the religious individual advances on the way of becoming a Christian. This is the first appropriation for the man who wants to become a Christian, who is passionately interested in eternal happiness, his own eternal happiness.

Faith starts with contradiction--the existence of another--and thrives on it, because the passion of faith fits in with paradox. But the absolute paradox for faith is that eternal God entered into time. That is the supreme contradiction. But as Kierkegaard maintained, even the individual's own existence has the predicament of contradiction. The individual is in time, but his striving is for eternity. Furthermore, this problem of existence is never explained in terms of abstract thought because existence itself is always temporal, whereas thought being abstract, without concrete existence, is timeless. The difficulty lies in penetrating concrete particularity by thought--that is, the relationship that abstract thought bears to existence.

> But inasmuch as all thought is eternal, there is here created a difficulty for the existing individual. Existence, like movement, is a difficulty for the existing individual. Existence, like movement, is a difficult category to deal with; for if I think it, I abrogate it, and then I do not think it. It might therefore seem to be the proper thing to say that there is something which cannot be thought; namely, existence. But the difficulty persists, in that existence itself combines thinking with existing, insofar as the thinker exists.[1]

Think and existence vanishes. Abstract thought repels concrete existence, and objectivity is abstraction. This again brings Kierkegaard back to his thesis that subjectivity is truth, and objective truth is like the eternity of abstract thought which is extraneous to the movement of concrete existence, leaving it out. Abstract thought is indifferent to concrete existence, whereas the exister himself is most passionately interested in his existence, and that he should achieve eternity.

The individual alone is real, but reality again cannot be expressed in abstract thought because the abstract is only possibility. All knowledge about reality is possibility, and solely the individual is real. This is the only reality that exists for an existing individual. In a word, the real subject is the ethically

[1]Ibid., pg. 274.

existing individual, the man who is the composite of time and eternity and who has the task of becoming uniquely eternal. But the effort to achieve existence in thought is contradictory. Thought abrogates actuality of everything that is other than self, and as to self, it cannot abstract completely. The ethical makes existence the infinite interest, but the ethical again is internal, realized only by the individual. Hence through being known it is the only reality that does not become mere possibility. Every other reality man tries to grasp by thinking it, he reduces to possibility. The individual stands alone, and hence Kierkegaard holds that the mode of apprehension of truth is precisely the truth since it is subjectivity. But then, what about the truth of God, which is the crux of the individual's God relationship. The truth of God must be established by the individual if he is to become eternal. For this truth of God Kierkegaard calls upon faith because God is other than self, which means that knowledge of God cannot be reached with certitude by reason, since we just said that the only knowledge which is not reduced to possibility when being known is that of self, and that is so because the individual cannot completely abstract from self. The maximum of attainment for faith, however, is to become infinitely interested in the fact that God is eternal, the reality of God, because He is the highest other than self, and because He is the necessary other in relation to self since the self is composite of time and eternity.

The inwardness of man points to his own finiteness and therefore also to infinitude because existence is such a composition. And the inwardness that is viewed as proper to man is the relationship of the individual to himself before God. Obviously the secret of existence is not so individual that one can leave out God, but rather on the contrary, a secret that is shared by God because of limitation on the part of the individual; it is necessary for him to acknowledge his relationship to the infinite. Man has certainty as to self--that he is composite of temporal and eternal--but uncertainty as to the infinite alone, and thus he must rely on faith. Reason will not give him this certainty, because reason merely encounters the absurdity of the infinite coming into existence in the fullness of time. Therefore

reason rests in uncertainty in relation to the infinite. But faith is based on this uncertainty, and hence a movement in the face of the absurd. Furthermore, the uncertainty is never to be removed, because if one takes away the uncertainty, the ground of faith is removed in relation to God. "The uncertainty is the criterion and the certainty without the uncertainty is the criterion for the absence of a God-relationship."[1] If the individual is to hold on to his God-relationship, as is proper for every individual, he must do so on faith, and not look to any removal of the uncertainty in relation to the other Who is God, a removal that might be done by reason.

Man seems so anxious to reason away his uncertainty, as if reason were the highest tribunal in the achievement of the God-relationship, whereas reason only leads up to God, and then a leap is necessary. That is to say, dialectics merely brings the individual up to the leaping point and does not eliminate the uncertainty.

> For dialectics is in its truth a benevolent helper, who discovers and assists in finding where the absolute object of faith and worship is--there, namely, where the difference between knowledge and ignorance collapses in absolute worship with a consciousness of ignorance, there where the resistance of an objective uncertainty tortures forth the passionate certainty of faith, there where the conflict of right and wrong collapses in absolute worship, but it leads, as it were, the individual up to it, and says: "Here it must be, that I guarantee; when you worship here, you worship God." But worship itself is not dialectics. A dialectic that mediates is a derelict genius.[2]

Faith is higher than reason, and achieves the certainty that is unattainable by reason. But this is faith which is singularly taken in the eminent sense and which is proper in relation to the existence of another, Who is God. In other words, it is the faith that is proper to the man who is becoming a Christian, and not the faith of any individual of lesser religiosity, not the faith of an aesthetic, nor ethicist, nor even the man of Socratic religiousness, but solely the Christian.

Faith in the eminent sense makes an advance upon Socrates, who rested with the opinion that immortality was proper to man. The man of faith who is becoming a

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[1] Ibid., pg. 407.

[2] Ibid., pgs. 438 and 439.

Christian does not hold this as a matter of opinion, but as the highest certainty. Chritianity holds to immortality with certainty, because the man who is becoming a Christian has the faith which is correlated to the reality that is timeless, to God, Who is infinite, and therefore a unity and not a composition of eternity and time, like man in his existence. Faith alone can make this leap to the unique unlikeness which is the infinite, and thus by faith the individual who is becoming a Christian makes an advance to certainty. It is an advance over the Socratic position, to that of Christianity, made by the self active will which leaps to faith and encloses itself with certitude as to the infinite.

The big problem of faith, as Kierkegaard saw it, was the achievement of complete firmness in spite of absurdity. Any looking back to reason in relation to man's God-relationship was a sign of lack of faith, and therefore lack of certitude, but rather a reverting to approximation. Faith in the eminent sense, and this was really the only sense in which faith can be asserted, was a state of certainty, and any going further than faith in trying to establish its reasonableness was a lack of faith, a lack of certitude again and a falling away from firmness so that the final settlement is made in what Kierkegaard considered lower. In firmness of mind there was nothing as high as faith. In other words, the certitude of faith alone was the highest, because it dealt with the highest relationship of man's existence, the infinite. Reason in reference to the infinite was hung on the unknown and therefore never attained the mental state which faith had to offer. The man of faith must be an Abraham, that is, without the slightest wavering when acting in reference to the God-relationship, and every act should be made precisely in view of man's God-relationship. The believer must not try to provide an explanation for action; he must not hesitate; he must not question. He simply must have the fullness of certainty of faith and act in spite of all the absurdities that might be conjured up, the greatest absurdity being that he must act in relation to God when actually there is nothing that is wanting in the infinite. The absurdities shatter the complete

firmness of reason, or rather because of the absurdities reason cannot rest in complete firmness, and therefore the reasonable speculator is left in opinion or doubt, but never in certitude. In the eyes of a reasonable man the believer is acting absurdly and inanely. But the man of faith has a firmness that is unequaled by a man of reason; it is unique--the certitude of faith stands alone for Kierkegaard. Even the man of infinite resignation may not yet be a man of faith, no matter how close he may be to the firmness of a believer. Nevertheless, if there is a breach between the two, no matter how small that breach is, they are not the same. Only the believer has faith, and he alone has unpunctured firmness. He stands alone because he does not lean on reason, and therefore no absurdity can shake his certitude. As to himself, Kierkegaard would not assert that he was a man who possessed this singular faith; but rather on the contrary, he asserted that it was too difficult a movement for him. He might call himself a man of infinite resignation, but not yet a man of faith, just as he said of Socrates who was not quite a man of faith. Socrates rested in opinion but not certitude; Socrates was not an Abraham, and neither was Kierkegaard and yet it was possible for every individual to rest in faith, to be a believer.

The apex, for Kierkegaard, at which existence arrived at truth by faith was exactly that of Christianity. All these elements are tracks of subjectivity which are finally switched into one. Existence, truth, faith and Christianity are subjectivity, and when attained fully and perfectly by the believer, then he might arrive at the resting point. He is eternal; he has attained eternal happiness. At that happy meeting point the individual is the unity that he always wanted to be. Being freed from the temporal, the individual will no longer exist--no longer be a composite, but be singularly eternal, and because of faith the eternal relationship will be to the otherness which is infinite, and the truth will be within the individual for endless duration, which in turn will be to his eternal happiness, because he is then a Christian, eternity in perfect harmony with his God-relationship. But we note especially, or rather repeat emphatically that the individual is not a

Christian in time, because so long as he is temporal, he can always fall away from becoming a Christian. Once the individual is solely eternal, then he can be a Christian, but otherwise he is only becoming one.

Reviewing the connecting links which we said that Kierkegaard forged into the chain of existence, we note that truth is decisive and therefore lies in the subject, who is becoming a Christian--that is his special task and that is his reason for appropriating truth. In this process the emphasis is not on the "what" of Christianity, but on the "how" of the Christian. This flows from the assertion that truth is subjectivity. The "how" is an act of faith, but faith and truth have the same definition, the one is the other. And in giving this notion of faith, Kierkegaard meant its application to be unique and specific in the eminent sense. This was not to be a loose link in his chain, one that might be removed and placed in another relationship. On the contrary, the link was to fit one proper relation and only that one; it is properly assigned to the believer, whose first act of faith was in the God-man, the absolute paradox of this earthly universe, the existence of the infinite in time.

> Faith is the objective uncertainty due to the repulsion of the absurd held fast by the passion of inwardness, which in this instance is intensified to the utmost degree. This formula fits only the believer, no one else, not a lover, not an enthusiast, not a thinker, but simply and solely the believer who is related to the absolute paradox.
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> Faith therefore cannot be any sort of provisional function. He who from the vantage point of a higher knowledge would know his faith as a factor resolved in a higher idea has eo ipso ceased to believe. Faith must not rest content with unintelligibility; for precisely the relation to or the repulsion from the unintelligible, the absurd, is the expression for the passion of faith.[1]

Holding that absurdity, the existence of God-man, with complete firmness, the individual who knows that he exists, that he himself is in a very secret and closed-in relationship to the God-man, can travel the road of fulfilling his existence, of becoming a Christian, and Kierkegaard maps out some of the travels of such an existence.

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[1]Ibid., pg. 540.

PART II

LIVING EXISTENCE AND FAITH

CHAPTER I

MAN AS A SYNTHESIS

A. Infinite and Finite

The existing individual alone is reality. The exister knows this; he knows that he is real. Everything else is possibility because man knows only his own existence directly, but everything else he knows conceptually. The one existence that man can grasp thoroughly is his own existence, and therefore Kierkegaard suggests that man should examine it to see what he can discover. Inspecting this existence, man notes that he is a strange synthesis, a composition of finite and infinite. "Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis."[1] The mixture which man is can only be adequately described as a synthesis. He is not purely finite, nor purely infinite. Kierkegaard expressed this clearly and succinctly enough--in short, the existence of man is a synthesis. But this observation is hardly satisfactory to the mind of a thoughtful man. Quite on the contrary, it is most disturbing, because taken simply as a synthesis of finite and infinite, it appears to the individual that such a composition is a contradiction. Kierkegaard was much disturbed by this thought and thus he devotes the entire book "Sickness Unto Death" to the theme of despair because of this apparent contradiction, and because man is enchained to the eternal element of existence. He may be rid of time, but never rid of the eternal.

The self is a synthesis of finite and infinite, as man discovers, but he is not completely self-sufficient, and this added discovery only complicates matters for him, because he must conclude that the synthesis is a derived relationship, a relationship that also points to another. Man despairs because there is no getting

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[1] Soren Kierkegaard, "The Sickness Unto Death", Translated by Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1941, pg. 17.

away from the fact that the self is not self-sufficient, but constituted by another; and man despairs too because there is no release from the eternal element in the self, that is, despairs at not willing to be one's own self. The despair will be as intense as is man's consciousness of these discoveries. Some persons are hardly aware of despair. Maybe even most people are hardly aware of it, because, as we said once before, they treat the matter of the synthesis on paper, and soon enough they explain it easily--on paper. They posit the finite and then the infinite; they set it on paper and declare that there must be a mediation. And there they have it--on paper. Kierkegaard remarked how fortunate it was for the existing man that he did not have to create existence, this synthesis of infinite and finite, but rather he only had to discover it. Man exists, and he is a synthesis, and therefore all he has to do is concentrate upon existing.

But still man has a task. As a synthesis of finite and infinite, he has the task of becoming one of the two existentially. He cannot become both, because that is precisely what he is as an existing individual. That is Kierkegaard's difference between being and becoming. Man is being; he is the synthesis of temporal and eternal, but he is trying to become one, trying to become eternal, to become a Christian. Hence existence orbeing is only the beginning for man, and his discovery of his existence as the synthesis of finite and infinite is the starting point on the way to becoming eternal. On paper, of course, this task too is easily finished, but in existence it is another story; it is the most difficult task of all for man.

To explain the synthesis which man is, there must be a third term. It is hardly complete by asserting the composition of finite and infinite--in fact, without the third term it is contradictory. What is the third term of this synthesis of finite and infinite? It is spirit. "Man is a synthesis of the soulish and the bodily. But a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third factor. This third factor is the spirit."[1] This third term is what makes the synthesis of finite

[1] Soren Kierkegaard, "The Concept of Dread". Translated by Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1946, pg. 39.

and infinite in man's existence strange, or rather unique. Man's existence is unique amid all the creations of the universe. Man holds a singular place, and itis spirit which holds man in his place, so that he cannot be reduced to mere animal or vegetable; neither, of course, while he exists can he be declared as solely eternal. Existence, for Kierkegaard, retains the temporal and hence man is being and only on the way to becoming eternal. That is man's task, to become eternal.

Man is, therefore, a synthesis of soul and body and spirit. But behold, Kierkegaard charged that most people mediate their finitude and infinitude on paper and in doing so do not become spirit. "For most people do not succeed in becoming spirit, and all the fortunate years of their immediateness are, where spirit is concerned, a loss and therefore they never attain to spirit."[1] Year in and year out people move in immediate enjoyment of existence, in the acting out of the synthesis of body and soul with the possibility of eternity hovering about, but never arresting their close attention. Thus in Kierkegaard's estimation there was so much superficial mediation on paper that most men missed the fullness of existence, because they lacked spirit. And what is spirituality? "Spirituality is: the power of a man's understanding over his life."[2] This was what was missing from the examination of existence by those who mediated on paper. They merely assert that there must be an explanation of the synthesis of finite and infinite, and then they let it go at that. They proceed to forget the matter, rather than live out becoming eternal. Whereas the man of spirit relates his activity toward becoming eternal, and he is spiritual in proportion to this understanding, and the influence it has in his living out of existence in order to become eternal. The man of spirit actively pursues the goal of eternal happiness.

The fact of spirit, however, is not necessarily a consolation to man. Quite on the contrary, it is a matter of despair, because despair is a qualification of

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[1]"The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 753, pg. 239.

[2]Ibid., No. 1177, pg. 425.

spirit; despair is tied to the apron string of the eternal in man. And man cannot rid himself of the eternal. There is no chance of casting off the eternal, and thus becoming singularly temporal, or else perhaps attaining annihilation, which some persons would look upon as a blessing and a salvation. This futility is expressed frequently enough when a person sighs casually and says, "Sometimes I wish that I had never been born," or again, "I didn't ask to be put on this earth." Obviously, this is some sort of realization and acknowledgement of being trapped in a stream of the eternal with no possible escape. It is a looking back with the implication that looking forward there is always the eternal. To hold to a notion of annihilation, of course, is to succumb utterly to despair. It is the forceful effort to close out the eternal, which, in reality, will not be closed out.

The man of spirit, on the other hand, always expresses hope of becoming eternal. He lives for the eternal. His every act is directed toward the goal of eternal happiness. He is a synthesis of body and soul and spirit, and is consciously striving to attain the goal of eternity, of becoming a Christian.

CHAPTER I

B. Temporal and Eternal

Man is also the synthesis of the temporal and eternal. We repeatedly expressed this second relationship in reference to the first synthesis of finite and infinite. But we did not stop to examine it then, and we did not explain it thoroughly. This second synthesis also needs a third term, or else it appears to rest in a contradiction. Kierkegaard inquired, what is the third term of temporal and eternal? The third term of the synthesis of duration, of time and eternity, is the instant. "The instant is not properly an atom of time but an atom of eternity. It is the finite reflection of eternity in time, its first effort as it were to bring time to a stop."[1] Again we see that the third term is tied to the eternal element in man, just as spirit is tied to the infinite. As soon as spirit, the power of understanding, is posited in reference to the synthesis of soul and body, then the instant is there in relation to duration, and time and eternity make sense. The whole orientation of the spiritual man becomes forward looking--toward becoming one, toward the eternal, which he expresses by saying "future life." The Greeks would not understand this because they looked back to the eternal--by recollection. The eternal was past, and they were trying to recall it. The pagan perspective was in retrospect. The Christian view is the opposite. It looks forward to the eternal, to becoming eternal because the promise of eternal happiness is the goal of Christianity.

But man must become rid of the temporal, which is the imperfection in man, the cause of his limitation. We said that he soon despairs of any attempt to become rid of the eternal, and in the wake of this he can only turn to becoming rid of the temporal so as to become only one. The temporal then is the drag upon man, holding him back from becoming eternal, and he must pay the price for being temporal. This is man's spirituality, his understanding of the synthesis and thus his living out of the temporal. However, he knows that he can be rid of the temporal, and that is his

[1] "The Concept of Dread," pg. 79.

good fortune. The spiritual man knows too that his task is to live out time and not simply to be rid of it all at once. He must suffer the living out of time. That is his religiousness. Thus suicide is ruled out by the spiritual man. To advert to suicide would be to abandon understanding utterly, to be spiritless rather than spiritual.

The spiritual man knows that he exists in an ambiguous moment of the instant, but he must live out the existence. "The instant is that ambiguous moment in which time and eternity touch one another, thereby positing the temporal, where time is constantly intersecting eternity and eternity constantly permeating time."[1] Man lives in that ambiguous moment, but he must eventually be rid of the touch of time before he can be one, before he can be solely eternal in order to enjoy eternal happiness. That is the becoming of a spiritual man; that is the becoming of every man. That again is why the man who is trying to become a Christian can talk of "future life," of eternal life. He sees the possibility of leaving off the temporal, or rather, of the fulfillment of the temporal. He has hope in becoming one. To be rid of the temporal is no loss to the spiritual man, but rather a gain. Existence, in Kierkegaard's sense, is left behind when the man becomes solely eternal. But this must be done in the fullness of time, or else the man is not spiritual, is not becoming a Christian.

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[1] Ibid., pg. 80.

C. Possible and Necessary

Finally, man is a synthesis of possibility and necessity. The hope, the possibility of becoming eternal wards off despair from the man who is trying to become a Christian. Of course, so long as he exists, he is the synthesis of possibility and necessity, and if these elements of his synthesis are kept in balance while he exists, he will not despair. That is to say, if neither possibility nor necessity outruns the other in his existence, then he will not despair. Rather he will see that he is free. The man of spirit knows that he is free, even if the self is derived. "The self is composed of infinity and finiteness. But the synthesis is a relationship, and it is a relationship which, though it is derived, relates itself to itself, which means freedom. The self is freedom. But freedom is the dialectical element in the terms possibility and necessity."[1] The self is a derived relationship, but still it is free, and thus the man who is trying to become a Christian can direct himself toward becoming eternally happy. However, he must be a man of spirit, or rather, we can even say this in a stronger way to the religious man. He must be a man of faith, because he is derived and because, in spite of his freedom, he is ever in the sight of another, ever in the sight of God, from Whom he is derived.

As a matter of fact, he alone, the man of spirit who is trying to become a Christian, he alone is the man of faith. He alone is the religious man with faith because anything less removes the individual from faith. The final understanding of the spiritual man, which is not utter abandonment of understanding, is that there is no understanding, and he seeks none. This is the position of the religious man of faith, the man who is always before God. "Faith is: that the self in being itself and is willing to be itself is grounded transparently in God."[2] The final synthesis

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[1] "The Sickness Unto Death," pg. 42.

[2] Ibid., pg. 132.

of man is in freedom. The existing individual knows he is free, but he arrives at the understanding by faith, or as we said before, he understands that there is no understanding, and yet he lives spiritually by faith, so that the synthesis of man takes on the fullness of meaning when it rests in faith.

The concrete individual is more and more spiritual as he becomes more and more Christian. The notion of becoming is more spiritual than existing. Kierkegaard expressed this precisely in those words. "Becoming is more spiritual than existing."[1] Thus the man must live spiritually, and living spiritually means the living out of the fullness of time. This is actually a suffering, but suffering is religiousness. But the understanding of the spiritual man is that he must be a man of faith if he is to become a Christian, because he must accept without questioning the fact that the final understanding is not understood, and therefore he must rest upon the hope that to God all things are possible. Man can even be rid of finiteness and rest happily in the eternal. The man of faith who lives out his existence with this final understanding, that is, lives out the fullness of time, and chooses to do it freely, will become one, will become eternal, will be eternally happy, will be a Christian. However, in examining the several ways in which the man on the street lives out his existence, Kierkegaard was shocked to find that only some act as though they may be on the way to the goal of faith. In his day he charged that in one way or another so many persons passed their existence without displaying faith, without becoming the Christians which they thoughtlessly professed to be. Kierkegaard made detailed observation of the actual existence of those around him, and he classified them as resting either in aesthetic or ethical existence, or even religiousness with immanence, but, so far as he could see, not Christianity, not even those dedicated exclusively to the service of God. Thus he maps out the various existences.

[1]"The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 941, pg. 323.

CHAPTER II

AESTHETIC LIFE

A. A Beginning

"What does it mean to exist?" the question that at some time or another is in everyone's mind, if not actually and overtly on the lips. In the steelmill the open-hearth bricklayer yells to the hod-carrier for more "feather-edge," and then pauses to wipe his perspiring brow, and in that fleeting moment lets the question race through his mind, "What is it all about?" He condenses all woes and worries, his crooked fingers, his calloused hands, his aching back, his dirty clothes, his daily regimented routine, his weariness, his fears, and also his good sideof life, his pleasures, his insatiable appetite for happiness--all of these he compresses into the question, "What is this existence all about?" and sandwiches the question into a brief pause as the helper scurries around gathering more "feather-edge." As soon as the bricks are supplied, however, the enigmatic question disappears, and back he goes turning his attention to the laying of more bricks. But the question is chronic, even though it is just as regularly forgotten, or at least set aside for response when he will have more time to devote to it, perhaps tomorrow--the same tomorrow of his last fifty odd years, and most probably the same tomorrow that he will carry with him to his dying day.

Kierkegaard was able to understand the question of the stone-mason of his day and thus would not be surprised that a busy bricklayer today continued to ask the same question and just as regularly put it off until tomorrow. What did surprise him, however, was that the learned ones, the erudite educators whose work it was to answer sundry queries acted no differently than the perplexed laborer. In an age of avid and professedly successful pursuit of knowledge it seemed strange to put off the question of existence--always to be answered tomorrow.

Existence cannot be shut out by a normal person; it needs but a fleeting moment to inject itself quizzically into the puzzled mind of an exister. But

Chapter II. Aesthetic Life

Kierkegaard observed that man was clever, because he was just as adept in erasing the question from his mind, as it was in making repeated appearances. Finally, Kierkegaard decided that for himself tomorrow arrived, and that he would attempt to answer the question of what it means to exist.

> My principal thought was that in our age, because of the great increase of knowledge, we had forgotten what it means to exist, and what inwardness signifies, and that the misunderstanding between speculative philosophy and Christianity was explicable on that ground. I now resolved to go back as far as possible, in order not to reach the religious mode of existence too soon, to say nothing of the specifically Christian mode of religious existence, in order not to leave difficulties unexplored behind me. If men had forgotten what it means to exist religiously, they had doubtless also forgotten what it means to exist as human beings; this must therefore be set forth.[1]

Having torn out the pages of history and starting with the primacy of subjectivity, Kierkegaard gave us his own definition of existence, which in its wake almost immediately conjured up the question, whether this definition also applied to the notion of God, whether God exists. But no, we shall see his distinction that God in His infinitude is not said to exist, although man can predicate existence of the God-man, yet such predication was the absurd, that the infinite came into existence in time. Therefore Kierkegaard found that existence called for faith, but this notion again had Kierkegaard's own trademark because it is equated with truth.

> Immanently (in the fantastic medium of abstraction) God does not exist, He only is--God only exists for an existing man; i.e., he can only exist in faith.
> Faith is therefore the anticipation of the eternal which holds the factors together, the cleavages of existence.
> When an existing individual has not got faith, God is not, neither does God exist, although understood from an eternal point of view God is eternally.[2]

As we said previously, Kierkegaard was forging his own chain, his own definitions, and trying to apply them to the problem of existence. But these notions were only preliminary to the start of his project; they were to set the stage for his subjective orientation. Yet they were not incidental. They were necessary if his thesis was to be understood in any measure. Furthermore, Kierkegaard realized

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[1] "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 223.

[2] "The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 605, pg. 173.

that he may have written "Fragments" and "Experiments" so as to be "without authority," but his was not idle babbling, like that of the Princes of Speculation, whom he charged as writing inanely, simply for the sake of knowing. Kierkegaard's solution to the problem of existence was rather for the sake of action, the living out of existence, which to him meant the becoming of a Christian. But still he would not revert solely to the historical Christian existence, because historically the Christian was dated by the coming of Christ. Kierkegaard would refer to man's existence even before the historicity of Christ, because man was always man, designed to live religiously before the coming of Christ as well as after. To make an adequate beginning, therefore, Kierkegaard found it necessary to go back to Socrates in order that an advance might be made upon his notions of subjectivity, and later application made in the light of Christianity. Hence only after his extensive prologue, so to speak, he dared to venture forth with his proposed thesis. "So I resolved to begin; and my first act, in order to begin from the beginning, would be to exhibit the existential relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical within an existing individual."[1] However, even before viewing the relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical, we may ask what does it mean to exist aesthetically, which Kierkegaard set down as the first stage of existence.

By way of digression we must offer the forewarning that Kierkegaard does not pretend to hold that every individual goes through all the stages of existence. "Christianity has never subscribed to the notion that every particular individual is in an outward sense privileged to begin from scratch. Every individual begins in a historical nexus, and the consequences of natural law are still as valid as ever."[2] Some may never go beyond the first stage, and thus simply rest in it. But in Kierkegaard's day most of the individuals claimed to be Christians, and were

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[1] "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 224.

[2] "The Concept of Dread," pg. 65.

charged by him as making a false claim, a charge that he leveled against all, even those who were especially consecrated to a profession of Christianity, the reverend clergy.

CHAPTER II

B. Enjoyment

Utopia!! The aim of some philosophers--recent philosophers as well as ancients--had been to establish a temporal utopia, and time and again we read their expositions that this is the best possible world which is ultimately destined to be an utopia, either in our time or some distant future when certain conditions have been fulfilled. Even though this hope has never been realized by man, it has never been abandoned by him, nor has the hope that this time we are on the road to its realization. Today for instance, as realistic and as practical as the communists are supposed to be, some gullibly hold to the Marxist doctrine of a temporal utopia, to be attained eventually after much struggle and even chaos, when all men finally understand and accept the necessity of materialism. They account for all of reality exclusively by dialectical materialism, which has sufficient causality so that in its culmination there is to be complete tranquillity and order among men.

If we were to suggest, however, that this is only an idle, fanciful dream, we would be charged with shortsightedness. In any case, a human individual can start with small grains of truth, and even build these up into a proposed utopian universe. The grains of truth which such writers have to work with are--first, man's appetite for lasting happiness; and second, man's power of imagination, which allows him to picture this universe through rose-colored glasses. Each one of us could picture a better world, simply by leaving off the sore spots, wars, depressions, pestilences and plagues, but we would not find the reality that might coincide with what we imagine. For the most part we use our imagination properly and prefer to keep our feet on the ground, to accept reality as it is and to live accordingly. But this is not true of everyone; some attain reality, but some prefer to live fancifully. "The imagination is what providence uses in order to get men into reality, into existence, to get them far enough out, or in, or down in existence. And when imagination has helped them as far out as they are meant to go--that

is where reality, properly speaking, begins."[1] Kierkegaard saw that some persons in all seriousness tried to lead utopian lives; they tried to live unrealistically, but successfully in an aesthetic world. Existence, to them, meant singularly aesthetic existence, a process of becoming in an universe of enjoyment. In fact, about these persons we should not say that they tried to live in a world of enjoyment, but rather that they were successful in passing from pleasure to pleasure, never encountering suffering, which would, of course, immediately throw them into a new category of existence. They never take off or lose their rose-colored glasses, and ever remain in the world of interminable pleasure. In a way they lead exalted lives because they play the role of some sort of divinity; they are some sort of gods. Having the spark of the Divine, as intelligent beings, and readily seeing that they as men are the highest beings on this universe, they find it easy to act as gods. It is easy because the pride of man leads him to think that everything is possible for him. "The aestheticist in Either-Or was an existential possibility, a young richly gifted, partly hopeful human being, experimenting with himself and with life; ... he was not really an actuality, but 'a possibility of everything'."[2] We see, then, that existence in the aesthetic world is that of enjoyment, and that the aesthetic plays the role of a god. Obviously such a man is absorbed by the creativity of man--human creativity, of which we spoke previously and which allows him to form ideas and to use these ideas in the making of realities, in the making of things. The farmer, the carpenter, the artist, the architect plan the things that they will make. The architect, for instance, clearly sees in mind the simple and the complex details which he puts on a plan, this wall will be twelve inches thick in order to support the given weight, and the door will be here--three feet wide and seven feet high.

In aesthetic existence man is a god, fashioning his own world, just as God Himself truly did, and so too man looks upon his creations and tells himself that

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[1]"The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 1338, pg. 519.

[2]"Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pgs. 262 and 263.

they are good, and enjoys the goodness which he creates. Aesthetic existence is everything. Aesthetic existence knows all, or can know all, and so long as it remains enclosed in the know-it-all world, there is enjoyment. Truly enough, some pleasures are to be held in abeyance--because man will know them tomorrow, since they are always possible, the Hegelian notion that existence will be given in the next chapter or the next book. Kierkegaard knew these men well, just as we may know one today--the man that claims that we will be able to speak to the dog or cat or horse, because he claims intelligence for them, just as an human being is intelligent, except that today we have not yet solved the problem of communicating intelligently with the animals. However, maybe tomorrow, or at least some tomorrow, we will know the solution; we are so close to it already. We have the horse that will push the right lever with the right answer to the question that it is asked (saying "yes" that it would like to be an human being). All is possible to the aesthetic. Imagination builds man's world, and some imaginations never reach the finiteness of man, the limitedness of even the highest of beings on this universe. Some persons never reach the limit, and hence are never in misfortune; they never reach reality, according to Kierkegaard. They just rest in imagination, because with their imaginations men can supply everything to the universe, like adding scenery to a stage play, or whatever dialogue is appropriate. Anything can be done, even apparent miracles can be performed.

And so we see the meaning of the first stage of existence. It is not a penetrating grasp of existence, even though an aesthetic exister may have a brilliant imagination. Kierkegaard himself thought of it more in terms of a childish stage, inasmuch as children like make-believe and have keenly active imaginations.

Knowing now that aesthetic existence is enjoyment, we may inquire as to its relationship to faith, and what are some of the implications of such a relationship.

CHAPTER II

C. No Faith

Aesthetic existence is enjoyment. This was an inviting path, and Kierkegaard went part way along that road because it seemed to be a natural road for a gifted human being, and as a matter of fact, for all human beings inasmuch as man naturally seeks happiness. Kierkegaard realized that he was even endowed with the special blessings of mind and tongue to travel far along this road. He was a poet, and was always well aware of the aesthetic powers that were at his command. If only that were the proper answer to the question of existence, he was well prepared for it. Were these powers bestowed to him precisely as clues that he must go the full length of his life on the aesthetic road? Was that to be his main concern, his purpose, his own vocation in life? Such interrogation actually occupied some of his time, yet at first he suspected and later he knew that somehow the aesthetic life was not the all of existence, because even while he was a poet, he was not merely a poet, but a religious poet, with the accent of his life on the religious category, rather than the aesthetic. However, he went far enough along this path to observe his fellow travelers who made it the all of existence, and never veered from it, nor got off. And even though he was abandoning them, he intentionally used their words and their style to capture their attention, and thus to try to lead them into a more religious path.

For several reasons Kierkegaard abandoned the aesthetics. In the first place the aesthetic lived in naivete, but this was not faith, certainly not faith in the Kierkegaardian sense. Furthermore he noticed that while the aesthetic lived in immediacy, it was not the decisive immediacy of the absolute paradox--it was not the absolute relation to the absolute, but a relation to the present pleasure in the individual's own unending cycle of pleasure. His naivete never allows for the suspicion of his limitation, of his lack of pure infinity, and hence there is some resemblance to the absolute, especially since the individual realizes that he is destined to

eternity. Nevertheless in reality it is a fact that the aesthetic does not exist decisively at all. He never attains faith, and therefore he never reaches reality. "For faith is not the first immediacy, but a subsequent immediacy. The first immediacy is the aesthetical, and about this the Hegelian philosophy may be in the right. But faith is not the aesthetical--or else faith has never existed because it has always existed."[1] Kierkegaard abandoned this immediacy because it was too shallow and too superficial to account for existence in its fullness. It was not the path for him because there was no faith, no reality, no God, which again meant no ethics and no duty. The most important relationship was found wanting; namely, the individual's god-relationship. "Duty becomes duty by being referred to God, but in duty itself I do not come into relation with God."[2] For the aesthetic, his life is enjoyment, and so every privilege is to be enjoyed. There must be no censure of enjoyment, no curtailment of privilege, and hence no duty other than to self, which is to say, freedom to enjoy all because there is no duty at all. Man is again a god. He creates, but he does not have to create. He does things, but he does not have to do them. Having to do, duty is not in the category of aesthetic existence at all. "The real action is not the external act, but an internal decision in which the individual puts an end to the mere possibility and identifies himself with the content of his thought in order to exist in it. This is the action."[3] The aesthetic does not put an end to possibility, and hence he does not really have to act, which means that he is not confined by duty. He knows all and has all as a possibility, and as far as being an exister through action is concerned, he simply becomes indifferent. He can always hide and rest in his aesthetic inwardness which can account for everything, at least in possible form, and thus still be

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[1] "Fear and Trembling," pg. 125.

[2] Ibid., pg. 102.

[3] "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 302.

the potential creator of all. He has no duty to accept the limitations of reality, because he has no duty at all. He is free to make his own world just as it pleases him.

Duty, then, has no place in aesthetic existence. It has no place because it would prevent the possibility of taking every privilege, and that would put an end to some enjoyment. If duty were to enter into aesthetic existence, then it would not be the full and true aesthetic life. Whereas the aesthetic prefers to flutter around like the butterfly gathering pollen; he goes from pleasure to pleasure. He does not halt nor cease his pursuit of pleasure, but always moves on to the next one; and each is for the moment, the immediate pleasure. In this way he never knows limitation; he never knows misfortune. "The immediate individual never comes to any understanding with misfortune, for he never becomes dialectical in himself."[1] In Kierkegaard's sense, he is never in contact with reality; he is never limited by duty. As long as he holds with complete naivete to his position, he remains in aesthetic existence. His final by-word may be, "I just do not understand," but this is expressly or tacitly qualified by his ever present "because it is possible, but the solution has not been worked out yet."

Kierkegaard rejected aesthetic existence as the fullness of existence of an individual who is to become a Christian. It is a religious form of existence, according to Kierkegaard, but not of the highest type, which alone is required of a Christian. It remains one of the lower forms of religiosity--"that in which the individual goes home from the Sunday God-relationship to exist quite immediately in the dialectic of the pleasant and the unpleasant."[2] At best, it is a childish form of religious existence, because the unpleasant causes no seriousness, no decisiveness. But Kierkegaard said that there was no misfortune, or at least a pretense of no misfortune, and hence no contact with reality, no awareness of the individual's

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[1] Ibid., pg. 388.

[2] Ibid., pg. 423.

obligations under the God-relationship. Some persons may pretend to rest in this aesthetic existence without ever making an advance, but for the most part men only start in this lowest form and sooner or later advance in religiousness. The child, for instance, is the god or king of his own world, in which all things indiscriminately are "mine," and there is need of a bit of training and education before a new world opens up for the child, before it has any understanding of the truer world of "mine and yours." So, too, an aesthetic may spend his whole lifetime in this sort of naive existence. But it is not reserved exclusively for naive persons. Nay, rather Kierkegaard warns that not only is it easily accessible to the simple folks, but also to the proud. It is not confined to the childish. As we indicated, it is also, and perhaps even more so, the path of the "know-it-all," comparable to the youthful state of adolescence, when the maturing young person begins to sense his virulence. He wants all the attention all the time; he acts as though he knew more than everyone else, more than his companions, more than his parents, more than his teachers, and more than the clergy. Proudly he wants attention to center around himself, and he will bask in this limelight. This is his greatest pleasure, and he wants it to be perennial. Some persons again never advance in maturity--whatever the chronological span of their lives, and their God-relationship is enveloped in just such an adolescent environment. Kierkegaard noted that while aesthetic existence may be childish, the other way--the way of pride is so favorable to enjoyment that it is quickly and easily traveled by some men. But this is not the sole path of the true Christian, who may go some distance along the path. However, he will not go far, nor remain very long on it. The individual, who is truly trying to become a Christian, will soon acknowledge his limitation; he will make his movement of faith; he will be in contact with reality, and he will advance in religiosity.

Truly, a man may exist aesthetically for a long time, always moving along the line of possibility, and seeking enjoyment in sampled and varied experiences. Limitation may be averted successfully for a long, long time, perhaps even for his

whole lifetime. But if this awareness of his limitations finally dawns upon him and later even assumes a strong hold on him, then his troubles begin because he is soon dethroned from his dais of divinity by these limitations; he stands face to face with reality; he is in a new category of existence which calls for him to choose to exist ethically, and therefore to accept the subsequent obligations. The aesthetic with his self-acquired infinity now bogs down in existence because of his clay feet, and the man who wanted so much to carry on intelligent conversations with cats, dogs and horses must hold fast to reality and converse with other men, if he is to converse at all.

Therefore, just as pleasure is the all of child-life, so too it is the all of aesthetic life. Enjoyment from the waking hour in the morning until the final minute before retiring at night is the sharpest outline of a child's life, even if it is true that the first sound every morning is that of crying, still the sobbing is only its way to arouse the other characters who are to play essential roles in its daily enjoyment, starting at that very moment when a sleepy mother brings the early morning bottle of milk to the infant. Childish existence is aesthetic; aesthetic existence is childish; the essential of both is enjoyment, but both are only on the lowest level of existence. The adult who pursues aesthetic existence is as hungry for enjoyment as the child for its first daily bottle of milk. Furthermore, the adult wants his enjoyment to be enduring, even to be endless enjoyment. The individual wants eternal happiness.

The chase is on. The aesthetic pursues every pleasure, but in due time the chase becomes wearisome, that is, the pursuer finds that to live every imaginable happiness is not easy, in fact, it appears to be more and more impossible. Hence he re-arranges his sights toward the goal. Instead of living every pleasure he is willing to settle for thinking every pleasure. In this way he may be able to retain the possibility of every pleasure. As long as he cannot gain every pleasure actually, he is satisfactorily compromising for the possibility of every enjoyment.

But still the eternity of pleasure escapes him. He always finds himself saying, "If it would only endure," and having so repeatedly whispered this collision with time in the accompaniment of every pleasure, he eventually realizes that infinite pleasure is not to be found in aesthetic existence. This conclusion is shocking and frightful. The incessant whispering becomes louder and louder, and the silence of his cubicle may finally be rent by the strident shriek, "the end of aesthetic existence is despair."

The aesthetic despairs of eternal happiness in his own category of existence. But he is proud and shrewd, and thus he must conceal the despair and pretend to exist in pleasure. "It is an imagination-existence in aesthetic passion, and therefore paradoxical, colliding with time; it is in its maximum despair; it is therefore not existence; but an existential possibility tending existence, and brought so close to it that you feel how every moment is wasted as long as it has not yet come to a decision."[1] The pursuit of eternal happiness strictly at the aesthetic level is futile. Hence the aesthetic calls for concealment. The futility must be kept secret. In fact, it is not a strict pursuit at all because it is not decisive. Enjoyment cannot be made to endure. In a word, it is not timeless enjoyment, but always cloaked in time and hence fleeting. It cannot be made to remain forever, as every aesthetic would want it, and so there is always despair. But if the individual is to remain aesthetic, there must be concealment, or else he must move on to another category of existence.

Enjoyment or pretense of enjoyment in despair, with the despair as well secreted as only a clever and proud man, or else simple, can conceal it, is the maximum of aesthetic existence. But this evokes no faith, because the aesthetic is not concerned with the existence of another, but only with his own pursuit of infinite pleasure. The individual's only concern is self-enjoyment. Since there is no relationship to the existence of another, there is no duty, because as to

[1]Ibid., pg. 226.

the self there is no boundary. As to the self every privilege is to be enjoyed. No faith because there is no other, and if there is no other, there is no duty.

CHAPTER III

ETHICAL LIFE

A. Irony

"The world is mine," cries the just married ebullient bride at her first private moment with her maid of honor and bridesmaids. "The world is mine"--as she gaily pirouettes and dances with joy, swept into the seventh heaven of the aesthetic universe, fitted with the loveliest rose-colored glasses and proclaimed queen of all. Her sympathetic friends gladly accompany her to the heights and vicariously swim in the happiness that is overflowing from her ecstatic heart, wishing that her every dream has come true. And maybe those dreams have come true; maybe too the bride will continue her dreaming and every one of her wonderful visions will come true. But on the other hand may stand reality, and hence maybe all of her dreams will not come true. In fact, the odds are that she will have to stop her dreaming in the face of some realities, which will elbow their way into her life, knocking off the fancifully focused glasses and thereby shattering her make believe world, the same one that she was trying to fashion into a real world.

Her troubles begin, like every person's troubles. Will she dare accept reality? Will she dare to forsake the world in which she had all? Will she dare to give up everything from the world that was hers on that happy wedding day? When the dream world is shattered by reality, it is completely shattered. Dreaming is no solution to the problems at hand; reality crowds out the dream. How ironic that is, to be swept down again from the seventh heaven, from all to nothing at all. The whole dream world is gone.

The analogy is a picture of what Kierkegaard paints, when a person dares to become the individual, the ethical individual who alone is real because human existence is ethical existence. A person can move from the aesthetic world by coming to a collision with reality. But this encounter, this collision is an advance upon

aesthetic existence, and being an advance, it is not the cause for grieving, even though it is a departure from the world of enjoyment. It is an advance because the fanciful pursuit of endless temporal happiness is properly viewed as circuitous, a sort of fantastic rat-race with man as if on an experimental treadle--always going faster and getting nowhere--never any nearer to a permanent temporal goal of happiness because there is none. And it is an advance because man is removed from a pursuit which has no goal and is thereby inane. But the price paid for this movement, for this advancement, is the giving up of everything from the aesthetic world. "If anything in the world can teach a man to venture, it is the ethical, which teaches to venture everything for nothing, to risk everything... therefore, says the ethical, dare, dare to renounce everything... dare to become nothing at all, to become a particular individual, of whom God requires everything, without your being relieved of the necessity of being enthusiastic: behold, that is the venture!"[1] The irony of it all, to have to give up everything, and to have to do it for nothing. The sad awakening from a collision with reality, from all to nothing.

The movement is made precisely through irony, because according to Kierkegaard that is its place; namely, between aesthetic existence and ethical existence. The immediacy of the aesthetic is such that makes everything important, but only immediately--that is to say, relatively important, but not decisively, not absolutely. In immediacy, an act, whatever it may be, is important at the very moment that it is performed by the actor. However, an instant later another act is the important one because now it is the enjoyment of the moment. And so a man goes on acting aesthetically without limitation of enjoyment, but ethically everything is different. The ethical individual, which of course, should mean every individual, is not in the same relation as the aesthetic; the ethical is in relation to another and therefore has duties, or all others in the abstract, to humanity, which is therefore a curb on the self. And yet the individual acts, but under the guise of irony, which is

[1] Ibid., pg. 133.

his incognito. "Definition of irony: Irony is the fusion of a passionately ethical view which inwardly lays infinite stress upon self--and of education which outwardly (among others) abstracts infinitely from the personal I. The result of the latter is that no one notices the former; therein lies the whole art of irony, and that is what conditions the infinite stress of the first."[1] The individual is no longer the god that he was on the aesthetic level; he no longer sees himself as purely infinite, not even in possibility, and still his main interest is the self. But now he stands in relation to others; he is even absorbed in the abstract of humanity, the mass of others who exist and tend to overshadow his self. But in his very most secret relation, he may always save face by adverting to the incognito of irony. Furthermore, there is a compensation because the individual is now in the advanced stage of existence which allows for mind, whereas previously aesthetic existence simply corresponded to body. In other words, formerly the essence of his existence was bodily enjoyment, but now an advance was made to mind, and therefore by reflection the individual can look back, so to speak, at his old self and see the irony of his existence, all that he said and did. And his secret is well guarded by God, who certainly saw the irony of his existence all the time, even though the individual himself did not, until he finally collided with reality and then made this advance. God knows the position of every man and certainly understands the relationship, but it remains for the individual to understand it as well as he can, starting with the medial notion of irony. God even permits an individual to act the role of a creator when the truth of the matter is that He alone is the creator, and the individual simply one of His creations, the highest creature, to be sure, but still a creature and not truly a creator. "The ethical development of the individual constitutes the little private theater where God is indeed a spectator, but where the individual is also a spectator from time to time, although essentially he is an actor, whose task is not to deceive but to reveal, just as all ethical development consists

[1]"The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 516, pg. 139.

in becoming apparent before God."[1] Other men may be kept in ignorance of the secret between the individual and God, and hence as observers may not understand the actions which they see because they may be viewing as relative that which in truth is an absolute relationship. If the observers were to judge the actor in that case, they would do him an injustice. There again is the irony. The actor acts decisively, but is not given credit for it popularly; rather in the eyes of worldly observers it seems as if he merely acted from the standpoint of aesthetic immediacy. God as spectator knows otherwise. Hence Kierkegaard warned that the individual must dare to become ethical, in spite of the misjudgments of his actions by the populace. He must advance to the decisive relationship, and the progress is made by the acceptance of irony as the passage way between aesthetic existence and ethical existence. "Irony is a synthesis of ethical passion which infinitely accentuates inwardly the person of the individual in relation to the ethical requirement--and of culture, which infinitely abstracts externally from the personal ego, as one finitude among all the other finitudes and particularities."[2] Ethical existence dethrones man. The bride, that we introduced earlier, loses her rose-colored glasses and finds that she is not the queen of all, and the world is not hers at all. Her dream was a jest, a joke which reality played on her for the moment, but she did not see through the joke. She did not discover reality at that moment. Later she collided with reality which revealed much to her because it revealed her essential limitedness. The joke is over, and now if she can only live through it. Would she now dare to accept the burdens of limited existence, of ethical existence. Would she dare to live ethically now that she discovered that she was ethically bound, to her husband and to all the various new relations; she discovered that there was a binding force which cemented her to ethical existence, to active fulfillment of the ethical requirement.

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[1] "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 141.

[2] Ibid., pg. 449.

Chapter III. Ethical Life

Like the bride, every individual discovers or should discover that he is bound by ethical requirement and that he is surrounded by other individuals and realities which make a constant demand upon his activity. And furthermore, he sees that his own self could easily be absorbed into the surroundings and swallowed up without receiving any special attention or notice. In a word, his world of self is raided by the world of others, and the self starts to lose significance. And yet to himself it is of utmost importance and concern. The question arises then: Does he dare to assert himself, does he dare to live ethically?

CHAPTER III

B. Struggle and Victory

In general man thinks that he is seldom in a position which definitely calls for action, which leaves him with no choice in the matter. In verification of this popular principle the wit will invariably quote the adage about "death and taxes," that they alone are inevitable in man's life, but that every other act has alternatives, or at least allows procrastination. This principle has the usual grain of truth and that is why it is widely accepted. Man may postpone acts; he may delay indefinitely or perhaps perform one of several alternatives because as a rule he has such an option. When a problem is very grave, however, man must act decisively, and the gravest problem, according to Kierkegaard, is man's own choice to exist ethically because in choosing ethical existence man commits himself to action and therefore to responsibility. In other words, there is a certain "oughtness" which is proper to man's ethical existence and binds him in relation to God and man; and the binding is irrevocable. Man must go on living; he has the task of existing. That is exactly the basic principle of ethical existence--namely, that man has a task. "The infinite merit of the Socratic position was precisely to accentuate the fact that the knower is an existing individual, and that the task of existing is his essential task."[1] Man has a task, the task of existing, of living out the synthesis of time and eternity as a prelude to becoming singularly eternal. But to exist is to act; man must act, and to have to act is to be responsible. Man is called upon to act, to be ethical, and yet he must look after his own interest first, and his main interest is to be eternal. But as a composite in existence now, he must look to his own existence because the self is of most importance to him. In a word, while he is bound, while he is an individual with a task, he is most decisively interested in himself, that he should become eternal.

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[1] Ibid., pg. 185.

The aesthetic man's existence was devoid of any such binding force; there was no "oughtness" upon his shoulders because he had a distorted, shortsighted view of the nature of man. For him man was always within the reach of infinity, possible infinity. He never came into collision with reality, and hence never really existed, other than by his imagination of a world of infinite possibilities of pleasures. And although there is despair, it might not even be known, because in the last second the individual may still turn to one final possibility, and such turning may be endless.

What happens when such a man finally discovers that he was a victim of a magnificent jest, that he is not a god, but a limited creature steeped in time who must choose to exist in the sight of God, Who is truly infinite. This man might whisper to himself, "Woe is me," and among the various connotations of this popular expression choose to announce a bit of helplessness, a bit of despair, although perhaps not utter despair, the sort which would move one to think in terms of complete annihilation, if this were possible. Rather he asserts the notion of resignation, his acceptance of the dethronement which he must suffer in order to live ethically, instead of aesthetically. Actual despair comes about when a man is helpless in the face of a problem which certainly calls for some action on his part. But in the instance of "Woe is me," various persons might react differently under similar circumstances. One aesthetic might try to act as usual, as if everything that happened were a bad dream, prescinding entirely from reality and continuing to live as though he were a god, and as though he simply had a narrow escape from a collision with reality. Another person might succumb utterly to despair and therefore prefer to attempt annihilation, rather than contend with reality and go on living; a third might realize that there is no possibility of actually becoming infinite, and hence he must accept his limitation and if he chooses to go on living, to live ethically. Thus the latter will be limited in his existence, but also resigned to this limitation, that he must go on existing. A new world is opened to him, a world of reality,

as against his former world of imagination, and he now embraces a new view of the very nature of man because he is now a responsible being, who once he chooses to exist ethically must continue to choose and to act because action is proper to existence. Ethical existence calls for action, and hence he must persist in activity; he must feed acts to sustain ethical existence as a motorist must pour gasoline into the tank of his car in order to keep it in operation. The fuel of persistence in existence is action, and action evokes responsibility.

Aesthetically this was not true; man did not have to act, but he looked upon himself as above any necessary action, and therefore without obligation. He was free of any pre-condition, of any presupposition. He viewed himself as author of all, who was above any law or requirement. Later we added that a progressive move from such a frame of existence was possible, and in fact, Kierkegaard urged every individual to make the move as an advance in his path to become a Christian. Kierkegaard urged the individual to discover ethical existence, to discover that he has the task of existing, which is a presupposition in relation to every man. Even before a man is born, it is established that he will have to carry out his existence from his natal day until his death, whatever the span may be, and only then can it be declared that his life is a unity, that his existence is complete. "Ethics concentrates upon the individual, and ethically it is the task of every individual to become an entire man; just as it is the ethical presupposition that every man is born in such a condition that he can become one."[1] This is not to say that every man will acknowledge the ethical requirement, but rather that it is there and available for every man to discover it and then to live it.

Well now, if that is what Kierkegaard urged, we may ask then, what is ethical existence according to his view. Just as aesthetic existence is enjoyment, so what is ethical existence? "While aesthetic existence is essentially enjoyment,

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[1]Ibid., pg. 309.

ethical existence is essentially struggle and victory."[1] The individual first has to struggle. But for what or against what is he struggling? He must struggle for his own self, for the certainty of his own existence, lest it becomes lost in oblivion, lest the self be obscured in the abstract of humanity, and then too, lest it be pulverized in the sight of the infinite. The struggle for the ethical person is for him to choose to exist, to choose self, to choose reality rather than possibility, because in the ethical reality is higher than possibility. He must will to be an individual, that is, to be a person with intense passion in relation to his own existence, in spite of the fact of his now discovered and acknowledged finitude. In ethical existence the individual stands before the infinite, but is himself bare and stripped of his own former possibility of infinity; and he stands beside all the others who exist, as well as all the things that exist. All of these are realities which are an invasion upon his self.

There the individual stands; there he is before ethical existence, and he must choose freely--his first choice being his own self, his own existence which will be bound to action and therefore tied with responsibility. The very fact that not everyone attains ethical existence is a clue that it is not easy, that it might be a struggle. Some do not dare to take the risk of all the implications of ethical existence; they do not dare to accept freely their limitation and to give up all from the world of possibility for existence before God, men and other realities. But there the individual stands, and he is asked to choose self at the very moment when it seems as if he has no choice--a case where not having a choice is really to choose. How else can this be done, except in desperation. How else can man be free, or know that he is free. Hence he must choose his freedom. "So there is consequently something in regard to which there may not be, and in thought cannot be a choice, and yet nevertheless it is a choice.... Freedom really only exists because the same instant it (freedom of choice) exists it rushes with infinite

[1] Ibid., pg. 256.

speed to bind itself unconditionally by choosing resignation, the choice of which it is true that in it there is no question of a choice."[1] Freedom is the loudest outcry of selfness. The individual can heave a sigh of satisfaction as he ponders over the fact that he exists and that he is free. The self is proclaimed by freedom and preserved from any impending oblivion.

Ethical existence is an achievement of reality. By passing through irony, a man may advance from aesthetic existence to ethical, and in the latter achieve reality. "Ethically regarded, reality is higher than possibility. The ethical proposes to do away with the disinterestedness of the possible, by making existence the infinite interest."[2] Whereas aesthetically a man might rest in indifference to reality, ethically he must be interested in it, and the first reality which is of intense interest is the self. He must make his own existence paramount, because it is the reality which he knows most intimately and because this reality demands action. The struggle continues because action is not always easy, at least not decisive action by one who has this infinite interest in himself, and who is at the joyful point of eliciting a newly discovered firm understanding of the all-important "I exist." This is the big accomplishment of the ethical. "Ethics closes immediately about the individual, and demands that he exist ethically; it does not make a parade of millions, or of generations of men; it does not take humanity in the lump, any more than the police arrest humanity at large. The ethical is concerned with particular human beings, and with each and every one of them by himself."[3] Ethics points to the self of each one in a world of selves. This is Kierkegaard's going back to Socrates, that is, to the Socratic "Know thyself." As a Socratic disciple, Kierkegaard reiterates the doctrine and the claim it has upon man to act ethically.

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[1] "The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 1051, pg. 371.

[2] "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 284.

[3] Ibid., pg. 284.

Chapter III. Ethical Life

The ethical person stands before the infinite; he stands among other men and other realities, and he struggles for the assertion of himself. He struggles through all the paradoxes of a relationship between the infinite and the finite. This alone is an enervating struggle. To act, to be ethical, to be the individual and to be committed in eternal relationship to God, and yet to be free. But there is the victory. The individual certainly exists; the individual is free. The individual attains this victory of certainty of existence; i.e., that he really has a firm grasp of his own reality, and that he is free to act.

The ethical person's victory is in choosing self, because his mind can close with certainty upon his own reality and rest satisfied with the knowledge of his own existence. And analogously--from his own certain existence--the individual can conclude as to the reality of existences of other individuals, that is, all the other human individuals. Of course for Kierkegaard the understanding by the individual of these other human beings is not as his own, not directly certain, but analogously the grasp of the possibility of other individuals, who in turn alone grasp their own existences as certainly as the individual does himself. The victory is a great victory, the achievement of self, just as the struggle was no small one.

When a person achieves ethical existence, only then can it truly be said by Kierkegaard that the individual exists. Only then can the individual's mind firmly hold on to his own existence, and direct man to live by principles proper to such existence. For instance, men assert the principle, "Thou shalt not steal" as an ethical principle, and in achievement of ethical existence we along with other men readily abide by the principle. As a rule we need no special adversion of mind to heed it. But was this always so, or was there a time when we struggled to understand this principle and its relation to our own existence. There may have been a time when we even transgressed the principle, when we stole a few pennies from mother's purse; also a time when we fought long with temptation; e.g., when stealthily we came into possession of another's goods, found his wallet with money in it,

but also with clear and definite identification, and we were more inclined to retain the goods rather than to exist in keeping with the principle. In due time after some or many struggles we may have arrived at the proper understanding of the principle, so that finally we were victorious in relating it to our action, and now easily synchronize the action in consonence with it. We are no longer bothered by the principle, "Thou shalt not steal." We no longer struggle to keep it. We act ethically. We are victorious with a good grasp of its truth in relation to our own existence. And so it may have been too with all the principles related to our ethical existence; namely, struggle and victory.

We saw that the first stage of existence was enjoyment, and now that the second stage, having passed through irony, is struggle and victory. The exister firmly knows that which is real to him, his own existence, his own self as an active being which is bound to responsibility. But now we may inquire as to the relation that Kierkegaard found between ethical existence and faith.

CHAPTER III

C. No Faith

Man knows that he exists in ethical existence; he knows this certainly. His own ethical reality is firmly grasped. Here he is, an active reality, but not a self-sufficient reality as he found out from his collision with reality. As an active reality, man must choose to act in the wake of these other realities with which he collided, because not only did the collision leave man with the discovery of his own ethical reality, but also the suspicion of all the others, existence of God, existence of other men, existence of things. However, he does not know these existences as he knows his own. As far as his intellectual grasp is concerned, he alone is real, an active being who is circumscribed by limitations, but who is resigned to this modified existence. He is confined to time regardless of how strongly he desires to become eternal.

Having made this discovery of self, man still finds it difficult to act, however, because of his finitude. He sees himself as a limited being standing before the infinite, some sort of infinite, no matter how vague he tries to make it. Even if he finally settles for "the work of God," this still makes it difficult for him to exist ethically.

First, he must choose his freedom in this environment, as it were, to flex his muscles in the company of the Almighty. This is not easy. Man is not prone to display a power before anyone who may have such a power to perfection. The average golfer has no inclination to be on exhibition in the company of Snead or Hogan. In fact, he would be more inclined to remain an inactive spectator. If he had to act, to play golf in their sight, he would do it only in desperation. So it is with the individual choosing his freedom. He might do it only if the viewer were himself a secret and invisible observer. Then he might act in resignation, as if prompted by the Almighty, Who might say, "Well, now that you know of your existence, why don't you try to exist more fully by exercising your active power. Choose your freedom."

This would be an encouraging, magnanimous display of goodness. The individual would not only exist, but also be ethical; he would be invited to act freely.

Freedom with knowledge constitutes the ethical. Absence of freedom would completely destroy the ethical; it would reduce man to some sort of automaton. No freedom would mean no responsibility; no responsibility--no ethics because an essential component would be missing, and hence its nature changed. For instance, children are returning from school and the ruffian and bully of the group pelts his smaller, helpless classmates with snowballs and cries out the usual juvenile invectives. Today his attention is aimed at Louise. "Louise, Louise, dirty old Louise!" Louise promptly reports his misdemeanors to her father who came to meet her at school and to drive her home. Like any solicitous parent, Louise's father berates the rascal. But the latter's father is also at hand and wrongly resents the censure. One word leads to another and soon the men boisterously rail and curse at each other, and eventually scuffle and cause a melee which quite noticeably disturbs the neighbors, not to mention the fact that it sets a flagrantly bad example to all the other children returning from school. The law enforcement officer leaves his traffic post to quell the fracas, but in vain. His only alternative is to remove the excited, foul-tongued combatants to the nearest jail, and charge them with disturbing the peace. The adults, the fathers are held responsible. Louise and the culprit tearfully run home to report the incident to their respective families, but neither youngster was held responsible in the eyes of the law, because as yet they are not said to have attained full knowledge, nor full control of the will over their activities. In relation to the youngsters some ethical requirements are said to be absent, at least to a certain degree, but insofar as their fathers are concerned, they are presumed to be fully present. Freedom and knowledge make men responsible for their activities.

Activity will be in a direction. But what direction does the individual assume? He might be infinitely interested in self; or in another, for instance God.

However, Kierkegaard notes that the ethical individual is not yet said to be infinitely interested in God, no matter what notion he has of God. But the choosing of freedom binds the individual to reality, and ultimately to some sort of notion of God, even if only, as we said before, to "works of God." Nevertheless, the individual could be infinitely interested in himself. Up to this point, living aesthetically, the individual was simply a god to himself. Now he knows his own limited existence with certainty, and since he knows it by himself, he still has no need of faith. Faith does not come into relation with the existence of self. Just as there was no faith in the eminent sense in aesthetic existence, neither is there faith in relation to ethical existence. Faith only comes into relation with the existence of another. When the individual is solely interested in self, he does not possess faith, even if the interest were the highest, purest and finest. At best, the ethical exister can attain infinite resignation which leaves him at the very threshold of faith. "For the act of resignation faith is not required, for what I gain by resignation is my eternal consciousness, and this is a purely philosophical movement which I dare say I am able to make if it is required, and which I can train myself to make, for whenever any finiteness would get the mastery over me, I starve myself until I can make the movement, for my eternal consciousness is my love to God, and for me this is higher than everything."[1] Thus even if one attains eternal consciousness, which Kierkegaard says is the love of God, still he does not need faith. The main interest remains in terms of self, and as long as one is interested in self, infinitely interested in self, he is the ethicist and not the believer. As long as his freedom points solely to assert himself, not to deny himself, the individual is ethical, and not yet a knight of faith. In a word, he can scale the heights of the ethical without faith because the latter is not in its terrain. One might be inclined to say that it is almost within the territory of faith, but for Kierkegaard the "almost" was enough to assert the breach clearly. Socrates was a

[1] "Fear and Trembling," pg. 69.

man of the refinest infinite passion as to self, but he was not said to have faith, and though Kierkegaard might call him the knight of infinite resignation, yet he would not compare him with the father of faith, Abraham. The achievement of the ethical is existence of self, and no matter how refined this achievement, still it does not equate with Kierkegaard's notion of faith in the eminent sense. Socrates was esteemed highest on the stage of ethical existence, according to his disciple Kierkegaard, but this was not as high as the position of the believer, because of this absence of faith, in spite of the freedom and duty which call for action and therefore point to others, and even the highest other Who is God. The ethical actor realizes his limitation of being confronted with other realities, but in accepting these he seeks the self within the milieu, and he is not moved with infinite passion toward the existence of another, for instance God.

This striving for self, however, does not mean pure selfishness in the worst sense, because Socrates was hardly a paragon of that. On the contrary, the selflessness of Socrates is well established in history, especially sharply brought out in reference to Xanthippe, his wife, who found it so difficult to understand her husband's actions, and who therefore denounced his selflessness. Abstention was a Socratic virtue, and though negative, it led him to the very border of faith. Ignorance was emphasized by him constructively in a know-it-all age of the Sophists, the leaders of aesthetic existence, while Socrates himself taught ethical existence, the knowledge of self which led to good moral activity. He condemned proud and reckless pursuit of self, and preached humble and thorough understanding of self as a prelude to good conduct. But still the accent for good moral activity fell on the existence of self and not on another, and because of that accent faith was not reached, no matter how close to it one might approach. When an individual is like Abraham, then he has faith, but no one in ethical existence is like Abraham.

Socrates was honored for his resignation, or as we said, even placed on the pedestal as the knight of infinite resignation. But he did not have faith. On the

question of immortality, he pressed himself as far in inquiry as he was accustomed to squeeze others into admission of ignorance by his interrogations, and he admitted that his knowledge of immortality was not the same as his certain knowledge of self. In fact, it was not certain at all. He simply was not certain of it, and yet while he was not certain of it, he was willing to bet on it. In other words, he was of the opinion that immortality was proper to man, but he would not declare it as a matter of certainty. His grasp of immortality lacked the final firmness so as to rule out the fear of the possibility of the truth of the opposite; it was not so very firm as to rule out the fear irrevocably and to put his mind completely at rest. He almost closed out that fear, but the "almost" nevertheless kept him in opinion, rather than certitude. The Socratic position, although highest in ethical existence, was still short of faith, and regardless of the lofty esteem that Kierkegaard had for Socrates, he would not credit him with faith because he would not allow for it in the sphere of ethical existence. The Socratic movement of mind always left a bit of a breach for fear, which therefore prevented a confident embracing of faith.

Earlier we said that aesthetic existence was a kind of religiosity, which Kierkegaard called a childish sort of religiousness, whether practiced by the naive or the proud person. However, we noted that, even though it is for some, it need not be the resting place of an individual, if he tried to make an advance from this meager religiousness. Ethical existence is presented as progressive in religiosity, but yet not even religiousness in the strict sense, as we shall see, and certainly not Christian religiousness which is Kierkegaard's goal. Nevertheless the ethical also qualifies as a lower form of religiousness. We made the advance and now we continue to follow our cue from Kierkegaard, who promised to examine existence prior to Christian existence, inasmuch as he found that men not only ceased to know what it meant to be a Christian, but even what it meant to exist. Hence we are just now approaching strict religious existence. And as to faith, up to this point Kierkegaard

has not allowed for it to be injected into existence, neither aesthetic existence nor even ethical existence. Man's achievement so far has been made without the aid of faith in the strict Kierkegaardian sense.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGIOUS LIFE

A. Eternity of God

Aesthetic existence is enjoyment; ethical existence is struggle and victory, but neither is yet Kierkegaard's main category of existence, because he was mostly concerned with religious existence, and even more specifically with Christian existence. His long train of writing was directed toward religiousness, but it started with an exposition of existence itself, because men had forgotten what it meant to exist. Men were merely dabbling in existence, but not living it in its fullness. The aesthete is indeed an exister, but not anywhere near the goal of Christianity; and so it is too with the ethicist, who is wrapped up in humanity rather than Christianity. The religiousness that might be asserted of either of these is hardly profound; it can hardly be said that they have delved deeply in existence, the one, the aesthetic avoiding every precipice of reality and simply sliding from pleasure to pleasure and thus cleverly avoiding penetration into reality and existence; the other acknowledging his obligations to existence, admitting a bit of a binding force, but still striving for every victory for self. Neither one had to fall back on faith; neither one was a believer; neither penetrated so deeply in existence that in a last resort he might be driven to faith. They knew of their existences; they developed their active powers, but mainly with a self indulgent view. In fact, the aesthetic would not even go so far as to admit that he had to act at all, whereas the ethicist at least owned up to duty, but again viewed it primarily as a hinderance to be accepted, a sort of handicap to full and open selfish development. But neither one was a believer; a believer is someone else again. "But the believer differs from the ethicist in being infinitely interested in the reality of another (in the fact, for example, that God has existed in time)."[1]

[1] "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 288.

Chapter IV. Religious Life

The believer is a religious person. The believer is much more profound than the others, much more steeped in existence. What is it that can bury a man deeper and deeper into existence, even so deep as to have him reach the end proper to existence? For the believer the full distance of existence leads him to the goal of Christianity. The others are shunted before they go so far. However, we are not yet prepared for all the considerations of a believer, if we are to heed Kierkegaard's earlier warning, to beware so as not to reach Christian existence too soon, and thereby miss some intervening stage of existence.

Existence is the synthesis of time and eternity. But if existence is the synthesis of time and eternity, what about the existence of God? Can Kierkegaard say that God exists?

Kierkegaard recognized this obvious objection as valid and therefore acknowledged that God does not exist, but rather He is eternal, which puts Him solely and exclusively on the side of infinitude. "God does not think, He creates; God does not exist, He is eternal. Man thinks and exists, and existence separates thought and being holding them apart from one another (in succession)."[1] God is eternal, and thus as we said, strictly related to the infinite, but existence having the element of time in its composition, the other element being eternity, cannot properly be predicated of God. Existence is the embodiment of the eternal and the temporal, an embodiment that is to be found in and most properly predicated of man. We recall that Kierkegaard's eyes were glued on the existing individual, from whom he took his cue in approaching, or rather explaining, reality.

Now the eternity of God had to be explained. Just as we saw that speculative philosophy was rejected by Kierkegaard because it was a useless tool and unable to respond to the query, "What is existence?", so again logic failed to answer the question, "Does God exist?" For him the realm of speculative thought was aimless territory, a stamping ground for Hegelian dreamers, both as to existence itself and

[1]Ibid., pg. 296.

as to the reality of God. Perhaps many of these persons simply ignored the problem of the reality of God, but not Kierkegaard, because he was not an idle poet, but one with a restless soul and an inquisitive mind. No peace, no tranquillity for him until he found some answer that might quell his avid mental appetite. But of course we wonder if, in the solitude of his cubicle, he ever truly enjoyed any quietude, even though he displayed complacence in the company of others, or did their voiced objections penetrate the closed door of his study and rent the quietude that he sought.

Therefore in the view which Kierkegaard upheld man exists, but God is eternal. This called for him to express the difference between man and God. "But the absolute difference between God and man consists precisely in this, that man is a particular existing being (which is just as much true of the most gifted human being as it is of the most stupid), whose essential task cannot be to think sub specie aeterni, since as long as he exists he is, though eternal, essentially an existing individual, whose essential task it is to concentrate upon inwardness in existing; while God is infinite and eternal."[1] Man is put in his place by existence, i.e., existing man is essentially steeped in his own inwardness, but with his feet in the sod of time; whereas God is not encumbered by temporal clay.

Kierkegaard was a God-fearing man; he called himself a religious poet, who trumpeted the resurrection of the individual's God-relationship, the Christian's return, or perhaps advent, to Christianity. Like everyone else who at some time or another inquired into the notion of God, he hounded himself with the all-important questions: "Is there a God?", "What about the reality of God?", "Does one prove existence of God?", because he too had to decide whether God was real or mythical, whether He really is or was merely conjured up by pietistic old folks, like his own strict and melancholy father, who might possibly just have used God as a bugaboo to discipline unsuspecting but believing and naive children. Hence Kierkegaard could

[1] Ibid., pg. 195.

not regard the questions lightly, en passant, and then run off to the nearest tavern to order a drink or two which would quickly dissolve such disturbing thoughts. Rather, he retired to his study in order to solve the perplexing problem. Again he was called upon to reflect and meditate at length in order to stand decisively and conclusively on one or the other side of the inquiry. His regular attendance at church services either had to be meaningful, in spite of what he considered muddled preachments, or else mere catering to popular superstition for want of anything else to do at that hour every Sunday. "And so the first thing to be decided, was the seeking and finding of the Kingdom of Heaven." "Although I am still farfrom having reached so complete an understanding of myself, I have, with profound respect for its significance, tried to preserve my individuality--worshipped the unknown God."[1] Much more than anyone else, in fact, Kierkegaard had to determine if God is real or not, because he dared to speak of existence, and inevitably he had to encounter the source of all existence, not with his physical eye, of course, but with his searching mind's eye.

Thus we see that Kierkegaard's notion of existence did not allow existence to be predicated of God, at least not properly. Of course we find that he lapses into such predication, but whenever anyone might want, as we say, "to pin him down on this point," he readily admitted that God does not exist, but is eternal. The God of Kierkegaard is an infinite God--without limitation, without beginning and without end. Existence is properly predicated of man who has a beginning, even if he is destined for eternity, i.e., designed for endless duration, once he gives to this temporal clay its due and thus sheds the cloak of time. In a final word then, Kierkegaard indicated that his concept of existence is not to be properly related to the reality of God.

While Kierkegaard divorced the concept of existence from the reality of God, he still wanted to determine whether man can have any knowledge of the infinite

[1]"The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 22, pgs. 17 and 19.

being, whether man's intellect was able to reach an understanding of the reality of God.

CHAPTER IV

B. Knowledge of God

Many pertinent questions cluttered Kierkegaard's mind, and he had to ignore them so as to concentrate first on this paramount one, the reality of God. He squirmed under its compelling force; he had to know if he had any right to discuss existence at all, because without a source of existence his related notions would be unfounded, without the fullness of infinity, no composite at all was possible, and his whole universe would be shattered, or else like the Hegelians, he would have to hide in fantasy; he would have to forsake Socrates for the myths of Plato. Unlike the unwary Hegelians he criticized, Kierkegaard knew this, and thus found such a thought most disturbing and momentous, and yet how inviting it was to profound contemplation.

As Kierkegaard began some of his projects he called the works, "Experiments in Psychology," which might suggest merely an investigation into the notion of man. But this was not so for him. The experiments were not to rest exclusively in relation to man, but were ultimately the investigation of man's God-relationship, and so in a final analysis the psychological inquiry was a movement toward the reality of God. "Psychology has been called the doctrine of the subjective spirit. If one will pursue this science a little more precisely, one will see how, when it comes to the problem of sin, it must change suddenly into the doctrine of absolute spirit."[1] We see that Kierkegaard was a thorough man who quickly saw the relation that man and sin implied God, and who therefore was not satisfied with proximate analyses, but preferred to delve into the ultimate "whys" in his mind. These inevitably brought his experiments to the discussion of the reality of God.

Kierkegaard heard the Sunday preacher's discourse on God, that man of himself can do nothing but must rely on God, and that man should always remember this; he also heard the man on the street repeat these notions so understandingly on the

[1] "The Concept of Dread," pg. 21.

following day, but all the while Kierkegaard listened,he wondered whether the preacher and the man on the street really understood what they glibly uttered. Do men understand or are they merely deluding themselves and others at the very moment that they utter God's hallowed name? Of course Kierkegaard asked the question existentially--do they live out, do they act according to their words, because seemingly their actions betray their words, and if anything, display a lack of understanding. For instance, when the Don or the preacher describes God as existence, The Existent, is he really saying something true, something that is objectively founded, or merely using a poor creature's limited way of describing what he does not understand? Yet existence itself as a characteristic description of God calls for an explanation from a learned man, from an educator as well as from an existential poet or philosopher, who must either incorporate the notion into his works or explain it away. Quite obviously the question of the reality of God necessarily loomed important for a man, and this was at least evident to Kierkegaard, if not to his contemporaries, and so he often reiterated man's duty to understand his God-relationship and to live in consonance with that understanding.

> The love of God is the only happy love; but on the other hand it is also something terrible. Face to face with God man is without standards and without comparisons; he cannot compare himself with God, there he is nothing, and in the presence of God he may not compare himself with others, for that is a distraction... And so we find in everyone a clever fear of really having to do with God; they desire the relationship at a distance and so spend their life in the distractions of time; all that making a business of life is really only a distraction."[1]

Kierkegaard saw that it was not easy to resolve the problem of the reality of God. Maybe that was why he felt that he must air his view publicly, and thus set it forth formally in his "Philosophical Fragments."

> The highest pitch of every passion is always to will its own downfall; and so it is also the supreme passion of the reason to seek a collision, though this collision must in one way or another prove its undoing. The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought cannot think. But what is this unknown something with which the reason collides when inspired by its paradoxical passion, with the result of unsettling even man's

[1] "The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 649, pg. 200.

> knowledge of himself? It is the unknown! It is not a human being, insofar as we know what man is; nor is it any other known thing. So let us call this unknown something: God. It is nothing more than a name we assign to it. The idea of demonstrating that this unknown something (God) exists, could scarcely suggest itself to the reason. For if God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if He does exist it would be folly to attempt it. For at the very outset, in beginning my proof, I will have presupposed it, not as doubtful but as certain (a presupposition is never doubtful, for the very reason that it is a presupposition), since otherwise I would not begin, readily understanding that the whole would be impossible if He did not exist. But if, when I speak of proving God's existence I mean that I propose to prove the Unknown, which exists, is God, then I express myself unfortunately. For in that case I do not prove anything, least of all an existence, but merely develop the content of a conception.[1]

Perhaps Kierkegaard thought that an open discussion was a good test of one's principles. He strikes out very boldly and asserts that he could not, nor for that matter can anyone else, demonstrate or prove the existence of God. Any attempt to establish such a proof would be invalid, and indeed superfluous, because it would presuppose God's reality even before any evidence was offered, and the presupposition by the very fact that it was a presupposition was not doubtful, but certain. Therefore, he may as well simply accept God's reality with certainty.

How many readers of Kierkegaard will utter a cryptic "Amen" as they browse through his writing; or others again perhaps shout a boisterous and exuberant "hurrah" as, for instance, an ardent agnostic who peruses the Dane's writings on this point. No doubt the agnostic will hopefully seek harbor and refuge in Kierkegaard's camp, because he hears him refer to the unknown. But can he rest easily and comfortably if he continues to probe into the writings? We suspect that an agnostic might even be embarrassed by Kierkegaard's ready acceptance of God; nay rather, he would be disgusted with his insistence upon the reality of God in spite of absence of proof. Certainly Kierkegaard was always willing to wager on God's reality, regardless of its lack of cognoscibility for him. He held to it even while he investigated the problem under his dialectical microscope, but he merely found the microscope of the intellect wanting in power to produce adequate proof, and so he carried his investigation through another medium.

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[1] "Philosophical Fragments," pg. 31.

Chapter IV. Religious Life

Speculative philosophy was an inappropriate instrument to lead one to attain or ascertain the reality of God, so far as Kierkegaard was concerned, and so the intellectual approach had to be abandoned, or simply left to the Dons and the preachers, who wrap philosophical language around it only to confound it, rather than explain it. Man's God-relationship was secreted along with it by philosophers and their philosophy, claimed Kierkegaard, because the burden of explanation was too great. They did not dare prove the existence of God, any more, of course, than they would try to prove the existence of a here-present king, which would only cause him embarrassment.

> For to prove the existence of one who is present is the most shameless affront, since it is an attempt to make him ridiculous; but unfortunately people have no inkling of this and for sheer seriousness regard it as a pious undertaking. But how could it occur to anybody to prove that he exists, unless one had permitted oneself to ignore him, and now makes the thing all the worse by proving his existence before his very nose? The existence of a king, or his presence, is commonly acknowledged by an appropriate expression of subjection and submission--What if in his sublime presence one were to prove that he existed? Is that the way to prove it? No, that would be making a fool of him; for one proves his presence by an expression of submission, which may assume various forms according to the customs of the country--and thus it is also one proves God's existence by worship...not by proofs. A poor wretch of an author whom a later investigator drags out of the obscurity of oblivion may indeed be very glad that the investigator succeeds in proving his existence--but an omnipresent being can only by a thinker's pious blundering be brought to this ridiculous embarrassment."[1]

We will admit that at times man does some of the most foolish things. For instance, according to Kierkegaard, to make an intellectual attempt to determine the reality of God would be one of those mistakes, a foolish human error, which might even cause Divine shamefacedness, if that were possible. First, Kierkegaard cut off the intellectual approach to existence, and now he severed the possibility of a similar effort to determine the reality of God. For Kierkegaard, therefore, one of the two highest powers of man, his intellect, was incapable of being related either to existence of another or to the reality of God. Thus Kierkegaard threw logic out the window of his study, as he opened its door for the entrance of voluntarism. "Logic deals only with essences whose being consists in their conceivability;

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[1] "Concluding Unscientific Postscripts," pg. 485.

factual existence is not an essence, and it involves a kind of being which cannot be logically conceived."[1] With this principle Kierkegaard criticized intellectualism and announced an inaptitude on the part of that human power, at first in reference to existence of any other, and now again in reference to the reality of God, Who is really the highest other. But since the intellect proved to be useless in this reference, Kierkegaard turned to man's other special power, his will. He presupposed the reality of God, and he did this with certainty, because, as he said, a presupposition is certain. He did this by movement of the will, and in spite of the futility of the intellect. For him God's eternity is to be accepted and not proven.

[1]"Something About Kierkegaard," pg. 146.

CHAPTER IV

C. Religiousness

Religiousness does not coincide with Christianity. The two are not identical, although Kierkegaard observed that almost every religious person called himself a Christian. With Kierkegaard, then, we must look first to see what is his notion of religiousness, and later see the categories of it, which will include Christian religiousness. In answer to the question, "What is religiousness?", we may now complete Kierkegaard's former statement. "While aesthetic existence is essentially enjoyment, and ethical existence essentially struggle and victory, religious existence is essentially suffering, and that not as a transitional moment, but as persisting."[1] Suffering is the mark and the lot of the religious. Suffering is part of the inwardness which Kierkegaard often repeats, because suffering comes as a result of the closed secret between the individual and God. The aesthetic would have none of it. No suffering for him. The ethicist recognized some limitation due to humanity, but he struggled to gain victory for himself. The religious man sees that suffering plagues him, that it persists, and to fall back upon enjoyment, as does the aesthetic, would be to deceive oneself about existence. "Poesy is for the immediate consciousness the explanation and glorification of life, but for the religious consciousness it is a beautiful and amiable jest, whose consolation religiosity nevertheless spurns, because the religious comes to life precisely in suffering. Immediacy expires in suffering; in suffering, religiosity begins to breathe."[2] When the immediate person thinks that he lives gloriously and even exuberantly announces it, the religious person would pity the poor duped fellow for his misunderstanding of existence, and even say to him that he hardly lives at all, that he has not really begun to live so long as he is not an existing sufferer, as

[1] "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 256.

[2] Ibid., pg. 390.

long as the contradictions of life escape his attention. The immediate person would be pitied for never having encountered reality.

Suffering is the dying away from immediacy. The perspective of the sufferer is away from that of the aesthetic, who thrives on immediacy because he makes his immediacy absolute, existence is endless enjoyment. That is the irony, so far as it concerns the aesthetic, because his existence leads to despair because infinite enjoyment is not attained in time. The contradiction is there, but to him it is not a painful contradiction since he may even lack awareness of it. This is what moves the sufferer to compassion for the aesthetic, seeing that the immediate person is in one way or another impervious to the contradiction, either crowding it out of his existence or not knowing it. In reality he ought to keep his feet on the ground, so to speak, to keep his relative ends relative, and thus lead an orderly existence. However, he either does not or chooses not to see the disorderliness of his existence.

But the sufferer is on the alert, and he even sees the jest into which he himself is thrown by reality, and the very ground which causes him to be a sufferer--namely, that in his immediacy he is absolutely committed to relative ends, whereas all his yearning and what he truly desires is commitment to the absolute. In his immediate activity, therefore, he appears no different than the immediate person, no different than the aesthetic and yet he wants to be religious, he wants to suffer the contradiction of immediacy so as to attain the absolute. The religious man's life is not given over to persistent enjoyment on the temporal level because he knows that such enjoyment is always fleeting when engrossed in time. Quite on the contrary the religious man insists upon avoiding the point of view that persistent enjoyment may be attained on earth. The religious individual must always strive toward self-annihilation--dying away from immediacy--if he is to remain in the religious category of existence. This means that his every immediate activity is destined to renew suffering, and he is essentially encased in suffering. How else

can he exist and remain religious? He cannot retrogress; that is, fall back to ethical existence or to aesthetic existence, because he already has seen the contradictions, the joke of these. He has passed through irony and made an advance. In a final analysis there is no escape from the situation, and he is always aware, always conscious of his impotence before God. And so he must suffer.

Suffering is a term of infinite teleology, for Kierkegaard, because man is ever in relation to God, and in that relationship he stands as nothing. God is completely self-sufficient and therefore has no need of man, and thus the religious man is constantly embarrassed in the sight of God. Kierkegaard notes that while the notion of constant suffering is related to all men, it is true that not all men reach it, but only those who bore deeply enough into existence. Nor does Kierkegaard maintain that every religious person has because of his religiosity comprehended this notion of suffering to its fullness. That is to say, every religious person has suffering as a ground for his religiosity, but not everyone understands it so as to be a knight of Christianity. In a word, not every sufferer is dubbed a Christian; not at all, not even if they all parade to church regularly on Sundays and attentively listen to the words of the pious preacher who admonishes, "always remember that before God you are as nothing," and accept the exhortation as though they understood it and were able to live it out in reality. But for Kierkegaard it is humorous to hear the religious ones call themselves Christians, which they do so easily and glibly, in spite of lack of activity in keeping with their profession. Truly enough, they themselves would not say that they lack reality in keeping with their principle, but Kierkegaard charges them with such discordance and want of understanding. He refuses to credit them with intense interest in God, so intense as to merit the appellation of Christian.

In ethical existence the intense passion was for self; in religious existence the individual must suffer the dying away from self, because now his intense passion is toward another, toward God. The suffering comes about because one cannot

escape self at any moment, when one is actually trying to escape from self because of infinite passion for the other. The wag would cynically dismiss the problem with his usual "neat trick if you can do it," and drop away from religiosity, but the serious person, the religious person has no such easy way out, but rather must carry the burden and suffer. To follow the wag would be to retrace oneself to aesthetic existence, but the religious man was to advance rather than slip back, and his advance must be made over and above ethical existence. If ethically he did everything to achieve self, now he must do everything to abandon self in order to be religious. The accent now shifts from self to other, and this shift of accent is the beginning of religiosity. That is where Kierkegaard allows religiosity to raise its head and to begin to breathe, so to speak.

Kierkegaard, however, does not peremptorily dismiss the wag. On the contrary, Kierkegaard definitely considers him to have an inkling of the contradiction that is at the bottom of a religious man's suffering, and therefore traces a path for him to follow without retrogression, if he were so disposed. Hence Kierkegaard evaluates the notion of humor and assigns a place to it, just as he did with irony, which rests between aesthetic and ethical existence.

CHAPTER V

SOCRATIC RELIGIOUS LIFE

A. Humor

Every religious person is a sufferer, but not every religious person is a Christian. The ethical individual was not essentially a sufferer, even though he struggled and admitted his limitations; he was not a sufferer because he attained victory after his struggle. The religious person is essentially immersed in suffering. How, then, does the ethicist make the transition to religiosity? Kierkegaard says that he does it through humor.

Comic is contradiction; everything comical contains a contradiction. If the comical is painless, it is irony, as we saw before, and it stands between aesthetic and ethical, but if the comical is painful, it is humor and stands between the ethical and religious. Suffering turned into jest is the state of the humorist, but since he is suffering, he is religious. Kierkegaard not only observed this about others, but also classified himself as a humorist, that is, a religious individual who was not yet a Christian.

> I myself, as author, have never displayed the comic, it has been used as a subservient factor by the pseudonyms who would, quite consistently, consider it ridiculous to be allowed to attain to a new stage, because the comic is the definition of a sphere, for the highest. I was a devotional writer from the beginning. In the pseudonyms the comic is, rather, too high a stage, because it is demoniacal.[1]

While his pseudonyms may have rested solely in the comical stage of existence, Kierkegaard himself was always a sufferer, and hence as an author in his own name always religious, even though not a Christian.

Humor may serve man for the transition from either aesthetic or ethical existence to religious existence, but it can also continue in his service in religious existence. That is to say, humor may serve both the Christian and the religious man who is not yet a Christian, after both have abandoned aesthetic or ethical existence

[1]"The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 1085, pg. 387.

in favor of the higher religious existence. For instance, we said previously that a religious individual performed an act and thereby outwardly acted no differently than an aesthetic man. But seeing that his action will appear no differently than the other's action, the religious man keeps his suffering to himself, his own inward secret, and uses humor as an incognito for the fact that that act is not an end, but in reality a means to his well-being. The joke is that his inwardness, which is decisive, is apparently cancelled by his action, which is immediate; he appears as an aesthetic although he is religious. In this case humor is put into service by the religious man as his incognito. In further consideration, however, humor is not always the same. It is not the same for the Christian, as for the religious man who is not yet a Christian, although humor may be used by both men. The latter is a sufferer who adds the humorous to his existence with the sincere hope that what he wants will become a reality which will wipe away his suffering and leave him a happy man. He suffers but then turns to humor as a way of salvation, that it might overcome his suffering. "When thus an unfortunate individual perhaps says: 'For me all is over, everything is lost,' the humorist might continue: 'Aye, what poor wretches we human beings are, involved in all these manifold miseries of life, we all suffer; now if I could only live to see the day when my landlord installs a new bell-pull... I would count myself the happiest of men'."[1] The humorist is aware of suffering, but just cannot abandon himself to it completely, and so he sincerely and seriously thinks that it can be averted. The Christian knows that his suffering cannot be set aside because it is the principal ingredient of religiosity, and thus in respect to humor, he only uses it as an incognito, as a cover-up for his inwardness. But in either case the starting point is from a God-relationship, the one turning away from it at the very last moment to seek happiness, the other always remaining conscious of it; the one cancels his inwardness, the other persists in it. The cancellation of inwardness by the humorist drops him, as it were, between ethical

[1]"Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 401.

and religious existence because humor has a position similar to irony, the latter between aesthetic and ethical, except that humor is painful because of suffering.

Irony and humor, nevertheless, are not essentially different because both are contradictions. They are simply contradictions at different planes. "The ironist levels everything on the basis of humanity in the abstract, the humorist on the abstract God-relationship, for he does not enter concretely into this relationship, but it is just at this point that he parries by means of the jest."[1] Kierkegaard himself was a humorist who seemingly was unable to advance to the category of Christianity, although he was always ardently striving to become a Christian. Even as a devout religious individual, he claimed that he could only knock on the door of Christianity but never cross the threshold because it was too high for him.

The inwardness of a Christian, being a hidden inwardness, which really never tends outward, is not cancelled by the comic; in fact, because it is a hidden inwardness, it is eo ipso inaccessible to the comic. His suffering persists, and he holds no hope for the actuality of the comic because he knows that it would not do away with his suffering. The humorist suffers but seeks something outward which he thinks would eventually make him happy. The Christian abandons any such hope and therefore retains his inwardness, even though outwardly his action appears the same as that of the humorist. This is his incognito, and his inwardness remains in tact. The jest is strictly a God-relation jest, because it remains a secret between the Christian and God. To another observer, any other viewer than God, there would be no joke because the Christian's outward acts would resemble those of every other exister, Christian and non-Christian. Hence humor serves the Christian as well as the humorist, but for the former his inwardness is preserved, and for the latter the inwardness is reverted to outwardness and thus cancelled.

Humor, therefore, may throw one deeper into existence by the persistence of suffering, even so deep that the individual will be on the very doorstep of Christianity,

[1] Ibid., Footnote, pg. 401.

or it may prevent the humorist from the fullness of existence by cancellation of his inwardness just at the moment when he faces the consciousness of constancy of suffering and must abandon hope of immediate salvation from it. It is as if the humorist were swimming in suffering along with the Christian, but repeatedly saying that something or other will rescue them from their plight and turn the suffering into happiness at that moment, whereas the Christian swims along but already without the hope of the humorist.

The humorist, therefore, is a sufferer; he is a religious person enveloped in contradiction, but with an inane hope of achieving something immediate, something outward, as a remedy to his suffering. The ironist, although also in the environment of contradiction, was not a sufferer because the comical was painless, and therefore he was not at all up to religious existence. The ironist's place is between aesthetic and the ethical; the humorist rests between the ethical and the religious because he continually falls away from religious existence itself by his cancellation of inwardness. Furthermore, humor carried into religious existence may serve the Christian as an incognito for the preservation of his inwardness, or it may be used by the man not yet a Christian as his straw of hope to overcome suffering.

CHAPTER V

B. Immanence

Christianity is not simply religiousness. It is something more. It is a special kind of religiousness. As we said before, religiosity by itself does not always add up to Christianity regardless of the claims of the religious ones. But if Christianity is something more, then there is also a religiousness which is something less. To be religious is not an easy achievement in itself, according to Kierkegaard, but to become a Christian is the most difficult of all achievements. What is the lesser religiousness? What, then, is the intervening state of existence between the ethical and Christianity? Certainly it too is a suffering, since all religiosity is essentially suffering. An existing individual has every opportunity to be religious as soon as and as often as he collides with reality, if only he were to conclude from it the persistence of suffering. But of course not everyone does. This collision might lead one solely to ethical existence, but it could also make it easy for him to be religious, to be a sufferer, even though he would not yet be a Christian. We may, therefore, consider first Kierkegaard's distinction as to the state of existence of an individual who has not yet reached the highest of religiousness; who nevertheless is said to be religious, who is only in the lower stage of religiosity, that of "Religiousness A" or Socratic religiousness. Kierkegaard asserts that it is lower than Christianity, but still it is an advance over ethical existence which culminated in the attainment of self, a victory of self in an environment of humanity, even if under the spectatorship of God. The intense passion of the exister in the ethical is turned toward the self. Even though the other is recognized, still there is no intense passion in relation to the existence of another. But what if an individual became intensely interested in another, for instance God. What if an ethicist wanted to progress to Socratic religiousness, what would be expected of him? Much would be expected of him, because the ethicist would have to relinquish his former final achievement, his selfness. After all his striving to attain

self, after his intense passion toward self, there must be an abatement of this passion, and now he must begin to annihilate the intense interest in self; he must begin to die away from immediateness, which is to say, a dying away from self. This is a reversal of direction, and not an easy reversal when one considers the power of self love and the love of freedom. Hence after all the straining to attain self, the existing individual who wants to be religious must start the dismantling process, the tearing down of the passion for self in order to make the transformation required of religiousness. This is where the other has a role, the existence of the other, and the all important other is God. Why God, why does God loom into the limelight? Because the exister wants eternal happiness, and left with intense interest in himself, he only clashes with reality and suffers, and now since his interest is in eternal happiness through another, the only other who can effect it is the infinite. But at least his suffering makes him religious, even if only in the category of Socratic religiousness, which Kierkegaard describes. "Religiousness A is the dialectic of inward transformation; it is the relation to an eternal happiness which is not conditioned by anything but is the dialectic inward appropriation of the relationship, and so is conditioned only by the inwardness of the appropriation and its dialectic."[1] The religious exister simply asks himself again, "What makes me tick," just as does the little boy who for the first time tinkers with the clock because he is fascinated by its operation. In due time the boy learns that the clock has a motor or spring which accounts for the synchronized operations of all the gears and the accurate movement of the hands so as to indicate the proper time on the dial. So, too, the religious individual wants to know what about an existing religious human being interested in eternal happiness. Like the little boy, the religious individual eventually finds that the motor in self is not the all of his existence, but is active because of another, because of God Who is the primary mover of all activity, and therefore certainly the source of supply for the activity in the self, even if the self is free. Previously the individual

[1] Ibid., pg. 494.

discovered the self, and now the relation of another to the self which accounts for his activity. That is the dialectic which is appropriated. Having discovered too that self is not infinite, and that the other, God, is not limited, the religious individual holds Him, the Infinite, as immanent in all of reality, his own existence included. Hence God is in the self; God is in the individual. The appropriation is not easy, yet it is a satisfactory solution for some persons--namely, simply to put God in the self because He is Infinite, He is the all.

Socratic religiousness, then, is immanence. The encounter with reality left the individual to learn of his own limitation, that he is not a god, and even though destined toward eternity because that is what he wants, eternal happiness, still he himself is not a god. Nevertheless he wants that happiness, and not just temporal happiness which is not enduring. The religious man knows his limitation, but he is also aware of his desire for lasting happiness, an unquenchable appetite from a temporal point of view. Thus the exister suffers and suffering is religiosity, and when the religiousness appropriates God into the self, it is Socratic religiousness. In other words, in spite of his suffering the religious man wants happiness, and furthermore the happiness should be eternal. If all his own activities, all his victories of self cannot assure him of enduring happiness, then only the Infinite can, only Almighty God Himself can. Since the self is not the all of everything, then another is, and this other is God, Who is in the self. God is immanent in all, and therefore God is in the religious exister. "For in immanence God is neither a something (He being all and infinitely all), nor is He outside the individual, since edification consists precisely in the fact that He is in the individual."[1] With God in the individual all is well, because while the self is limited, yet it contains the unlimited, which is the appropriated dialectic, and therefore rests happily in that appropriation. Of course the exister has to pass his temporal trial of suffering in order to attain eternal happiness. This trial of suffering is his persistent

[1]Ibid., pg. 498.

reverting to a passion for self when his innermost intense passion should be for God, and he should be dying away from self. This is all the more a suffering because he realizes that he cannot entirely renounce self, nor does he always faithfully strive to renounce self. This realization again plunges him deeper into existence because it is the consciousness of guilt.

Socratic religiousness is immanence, and since the other, God, does not always receive the intense interest which is due to Him inasmuch as He is infinite, the religious exister is aware of guilt, but his awareness of it is in terms of totality of guilt since God is in all. For Kierkegaard this was a sign of Socratic religiousness, the consciousness of guilt, but because of humor the guilt is not appropriated individually, but rather comprehended as a totality, in distinction to the consciousness of sin which is appropriated individually, and which Kierkegaard reserves as a mark of the Christian. Yet by this consciousness of guilt the individual does put himself along with all the others of humanity into relationship with God and eternal happiness. "The totality of guilt-consciousness is the most edifying factor in religiousness A. The edifying element in the sphere of religiousness A is essentially that of immanence, it is the annihilation by which the individual puts himself out of the way in order to find God, since precisely the individual himself is the hinderance."[1] Contrary to ethical existence in which the individual finds himself, in religiousness he loses himself. He loses himself because he becomes wrapped up with God, so to speak. The self is not the all of everything, and so it is set aside in favor of the all. He has God in him, and God is other than himself, so that his existence is not due to self, but rather due to the other in the self. The former victory of self is being cancelled, and the other, God, is being given credit for existence, and thus by turning away from self, by dying more and more away from self, which was a hinderance to the full understanding of existence, and turning more and more to the other, the individual makes this inward

[1] Ibid., pg. 497.

transformation which is religiousness--not yet Christianity--but religiousness of paganism or Socratic religiousness.

CHAPTER V

C. No Faith

The alarm was sounded that Socratic religiousness is not Christianity, but still a religiousness which is a dying away from self, a suffering which rests upon the inward appropriation of God as the other in the self by virtue of immanence. It is a religiosity, but by no means the highest. Man's discovery leads to the inner transformation, emphasizing God instead of self, but not yet evoking faith. Thus we may inquire as to the relation of faith to such lower religiosity. What is the relation of faith to pagan religiousness?

Although we cannot really call Kierkegaard an "Indian-giver"--one who gives something only to take it back--in the relationship of faith to Socratic Religiousness, still there is a bit of this in his presentation because when he seems to assert something, frequently enough he takes it right back by a qualification. Thus his response to this question is in the order of an "Indian-giver." Positively stated, we may say that there is a sort of faith related to pagan religiousness, but hastily add the qualification that quite clearly it is not faith in the singularly eminent sense. Since it is a lower form of religiosity, so the faith related to it is also lower, or in an ultimate, precise sense not faith at all. To put it negatively, as in aesthetic and ethical existence, so too in Socratic Religiousness, there is no faith, according to Kierkegaard's notion of it, because in the final analysis faith is specifically related to Christianity.

The appropriate transition of Socratic Religiousness is possible within the human understanding of the religious individual and therefore does not call forth faith. "A purely human courage is required to renounce the whole of the temporal to gain the eternal."[1] The individual dies away from self temporally, and he does this without the aid of faith because his reward is great enough for him to do this under his own human powers. It is as though he were simply staking his temporal all

[1]"Fear and Trembling," pg. 70.

for the eternal solely by the understanding of immanence. He does not need faith for this understanding. God is in the self and He donates eternal happiness for the renunciation of the temporal.

Just as Socrates is said to have been devoid of faith in relation to religiosity and the existence of God, so too the individual who rests in pagan religiousness is said not to have faith. Yet Socratic ignorance was looked upon as a kind of analogy of faith, although Kierkegaard repeatedly indicates that there is really no appropriate human analogy for faith because it is unique. The Socratic state is best described as a matter of recollection, and so also is that of the religious man who is not a Christian. "In Religiousness A there is no historical starting point. The individual merely discovers in time that he must assume he is eternal. The moment in time is therefore eo ipso swallowed up by eternity. In time the individual recollects that he is eternal. This contradiction lies exclusively within immanence."[1] In Socratic religiousness the exister discovers the infinite in the self, and holds on to the immanence of God as a matter of understanding and explaining the existence of self. He does not forsake the understanding, but rather retains it and goes a bit deeper into existence with this understanding. For Kierkegaard that is the sign that the exister does not reach the very depth of existence, the very depth of faith--by the fact that he does not abandon understanding, but adheres to it. And so long as understanding remains, faith is absent.

In pagan religiousness, the absolute relationship has not been attained--the absolute relationship to the absolute. The exister is not in an entirely individual relation to God, one that is closed to all other relationships and solely opened between himself and God. The religious person understands immanence of God in all of human nature; the so-called spark of the infinite is in the totality of human nature, and the individual holds a relative position in the totality. His relation

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[1]"Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 508.

is a relative relation to the absolute, and therefore again does not qualify as to faith, which calls for an absolute relation to the absolute.

Socratic Religiousness, however, is a prerequisite of Christianity, and therefore delivers the religious exister to the door of faith. In other words, while the religious individual is not said to have the singular faith yet, he is as close to it as it is possible for him to be under a religiosity which is not the highest. Of course that is not to say that such proximity necessarily makes it very easy for the individual to appropriate faith. On the contrary, Kierkegaard held that it was most difficult, and equally as difficult for the clever heads as for the simple minded folks. To knock at the door of faith is still not Christianity, and there is also no assurance of the individual making the final steps to Christianity, because as a matter of fact there lurks greater danger in falling back, in retrogression, rather than in going forward, in progression. The danger is of turning the inward appropriation outward, rather than becoming completely inward. Any external action at all--any doing of something efficacious for God--nullifies the inwardness and removes the religious exister from faith, because he becomes oblivious of God's self-sufficiency and his own inability to do anything for God. At that moment the exister forgets his suffering, forgets his religiousness. The understanding becomes a misunderstanding. Kierkegaard charged that some religious individuals made the preposterous claims that they appropriated Christ and Christianity with ease, as though it were not a matter of difficulty, especially for clever heads. But Kierkegaard could not see this. For him it was always so difficult an appropriation to make that he simply would not place himself among the Christians and only claimed to be a religious humorist and nothing more, because he did not have faith. Nevertheless, he was on the way to Christianity, inasmuch as Socratic Religiousness was a prerequisite of it. He was on the way, but yet short of faith. He was unable to imitate Abraham, the father of faith, and yet that is precisely what is called for from an existing religious individual.

Chapter V. Socratic Religious Life

In summary of existence under Socratic religiousness, we learned first that religiousness itself was essentially suffering, in distinction to enjoyment for aesthetic existence and for ethical existence struggle and victory. The religious exister perceives suffering and persists in it. But between the ethical and the religious there is humor, where the sufferer undergoes painful contradiction but the persistence of suffering is, or apparently can be nullified by the comical. However, there is also the religious sufferer whose suffering cannot be nullified by the comical and so persistence remains, but humor is used as an incognito of his religiousness. Finally, we had the sufferer of pagan religiousness whose foundation was immanence. By seeing God in all, and therefore in himself, the sufferer must die away from self, that is, give up immediateness for eternity. Since he understands that God is in the self, he is not a believer, even if his resignation is the highest. Therefore he does not have faith, and he is not a Christian.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIAN LIFE

A. Abandonment

"If only I were God," this idle phrase escapes the lips of a shallow person from time to time, and perhaps shocks a pious audience, even though it might be intended with naive, pious regard, yet more often it is said with proud impatience as if God truly needed an experienced assistant to cope with man-made evil. The idler is so impressed with omniscience and omnipotence, which he would use to make this world free from evil and therefore the perfectly wonderful place in which to live, that at the same time he is oblivious of God's great gift to man, freedom, and of other divine perfections, especially perfect justice. But then if this thought is expressed proudly, was not a similar proud thought the sin of Adam and Eve who jealously wanted to know all and to enjoy every divine privilege? Because of his freedom man with petty jealousy dares to want to sit along side of God as an equal, as if attempting from time to time to climb on His throne, the seat of infinity. In spite of futile efforts, it is as if man kept saying to God, "Move over, because here I come again, and this time I am going to make it." He repeats this effort, but temporal reality continually knocks him down. Nevertheless, for some persons this becomes a game, like children playing "King of the hill" on a nice soft sand pile, and it never ceases during their entire life span, no matter how often reality knocks them down. Others may play the game for a while, but soon abandon it for another which caters more to their own ego, that is, in which they themselves hold top billing, rather than suffering unceasing knock downs. Still others may see that it is just a game in which they by themselves do not rank on top, but at best only attain ranking in virtue of another--like the child who says, "my father and I can do anything," but when challenged to what he himself cannot do, he retorts, "but my father can do it." So too a religious individual whose religiosity has the foundation of immanence

can say the same, because he preaches that "with God all things are possible," and after all, he has God as the other in himself, and God is infinite. Now for such a person when there arises a question of understanding, whatever he himself cannot understand, can still be understood by God; and therefore it is still understandable as far as he is concerned because the infinite is in himself. But for the Christian it is not so easy a matter, because he does not have such a crutch or prop for understanding.

The difficulty for the religious person is that he exists, and the problem of living out his existence understandably looms before him. Let the individual live out the synthesis of eternity and time, and try to live it out in reality with understanding. But to do so with understanding is impossible, according to Kierkegaard, because there is no final understanding of this synthesis for human heads. The understanding is possible for God, but not for a human being. Where, then, does this leave the distraught individual, if not crucified on the cross of misunderstanding inasmuch as he must exist in reality, and furthermore this means exist religiously. "Christianity is an existence--communication which makes existence paradoxical and remains paradoxical as long as one exists."[1] On earth every man is shod with the clay feet of time, and so long as one is wrapped up in time, although destined for eternity, he is actually in the paradox of existence--trying to drink in the eternity that is desirable and due. Furthermore every man should be religious, that is, live out religiosity, even the highest which is Christianity. Kierkegaard rejoiced at the man who objected that the presentation is absurd, because that is just the corner in which Kierkegaard would like the man to find himself. With such an objection the individual would be uttering the hope of becoming a Christian, or at least he would be making an announcement which Kierkegaard would take as a hopeful sign of possibly achieving the goal of becoming a Christian, provided he was stronger than Kierkegaard himself in the abandonment of understanding.

[1] Ibid., pg. 499.

Chapter VI. Christian Life

As a main point of Christianity Kierkegaard discovered the abandonment of understanding, because then the absurd is appropriated and assumes its proper role in existence. "What now is the absurd? 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."[1] The eternal contained in time--absurd; time digesting the eternal and both surviving--absurd. To understand the eternal as historical--absurd. Hence the mind rebels against these notions; the mind will not accept them as sociable, and hence they ought to be rejected, but if the mind accepts the absurd, then understanding must be abandoned. In a word, confronted by the absurd, understanding must make its gracious exit. For the religious man this is of paramount concern. This is the initial step toward becoming a Christian, and not simply knowing Christianity--that is to say, living out Christianity as against knowing it. But for some religious persons this would mean that they must synthesize eternity and time in their understanding, and that is exactly what Kierkegaard would not allow to their credit, no matter how they asserted themselves. As far as he was concerned, they did not so much explain the problem understandingly, as explain it away. For Kierkegaard this synthesis defies human understanding, and so if the religious individual wants to become a Christian, he must first abandon understanding in favor of highest religiosity. But Kierkegaard saw that every man does not abandon understanding in toto, that is, in every relationship. Nay, rather, it is the Christian who must abandon understanding in relation to his ultimate movement of religiosity, and just when he wants most to understand. "So the believing Christian not only possesses but uses his understanding, respects the universal-human, does not put it down to lack of understanding if somebody is not a Christian; but in relation to Christianity he believes against the understanding and in this case also uses understanding--to make sure that he believes against the understanding."[2] The

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[1] Ibid., pg. 188.

[2] Ibid., pg. 504.

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Christian finally understands that there is no understanding of the foundation of the utmost depth of religious existence. Whereas every man who holds to understanding, by that very fact, is not a Christian, and so long as he is steadfast to understanding in relation to his religiosity, he will never become a Christian. Yet every man should be religious to the utmost, and Christianity is always presented as the truth of religiosity, which, as we know, meant inwardness to Kierkegaard. Hence the individual should follow the path of inwardness to the very end, and when he arrives there, in complete inwardness, he will rest in Christianity. In order to accomplish complete inwardness, however, he will have to abandon the understanding that he formerly had, and he will have to exist solely by the absurd. The mind cannot entertain the absurd understandingly, and yet there it is--the eternal and the temporal synthesized. The synthesis is absurd but there it is. To live according to this synthesis is to live Christianity, but to live Christianity is not to know it, but to abandon understanding and yet to hold fast to the absurd. For the man who is trying to become a Christian, the final understanding is that there is no understanding, and hence it is his way of putting understanding to work, so to speak, of living out the final understanding.

CHAPTER VI

B. No Immanence

Christianity is not a doctrine, but an existence communication, appropriated by the religious individual as a result of his abandonment of understanding in relation to the synthesis of eternity and time. Christianity is the truth, the most intensive inwardness. "Christianity has declared itself to be the eternal essential truth which has come into being in time. It has proclaimed itself as the paradox, and it has required of the individual the inwardness of faith in relation to that which stamps itself as an offense to the Jews and a folly to the Greeks--and an absurdity to the understanding."[1] This is the full meaning of existence; this is the full meaning of religiosity; and everyone's existence should be religious existence. This is the fullness of inner suffering which must be appropriated by the individual and never, never turned outward in any way. The existence of the Christian surpasses the existence of the religious man who is not yet a Christian, of the religious man of Socratic Religiousness, because of the complete inwardness in the appropriation. The Christian makes no outward turn toward salvation from the suffering, as does the individual of lesser religiosity.

The man of Socratic Religiousness dies away from self, but not completely, because finally he rests with the infinite in the self. The Christian, on the other hand, even breaks away from immanence and thus completely dies away from self, and suffers this humiliation without any consolation, without any ultimate understanding.

> The paradoxical religiousness places the contradiction absolutely between existence and the eternal; for precisely the thought that the eternal is at a definite moment of time, is an expression for the fact that existence is abandoned by the concealed immanence of the eternal. In the Religiousness A the eternal is ubique et nusquam, but concealed by the actuality of existence; in the paradoxical religiousness the eternal is at a definite place, and precisely this is the breach with immanence.[2]

Immanence has a totality about it, the eternal being in everyone and at every time

[1] Ibid., pg. 191.

[2] Ibid., pg. 506.

and place, although in a secretive manner. This offers the religious individual the chance to shake his head and wink his eye with an understanding of existence because he is a part of the totality. His understanding remains. But the Christian is deprived of such understanding, even deprived of any vagueness which would allow for a sign of understanding. The Christian must live out religiosity with the absurd in a certain point of time. He does not view religious existence as the man of Socratic religiousness does in his final movement. Nor does the Christian abandon existence, even though he does away with the understanding of it. He holds to existence in spite of the abandonment of understanding, and even in spite of the final breach from immanence. He is stripped, as it were, from everything outward and stands completely bare with his inwardness. He is as if swallowed up by the eternal because of his inwardness. In the dialectic of the temporal and eternal of existence this leaves him with so much stress on the eternal that he completely dies away from the temporal. However, this does not debase the individual even though there is a complete dying away from self; in fact, it rather exalts him. It does not set him lower in existence and therefore in religiosity, but rather higher, even up to the very pinnacle of Christianity. His bareness of outwardness is not a loss, but a gain of the fullness of inwardness. He penetrates into the depths of human existence. His very falling away from understanding is in itself a condition for the firm grasp of religious existence. His certainty is based on it.

The man of Socratic religiousness burrowed into existence; he delved into it by his consciousness of guilt, which was within immanence; it was a totality of guilt. The Christian, we just said, stands denuded of outwardness, and so he has no cloak of totality of guilt. Since he stands alone, the consciousness of guilt for him is entirely individual; it is the consciousness of sin. Here again is a distinctive characteristic of a Christian for Kierkegaard, and the cause of persistence in suffering so long as the individual remained temporal. He is not sharing guilt with humanity; he alone as the real individual is aware of his frailty and failings in relation to the infinite. But he is not in a relative

relation to the absolute, like the man of Socratic Religiousness, but as a Christian he reached the height of absolute relation to the absolute. He is now in a closed world, circumscribed by God and himself. Nothing else matters except the bond between himself and the infinite--with no outwardness for the self, just full inwardness between self and the infinite, in which the self is completely embarrassed by the spectatorship of the infinite. And yet in this relationship the eternal happiness of self is dependent upon something historical, which also wipes away sin. The temporal is there, but for the Christian how insignificant it is in company with the eternal, especially since the Christian breaks away from immanence. Furthermore his goal of eternal happiness is tied to the apron string of something historical, just when he sees the eternal swallowing up the temporal. Here again the Christian has his absurdity.

> The contradiction is that this thing of becoming a Christian begins with the miracle of creation, and that this occurs to one who already is created, in spite of which Christianity is preached to all men, implying that they are non-existent, seeing that the miracle whereby they come into being must intervene either as actual or as an expression of the breach with immanence and of the opposition which absolutely makes the passion of faith paradoxical as long as one exists in faith, that is, for the whole of life; for one constantly has one's eternal happiness based upon something historical.[1]

Christianity is a miracle, but one that is available to every individual, because whether smart or stupid each one is in a position to give up the understanding that he has and live out religiosity on the basis of the absurd, to hang his own aspiration for eternal happiness on the historical--that timeless God came into existence at a definite point of time. Every mind, whether clever or simple, can clash with the paradoxical--time-tied man in relation to the eternal, and eternal God in relation to the temporal--and because of this fact everyone can become a Christian, but only upon the abandonment of understanding, even its last thread, even immanence, which would serve as an understandable explanation of religiosity for the man embracing Socratic Religiousness.

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[1] Ibid., pgs. 510 and 511.

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Now if pagan religiousness is acknowledged as difficult inasmuch as the individual must die away from self to the extent that the meaningfulness of self is through what is in the self, the eternal, then how much more difficult is Christianity in which the last vestige of self must be utterly abandoned in favor of absurdity. Kierkegaard is preoccupied by this problem and treats it at length because of his own shortcoming. For the Christian the divorce from self is not assuaged by any understanding or understandability, but solely pinned on absurdity, and existence lived out because of it. Although pagan religiousness is not easy, yet there is understanding, in which the individual may rest, but the Christian has no such haven. The problem for the Christian is to live out absurdity. The individual of Socratic Religiousness may find it extremely difficult to live out his understanding, that is, to put it into daily practice, because with God all things are possible, but his difficulty hardly approaches that of the Christian who breaks away from immanence. The man of Socratic Religiousness hears the preacher on Sunday, and understands the eloquently delineated principles of his sermon. However, if he were to put them into practice on Monday or Tuesday, he might find the effort far more arduous than the understanding. For instance, last Sunday the preacher in anticipation of Ash Wednesday reminded the religious individual that he must never forget that he is but dust and must return to dust, and therefore he must always live so as to be prepared for death. And the man understands the never and the always of the preachment, but while the understanding is not difficult for him, the application of the exhortations in daily existence is not easy. As a matter of fact, as Kierkegaard saw it, Socratic Religiousness was difficult enough in itself, so much so that he himself found it strenuous to be religious. But to become a Christian was just too strenuous--at least for him, even though others claimed to appropriate it so easily. Because of the absurd to perform every act in desperation called for more fortitude than Kierkegaard would allow of himself. At most he was merely on the way because, as we said before, Socratic Religiousness was always a

prerequisite of Christianity. However, for some, for those who appropriate religiosity easily, which Kierkegaard looked upon as preposterous, it may be a strange hodge-podge of every stage, aesthetic, ethical, Socratic religiousness and even an inkling of Christianity.

If there is a general tendency for human beings to meander like the silent river along the lines of least resistence, why should anyone present difficulties and obstacles to human nature, to the existing human individual? Why should anyone try to outline a difficult path? In a word, why should Kierkegaard burden man with a load that he is not apt to carry at all? Especially in view of the fact that he himself was unable to carry the burden he offered, why place it on the shoulders of others? The answer remains in the fact that because of lethargy man has completely forgotten what it means to exist, and so now the return to existence is not easy, just like climbing a tree or a cliff may be easy enough, but the descent again is far more difficult. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard held that Christianity is within the reach of every man, because it is the proper end of religious existence, and human existence is nothing else but religious existence.

> My purpose is to make it difficult to become a Christian, yet not more difficult than it is, nor to make it difficult for stupid people, and easy for clever pates, but qualitatively difficult, and essentially difficult for every man equally, for essentially it is equally difficult for every man to relinquish his understanding and his thinking, and to keep his soul fixed upon the absurd; it is comparatively more difficult for a man if he has much understanding--if one will keep in mind that not everyone who has lost his understanding over Christianity thereby proves that he has any.[1]

Christianity is difficult for all, but yet attainable by every man. And even though it cannot be reached by reason, still it can be appropriated. The movement must therefore be made by faith. And so finally we are arriving at a common meeting ground of existence and faith according to Kierkegaard, because that which is impossible for reason, is possible for faith, and although it is not easy, still it is possible for the decisive individual.

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[1]Ibid., pg. 495.

CHAPTER VI

C. Faith

On a street corner today, after his exposition in relation to the absurd, Kierkegaard would be told off with a blase, "Man, you are ripe for the boys with the white coats." To talk of giving up understanding because of the encounter with the absurd, and then to try to have certitude in virtue of it, is repulsive, especially repulsive to persons who live so much in immediateness as the gang on the corner. Obviously they would ridicule Kierkegaard and dismiss his shocking discourse in haste with a cynical comment. Although such an audience may be considered very clever in immediateness, it would nevertheless be futile for Kierkegaard to continue his presentation because the judgement against him would remain unchanged, even if he stressed the point of certitude, that is, certainty on the strength of giving up understanding.

But Kierkegaard himself realized that there is no satisfaction to be found simply by resting in unintelligibility. "Faith must not rest content with unintelligibility; for precisely the relation to or the repulsion from the unintelligible, the absurd, is the expression for the passion of faith."[1] It is proper then for immediate persons to experience this repulsion; in fact, if there is any hope whatsoever for them to advance from immediateness, it is because of this repulsiveness. In a word, the absurd is repulsive, and Kierkegaard acknowledges this, but a constructive effort must be made from the absurd to faith, and not merely to be scandalized by the absurd so as to fall away from the core of existence, and hence retrogress rather than progress. The individual stands on the very brink of highest existence by virtue of the absurd, and therefore he is in a position to make the final leap, just as he is also in place to fall back, to shrink away to lesser religiosity, and hence to something less than the fullness of existence. Kierkegaard does not want to leave man in a quandry, to leave him with no certainty whatsoever,

[1] Ibid., pg. 540.

but rather he maintains that the certainty as to existence with which man must live out his daily life has its foundation in uncertainty, in the absurd. But this uncertainty may be averted by inwardness, by subjective appropriation of certitude. Man removes himself from objectivity in the face of the absurd, and as he does so, he becomes more subjective until reaching the utmost distance from objectivity, which is complete inwardness, the very goal toward which Kierkegaard would want every man to aim at, inasmuch as he maintains that it was a goal proper to man, that it was the fullness of human existence, religious existence, the religious existence of a Christian.

Christianity is complete inwardness, and not just something speculatively acknowledged, but truly lived out because it is an existence-communication and not a doctrine. Regardless of the indigence of reason with reference to the absurd, Christianity can still be practiced, not just known; it can be lived. Kierkegaard suspected that more and more persons of every walk of life were forsaking Christianity, at least the practice if not the name, especially the learned ones who held so fast to understanding and thereby explained away existence.

The firm grasp of religious existence by the exister must be reached by faith because this firmness of faith surpasses any intellectual certainty of man. Did not Kierkegaard say that the certainty of faith was the highest, and that it had two tasks; namely, to discover the improbable, the paradox, and to hold it fast with the passion of inwardness? Because faith is self-active as to its tasks, Kierkegaard therefore claims not to leave man hung on unintelligibility, but rather puts this unintelligibility to work, to open the path of certainty. "Faith is self-active in its relation to the improbable and the paradoxical, self-active in the discovery, and self-active in every moment holding it fast--in order to believe."[1] Every obstacle in relation to religious existence can be surpassed, even the last. Even the absurd can be hurdled with a leap to certainty by a self-active faith.

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[1]Ibid., pg. 209.

Where reason is stopped, faith is not stopped; in fact, faith uses the stopping point of reason as a footing for the leap to certainty. Not that the obstacles are easily crossed, especially the last one of giving up understanding to attain certainty by faith, but still they can be surmounted, even the last by a self-active faith.

But complete inwardness is necessary to make the final leap, and that is what makes it difficult, because any vestige whatsoever of outwardness allows for a bit of understanding which nullifies faith in the eminent sense. The final movement of faith must be made without the help of reason--that is, leap over the absurd which holds reason at a standstill.

As long as man relies upon understanding of reason, he does not qualify as the believer, as an individual of faith. The movement is like that of a zipper and the closing in on subjectivity is a withdrawal from objectivity, the closing in on faith is the removal from reason, and complete movement to faith is complete divorce from intellectual objectivity, and therefore the achievement of certainty more firm than anything of reason. With the attainment of complete subjectivity, that is, the achievement of the certainty of faith, the object of faith is held unwaveringly. We may inquire again what is the object of this self-active faith which it holds so tenaciously? Of course we already answered this question in general, but now make it specific. "The object of faith is hence the reality of the God-man in the sense of his existence... The object of faith is thus God's reality in existence as a particular individual, the fact that God has existed as an individual human being."[1] The religious individual meets the absurd--the eternal in time, the God-man--and his reason is shocked by the encounter, shaken from any firm foundation, as if it were to say, "This does not make sense--that the timeless should be in time." But self-active faith need not be repulsed by the absurd, not if it is strong enough in passion to make a leap with the absurd as a foundation, a leap which rests in the

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[1] Ibid., pg. 290.

certainty of faith. The synthesis of eternity and time as historical, as a reality in a certain point of time is what reason rejects, but precisely what faith is expected to accept. To appropriate this synthesis is not easy, even if it was historical. Nor was it easier since the day of Christ, than preceding His day, because then the problem was to synthesize time and eternity, man as eternal. In the one case, we observe God as in time, but in the other, man, who is in time, as eternal, and the difficulty of appropriating such a synthesis remains in either case. Nevertheless, faith can appropriate it. Kierkegaard asserts that self-active faith is sufficient for the appropriation, even in spite of the debacle of reason.

The God-man is the object of faith, and the tasks of faith are first to find the improbable and then to grasp it unwaveringly. These ingredients, then, are applied by Kierkegaard in his definition of faith in order to explain the riddle of Christian existence. "Faith is the objective uncertainty due to the repulsion of the absurd held fast by the passion of inwardness, which in this instance is intensified to the utmost degree."[1] Here again we have Kierkegaard's definition of faith, which of course, we recall, was also an expression of truth, because when he discovered the latter, he equated it with the former. "Here is such a definition of truth: An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual... But the above definition of truth is an equivalent expression for faith."[2] Where reason would halt at the absurd, faith, which discovered the absurd, leaps over it, holding with certainty the absolute paradox that God existed in a point of time, that the eternal and temporal are synthesizeable, and furthermore that man himself actually lives out the synthesis of time and eternity, which is precisely Kierkegaard's definition of existence.

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[1]Ibid., pg. 540.

[2]Ibid., pg. 182.

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With certainty of faith Kierkegaard is now putting together existence, faith, God man and Christianity. We see that for Kierkegaard human existence in its plenitude is religious existence--not just for some persons, but for every man--and the highest religious existence for every religious individual is Christianity. Man's problem, his paradox is that although temporal, he is designed for eternity; he is to live out the synthesis. The absolute paradox is God's place in time, the reality of the eternal in the temporal. To appropriate with complete firmness that the synthesis of eternity and time has been and can be lived out by the decisive individual is the task of becoming fully subjective, and Christianity is the fullness of subjectivity. "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... The existing individual has by means of the paradox itself come to be placed in the extremity of existence."[1] Truly enough, the appropriation is paradoxical, but then Kierkegaard said that it does not depend on the "what," but on the "how," inasmuch as the Christian's "how" can only correspond with one thing, his faith in relation to the absolute paradox. He also pointed out that man's faith is appropriate to the paradox and therefore can close itself with complete firmness upon Christianity, especially because in accepting the "how," the "what" is also given. And thus man can be a Christian, but only in the fullness of time. "Eternity is the fullness of time (that word taken in the sense in which it is used where it is said that Christ came in the fullness of time)."[2] Man is becoming a Christian and his book of life is closed only at his death. For him the becoming a Christian is a continuous process as long as he lives, and at no point in his lifetime can it be asserted that he is a finished Christian, because he is always in danger of falling away from faith, that is, of falling away again from Christianity, from the process of becoming a Christian, especially by grasping again for a bit of understanding.

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[1] Ibid., pg. 206.

[2] "The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 281, pg. 74.

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Faith is specifically related to Christianity. Faith in the eminent sense is entirely singular for Kierkegaard, and hence was not related to aesthetic existence, ethical existence, or even to Religiousness of Socrates. The man of faith alone is a believer. "But to believe is specifically different from all other appropriation and inwardness... This formula fits only the believer, no one else, not a lover, not an enthusiast, not a thinker, but simply and solely the believer who is related to the absolute paradox."[1] Faith evokes just this one relationship--namely, to the absolute paradox. There is no understanding, and none can be sought, because as soon as one turns to understanding, faith is misunderstood, or rather it is entirely lacking. It is an intense passion for the paradox, to which it has a peculiar affinity. As we saw, Kierkegaard held that passion and paradox were made for each other, and the most intense passion was for the absolute paradox.

Faith applies specifically to paradoxical religiousness, and not to any lesser religiosity. That was why we had to refrain from predicating it about any of the other stages of existence. "And faith belongs essentially in the sphere of the paradox--religious, as has constantly been asserted; all other faith is only an analogy, which is no faith, an analogy, which may serve to call attention, but nothing more, and the understanding of which therefore is revocation."[2] We indicated previously that Kierkegaard would not allow for faith in any other stage of existence, not even Socrates was said to have faith in the eminent sense. At most he may have been knight of infinite resignation, but not knight of faith.

Faith accentuates existence, but the main point of it is that it accentuates the existence of another, and not one's own existence. One's own existence was established with certainty by reason in the ethical, but there was no room for faith in the ethical, faith in the eminent sense. The certitude of the ethical was a certainty of self, and not certitude related to the existence of another. It was

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[1] "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pg. 540.

[2] Ibid., Footnote, pg. 505.

also the certainty of reason, of understanding, which was only appropriate to the self, and not at all to another. The other was only known analogously by reason. In the ethical the individual alone was real. In fact, religiousness only started with a dying away from self, as it were, on a search for the existence of another, and the end of that search was in paradoxical religiousness by the movement of faith. Even the intervening stage between the ethical and Christianity, that of Socratic Religiousness, which rested in immanence, did not yet call for faith. In immanence the existence of another is said to be in the self, and hence faith was not needed as yet. The Christian even had to break away from immanence before making the leap of faith as to the existence of the other. The dying away from self is completed by this leap of faith, which rests in the certainty of the existence of God. With complete dying away from self the way was cleared for faith, but not any sooner. Paradoxical religiousness alone has the need of faith, because of the abandonment of understanding and the leap over absurdity, a leap which rests satisfied with the certainty of the existence of another, God. This certitude of the existence of God is completely unwavering, and hence according to Kierkegaard even stronger than the certainty as to the self, which is that of reason. That is why one can die away from self completely--namely, because faith has more firmness to offer than reason because it can move even after reason is at a standstill.

Finally, if an individual wants to attain the highest existence, he has the task of becoming a Christian, of becoming eternal, that is, as a synthesis of eternity and time, which he is, he has the task of becoming one, of becoming solely eternal. The religiosity of the Christian exister--his suffering--is the synthesis, whereas his whole passion is to be singularly eternal and not an oleo of eternity and time.

> For the finite and the infinite are put together in existence, in the existing individual; the existing individual has therefore no need to trouble himself to create existence, or to imitate existence in thought, but needs all the more to concentrate upon existing. Nowadays existence is even produced, on paper, with the assistance of mediation. In existence, where the existing

> individual finds himself, the task is simpler; namely, whether he will be so good as to exist. As an existing individual he is not called upon to create existence out of the finite and the infinite; but as one who is himself composed of finite and infinite it is his task to become one of the two existentially. It is impossible to become both at the same time, as one is both by being an existing individual.[1]

The exister is both finite and infinite, and hence cannot become both; he can only become one. Christianity then is the process of becoming directed toward eternal happiness with the synthesis of eternity and time as the starting point which is rejected by reason, but appropriated by faith. With complete subjectivity the Christian is paving the way to eternal happiness, by living out an absurd synthesis; by appropriating on faith the existence of another, God. The Christian's own existence, even though it does not make sense so far as reason is concerned, still it can lead to eternal happiness; that is, just as the absolute paradox does not make sense, yet God is eternal and by faith the Christian can grasp this firmly, so too for reason man's synthesis does not make sense, but because of his infinite passion for eternal happiness he too can reach the coveted goal by the powerful movement of faith in the existence of another who can set up the condition for eternal happiness, since this other is eternal. Therefore, Christian existence although exceedingly strenuous, can still be lived out by every man, because the other, God, is equally the other for every individual and the same condition prevails for all, and finally the reward that awaits the individual in every case is eternal happiness. He can become one; he can become eternal and be fully satisfied as to his infinite passion. Christianity is that process of becoming so, and the existing religious individual of faith is becoming a Christian.

To recapitulate, existence may be carried out in four ways, as far as Kierkegaard is concerned. A man may rise from one category to another, or he may fall back to a former category, even the one who is on the way to becoming a Christian may fall back so long as he exists. The criterion of judgment in each category is the

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[1]Ibid., pgs. 375, and 376.

relationship of the dialectic of life to the individual. In the first instance, the aesthetic individual is undialectical in himself, and the enigma of existence is outside of himself as something to be worked out since everything is possible for him. "If the individual is in himself undialectical and has his dialectic outside himself, then we have the aesthetic interpretation."[1] Within himself this individual does not see any contradiction between eternity and time, because he views everything as possible for him, infinitely possible, so that he rests satisfied in the possibility of infinite enjoyment. The dialectic is not in him, and therefore it does not interfere with his enjoyment. There is no obstacle in himself to infinite happiness, because every struggle is always outside himself as something to be worked out yet, since all is possible. There is no contradiction of life within himself, but always just beyond him, always outside him, and therefore never arresting his happiness. In a word, when the dialectic in relation to the individual is outside himself, he is living out aesthetic existence. Of course this endless pursuit of transient enjoyment only ends in despair, because aesthetic man never realizes all the possibilities.

A second relationship of the dialectical may not be outside the individual, but within him. However, when in spite of the contradiction of existence, the individual struggles to assert self, then he is in the ethical stage, because in the victory of self the dialectic is overcome, so that in the final analysis again he is undialectical. He sees the contradiction that man is the synthesis of eternity and time, but he chooses his freedom to assert self, which is an assertion of time, rather than eternity. "If the individual is dialectical in himself inwardly in self-assertion, hence in such a way that the ultimate basis is not dialectic in itself, inasmuch as the self which is at the basis is used to overcome and assert itself, then we have the ethical interpretation."[2] The ethical individual sees the

[1] Ibid., pg. 507.

[2] Ibid., pg. 507.

limitation of man, sees reality and gives up aesthetic infinitude, but he also sees freedom, man's freedom, and he chooses to assert himself in the environment of humanity. There is an oughtness or a duty to humanity and even to God, but man is free, and this again, this choosing of his freedom puts him solely in the temporal perspective, so that the victory of self is finally undialectical. He reverts at the last moment to the temporal, and therefore to despair, like the aesthetic, because the temporal forever keeps out eternal happiness. Where the aesthetic finds no contradiction in existence because to exist is one thing, and the contradiction is something else coming from the outside of him, the ethical man finds the contradiction in himself, but his freedom allows for self-assertion, so that ultimately he negates the contradiction of existence by the victory of free self. He is in a temporal world of humanity, limited in relation to all other men, but making as much use of this world as he can, by choosing every freedom. His choosing is within the temporal and therefore eternal happiness is impossible, so that the ethical too ends in despair.

When the dialectic is within the individual, as a self-annihilation before God, then his existence is religious, but if the suffering of time and eternity puts emphasis on existing rather than becoming eternal, then the exister is in the category of pagan religiousness, and he has the harbor or haven of immanence, of God, the Eternal, within himself. "If the individual is inwardly defined by self-annihilation before God, then we have Religiousness A."[1] He is in the position of standing as nothing before God, the Eternal, but God is within him, and therefore he can exist, he can live, he can act in relation to the eternal within himself, and thus he can explain the relationship between the temporal and the eternal. He sees the contradiction but he has some understanding of it. This explanation is made with understanding, and precisely because of that bit of understanding, the individual has not attained highest religiosity. The man of Socratic Religiousness is on

[1]Ibid., pg. 507.

the threshold of faith, but as yet he is not becoming a Christian. He is not solely temporal, and hence he suffers, but he has immanence as a salve for his suffering.

Finally, when the dialectic is within the individual with no understanding of the contradiction, then the exister is a man of faith who is becoming a Christian. With the abandonment of understanding, even that of immanence, the man goes through the door of faith, but not a moment before. It is only when existence is the contradiction of time and eternity, and simply does not make sense at all, that the exister is a man of faith. It does not make sense whether viewed from the vantage point of man, or whether viewed from the standpoint of God, the Eternal. "If the individual is paradoxically dialectic, every vestige of original immanence being annihilated and all connection cut off, the individual being brought to the utmost verge of existence, then we have the paradoxical religiousness."[1] The fact of existing, then, becomes the absolute contradiction, and yet the man goes on existing because of his faith in the attainment of eternal happiness. He is then on the way to becoming a Christian; he is in absolute relation to the absolute. This is the fullness of existence. This is the category of the man of faith. This is the relationship of existence to faith which is the becoming of a Christian. It is always a becoming, as long as the temporal element is present to man, because the danger of seeking some understanding is forever present in time. Only when this danger is absent can one be a Christian; that is, can one be in eternal relationship with God. But then one no longer exists, but rather is eternal.

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[1]Ibid., pg. 507.

CHAPTER VII

CRITICISM

A. Objective and Subjective Cognition

Kierkegaard was not merely garrulous, or rather, not merely loquacious like the proverbial parrot, but on the contrary, he was a thoughtful person, who meditated at length on the meaningfulness and destiny of human nature, on what it meant for him to exist, on the why of human existence. At the University of Copenhagen, when he was a candidate for a degree in theology, these notions gnawed in the recesses of his mind. These and related thoughts disturbed him so much because he saw quite readily that the popular views which where handed down to him from the platforms and pulpits never supplied an adequate explanation of the purpose of life. This awareness was poignant and irritating. In fact, it was so striking that at one time Kierkegaard almost gave full homage to despair. He was on the verge of suicide.

Kierkegaard saw that the logical consequence of a philosophical doctrine like Hegelianism inevitably led to despair because it left man with abstractness and essence, and thus never completely explained reality, because of indifference to existence. Furthermore, Kierkegaard saw that if what man wants with his innermost passion is to be eternal, he can never achieve this aim in essentialism, because essence in the concrete is steeped in time, and essence in the abstract is universal and devoid of existence and individuality. Hegelianism, therefore, seemed to offer to Kierkegaard either no eternity at all or a universal eternity, which is to say again, despair of concrete eternity and despair of individual eternity. But what Kierkegaard wanted, or rather what every man wants, is to be himself and to achieve eternal happiness individually, and not merely to drag on hopelessly temporal with transient happiness, nor to be devoid of individuality in eternity.

But Kierkegaard refused to succumb to despair. He forestalled his contemplated self-destruction because he had faith that existence was not inane and that

another solution might be found to displace indifference to existence. Therefore he decided to champion the cause of existence.

Kierkegaard saw clearly enough that contemporary notions of reality were entirely engrossed in essences. At the University, at public lectures and even on the pulpit, teachers, lecturers and preachers heralded the doctrine of essences and ignored existence, or even explained it away. They were either indifferent to existence or declared that it added nothing to essences. These utterances, or the lack of reference to existence, shocked Kierkegaard, and thus he rightfully reacted against such preachments and teachings, because he knew that they not only led to purely arbitrary philosophies which were completely out of touch with reality, but also that their logical end was despair. Kierkegaard also feared that in due time men would see this final point and perhaps abandon themselves to despairing practices, and maybe even to wanton self-destruction in view of absolute frustration. Pure essentialism led to utter frustration. Kierkegaard knew this because he traveled some length of the road, and saw its terminal much sooner than the shortsighted advocates of essentialism, although he did not pursue it to the end. In charity, then, he wished to spare them and all other men from that pointless journey. Because he was convinced that essentialism, particularly as represented by the then current Hegelians, was inane, he therefore turned in the opposite direction, away from essence and toward existence. But here Kierkegaard made the mistake of supposing that essence might be left completely behind and that he could go over to existence as if it were singularly isolated. He presumed that because existence might be treated apart from essence, it is entirely apart from essence. "Here we touch upon the original error that underlies all the modern existentialist philosophies. Ignorant of or neglecting the warning of the old scholastic wisdom, that 'the act of existing cannot be the object of a perfect abstraction,' these philosophies presuppose that existence can be isolated. They contend that existence alone is the

nourishing soil of philosophy."[1] We may say that Kierkegaard launched a project which might be called philosophy of existence, whereas he should have initiated again the philosophy of being, of that which exists, because existence is always of a subject which is in existence, whether actual or possible, and never merely existence. Hence Kierkegaard's opposition to essentialism became extreme opposition, toward an isolated existence. But he had no reality to coincide with his effort. There is no existence that is entirely by itself an existence which he might equate with his presupposition. In other words, his presupposition was unfounded in reality; it was without a foundation. Isolated existence is unreal and unthinkable. In Thomism there is insistence that the "to be" is always of an essence and never a mere isolation. "The act of existing is the actuality of every form of nature."[2] Truly enough, a Thomist understands the existentialist if he refers to identity of essence and existence in God. But this should not lead to the confusion that in created beings essence is existence, or existence is essence. The two are not the same, but neither are they separable. Even though they are inseparable, they are intrinsically varied. The one is not the other.

What a thing is, and whether it is, are announcements of essence and existence, and they are not the same. We are simply asserting that existence is not detached from essence, because in reality there is no isolated existence.

And Kierkegaard was wrong, therefore, in supposing that a sound investigation of reality might be initiated in an attempt to capture this isolated existence; he was wrong in supposing that the act of existence might possibly be perfectly isolated whether in time or in eternity. And thus this postulate led him into various difficulties, into absurdities, as might be expected because of the absence of foundation in reality to coincide with his assertions. For instance, his intellectual effort

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[1] "Existence and the Existent," pg. 24.

[2] St. Thomas Aquinas, "Opera Omnia." Edited by S.E. Frette and P. Mare. 34 Volumes, Vives Edition. Paris, 1872-1880. Summa Theologica, P I, Q 3, Art. 4. "Quia esse est actualitas omnis formae vel naturae."

to seize isolated existence led him to scrap intellectuality. He expected the intellect to achieve what was beyond it; namely, to arrive at isolated existence, and when it failed, rather than give up his notion of isolated existence, he relegated the intellect on the scrap pile.

Dealing with cognition as an effort to attain knowledge of isolated existence, Kierkegaard found objective cognition wanting, and for this reason step by step as he removed himself from objectivity, he settled for subjectivity as the only alternative so as not to be left in despairing absurdity. As a matter of fact Gilson asserts that the crux of Kierkegaard's problem was in this area, the distinction between objective and subjective cognition. "His (Kierkegaard's) whole argumentation rests upon a fundamental distinction between two types of cognition: objective knowledge and subjective knowledge."[1] Incidentally, Gilson warns us that "subjective knowledge" are misleading words and that one must understand Kierkegaard's use of them and then grow accustomed to it. Whereas objective knowledge is mere appropriation, as one appropriates mathematics, subjective knowledge is active appropriation, as in the case of Socrates living out his philosophy, and not merely knowing it.

In relation to existence Kierkegaard held that objective knowledge was impossible. Reason was not able merely to appropriate existence, because existence was always of the concrete and left behind by abstraction. Objective or speculative knowledge mirrors objects, but it is indifferent to existence, leaving it off. Hence Kierkegaard rejected the objective approach to existence and turned to the subjective approach. Of course Kierkegaard always held Christianity in mind when treating of existence, and he settled for subjectivity quickly because it was perfectly suited for Christianity. Subjectivity and Christianity suited each other perfectly. Subjective knowledge was not mere appropriation for Kierkegaard, but active appropriation.

[1]Etienne Gilson, "Being and Some Philosophers," Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952, pg. 143.

Therefore, subjectivity is best displayed in religion because it does not mean merely to know religion, but to be religious. "The office of subjective reflection is to make a constant comparison between a man's actual condition and the requirements of God and the moral law, not in order to reach speculative conclusion but as a guide and spur to further growth in character and devotion. Without such a practical intent, Kierkegaard does not admit that thinking can be termed existential."[1] The existing man is destined to be eternal, and hence subjectivity is active religiosity without any qualification. Kierkegaard's subjective knowledge is precisely directed toward Christianity, and man becomes a Christian in proportion to his removal from objectivity. Knowing Christianity, i.e., objective knowledge of Christianity, may not at all help a man to be religious, because he merely appropriates the knowledge, but does not live out the appropriation. Becoming a Christian, on the other hand, i.e., subjective knowledge, is precisely the living out of Christian religiousness which is destined for the goal of eternal beatitude, which is exactly what man wants. Kierkegaard's advice then is to pursue subjectivity, that man should follow it to the goal of Christianity. Subjectivity is the truth. And as to objectivity, man should forsake it, even to the point of utter abandonment. Man should remove himself as farfrom objectivity as possible in order to become as subjective as possible, which is to say, he should be completely subjective. Thus solely by penetrating existence, man would eventually arrive at the goal of his eternal happiness because existence is religiosity, and the highest religiosity is Christianity.

This pursuit is presented again under the supposition of isolated existence. Just as Hegelians became indifferent to existence, Kierkegaard by complete rejection of speculation becomes so engrossed in existence that it alone holds the spotlight and obscures any other consideration of reality. Objective knowledge is a distinct

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[1]James Collins, "The Meaning of Existence." The New Scholasticism, Vol. XXII, Oct. 1948, pg. 379.

obstacle and hinderance to the pursuit of the subjectivity which Kierkegaard advocates. He certainly wants the pursuit of existence without any speculative metaphysics of being. And carrying such a notion out, living it out, would be, as Gilson notes, that "the only thing a true existentialist should do is to become silent, in order the better to be, for, indeed, one ceases to be as soon as one begins talking about it."[1] As soon as the individual mouths abstractions, he leaves out concrete existence, and therefore abandons existentialism. In fact, we might even question that silence is the end of the line, so to speak, for existentialists, or whether the strict divorce from objectivity does not only imply no adequate accounting for being, but also no being at all.

If we return again to the consideration of cognition, for instance, and the assertion of Kierkegaard that man knows only that he is really existent, is this cognition so purely subjective that no objectivity is involved? Or rather, does the self also serve as object at the very moment that it knows itself? In the process of cognition we have the subject, the object and the act of knowing. And the self may serve as an object at the same time that the person knows; we make such pronouncements from time to time--"I know myself," which is an enunciation of objectivity. "The object of knowledge is anything and everything that is, or becomes, or can be, known by man. According to man's spontaneous conviction the objects of his knowledge comprise his own self, various conscious states of his self, and also realities other than self."[2] The individual himself then serves as the subject of knowledge, and may also serve as object of knowledge, so that in such a case subjective being and objective being stem from him in relation to cognition. And hence there is objectivity, and we make such reference frequently enough. When man makes reference to the subject as knowing, we say subjective, and to the object as known,

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[1]"Being and Some Philosophers," pg. 146.

[2]Celestine N. Bittle, "Reality and the Mind." Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1941, pg. 16.

we say objective, even if the latter is himself or his own act, and thus we distinguish subjective knowledge from objective knowledge.

> Whatever pertains to, or proceeds from, the subject is subjective; and whatever pertains to, or proceeds from, the object is objective. The state or condition of being subjective or being objective is then styled subjectivity or objectivity. And anything that pertains to, or proceeds from, the act of knowing or cognition is termed cognitional or intentional. Knowledge will thus be either subjective or objective; viewed from the standpoint of the subject who knows, it is subjective; and considered as referring to the object which is known, it is objective.[1]

We propose this exposition as a more adequate reflection of reality than to say as in Kierkegaard's case, that mere appropriation is objectivity and practical appropriation is subjectivity, because it accounts for reality rather than creates difficulties in an attempt to account for a supposition that has no reality. In other words, we propose that our distinction is in keeping with reality. Furthermore, Kierkegaard concludes that practical appropriation alone is proper to man, that subjectivity alone is not only the highest, but actually the singular goal of man's cognition. This certainly is a one-sided report of reality, and being one-sided, it is an inadequate reflection of reality. Of course, the main point is that reality itself should be the foundation for a report about it, but Kierkegaard's presupposition is without a reality. When he adverts to cognition under his presupposition, he discovers failure on the part of the intellect, because he expects it to attain precisely to what is lacking in reality.

It is true, however, that man agreeably recognizes the value of practical application of what he knows, and that practical appropriation may serve as a stepping stone toward the individual's becoming eternal. But we also maintain that objective knowing, which Kierkegaard rejects, is an avenue toward man's eternal happiness. In fact, we would say that the avenue which Kierkegaard rejects, objectivity, is the first avenue for man--not the only one, but the primary one. We say this because we maintain that the objective is even the foundation for the movement of the will, a foundation which Kierkegaard discards although the movement of

[1] Ibid., pg. 18.

the will plays the most important role in Kierkegaard's presentation. Thus, as we see it, Kierkegaard cuts off the legs from under himself, because the will is not so isolated from the intellect as to go into operation without any reference whatsoever to the intellect. We maintain that at some time before the will acts, it must have a presentation from the intellect, even though this be vague. As a matter of fact, it is in the case of such vagueness on the part of the intellect that the will may go into operation.

> The will can command intellectual assent in the absence of compelling evidence, but it does not have complete control. The will cannot elicit assent. Assent is the act of the intellect, so it cannot be elicited without some intellectual motives. There must be at least some evidence that seems valid. The inadequate evidence can be exaggerated by non-intellectual or emotional forces and the mind can be induced to assent--provided the compelling evidence for the contrary be withheld.[1]

Kierkegaard denounces the intellect, and he rejects objectivity. He makes his practical appropriation by the operation of the will. But the point is that somewhere along the line of cognition there must be the bit of objective knowledge which we described previously in order that the will may go into operation at all. Furthermore, at the very start of the line we must have self-evident first principles which are a speculative achievement for man, or else we have no well-founded beginning, but simply rest always in the absurd achievement of man, the relativity of man which could never attain an eternal truth, nor lead man to an eternal goal, because there would be none.

In any case, a total rejection of objectivity in order to be completely subjective leaves the individual without anything like the speculative, and therefore without any sort of starting point for his practical appropriations where even the will itself might take over and make appropriations. And Kierkegaard does reject the speculative totally because he maintains that it leaves existence behind, and because he would want man to go completely over to subjectivity, and this is not possible unless he is fully divorced from objectivity. In other words, we may

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[1]Joseph B. McAllister, "Epistemology--Course Notes." Washington,D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947, pg. 112.

not even allow for Kierkegaard's practical appropriation because we cannot allow for the movement of the will without the cooperation of the intellect, since reality itself does not make for such allowance. The will does not replace the intellect in search for truth without the condition of some objectivity being retained. But Kierkegaard's perfect man would be perfectly devoid of objectivity, in order to rest in perfect subjectivity; and therefore, as we see it, left with no ground for the operation of the will toward the attainment of truth by practical appropriation, which is the target that man must constantly hit under Kierkegaard's exposition of knowledge.

Finally, what Kierkegaard would insist upon as purely subjective in relation to man, does not have such purity. This again is to say that he does not have the reality that he supposes and claims to have; there is no reality which coincides with his assertion. He allows for the first fact--that man exists. He also allows for man knowing his own existence, and knowing it with certainty. But this is not only subjective knowledge, but also objective knowledge, as we described it. In other words, Kierkegaard does have the reality of objectivity, even at the moment that he would advise complete separation from objectivity in order to achieve the fullness of subjectivity. But he rejects this reality. "All real knowledge is by nature essential and existential."[1] Assertion of pure subjectivity may be in keeping with his supposition, but it does not change the reality, and to put it in his terms, mere appropriation has its place in reality along with practical appropriation. To have a being of practical appropriation exclusively Kierkegaard would have to be a creator and change the nature of man, since he does not have a reality to support his assertion.

In Thomism practical appropriation does not hold an exalted position, but it is given its proper value and place. For instance, the virtue of prudence is neither strictly moral nor intellectual, and therefore it is assigned to both. "This is why

[1] "Being and Some Philosophers," pg. 204.

practical wisdom, prudentia, is a virtue indivisibly moral and intellectual at the same time."[1] Reality governs such an assertion. Reality indicates that it is indivisible. Kierkegaard pretends to make divisions where reality does not show such division. Kierkegaard holds up subjective knowledge, practical appropriation, while he rejects completely objective knowledge, mere appropriation. Indeed, we wonder how practical appropriation could have a starting point without mere appropriation or ever be declared as totally without it. In other words, is there a reality which supports the contention of no mere appropriation, which would be the perfect development of man under Kierkegaard's principles. We maintain that there is no such reality. In any case, total rejection of the objectivity is hardly an adequate report of reality. It simply is an unfounded assertion which brings about more difficulties than the ones it supposedly solves. The nature of man's cognition simply does not allow for the assertion. But Kierkegaard would have it that way; he would have man become completely subjective.

Initially, we said that Kierkegaard was a well-trained Hegelian; he himself asserted that he knew Hegel forward and backward. But this only led him to some of his difficulties. He was unable to rise above this environment, that is, he was a well-trained Hegelian, and he retained the influence of idealism even though he criticized the system. While he questioned the system as to existence, he had so much respect for Hegel that he took over most idealistic notions without question, even though they led him to novel assertions. The fact that the assertions were novel should have caused Kierkegaard to re-evaluate the notions, but because he embraced them wholeheartedly, he drew the conclusions to which they led him, rather than question them, to reject objectivity and to foster complete subjectivity. For instance, he retained the idealistic notion of conception as related strictly and solely to the universal, and the intellect as in contact only with the universal. Hence, when he wanted to make contact with existence under these terms, he simply

[1] "Existence and the Existent," pg. 51.

had to reject the objective way because of his idealistic definitions of these terms, especially since he wanted to hold on to existence at all cost.

We must conclude that while Kierkegaard criticized Hegelians for their indifference to existence, this does not show that he abandoned the camp of idealism. He still remained a sort of Hegelian, a peculiar Hegelian because of existence, but still one who retained the idealistic notions. He simply wanted to fit existence into these notions. He wanted to establish a relationship between existence and the idealism he retained from what he was taught. Truly enough, as we said before, Kierkegaard forged some of his own definitions but for the most part he simply retained those of idealism and insisted that existence be kept in view.

Kierkegaard was critical of Hegelianism, but he did not purge himself adequately nor completely from its influence. On the contrary, he retained the idealistic heritage and added some of his own definitions in order to try to incorporate existence. We are not saying that Kierkegaard was trying to save Hegel, that is, provide a way of salvation for Hegelianism. Nay, rather, he knew that he was presenting something new, some new definitions and drawing new conclusions, but the backdrop of his presentation was Hegelian because of his retention and application of basic idealistic definitions. The novelty or peculiarity which was Kierkegaardian was the attempted application to existence, or rather their relation to existence, whereas the system was indifferent to existence.

CHAPTER VII

B. Essence and Existence

Capture existence with certitude--this was Kierkegaard's task. Because of the presupposition that existence is isolated, Kierkegaard made a determined effort to capture a perfect grasp of this existence. The aim was to hold on to existence with certitude, not just existence of self, which was easy, but also of another, all others, so that Hegelians and other philosophers would no longer be able to treat existence with indifference. And we say that Kierkegaard made a determined effort because he tried exhaustively to attain certitude of existence by his intellect, and the best that he achieved was certitude only of his own existence, solely his own ethical existence, which was only a limited capture because the existence of another escaped him. That is to say, in every other relationship to existence, the intellect was found wanting; he simply had to declare it unable to attain existence of another with certainty. And the only reason it captured one's own practical existence so firmly was that man was never able to abstract entirely from his own existence, even when he did reflect upon himself.

Like a trapper, Kierkegaard set out for existence because it was successfully eluding the intellectuals of his day, or at least they paid it no heed. This elusiveness intrigued and even irritated Kierkegaard, and for that reason he wanted man to learn how to hold on to existence, not only his own practical existence, but also the existence of others, and especially the existence of the highest other, Who is God. The goal of the existence of man is to be eternal, but man is temporal and eternal, and his only hint of eternal existence is the eternity of God, so that man must eventually learn to hold on with certainty to the eternity of God.

Nevertheless, Kierkegaard started with existing reality as the first effort to capture existence of another with certainty. But he declared that reason was not able to make such a capture. Every effort of reason let existence slip by, because reason merely came up with essence and abstracted from concrete existence. He

finally concluded that reason was not able to hold on to any other existence with certainty than a man's own practical existence. Man in his ethical existence alone was real. "Kierkegaard stumbled upon a difficulty--'I can know myself as I actually am, but how can I know others as they actually are, since I must approach them by means of abstract thinking?'--An answer to this question would place one at the very heart of existentialist conception, but Kierkegaard only supplies a few hints."[1] Thus Kierkegaard's determined and exhaustive effort was still not exhaustive enough. Furthermore, we again maintain that Kierkegaard was wrong; we maintain that man's intellect truly does attain existence, even the existence of another, and hold on to it with firmness of mind--not an isolated capture of existence, as under the supposition of Kierkegaard, but nevertheless true existence. The capture is truly a mental capture of existence, and not just a mental capture of essence, because existence is not an essence. "Metaphysics uses the concept of existence in order to know a reality which is not an essence, but the very act of existing."[2] The intellect attains this very act of existing when dealing with being which is the proper object of the intellect. Maritain explains that the concept of existence is taken "ut significata," as signified to the mind after the fashion of an essence, although it is not an essence. The mind makes the capture of existence because it captures the notion of being which is proper to it. This notion of being is "that which is," and not a mere "that which," nor an isolated "is." There is no separation of "that which is" in the real order. For Kierkegaard the notion of being meant that which is a composite of eternity and time, and man is such a being who is trying to become singularly eternal. "To be" for Kierkegaard would really be uniquely and perfectly predicated of eternal God, and not even perfectly predicated of Christ when referring to the time when He was a composite of eternity and time. Secondarily, "to be" would be predicated of all eternal entities, who are no longer in composition with time,

[1] "The Meaning of Existence," pg. 393.

[2] "Existence and the Existent," pg. 34.

but singularly eternal. To be a Christian, therefore, is to achieve eternal happiness, the proper goal of man.

We maintain that being is predicated in proportion to the actuality of that which is. In God, there is identity of essence and existence, but in all other beings there is composition because there is always some potency, since God alone is Pure Actuality. Where Kierkegaard insists upon the composition of time and eternity as the proper expression of being, we maintain that he does not guide himself by reality, and in order to do so, he should have insisted upon the distinction in terms of potency and act. This way in the whole hierachy of being the existence is always of an essence, as reality itself reveals it to be. In other words, the notion of being, the proper object of the intellect, can be predicated even transcendentally, but always as "that which is," and never so that it might be an isolated "is." In fact, existence is implied, as possible or actual, in the very notion of essence, even if not asserted. And this does not mean that the two are the same. They are not. The implication of existence in essence does not destroy the real distinction.

What we are saying is that reality does not prescind from existence, even if we advert only to the "that which," and which in reality is or is not. Because of the real distinction between essence and existence we can refer to essence without direct reference to its existence, but the reality of it is not divided, and the implication of existence is always there as we talk about it. In reality, of course, the existence is always of an essence. We make that reference to existence clear when we compose or divide--in a judgment. "Moreover, the intellectual knowledge of the material singular is, in the first instance at least, a judgment. The simplest reason for saying this is that particulars, and only particulars, exist, and the act of existing is known, and in the first instance only known, in the judgement."[1] Thus in our judgements we clearly assert that which is or is not, and

[1]George P. Klubertanz, "St. Thomas and the Knowledge of the Singular." The New Scholasticism, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, April 1952, pg. 165.

make the achievement of existence by reason. In other words, the intellect attains being, and being adequately taken is not merely "that which," but "that which is." "Now the intellect, because made to know truth, seeks the real, that is, the existing individual; for, although the proper object of the human intellect is material essences, still the adequate object of any intellect is being, that which exists, and that which exists is individual."[1] This is to say that the intellect is not fully sated with simple apprehension, which is the universal concept. Rather the intellect seeks a full diet, which is the individual existence from which that universal essence was taken. And thus it does not attain perfection in the simple apprehension, which is abstract, but prefers the individual which is real. "Reality, however, is individual and determined; hence, a faculty such as the intellect, whose end is to know the real, cannot rest in the act of simple apprehension, in the knowledge of a universal essence, even though in this act it attains its proper object. It thirsts after being. It must seek the existing individual."[2] The intellect was made for the real and therefore it naturally tends toward the real in order to achieve complete satisfaction. Kierkegaard himself showed that there was despair in aesthetic existence which remained in the realm of fantasy, in a world of infinite possibility, but without reality to coincide with each possibility. The reality is not reached, and in fact, there is despair of reaching the reality of eternity in existence, or at least Kierkegaard pointed this out in aesthetic existence.

The intellect tends to the real, and the real is individual, an existing individual, the supposit. Kierkegaard saw that to capture existence meant to capture the individual, and hence he was the poet of the individual. But this posed the question whether man can attain intellectual knowledge of the existence of the

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[1]Henri Renard, "The Metaphysics of the Existential Judgment." The New Scholasticism, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, Oct. 1949, pg. 387.

[2]Ibid., pg. 388.

individual. The question is: Can we have some intellectual knowledge of the existing individual? Kierkegaard's answer was that we cannot, but St. Thomas answered the same question a long time before Kierkegaard, and answered it otherwise than Kierkegaard. Although the intellect does not know the singular by means of a concept, does not know it directly, "but indirectly, and as it were, by a kind of reflection; because, even after abstracting the intelligible species, the intellect, in order to understand actually, needs to turn to the phantasm in which it understands the species. Therefore, it understands the universal directly through the intelligible species and indirectly the singular represented by the phantasm. And thus forms the proposition: Socrates is a man."[1] Or again, "And, therefore, for the intellect to understand actually its proper object, it must of necessity turn to the phantasms in order to perceive the universal nature existing in the individual."[2] The intellect pushes on toward what is most satisfying to it, and hence in a return to the phantasm it knows the individual, but not yet clearly. And if the intellect is to achieve its perfection, it must continue on to form the judgment, inasmuch as it cannot remain in the consideration of essence. The judgment is its perfect operation, and here it attains its end; namely, the knowledge of the existing singular. "Only in the act of judgment, then, does the intellect arrive at formal truth; for the definition of formal truth requires a known conformity of the intellect with the thing as it is; and only in the judgment does the intellect, composing the knowledge that it has with existence, know the singular as existing."[3]

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[1] Summa Theologica, P I, Q. 86, Art. 1.
"Indirecte autem et quasi per quandam reflexionem, potest cognoscere singulare, quia, sicut supra dictum est, etiam postquam species intelligibiles abstraxerit, non potest secundum eas actu intelligere nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata, in quibus species intelligibiles intelligit. Sic igitur ipsum universale per speciem intelligibilem directe intelligit; indirecte autem singularia quorum sunt phantasmata. Et hoc modo format hanc propositionem: Socrates est homo."

[2] Ibid., P I, Q. 84, Art. 7.
"Et ideo necesse est ad hoc quod intellectus intelligat suum objectum proprium, quod convertat se ad phantasmata, ut speculetur naturam universalem in particulari existentem."

[3] "The Metaphysics of the Existential Judgment," pg. 392.

Chapter VII. Criticism

If Kierkegaard were not so busy trying to have the intellect accomplish what it obviously could not do, namely attain to isolated existence, then he might have analyzed the interplay, the necessary interplay, between the concept and the phantasm in achieving the existence of the individual. The direct concept is universal, this is true, and the universal as such does not exist, this is also true, but the foundation of the universal is the singular and hence there must be an interplay between the two, and the intellect must attain that interplay if it is to have any knowledge at all.

Kierkegaard's insistence upon complete diachotomies, where there were none, made him pursue isolations which were not truly isolated, as he supposed them to be. Man's intellect actually attains the "is" part as it composes in a judgment, and this achievement announces the existence of a supposit, an achievement that flows from the intellect when it is judging. All of this is actually done in the existential judgment. "This is the existential judgment, the most perfect action of man, the actus perfecti of St. Thomas. For in that act, the supreme faculty of man, his intellect, attains reality: the existing individual."[1] We are not saying, however, that the achievement of the existential judgment is made by the intellect alone, nor a matter of the senses acting alone, but an achievement of the whole man. To insist upon isolations is to ignore the realities which are not so isolated. To isolate the intellect, to isolate existence, as Kierkegaard did, was simply to ignore reality and then expect an achievement of the impossible. "When the human intellect acts together with the sense powers, performing with these powers an actually undivided, composite operation, it attains the material, existing singular in a judgment or a reasoning process (and consequently also in such conceptions as presuppose for their formation perceptual judgments)."[2] The intellect of the whole man acts in attaining the existence of the individual, the act of that which is, because existence is always of an essence.

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[1] Ibid., pg. 394.

[2] "St. Thomas and the Knowledge of the Singular," pg. 162.

Chapter VII. Criticism

What Kierkegaard should have done before he declared such utter paucity of the intellect was to re-examine his analysis in the light of reality. He should have let reality set the pace of his investigation, and be prepared to change his supposition as long as he was unable to support it with reality. But his notion of subjectivity was so fixed in mind that he was unwilling to give it up or alter it in keeping with reality, and therefore abandoning the intellect, he went over to the other power, his will, which could embrace what his intellect could not, or rather what he claimed to be unattainable by the intellect.

Furthermore, the achievement of existence is made conceptually, because whatever man knows, he knows conceptually.

> To know is to conceive knowledge. Every act of intellectual knowledge terminates in an intellection, that is, in what is intellectually known (ipsum intellectum), and what has thus been conceived is a "conception" (conceptio) which expresses itself in words. Now, the intellectually conceived is twofold in kind, as can be seen from the very words which express it. It may be simple, as happens when our intellect forms the quiddity of a thing, in which case its verbal expression is incomplex. It may also be complex, as happens when our intellect compounds or divides (componit et dividit) such quiddities. In both cases there is an intellectual act of conceiving and, therefore, a conceived intellection, but what has been conceived in the first case is called a concept (conceptus), whereas what has been conceived in the second case is a judgment (judicium). To judge is to compose or to separate by an intellectual act two elements of reality grasped by means of concepts.[1]

This achievement of existence by the intellect, however, is made in the judgment by a verb concept. Kierkegaard, of course, insisted that every conception was necessarily abstract, and this notion brought about much difficulty for him, but it too was not founded in reality. It is not of the essence of a conception to be abstract.

> Consequently the knowledge of existence is had through and in a concept in Thomism, not a noun concept but a verb concept. It would be strange if by definition all concepts were abstract and only had the function of causing the quiddities of things to exist in the soul. It is not of the essence of a concept to be abstract: there are even concepts which cannot be abstract because their intelligibility requires an absence of abstraction (In De Trin., 5, 3). Neither the concept of being as a noun nor that of being as a verb can be the result of an abstraction: for "being" as a noun implies essentially habens esse

[1] "Being and Some Philosophers," pg. 190.

> or quod est, and "being" as a verb implies necessarily the subject of existence whose act it is. This notion of concept would be absurd in Kant since the concept is made up above all of a priori conditions of understanding; and existence is not an a priori condition but a fact, an act which is observed and known but is not thought. Consequently, there are concepts in Thomism which neither are nor can be quidditative, because the reality which they signify is not quiddity but being. All analogical concepts enter into this category, and being is the first among them.[1]

But the notion of concept handed down to Kierkegaard was not the Thomistic notion, and he soon tired of hearing only about essences in his day. Kierkegaard knew that essences were not the whole reality, and this was precisely what he wanted to point out to his contemporaries--that the real had something beyond essence, and that something was existence. But then he supposed that existence alone might be captured with certainty. Had he started with the supposition that essence necessarily implies existence, and existence necessarily implies essence, he may have broken away from the prevalent notion of conception as necessarily being abstract. We agree that there is something beyond essence, but we add, not without essence, and to express this adequately we advert to the primary concept of being.

> But this concept of existence, of to-exist (esse) is not and cannot be cut off from the absolutely primary concept of being (ens, that which is, that which exists, that whose act is to exist). This is so because the affirmation of existence, or the judgment, which provides the content of such a concept, is itself the composition of a subject with existence; i.e., the affirmation that something exists (actually or possibly, simply or with such-and-such a predicate). It is the concept of being (that-which exists or is able to exist) which, in the order of ideative perception, corresponds adequately to this affirmation in the order of judgment. The concept of existence cannot be visualized completely apart, detached, isolated, separated from that of being; and it is in that concept of being and with that concept of being that it is at first conceived.[2]

It is a fact that we judge, and that the judgment has meaning. We compose concepts in judging; we announce that something is, and we know that our assertion is meaningful, that there is an understanding of the is. In short, we hold that we make an intellectual achievement by the use of the judgment, an achievement which is an expression of existence, not isolated existence, but the existence of that something.

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[1] Ibid., Appendix, pg. 220.

[2] "Existence and the Existent," pg. 24.

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In a word, existential predication has meaning, and there is an understanding of the something which is. Isolation of existence is not meaningful; but being, that which is, is meaningful, and carries the intelligibility which satisfies the mind when it composes or divides, when it judges. But again we repeat that the judgment is the achievement of the whole man. "It is only in terms of the unified suppositum of informed matter, where no real dichotomy is possible between the senses, the intellect and their possessor, that human judgments are explicable."[1] Although insisting on the existing individual, Kierkegaard ignored this unity in the knowledge of the individual, and thus pursued his presupposed isolations, isolated abstract concepts, isolated existence, isolated intellect. Whereas the achievement of existence is the result of the interplay within the whole man, his senses and his intellect operating so as to attain the meaningful understanding of existence. To say, for instance, the popular expression that "the average man" does not exist means that the realities of the complex relationships which make up the notion of "the average man" are not to be found in any one individual is true. But because of the countless relationships in the notion of "the average man" the individual reality to represent these relationships is not found. However, each relationship taken individually can be found in reality, not only in one individual, but in many individuals, because that is the reason for predicating the average. And in each instance in this case the relationship in its simple form is conjoined to a reality. It is we who compose relationships that are not found in reality under the form in which we compose them. The fact that the relationships are sociable allows for such composition, even though such actual composition does not exist in reality. We simply take one relationship from an actual reality and compose it with other relationships taken from reality, but the composite as such that we finally have may not exist in that form. For instance again, we may have seen this graphically

[1]John Noonan, "The Existentialism of Etienne Gilson." The New Scholasticism, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, Oct. 1950, pg. 432.

displayed by photographers when they want to present the average facial features, and therefore they make a composite photograph--of one person's chin, another person's nose, another's forehead. The resulting photograph then is not a representation of one existing reality, but actually many realities that exist, and in every case the existence is of an essence. All in all, our judgments, however complex on the side of composition, do have meaning and understanding, and what we understand by such composition is that we assert existence of a being--existence is always of an essence. We make the assertion under the power of the intellect and in keeping with our other powers which make up the whole man. And as we make our judgments the mind closes with firmness as to the existence or non-existence of the being. We do have certitude of existence, not only our own existence, but also the existence of other beings. To say otherwise is to misconstrue the report of realities, or as in Kierkegaard's case to presuppose without support from reality. Kierkegaard's analysis is consistent with his own description of existence, but his notion of existence is not consistent with reality.

We maintain, furthermore, that our knowledge of the singular is not a vague generality, nor obtained haphazardly. As a matter of fact, knowledge of the singular can be declared as scientific knowledge.

> Over and above this perceptual knowledge of the singular, there is a kind of scientific knowledge of the singular. The scientist (or philosopher) may wish to check the connection between his developed knowledge and the things which he knows. He will then reflect that his elaborated proposition or definition requires a formal principle from which it flows, namely, the intelligible species; that the intelligible species, as an actual determination, must have been derived from a retained experience or phantasm, and the phantasm through sense experience from a sensible singular. If each one of these steps checks out properly, the result is a (scientific) reflective knowledge of the singular.[1]

Of course, the test-tube scientist would reject an introspective proof because he could not ascertain it by weights and measures in his laboratory. Nevertheless, introspection is scientific and does validly lead us to knowledge of the singular; it is a result of step by step examination, or rather lends itself to such examination.

[1] "St. Thomas and the Knowledge of the Singular," pg. 166.

However, while the examination makes sense under Thomistic principles, it does not make sense under Kierkegaard's suppositions, which we rejected because they were unfounded. Whereas we agree with Kierkegaard that existence is always the existence of an individual, we hold that the intellect can attain to that existence of the singular other than self, an achievement that is not made by isolated intellect, it is true, but rather by the intellect of a really existing whole man in keeping with his other powers. We also said that the achievement is not straightway, directly an achievement of the intellect alone, but indirectly by returning from the intelligible species to the phantasm. But in the same breath we added that the intellect was not satisfied until it did attain the existence of the individual, because it was designed for such an achievement. Although attained indirectly, still it is proper to the intellect.

Then too, our declarations are made in the light of being as the proper object of the intellect, and being is "that which is." But this is not Kierkegaard's notion of being, since he did not make reference to it in terms ofessence and existence, but rather in terms of duration alone--the synthesis of eternity and time. Kierkegaard's notion of being equates entirely with his description of existence, and therefore has reference only to sensible powers and not to the whole man, certainly not to the intellectual power. In other words, for Kierkegaard the intellect has no avenue of approach to the existing singular other than self, because the intellect is restricted to the aspect of eternity, but as we just said that being for him was a synthesis which included time, and therefore cannot be captured singularly as eternal. Because of the temporal factor in his notion, he cannot allow for the intellect to reach the existence of another being. This is also thus because he treats the intellect ut sic rather than the intellect of an existing man, which operates in keeping with his other powers. For him, existence is the mark that separates something from eternity, and because of the separation, it is not amenable to intellect. On the other hand, we have being as "that which is"--an essence

with an existence. Hence in the process of man's knowing there is a capture, not only of the something, but always a something with an implied existence, and also of the existing singular which is always a something. We examine the intellectual operation of the actual man, and not merely intellect as such. We examine being--essence and existence--and not merely existence. We examine the step by step interplay between the singular and our intellectual capture of its existence. And we make our predications from what reality dictates; we are governed by what is so in reality, and therefore by what is well founded. Kierkegaard chose to be governed by what he supposed, but what he supposed was not actually based on reality.

CHAPTER VII

C. Faith

Intellectually Kierkegaard was hung on the absurd. Rather than throw himself heedlessly into despair because of such a position, he proceeded to climb the absurd, and to use it for the movement of the will toward certain acceptance of existence of another, after he rejected it on the part of the intellect. But what happened when he went over to the will? Kierkegaard himself was not able to make the movement of faith, at least not Christian faith, according to his own requirements. He was so entangled in the absurd that he was really unable to make the final movement, and that was why he kept repeating that he did not have faith, not the faith of Abraham.

We maintain that Kierkegaard's notion of faith, aside from his own movement, always is susceptible to a repugnance that prevents firmness of mind, because it is never freed from the absurd long enough to attain certitude by movement of the will. We say this because when he gave his definition of truth, he also equated it with faith. The same definition held for both. Hence Kierkegaard made a strange mixture because he threw the object of the intellect, which is truth, into the definition of the object of the will, which is good, and in relation to the intellect he arrived at the absurd, which therefore remains whirling around in his mixture. He has some sort of object like "true-good," which cannot be upheld with certainty by his intellect, but which is supposedly attainable with certainty by the will of a Christian, solely by the will of the Christian. Faith in relation to the aesthetic exister was never the highest, never reached certitude, but rather rested in opinion. So, too, in relation to the ethical man, and the man of Socratic Religiousness. None of these attained certitude, and therefore none had faith in the eminent sense. Kierkegaard reserved faith in the eminent sense as the apex of the existing man who without the slightest wavering of mind embraced the existence of the highest other than self, God, and who every moment of his existence acted in pursuit of an

eternal relationship with God, never once so much as making a "mere appropriation," in being objective, but rather always making "active appropriation," in being subjective in reference to his God-relationship. Only the Abrahams were becoming Christians, and only the Abrahams had faith. Kierkegaard himself was not an Abraham. But was it possible to be an Abraham by dipping into Kierkegaard's mixture of "true-good"? Kierkegaard said that it was possible for every man, but we maintain that this is not possible because the mind cannot rest firmly, cannot have certitude from such a mixture because the ever present absurdity forbids a firm closing of the mind. It is not possible, not even for Abraham, because credibility is destroyed, and thus the mind cannot have certitude from such a mixture with ever present absurdity. What the mind needs is credibility and then it can move, even to the certainty of faith. With no credibility whatsoever there can be no Abraham. That is to say, there is a leap of faith, and it is held with certainty. St. Thomas allows for this leap--in fact,he insists on it in relation to the supernatural, but only because of the condition of credibility, and not because of absurdity. In relation to God, "Who can neither deceive nor be deceived," the credibility can be the strongest, once His existence is established. Then man can be moved to certitude of faith in reference to the "words of God" because of his credibility. However, Kierkegaard insists that there must be no final understanding; he insists on absurdity, and yet he wants firmness of mind. This again is an impossibility, even for an Abraham, because the absurdity destroys any firm habit of the intellect, and faith calls for the perfect habit of intellect as well as the will. "Consequently, if the act of faith is to be perfect, there needs to be a habit in the will as well as in the intellect."[1] By removing credibility, Kierkegaard makes it impossible even for an Abraham to arrive at faith. Existentially, of course, Kierkegaard lived

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[1]Summa Theologica, P II-II, Q 4, Art. 2.
"Et ideo oportet quod tam in voluntate sit aliquis habitus quam in intellectu, si debeat actus fidei esse perfectus."

this out, by the fact that he himself was unable to obtain the faith in the eminent sense, but still he insisted that it was existentially possible for Abraham, and in fact for every man. In the light of reality there can be Abrahams with certitude of faith, but Kierkegaard's mixture with its rejected intellectual part is not reflected in reality, and for that reason wards off any Kierkegaardian Abrahams. In other words, Kierkegaard refers the object of the intellect, which led to absurdity, to serve in part as the object of the will, and in spite of the absurdity to reach certitude. Yet Kierkegaard could not make this achievement. But he claims that Abraham did. Whereas we maintain that not even Abraham could have accomplished what Kierkegaard asked, because there is no such reality for achievement. What Abraham accomplished makes sense under Thomistic analysis of the movement of the will, but not under Kierkegaard's hodge-podge.

> Therefore, since the proper nature of a power is in its order to its object, it follows that the intellect in itself and absolutely is higher and nobler than the will. But relatively and by comparison with something else, we find that the will is sometimes higher than the intellect, from the fact that the object of the will occurs in something higher than that in which occurs the object of the intellect... Wherefore, the love of God is better than the knowledge of God.[1]

St. Thomas allows for an Abraham while he retains the proper place for the intellect, but this cannot be said for Kierkegaard's analysis. As a matter of fact, once Kierkegaard rejected the hope of the intellect to attain with certitude the existence of another, he should have been on the quivive in relation to the will, because it is known that the will can move on slight or flimsy evidence. He should have been more cautious in calling upon the will because it is apt to move on a scrap of evidence, whereas the intellect will not move on a mere morsel of evidence, at least not close with certitude on such evidence. The intellect may at times prefer to remain in abeyance, in doubt, suspicion or opinion, rather than embrace firmly what

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[1]Summa Theologica, P I, Q. 82, Art. 3.
"Cum ergo propria ratio potentiae sit secundum ordinem ad objectum, sequitur quod secundum se et simpliciter intellectus sit altior et nobilior voluntate. Secundum quid autem, et per comparationem ad alterum, voluntas invenitur interdum altior intellectu; ex eo scilicet quod objectum voluntatis in altiori re invenitur quam objectum intellectus... Unde melior est amor dei quam cognitio."

is unsupported by clear evidence. But Kierkegaard went wholeheartedly over to the will and dragged along the absurdity which the intellect would not grasp, but which, he insisted, the will must use as its very foundation for the leap. "Intelligibility derived from absurdity is, indeed, a paradox that must always trouble the voluntarists, and its incomprehensibility is a strong indication that something must be wrong in their analysis."[1] If the voluntarists are bothered, that is, if their credibility is destroyed, they can hardly have certitude; they can never be nor have an Abraham. Kierkegaard should have been a bit more wary in turning to the will, but he was not; he should have re-examined his analysis, and rejected his supposition, in view of lack of support in reality, but he did not. He moved boldly, daringly to the will. He sang the praise of faith in reference to becoming a Christian, even though he was unable to live it, to support it existentially. And his claim that Abraham lived it, that he supported Kierkegaard's analysis, is a mistaken appropriation of Abraham's faith, which has the hallmark of reasonableness, and not as Kierkegaard claimed, the foundation of absurdity. As long as there is the rejection of objective knowledge, mere appropriation, there is no chance for an Abraham. As long as the intellect is declared a failure in relation to the existence of any other, there is no way of attaining the starting point which may serve the movement of faith.

Subjectivity alone is not the truth, as Kierkegaard would have it. But by turning away completely from objectivity what else could he do, but embrace subjectivity, or at least so he thought since he insisted that his analysis was correct. Apparently he overlooked the fact that he might re-examine his analysis under new suppositions, which were truly supported by reality. In other words, he might have rejected his notion of isolated existence with all its implications, and the related effort of intellect by itself trying to capture it. But no, he chose to erect a structure of faith, based on the pedestal of absurdity.

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[1] "The Existentialism of Etienne Gilson," pg. 430.

Chapter VII. Criticism

> In the meaning of Kierkegaard, existential thinking is thus a mode of thought which accepts the tension of life and is therefore concrete not abstract, subjective and personal not objective and impersonal, passionate (in the sense of suffering) not dispassionate, which seeks, not national proof for thought, but the assurance of faith for life and claims to explore a dimension of reality closed to analytical reason which carries the paradox of life into the process of living thought and employs in that thought a dialectic which the recognition of that paradox requires, which expects its synthesis, not in time and the mind of man, but in eternity and the mind of God.[1]

For Kierkegaard subjectivity is the truth. His own ethical existence was his life-line, and so he examined the operations of his will to see what it might do in relation to existence of another, of all others than self, and especially the highest other, God.

Kierkegaard saw at once that in relation to eternal existence, his own existence was defective because it was the synthesis of time and eternity, and any existence that might be purely eternal would necessarily be other than self. To grasp with certainty the existence of this highest other was again impossible for the intellect, because the intellect could not attain the existence of any other than self, let alone the highest other, which was precisely the supreme paradox. And the intellect could only attain the existence of self because it cannot abstract entirely from self. In relation to others, the intellect simply failed again, and because of its failure Kierkegaard made the appropriation by his will, by having the will move where intellect feared to tread, by stepping on absurdity. We said that the will can move as long as it has something to motivate it, and Kierkegaard insists that it can be moved by utter absurdity.

But we pose our question again: Is the eternal existence the act of an existing something, even if identical with it, or is it simply eternal existence without a something? The latter is utter absurdity, the former is reasonable. Under our own notions it is clear that existence is always the act of something--of an essence, and we express this notion as being, that which exists. This applies to every actual or possible being. However, under Kierkegaard's exposition being is

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[1] "Modern Christian Revolutionaries," pg. 31.

always a synthesis of time and eternity, and the purely eternal then is simply "to be," and not being. Of course we could understand Kierkegaard if the eternal existence were identical with the essence; that is, if he held on to a something in keeping with the "to be" and asserted the identity of the two only in Pure Act, but we do not understand him when he insists singularly upon eternal existence, or rather eternity without essence. Strictly speaking, Kierkegaard does not allow us to say "eternal existence" because existence always is temporal. In any case, eternity without essence does not make sense again, simply to be and yet not to be something. Again his analysis under the supposition of isolated existence should have been checked. Every examination of reality shows a something which exists, and being is proper to the mind, but isolated "to be" is repugnant to it. Kierkegaard was concerned about existence, but he ought to have guided himself by reality. However, he preferred to call upon the will to take a firm grasp of the supreme paradox, of absurdity, that there is an eternal to be without any reference to essence, and that since it is other than self, the will must appropriate it. With subjectivity as the truth, the will can make this firm appropriation. This was so for Kierkegaard, and thus he held that the willful appropriation was made, and that it was true. Of course we say that because there actually is no understanding of existence by itself, this claim was unfounded in reality. Actually this was nonsense. Understanding is always of a being--essence and existence, actual or possible, and not merely a "to be," not even when reference is made to God.

Kierkegaard does not pretend to be another creator, producing existence out of nothing, but he was something of a magician in accounting for existence. He believed in God as the source of all existences, but his notion of God was simply eternity, not eternal being because in being there was always a time element for him. Of course he could not reach the notion of God by reason, but he claimed that by faith a Christian could appropriate eternity, even though this is not an eternal being. He claimed that the Christian can make this appropriation only by sheer

desperation. Yet he had to advert to some sort of evidence. And the only bit of evidence he gives the will to work on in order to make the appropriation is that theoretically he examined every case of human existence, and found it unable to explain itself, unable to account for the eternal part of the synthesis, and therefore there must be an eternity itself. Hence the Christian can make the movement of faith toward God. "It is Kierkegaard's contention that God's existence can be grasped only by being believed."[1] Now St. Thomas also held that God, Who is Being, is the source of all existences, but he uses his intellect to arrive at this conclusion. He starts with the intuition of being, which is the adequate object of the intellect, and then through the judgment asserts the existence of being, since being is always "that which exists," judgment announces existence. Thus using the judgment which composes and asserts an existing being, St. Thomas arrived at the first principles of being, which are self-evident principles--of identity, of contradiction. The mind is on very solid ground because it can grasp these firmly as soon as it understands the terms. Every achievement up to this point is an intellectual achievement, which reality verifies. The foundation is in reality, or as we put it before, reality sets the pace and dictates every assertion. Kierkegaard also claims that he is guided by reality, but his supposition is unfounded. It lacks actual verification. St. Thomas then uses these self-evident principles in the demonstration of the existence of God. We even note that a Thomist can say existence of God, whereas Kierkegaard could not.

Moving to the principles of sufficient reason, of causality, and of finality, St. Thomas gave his reasonable demonstrations and finally indicates that God is the source of being. "God contains within Himself all the perfections of being, because He is Being Itself, or the very act of existing, subsistent by itself."[2] The

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[1] "The Meaning of Existence," pg. 384.

[2] Summa Theologica, P I, Q 4, Art. 2.
"Quod deus est ipsum esse per se subsistens, ex quo oportet quod totam perfectionem essendi in se contineat."

achievement is reasonable; the achievement is even scientific. Not an attainment of isolated existence, of a simple to be, but rather of a being, that which is, holding all along to the same notion that existence is always of an essence. God is a subsistent being, not simply eternity without any being. Hence St. Thomas can predicate existence of God, the highest existence because in God there is no composition. God is unique; God's essence and existence are identical, but God is still Being, or as St. Thomas said, Being Itself. For St. Thomas existence always has reference to an essence, and therefore can be announced at any level that it is discovered. It is not isolated, not even is God an isolated eternity without being. In predicating existence of an essence the predication is made in proportion to the activity of the being. For Kierkegaard existence is not at all properly predicated of God, and in reference to every other being, it is a mere crossing of a threshold of potency, so that a fly might have as much existence as a man. But for St. Thomas there is proportionality, the act of existence is the active principle of an essence always, and thus the activity is in proportion to the nature of the thing, a stone has existence in keeping with its essence, a flower with its essence, a man with his essence. But always the existence is of some essence. And it is the whole being, with essence and existence, that is known to exist, because concrete existence is always individual. Isolated existence or eternity does not make sense because there is no isolated existence as such. As soon as one announces existence, it is an existence with reference to an essence, the essence is always implied even if it is not expressed.

St. Thomas took his cue from reality and always adhered to reality. He had to. "Outside the mind, therefore, only singular realities exist. They alone are capable of exercising the act of existing."[1] St. Thomas examined the concrete existing being that first stimulated his senses, and at the very same time became

[1]Wm. M. Walton, "Being, Essence and Existence for St. Thomas Aquinas." The Review of Metaphysics, Vol. V, No. 1, Sept. 1951, pg. 92.

matter for an intellectual existential judgment. He examined it until he was able to give an adequate account for every existing being, even the highest, and gave it as an actual intellectual report. Kierkegaard said that he always started with existing reality, the existing individual, but when we seek the reality for his supposition, we do not find it, and therefore we must charge Kierkegaard with a serious shortcoming. The lack too of adequate development of existential truth is another shortcoming in Kierkegaard's works. With him it is always simply practical.

> What is missing from Kierkegaard is a treatment of existential truth which is speculative and metaphysical. In Kierkegaard's estimation existential truth is practical, in the sense in which practical doing and self-development are distinguished from making, and transformation of the external object: subjective reflection is ordained to a practical operation, to the cultivation of the self in its free relation with God and other human selves.[1]

But the willful appetite is not man's sole appetite, nor even his highest, because man also has an intellectual appetite, which needs to be nourished by the speculative for its own sake, and which plays a motivating role in relation to the will. In fact, it was this intellectual appetite that would not let Kierkegaard rest in complete abeyance of mind when it reached the absurd, but rather drove him to the movement of the will for some sort of satisfaction. The original hunger pangs were intellectual and since his mind was unable to quiet these, Kierkegaard, intent upon avoiding despair, turned to the will for satisfaction. Had he pursued existential truth in terms of being as "that which is," he would have arrived at the banquet of intellectual satisfaction.

> In point of fact, such is the natural order followed by our rational knowledge: we first conceive certain beings, then we define their essences, and last we affirm their existence by means of a judgment. But the metaphysical order of reality is just the reverse of the order of human knowledge: what first comes into it is a certain act of existing which, because it is this particular act of existing, circumscribes at once a certain essence and causes a certain substance to come into being. In this deeper sense, 'to be' is the primitive and fundamental act by virtue of which a certain being actually is, or exists.[2]

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[1] "The Meaning of Existence," pg. 378.

[2] Etienne Gilson, "God and Philosophy." New Haven, Yale University Press, 1941, pg. 64.

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Kierkegaard analyzed the order of knowledge, but not the metaphysical order, and yet he sought the truths of the latter by means of his analysis. This again was a distortion, an unfounded expectation, and therefore strange twists and turns in his notion of knowledge resulted from such a point of view.

Kierkegaard boldly espoused the negative approach. Again and again his exposition of existence is taken from the negative, and always confined to the one existence that he could know with certainty, his own ethical existence. "But, if we turn at last to our own selves, in which each of us is alone, what can we say of that existence which we are? It would be very foolish to expect from Kierkegaard any definition or description of 'what' it is. All that he can tell us about it is what it does."[1] By explaining existence in terms of what it does, Kierkegaard therefore renders existence so that it has the determinations of an essence. What existence does, in terms of the negative, is to exclude man from eternity; and in explaining this Kierkegaard soon has existence behaving like an essence.

> Acutely conscious of the all-importance of existence, as opposed to the mere possibility of abstract essences, he has turned existence itself into a new essence, the essence of that which has no essence. All its determinations are negative, yet it behaves as a true essence precisely in this, that it obstinately refuses to communicate with anything else in order to save its own purity and to remain exclusively that which it is. It is not possibility, but actual existence. It is not objective reality, but what cannot be expressed in terms of objective reality. It is not knowable from without, and it cannot be known from without, but it can at least know itself, and, when it does so, what existence discovers in itself, as the ultimate ground, is that it is in itself a radical lack of being.[2]

What else did Kierkegaard do, but return to a peculiar kind of essentialism of his own. He described what existence does and endowed it with essentialistic traits and characteristics. He had to do it. His supposition forced him into it. His supposition necessitated it because he had to aim at some sort of reality, and since isolated existence is no reality, and yet he did not want to abandon it, therefore he endowed it with essentialistic traits while he kept calling it merely existence, rather than adhering to reality which is

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[1] "Being and Some Philosophers," pgs. 150 and 151.

[2] Ibid., pgs. 152 and 153.

always being--an essence with an existence. Essence and existence are not the same, but neither are they separable, and when someone wants to explain one or the other adequately, this can be done in terms of being, but not in terms of isolated essence or existence, because this would involve a radical omission. "Being is a composite notion of essence and esse."[1] Existence infers an essence and Kierkegaard's description was in keeping with that inference, but not in keeping with his supposition, and ultimately not in keeping with his proposal to hold to existence. By describing existence with essentialistic determinations he hardly upheld an unadulterated existence, and if anything, he undermined it again. He fell into the pit that he was so very scrupulously trying to avoid--reducing reality to essence because his existence was essentialistic. In Kierkegaard's case the direct assertion of existence is always paramount, but the later description and discussion of existence subverts the initial expression. It is as if Kierkegaard were a peddler who walked the streets selling existence and thus crying out, "Existence! Existence!" but when a man stopped him and asked about his existence, he described it in terms of what it does, and hence described it essentially. This essentialism, or at least we can call it a peculiar sort of essentialism, is an innovation of Kierkegaard's because of his effort to expound on existence in terms of idealistic philosophy, which Kierkegaard always retained. Once he started to offer new definitions, he should have divorced himself from idealism, but he never really did. He used the idealistic notions and terms that were handed down to him. He put up an outcry of realism, but he did not live it out adequately and fully; rather, he continued for the most part with the idealism that he knew so well, except to insist upon existence, upon real, concrete existence of the individual.

Finally, we consider the leap of faith which Kierkegaard repeats so frequently and suggests as being proper to the individual who is becoming a Christian. We

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[2]George M. Buckley, "The Nature and Unity of Metaphysics." Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1946, pg. 135.

acknowledged already that the leap of faith is proper to man, and that St. Thomas insisted on the leap in relation to the supernatural. That is the only way that man can grasp the supernatural--by a free gift of faith. But we indicated too that credibility is a condition for this leap, at least it is for St. Thomas. Now in reference to Kierkegaard, we ask what is the role of the will, and what is the nature of the leap? Kierkegaard saw the notion of the leap clearly and rightfully called attention to it. It was necessary, and it was consistent with his analysis. The leap was especially necessary for Kierkegaard because the will is to attain certitude regardless of absurdity, and thus to achieve some sort of independent movement in spite of the absurdity related to the intellect.

The leap was also necessary for St. Thomas, but it was not the same sort of leap as for Kierkegaard, because St. Thomas always held on to credibility as a condition for the leap.

> Faith, therefore, has a certitude essentially supernatural, surpassing even the most evident natural certitude, whether that of wisdom, of science, or of first principles. God's authority claims our infallible adherence in an order far higher than apologetic reasoning, which is prerequired for credibility; i.e., that the mysteries proposed by the Church are guaranteed by signs manifestly divine, and are therefore evidently credible.[1]

St. Thomas insisted on the leap to the supernatural, because that is man's only avenue to it, but he also insisted on credibility before the leap. The credible was the looking before the leap, the condition for the leap. But Kierkegaard would have no such looking. He insisted otherwise. He insisted that any looking whatsoever destroyed the leap. Where there was looking, there was no faith. To achieve his certitude of faith, Kierkegaard must suppose an indepdence of the will in relation to an act of faith, because otherwise the firmness of certitude would be forever shattered. There is no room for credibility for Kierkegaard, and in fact, there must be no looking for any sort of understanding. That, he insisted, is the final, the very final understanding, that there is no understanding. The leap must be a cutting off

[1]Reginald Garrigou Lagrange, "Reality." Translated by Patrick Cummins. St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder Book Co., 1950, pg. 320.

or leaving behind whatever might hinder the certitude, and therefore for Kierkegaard the intellect is not knitted to the will in an act of faith. Whereas that is precisely what St. Thomas announced and insisted on, as we said before. "If the act of faith is to be perfect, there needs to be a habit in the will as well as in the intellect."[1] Kierkegaard definitely holds out for certitude for the man of faith, the certainty of the eternity of God, Who is the highest other, and because of Whom there is an accounting for the eternal element in existence. Now since the intellect failed to make such an achievement of certainty, Kierkegaard called upon the will and claimed the possibility of success through faith. But he insists that at no point must there be any questioning. In other words, at no time can there be any intellectual appetition and still certitude of faith. To seek reasonableness is to shatter the firmness. This supposes a divorce of the intellect from the will under Kierkegaard's assertion that this certitude without questioning is possible, since his analysis rests the intellect in an unending quizzical state in this same relationship in which the will attains certitude. But the individual cannot be quizzical and firm at the same time in the same relationship. To arrive at at the firmness Kierkegaard had to suppose independent action on the part of the will in the attainment of Christian faith. We maintain that there is no such utter independence in the act. There is always an interplay between the intellect and will in the achievement of certainty by faith. The mind of man can attain firmness, with no fear of being subverted, and it can do so in belief.

> Faith signifies the assent of the intellect to that which is believed. Now the intellect assents to a thing in two ways. First, through being moved to assent by its very object, which is known either by itself (as in the case of first principles, which are held by the habit of understanding) or through something else already known (as in the case of conclusions which are held by the habit of science). Secondly, the intellect assents to something, not through being sufficiently moved to this assent by its proper object, but through an

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[1] Summa Theologica, P II-II, Q 4, Art. 2.
"Et ideo oportet quod tam in voluntate sit aliquis habitus quam in intellectu, si debeat actus fidei esse perfectus."

> act of choice, whereby it turns voluntarily to one side rather than to the other: and if this be accompanied by doubt and fear of the opposite side, there will be opinion, while if there be certainty and no fear of the other side, there will be faith.[1]

But Kierkegaard himself never was freed from the fear of the opposite and therefore never attained the faith. He acknowledged that he did not have the faith of Abraham. He himself rested in opinion, therefore, and never in faith, although he always held that faith was possible for every man. We maintain that what was existentially impossible or too strenuous for Kierkegaard was so because he wanted the will to perform what is impossible for it to do--namely, act without any relation to the intellect and still arrive at certitude. This is the final isolation which Kierkegaard makes because he again forgets that the whole man is involved in his acts. "Kierkegaard is so preoccupied with a description of such spiritual passional states as dread, despair and faith that he often loses sight of the total person and the problem of integrating all the passional drives."[2] Kierkegaard's own analysis was not lived out at all, not even by Abraham. There simply was no reality that might coincide with his supposition, and there could be none because it was not founded upon reality. The act of faith of Abraham was in reality an achievement of the intellect and the will, and not an achievement of the will alone, and that was why *firmness* was reached. To live out Kierkegaard's analysis would have been as strenuous for Abraham as it was for Kierkegaard himself; it would have been impossible. Truth was said to be held with certainty, and truth is always proper to the intellect. "Now, to believe is immediately an act of the intellect, because

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[1]Summa Theologica, P II-II, Q 1, Art. 4.
"Dicendum quod fides importat assensum intellectus ad id quod creditur. Assentit autem intellectus alicui dupliciter. Uno modo, quia ad hoc movetur ab ipso objecto quod est per seipsum cognitum, sicut patet in principiis primis, quorum est intellectus, vel est per aliud cognitum, sicut patet de conclusionibus, quarum est scientia. Alio modo, intellectus assentit alicui non quia sufficienter moveatur ab objecto proprio, sed per quandam electionem voluntarie declinans in unam partem magis quam in aliam. Et si quidem haec sit cum dubitatione et formidine alterius partis, erit opinio; si autem sit cum certitudine absque tali formidine, erit fides."

[2]James Collins, "Kierkegaard and Christian Philosophy," The Thomist, Vol. XIV No. 4, Oct. 1951, pg. 461.

the object of that act is the true, which pertains properly to the intellect. Consequently faith, which is the proper principle of that act, must needs reside in the intellect."[1] The reality of the faith of Abraham coincides with Thomistic analysis, and is the highest example of it, but it is not an example of Kierkegaard's analysis of faith. There can be no example for Kierkegaard in reality, because he has a supposition which excludes participation in reality. The existing individual who has Christian faith and thus certitude of the eternity of God and his own relationship to God is a man who made an attainment of intellect and will and rests in the perfect achievement of both. But this is accomplished by the whole man. To do what Kierkegaard wanted would be an achievement of half of a man, which is to say, of no existing man at all. But Abraham was an existing man, and Abraham had faith. The faith of Abraham was an achievement of the whole man, firm and unshattered, based on the existence of God, Who is Being Itself. "Therefore the certitude of our faith resolves itself formally and intrinsically into uncreated revelation as infallibly believed, and only materially and extrinsically into the evidence of the signs of revelation, particularly miracles."[2] This was the faith of St. Thomas, but not the faith of Kierkegaard. The faith of Kierkegaard would have rent Abraham asunder. Kierkegaard insisted on the foundation of absurdity for faith, but absurdity disallows firmness. No man can have Kierkegaardian faith, because there is no such reality--certitude and opinion are not the same. Kierkegaard rests in opinion because the fear of the opposite is never removed, absurdity is always present. One cannot have such fear and yet have certitude. Kierkegaard tried to live out his supposition, but he could not; nor could anyone else. The existing man cannot live out a contradiction.

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[1] Summa Theologica, P II-II, Q 4, Art. 2.
"Credere autem immediate est actus intellectus, quia objectum hujus actus est verum, quod proprie pertinet ad intellectum. Et ideo necesse est quod fides, quae est proprium principium hujus actus, sit in intellectu sicut in subjecto."

[2] Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "Grace." Translated by the Dominican Nuns, Corpus Christi Monastery, Menlo Park, Calif. St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder Book Co., 1952, pg. 496.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATION

Kierkegaard was a serious man, seriously concerned about religion. He was a religious man who was concerned about what philosophers of his day were teaching in relation to religion, that is, doing away with it, because they were doing away with existence. He saw the problem of explaining existence as the most important spiritual problem. Existence is tied to God. Kierkegaard saw this clearly. And in man it is of the nature of man that he should become religious, and since Christ's day, that he should become a Christian. For Kierkegaard existence was man's God-relationship before the individual became eternal. But philosophers of his day did away with existence; they were essentialistic; they saw no spiritual problem of existence; they became indifferent to existence, and therefore were leading toward indifference in religion, because they did not know what to do with existence. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, saw how imperative it was to retain existence. His foresight was an asset and a contribution to philosophy.

Kierkegaard set out to demonstrate that existence may be held with certainty, nay rather, that it must be held with complete firmness at all times. However, he maintained that the intellect was unable to make such an achievement. At best the intellect could only lead the individual to certain knowledge of his own existence, andthat was because man cannot entirely abstract from self. Therefore, he concluded that the individual alone is real, and essential existence of this individual is his own ethical existence, that man was designed for eternal relationship with God--designed for God-relationship.

If the individual alone is real, and immersed in time, but destined for relationship to the Eternal, then the individual must know the Eternal. But the Eternal is other than the individual. Existence separates the individual from the Eternal. Thus man cannot be indifferent to existence; he must rather be on the way to becoming eternal, to becoming a Christian.

Chapter VIII. Conclusions and Evaluation

Kierkegaard formulated his own description of existence because former notions of existence were inadequate and unable to withstand the assault of indifference. Existence is the synthesis of time and eternity, and the existing individual is trying to become solely eternal. God is eternal. Man's existence is therefore a pathway of God-relationship which is to rest in the eternal once man is rid of the temporal. The purpose of man's existence is ethical, and therefore every act must be purely ethical, to act otherwise is unbecoming to man. To be objective, to be speculative, merely to appropriate, merely to know is a fault, a shortcoming on the part of man. He must do more than merely appropriate; he must live out the appropriation in relation to his own God-relationship. He must always act in reference to his God-relationship, which is to say ethically. Man is purely subjective. Truth is purely subjective. Existence is purely subjective, that is, active appropriation in reference to God-relationship.

To know that man is purely subjective, to accept this with certainty is an achievement of faith. The subjectivity of man allows for his will to move unwaveringly to accept the eternity of God and the existence of other men. Existence is subjectivity; subjectivity is truth; truth and faith are one and the same in the achievement of Christianity. Existence, therefore, is to become a Christian.

Truly enough, there are absurdities in the formula outlined by Kierkegaard, but the absurdities were only barriers to the intellect, and not to the will. And therefore faith is the salvation of existence from indifference. Kierkegaard did not deny the absurdities; he used them. He used them to do away with the objective, and to announce the failure of the intellect. He used them to go over completely to the subjective. He explained existence in terms of removal from objectivity, that it was complete subjectivity. And Christianity is subjectivity. Existence and Christianity are designed for the same goal. Faith in existence is the becoming of a Christian.

Chapter VIII. Conclusions and Evaluation

The typical collegiate judgment of Kierkegaard's effort would be the popular "nice try." He saw the problem clearly, and he tried to solve it, but his solution was inadequate. For one thing, his analysis became so microscopic that the whole of the reality of man was lost from time to time. And when Kierkegaard set out to save existence, he assumed that it was isolated and could be ascertained as such. Adverting to the operation of the intellect, he assumed that it was entirely separate, and therefore with no intellectual reference to concrete existence. When he finally settled for certitude of faith, it was on the premise that the will alone can attain truth. But Kierkegaard's dissections were out of touch with the whole of reality. For instance, the intelligible and proper perspective of reality is not isolated existence, but being, that which is. In other words, adequate examination of existence is made with reference always to essence, because existence as such is no reality. And the knowledge of existence is an intellectual achievement, but not by a separated intellect, rather the intellect of an existing man, that is, with reference to the whole man, because the sense report is necessary for the attainment of concrete existence, which is always in the individual. Man is a limited creature and his knowledge starts in that limited way. Yet the achievement is a real attainment of existence with the intellect playing its role in the whole man.

The will plays a special role in relation to faith, but again not an isolated role. An isolated will is hardly an adequate report of the activity of the whole man in the achievement of existence. The intellect cannot be rejected, or said to play no part, if the will is said to act, but rather it must play its proper role, especially if we are to assert complete firmness on the part of the mind of man. By denouncing the intellect, Kierkegaard shook off credibility, and man could hardly attain the certitude that Kierkegaard sought. Of course in his own life he found this out, but then he claimed that another might succeed where he failed. However, this is impossible because no reality, no human person coincides with what Kierkegaard portrays. Again he ignored the operations of the whole man in his act of faith.

Chapter VIII. Conclusions and Evaluation

In conclusion, while we know that Kierkegaard is acknowledged as the Father of modern existentialism, we rather think of him as deserving the title solely because he speaks extensively of existence, whereas when he gives his description of existence, he has it acting like an essence. Furthermore, his is a voluntaristic existentialism because his saving grace is the movement of the will toward the eternity of God. Otherwise he most probably would have used the gun that he once took up, with the notion that despair ends all. If he were an intellectual existentialist, as St. Thomas, he would never have reached for the gun in the first place, because he would never have encountered utter absurdities, which led toward despair. Rather he would have arrived at the achievement of existence by the intellect in a judgment, and the reasonableness of existence at every level in proportion to the essence, even the highest, the existence of God, Who is Being Itself. This reasonableness would have given him the hope that would drive away despair, even if the very nature of God as It is in Itself is not fully comprehended.

Kierkegaard was an idealist with existence. We do not call him a realist, because his existence is not realistic. When he describes it, he does so essentially. He advised the complete turning away from objectivity. This was fantastic advice to a limited creature who hangs heavily on objectivity. Kierkegaard should have retained objectivity in its proper place, and also kept subjectivity in its proper place. That is to say, he should have governed himself by reality, rather than describe fantasy to man. Both are proper to man, and as a matter of fact, rather than being purely subjective, man finds that objectivity is primary in his life. Man actually rests in firmness of mind based on objectivity.

Kierkegaard was a Fideist, taking the eternity of God solely on faith, and thus accounting for the eternal part of his own existence on this same foundation. For him the existence of man made sense only because of his faith in an eternal God. But there was no need for Kierkegaard to reject the intellectual approach to existence whether the existence be that of a man other than self, or the very

existence of God. Man can know truth; man can attain the truth of existence. Man can even arrive at the truth of the existence of God by reason. Truth is the achievement of the intellect, but not a separated intellect. Truth is always a matter of the intellect, but the intellect is that of a whole person. In man we must recognize the interplay of the intellect and the will in belief. Kierkegaard equated truth with faith and then simply called for the movement of the will for the attainment of truth. In reality, however, the truth is referred to the intellect, but by rejecting this, Kierkegaard had to move toward the will. He was consistent with his rejection but not with reality.

Kierkegaard was a poet of existence. He himself even disclaimed, and quite correctly, that he was a philosopher. We see his point, and we agree, because if he were to be a philosopher, he would have to be a philosopher of Being, and not merely a philosopher of existence, who is no philosopher at all because there is no existence as such. Sound philosophy can only be established on sound metaphysics, but Kierkegaard had no sound metaphysics to go along with his suppositions. He was boldly consistent with his own definitions, but time and again these were not in contact with reality. He had no real metaphysics.

Perhaps Kierkegaard may not rightly be called an anti-intellectualist, yet his limitation of the intellect leads to such a charge now and again. In any case, he certainly did not hold to the primacy of the intellect, as St. Thomas always did. For Kierkegaard the failures of the intellect were uppermost, and simply led him to rest in absurdity. But intelligibility resting on absurdity does not make sense. Kierkegaard should have re-examined his analysis and his suppositions in order to resolve this point, rather than merely denounce the intellect and run completely over to the will.

Kierkegaard was more than the poet of existence; he was also the poet of the will. But in extolling the will of man, he forgot and abandoned the reality of man. He should have been a philosopher of man, the whole man, that is, with due

regard for all the powers of man. Just as he acknowledged man's sense report of reality, he also should have had due regard for both of man's highest operations, that of the intellect and the will. The existing individual brings all of his powers to bear upon his existence. Kierkegaard's report of man should have reflected this integration. As poet of the will, he is a philosopher of half of a man.

Kierkegaard traveled on the road of life that he mapped out, but he never reached its goal. When he determined his vocation, he was first an aesthetic, or at least he assumed the role of an aesthete. He did this intentionally in order to capture the attention of others who traveled on the same path. But once he had the attention of the people, he made his move; he progressed to ethical existence and tried to carry his audience with him. Then he revealed himself in his true color, as a religious person who was trying to become a Christian. He made the movement of Socratic Religiousness, but he never attained the final goal. He never succeeded, because he never attained the faith of Abraham. This is his own judgment.

Kierkegaard lived his philosophy; his writings followed the pattern of his life, insofar as this was possible. That is to say, he lived out concretely as much as he could, and he wrote extensively, about it. He was a prolific writer, and all his productions are in keeping with his main line of thought--from existence to the faith of Christianity. His style of writing was not popular. Kierkegaard knew this and even preferred it that way. For the most part he received no criticism, or some adverse criticism, and yet at times he might be described as reaching the height of a stylist.

Kierkegaard was a bold thinker and writer, and he was consistent with his own descriptions and definitions. There was an inner consistency even when he drove himself toward absurdity. But his descriptions and definitions do not always coincide with reality, and hence as a report of reality it is a faulty report. He was not like St. Thomas who, when he encountered a problem, would insist on analyzing it

in keeping with reality and always let reality guide the analysis. Thomistic predications were always tied to some clue in reality. Kierkegaard starts with reality, but he does not always hold to it. At times he forgot to check back to reality to see if he could find the reality to substantiate his assertions. He did not re-evaluate his analysis under new or untried suppositions, but rather preferred to push forth his theory, relying on his own notion of the will to make this accomplishment.

Kierkegaard was loyal to his calling as a Socrates of the Christian era. He devoted his entire life, using all his time and his money, and even forsaking marriage, in order to make men aware of Christianity, of trying to become Christians. His special attention and affinity to Socrates was because of subjectivity; Socrates having given the pagan orientation, and Kierkegaard presenting the Christian orientation. However, Kierkegaard should have seen that the work of Socrates needed the Aristotelian synthesis to put it into proper place and perspective, and also that a Christian orientation of this synthesis was available in the works of St. Thomas.

Socrates knew how to ask questions, even though he was not always able to answer them adequately himself. Kierkegaard not only asked questions, but also devoted his whole life in trying to provide answers to them. However, we found his answers inadequate in the light of reality. Therefore, while he saw the problem of existence clearly, his answer to the problem is unreal and inadequate.

Kierkegaard aimed to map out human existence.

> I hope with my writings to have achieved this much: to have left behind me so exact a description of Christianity and its relation to the world that a young man with enthusiasm and nobility of mind will be able to find in it a map of the conditions, as accurate as any topographical map by one of the well-known institutes. I have not had the help of such an author.[1]

We studied and traced Kierkegaard's map. We credit him with an honest effort, "a good try," but since he was not always in contact with reality, we are forced to conclude that he did not succeed as he had hoped.

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[1] "The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard," No. 849, pg. 275.

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SUMMARY

SUMMARY

Initiating this study, we had in mind to find out what the Father of Existentialism had to say about existence. We wanted to know his concept of existence, and what foundation he had for this notion.

From the writings of Kierkegaard we mapped out existence, and traced it to its goal, Christianity. For Kierkegaard existence was paramount, and if existence was not to be diffused and ineffable; that is, if man was not to become indifferent to existence, he must treat it in the concrete, in the individual. Existence is the movement of the individual man toward the eternal; in man existence is religiosity, toward the goal of eternal happiness with God.

Man tends toward his eternal Creator freely. Thus man's existence is knitted to a God-relationship, but he may direct his nature to its proper goal. Therefore, existence is aimed at eternity with God. To the question, then, "What is existence?" Kierkegaard answered that the concrete existence of the individual man is a synthesis of eternity and time, which is trying to become singularly eternal. Concrete existence separates the individual from the eternal.

Since existence seemed to escape man's attention, and he became indifferent to it, Kierkegaard asked, "Does man have certain knowledge of existence?" And he responded that man has certainty only of his own existence, because he knows himself directly and cannot abstract from himself entirely. Every other existence, said Kierkegaard, man knows only conceptually, that is, abstractly and not concretely. The individual alone is real.

The intellect did not attain the existence of another. Dwelling on this point, Kierkegaard inquired into the problems of truth and certitude. As to truth, his presentation is advanced as original in the Christian era, that subjectivity is the truth. Socrates presented the pagan version of this point, and Kierkegaard the Christian version. Objectivity was otherness, and otherness was in the abstract. Man was certain of his own existence; this was certainly true to him. Subjectivity

is the truth, but any other existence was in abstract relation to the individual, and therefore concrete existence of another escaped apprehension.

Subjectivity is the actual living out of truth, and not the mere appropriation of it; mere appropriation or objectivity hindered existence along the road to becoming eternal. This application of subjectivity and objectivity is Kierkegaard's. To live out truth is to act in reference to one's own God-relationship; existence related to God. But what about God, Who is other than self? Can man know this other? Kierkegaard held his ground--man cannot know with certainty of intellect any other existence than self, and especially is he unable to know God thus, because the relation of God to man is the supreme paradox. This is the highest absurdity that thwarts the achievement of the human intellect.

The intellect is a woeful failure in reference to otherness, but still all is not lost. The existences of others do not escape man entirely. Where the intellect failed, the will may succeed, even by grounding itself to that very absurdity, the supreme paradox. Subjectivity is the truth; truth and faith are the same, said Kierkegaard, and therefore, the will holds to certainty of the eternity of God, in spite of the absurdity of the intellect's frustrated attempt to make the appropriation. The achievement of the will is not at all shaken by the absurdity of the intellect. With subjectivity as the truth, the attainment is made unwaveringly. Kierkegaard believed in the eternity of God, the Creator of all existences.

Man exists; man is subjective, that is, he actively lives the concrete synthesis of time and eternity in relation to the eternity of God, and thereby is on the way to becoming singularly eternal. Man's existence is religious; it is on the way to the goal of religiosity, eternal happiness with God. Christianity is the promised goal of eternal happiness. Therefore, man is trying to become a Christian. And this calls for faith, the faith of Abraham.

Aesthetic existence fails to lead man to his goal. Aesthetic existence is not in relation to the proper eternal, to another as eternal, but rather to the self

as the possible eternal. But in fact man is limited, the self is always limited, and therefore aesthetic existence leads to despair. There is no faith of Abraham in aesthetic existence, because there is no absolute movement toward the other.

Ethical existence recognizes the other, and therefore discovers duty. But in ethical existence man sees that he is free, and so he struggles to assert the victory of self, rather than rest absolutely in relation to another. He is in relative relation to the absolute because at the last moment he turns to the self, whereas he ought to see that freedom was given to him so that he might achieve rest in the eternity of God. The self is limited, always limited, and therefore ethical existence, like aesthetic, leads to despair. Again, there is no faith of Abraham.

Religiousness is suffering; Socratic Religiousness is suffering without the victory of self; it is selflessness, but with a consolation--that of immanence, the eternal is other, but this other is in the self. There is no complete victory of self because there is always immanence. But precisely because of this consolation there is not absolute relation to the absolute other. There is no utter abandonment to faith. Immanence is a crutch, and therefore there is no faith of Abraham.

The man who is becoming a Christian, he alone exists fully; he alone has the faith of Abraham. He alone is completely subjective. His existence is the living out of every act in reference to his own God-relationship. Anything less and he falls away from Christianity, so that he can never be declared a Christian so long as he lives, and therefore stands in danger of falling away. He alone has faith, because he never questions, never seeks any sort of consolation, never seeks any reasonableness to buttress his faith. In spite of supreme paradox he has faith in the eternity of God, and his own existence as designed to rest in the promised perfect happiness, the promise of Christianity. He is in absolute relation to the absolute other. Existence of the man who is becoming a Christian is the synthesis of eternity and time, but with the hope of becoming perfectly happy, once rid of

the temporal. This hope is promised and attainable in Christianity, and since there is always hope, there is no despair. Here alone is the faith of Abraham, the faith in becoming a Christian.

We criticized Kierkegaard, however, and we showed that existence in terms of itself alone, isolated existence, which was the supposition of Kierkegaard, did not make sense; it is incomprehensible. Existence only makes sense in terms of Being, an essence which exists. Being, for Kierkegaard, was merely existence. While Kierkegaard's notion of existence may have some sort of poetic appeal, it is without a metaphysical foundation.

We also showed that the intellect has truth for its proper object; the intellect is not a failure, but rather it attains the truth. And the mind of man can even attain to concrete existence, but this again is the existence of a being, that which is, and not isolated existence. To expect the mind to attain isolated existence is an impossible expectation, that is, an expectation built on an impossible supposition.

The intellect operates toward the assertion and achievement of existence in a judgment, not by isolated activity of the intellect, but by the operations of the whole man, which means, by the interplay and integration of his powers. Man's knowledge starts with the senses, and then the intellect abstracts, but in the achievement of concrete existence, which is always individual, refers back to the phantasm and asserts the existence of that singular which is. The intellect of man does know the singular, or else without this foundation, it would know nothing. The accomplishment is actually an achievement of concrete existence which is asserted in the judgment that announces that something exists.

Subjectivity is not the all of truth. It has its place in reference to the knowing subject, the man who knows. But objectivity also has its place with reference to the known object. Objectivity is not to be denounced, nor is man to be advised to turn completely away from it. This is unnatural. With no objectivity,

there would be no foundation for firmness of mind. Complete divorce from objectivity would leave man with no residue even for the operation of his will. In knowledge, there is the subject who knows and the object which he knows. The object known must be given due regard. Even in his belief man has reference to the intellect and to some intellectual presentation to the will. The mind of man is designed toward objectivity as its foundation for firmness. It starts with principles that are self-evident and builds upon these a solid objective ground. Without this foundation it would simply swim in relativity. Subjectivity has its place, but objectivity is foremost in relation to the firmness of mind for man in the achievement of truth.

We talk of "sheer force of will," but still this does not mean movement of will without intellectual presentation. Faith is not in reference to will alone, to isolated will. Not even the faith of Abraham is understandable in terms of isolated will. Movement of will, as if isolated, is not the movement of any man at all. The movement of faith is in keeping with the powers of the whole man, and there is a presentation from the intellect in belief. There is a leap of faith to the supernatural. St. Thomas insisted on it, but he also insisted that the condition of the leap be credibility and not absurdity.