

Selfhood And Subjective Truth In Kierkegaard

By

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Abstract:

This thesis explicates Kierkegaard's notion of subjective truth, and attempts to place such truth within the broader context of Kierkegaard's philosophy.

It is generally thought that to be subjective is no art. Well, of course, every human being is something of a subject. But now to become what one is as a matter of course - who would waste his time on that? That would indeed be the most dispensable of all tasks in life. Quite so. But that is why it is already so very difficult, indeed, the most difficult of all, because every human being has a strong natural desire and drive to become something else and more. That is how it is with all apparently insignificant tasks: just this apparent insignificance makes them infinitely difficult, because the task does not clearly beckon and thus lend support to the aspirer, but works against him so that it takes an infinite effort just to discover the task, that is, that this is a task, a drudgery from which one is otherwise exempted. To think about the simple, something that the simple person also knows, is extremely deterring, for even through the most extreme effort the difference itself by no means becomes obvious to the sensate person. No, then the grandiose is glorious in a quite different way.(Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp.130-131)

This thesis - really, an excuse to study Kierkegaard, more than a research project - follows loosely upon the uncovering of the subjective or *existential* position.

The work is arranged around a particular issue: truth, principally the juxtaposition of subjective and objective truth as set out in Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript. I begin with a preliminary explication of this opposition - 'preliminary', because the analysis means to set up a more detailed consideration of the same issue in subsequent chapters. But the early effort is insufficient. It, no less than the following treatments of truth, wants a grounding in the larger context of Kierkegaard's philosophy. To this end, I add, in the second chapter, an analysis of human selfhood, expounded primarily in The Concept of Anxiety and The Sickness Unto Death. A reconsideration of subjective and objective truth follows this second division. Here, I complete a criticism of objectivity and objective truth initiated in the first section. Though this third section ends (more or less) the attack on objectivity, it leaves the main discussion of the thesis somewhat negative. We have to this juncture only critique and the rumblings of a novel perspective. The positive doctrine comes in the fourth and final section, wherein I present an alternative account of truth - *subjective* truth - and a mode of communication uniquely appropriate for such truth - *indirect* communication.

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...be cautious with an abstract thinker who not only wants to remain in abstraction's pure being but wants this to be the highest for a human being, and wants such thinking, which results in the ignoring of the ethical and a misunderstanding of the religious, to be the highest human thinking(Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p.307)

I Philosophic Preliminaries: Objective Knowing as Category Error

This first section traces, in a cursory way, Kierkegaard's attack on objective truth. The section begins with Descartes and Kant and the problematic of early modern philosophy. The treatment is then extended to Hegel. The purpose here is not to offer a positive doctrine of truth, but rather to set up a more detailed criticism of objective truth in the third section and, in the final section, an explication of an alternative notion of truth. In fine, these initial pages introduce the problematic of the thesis.

IA) The Empirical and Idealist Notions of Truth

In his Concluding Unscientific Postscript, the vast endnote to Philosophical Fragments, Kierkegaard prefaces the discussion of truth with a warning to the *existing* human subject. Regarding truth, we are to "pay scrupulous attention to what is understood by being" rather than the particular definition of truth, i.e. whether "truth is defined more empirically as the agreement of thinking with being or more idealistically as the agreement of being with thinking".(Concluding Unscientific Postscript, hereafter CUP, p.189) The mode of being on which a construal of truth fastens is, then, of prior significance to the way in which such a construal attempts to grasp this mode of being. The point becomes clearer in relation to examples of the aforementioned 'empirical' and 'idealistic' canons of truth.

The treatment of empirical truth - which we must furnish for ourselves - properly begins with Descartes. "What?.. A *rationalist* - whatever that is - as the herald of empirical truth?" Ironically, this is so. The key is Descartes' faith in sense-certainty. In Meditation III, Descartes lays down as a general rule "that whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true".(The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, hereafter PWD, vol.II, p.24) But the criterion of clarity and distinctness is left unexplained in the Meditations. One must look to the Principles for clarification of Cartesian 'distinctness' and 'clarity':

I call a perception *clear* when it is present and accessible to the attentive mind - just as when we say that we see something clearly when it is present to the eye's gaze and stimulates it with a sufficient degree of strength and accessibility. I call a perception *distinct* if, as well as being clear, it is so sharply departed from all other perceptions that it contains within itself only what is clear. (PWD, vol. I, p.201)

'Clear and distinct' perception refers to the immediate mental apprehension of all (i.e. clear) and nothing but (i.e. distinct) the simple nature under investigation. These simples

are the foundational objects of rational intuition, demarcated from more complex subject matter by methodical analysis. Descartes' simples are not 'empirical' - they are not the simple sense impressions of Hume.¹ (cf. Rules For the Direction of the Mind, PWD, vol.I, pp.-45) This is, of course, why he is considered a *rationalist*. Still, the essential problematic animating European rationalism and British empiricism is the same: epistemic atomism, i.e. the construction of metaphysical systems grounded in the immediate apprehension of simple bits of content, which apprehension is considered truth - the agreement of thinking and being - in the strict sense.

This requires some nuancing. Truth in Locke, for instance, is propositional truth. Yet his methodology is an epistemic atomism inspired by Descartes; and insofar as the immediate apprehension of simple bits of content opens up the possibility of propositional truth, intuition, for Locke, is the true locus of truth.² Locke is just not as honest as Descartes, or perhaps just not as transcendental, i.e. had he questioned concerning the condition of the possibility of propositional truth, he would acknowledge intuition as the source of truth, all truth. I have already mentioned Hume, i.e. his adherence to sense impressions, from which, he argues, all knowledge is constructed. There is, however, another set of thinkers, both *rationalist* and *empiricist* - whatever those are - that do not mesh well with what I am here proposing.

Such thinkers stray from my proposal due to a difference of disposition toward epistemology. In fine, they ignore it. There are simples in Leibniz, for example. But he takes complete leave of epistemology. Intuitive apprehension is instead relocated in the simples themselves and becomes apperception, i.e. the simples perceive themselves and others in themselves or something like that. (Philosophical Essays, pp.208, 214, 216) And certainly, Hobbes has a kind of materialist/empiricist epistemology underlying his nominalism, but he rarely defends (at least not in any great detail) the epistemic status of

the definitions from which he constructs Leviathan. He, like Spinoza, is doing logical geometrism. Truth is here a *formal congruence* between propositions, grounded ultimately in axiomatic truth. In keeping with the present argument, the axioms, like the simples in Descartes and Locke, are the real locus of truth, whether acknowledged by such thinkers or not, since they afford the interconnectedness between propositions in the system, i.e. the system is a kind of logical unpacking of what is already contained in the axioms.⁴ Truth here is almost unabashedly the agreement of thinking with thinking rather than the agreement of thinking with being of which Kierkegaard speaks.

Theses qualifications in mind, let us return to the argument. In the empirical sense, truth, as Kierkegaard suggests, is the agreement of thinking and being, except he neglects to mention that such truth is signaled by some form of intuitive apprehension. Clearly, this is because Kierkegaard is critiquing all forms of *adequation of intellect and thing*, not merely Cartesianism, British empiricism etc. - hence my point in the initial endnote. At bottom, however, all forms of empirical *adequatio* seem to rest on some notion of intuition. (This is why Cartesianism, with its explicit emphasis of intuition, is a good vehicle for explicating the so-called 'empirical' concept of truth.) Even formalism, where *adequatio* devolves into logical consistency, must, in order to account for the knowability of logical rules (if it bothers at all with this problem) either appeal to some form of intuition or follow the idealist path, i.e. presuppose that logic is operative in the human intellect, since we actually *do* use it and it *does* seem to allow us to cognize the world - note a naive pragmatism here - and then assert that all being is amenable to the rules of logic, that all being conforms to the rules of thinking. This style of argumentation is found in Kant (cf. Prolegomena, section 39, .64-68), with the proviso that Kant attempts to ground logic in a transcendental logic. With this, I turn to Kant.

The so-called *idealist* notion of truth is rooted in Kant. In the first Critique, Kant grants the 'correctness' of the logical/nominal definition of truth: "the agreement of knowledge with its object" - a circumlocution of the scholastic idea of truth as adequation of intellect and thing.(A58) Nonetheless, he limits the scope of nominal truth, arguing that it yields only a "negative condition of all truth".(B84) Compliance with such a rule ensures that thought "does not contradict itself, [but] it is still possible that it may be in contradiction with its object".(B84) Something more is needed. The failure of past thinkers to augment the nominal canon of truth, according to Kant, is an absurd bumbling of the whole question of truth, akin to "ludicrous spectacle of one man milking a he-goat and the other holding a sieve underneath".(B83) One must ask what undergirds this negative standard, such that logic remains yoked to its object. This enquiry calls for a "*transcendental logic*" (my italics). Further, "that part of transcendental logic which deals with the elements of the pure knowledge yielded by understanding, and the principles without which no object can be thought, is transcendental analytic. It is a logic of truth. For no knowledge can contradict it without at once losing all content, that is, all relation to an object, and therefore all truth".(B87) This transcendental logic, then, has a prior claim to the designation *logic of truth*, as it outlines the conditions of the possibility of any nominal truth⁵:

All our knowledge falls within the bounds of possible experience, and just in this universal relation to possible experience consists that transcendental truth which precedes all empirical truth and makes it possible.(A146)

In the deepest sense, transcendental truth sets out the conditions of the possibility of any experience at all: all being must conform to the transcendental logic, otherwise it cannot even be experienced, much less analyzed through logic, the organ of *nominal* truth.⁶

One might also note that many thinkers prior to Kant attempt to ensure the a priori correspondence of being with thought; however in the absence of Kant's transcendental

apparatus, they often invoke some other-worldly, divine principle which acts as an epistemic security check. Descartes, as every philosophic freshman knows, appeals to God. (cf. first paragraph Meditation VI, PWD, vol.II, p.50) Aquinas does the same, as the 'true' ideas of the intellect are grounded in a certain "preconception in the divine intellect".(Summa Theologica, question 16, article I, p.170) Plato furnishes a more mythical/allegorical account. In the Republic he offers the good (the sun) as that which undergirds the knowability and objective reality of the forms.(cf. Republic 508d-511e, 514a-520c) Even Newton, the presuppositionless, christens his *absolute* space and time - the minimal requirements of an experimentally measurable universe, presumably, though they sound like presuppositions to me - the 'sensorium of God'.(cf. Principia, pp.6-7 and Copleston, A History of Philosophy, vol.V, pp.153-155 for citations from the Opticks) Kant, of course, merely relocates space and time in the constitution of the human understanding, thereby undercutting the need for other-worldly imagery.⁷

Despite their differences, both canons of truth fasten on a similar objective, a-temporal mode of being.(cf.CUP, pp.189-190) Being, the matter cognized in *truth*, is, for Descartes, a foundational object of intuition - a simple nature, a simple substance. It is grasped by the mind - any mind endowed with reason - irrespective of time, place and even independent of language.(on the latter point, cf. Principles, p.220, PWD) This is not an *existing* being, i.e. a being in a particular time and place, with a certain past, projecting itself into a future in accordance with possibilities given to itself in and through a language, a language inherited from a culture. In Kierkegaardian language, the being amenable to Descartes' truth is not an "empirical", "concrete", "actual" being. (cf.CUP, pp.189-190) Nor still is the being proper to Kantian transcendental truth. Knowable being, on Kant's account, is a possible object of experience - possible, that is, as determined by the a priori correspondence of the object with the categories of the understanding. This is

a purely formal, empty construal of being. It assigns no particular content to the being in question.

This kinship between Kant and Descartes is grounded in a deeper unity of purpose. Both thinkers collapse the distinction between epistemology and metaphysics (and ontology, depending on whether or not you want to distinguish the two). In Kant and Descartes - indeed, in modern philosophy in general, the structure or being of any candidate for the appellation 'true' is set out in advance by the constitution of the intellect. In all modern philosophy, though Kant is the first to admit this explicitly, knowing consists of an explication of what the mind puts into the subject matter: we get what we put in - all else is empty groping.⁸ Kierkegaard considers this tautologous knowing:

..if being is understood in this way, the formula is a tautology; that is, thinking and being signify one and the same, and the agreement spoken of is only an abstract identity with itself. Therefore, none of the formulas says more than that truth is, if this is understood in such a way that the copula is accentuated - truth *is* - that is, truth is a redoubling. Truth is the first, but truth's other, that it *is*, is the abstract form of truth. In this way it is expressed that truth is not something simple but in an entirely abstract sense a redoubling.(CUP, p.190, cf. also p.192)

When, however, objective canons of knowing are fixed on concrete, empirical being - on a being that genuinely *becomes*, tautology gives way to "approximation", as objective thinking can never pin down a changing being long enough to completely adequate itself with this being. Said in the language of the previous critique, objective knowing cannot read itself out of concrete being. Concrete being is always defining itself anew. Indeed, any attempt to halt the changing of concrete, empirical being transforms it into objective being:

If, in the two definitions given, being is understood as empirical being, then truth is transformed into a desideratum [something wanted] and everything is placed in the process of becoming, because the empirical object is not finished... Thus truth is an approximating whose beginning cannot be established absolutely, because there is no conclusion that has retroactive power...(CUP, p.189)

The term *being* in those definitions must, then, be understood much more abstractly as the abstract rendition or abstract prototype of what being in concreto is as empirical being. If it is understood in this way, nothing stands in the way of abstractly defining truth as something finished, because viewed abstractly, the agreement between thinking and being is always finished, inasmuch as the beginning of the process of becoming lies precisely in the concretation that abstraction abstractly disregards.(CUP, p.190)²

Human being is such a concrete, empirical being, according to Kierkegaard. Thus it resists the techniques of objective knowing, whether rendered in the language of sense-certainty or idealism. This is not to deny the reality of objective knowing, however. Kierkegaard does not altogether reject the notion of objectivity (though the seeds of such a reflection may well be in his doctrine). Rather, he limits its scope: at the level of the existing, human subject in its ethical/religious activity there is no objective truth to be had¹⁰:

The way of objective reflection now leads to abstract thinking [e.g. metaphysics], to mathematics, to historical knowledge of various kinds, and always leads away from the subjective individual, whose existence or nonexistence becomes, from the objective point of view, altogether properly, infinitely indifferent...(CUP, p.193; Kierkegaard questions the appropriateness of objective knowing with regard to history in Either/Or vol.II, p.174, so we should be cautious about using history as an example.)

It is always to be borne in mind that I am speaking of the religious, in which objective thinking, if it is supposed to be supreme is downright irreligious. But wherever objective thinking is within its rights, its direct communication is in order, precisely because it is not supposed to deal with subjectivity.(CUP, p.76, second footnote, cf. also pp. 52-53)

The employment of objective knowing outside its proper sphere represents a category error and a consequent leveling of the human subject:

...be cautious with an abstract thinker who not only wants to remain in abstraction's pure being but wants this to be the highest for a human being, and wants such thinking, which results in the ignoring of the ethical and a misunderstanding of the religious, to be the highest human thinking. (CUP, p.307)

It is on this point of existing and on the requirement of the ethical to the existing person that resistance must be made when an abstract philosophy and pure thinking want to

explain everything by explaining away the decisive factor. One has only to dare intrepidly to be a human being and refuse to be tricked into becoming something like a phantom. It would be another matter if pure thinking would explain its relation to the ethical and to an ethically existing individuality. But this is what it never does; indeed, it does not even make a show of wanting to do it, since in that case it would also have to become involved with another kind of dialectic, the Greek or existence-dialectic. (CUP, p.309)

So much begs a buffet of questions - principally, what is human being, this mysterious human subject? and what is the becoming (existence) unique to this being? From these, an array of methodological questions follow, e.g. having rejected objective knowing, how does one disclose human being in its becoming? and what is the hallmark of truth for such a methodology? Most important perhaps - though I will give the matter only scant treatment in the final section - is the residual non-philosophic, pragmatic question: since objective knowledge no longer obtains at the level of the human subject, what rational means can the human subject employ in everyday dealings - to use a Heideggerian phrase, in the "here and now and in little things"?(cf. The Question Concerning Technology, p.33)

The resolution; or, more modestly, the consideration of these questions is the work of this thesis. But for the present I ask the reader's indulgence while I say a few words about Hegel and his relation to the critique of objective knowing.

IB) More Preliminaries: A Hegelian Interlude

I must say something about Hegel and objective knowing, though I suspect this 'something' will not entirely satisfy the reader - partly because I lack the Hegel requisite for rooting Kierkegaard's critique within the totality of 'the system'. A second reason, a much more philosophically significant reason fastens on Kierkegaard himself and his reading of Hegel (which necessarily mediates and taints my presentation of the issue). Simply put, Kierkegaard is not kind. The cruelty is founded in deep disagreement, of course. However, as Fackenheim notes, there is also a good measure of philosophic patricide in Kierkegaard's treatment of Hegel:

If such thinkers as Marx and Kierkegaard attack Hegel, it is not because he is absurd, but rather because he is too close for comfort. (The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought, p.7)

The debt to Hegel is perhaps most evident in Kierkegaard's dissertation, The Concept of Irony, and the initial sections of The Concept of Anxiety. But the intellectual claustrophobia Fackenheim mentions, coupled with certain crucial philosophic quarrels, inspires a fairly univocal reading of Hegel. The Hegel of Kierkegaard's critique is, more or less, the "transcendent metaphysician" - the Hegel of the right wing Hegelians.(cf. Religious Dimension, p.74) On this reading, the Logic of Hegel "describes an ontologically self-sufficient, transcendent realm" and its applications (in the Philosophy of Spirit and Philosophy of Nature) are mere appendages - coloring of an already cognized reality. (cf. Religious Dimension, p.77) The interpretation is not entirely faithful to the *spirit*, as it were, of Hegel's philosophy:

...Hegel's life-long endeavor was to find the Absolute not beyond but present *in* the world, the world in which men suffer and labor, despair and hope, destroy and create, die and

believe. To be sure, this Absolute, when present as such, heals the fragmentation of the actual world in which it is present, for those to whom it is present, which is why its presence in and for thought may be called a mysticism of Reason. But unlike so many mysticisms, this mysticism is no flight from the actual world, which takes that world as mere sham and illusion. According to Hegel, it is much rather such a flight which is a sham, compared to which steadfast existence in the actual world, even if taken as ultimately fragmented, has substance and reality. The Absolute, if accessible to thought at all, is accessible only to a thought which *remains* with the world of sense, not to a thought which shuns it in "monkish fashion". (Religious Dimension, pp.79-80)¹¹

These qualifications in mind, I must still say something of Hegel and his relation to the issue at hand, but in a sense this 'something' has already been said. The previous analysis, couched in the talk of Descartes and Kant, lies within the scope of the Hegel's philosophy insofar as Cartesianism and Kantianism are only so many moments in the unfolding of Spirit, which 'unfolding' - if we are to be charitable - *is* Hegel's system. On this score, one need only re-run the previous section in Hegel-ese and append the same Kierkegaardian criticisms. But this approach would add nothing new to the argument.

There is something particularly subversive about Hegel. In a word, it's *mediation* - a principle underlying Hegel's apparent invigorating of logic.(cf. The Concept of Anxiety, p.81)¹² In a most formal sense, mediation is the reconciliation of opposition into higher synthesis. This new unity is itself embedded within the original opposition as a condition of the possibility of their initial opposition. Said differently, contradiction is sustained by the inter-relatedness of contradictories. When either pole is negated the opposition itself vanishes. This recognition transforms our understanding of opposition, exposing the necessary reconciliation of opposites in their unity, i.e. their unity in differentiation. Thus "mediation expresses the necessity with which opposites are thought together".(Mackey, Kierkegaard and the Problem of Existential Philosophy, I, p.407; cf. also Charles Taylor, Hegel, p.105)

Mediation, however, is more than an empty, formal principle, on Hegel's account. Human being; or to be more Hegelian, Spirit/Absolute Subject (though these designations

are not to be taken as synonyms for human being) takes up the project of knowing in a state of fragmentation, signaled by the strict opposition of spirit and nature, of Geist and Gegenstand. The story of the Subject in knowing - mapped out in its entirety in the Phenomenology, indeed in the whole of 'the system' - is the ongoing unification of its sundered state through the transcendence of limitations imposed on itself. Spirit alienates itself in its attempt to know something as other, only to regain itself in the mediation of self and other:

...the living Substance is being which is in truth SUBJECT , or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself. This Substance is, as subject, pure, *simple negativity*, and for this reason the bifurcation of the simple; it is the doubling which sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this indifferent diversity and of its antithesis [the immediate simplicity]. Only this self-*restoring* sameness, or this reflection in otherness within itself - not an *original* or *immediate* unity as such - is the True. (Phenomenology of Spirit, p.10; cf. also p.51 and the talk of consciousness 'going beyond itself')

The re-collection of the self ceases as it transcends all opposition in "PURE self-recognition in absolute otherness".(Phenomenology, p.14; cf. M.C.Taylor, Journeys to selfhood, pp.80-81)¹³ Mediation is an engine of this self-recognition.¹⁴ Further, insofar as Spirit/Subject - what is, in the deepest sense, real/Absolute - is animated by mediation of opposition, "the dialectic of identity and opposition in subjectivity must be of ontological import. If the absolute is subject, and everything that is can only be in being related to this subject, then everything is caught up in the interplay of identity and opposition which makes up the life of this subject."(Charles Taylor, Hegel, p.104) As Taylor later suggests, "mediation becomes a cosmic principle".(p.104)

Kierkegaard rejects the universality of mediation. This dismissal, like the criticisms of the empirical and idealistic notions of truth, turns on an orientation toward being. The Hegelian issue causes a shift in my presentation, though; or more accurately it highlights an aspect of the earlier discussion that was only implicit. Previously, I spoke of the 'being'

that is cognized in truth (arguing that this objective, existentially stale being is metaphysically identical to the cognitive structure of the thinker, which cognitive structure is synonymous with the methodology employed by the cognizing thinker; and then, concurring with Kierkegaard, I surmised that this was a kind of tautology). The argument was mainly 'metaphysical', if one can use such a term in the context of post-modern thinking. But the present discussion fastens particularly on the existential relation between the subject and what is known, the object⁴⁵ (though considering Hegel's position any strict distinction between subject and object represents an unfelicitous way of speaking - this is, we shall discover, the problem).

Simply put, Kierkegaard asks how the existent human being, the mediator, is related to mediation. How, that is, does a human being enter into mediation? The issue is difficult to broach because, if we are to be charitable to Hegel, the answer is that we are always already in mediation, regardless of whether or not this issue is explicitly taken up by consciousness. But Kierkegaard is not so conciliatory. He maintains that to exist in mediation requires radical abstraction from existence. In a word, it requires 'objectivity'. The existing individual must extricate him/herself from concrete, actual existence in order to intellectually annul opposition:

In a previous section, I sought to show the chimerical character of mediation when there is supposed to be a mediation between existence and thinking for an *existing person*, inasmuch as everything said about mediation can be true and glorious but becomes untruth in the mouth of an existing person since he as an existing person is prevented from obtaining such a foothold outside existence that from it he can mediate that which by being in a process of becoming also precludes completion. It was also shown that with regard to an existing person all the talk about mediation is deceptive, since abstract thinking, to say nothing of pure thinking, expressly ignores existence, which from the ethical point of view is so lacking in merit that it is the opposite, is culpable. (CUP, p.399)

As Kierkegaard suggests, the existential bankruptcy of mediation appears in "ethical" (he would also add, religious) matters. He makes an example of good and evil. "From the objective point of view there is no infinite decision, and thus it is objectively correct that the distinction between good and evil is canceled, along with the principle of contradiction..."(CUP, p.203, cf. also p.305) Yet from the standpoint of the 'existing' subject (as opposed to the 'absolute' subject), or what Kierkegaard calls the perspective of subjectivity (in contrast to objectivity) these poles, good and evil, admit of no mediation. In existence we are confronted with "absolute" or "qualitative" (rather than quantitative) disjunction or dialectic (cf. CUP, pp.307, 350, 399) - hence Kierkegaard's famous proclamation of the *either/or* (cf. Either/Or II, p.173).¹⁶ Mackey puts the matter well:

A man must think both good and evil in the same thought, but can he become both good and evil at once? And can the real exclusions operative in existence be reconciled with the synthesis of ideas in a still higher synthesis? These are the questions which Kierkegaard puts to the Hegelian concept of mediation.(Kierkegaard And The Problem of Existential Philosophy, I, p.407)

My presentation now founders for the same reason as before: there is a new sense of human being and becoming at work in Kierkegaard, and these issues want explication. Allow the previous discussion to serve notice that this as yet mysterious sense of human being and becoming is not amenable to objective cognition. We will resume the topic when the nature of human being is clear (or at least clearer).

A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self! But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself. A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two. Considered in this way, a human being is still not a self.

In the relation between two, the relation is the third as a negative unity, and the two relate to the relation and in the relation to the relation; thus under the qualification of the psychical the relation between the psychical and the physical is a relation. If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third and this is the self. (The Sickness Unto Death, p.13)

II The Structure of Selfhood

We find Kierkegaard's most exhaustive treatment of the constitution of the self in this initial section of the Sickness Unto Death. The manner (and content) of the presentation is reminiscent of Hegel.¹ Kierkegaard offers a purely formal synopsis of the structure of selfhood which is then nuanced with empirical content in what follows. The doctrine resists explication. The opening, so hideously opaque, wants the explanation that only comes in the end. As a corrective, I shall follow the argument from behind, unpacking the content that renders the beginning intelligible. As a further corrective, I will augment the

structures of selfhood found in the Sickness with those of The Concept of Anxiety. The unity of these structures is indisputable.

Provisionally, one may construe the self, Kierkegaard's self, as a bundle of dichotomies. The Sickness yields two crucial dichotomies: finitude/infinity and necessity/possibility. The self in its fullness is the tenuous bonding of these oppositions. Consideration of a further polarity, time/eternity, found in the Anxiety, exposes the temporal structure within which all bonding occurs. I shall explicate the dichotomies of the Sickness presently, and then move to the time/eternity opposition of the Anxiety.

First, however, some prefatory words on the scope of these polarities. In his discussion of infinity, particularly the "lack" of infinity, Kierkegaard remarks that "what is meant here is only *ethical* narrowness and limitation" which results when infinity is denied. (Sickness, p.33, my italics) Infinity, then, pertains in some sense to 'the ethical'. The point extends to all dichotomies here at question.

By 'ethical' Kierkegaard understands something quite pedestrian. The adjective is carefully chosen. It signals the two aspects of Kierkegaard's use of the word which I wish to exploit. First, 'the ethical' fastens properly on something less inspiring than does our customary employment of the word - in this sense the ethical is somewhat mundane, ordinary. It is not the morally loaded term of our standard usage. Instead, Kierkegaard means ethical in the more primal sense of pragmatic engagement, of purposeful action - and herein lies the second sense of 'the ethical' as pedestrian, namely, that the ethical is bound up with motion, action, though I do not mean to restrict ethical action to the mere walking of a pedestrian. The relevant actions are thought in terms of life choices. The ethical, concerns the sphere of lived possibilities, of existential alternatives. Morality, on the other hand, is merely a qualification of lived action; and many lived possibilities escape

moral qualification altogether, e.g. that I should become a gardener or a clerk is a morally moot question, since neither possibility enjoins necessary praise or condemnations.

To be sure, Kierkegaard is concerned with morality. He considers some possibilities to be of a higher order than others. Of this there can be no doubts. Nonetheless, I must maintain that in the present context - the explication of the structures of human existence - the ethical pertains to life choices. This is why Kierkegaard can speak alternatively about the religious and the ethical (which, strictly speaking, are two incommensurable spheres of existence) in the initial stages of the Sickness, wherein we find a presentation of some of the polarities that constitute the self. Both the religious and the ethical are equal in the sense that they are both life alternatives, though, of course, one is a 'higher' alternative on Kierkegaard's account.²

II A) Finitude/Infinitude

The dichotomy is tied to the body in a certain way, though it does not refer precisely to the corporeal. Rather, it is about the most primal constitution of human being - note the language of 'primitivity'. (Sickness, p.33) As existing human beings we are at once both situated and projective. Finitude pertains to the dimension of the self that is fixed or situated. Here the self appears stubbornly factual, as something that has already happened and is now beyond control. Infinitude, on the other hand, relates to the projective or "extending" aspect of the self (Sickness, p.31), the dimension that actively determines the path the self - as situated - will follow. The relation between the two dimensions of selfhood is crucial. Kierkegaard means for us to think infinitude, the dimension of human projectivity, from within finitude, the situatedness of the self. Some words on finitude and infinitude individually will clarify this relation.

Baldly considered, the finite refers to 'limitation'. (cf. Sickness, p.30) This is a purely formal construal of the finite and is not helpful in this context because the question is: what does limit, as a structural principle of human selfhood, mean within human existence? We are not after an empty logical category. Some explanation is found in volume II of Either/Or. Here, in regard to the choosing of self; better, the choosing to be oneself, Kierkegaard enumerates a number of features of the self that strike one as fixed, as no-longer-up-for-grabs, as it were. These range from profoundly personal/corporeal features, e.g. capacities, drives, passions, inclinations, habits, to more inter-personal factors, such as race, social duties, political allegiances and history:

The individual... becomes conscious as this specific individual with these capacities, these inclinations, these drives, these passions, influenced by this social milieu, as a product of a specific environment. (p.251, cf. also p.262, where Kierkegaard adds that the self is also factually determined as a "civic self")

Now he discovers that the self he chooses has a boundless multiplicity within itself inasmuch as it has a history, a history in which he acknowledges identity with himself. This history is of a different kind, for in this history he stands in relation to other individuals in the race and to the whole race, and this history contains painful things, and yet he is the person he is only through this history.(p.216)

These features render the self situated in some particular way. The scope of this situatedness is considerable. As Elrod notes, Kierkegaard sometimes allies the self's finitude with the world.(cf. for example Either/Or II, pp. 203, 209, 221) "Here the term does not have a cosmological meaning but simply signifies the sheer, brute givenness of all that *is* in relation to the existing becoming self."(Being and Existence in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Works, p.34)³ Unfortunately Elrod does not draw the obvious conclusion from this synonymy between the self's finitude and the world. Kierkegaard is signaling, though obliquely, the notion of *worldview* - a notion so central in Nietzsche.

Infinitude, in opposition to finitude, relates to "the unlimited".(Sickness, p.30) Again, such formal construal is not illuminating. Kierkegaard adds some content to infinitude indirectly, by exposing the bane of infinitude, "the fantastic".(Sickness, p.30)

The self in its projective, extending dimension is closely tied to imagination: imagination is the medium of self-projection, of 'infinitezation':

As a rule, imagination is the medium for the process of infinitezation; it is not a capacity, as are the others [i.e. feeling, knowing, willing] - if one wishes to speak in those terms it is the capacity [for all capacities]."(Sickness, pp.30-31)

Through imagination the self sees itself in alternative life possibilities lifted from its situation, its finitude. Imagination, then, is "the maker of infinity in the sense that it opens up the self's own horizon of meanings".(Elrod, paraphrasing Fahrenbach, Being and Existence, p.34):

The self is reflection, and the imagination is reflection, is the rendition of self as the self's possibility. The imagination is the possibility of any and all reflection, and the intensity of this medium is the possibility and the intensity of the self."(Sickness, p.31)

But imagination is also customarily associated with "the fantastic"(Sickness, p.30), or "that which leads a person out into the infinite [the unlimited] in such a way that it only leads him away from himself [his limited, situated, factual self] and thereby prevents him from coming back to himself [i.e. his finite self]".(Sickness, p.31) The fantastic is that which the self cannot appropriate in its finitude, for example, that I should become a whale or perhaps a gourd, or that I should attempt to categorize the fauna of Mars, or maybe suffer the anguish of all the 'victims' of the world. This juxtaposition of imagination in its utility as the 'medium of infinitizing' and the seductive powers of the imagination as the organ of 'the fantastic' reveals the appropriate sense of the infinite. Infinitude, the "extending constituent" of the self, is that which properly directs the finite self from within its finitude.

The earlier promise is now fulfilled, namely, that I should clarify the sense in which infinitude is to be thought from within finitude. This interpretation, however, gives rise to a third distinction.

As we have seen, the self in its factual givenness conditions the projective, extending dimension of the self. That which is projected is in some sense made projectable by the self's finitude. Still, this projection poses a challenge to finitude. Infinitization inspires something new, a novel manifestation of finitude. The self, as infinite, projects alternative life possibilities from within finitude, and in the reclamation of these possibilities in finitude the self, its finite situatedness, is transformed. Kierkegaard's word for this new self is "concrete". The coherence of infinitude in finitude is the self in its concreteness:

To become oneself is to become concrete. But to become concrete is neither to become finite nor to become infinite, for that which is to become concrete is indeed a synthesis. Consequently, the progress of the becoming must be an infinite moving away from itself in the infinitizing of the self, and an infinite coming back to itself in the finitizing process. (Sickness, p.30)

We can speak of the concrete self appropriately, though oxymoronically, as an enbounded limitlessness. Concrete selfhood is a limit (finitude) that is forever (infinitely) expanding.⁴

IIB) Necessity/Possibility

The sense of this dichotomy is in part already clear. My assertion rests on the kinship between the present opposition and the previous polarity. Kierkegaard alerts us to this relation at the very outset of his discussion of necessity/possibility in the Sickness:

Just as finitude is the limiting aspect in relation to infinitude, so also necessity is the constraint in relation to possibility. Inasmuch as the self as a synthesis of finitude and infinitude is established, is [potential]⁵, in order to become itself reflects itself in the medium of imagination, and thereby the infinite possibility becomes manifest. The self is [potentially] just as possible as it is necessary, for it is indeed itself, but it has the task of becoming itself. Insofar as it is itself, it is the necessary, and insofar as it has the task of becoming itself, it is a possibility. (Sickness, p.35)⁶

Strictly speaking, however, the two dichotomies are not synonymous. Though they have the same 'referents' - for lack of a better word- each opposition consists of a different orientation toward that referent. Finitude/infinitude designates *what* the existing, human subject is; possibility/necessity plays on the manner or *way* in which this subject is. In logical jargon, possibility/necessity relates to the self in its modality. Necessity, then, denotes the inescapability of finitude, of human situatedness. Possibility designates the contingent manifoldness of infinitude, of the self in its infinite dimension.⁷

Kierkegaard speaks metaphorically of the snug relationship between necessity and possibility. He likens possibility to "a child's invitation to a party" and necessity to parental permission to attend - "and as it is with the parents, so it is with necessity". (Sickness, p.31) On another occasion he expresses the necessity/possibility dynamic in terms of the relation between consonants and vowels:

If loosing oneself in possibility may be compared with a child's utterance of vowel sounds, then lacking possibility would be the same as being dumb. The necessary is like pure consonants, but to express them there must be possibility. (Sickness, p.37)

Kierkegaard also refers to possibility as "air" - "possibility is for the self what oxygen is for breathing". (Sickness, p.40) The implication here, though Kierkegaard does not himself draw the obvious conclusion, is that the self in its finitude necessarily breaths.⁸

This interconnection parallels the unity of finitude and infinitude. Possibility, like infinitude, lives within the bounds of its opposite, necessity:

When a self becomes lost in possibility..., it is not merely because of a lack of energy... What is missing is essentially the power to obey, to submit to the necessity in one's life, to what may be called one's limitations. Therefore, the tragedy is not that such a self did not amount to something in the world; no, the tragedy is that he did not become aware of himself, aware that the self is a very definite something and thus the necessary. (Sickness, p.36)

Necessity is literally "the place" for possibility. "Movement" in this place corresponds to the infinitizing dimension of the self in its contingency, i.e. possibility. (Sickness, p.36) Kierkegaard's spatial metaphor underscores the relation between necessity and possibility: all movement requires location, just as possibility wants some mooring in necessity. And as with the unity of finitude and infinitude, the interplay of necessity and possibility procures newness. Kierkegaard reminds that "to become oneself is a movement in that place [necessity]", but "to become is a movement away from that place". (Sickness, p.36) The self, then, is transformed in the interpenetration of necessity and possibility.

But we should not carry the metaphor too far. The figures are misleading. Movement here is not spatial. At the level of necessity/possibility, indeed, at the level of the existing, human subject generally, movement is internal. The action that unifies possibility and necessity is an inward decision. The resolution renders the self 'actual' - "actuality is the unity of possibility and necessity". (Sickness, p.36) (In this sense 'actuality' is a modal analogue to concreteness - 'actual' is the *way* the concrete self *is*.⁹)

The actuality is not the external action but an interiority in which the individual annuls possibility and identifies himself with what is thought in order to exist in it. This is action. (CUP, p.339)

This passage - the definition of action in relation to actuality - veils a transcendental argument. The movement of inward appropriation, wherein the individual locates him/herself (i.e. the necessary self) in possibility and then draws possibility into necessity, is the condition of the possibility of any outward manifestation of action. Thus the internal action, and not its external consequence, is the locus of the movement that bonds necessity and possibility (thereby yielding actuality). Again, this unity is constitutive of selfhood:

Personhood is a synthesis of possibility and necessity. (Sickness, p.40)

II C) Time: a Preliminary Explication

Let us recap the argument. Thus far, the self is composed of a dual synthesis: the unification of finitude and infinitude in concreteness and the bonding of necessity and possibility in actuality. In the Sickness, however, Kierkegaard alerts us of the importance of time with regard to these syntheses. He does so in the context of exposing the seductive powers of possibility:

...possibility seems greater and greater to the self; more and more becomes possible because nothing becomes actual. Eventually everything seems possible, but this is exactly the point at which the abyss swallows up the self. It takes time for each little possibility to become actuality. Eventually, however, the time that should be used for actuality grows shorter and shorter; everything becomes more and more momentary. (Sickness, p.36)

The relationship between possibility and time, particularly 'the future', is echoed in the Anxiety:

The possible corresponds exactly to the future.(p.91)

By implication, one can presume a correspondence of the past, the natural contrast to the future, to possibility's opposite, necessity. We have, then, a provisional temporal structure for the polarity of possibility and necessity (and considering the close kinship between possibility/necessity and finitude/infinitude one may apply the structure no less to the latter dichotomy). This time-model lacks only a concept of the present which would provide a temporal analogue to concreteness and actuality, the loci of human transformation.

We may call the preceding time-model temporality's 'sub-structure'; and by this we understand the designations past, present and future and their correspondence to the dichotomies animating self-hood; better perhaps, the *trichotomies* animating selfhood.¹⁰

Beyond this lies the 'meta-structure' of temporality which undergirds the sub-structure. This latter structure is itself constituted by a synthesis. Kierkegaard maintains that the designations 'past, present and future' emerge only with a prior synthesis of "the eternal" and "time" in "the moment". The prior synthesis, coupled with the sub-designations produced thereby, then conspire to produce "temporality" and "history". (cf. Anxiety, p..89) (We should note the looming distinction between time and temporality.)

Clearly, temporality is a complicated issue in Kierkegaard. Preliminary presentation of its dual structure and an indication of its relation to previous structures should suggest as much. Our investigation of the issue becomes easier if we arrive at some more precise understanding of the character of the self. We do so through a consideration of Kierkegaard's definition of the self in The Sickness Unto Death.

II D) Spirit, Freedom and the Self-itself

We are now in a position to understand Kierkegaard's enigmatic beginning in the Sickness

- the passage from which I fled at the very outset of this section:

A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself. A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two. considered in this way, a human being is still not a self.

In the relation between two, the relation is the third as a negative unity, and the two relate to the relation and in the relation to the relation; thus under the qualification of the psychical the relation between the psychical and the physical is a relation. If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third and this is the self. (Sickness, p.13)

One should note the initial parallels:

human being = spirit
spirit=self

Self, spirit and human being are in a certain sense identical. Kierkegaard continues: "The self is relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself". It is obvious from the second clause - which Kierkegaard adds to aid the reader in understanding the first clause - that the self is a 'relating'. The self is a dynamic self, constituted in the action of relating. The question is, a) to what does the first relation correspond? and b) what sense can be made of the initial relation relating itself to itself?

Kierkegaard answers the first question in the first paragraph. Human being (the self), we are told, is "a synthesis [i.e. a relation] of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal [he does not here distinguish between time and temporality, but he should] and

the eternal, of freedom [here used as synonym for possibility] and necessity, in short, a synthesis". We should pay particular attention to the final words": 'in short, a synthesis". All these various syntheses are expressions of human being, the self, as a synthesis or relation. They merely express different aspects of this relation. (We have already seen the interconnectedness of the structures within this relation.)

Yet this synthesis or relation is not a self. It is a precondition of selfhood but is not itself the self. He explains the point through an example, the relation of the physical and psychological, of body and soul. In any relation "between two [for example, body and soul], the relation is the third as a negative unity". As a 'negative third', the relation, i.e. the self (which is as yet not a true self), is aware of itself as a relation, namely, a relation of body and soul. This awareness merely designates the capacity for reflectively claiming this relation, this self, as one's own - the ability to say 'I am this unity of body and soul'.¹¹ There is, however, no conscious attempt to transcend this given relation. The self remains in its given relatedness. As Hannay suggests, the self as a negative relation "would be a merely dependent factor, mirroring the interplay of the other two [i.e. body and soul] with each other and with the environment".(Kierkegaard, p.191) Such a self is a capricious relation, ruled exclusively by the immediate needs of the situation in which it finds itself. In his journals, Kierkegaard speaks of this negative relation as a relation which is not yet "for itself":

The relation between the psychological and the physical, although a relation, is not ... a relation which is for itself"(Sickness, p.144, quoted from Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers, I 749)

The relation that *is* 'for itself' is the relation that "relates itself to itself". In self-relating, the self posits itself in a further relation to the original negative relation and then draws this posited self back into the original relation. The interiorization of the posited relation transforms the original relation. The initial relation between body and soul, the "negative

unity", now becomes a "positive" relation. This dynamic act of self-relating is a circumlocution for 'spirit', the emergence of which signals authentic selfhood. Spirit, then, is not a thing. Rather, 'spirit' is merely a designation referring to a self-transcendence through self-relation. The spiritless self, on the other hand, is characterized by an awareness of the self as 'this' relation between body and soul but no act of relating to this relation. Kierkegaard contrasts this negative, naive self with the self as spirit:

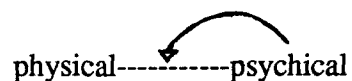
Man is a synthesis of the psychical and the physical; however, a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. This [positive] third is spirit. In innocence [i.e. as a negative relation] man is not merely animal [i.e. a being with sensory awareness, but not reflexive self-awareness], for if he were at any moment of his life merely animal, he would never become man. [Hence my suggestion that the negative relation is a precondition for the positive relation or authentic selfhood]. So spirit is present, but as immediate, as dreaming. (The Concept of Anxiety, p.43)

Allow me to add more content to this schematic presentation. There are really three levels of consciousness at play here. At the most primitive, bestial level is mere sensory awareness. Here, some entity - as Kierkegaard suggests, an entity that is not a human being - perceives but lacks the capacity for reflexive self-awareness. We represent this primitive consciousness as mere psycho-somatic duality:

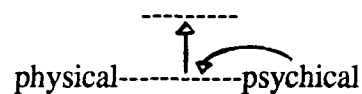
physical-----psychical

Next, there is the level of reflective consciousness. One now knows oneself as *this* psycho-somatic duality, i.e. one knows the thoughts of this duality are one's own. We represent such reflective consciousness in the same way, except we add an arrow reaching from the psychical, the organ of self-awareness, over to the original relation of body and soul, in order to designate reflective awareness of the self's status with respect to this relation:

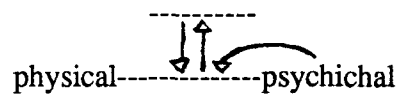
physical-----psychical



There is at last the level of self-relation, of the self 'relating itself to itself'. In relating itself to itself, the self steps out of itself - i.e. outside of the already established psycho-somatic relation - and posits itself in another relation to the original negative relation.¹² This positing of a second relation corresponds to the infinitized, possible, futural self:



The self then relates this projected relation back into itself, thereby becoming a positive relation. This returning corresponds to the internalizing of infinitude/possibility into finitude/necessity¹³:



In this internalization, the self, as already mentioned, becomes a positive relation and a self in the true sense of the word. Thus to be a self, according to Kierkegaard, is to transcend one's immediate relatedness - e.g. the naive, un-self-related relatedness of the negative self or the self-related relatedness between finitude and infinitude that has already hardened and now constitutes one's situatedness - in a dynamic act of self-relation which *is* spirit.¹⁴

A consideration of the genesis of spirit is not required here. There are two dimensions to this question. There is first the metaphysical/archeological aspect, i.e. the way in which the self, as a dynamic self-relating, is initially constituted. I am not interested in this question; nor is Kierkegaard:

It is not my purpose to present a pretentious and bombastic philosophical deliberation on the relation between psyche and body and to discuss in which sense the psyche itself produces its body... Here I have no need of such things. For my purpose, I shall express

myself to the best of my ability: the body is the organ of the psyche and in turn the organ of the spirit. (The Concept of Anxiety, p.136)

A second, closely related issue is the emergence of our awareness as spirit, as a 'self-relating' (and all this entails). Of course, Kierkegaard is very much interested in this topic. It is his explicit theme in The Sickness Unto Death and The Concept of Anxiety.¹⁵ For my purposes, however, it is enough to note the structure of selfhood.

I must add one further qualification to this structure.

As we have seen, self and spirit are synonymous for Kierkegaard. (cf. Sickness) We then discovered that spirit refers to the self's situated transcendence of itself through self-relation. By aligning spirit, the self, with the dynamic of self-relation, Kierkegaard undercuts the substantialism infecting ago-old accounts of selfhood - this much was also mentioned. But - and this now is new - Kierkegaard often speaks of spirit as the 'eternal in man':

...to despair [I will speak of 'despair in the following section] is a qualification of spirit and relates to the eternal in man. But he cannot rid himself of the eternal - no, never in all eternity. (Sickness, p.17)

Despair is a qualification of the spirit, is related to the eternal, and thus has something of the eternal in its dialectic. (Sickness, p.24, cf. also p.21)

This talk of the 'eternal in man' clearly smacks of dreaded substantialism, i.e. a supposition of some changeless in-itself that undergirds the self in its ongoing relating to itself.

Kierkegaard, however, has something different in mind. He also speaks of the self as freedom:

The self is composed of infinitude and finitude. However, this synthesis is a relation, and a relation that... relates itself to itself, which is freedom. The self is freedom. (Sickness, p.29)

But what is this self of mine? If I were to speak of a first moment, a first expression for it, then my answer is this: it is the most abstract of all, and yet in itself it is also the most concrete of all - it is freedom... at this point I merely want to find the most abstract

expression for this "self" that makes him who he is. And this is nothing other than freedom. (Either/Or II, pp.214-215)

Selfhood rendered in the language of freedom undercuts the substantialistic connotations of spirit as the 'eternal in man'. It is difficult to conceptualize some in-itself that corresponds to freedom. We may, then, defuse part of the controversy by presuming that freedom, no less than spirit (and indeed perhaps more appropriately than spirit) refers to the 'eternal in man'.

But such presumption presents a further dilemma. Again, as we have already seen, situatedness and necessity are fundamental aspects of selfhood. These concepts seem to mesh poorly with freedom. The incongruence, however, lies in the supposition of radical liberty. Kierkegaard considers such freedom chimerical:

That a bare and naked liberum arbitrium is a chimera is best seen by the difficulty, the long, long continuous effort, which is necessary merely to get rid of a habit, even if one ever so earnestly has made a resolution. (Journals and Papers, p.67, 1260)

That abstract freedom of choice (liberuma arbitrium) is a phantasy, as if a human being at every moment of his life stood continually in this abstract possibility, so that consequently he never moves from an historical condition - this has been pointed out by Augustine and many moderns.

It seems to me that the matter can be illuminated simply in the following way. Take a weight, even the most accurate gold weight - when it has been used only a week it already has a history. The owner knows this history, for example, that it leans towards off-balance one way or the other, etc. This history continues with use.

So it is with the will. It has a history, a continually progressive history. A person can go so far that he finally loses even the capacity of being able to choose. (Journals and Papers, p.73, 1268)

Instead, he advances a more reserved notion of freedom, couched

'being-able'¹⁶:

Liberum arbitrium, which can equally well choose the good or the evil, is basically an abrogation of the concept of freedom and a despair of any explanation of it. Freedom means to be capable."(Journals and Papers, pp.61-62, 1249)

...freedom's possibility is not the ability to choose the good or the evil. Such thoughtlessness is no more in the interests of scriptures than in the interest of thought. The possibility is to *be able*. (Anxiety, p.49, cf. also pp.49, 112)

'Being-able' pertains to one's ability to relate oneself to oneself (which depends in part on one's situatedness and necessity) and not the ability to choose this or that without reservation.¹⁷ This capacity for self-relation is the minimal condition of selfhood. (Indeed, it opens up the possibility of any choosing of this or that, of good or evil.) In Either/Or Kierkegaard calls this being-able 'positive' freedom and contrasts it with the negative freedom of indifference:

I am by no means confusing liberum arbitrium with true, positive freedom...(Either/Or II, p.174)

Following Kierkegaard, we shall hereafter understand the self as 'freedom'. Viewed in this way, the 'eternal in man' designates the permanence of freedom, by which we understand human being in its capacity to relate itself to itself by means of projection from within situatedness and a subsequent internalization into situatedness of this projection. Taylor puts the matter well:

The eternal component of the self system is nothing other than the self itself. But we have seen that he... equates the self properly so-called with freedom. Therefore, we can say that the eternal aspect of the self system is freedom... The eternal or unchanging dimension of the self system is the constant capacity of the self to relate itself (its ideal self, its possibilities, its infinitude) to itself (its real self, its actuality [i.e. possibility within necessity that becomes actuality and then hardens into one's current necessity or situatedness] its finitude). The eternal component of the self does not refer to a static substance, but designates the constant [eternal, unchanging] ability of the self to act or to resolve to strive to actualize certain possibilities in any given situation.(KPA, pp.116-117)

III) Temporality: A Final Explication

I return now to the question of temporality. Preliminary treatment of the issue revealed a bond between infinitude/possibility and futurity. I then deduced - admittedly, with minimal textual support - temporal analogues to finitude/necessity and concrete/actuality, namely, the past and present. I named this coherence of concepts the 'substructure of temporality'. The mere locution implied a further structure, what I proceeded to call the 'meta-structure'. Presentation of this second structure was schematic at best. I merely stated the dependence of the substructure on a prior synthesis of 'time and eternity' in the 'moment'. No further explanation was offered. The current discussion of temporality begins with the question of the 'meta-structure' and this 'prior synthesis'.

As we have seen, the self is freedom (or spirit); more accurately, the 'eternal in man' is freedom (or spirit). This eternal dimension, as we have also already seen, refers to the self's ability to relate itself to itself, i.e. its capacity for self-transcendence through self-relation. Kierkegaard explicates this capacity within the context of the synthesis of body and soul, of physical and psychical. In the Anxiety, however, Kierkegaard aligns the synthesis of body and soul with the synthesis of time and eternity - this latter synthesis is in fact considered just another expression of the former:

Man, then, is a synthesis of psyche and body, but he is also a *synthesis of the temporal and the eternal*. (Anxiety, p.85)

The synthesis of the temporal and the eternal is not another synthesis but is the expression for the first synthesis, according to which man is a synthesis of psyche and body that is sustained by spirit. As soon as spirit is posited, the moment is present. (Anxiety, p.88)

What can be made of this?

There are really two questions here. First, there is the question concerning the sense of the synthesis of time and eternity. There is, secondly, a question about the relation of this synthesis to the synthesis of body and soul. We take up these questions in order.

Kierkegaard begins with a purely formal construal of time. Time, he maintains, is "infinite succession", an endless sequence of identical 'nows'. The definition is lifted from Hegel. (cf. Hegel's Philosophy of Nature, pp.37-40) Contra Hegel, however, Kierkegaard maintains that the distinctions of past, present and future - temporality's substructure - are not internal to time as infinite succession:

...precisely because every moment, as well as the sum of the moments, is a process (a passing by), no moment is a present, and accordingly there is in time neither present, nor past, nor future. (Anxiety, p.85)

If we are to account for these distinctions something more is needed. Kierkegaard supplies 'the eternal'.¹⁸

As with time, Kierkegaard offers a provisional, formal definition of 'the eternal':

The eternal... is the present. For thought, the eternal is the present in terms of annulled succession (time is the succession that passes by).(Anxiety, p.86)

And again, as with pure time, the pure eternal cannot render an adequate account of human temporality:

So also in the eternal there is no division into the past and the future, because the present is posited as the annulled succession. (Anxiety, p.86)

When, however, the eternal - the purely present - is thought within time (and not as an empty logical concept), it provides a breach in time's infinite succession. This rift is the moment:

If... time and eternity touch each other, then it must be in time, and now we have come to the moment. (Anxiety, p.87)

The moment furnishes a reference - or what Kierkegaard calls a "foothold" (Anxiety, p.87) - within the infinite succession of time, allowing one to distinguish past, present and future.¹² In this toe-hold, then, lies the origin of human temporality:

The moment is that ambiguity in which time and eternity touch each other, and with this the concept of *temporality* is posited, whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time. As a result, the above-mentioned division acquires its significance: the present time, the past time, the future time. (Anxiety, p.89)

The moment also marks the source of human history:

Only with the moment does history begin. (Anxiety, p.89)

The Danish word for moment - which defies the script of my computer - is derived from the German Augenblick, 'the blink of an eye'. Kierkegaard exploits the imagery latent in the word in his discussion of the philosophic import of 'the moment':

'The moment' is a figurative expression, and therefore it is not easy to deal with. However, it is a beautiful word to consider. Nothing is as swift as a blink of the eye, and yet it is commensurable with the content of the eternal... A blink is therefore a designation of time, but mark well, of time in the fateful conflict when it is touched by eternity. (Anxiety, p.87)

The 'blink of an eye', like a frame in a motion picture, demarcates a certain instant of vision. This piece is whole or complete in the sense that it has an identity distinct from any other moment; and yet it preserves a continuity with other moments, past and future - indeed, its distinctness is bound up with this continuity. The integrity of each moment is grounded in its unity with the past and future: 'this moment' only is this moment in relation to both a previous and anticipated moment (which it is not), just as the flash of an eye is rendered intelligible by the relation of its contents to what has been (though this flash presents something novel nonetheless). The existentially authentic moment, then, is fused to the past and future.²⁰

We may speak of this moment - at least in its relation to the past and future - as the present. Kierkegaard rarely speaks this way. Yet we may do so in good conscience, since the present is in fact the temporal analogue to the moment - the moment occurs in the present. When, however, the discussion fastens on the content of the present, 'moment' is the better word, as it is evocative of a 'happening' in this now that is the present. I myself will follow Kierkegaard and speak mainly of the moment.

We move now to the second of the aforementioned questions, namely, the relation between the synthesis of time and eternity and that of body and soul.

As already mentioned, the synthesis of time and eternity is considered a further expression of the synthesis of body and soul.(cf. Anxiety, pp.85, 88) The point is founded in the parallels between the two polarities. The body meshes naturally with time. Our corporeal self is fixed in time: it grows and decays in accordance with a progression from which there is no escape. The soul, conversely, as the organ of possibility and projection, operates outside the flux of time. In this sense it is analogous to the eternal, i.e. the eternal as time-less. As we have also already seen, though, Kierkegaard uses the eternal in various sense.(cf. endnote 19, section II) The eternal, as a temporal signification, designates timelessness. The eternal also means permanence. Kierkegaard exploited the latter usage, we recall, in the discussion of spirit/freedom. Such employment of 'the eternal' is resumed in the explication of the moment:

If the moment is posited, so is the eternal...(Anxiety, p.90)

The eruption of spirit is in some sense synonymous with the birth of the moment.

The coincidence concerns the relation between the eternal (as spirit - the 'eternal in man') and futurity. We should hear the emergence of a third sense of eternal, i.e. the eternal as futurity.²¹

Initially, Kierkegaard asks us to note the futural connotations of the 'eternal' in our customary handling of the word:

Linguistic usage at times also takes the future as identical with the eternal (the future life - the eternal life).(Anxiety, p.89)

(He applied a similar strategy in his earlier discussion of the moment as 'the blink of an eye'. The implication here is that his philosophic distinctions are implicit in language itself - an important kinship for one who advances a doctrine designed to explicate existence, since, after all, language is rooted in human being.) At a deeper, more philosophically fundamental level, however, Kierkegaard argues that the unity of the eternal and futurity is grounded in the nature of the moment. The moment is essentially projective - the eye looks forward as it blinks. As such, that which is present in the moment is first signaled in futurity. The moment is tangible futurity:

The future is not by itself but in simple continuity with the present. (Anxiety, p.90)

This moment, first palpable futurity, fast hardens and becomes the past:

The moment and the future in turn posit the past. (Anxiety, p.89)

One does not get the past by itself but in a simple continuity with the future. (Anxiety, p.90)

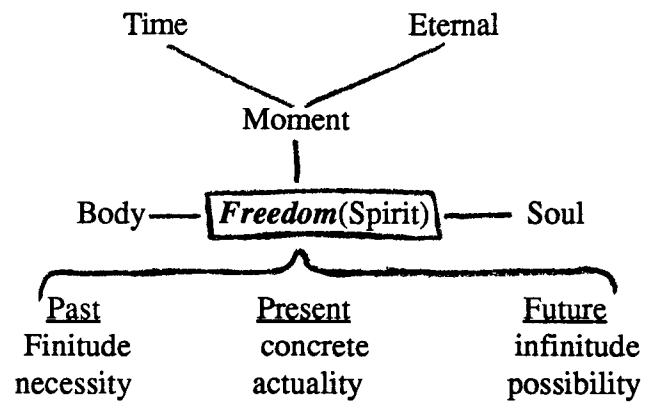
Past and present (or the moment), then, are outgrowths of the future:

...the future in a certain sense signifies more than the present and past, because in a certain sense the future is the whole of which the past is a part, and the future can in a certain sense signify the whole. This is because the eternal first signifies the future or because the future is the incognito in which the eternal, even though it is incommensurable with time, nevertheless preserves its association with time. (*Anxiety*, p.89)²²

The passage returns us to freedom/spirit, the 'eternal in man'. The futural orientation of the moment rests ultimately on the prior prospective bearing of the self. Freedom/spirit is fundamentally 'projective', or what we have also called 'self-relating'. This enjoins futurity - we here recall the kinship between possibility, the mode of the self in projection, and the future; and so freedom/spirit, though eternal, finds itself implicated in time simply in virtue of its own projectiveness, which wants the temporal designations past, present and, most notably, the future. Thus the synthesis of soul and body, the locus of freedom/spirit, is simultaneously the synthesis of time and the eternal, the source of the past, present and future:

The synthesis of the psychical and the physical is to be posited by spirit; but spirit is eternal, and the synthesis is, therefore, only when spirit posits the first synthesis along with the second synthesis of the temporal [he does not here distinguish between time and eternity, though he should] and the eternal... Just as... the spirit, when it is about to be posited in the synthesis, or, more correctly, when it is about to posit the synthesis as the spirit's (freedom's) possibility in the individuality... So here the future in turn is the eternal's (freedom's) possibility in the individuality... For freedom, the possible is the future, and the future is for time the possible. (*Anxiety*, pp.90-91)

The structure of human selfhood is summarized in the following diagram, which will serve as a conclusion to this second section:²³



No, to be in error is , quite un-Socratically, what men fear least of all. There are amazing examples that amply illustrate this. A thinker erects a huge building, a system, a system embracing the whole of existence, world history, etc., and if his personal life is considered, to our amazement the appalling and ludicrous discovery is made that he himself does not personally live in this huge, domed palace but a shed alongside it, or in a doghouse, or at best in the janitor's quarters. (The Sickness Unto Death, pp.43-44)

III Objectivity Reconsidered

Let us resume the problematic abandoned after the initial section. I, on behalf of Kierkegaard, there chastised objective knowing - at the level of the human subject only, please note - as a category error. The rather bold assertion begged an array of questions, particularly a question concerning the nature of the human subject. The second section resolved this issue. The constitution of the human subject is now clear. The question again arises, in what sense is objective knowing inappropriate for this subject?

There are actually two questions here. There is, first, the issue of the utility of objective knowing to the human subject in the ongoing projection and internalization of itself. Simply stated, what is the status of objective knowing with regard to the self's self-relation? There is also a methodological question. My explication of the human subject - i.e. the structure of selfhood -; or rather Kierkegaard's treatment of the human subject, which I merely re-presented, was itself a philosophic enquiry. On the face of it, this analysis seems to employ the cognitive techniques questioned in the initial section. On

what grounds can we allow such consideration of the human subject? We shall call this latter, methodological problem the meta-question; and we shall address it following the former issue.

III A) Objective Knowing as Despair

The discussion of selfhood was lifted primarily from The Sickness Unto Death. There is something instantly alarming about the location: selfhood amidst 'sickness unto death'?... Indeed, the sickness is difficult to endure, at least psychologically so; yet it is also disclosive of the fundamental structure of human being, and this is a positive possibility.

Despair is misrelation of the self in self-relation. The self, as we have seen, is "a relation that relates itself to itself". (Sickness, p.13) The act of self-relation is two-fold. It consists of a projection from within finitude - an imaginative infinitization of the self (as projection); and a subsequent internalization of this projection into finitude (as necessity). A dual sense of the self is implicit in this construal. In a formal, structural sense, the self is the action of self-projection and internalization, or rather the principle animating the self-relating constitutive of selfhood. This formal self is freedom (or spirit), 'the eternal in man', what I have also called 'the self itself'.¹ Freedom is the condition of the possibility of what we may, with some indulgence, call the 'empirical' self. This is the concrete, actual self composed of that which is internalized into finitude.² Despair fastens particularly onto the empirical self. (If it pertained to the formal self, then, as Kierkegaard suggests, "despair would be something that lies in human nature as such". Sickness, p.16) In despair, the empirical self, properly a unity of finitude and infinitude in finitude, is fragmented. The dispersal refers to a "misrelation" between the infinitized, possible self and the finite, necessary self.

Misrelation can take two forms. From the side of infinitude, despair is the self's inability to internalize its idealized self into finitude. This is despair of infinitude. In its most naive, benign form despair of the infinite is oversight or absentmindedness . The self simply projects something which is in principle uninternalizable. This betrays a lack of self-

understanding, i.e. it reveals an ignorance of the necessity of one's finitude, and of the particular limitations that constitute one's own finitude. But the self can also 'plunge headlong' into the fantastical. The result is the same on both fronts: loss of finitude/necessity, loss of self:

When feeling or knowing or willing has become fantastic, the entire self can eventually become that, whether in the more active form of plunging headlong into fantasy or in the more passive form of being carried away... The self, then, leads a fantasized existence in abstract infinitizing or in abstract isolation, continually lacking itself, from which it moves further and further away. (Sickness, p.32)

...if possibility outruns necessity so that the self runs away from itself in possibility, it has no necessity to which it is to return; this is possibility's despair. The self becomes an abstract possibility; it flounders in possibility until exhausted but neither moves from the place where it is nor arrives anywhere for necessity is literally that place. (Sickness, p.36)

Loss of self is also possible from the side of finitude. The self now binds itself to finitude, to necessity and resists any idealized self-projection. Kierkegaard considers this a denial of one's "primitivity". (Sickness, p.33) Projection, of course, is the medium of self-transformation. It allows us to be what we can be. In rejecting projection, then, the self loses - to use a Heideggerian phrase - itself as its ownmost possibility. Self-transformation becomes the process of adapting to the situation at hand. Possibilities are no longer self-given, but rather lifted from one's environment, and the self is a mere reflection of the contingent necessities - if the oxymoron is allowed - of its context and not its own "essential contingencies":

Every human being is primitively intended to be a self, destined to become himself, and as such every self is certainly angular, but that only means that it is to be ground into shape, not that it is ground down smooth, not that it is utterly to abandon itself out of fear of men, or even simply out of fear of men not to dare to be itself in its more essential contingency (which is definitely not to be ground down smooth), in which a person is still himself for himself. (Sickness, p.33)

This leveling of one's "essential contingency" is the despair of finitude.

As a psychological phenomenon, despair is the sense that something is amiss, namely, the self. One cannot live exclusively in possibility or necessity, despite the innocence and earnestness that may accompany the attempt. Such univocalness violates the existential conditions imposed on the self simply in virtue of its constitution as a 'self-relating', as freedom. The self experiences this unsettling as a loss, but the feeling is unspecific and the self may easily persevere in its incompleteness.(cf. Sickness, pp.32-33, 35)

When accompanied by consciousness, however, despair is far more destructive, or shall we say: "self-destructive". The self that was previously sundered now bears an active annihilation of some aspect of itself. But the self always resists such negation. One cannot simply wish away the whole of necessity or possibility, or even some particular aspect thereof.² Yet the self is insistent. It demands that, say, necessity; more particularly, some aspect of necessity, like one's nationality, should excuse itself from existence. Again, necessity refuses: one remains Ukrainian/Romanian/French/English - in sum, Canadian. This tension raises despair to its maximal pitch, and the loathsome aspect of the self now becomes intolerable. (And I do not mean for one to continue my example, and assume I consider my mongrel Canadianness loathsome or intolerable - nothing could be further from my meaning.) This intolerableness announces 'the sickness unto death'. The phrase is deceiving. There is no death here, and precisely therein lies the "torment" of the sickness.(Sickness, p.18) The self would like itself to die away, but the self refuses to go away and, moreover, the self knows it cannot entirely negate itself. Kierkegaard makes an example of Cesare Borgia, the man who would be "Caesar of nothing":

...when the ambitious man... does not get to be Caesar, he despairs over it. But this also means something else: precisely because he did not get to be Caesar, he cannot now bear to be himself. Consequently he does not despair because he did not get to be Caesar but despairs over himself because he did not get to be Caesar... If he had become Caesar, he

would despairingly get rid of himself, but he did not become Caesar and cannot despairingly get rid of himself. Essentially, he is just as despairing, for he does not have his self, is not himself. He would not have become himself by becoming Caesar but would have been rid of himself, and by not becoming Caesar he despairs over not being able to get rid of himself. Thus it is superficial for someone (who probably has never seen anyone in despair, not even himself) to say of a person in despair: he is consuming himself. But this is precisely what he in his despair [wants] and this is precisely what he to his torment cannot do, since the despair has inflamed something that cannot burn or be burned up in the self. (Sickness, p.19)

On its own terms, objective knowing has nothing to do with despair, much less any 'sickness unto death'. Despair, we recall, pertains to selfhood. It is a disposition toward oneself. But objective knowing - at least for the most part - has nothing to do with the human subject. It is simply math or logic or metaphysics or historiology etc. Kierkegaard allows the truth of these disciplines, and so also objective knowing when restricted to its proper domain. (In this he distinguishes himself from Nietzsche and later existential thinkers.) The despair begins as objectivity encroaches in on the existing, human subject. As we have seen, objective knowing produces two results at the level of the human subject. When least successful - 'least successful', that is, considering its own goal of timeless certainty - it leads to 'approximation knowledge'; as human being, a concrete, ever-changing being defies any final determination. (cf. CUP, pp.189-190) There is something perverse in the attempt, though, despite its failure. It betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the human subject, i.e. it ignores the dimension of self-transcendence through self-relation which undergirds the transitoriness of the human subject. (This is why objective knowing at the level of the human subject can be considered a category error.) At its best - again, 'best' refers to the standards objectivity sets for itself - objective knowing yields tautology. The human subject becomes a purely abstract being, structured by the prior dictates of a 'method' or a previously established metaphysics. This procures a philosophic construal of the human subject. Granted. But the human subject is no longer a self (and all selfhood entails). It is rather fodder for a philosophic method, or a piece of an

already cognized world - to use Kierkegaard's favorite knock on the Hegelians of his day, the human subject is 'section 14 of the system'.

This tautology, then, proves much more ruinous than mere logical redundancy - indeed it concerns the very possibility of formal repetitiveness. Tautology is, after all, an empty, logical designation; but the present tautology negates the existence of the being that would think in a tautologous manner. This reveals a second level of tautology, what we may call the '*meta*-tautology' or, given its connection with the being of a thinker, the *ontological* tautology. At this deeper, more ontologically fundamental level of questioning, objective knowing, the medium of this specious tautology, exposes its immanent contradiction, namely, that it undermines its own essential condition: the existing human subject:

Objectively understood, thinking is pure thinking, which just as abstractly objectively corresponds to its object, which in turn is therefore itself, and truth is in turn the correspondence of thinking with itself. This objective thinking has no relation to the existing subjectivity, and while the difficult question always remains - namely, how the existing subject gains entrance into this objectivity in which subjectivity is pure abstract subjectivity (which again is an objective qualification and does not signify any existing human being) - it is certain that the existing subjectivity evaporates more and more. And finally, if it is possible that a human being can become such a thing and that all this is not something of which he at best can become cognizant through imagination, this existing subjectivity becomes pure abstract co-knowledge in and knowledge of this pure relation between thinking and being, this pure identity, indeed this tautology, because here being does not mean that the thinking person is, but basically only that he is a thinker.(CUP, pp.123-124)

The despair of objective knowing resides in this leveling of the existing human subject.

The self of objective knowing is in principle in-appropriate-able. This objective self can be thought. In this there is no difficulty. But one can neither live in objectivity, nor become the self it discloses. The self that tries on either front is lost. In the Sickness, Kierkegaard includes this phenomenon under the general rubric 'despair of infinitude':

So also with knowing, when it becomes fantastic. The law for the development of the self with respect to knowing, insofar as it is the case that the self becomes itself, is that the increase of knowledge corresponds to the increase of self-knowledge, that the more the self knows, the more it knows itself. If this does not happen, the more knowledge increases, the more it becomes a kind of inhuman knowledge, in the obtaining of which a person's self is squandered... When... knowing... has become fantastic, the entire self can eventually become that, whether in the more active form of plunging headlong into fantasy or in the more passive form of being carried away, but in both cases the person is responsible. The self, then, leads a fantasized existence in abstract infinitizing or in abstract isolation, continually lacking its self, from which it only moves further and further away. (Sickness, pp.31-32)

He does not offer any examples of such fantastical knowing in the Sickness, however. For specific instances one must turn to the Postscript, wherein, happily, Kierkegaard renders the point in the language of idealism and empiricism - 'empiricist', that is, given my Cartesian treatment of the term in the opening section. Consider first the reference to 'fantasticalness' in the poke at Fichte's $I=I$, the cockcrow of the 'absolute' subject:

But where is this point? The $I-I$ is a mathematical point that does not exist at all; accordingly anyone can readily take up this standpoint - no one stands in the way of anyone else... The fantastical $I-I$ is not infinitude and finitude in identity, since neither the one nor the other is actual; it is a fantastical union with a cloud, an unfruitful embrace, and the relation of the individual I to this mirage is never stated.(CUP, p.197, cf. also p.117)⁴

Descartes' cogito is a similar chimera, according to Kierkegaard:

The Cartesian cogito ergo sum has been repeated often enough. If the I in the cogito is understood to be an individual human being, then the statement demonstrates nothing: *I am* thinking, no wonder, then, that I am; after all, it has already been said, and the first consequently says even more than the last. If, then, by the I in cogito, one understands a single individual existing human being, philosophy shouts: Foolishness, foolishness here it is not a matter of my I or of your I but of the pure I ... What, then, is the concluding formula supposed to mean; indeed, there is no conclusion, for then the statement is a tautology.(CUP, p.317)⁵

Though the critique in the Postscript so obviously mirrors that in the Sickness, Kierkegaard does not explicitly mention despair in the Postscript - at least not in the

context of the relation between selfhood and objective knowing. He speaks instead of "lunacy":⁶

But [in the opinion of objectivity] one does not become a lunatic by becoming objective. At this point I might perhaps add a little comment that does not seem superfluous in an objective age. Is the absence of inwardness also lunacy? The objective truth as such does not at all decide that the one stating it is sensible; on the contrary, it can even betray that the man is a lunatic, although what he says is entirely true and especially objectively true.(CUP, p.194)

As an example of such insanity, Kierkegaard asks us to envision a man who would escape from a madhouse. "It occurs to him (shall I say he was sagacious enough or lunatic enough to have this whimsical idea?): when you arrive in the city, you will be recognized and will be very likely taken back right away. What you need to do, then, is to convince everyone completely, by the objective truth of what you say, that all is well as far as you sanity is concerned.(CUP, p.195) So the madman settles on an objective truth, namely, the roundness of the earth, which he offers as proof of his sanity. But the offering is off. There is a discordance between the content of the truth and the way in which and the reason for which it is presented. The lunatic proclaims, to all who would listen: "Boom! The earth is round." This is surely "a truth universally accepted and universally regarded as objective"(CUP, p.195); and yet the barmy effuse is detected for what it is. Objective certainty, then, serves as no assurance of sanity. The missing component is existential appropriation, what Kierkegaard will also express as *inwardness* - that which has inwardness is that which is appropriated, is being appropriated or is at least in principle appropriateable. The lunatic parrots away about the roundness of the earth (which no one denies), but the very parroting betrays that his speech has no mooring in existence. Alternatively put, his speech is an infinitude not amenable to finitude.⁷ The man *is* not 'the roundness of the earth', nor can he rightly offer this objective truth as a guarantee of his own self-possession:

...when the insanity is the absence of inwardness, the comic is that the something known by the blissful person is the truth, truth that pertains to the whole human race but does not in the least pertain to the highly honored parroter [that the parroter should be "highly honored" suggests an oblique thrust at scholars/philosophers. Common lunatics armed with objective truths are not "highly honored"](CUP, p.196)

In a crucial footnote Kierkegaard advances the same point in the terminology of finitude and infinitude:

...madness never has the inwardness of infinity. Its fixed idea is a kind of objective something and the contradiction of madness lies in wanting to embrace it with passion. The decisive factor in madness... is... the little infinitude that becomes fixed, something the infinite can never become.[The phrasing here is obviously a little strong. Some infinity can become finite, as we have already learned, otherwise there could be no human transformation. The point is merely that objective knowing is pure infinitude and can never become finitude](CUP, p.194)⁸

Of course, objective thinkers (philosophers, scientists) are not 'lunatics', at least not in the strict medical sense of the term. They are much more sophisticated in their self-dispossession. Objective thinkers are like schizophrenics, on Kierkegaard's account. (Not much of an improvement, I suppose.) The personality split concerns a disharmony of thought and existence. As objective thinkers, philosophers think in categories animated by pure logic or metaphysics or epistemology etc. But these categories have no existential utility. One does not appeal to modus tollens or materialism in order to decide whether one should become a sculptor rather than an actor. Thus objective thinkers must exist in categories distinct from their speculative thinking (though they may refuse to admit this duality, much less dignify the existential categories with serious, philosophic consideration):

The thinker who in all his thinking can forget to think conjointly that he is existing does not explain existence; he makes an attempt to cease to be a human being, to become a book or an objective something that only a Munchhausen can become. That objective thinking has its reality is not denied, [but]... even if a man his whole life through occupies himself exclusively with logic, he still does not become logic; he himself therefore exists in

other categories. Now, if he finds that this is not worth thinking about, then let him have his way. It will scarcely be a pleasure for him to learn that existence mocks the one who keeps on wanting to become purely objective.(CUP, p.93)

Sight of this bifurcation between thought and existence is often concealed by otherwise normal living. Indeed, the objective thinker may live "fairly well":

But to become fantastic in this way, and thus to be in despair, does not mean although it usually becomes apparent, that a person cannot go on living fairly well, seem to be a man, be occupied with temporal matters, marry, have children, be honored and esteemed - and it may not be detected that in a deeper sense he lacks a self.(Sickness, p.32)

The quality of one's existence (or at least its external appearance), given such a dualism, is entirely contingent on the thinker in question. Some will become 'world-historical' scholars; others, as Kierkegaard warns, become books. On both counts, however, there is a loss of self - the ability to get by in the world despite this loss is only a bonus, not a corrective to the despair. The objective thinker, for all his/her fame, still knows nothing of him/herself, according to Kierkegaard:

When a person as a learner enthusiastically relates in this way to such a German Professor, he accomplishes the most superb epigram upon, him because a speculator of that sort is anything but served by a learner's honest and enthusiastic zeal for expressing and accomplishing, for existentially appropriating his wisdom, since this wisdom is something that the Herr Professor himself has imagined and has written books about but has never attempted himself. It has not even occurred to him that it should be done. Like the customs clerk who, in the belief that his business was merely to write, wrote that he himself could not read, so there are speculative thinkers who merely write, and write that which, if it is to be read with the aid of action, if I may put it that way, proves to be nonsense, unless it is perhaps intended only for fantastical beings.(CUP, p.191)

...when one considers an abstract thinker who is unwilling to make clear to himself and to admit the relation his abstract thinking has to his being an existing person, he makes a comic impression, even if he is ever so distinguished, because he is about to cease to be a human being. Whereas an actual human being composed of the infinite and the finite [in concreteness] and infinitely interested in his thinking has his actuality precisely in holding these together [note the switch to modal language in order to describe the way one is a concrete composition of finitude and infinitude], such a abstract creature is a double creature, a fantastic creature who lives in the pure being of abstraction, and an at times pitiful professional figure which that abstract creature sets down just as one sets down a

cane. [Earlier on Kierkegaard refers to a philosopher as a "walking stick" (CUP, p.196)] When reading the biography of such a thinker (for his books may very well be excellent), one sometimes shudders at the thought of what it means to be a human being. Even if a lacemaker made lace ever so lovely, it is still sad to think of this poor stunted creature, and thus it is comic to see a thinker who, despite all his bravura, personally did marry but was scarcely acquainted with or moved by the power of love, whose marriage therefore was presumably as impersonal as his thinking, whose personal life was without pathos and without passionate struggles and was philistinely concerned only about which university provided the best job. One would suppose that such a misrelation would be an impossibility in thinking; one would suppose that it would belong only to the wretchedness of the external world, where one human being slaves for the other, so that one cannot admire the lace without tears if one thinks of the lacemaker. One would believe that a thinker would lead the richest human life - so it was in Greece. (CUP, pp.302-303)²

So far, this reconsideration of objective knowing, though a general reconsideration, has made particular reference to the problematic of the first half of the initial section of the thesis, namely, the question concerning tautology and the empirical and idealist notions of truth - hence the inclusion of Descartes and Fichte (and indirectly Kant) in the present discussion. But the latter end of the opening section - that is, Hegel and the question of mediation - has yet to receive re-evaluation. We treat this issue now.

Earlier on, already in the first section, you may recall, I hinted at the inability of the existing human subject to 'exist' in the principle of mediation. We have now seen this issue played out with regard to objective knowing broadly taken. The incongruity of mediation and human existence parallels the general existential bankruptcy of objective knowing. This new issue, then, meshes well with the prior discussion of this third section.

Mediation, like all objective knowing, enjoins a certain leveling of the existing human subject. As already mentioned in the introductory section, one must abstract - radically abstract - from existence in order to intellectually annul real, tangible opposition, e.g. the opposition of good and evil. (cf. CUP, pp.399, 305 and 203); or, more germane to Kierkegaard's philosophy as a whole, the opposition of the religious and the philosophical - the either/or of Fear and Trembling. Through this abstraction the existing individual

becomes, again, 'fantastical' - an abstract someone, the 'Absolute subject', the phenomenological 'we'. This is not an existing human being, according to Kierkegaard; nor can a human being relate itself in existence toward this objective self:

...can mediation... help the existing person so that he himself, as long as he is existing, becomes mediation, which is, after all, sub specie aeterni, whereas the poor existing one is existing? It certainly does not help to make a fool of a person, to entice him with the subject-object when he himself is prevented from entering into the state in which he can relate himself to it, prevented because he himself, by virtue of existing is in the process of becoming... [W]ith the subject-object of mediation we have merely reverted to abstraction...(CUP, p.192)

Objective knowledge can certainly have the existent as its object, but since the knowing subject is existing and himself in the process of becoming by existing, speculative thought must first explain how a particular existing subject relates himself to knowledge of mediation, what he is at the moment, whether, for example, he is not at that very moment rather absentminded, and where he is, whether he is not on the moon. There is continual talk about mediation and mediation. Is mediation, then, a human being...? How does a human being go about becoming something of that sort?... Just try to become involved with these and other similar simple questions raised by a simple human being, who would very much like to be mediation if he could become that in a legitimate and honorable manner, and not either by saying [one, two, three, hocus pocus] or by forgetting that he himself is an existing human being... To a speculative thinker it may seem [in bad taste] to ask questions in this way, but it is especially important not to polemicize in the wrong place and hence not to begin fantastically-objectively a pro and contra as to whether or not there is mediation, but firmly to maintain what it means to be a human being.(CUP, p.198)

Mediation, then, is an infinitude that cannot become finitude, like the self of the Cartesian cogito (the 'thinking substance'), or Fichte's *I-I*. There is no existential appropriation of mediation. One simply cannot become the being that reconciles opposition into a higher unity and, at the same time, remain a human being in existence. The self that attempts to do so, as Kierkegaard suggests is lost in the fantasticalness of speculative thought.

On this score, mediation is of a piece with objective knowing generally. It is just another of so many inappropriate-able principles, the non-speculative, existential appeal to which signals the onset of the despair of infinitude. But there is something particularly

subversive about mediation. Explication of this matter will justify my rather enigmatic introduction to this subsection on objectivity and despair: we shall see that despair contains a positive possibility.

In the Logic, Hegel defines necessity - and "rightly so", he maintains - as "the union of possibility and actuality".(p.208) The position is attacked savagely in the important "Interlude" of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments, in which he undermines the mediating role of logical necessity in the transition from possibility to actuality.(cf.pp.73-75) The discussion is cast in the language of modality. But the issue is more complicated now. We have in fact a juxtaposition of two senses of modality. In the Fragments, Kierkegaard contrasts the 'speculative' with what we may, with some indulgence, call the 'existential', disclosure of modality. (I was not required to force such a distinction in earlier discussions, where only Kierkegaard's existential modality was at issue.) The speculative position is, of course, Hegel's position. He speaks of modality under the general rubric 'essence'. Kierkegaard as already suggested, considers modality as gradations of 'being'.(cf. Fragments, p.74) The quarrel, then, concerns the transition from possibility to actuality at the level of being vs. the same movement at the level of speculative essence.

Between possibility and actuality, according to Kierkegaard, there is an absolute modal distinction. Possibility *is* not; actuality *is*. The transition from possibility to actuality, from non-being to being, requires an annulment of possibility, wherein its modal status is transformed. Kierkegaard speaks of this negation as an 'annihilation' of possibility:

All coming into existence is a *suffering*, and the necessary cannot suffer, cannot suffer the suffering of actuality - namely, that the possible (not merely the possible that is excluded but even the possibility that is accepted) turns out to be nothing the more actual, for possibility is *annihilated* by actuality.(Fragments, p.74)

This modal movement is contingent, on Kierkegaard's account. There is nothing immanent in possibility - e.g., some necessary logical ground (cf. Hegel's Logic, pp.180, 209) - that ensures its transition into actuality:

Precisely by coming into existence, everything that comes into existence demonstrates that it is not necessary, for the only thing that cannot come into existence is the necessary, because the necessary *is*. (Fragments, p.74)

As the passage suggests, necessity, from the standpoint of modality, is necessary being. It cannot become, it cannot 'come into existence'. It simply *is*. Kierkegaard concludes that the necessary stands alone, outside the dialectic of 'coming into existence'. So much undermines the mediating role of necessity in the transition from possibility to actuality affirmed by speculative thought:

Necessity stands all by itself. Nothing whatever comes into existence by way of necessity, no more than necessity comes into existence or anything in coming into existence becomes the necessary. Nothing whatever exists because it is necessary, but the necessary exists because it is necessary or because the necessary *is*. The actual is no more necessary than the possible, for the necessary is absolutely different from both. (Fragments, pp.74-75; cf. also the "note", CUP, p.343; and CUP vol.II, p.76, journal entry VI B 54:21, where Kierkegaard suggests that this topic requires much more work than he can afford)

The transition from possibility to actuality occurs instead "in freedom":

The change of coming into existence takes place in freedom. No coming into existence is necessary - not before it came into existence, for then it cannot come into existence, and not after it has come into existence, for then it has not come into existence... All coming into existence occurs in freedom, not by way of necessity. (Fragments, p.75)

In the Sickness, the controversy re-emerges in the context of the despair of possibility:

The philosophers are mistaken when they explain necessity as a union of possibility and actuality - no, actuality is the unity of possibility and necessity. (p.36, cf. also p.15)

The continuity of the doctrine invites us to transpose the rather formal discussion in the Fragments into the treatment of selfhood found in the Sickness. (This will add some much needed content to the dialectic of possibility and actuality.)

Human self-relation, we recall, begins with infinitization. The self (freedom) infinitizes itself into manifold forms inspired in some sense by finitude - we don't just infinitize ourselves out of nothing. As hypothetical or contingent, these infinities are 'possibilities'. Let us refer to them as such. In the action of self-relation, the self (freedom) peruses a menu of possibilities and selects a single possibility.¹⁰ The remaining possibilities are at once annihilated. (As we have seen, Kierkegaard is concerned with possibilities that confront the human subject with 'absolute disjunction'. These are, so to speak, the existentially interesting possibilities: we are not talking about walking and chewing gum which, to reverse the cliché, *can* be done at the same time.) This is the first aspect of the annihilation of possibility.(cf. Fragments, p.74) Concurrent with this negation of disregarded possibility, however, is a modal annihilation of the privileged possibility. In this second, modal annihilation of possibility (again, simultaneous with though different from the first), the chosen possibility is annulled *as* possibility and transposed into necessity, thereby becoming actual.(cf. Fragments, p.74) This transposition occurs in Freedom, i.e. it occurs through the self-activity of the human subject, the human self:

The self is composed of infinitude and finitude. However, this synthesis is a relation, and a relation that... relates itself to itself, which is freedom. The self is freedom. But freedom is the dialectical aspect of the categories of possibility and necessity.(Sickness, p.29)

Possibility and necessity are equally essential to becoming (and the self has the task of becoming itself in freedom).(Sickness, p.35)

I ask the reader to pay special attention to the mention of 'task'.(cf. also Sickness, p.29) It is precisely the labour of selfhood that the speculative dialectic of possibility and actuality threatens to conceal. Hegelian mediation is 'particularly subversive' because,

unlike other manifestations of objective thought, it introduces motion into logic itself, replacing (at least theoretically) the voluntary activity of the human subject that renders possibility actual with the onward progression from possibility to actuality in accordance with logical necessity.(cf. Dupre, The Constitution of the Self in Kierkegaard's Philosophy, p.510)

At the level of the existing human subject, however, possibility, as we have seen, does not simply coast into actuality by means of a logical ground. Rather, the transition is the product of a "cause":

Nothing coming into existence comes into existence by way of a ground, but everything by way of a cause.(Fragments, p.75)

Less formally, the transition from possibility (non-being) to actuality (being) is the work of human self-relation.¹¹ The work is hard. It requires a certain existential resolve. Kierkegaard alerts us to the hardship of self-relation in the Sickness, in the emphasis on "self-consciousness" and "will":

Generally speaking, consciousness - that is, self-consciousness - is decisive with regard to the self. The more consciousness, the more self; the more consciousness, the more will; the more will, the more self. A person who has no will at all is not a self; but the more will he has, the more self-consciousness he has also.(p.29)

One must consciously will to be oneself. Said in the language of possibility and actuality, one must consciously will possibility into necessity, creating in this necessity actuality.¹²

The self without the self-awareness and will requisite for the task of self-relation is lost.

Ironically, however, our ability to fail in the work of self-relation undergirds the whole enterprise of self-relation. Herein lies the positive possibility of despair. If the self were always itself, if, that is, there were no possibility of misrelation, then so also there could be no authentic (free) self-relation, and the human self would be a non-projecting,

static being. Thus Kierkegaard concludes that the capacity for "sickness" (despair) distinguishes human from animal being¹³:

Is despair an excellence or a defect? Purely dialectically, it is both. If only the abstract idea of despair is concerned, without any thought of someone in despair, it must be regarded as a surpassing excellence. The possibility of this sickness is man's superiority over the animal, and this superiority distinguishes him in quite another way than does his erect walk, for it indicates infinite erectness of sublimity, that he is spirit [rendered modally, that he *is* freedom]. (Sickness, pp.14-15)

There is an implicit methodological irony here as well. Despair - the fracture of the self - opens up the possibility of a radical insight into the structure of human being:

...despairing lies in man himself. If he were not a synthesis, he would not despair at all. (Sickness, p.16)

The synthetic nature of human being is only disclosed in the misrelation - the non-synthesis - of infinitude/possibility and finitude/necessity, the constituents of the self as synthesis.¹⁴

There is a further and, ostensibly, less felicitous ironic nuance at play. This analysis of human being under duress, i.e. in despair, parallels the commitment of modern science - that great edifice of objective knowing - to treat nature under 'vexation', in the words of Bacon.

I do not want to push the issue too far - how far could one press a kinship between science and Kierkegaard? The point, of course, is that to be human is to be in duress, the duress that is the task of self-relation. To consider human being under such vexation is only to treat human nature naturally. That Kierkegaard, despite his professed 'unscientificity', should bear such a resemblance to the experimental procedure of modern science is, nonetheless, ironic. This noted, we turn to the larger question of methodology.

III B) Objectivity in Kierkegaard ?

I have, with and through Kierkegaard, advanced both preliminary and retrospective criticisms of objective knowing.(cf. sections I and III A) The objections presuppose a certain understanding of the existing human subject; better, an understanding of human selfhood: the self is 'a relation that relates itself to itself'. That objective knowing, at the level of the human subject, is a 'category error' or 'highway one to despair' makes sense only amidst the backdrop of dynamic self-relation. were human being not a 'self-relating', neither contention could be sustained. Objective knowing would then be the origin of truth, both for things and human beings; and any existential supplementation of objective knowing would be, at best, superfluous. The question arises, however: what is the status of this construal of selfhood? So much depends upon the description of the self, and yet the nature and origin of this description is somewhat mysterious. Is self-relation an imaginative, speculative hypothesis? A purely personal and contingent principle? Or is it in fact an a-historical, necessary - in a word, objective - feature of the constitution of human selfhood and existence? On the face of the issue, this latter alternative seems most plausible. The human metaphysical relation to 'self-relating' is not up for grabs - at least not in the Sickness. Self-relating belongs equally and at all times to all, simply in virtue of the human constitution as freedom (or spirit), though one may for various reasons fail in the task of self-relation. The apparent universality of self-relation poses a curious challenge to the general attack on objectivity. Kierkegaard must distinguish the seeming objectivity of his own construal of human being from the objectivisms of past metaphysicians.

The issue tolerates further clarification. There is both a *methodological* and, for lack of a better word, *metaphysical* dimension to the question of objectivity. The

methodological matter is fairly obvious. In fine, Kierkegaard must offer some explanation of how he arrives at his conclusions regarding the nature of human selfhood and being. This is not another episode in the tyrannic rule of epistemology. I am merely suggesting that Kierkegaard ought to provide some elucidation of the mode of enquiry animating the disclosure of his principles. The metaphysical issue concerns the nature of the conclusions themselves. On this front, we want to know what Kierkegaard's principles *are* - not how they are derived - that we might evaluate their appropriateness. He must distinguish himself from ago-old objectivisms on both scores.

Neither controversy is broached in the Sickness. Here, we recall, Kierkegaard asserts the self-relating character of human being quite baldly.(cf. pp.13-14) There is no defense of self-relation, nor any defense of the non-defense. Kierkegaard speaks instead of the way in which we approach the task of self-relation, the work of becoming oneself. The evasiveness is repeated in the Anxiety. Insight into the constitution of human being is unabashedly presupposed in the Fragments:

...in order to get started, let us state a bold proposition: let us assume that we know what a human being is.(p.38)

Apparently, we are to concede him some evident understanding of human being in general. The denial of the "Socratic theory of... every human being as universal man", Kierkegaard contends, leaves one prey to skeptical quietude on one side, and Protagorean - all-to-Protagorean - relativism on the other.(cf. Fragments, p.38; cf. also Mackey, Kierkegaard And The Problem Of Existential Philosophy, II, p.581) The inconclusiveness of the foregoing texts is bothersome but tolerable, since, after all, Kierkegaard's concerns therein are not explicitly methodological, nor are they precisely enquiries into the essence of human being; but in the Postscript this fugitive philosophizing is inexcusable.

My intolerance is well founded. In the Postscript Kierkegaard mingles attacks on objective renderings of human being with his own ostensibly objective, universal treatment of the human subject. Very early on, in the context of denying the possibility of a 'system' of existence, he mentions the existential poverty of the "human in general", a circumlocution for all general descriptions of human being:

So let us ask very simply, as a Greek youth would ask his master..., about the impossibility of a system of existence: who is supposed to write or finish such a system? Surely a human being, unless we are to resume the peculiar talk about a human being's becoming speculative thought, a subject-object. Consequently, a human and surely a living, that is, an existing, human being. Or if the speculative thought that produces this system is a joint effort of these various thinkers, in what final conclusion does this fellowship combine? How does it come to light? Surely through a human being? And how, in turn, do the individual thinkers relate themselves to this effort; what are the middle terms between the particular and the world-historical; and in turn what sort of being is the one who is stringing it all on the systematic thread? Is he a human being or is he speculative thought? But if he is a human being then he is indeed existing.

Now, all in all, there are two ways for an existing individual: either he can do everything to forget that he is existing and thereby manage to become comic... because existence possesses the remarkable quality that existing person exists whether he wants to or not; or he can direct his attention to existing. It is from this that an objection must first be made to modern speculative thought, that it has not a false presupposition but a comic presupposition, occasioned by its having forgotten in a kind of world-historical absentmindedness what it means to be a human being, not what it means to be human in general, for even speculators might be swayed to consider that sort of thing, but what it means that we, you and I and he, are human beings, each one on his own.(CUP, p.120)

To do philosophic justice to the existing human subject, apparently, one must focus on particular human beings, not some nebulous mass man, 'man in general', the phenomenological 'we', the 'thinking substance', the '*I-I*' etc. Much later on, however, amidst a discussion of 'actual subjectivity', Kierkegaard offers a rather formal, general account of actuality:

Actuality is an *inter-esse* [between-being] between thinking and being in the hypothetical unity of abstraction... Abstraction, existence, is the dialectical element in a trilogy, the beginning and end of which cannot be for an existing person, who *qua* existing is in the dialectical element.(CUP, pp.314-315)

Actuality, of course, is the unity of possibility and necessity in necessity - this is the "trilogy" at play here. Every human being *is*, in the deepest, most concrete sense, its actuality. Less formally, we *are* possibilities actualized in necessity. Kierkegaard captures the active connotations of actuality in the designation 'inter-esse', between-being. Human being *is* the alternation between projection and appropriation ("between thinking and being"). Said in the language of the "trilogy", human actuality is an oscillation between possibility and necessity (necessity, that is, as hardened possibility - actuality is in fact 'the moment' possibility begins to harden). Such transience makes actuality more aptly described as a between-being rather than a being 'this-or-that'.¹⁵ But this description strips actuality of any empirical content. 'Between-being' is actuality in general, not any particular human actuality, not my or her or his actuality. Kierkegaard here seems the object of his own critique.

He is alive to this tension. Ironically, "inter-esse" is presented within a polemic against any leveling of individual actuality through abstract generalization:

What actuality is cannot be rendered in the language of abstraction... Abstraction deals with possibility and actuality, but its conception of actuality is a false rendition, since the medium is not actuality but possibility. Only by annulling actuality can abstraction grasp it, but to annul it is precisely to change it into possibility.(CUP, pp.314-315)

The beginnings of Kierkegaard's apology - again, please note, a defense from his own attack - lie in this juxtaposition of abstraction and actuality, the two "media" of existence:

Just as existence has joined thinking and existing, inasmuch as an existing person is a thinking person, so there are two media: the medium of abstraction and the medium of actuality.(CUP, p.314)

Abstraction and thinking are synonymous in this context. All thinking is abstraction, according to Kierkegaard. Further, thought/abstraction is the organ of possibility.¹⁶ This is a somewhat more inclusive sense of possibility than the previous notion of possibility as a

life alternative, though the latter possibility is included in the former. This wider "possibility refers to the hypotheticalness of all thought. Actuality, on the other hand, is precisely non-hypothetical. Actuality is what *is*.¹⁷ It is being. It is existence. At bottom, then, the distinction between the media of abstraction and actuality turns on the absolute distinction between thought and being:

A human being thinks and exists, and existence separates thinking and being, holds them apart from each other in succession.(CUP, p.232)

The existing human subject both *is*, exists, and is thinking in and about this *is*-ness, his/her existence; but the two media, qua media, remain essentially distinct. The transition from abstract possibility to concrete actuality, as has been shown, requires motion. At the level of the existing human subject 'motion' means willful activity. One cannot simply think away the gulf between thought and existence, between abstraction and actuality. Yet this is what "pure thinking", "a third medium, very recently invented", attempts.(CUP, p.314)

"Pure" thought is a radical abstraction that closes down the dichotomy of thought/existence exclusively from the side of thought. Kierkegaard explains the point in relation to Hegel (though it applies no less to previous metaphysicians), who fuses the trilogy of necessity, actuality and possibility through a logical mediation independent of the activity of an existing human being:

Pure thinking is - what shall I say - piously or thoughtlessly unaware of the relation that abstraction still continuously has to that from which it abstracts... Abstraction merges the trilogy. Quite right. But how does it do it? Is abstraction a something that does it, or is it not the act of the abstracter? But the abstracter is, after all, an existing person, and as an existing person is consequently in the dialectical element, which he cannot mediate or merge, least of all absolutely, as long as he is existing. If he does do it, then this must be related as a possibility to actuality, to the existence in which he himself is. He must explain how he goes about it - that is, how he as an existing person goes about it, or whether he ceases to be an existing person, and whether an existing person has a right to do that.(CUP, pp.314-315)

We have already seen this episode. Pure thinking denies the reality of the existing human subject that undergirds any act of thinking, thereby undermining both its own essential condition and - and this is the point germane to the present issue - its relation to concrete actuality, to existence.¹⁸ On these grounds Kierkegaard considers *Pure* thinking "a phantom".(CUP, pp.314, 316) If "inter-esse" is to be allowed, however, Kierkegaard must distinguish his own theoretical abstraction concerning actuality from the abstractions of *pure* thought.

How, though? "Inter-esse" *is* an abstraction. It is not a concrete actuality. Nonetheless, "inter-esse" is in some sense descriptive of actuality. But in order to *describe* human actuality "inter-esse" must always bear a relation to that which it describes, namely, real actualities. Any abstraction concerning existence, Kierkegaard maintains, must be thought in relation to particular existing beings. Kierkegaard expresses this point (somewhat opaquely) in his resolve to think the "abstract concretely" and to speak "abstractly"... "about one human being":

Instead of having the task of understanding the concrete abstractly, as abstract thinking has, the subjective thinker has the opposite task of understanding the abstract concretely. Abstract thinking turns from concrete human beings to human-kind in general; the subjective thinker understands the abstract concept to be the concrete human being, to be *this individual existing human being*.(CUP, p.352)

In a certain sense, the subjective thinker speaks just as abstractly as the abstract thinker, because the latter thinks about humanity in general, subjectivity in general, the other about the one human being (Unum noris omnes [if you know one, you know all]).(CUP, p.353)

"Inter-esse", then, is not a self-subsistent logical category. It remains instead bonded to existing human subjects. We broach this issue on two fronts. From the side of the philosopher - s/he who would disclose this abstract construal of actuality - "inter-esse" is a *structural* description of particular actualities. Were there no actual, self-relating human beings 'inter-esse would become existentially vacuous. On this point we may contrast

Kierkegaard with the enquiries of formal logic, where existence is reduced to a series of formal relations. This opens up the possibility of an investigation of *existence*, qua concept, independent of any real existents.¹⁹ Kierkegaardian thought, on the other hand, permits no systematic explication of the category of existence, of actuality. One may abstract from particular actualities in order to describe *structure* of actuality, but no more. After structural description the philosophic work ends, and there remains only the task of evaluating the particular empirical content of an actuality, i.e. the actualized possibilities that constitute an individual existing human being.²⁰ On the side of the existing human subject - "inter-esse" gains its validity only in its realization in and through existence. The appropriateness of 'inter-esse', its existential *truth-value*, as it were, is revealed to particular people in the own self-activity, through which they literally *live* (or find themselves unable to live) in the universal. Simply put, 'inter-esse' is validated when existing human subjects see themselves 'between-being'. Mackey and Schrag speak well on this topic:

In so far as it gives utterance to what is "essentially" human, existential philosophy will possess the objectivity and universality necessary to intelligible discourse. By its very objectivity and universality it reveals its relevance to all men and not just to the philosopher. But the "essence of man" as communicated by the existential philosopher will not have finality; it will not take the form of a definitive ontology of existence. For it is the universal objective structure of human existence *as understood* in his existence by a particular human being. And if this structure is to be understood by other men, they must in turn make their own individual appropriations of it. (Kierkegaard And The Problem of Existential Philosophy II, p.583)

The self, as understood by Kierkegaard, is not an abstract individual - who is no individual at all - but rather that which expresses itself concretely as universal humanity. Insofar as the universal is founded upon the ethical existing individual, the universal becomes contingent. It is not something given. It is something that must be achieved. Each individual must realize the universal in a concrete particular embodiment. It is in this sense that the universal is posited as the individual. (Existence and Freedom, p.54)

I conclude this third section with a brief - admittedly rudimentary - discussion of the problems unique to 'thinking the abstract concretely'. Since this is in fact the central problematic of much post-modern philosophy (and the crux of the ongoing continental/analytic debate/inquisition), I trust no final word on these matters is expected in a thesis on Kierkegaard. I shall content myself with a mention of the key difficulties of thinking within existence, as they pertain particularly to Kierkegaard's philosophy.²¹

The oscillation between possibility and necessity (as hardened actuality) is, as Taylor suggests, Kierkegaardian "reality".(KPA, pp.43-44, 46) 'Actuality' is the logical category (lifted from Hegel) Kierkegaard uses to denote such reality; 'inter-esse', 'between-being', then, describes actuality. As we have also seen, however, actuality admits of no more than general, structural description. This signals a decided loss of actuality as a logical category, despite Kierkegaard's resolve to include *actuality* within his *metaphysics*, so to speak.²² The loss of actuality manifests itself in certain tensions in his philosophic lexicon. Actuality, existence and subjectivity are synonyms for Kierkegaard.(cf.CUP, pp.315, 343) The apparent conflation of subjective experience and reality is an obvious dilemma. I reserve this issue for the final section and the presentation of subjective truth, where the vocabulary becomes still murkier. A further question concerns the linguistic - at bottom, methodological - difficulty in expressing actuality conceived as process.

Kierkegaard stuffs a curious challenge into the construal of actuality: "actuality", he warns, "cannot be rendered in the language of abstraction".(CUP, p.314) But language *is* language of abstraction - in the deepest sense, language *is* abstraction. Language lifts concrete, empirical reality from its customary flux and flow, transposing it into stasis. The semantics and syntax of human language (or at least the European languages) is designed to pin things down. Ours is a language of abstract being. Kierkegaard expresses this point, albeit obliquely, in Johannes Climacus by aligning language and ideality:

What, then, is immediacy? It is reality itself. What is mediacy? It is the word. How does the one cancel the other? By giving expression to it, for that which is given expression is always *presupposed*.

Immediacy is reality; language is ideality; consciousness is contradiction [because, of course, it is the intersection of ideality and reality]. The moment I make a statement about reality, contradiction is present, for what I say is ideality.(pp.167-168; cf. also Taylor, Language, Truth and Indirect Communication, pp.74-78)

So much seems a decisive blow against the possibility of providing philosophic expression of actuality while preserving its active character. The medium of language simply arrests all becoming. Granted, we do press language into the service of becoming, particularly through the use of ironic tropes. But the success of this technique is somewhat dubious. Kierkegaard reminds that even Heraclitus' statement, that 'one cannot step into the same river twice', fails, since, after all, one cannot even go through the *same* river a first time.(CUP, p.312; contrast with Fear and Trembling, p.123)

One must ask how the discordance of abstraction and actuality bears on "interesse" - what I, with some exegetical liberty, consider a *structural* description of human becoming and reality. Kierkegaard speaks of concrete existence as a being-between - my reversal of his locution - necessity and possibility, outlines other structures allowing us to move amidst these two poles - e.g. the temporal structure of self - relation or our relatedness to God (of which I have not spoken) -, then he stops. Any further assignment of positive philosophic content to concrete reality violates its own essential condition, i.e. such assignment objectifies existence, undercutting the *existential foundation*, if the oxymoron is allowed, on which all philosophic objectifications stand, namely, the existence of the existing human being. Said differently, one can describe human reality or becoming as an empty structure, but the particulars of the structure defy a priori description. This conceded, Kierkegaard must more clearly distinguish the abstractness of structural description from the abstractness of previous philosophic objectivisms. All thinking is

abstraction, on Kierkegaard's account. But the abstractness of structural description is importantly different from that of past metaphysicians. Kierkegaard nonetheless includes the derivation of his own principles under the general rubric 'abstraction'. The scope of the term is too wide. He must isolate structural description from the manifold other forms of abstraction. More specifically, Kierkegaard must explain the *logic* of structural description, i.e. the methodology of structural description wants an explanation, that both clarifies the origin of his principles and distinguishes this mode of enquiry from the existentially stale methodologies of past thinkers.

The apparent contingency of the Kierkegaardian universal also demands attention, though this issue is not radically distinct from the previous topic. The universal here draws its 'validity', for lack of a better word, from individual acts of appropriation. Only internalization by particular human beings licenses philosophic abstraction. This appeal to the individual, however, opens up philosophy to human whim and idiosyncrasy. There is an obvious question here concerning the harmony of philosophic generalization and human particularity. Kierkegaard attempts to think the universal - the universal, abstract human - within the particular - the individual human being - in order to preserve the particularity of the *particular*, but this threatens to rob the universal of its universality. His subjectively *situated* objectivity requires further clarification.²³

There is little left to say regarding Kierkegaardian philosophic methodology. His remarks on the matter are simply too scant. I turn now to the question of individual appropriation of possibility, with particular emphasis on the internalization of life alternatives rather than philosophic principles and structures.

Socrates, Socrates, Socrates! Yes, we may well call your name three times; it would not be too much to call it ten times, if it would be of any help. Popular opinion maintains that the world needs a republic, needs a new social order and a new religion - but no one considers that what the world, confused simply by too much knowledge, needs is a Socrates. Of course, if anyone thought of it, not to mention if many thought of it, he would be less needed. Invariably, what error needs most is always the last thing it thinks of - quite naturally, for otherwise it would not, after all, be an error. (The Sickness Unto Death, p.92)

IV Subjective Truth and Indirect Communication

A novel canon of certainty was already implicit in the latter half of the previous section. There, you recall, I, through Kierkegaard, made existential *appropriation* the locus of philosophic validity. The notion seemed problematic at the level of abstract description of the self and selfhood, where the traditional aim is universal, trans-historical generalizations; and the problems were noted, if only summarily. Yet the authority of personal appropriation is less dubious with respect to real human decision which can so easily exhaust the security of objective moral/ethical guidelines. (I trust there is no need to rehearse the rule-defying situations set out by the later existentialists Sartre and Camus or indeed already in Greek tragedy.)

This fourth and final section first treats the truth of appropriation - what Kierkegaard will call 'subjective truth' - and the role of passion in the appropriation of

ethical possibility. We shall then discover that the communication of subjective truth wants a maieutic, indirect form of communication. The section concludes with an explication of subjective communication.

IV A) Truth is Subjectivity

The topic is perhaps best broached through the notion of *inter-esse*; more accurately, a re-interpretation of *inter-esse*. Earlier analysis disclosed *inter-esse* as an abstract, structural description of human being. But the term has a second, no less significant meaning. *Inter-esse* communicates both a sense of fluctuation between necessity and possibility, of between-being, *and* the sense of *existential interest*. In Johannes Climacus Kierkegaard presents this latter shade of meaning somewhat formally. Doubt, or rather the doubt that would in truth deny everything - the subtitle to Johannes Climacus is De Omnibus Dubitandum Est - requires more than skeptical method. Doubt demands intense attention. One must implicate oneself, one's very being, as it were, in the ongoing process of doubting, should doubt be truly radical:

Reflection is the possibility of the relation. This can also be stated as follows: Reflection is *disinterested*. Consciousness, however, is the relation and thereby is interest, a duality that is perfectly and with pregnant double meaning expressed in the word "interest" (interesse [between-being]). Therefore, all disinterested knowledge (mathematics, esthetics, metaphysics) is only the presupposition of doubt. As soon as the interest is canceled, doubt is not conquered but is neutralized, and all such knowing is simply a retrogression. Thus it would be a misunderstanding for someone to think that doubt can be overcome by so-called objective thinking. Doubt is a higher form than any objective thinking, for it presupposes the latter but has something more, a third, which is interest or consciousness.(p.170. On the existential implications of doubt cf. endnote 9, section III)

Unlike objective thinking - the thinking of the pure sciences, historiography etc. -, animated by a distanced, dispassionate intellectual apprehension of some object, say, cellular structure, pure number, past events, the subjective thinker is profoundly intertwined and interested in the object of his/her thought.

To be precise, there are two aspects to this second sense of inter-esse, both of which are closely related and lead to a new canon of truth. We take up these related sub-senses of inter-esse in turn.

Initially, one should recall the Latin root esse, being, in inter-esse. The human subject is 'interested' in the object because the object - in this case an existential possibility; less formally, a life-alternative - pertains to the being of the subject. In the interest of appropriation the existing human subject actualizes an imagined possibility in him/herself. In the deepest sense, s/he becomes this possibility:

Whereas objective thinking is indifferent to the thinking subject and his existence, the subjective thinker is essentially interested in his own thinking, is existing in it. Therefore, his thinking has another kind of reflection, specifically, that of inwardness, of possession, whereby it belongs to the subject and to no one else.(CUP, pp. 72-73)

This much follows from the already explained activity of self-relation.(cf. Sickness, p.13, and my analysis in section II). 'Reflection of inwardness' here is in fact an allusion to self-relation. Kierkegaard's philosophic lexicon changes after The Sickness. In the Postscript he speaks of self-relation as subjective thought's "double-reflection". The first reflection refers to the projection of possibility; the second, to the active actualization of possibility. This latter reflection is the so-called 'reflection of inwardness', wherein the existing human subject re-projects projected possibility into itself, ridding abstract possibility of its hypotheticalness - its 'universality' -, as possibility becomes actuality for a particular human being:

The reflection of inwardness is the subjective thinker's double-reflection. In thinking, he thinks the universal, but, as existing in his thinking, as acquiring this in his inwardness, he becomes more and more subjectively isolated.(CUP, p.73)

This second moment of reflection, the instance of 'subjective isolation', is, moreover, the locus of subjective truth.

Again, the esse of inter-esse is crucial. The truth of subjectivity plays on a certain orientation toward being. The ontological disposition is only intelligible - at least theoretically - in relation to the objective construal of being in objective truth. In the opening section objective truth - the adequation of thing and intellect, regardless of the form of adequation - was considered tautologous, at least at the level of the existing human subject. Objective truth, we discovered, is at bottom a unity of thinking with itself, not thinking and being. In objective knowing being - what *is*, the subject matter - is always already mediated by the method prior to any explicit judgment concerning the status of the being; and the truth of any such judgment is ultimately the coherence of an assessment of a being with a prior, methodologically mediated disclosure of that same being. So much signals a certain intellectual annihilation of the being cognized in objective knowing - this was, of course, the topic of the third section. Being, in this case an existing human being, is transformed into an abstract, a-temporal possibility by objective canons of knowing, which transformation strips being of its true character, namely, that it should exist and become. A subjective or existential orientation toward being preserves this flux. Viewed existentially, the *human* being is constantly transformed in the ongoing process of self-relation. There is no final adequation of thinking and being. The unity is instead momentary. In the double-reflection of self-relation being is first transposed into possibility as one thinks oneself as a possible this or that; and this abstract, possible self is then willed into actuality; and the process then begins anew. The movement here is from being to thought and back into being. Subjective or existential thought, then, is replicated momentarily in being, unlike the thinking of pure objectivity which renders being in thought with no foray back into being. (cf. Mark C. Taylor, Language, Truth and Indirect Communication, p.82) This duplication of thought in being replaces the existentially inert *adequatio* of objective knowing. Truth is now the unity of thinking and being in being. We

exist - literally *live* - in subjective truth.¹ Kierkegaard alludes to this coherence of thought in being in his talk of 'essential knowing', where he exploits the ontological connotations of 'essence', just as he did the ontological implications of interest as 'inter-esse':

All essential knowing pertains to existence, or only the knowing whose relation to existence is essential is essential knowing. Essentially viewed, the knowing that does not inwardly in the reflection of inwardness pertain to existence is accidental knowing, and its degree and scope, essentially viewed, are a matter of indifference. That essential knowing is essentially related to existence does not, however, signify the above-mentioned abstract identity between thinking and being, nor does it signify that the knowledge is objectively related to something that existent as its object, but it means that knowledge is related to the knower, who is essentially an existing person, and that all essential knowing is therefore essentially related to existence and to existing. Therefore, only ethical and ethical-religious knowing is essential knowing. But all ethical and all ethical-religious knowing is essentially a relating to the existing of the knower.(CUP, pp.197-198)

We move now to a further nuance to the so-called 'second sense' of inter-esse. Subjective truth, as already suggested, is the existential appropriation of self-posed possibility. In the third section I mentioned the role of the will in self-relation. One must will possibility into necessity: self-relation is not an exercise in pure thinking. The present point concerning inter-esse is closely related to the a-intellectual dimension of self-relation. Existential volition requires a certain resolve or what Kierkegaard most often calls 'passion' - the 'passion of inwardness'. Inter-esse as interest conveys both the just discussed ontological implications of self-relation *and* the sense of passionate existential resolution.

Kierkegaard solidifies the relation between inter-esse, between-being, and passion in an image lifted from Plato's Phaedrus (cf. 246a-247b). In an important journal entry he likens existence, characterized as it is by the oscillation between finitude and infinitude, to a sojourn in a carriage drawn by an old nag and Pegasus, the winged steed:

Who thinks of hitching Pegasus and an old nag together to one carriage for a ride? And yet this is what it is to exist for one compounded of finitude and infinitude!(Journals and Papers, vol.7, p.22, note 55)

The metaphor is reworked in the Postscript, where Kierkegaard juxtaposes the clumsy awkwardness of finitude with the limitlessness of pure infinitude, in order to underscore the utility of passion in unifying the opposing modes of being (which unification, as we have seen, is *the* task of the existing human being):

Existing, if this is not to be understood as just any sort of existing, cannot be done without passion. Therefore, every Greek thinker was essentially also passionate thinker. I have often thought about how one might bring a person into passion. So I have considered the possibility of getting him astride a horse and then frightening the horse into the wildest gallop, or even better, in order to draw out the passion properly, the possibility of getting a man who wants to go somewhere as quickly as possible (and therefore was already in something of a passion) astride a horse that can hardly walk - and yet existing is like that if one is conscious of it. Or if a Pegasus and old nag were hitched to a carriage for a driver not usually disposed to passion and he was told: now drive - I think it would be successful. And this is what existing is like if one is to be conscious of it. Eternity is infinitely quick like that winged steed, temporality is an old nag, and the existing person is the driver, that is, if existing is not to be what people usually call existing, because then the existing person is no driver but a drunken peasant who lies in the wagon and sleeps and lets the horses shift for themselves. Of course, he also drives, he is also a driver, and likewise there perhaps are many who - also exist.(CUP, pp.311-312)

I would now like to pick up on Kierkegaard's reference to time in the previous citation. The relation between temporality and self-relation draws the import of passion into sharper focus.

Time unsettles the process of self-relation. (Of course time also opens up the possibility of authentic self-relations. (cf. section II) This is the irony of temporality.) Strictly speaking, one does not merely drag possibilities down from an a-temporal realm and stick them into concrete reality. The onward temporal progression of the existing human being works against any easy grafting of possibility onto necessity. We treat the matter from both the side of possibility and necessity. First, possibility, the 'eternal', is posited within time. We project possibilities while in the flux of being. The transitoriness of the human subject infects these possibilities. We inevitably posit and choose possibilities conditioned by so many factors which are themselves subject to change - an infinite

inventory of social, personal, linguistic, historical ... variables. We are, consequently, unable to discern with absolute certainty what, among an array of potential possibilities, is 'best' for ourselves. We posit and choose in uncertainty, in "fear and trembling". From the side of necessity, one notices anew the already mentioned unity of time and the situation within which we choose. The context or milieu of existential projection is part of one's necessity. Time works away at this ensemble of features - i.e. one's necessity (who one is), one's situation (which is also a part of who one is) - while we posit and evaluate possibilities. Thus our possibilities never exactly mesh with the real needs of concrete reality, as it has always changed in the interval between the context from which we posit possibilities and the actual situation into which we invoke posited alternatives. Possibility never truly fits into necessity... We need help, on two fronts. Kierkegaard suggests passion as a corrective. Passion, in the sense of existential resolution, allows one to hold fast to posited possibilities amidst uncertainty; and this same passion provides the resolve requisite for forcing possibility into necessity, an invariably sweaty, messy fit.

The dual sense of inter-esse as existential interest or passion and ontological self-definition is unified in Kierkegaard's definition of subjective truth:

When subjectivity is truth, the definition of truth must also contain in itself an expression of the antithesis to objectivity, a memento of that fork in the road, and this expression will at the same time indicate the resilience of inwardness. Here is such a definition of truth: *An objective uncertainty held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth, the highest truth there is for an existing person.*(CUP, p.203)²

Though role of passion is most clear, the *essential* implication of the subject in possibility is no less present. "Inwardness" itself is a synonym for the ontological implication of the existing human being in his/her thinking. Kierkegaard expresses the same point in the talk of 'holding fast' to "objective uncertainty", i.e. self-positing possibility, in appropriation. Both ways of speaking also impart the significance of passion: in one case, the significance

is obvious; and the reference to 'holding fast' conveys a sense of urgency akin to existential passion, in addition to the sense of unity of subject and possibility in appropriation.

There is really not much else to say of subjective truth - at least not in terms of explaining the definition. Kierkegaard focuses instead on the communication of subjective truth. Before moving to the issue of communication, however, I pause to note a curious nuance of subjective truth.

Admittedly, the kinship of passion and truth is somewhat arresting. It lends plausibility to accusations of fetishism, fanaticism etc. Kierkegaard points up this tension himself:

...the objective way is of the opinion that it has a security that the subjective way does not have (of course, existence, what it means to exist, and objective security cannot be thought together). It is of the opinion that it avoids a danger that lies in wait for the subjective way, and at its maximum this danger is madness. In a solely subjective definition of truth, lunacy and truth are ultimately indistinguishable, because they may both have inwardness.(CUP, p.194)

The passage precedes the previously quoted discussion of the lunatic - the man with a single ball in his shorts, so to speak, whom I compared to one of Dr. Sacks' patients. Kierkegaard's response to the present controversy follows from the attack on objectivity found in the tale of the 'lunatic'. He concedes the apparent indistinguishability of insanity and truth in a subjective account of truth, but maintains that this is a consequence of existence itself, not bad philosophy. If one is to give an existential account of existence - i.e. an account faithful to the phenomenon, the only treatment a thinker should allow -, then one must resign the security of objective knowing. Indeed, the decision to train objective canons of knowing on the existing human subject betrays itself both as bad thinking and a certain existential cowardice. Properly existential thinkers are instead, quite appropriately, left with the uncertainty of subjective truth. But this does not close down absolutely the distinction between truth and neurosis. Kierkegaard contends that crude

insanity, the kind of unsettledness about which one might rightly worry, and the lunacy of inwardness *are* ultimately distinguishable. He contrasts the barminess of the madman with the deep intensity and conviction of one existing in his/her thinking:

Don Quixote is the prototype of the subjective lunacy in which the passion of inwardness grasps a particular fixed finite idea. But when inwardness is absent, parroting lunacy sets in which is just as comic... When the insanity is the absence of inwardness, the comic is that the something known by the blissful person is the truth, truth that pertains to the whole human race but does not in the least pertain to the highly honored parroter. This kind of insanity is more inhuman than the other. One shrinks from looking the first one in the eye, lest one discover the depth of his frantic state, but one does not dare to look at the other at all for fear of discovering that he does not have proper eyes but glass eyes and hair made from a floormat, in short that he is an artificial product.(CUP, pp.195-196)

This "subjective" lunacy, the more 'human' lunacy, is the anxiety of inwardness, the passionate intensity requisite for choosing in uncertainty. Personal attachment to the choosing is the hallmark of such lunacy. The aforementioned lunatic is mad because he bears no existential relation to the object of his ravings, namely, the roundness of the earth. Quixote, on the other hand, lives in his thought, ludicrous though his thinking is.

A distinction between types of passion parallels the distinction between lunacies. As already mentioned, Kierkegaard, refers to passion - at least the existentially relevant form - as the *passion of inwardness*. In another context he considers existential passion the *idealizing passion*. The phrasing underscores the intense interest and resolve that animates self-projection - again, projection which is never entirely realized in existence:

The eternal is the continuity of motion, but an abstract eternity is outside motion, and a concrete eternity in the existing person is the maximum of passion. That is, all idealizing passion is an anticipation of the eternal in existence in order for an existing person to exist... For an existing person, however, passion's anticipation of the eternal is still not absolute continuity but the possibility of an approximation to the only true continuity there can be for an existing person.(CUP, pp.312-313)

In the footnote Kierkegaard appends to this passage, he contrasts the "idealizing" passion of the 'passion of inwardness' with an "earthly passion", which "hinders existing by

changing existence into the momentary".(CUP, p.312) This latter passion is a kind of transitory infatuation.(cf. for example, CUP, p.236) Authentic existential passion is not to be confused with such capricious whim.³

We move now to the previously delayed question of communication.

IV B) Subjective Truth and its Indirect Communication

Kierkegaard's treatment of communication follows from the opposition of subjective and objective thinking:

The difference between subjective and objective thinking must also manifest itself in the form of communication.(CUP, p.73)

This 'manifested difference' between subjective and objective thinking breeds a further opposition, the juxtaposition of direct and indirect communication.

Direct communication is a transmission of thought's outcome. The results of thinking are here distinguished from the processes through which these results are achieved and, more significantly, the thinker of the thinking. The subject matter bears this dissociation because there is no ontological bond between the thought and thinker of objective thinker. The existing human being is simply not ontologically implicated in the content of objective thought. The scientist, for instance, communicates the outcome of his/her thinking in the form of a principle or law (which is customarily reduced to a mathematic/symbolic form).(cf.pp.83-84, Language, Truth and Indirect Communication) The results are then confirmed (or falsified) by others through an abridged repetition of the process of thinking - 'abridged', because the confirmers repeat only the steps requisite for testing the positive results: they do not rehearse the dead ends pursued by the scientist in his/her original investigation. Once confirmed, however, the conclusions render the process - the investigative discovering and confirming - insignificant. Scientific (objective) truth is now discussed in absentia from the activity of disclosing this truth. There is simply no utility in doing otherwise. Objective truth concerns results and details of and about things. The personal transformation of the thinker in the process of thinking is of no significance, nor still is the particular process of thinking, since one can often duplicate

findings in various ways. In objective thinking the conclusions stand alone, independent of the concluding and concludor. All such thinking is properly communicated "directly", in Kierkegaardian terms. Said differently, objective thought is communicated as 'result', as an already established truth or *fact* to be accepted and assimilated. No radical re-interpretation of objective thought is required or expected, nor, moreover, does it inspire any personal self-examination or re-orientation.

Subjective truth does not admit of direct communication. In subjective thinking there are no directly communicable results to be abstracted from the process of thinking, since, after all, subjective truth *is* the process, the *way* of projecting and appropriating possibilities:

Whereas objective thinking invests everything in the result and assist all human kind to cheat by copying and reeling off the results and answers, subjective thinking invests everything in the process of becoming and omits the result, partly because this belongs to him, since he possesses the way, partly because he as existing is continually in the process of becoming...(CUP, p.73)

Thus subjective thinking demands an alternate mode of presentation, one that somehow allows the communication of process - but not, I caution, the communication of 'this' or 'that' process, a particular process. One must guard against the objectification of process, which is, at bottom, to turn the process into a result. Rather, the purpose of indirect communication is to inspire the recipient to initiate the process of projecting and appropriating possibilities, without imposing any kind of empirical content on this process. Couched in Kierkegaardian language, in indirect communication the subjective thinker, the speaker must hold open the conditions of the possibility of a "double-reflection" by the potential hearer:

...the subjective thinker must promptly become aware that the form of communication must artistically possess just as much reflection as he himself, existing in his thinking. Artistically, please note, for the secret does not consist in his enunciating the double-reflection directly, since such an enunciation is a direct contradiction.(CUP, p.74)

The preservation of the possibility of the double-reflection signals a freeing of both communicator and 'communicatee', for lack of a better word. Double-reflection requires a certain existential distance between interlocutors. Unlike direct communication, which aims at strict identity between the ideas in the minds of communicants, indirect communication secures the distinctness of both thinkers:

Whenever the subjective is of importance in knowledge and appropriation is therefore the main point, communication is a work of art; it is doubly reflected, and its first form is the subtlety that the subjective individuals must be held devoutly apart from one another and must not run coagulatingly together in objectivity. This is objectivity's word of farewell to subjectivity.(CUP, p.79, cf. also pp.242, 247-249)

From the standpoint of the hearer/reader, this autonomy allows for the independent enactment of the double-reflection, which double-reflection allows the transformation of self through the appropriation of self-posed possibilities. Indirect communication allows the recipient to choose him/herself anew. The speaker/writer is also liberated. The gap between interlocutors permits the subjective existing thinker to communicate him/herself without exposing the inward aspect of their thought to another. The subjective intent of an indirect communication always remains concealed in indirect communication.⁴ This concealment shields the subjective existing thinker from discipleship which, if allowed, would render existence public and objective. In this sense, indirect communication grants the subjective thinker freedom of expression, safe from the inauthenticity of his/her inwardness by followers:

...just as the subjective existing thinker has set himself free by the duplexity [of thought-existence, which underlies thought's double-reflection], so the secret of communication specifically hinges on setting the other free, and for that very reason he must not communicate himself directly...(CUP, p.74)⁵

Indirect communication employs an array of rhetorical strategies. Kierkegaard offers a limited inventory of these techniques in Training in Christianity:

An example of such indirect communication is, so to compose with jest and earnest that the composition is a dialectical knot - and with this to be anybody.⁶ If anyone is to profit by this sort of communication, he must undo the knot for himself. Another example is, to bring defense and attack in such a unity that no one can say directly whether one is attacking or defending,⁷ so that both the most zealous partisans of the cause and its bitterest enemies can regard one as an ally - and with this to be nobody, an absentee, an objective something, not a personal man.(pp.132-133)

The key is opposition. Kierkegaard bonds opposite perspectives within the same account - bonds, but does not synthesize. The opposites are left as either/ors, not unified into both/ands. On this basis, one might add some obvious omissions to the list. Clearly, the use of irony is one such dichotomous technique:

We may not regard irony as a mere mode of speech; it is rather a specific attitude which is an integral part of this whole dialectic... Every direct relation between man and man by which one might immediately assimilate the experience of another, without its being first conveyed in the form of a possibility, must be prevented. It can be prevented in the form of irony, for which Kierkegaard supplies the general definition "that the phenomenon is not reality but the opposite of reality".(SV XIII, 322; The Concept of Irony, p.247)

Everything can be concealed under the veil of an ironical statement; it fetters neither the speaker nor the hearer to what is stated. It may provoke the other to reveal himself; it may entice him on to a false track in order consequently to trip him up, and so to awaken his insight. But it will use all these means only in order to release the individual negatively.(Diem, Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence, pp.42-43)

The eager profession of ir-religiousness, of the inability to become a Christian, by one so passionately interested in Christianity also presents the reader with something of a "dialectical knot".(Contrast the aesthetic, indolent overtones at CUP, pp.161; 185-188 with the selfless interest in the meaning of being a Christian at CUP, pp.234-243) According to Taylor, this is Kierkegaard's equivalent to Socratic ignorance. (cf. Journeys to Selfhood, p.94; and Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship, p.56; though in both texts he neglects a crucial feature of Kierkegaard's religious impotence⁸) Kierkegaard offers a succinct presentation of this ignorance in the preface to the Philosophical Fragments:

If, however, anyone were to be so courteous as to assume that I have an opinion, if he were to carry his gallantry to the extreme of embracing my opinion because it is mine, I regret his courtesy, that is extended to one unworthy, and his opinion, if he does not otherwise have one apart from mine. I can stake my own life, I can in all earnestness trifle with my own life - not with another's. I am capable of this, the only thing I am able to do for thought, I who have no learning to offer... (pp.7-8)

Beneath this intermingling of opposites lies a meta-principle governing indirect communication. A receding of authorship is implicit and prior to all rhetorical strategies: one must recall the resolve to so "compose jest and earnest that the composition is a dialectical knot - and with this to be nobody", and to unify attack and defense in such fashion that one becomes "an objective something, not a personal man".(TC, pp.132-133) Kierkegaard in fact defines indirect communication as the "art [of] reducing oneself, the communicator, to nobody, something purely objective, and then incessantly composing qualitative opposites into unity".(TC, p.132) False authorship is a kind of concretization of the rather inhuman objectification of the author.. It is the decisive technique for preserving the double-reflection.²

The dubious status of the authorship renders the communication itself dubious. The reader can hardly interpret a treatise by John the Silent, a Taciturn Father or a Hilarius Bookbinder as unconditional truth. Their transmissions are at best hypothetical. But this is precisely what indirect communication requires. The false authors allow Kierkegaard to communicate life alternatives in the form of possibilities:

Each pseudonymous writing represents the point of its author in both style and content. The pseudonymous author tries to portray a particular way of looking at the world in as ideal a form as possible. The work, therefore, presents the reader with a possible way of regarding the world - it creates a possibility for the reader.(KPA, p.55, cf. also JS, pp.92-93, 101-102)

Life possibilities are then repositied and redefined by the reader in the first moment of the double-reflection. This prepares the reader for the second and, for Kierkegaard, the more

important moment of double-reflection: the decision to reject or actualize certain possibilities in existence:

If actuality is to be understood by a third party, it must be understood as a possibility, and a communicator who is conscious will therefore see to it, precisely in order to be oriented to existence, that his existence-communication is in the form of possibility. A production in the form of possibility places existing in it as close to the recipient as it is possible between one human being and another.(CUP, p.358)

This is as far as the maieutic technique can go:

But this result [i.e. the decision to act] is not in my power; it depends upon so many things, and above all, it depends upon whether he will or not. In all eternity it is impossible for me to compel a person to accept an opinion, a conviction or belief. But the one thing I can do: I can compel him to take notice. In one sense this is the first thing; for it is the condition antecedent to the next thing, i.e. the acceptance of an opinion, a conviction a belief. In another sense it is the last - if that is, he will not take the next step.(Point of View of My Work as an Author, p.35)

Endnotes to Section I

¹My resolve to root the "empirical" definition of truth in Descartes may seem odd, since the decision is grounded in the emphasis on intuition and, after all, intuition was, as with so many other philosophic principles, first signaled in Greek philosophy, particularly in Aristotle. (cf. Nichomachean Ethics, bk.VI, chapters 6,7; and even Plato's talk of an instantaneous seeing of true, changeless being with the mind's eye can be considered a precursor to Cartesian intuition, cf., for example, Republic 475d-476d.) I begin with Descartes nonetheless, partly because chapter II of the Postscript (wherein Kierkegaard's critique of objective truth is found) reads in large part as a polemic against modern philosophy, notably Descartes, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, as they are the most frequent targets. (Though Kant is rarely mentioned in the Postscript, he stands in the background to much of the attack on Hegel and Fichte, who are explicitly critiqued in the Postscript.) This is one reason for beginning with Descartes and the problematic of early modern philosophy. A second reason turns on the nature of the critique itself. Kierkegaard wants to undermine the hegemony of the subject/object opposition in philosophy (which is what animates both the empirical and idealist definitions of truth, as we shall see), in order to disclose an alternative mode of access to reality. Crites puts the matter well:

"...although there has been much dispute among philosophers about the way men experience or know, and even about the possibility of knowledge, most philosophers have taken it for granted that men's only encounter with existence, or the only one worth mentioning, is in the subject/object relationship, that is, in experience. It has been generally recognized that man is a creature of feeling and emotion as well as perception and

knowledge, but these are all modes of the aesthetic [Kierkegaard's word for the standpoint of "objective apprehension" - this not to be confused with the aesthetic mode of existence]. What Kierkegaard calls the aesthetic has been implicitly regarded as so all-embracing, particularly since Descartes, that it has not been recognized as a distinct category at all. Kant, in distinguishing practical or moral from theoretical reason was an exception to this tendency among philosophers [Crites disregards a similar distinction in Aristotle]; but Hegel carried it to its fruition in the *System*, as the standpoint of absolute Subject. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, insisted that experience, knowledge, feeling, apprehension, do not exhaust the possibilities of human encounter with existence. Men do not merely apprehend existence. They are in existence. They are not only the subjects of experience but potential agents of act and decision. Kierkegaard therefor undertook to define the limits of the aesthetic -speculative, and to set over and against it, the existential. (introduction to Crisis In The Life Of An Actress, pp.23-24; cf. also Soloman, Kierkegaard and Subjective Truth, pp.206-207)

Considering the import of the subject/object relationship it seems inappropriate to found Kierkegaard's critique in ancient philosophy, where the operative dichotomy is matter/form.

Generally speaking, however, one must note that Kierkegaard means to extend his critique to the whole history of philosophy, ancient and modern, insofar as any past thinker held the views he rejects - this is why, for example, he does not name any particular thinker in relationship to the 'empirical' and 'idealistic' canons of truth. The need to name your adversary is also eliminated to some degree by the mere presence of Hegel, a man so fortunate (burdened?) as to have been charged to assimilate the whole of philosophy in his *System*. Yet I ask that the reader see the figures in the backdrop to the confrontation between Kierkegaard and Hegel. In this thesis I will (for the most part) attempt to locate Kierkegaard's thinking within the greater context of the history of philosophy. The standard Kierkegaard-Hegel quarrel is too limiting.

²Peter Schouls works out the relationship between Locke and Descartes in The Imposition of Method)

⁴As a point of historical interest, one should note the influence Descartes surely had on Hobbes. *Leviathan* was published in 1651. Hobbes lived in Paris for the previous eleven years. Just prior to this time Descartes circulated his Discourse on the Method (ca.1637). The ironic profession of equality in the justly famous chapter 13 of Leviathan (pp.183-184) is lifted from the first paragraph of Descartes' Discourse. We should also hear the Discourse in Hobbes' emphasis on right method.(cf. Leviathan, pp.114-115)

⁵At the level of transcendental truth, logical falsity, i.e. inconsistency, is replaced by transcendental falsity, i.e. confusion, non-experience, like a kaleidoscope of unorganizable color or a bad rock n' roll video from the 60's.

⁶This is more or less; well, more more than less, Heidegger's reading of Kant's 'Copernican revolution'.(cf. Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics, pp.9-22)

⁷Yet Kant still invokes heuristic teleology as a regulative principle for the scientific cognition of nature, i.e. the supposition that nature is a purposeful whole, subject to the mechanistic causality that animates modern science. Though there is no in-itself that corresponds to this assumption - again, it is only a regulative principle -, it nonetheless has the same force as a divine anchoring for human cognition. (cf. Critique of Judgment, sections 66-69, pp.255-265) Kant invokes a similar principle with regard to history. Seeing no rational 'plan' for human development in the random, miserable actions of actual human beings, Kant argues that a 'universal' history is possible only if we locate the telos of human development within nature itself - he then leaves it for nature to produce some "Newton" of history to compose this universal history: enter Hegel. (cf. Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent, preface and 9th thesis, pp.15-16, 38-39. Note the plea for a "guiding thread", particularly on pp.38-39. This is an analogue to

Kant's use of the work of logicians as a 'clue for the deduction of the categories, cf. Prolegomena, section 39, pp.64-68)

On the whole idea of bonding objects to thought, regardless of the form this bonding may take, cf. Heidegger's On The Essence Of Truth, sections I-II, pp.118-125)

⁸Again, I realize this is pretty rough and reductionistic, but I think this is Kierkegaard's view and I am more or less in agreement. The essential problematic remains the same throughout all of modern philosophy, over and above any quibbling over the details of how this problematic is worked out (and indeed some figures, particularly Hegel, resist this reduction more than others).

⁹For alternative treatments of Kierkegaard's critique of objective truth and the sense in which it leads to either 'tautology' or 'approximation' see Mackey, Kierkegaard And The Problem of Existential Philosophy I, pp.404-405 and Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet, pp.179-180. I disagree almost entirely with this presentation, as my own account will show, but it is provocative in some respects. Also, consider Taylor's presentation in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship, pp.40-42. I am in general agreement with this reading, and my own interpretation is indebted to Taylor's work; but he refrains from working out the details of Kierkegaard's critique in relation to the empirical and idealist canons of truth, thus leaving things quite general. I am trying to do something a little more adventurous here by unpacking the empirical and idealist notions of truth and outlining the type of being amenable to such truths.

¹⁰As Crites suggests, Kierkegaard's treatment of "objective reflection" in this context is similar to Kant's treatment of the 'theoretical employment of reason' with respect to practical reason, though, as Crites also advises, there are problems with aligning Kant's

notion of practical reason too closely with Kierkegaard's existentialism.(cf. In the Twilight of Christendom, pp.21-24)

¹¹In his account of selfhood in Kierkegaard, Mark C. Taylor provides an excellent instance both of Kierkegaard's indebtedness to Hegel and the extent to which Kierkegaard downplays Hegel's existential sensitivity. (Cf. Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship, pp.86-109, especially pp.101-109; indeed, it can be said that these issues are the substance of the whole of Taylor's remarkable Journeys To Selfhood)

¹²For Hegel's views on how mediation, or the lack thereof, bears on the thinkers I have already used as fodder for the explication of Kierkegaard's critique of truth, i.e. Kant and Descartes, cf. Hegel's Logic; on Kant, see pp.90-94 and the important footnote at pp.66-68; and regarding Descartes consider pp.104-112.

¹³This statement requires some nuancing. Strictly speaking, opposition is not absolutely "transcended", since it is in fact the province of mediation to think the unity of opposites in their opposition. Thus the opposition is in some sense preserved while its necessary inner unity is realized - hence the dual sense of Aufhebung.(On the connection between Aufhebung, sublation, and mediation see Hegel's Science of Logic, p.107) Incidentally, Kierkegaard is not too excited about this double entendre:

Does explaining something mean to *annul* it? I do know that the word aufheben has various, indeed opposite, meanings in the German language. It has often been noted that the word can mean both [annul, annihilate] and [preserve], I am not aware that the Danish word [annul] allows any such equivocation, but I do know that our German-Danish philosophers use it like the German word. Whether it is a good quality in a word to have opposite meanings, I do not know, but anyone who wants to express himself with precision usually avoids the use of such a word in decisive places. There is a simple folk saying that humorously denotes the impossible: to have one's mouth full of crackers and to whistle at the same time. Speculative thought accomplishes a tour de force somewhat like that by using a word that also denotes the very opposite.(CUP, p.222)

¹⁴On this point, note Hegel's construal of mediation in the *Phenomenology*: "For mediation is nothing beyond self-moving selfsameness, or is reflection into self, the moment of the 'I' which is for itself pure negativity or, when reduced to its pure abstraction, *simple becoming*".(p.11)

This 'active' aspect of mediation is underscored in Hegel's Science of Logic:

For being which is the outcome of *mediation* we shall reserve the term: *Existence*.(p.93)

This immediacy that is mediated by ground and condition is self-identical through the sublation of mediation, is *Existence*.(p.478, cf. Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p.186, vol. II, note 32, for a further inventory of selections from the Science of Logic regarding mediation.)

¹⁵This issue will be re-raised in the context of the empirical and idealistic canons of knowing in section III; indeed, the notion of mediation will only receive its full due in this later section.

¹⁶Kierkegaard underscores the exclusivity of existential opposition in the remainder of the already cited discussion of Aufhebung:

In order to denote very clearly that speculation knows nothing of decision, it itself uses an ambiguous word in order to denote the kind of understanding that is speculative understanding. Upon closer inspection, the confusion becomes more evident. Aufheben in the sense of tollere means to annihilate; in the sense of conservare, it means to preserve in altogether unaltered condition, to do nothing at all to what is being preserved. If the government dissolves a political society, it abolishes it; if a man keeps or preserves something for me, it is of particular importance to me that he make no change whatever in it. Neither of these meanings is the philosophical aufheben. So speculation annuls all difficulty, and leaves me with the difficulty of understanding just what it is doing with this aufheben.(CUP, p.222)

When a civil society is "dissolved", as Kierkegaard suggests, it is not also in some sense preserved, nor still is it preserved in higher unity. Rather, the society is annihilated. Absolutely. There is no reconciliation of opposition at the level of existence.

Endnotes to Section II

¹Hannay also notes this. (cf. Kierkegaard, p.190)

²These words concerning the ethical resolve an earlier tension. Previously, in relation to objective knowing, particularly mediation, I spoke of the ethical. I suggested that the bankruptcy of mediation is exposed in the ethical/religious sphere of existence. Though the suggestion did not distinguish the ethical as pragmatic engagement from the ethical as morality or religion, the point concerned ethics as action, as lived possibility.

³Both Elrod and Taylor point out the parallels between the sense of Kierkegaard's 'finitude' and Heidegger's use of 'facticity' and 'thrownness'.(cf. Elrod, Being and Existence p.33; Taylor KPA pp.112-113; and Heidegger, Being and Time, pp.174-175)

⁴Elrod makes a similar point, cf. Being and Existence, p.34.

⁵Elrod argues that the Greek expression kata dynamin, which I have excluded in favor of the translation, 'potential', should be translated "to the best of one's power".(cf. p.60, footnote 111, Being and Existence) This would be helpful here, in the first usage of the idiom, as the synthesis of finitude and infinitude is not established with the rigor and necessity of a logical conclusion, but rather to the best of one's ability. But the alternative translation would render the second instance of the idiom in the paragraph rather clumsy. I will stay with 'potential'. Yet one should note the ambiguities of the translation.

⁶Note that the last two sentences of this passage are lifted from the introduction of the finitude/infinitude dichotomy.(cf. Sickness, p.30) Again, Kierkegaard is alerting us to the connection between the two polarities.

⁷For some reason Taylor refuses to offer a clear distinction between these two sets of terms. (Cf. KPA, pp.112-113) Dietrichson is guilty of the same error.(cf. Kierkegaard's Concept of the Self, p.8)

⁸This ethereal, saving aspect of possibility is an ironic contrast to the sense of possibility as the "weightiest of categories", wherein Kierkegaard underscores the anxiety inspired by sheer contingency:

...only he who is educated by possibility is educated according to infinitude. Therefore possibility is the weightiest of all categories. It is true that we often hear the opposite stated, that possibility is so light... But from whom does one hear such words?... this possibility that is said to be so light is commonly regarded as the possibility of happiness, fortune, etc. But this is not possibility. It is rather a mendacious invention that human depravity has dressed up so as to have a reason for complaining of life and governance and a pretext for becoming self-important. No, in possibility all things are equally possible, and whoever has truly been brought up by possibility has grasped the terrible as well as the joyful. So when such a person graduates from the school of possibility, and he knows better than a child knows his ABC's that he can demand absolutely nothing of life and that the terrible, perdition, and annihilation live next door to every man... (The Concept of Anxiety, p.156)

⁹This point is generally overlooked in the secondary literature. Taylor, for example, argues that necessity and actuality are synonyms.(KPA, p.121) This is fine if necessity is qualified as necessity loaded with possibility, but Taylor does not make such a qualification. This is no doubt due to a larger interpretational flaw. He fails to note the significance of the middle terms in the dichotomies finite/infinite, necessity/possibility. (He misses 'concreteness' altogether; 'actuality' is at least mentioned, though mistakenly. cf. KPA, chapter III) Dietrichson also mistreats, or rather undertreats the role of the middle terms concrete and actuality. (cf. Kierkegaard's Concept of the Self, pp.8-12) Elrod's account is by far the best, but he often speaks of 'freedom' as though it were the middle term between

necessity and possibility.(cf. Being and Existence, pp.53-65) Freedom plays a crucial role in the synthesis of this polarity, as we will see, but it is *not* the middle term.

¹⁰In Johannes Climacus, Kierkegaard speaks of 'trichotomous' concepts as "categories of consciousness".(p.169)

¹¹We do this by means of the soul. The soul is the organ of self awareness. This is why the relation occurs "under the qualification of the psychical".

¹² We should certainly see the rumblings of Heidegger's emphasis on the 'ek-static' character of human being in Kierkegaard's analysis of selfhood.(cf. On The Essence of Truth)

¹³ Taylor expresses this act of self relation as an interplay between the ideal and real self:

We have noted that [Kierkegaard] argues that "the self is a relation that relates itself to its own self". In light of the foregoing analysis, this can be understood to mean: "the self is a relation which relates itself [its ideal self, its potentiality, its infinitude] to its own self [its real self, its actuality, its finitude].(KPA, p.115. The parentheses, with the exception of the first set, are Taylor's)

My interpretation is obviously very similar to Taylor's. Elrod's and Hannay's readings are also close to Taylor's.(cf. Being and Existence, pp.29-69 and Kierkegaard, pp.171-190) Malantschuk offers a somewhat different interpretation, playing on the discussion of the 'first self' and the 'deeper self' in Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses. (See Malantschuk, Kierkegaard's Way To The Truth, pp.87-88 and Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses, pp.312-319) (Hong, the translator and editor of my edition of the Sickness, endorses this reading, cf. Sickness, endnotes 3 and 4 to p.13 found on p.174) Though I do not want to get into an extended polemic with either Malantschuk or Hong, I would say that the passages lifted from the Upbuilding Discourses which underlie this interpretation refer more to the

emergence of our awareness of the structure of selfhood than the actual structure of selfhood.

¹⁴Hannay advises us to elide the first 'itself' with the second 'itself', so that it reads 'the self is a relation which relates to itself'. (Kierkegaard, preface, xii) He does so, presumably, in order to emphasize the act of relating, the fundamental feature of selfhood. Not a bad suggestion, generally; but it does downplay the double movement of projection and internalization which is preserved in the locution 'relates itself to itself'.

¹⁵ Hannay aptly refers to these treatments as a 'pathology of the self' (Kierkegaard, p.157). The designation is obviously lifted from the opening sections of The Sickness Unto Death, where Kierkegaard himself refers to a "physician of the soul".(p.23 and also pp.20-21) The image is abstracted from the Republic. (cf.389b-d, 426a-b, 459c, 489b-c) Socrates often uses the image to speak of one who would prescribe remedies for the human soul. Bearing this in mind, one should note Kierkegaard's plea - within his own 'pathology of the self' - for a "new Socrates".(Sickness, p.92)

¹⁶ cf. Elrod, Being and Existence, p.60.

¹⁷ One should note that Heidegger's sense of situated freedom - though one could well debate the extent of this situatedness - is much closer in spirit to Kierkegaard's conception than the radical freedom found in the later existentialisms of Sartre and Camus.

¹⁸Kierkegaard uses 'the eternal' in many contexts. In the previous usage, 'the eternal' signified constancy or permanence, namely, the permanence of freedom, the power of self-relation. Here it fastens on the temporal implications of permanence, i.e. timelessness.

¹⁹cf. Dietrichson, Kierkegaard's Concept of the Self, pp.7-8.

²⁰Kierkegaard contrasts this moment with the moment of the sensuous life, wherein each moment becomes the whole of time, without relation to a past or future:

In order to define the sensuous life, it is usually said that it is in the moment and only in the moment. By the moment, then, is understood that which, if it is to be the present, is a parody of it... The moment signifies the present as that which has no past and no future, and precisely in this lies the imperfection of the sensuous life. (Anxiety, pp.86-87)

²¹Taylor sees only two senses of 'the eternal'.(cf. KPA, p.91)

²²Kierkegaard also speaks of the unity of the moment and the eternal as "the fullness of time".(cf. Anxiety, p.90; Philosophical Fragments, p.18) The phrase refers particularly to the birth of Christ, the God-man. The Incarnation is a divine analogue to the imposition of the eternal in time at the level of human being. Bedell supplies an excellent synopsis of the force of the 'fullness of time':

The Incarnation is that intersection of mere successiveness and succession annulled... The eternity which is present is a summation still thick with succession, still heavy with the future, a plenum of realized expectations, hence a proper place for hope and faith. So conceived each moment has value, but each moment has its own special and unique value. Time is a terrain of dramatic peaks and valleys. There can be moments because there is a Moment. (Kierkegaard's Conception of Time, p.267)

As Bedell suggests, the Incarnation anchors human time. The point exposes a rather large exclusion in my own presentation of Kierkegaard's treatment of selfhood, namely, God's role in the constitution of the self. A serious examination of this issue would require another thesis but, summarily, one may say that God creates 'the structure', as it were, within which human self-choosing is fulfilled, i.e. God fashions us such that we may choose ourselves:

Such a relation that relates itself to itself, a self, must either have established itself or have been established by another.

If the relation that relates itself to itself has been established by another, then the relation is indeed the third, but this relation, the third, is yet again a relation and relates itself to that which established the entire relation [i.e. God].

The human self is such a derived, established relation, a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates itself to another [i.e. God]. (Sickness, pp.13-14)

Fackenheim's Metaphysics And Historicity is the clearest (and also the subtlest) treatment of this issue that I know of - note, he speaks of the "human situation" rather than the structure of selfhood. (cf. pp.71-100)

²³Contrast with Taylor's diagrams, KPA, pp.121-122.

Endnotes to Section III

¹I use 'formal' here not to imply that freedom is an empty logical construct, like some axiom of selfhood, but rather to imply that there is no in-itself that corresponds to the self as freedom. Freedom merely describes the activity of self-relation.

²The empirical self is thus itself a composite of the finite and infinite self, unified in self-relation.

³Sure, one can reject certain possibilities or alter, through self-relation, certain aspects of one's necessity, but one cannot deny that the self is both necessary and possible; and this realization enjoins an awareness of particular limitations that are non-negotiable and mediate all imaginative projection of the self, e.g. that one is male, or born in the prairies etc. But I should not speak like this. One cannot carve the self up into necessary and not so necessary features. Strictly speaking, all that has been appropriated into finitude, whether consciously or unconsciously, is necessary in the sense that it conditions future projection.

⁴The point is provided in more detail in Kierkegaard's dissertation, The Concept of Irony:

This question [whether the *I* is a thing-in-itself] was raised and answered by Fichte. He removed the difficulty with this an sich by placing it within thought; he infinitized the *I* in the *I-I*. The producing *I* is the same as the produced *I*. *I-I* is the abstract identity. By so doing he infinitely liberated thought. But this infinity of thought in Fichte is, like all Fichte's infinity... negative infinity, an infinity in which there is no finitude, an infinity without any content. When Fichte infinitized the *I* in this way, he advanced an idealism beside which any actuality turned pale, an acosmism in which his idealism became actuality even though it was docetism... [S]ince Fichte in his *I-I* insisted on abstract identity in this way and in his ideal kingdom would have nothing to do with actuality, he achieved the absolute beginning, and proceeding from that, as so frequently has been discussed, he wanted to construct the world. The *I* became the constituting entity. But since the *I* was

merely formally understood and consequently negatively, Fichte actually went no further than the infinite, elastic [efforts] toward a beginning.(p.273)

⁵One should note the symmetry between my earlier presentation of the bankruptcy of the empirical and idealistic notions of truth and the present discussion of inappropriate-able construals of selfhood, in which both the empirical and idealist camps are represented, though the idealist is Fichte rather than Kant (but the quote from the Irony (cf. note 4) shows that Kierkegaard - quite rightly - sees him within the Kantian problematic).

⁶This is perhaps a more fitting way to speak of self loss. In the Sickness Kierkegaard describes himself as a physician of the soul (cf. pp.18-25), so it is apt to use a term with medical overtones to describe self loss (and of course 'lunacy' has a certain dramatic force despair lacks).

⁷Admittedly, it seems odd to speak of an 'objective truth' as an infinitude, given the kinship between infinitude and possibility. Objective truth, after all, is necessary truth. The point is simply that the madman offers the objective truth as though it reflects the status of his self-awareness or, literally, his self-possession. In this sense the objective truth can be considered an infinitude.

⁸Dr. Oliver Sacks, the eminent neuro-psychologist, offers a kind of vindication of Kierkegaard's analysis of insanity, despair and objective knowing in his remarkable work, The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat.

I am referring particularly to section 12, "A Matter of Identity". Sacks here presents William Thompson, an ex-grocer with acute Korsakov's syndrome. The affliction, caused by alcoholism, refers to the destruction of the tiny mamillary bodies which results in extreme memory loss. Sacks provides an initial diagnosis of Mr. Thompson:

He remembered nothing for more than a few seconds. He was continually disoriented. Abysses of amnesia continually opened beneath him, but he would bridge them, nimbly, by

fluent confabulations and fictions of all kinds. For him they were not fictions, but how he suddenly saw, or interpreted the world.(p.109)

The doctor remarks that Thompson's gift for storytelling is at first endearing, even uproarious; but that his incessant chatter fast becomes unsettling:

After finding him 'a riot', 'a laugh', 'loads of fun', people are disquieted, even terrified, by something in him. 'He never stops', they say. 'He's like a man in a race, a man trying to catch something which always eludes him.(pp.111-112)

The origin of this terror, Sacks suspects, is a deep loss of feeling - "that feeling, or judgment, which distinguishes between 'real' and 'unreal', 'true' and 'untrue' (one cannot speak of 'lies' here, only of 'non-truth'), important and trivial, relevant or irrelevant".(p.112) This suspicion is confirmed in an incident that parallels Kierkegaard's discussion of lunacy.

One afternoon, amidst an endless parade of tales and invented people, William Thompson remarks: " 'And there goes my younger brother, Bob, past the window', in the same, excited but even and indifferent tone, as the rest of the monologue."(p.112) To Sacks' surprise, Mr. Thompson had correctly identified his brother:

Nothing in William's tone or manner - nothing in his exuberant, but unvarying and indifferent, style of monologue had prepared me for the possibility of... reality. William spoke of his brother, who *was* real, in precisely the same tone, or lack of tone, in which he spoke of the unreal - and now, suddenly, out of the phantoms, a real figure appeared!(p.113)

Thompson's rather bald, insensitive identification of his brother smacks of Kierkegaard's lunatic and his indiscriminant profession of the earth's roundness. Both proclaim objective truths or 'facts', for lack of a better word'; and in both cases there is no appearance of personal connection to their words. (One should note that the lunatic arrived at his objective truth in a similar chance fashion: he picks up a ball, places it in his back pocket,

and then accompanies the sensation of the ball banging his "seat" with the declaration: 'Boom! The earth is round' - the joke being that the madman elides the physicality of the ball with that of the world and, ironically, comes up with an objective truth, despite the qualitative/quantitative differences between the ball and the earth.) This lack of engagement inspires Sacks to ask if Mr. Thompson even has a "soul", i.e. a self:

It was this which convinced me, above everything, that there was some ultimate and total loss of inner reality, of feeling and meaning, of soul, in William - and led me to ask the Sisters [nuns who work in the hospital], as I had asked them of Jimmie G. [another victim of Korsakov's]. 'Do you think William has a soul? or has he been pithed, scooped-out, de-souled, by disease?(p.113)

The Sisters agree that something existentially fundamental is missing (though, of course, they maintain he has a soul in a "theological sense"). Sacks concludes with a further comparison between Jimmie G., a Korsakov's sufferer still capable of existential connection, and William Thompson, and in so doing appeals directly to Kierkegaard:

It is because Jimmie is 'lost' that he *can* be redeemed or found, at least for a while, in the mode of genuine. Jimmie is in despair, a quiet despair (to use or adapt Kierkegaard's term), and therefore he has the possibility of salvation, of touching base, the ground of reality, the feeling and meaning he has lost, but still recognizes and still yearns for...

But for William - with his brassy surface, the unending joke which he substitutes for a world (which if it covers over a desperation, is a desperation he does not feel); for William with his manifest indifference to relation and reality caught in an unending verbosity, there may be nothing redeeming at all - his confabulations, his apparitions, his frantic search for meanings, being the ultimate barrier *to* any meaning...

For it is not memory which is the final, 'existential' causality here (although his memory *is* wholly devastated)... but some ultimate capacity for feeling which is gone; and this is the sense in which he is 'de-souled'.(p.114)

(Kierkegaard speaks metaphorically of such de-souling. The lunatic, parroting philosopher, for instance, is labeled a "walking stick" (CUP, p.198), implying that s/he is

no longer a human being but rather mere matter in motion - this was probably a much better joke before the discovery of the like named insect.)

⁹Knowledge derived through methodological doubt is one of Kierkegaard's favorite examples of inappropriate-able knowledge. If one begins with 'radical' doubt; if, that is, 'everything' is in truth doubted, then this beginning is a sort of ending, since, after all, the existing, human subject, the medium of all doubting and knowing, would surely vanish amidst such thoroughgoing skepticism. In fine, radical doubt (like objective knowing generally) undermines its own essential - or *existential* - condition: a human being. A version of this point prefaces Kierkegaard's discussion of Descartes' cogito:

Surely an abstract thinker exists, but his existing is rather like a satire on him. To demonstrate his existence on the grounds that he is *thinking* [more precisely, on the grounds that he is doubting] is a strange contradiction, because to the degree that he thinks abstractly he abstracts to the same degree precisely from his existing. To that extent, his existence does become clear as a presupposition from which he wants to extricate himself, but nevertheless the abstraction itself does indeed become a strange demonstration of his existence, since his existence would simply cease if he were completely successful.(CUP, pp.316-317, cf. also p.114 for the same point rendered in the context of idealism)

Kierkegaard wonders if this insensitivity to existence is not sufficient indication of madness:

When an assistant professor, every time his coattail reminds him to say something [just as the ball reminded the lunatic to declare the roundness of the earth], says [everything must be doubted] and briskly writes away on a system in which there is sufficient internal evidence in every other sentence that the man has never doubted anything - he is not considered lunatic.(CUP, p.195; cf. also pp.352-353 for the same point rendered in the language of idealism)

Doubt internalized - *existential* as opposed to methodological doubt, as it were - he maintains, ought to inspire a withdrawal from existence similar in principle to the skeptical ataraxia, of the ancient Greeks.(cf. CUP, p.318)

¹⁰This manifoldness of possibility suggests a drawback of the "either/or" metaphor. Granted, it conveys the sense of mutual exclusivity between possibilities. Of this I have no complaints. But we have more than two choices in any given situation. In existence there is always another *or*.

¹¹There is something peculiar about Kierkegaard's treatment of transition. In the Anxiety (cf. p.81) and Postscript (cf. p.305). Kierkegaard includes transition under the general rubric "motion". He does the same with mediation and negation (i.e. determinate negation). His purpose is to demonstrate the incommensurability of real existential motion and Hegelian logical motion (undergirded by 'transition', 'mediation', 'negation' etc.) To this end, Kierkegaard, via Aristotle, supplies an alternative account of motion in the Postscript:

The transition from possibility to actuality is, as Aristotle rightly teaches, kinesis, a movement. (p.342, cf. also p.312)

Following this he offers a puzzling attack on objective construals of motion:

This cannot be said in the language of abstraction at all or understood therein, because abstraction can give motion neither time nor space, which presuppose it or which it presupposes. (Postscript, p.342)

The demand that 'the language of abstraction' - a circumlocution for objective knowing generally, though it often veils a reference to Hegel - should give motion space is troubling. A few pages prior to the plea Kierkegaard advanced his definition of human action which is more or less at one with the general definition of motion. We have already considered the passage (cf. section II), but I quote it again for the purposes of the present discussion:

The actuality is not the external action but an interiority in which the individual annuls possibility and identifies himself with what is thought in order to exist in it. This is action. (Postscript, p.339)

Kierkegaard here distinguishes between the 'external' and what we may call the inward. Presumably, this 'external' action is bound up with space. The question arises: how does this construal of inward, non-spatial action mesh with the previous demand that motion should have space? The appeal to Aristotle is not helpful here either. In the Physics, Aristotle considers motion in relation to "things":

...there is no such thing as motion *over and above* the things. It is always with respect to substance or to quantity or to quality or to place that what changes changes.(Book III, ch.1, 200b32-34)

Though Aristotle distinguishes between explicitly spatial change and non-spatial change (e.g. qualitative change), motion itself is always considered in relation to spatial objects. (Considering this tension, it is unclear to me why Caputo should push the kinship between Aristotle and Kierkegaard so unconditionally, cf. Radical Hermeneutics, pp.16-17)

As a footnote to this endnote, I would mention the explicit critique of the "spatialization" of time in the Anxiety.(cf. pp. 85-86) Much has been written about this, see Mark C. Taylor's Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship, pp.81-85; Bedell, Kierkegaard's Conception of Time, pp.266-267) Kierkegaard does not appeal to Aristotle in this context, perhaps because of the obvious spatial connotations of Aristotelian time.(cf. Physics, Book IV, chapters 11 and 12)

¹²Necessity, as already noted, is "the place" of actuality.(cf. Sickness, p.36) But it is not a static place. Necessity is transformed in the transition from possibility to actuality. The annihilation of possibility procures a newness in necessity. Such novelty is denied in the static notion of necessity advanced by speculative (Hegelian) thought, where becoming is the transition from possibility to actuality of that which always already *is*. This is, at bottom, why the speculative account of becoming is a false account.

Both Dietrichson and Dupre are good on this point. Dupre, whom I have already paraphrased, offers a rather formal presentation of the matter:

[Speculative thought] is... unable to cope with any form of becoming, for becoming is transcendent to what precedes it: it produces something which was not there before. True enough, by means of mediation Hegel tried to integrate becoming in philosophy and even to make it the driving force of his whole system, but in doing so he has merely ignored its transcendent character and transformed freedom into necessity, causality into logical ground. "Mediation must be understood in relation to immanence. Thus understood, mediation cannot be employed at all in the sphere of freedom, where the real thing constantly emerges, where the real thing constantly emerges not by virtue of immanence but of transcendence." [Soren Kierkegaard's *Papirer*, IV, p.47] In mediation the actual is *immanent* in the possible, whereas in the movement of freedom, the actual emerges from the possible in a transcendent way. (The Constitution of the Self in Kierkegaard's Philosophy, p.510)

Dietrichson couches the issue of becoming and self-transcendence in talk of the task of selfhood and the transition from aesthetic to ethical existence. (His citations of Kierkegaard are his own translations of Either/Or vol.II. In the parentheses I include the pages he cites from the Danish first, then the pagination from the Hong translation.):

Since 'only that belongs to me essentially which I ethically adopt as task', it follows that I belong to myself essentially, have come to exist as an actual self, only when my immediate being - my so-called aesthetic self - relates to itself by adopting itself ethically as a task. [II 265, p.296] This actual self 'contains in it a rich concretation, a multitude of determinations, of properties - in short is the whole aesthetic self, which is chosen ethically'. [II 199, p.222] My given, aesthetic nature has not been exchanged for a numerically different being but it has been transformed by my choice, and in this sense is a new being, a different being:

This self he thus chooses is infinitely concrete, for it is himself, and yet it is absolutely different from his previous self, because he has chosen it absolutely. This self has not existed before, because it came into being by the choice, and yet it has existed because it was in fact himself. [II 232, p.259]

(cf. also Mackey Kierkegaard and the Problem of Existential Philosophy I, pp.407-409)

¹³This point was already implicit in the discussion of Dr. Sacks and his patient William Thompson. (cf. endnote 8 of this third section)

¹⁴Both forms of argumentation - which I have merely labeled 'ironies' - are found in the early and later Heidegger. In Being and Time, Heidegger borrows heavily from Kierkegaard's analyses of anxiety and despair, making mood disclosive of 'being-in-the-world'.(cf. pp.169-225) Rumblings of such argumentation are found again in The Question Concerning Technology. Gestell, the most ominous of all disclosures of being, 'ominous' because it threatens to conceal the true locus of the disclosure of being, namely, human being, Dasein, contains within itself a positive possibility - a "saving power", to re-quote Holderlin.(The Question Concerning Technology, p.28) Gestell (technology) can never finally subvert human being, since human being is the locus of all disclosures of being, including Gestell.

¹⁵As we have seen, living pure possibility leads to despair; so does life exclusively in necessity, only this form of despair did not figure into our enquiry.(cf. Sickness, pp.33-35; 37-42)

A further note concerning the sense in which the neither the "beginning" nor the "end" of the trilogy "cannot be for an existing person..."(CUP, p.315) That one cannot finally close the dialectic between possibility and necessity, nor discover some absolute beginning to the process of self-relation refers again to the transitory nature of human being. We are always already in becoming. There is no access to a *becoming* because, any enquiry into the beginning is itself a projection made possible by the actualization of previous projections. Similarly, one cannot disclose an end to self-relation, since one can only scrutinize the end of self-relation, necessity, by an act of mental abstraction which transforms necessity into possibility, which in turn requires an act of self-relation: because

one must always relate oneself to oneself, even to one's past, necessary self, there is no "end" to self-relation.

¹⁶The phrasing is borrowed from Taylor's Language, Truth and Indirect Communication, p.78, though I am using the phrase in a different context.

¹⁷Necessity is also what *is*. As already mentioned, though, necessity is hardened being. Necessity is the permanence of actuality - the recurrent reality of what has already occurred; whereas actuality proper is the origin of what *is* - the 'moment' of being.

¹⁸This point ties into Kierkegaard's constant refrain concerning the absence of "ethics" in Hegel's system:

If what is thought were actuality, then what is thought out as perfectly as possible, when I as yet have not acted, would be the action. In this way there would be no action whatever, but the intellectual swallows the ethical.(CUP, p.338)

Hegel's system lacks an ethics because it collapses the distinction between possibility and actuality from the side of possibility (thought, abstraction), substituting logical necessity for voluntary action. This robs existence - which is synonymous with actuality (cf. CUP, p.315) - of its authentic character. (Regarding the absence of an ethics in Hegel's system see also CUP, pp. 119, 308-309; Stages on Life's Way, pp.230-231, where Kierkegaard first suggests Hegel's system lacks an ethics.)

¹⁹It is not incidental that Russell should fasten on a sentence such as 'the present King of France is bald'. The Philosophy of Logical Atomism is not just an exercise in formal semantics. He is mapping out a metaphysics and ontology, i.e. he is speaking about *what is*; and he is doing so in relation to an entity that *is not*.(cf. The Philosophy of Logical Atomism, pp.74-76, 116-117)

²⁰Kierkegaard makes the same point in relation to "absolute disjunction", i.e. the either/or-ness of human decision. (cf. CUP, p.350) When the disjunction is applied "flatly and

simply", in isolation from any particular existential choice, "it says nothing". (Contrast with Mackey's interpretation of this same passage, which I consider quite mistaken, cf. Kierkegaard And The Problem of Existential Philosophy, II, pp.581-582)

²¹I must note my indebtedness to Dr. Marina Vitkin for what follows. As meager as these comments are, they would be still less enlightening without the benefit of her philosophic judgment and creativity.

²²The term 'metaphysics' has, for obvious reasons, fallen into disuse in the context of post-modern thinking; mistakenly, I think. What we, with Kierkegaard, oppose is a-temporal objectivism and geometric, atomistic constructivism. But the task of giving philosophic articulation to reality refuses to go away. This is the task of *metaphysics*, and the objectionable connotations of the term are properly owned by those who have performed poorly in the service of metaphysics, not the enterprise of metaphysical speculation. *Metaphysics is philosophy.*

²³This tension between the universal and the particular seems still more acute when one considers Kierkegaard's analysis of the Greek conception of time, or lack thereof. In the Anxiety, he maintains that the Greeks could not think 'the moment' in the continuity of future, present and past.(cf. pp.82-83, 87-88) This became possible only with the Incarnation of Christ, the God-man, according to Kierkegaard.(cf. Anxiety, pp.89-90) The Greeks, then, lack the temporal structure that animates self-choosing. Yet Kierkegaard wants to maintain that "every human being must be assumed to possess essentially what belongs essentially to being a human being".(CUP, p.356) As we have seen though, the Greeks did not possess all the essentials. Either they were not human - and I hardly think Kierkegaard would argue so - or there are certain socio-historical particularities that open up the possibility of living in accordance with the Kierkegaardian notion of self-relation,

e.g. the birth of Christianity, the philosophy of Hegel etc. Again, this points out the tension between philosophic abstraction and human particularity.

Endnotes to Section IV

¹Heidegger would later build truth into existence as an *existentiale* or structure of existence.(cf. Being and Time, section 44, pp.256-273)

²In the third section I noted the conflation of the terms subjectivity, actuality and existence. I there suggested that the water would become still murkier. 'Truth', we now discover, is a synonym for subjectivity.(CUP, p.343) This creates a network of synonyms: truth, existence, actuality and subjectivity.

³This is perhaps a good opportunity to mention the notion of repetition. Prior to the passage quoted from page 312, CUP, Kierkegaard notes that "for an existing person, the goal of motion is decision and repetition". Much has already been made of motion and decision in this thesis. I'll add no more on these score. In a certain sense repetition too has been treated. The concept denotes the duplication of decision - an existential choice - in existence. This, of course, takes its lead from subjective truth, the duplication of thought in being. "Repetition" expresses the activity of making existential truth.

⁴This is one aspect of Kierkegaard's discussion of 'essential secrets', an analogue to 'essential' truth. (cf. CUP, p.79)

⁵This point draws attention to what is, in my view, the principal tension in the argumentation of section I, part II of the Postscript. Kierkegaard begins the explication of the so-called 'subjective' point of view with an analysis of "possible and actual theses by Lessing". Such an appeal seems unfelicitous. If, after all, Lessing is indeed a subjective existing thinker, communicating *indirectly*, it would seem completely at odds with his

teaching to ascribe principles to him, as though he offers some handbook to self-choosing, as though he encouraged discipleship.

In Kierkegaard's defense, the appeals to Lessing are quite guarded. Kierkegaard ascribes his principles to Lessing, "without being certain that he would acknowledge [them]".(CUP, p.72; cf. also the disclaimer just prior to the presentation of the second thesis, CUP, p.80) The trepidation preserves the integrity of Lessing's authorship. Kierkegaard does not directly ascribe his principles to Lessing because he cannot. Lessing makes this impossible. Had he not done so, his writings would not be an example of indirect communication:

[The expression of gratitude to Lessing] pertains to something in which the knotty difficulty is precisely that one cannot come to admire him directly or by one's admiration enter into an immediate relation to him, for his merit consists precisely in having prevented this: he closed himself off in the isolation of subjectivity, did not allow himself to be tricked into becoming world-historical or systematic with regard to the religious...(CUP, p.65)

If I wanted to be Lessing's follower by hook or by crook, I could not; he has prevented it. Just as he himself is free, so, I think, he wants to make everyone free in relation to him, declining the exhalations and impudence of the apprentice, fearful of being made a laughingstock by the tutors: a parroting echo's routine production of what has been said.(CUP, p.72)

Kierkegaard proceeds gingerly between two extremes: his appeals to Lessing must have the detail requisite for defusing the charge that he is merely offering an empty *formalism*, i.e. the appeals are designed to demonstrate that his theses about subjectivity have some mooring in subjective communication and 'subjective existence' (a seemingly redundant phrase he finds useful); and, at the same time, the appeals cannot go so far as to explicitly locate his principles in Lessing's works, as this would both impugn Lessing's status as a 'subjective existing thinker' and reduce Kierkegaard's text to a shameful "parrot's echo".

(It is interesting to note that Kierkegaard had originally named Lessing in the first (p.72) and second (p.80) theses.(cf. p.33, 1.72:31-32; p.34, 1.80:21-24, CUP, vol.II) The amendment in the final draft staves off the latter half of the just mentioned danger. Of course, Lessing is named in the third (p.93) and fourth (p.106) theses, but these are direct quotes, and Kierkegaard has already declared that he is interpreting Lessing loosely. The danger lies in the ability to directly attribute something to Lessing beyond mere quoting, the ability to pin him down without restatement. (He alerts us to this danger at the very outset of the book, in the preface, pp.7-8 CUP) Thus, if Kierkegaard had included Lessing's name in either of the first two theses, the whole of the first section would fail, as Lessing would no longer be subjective existing thinker, an Kierkegaard's account would lose its grounding in indirect communication.)

At bottom, this whole controversy is animated by a much deeper, already explicated tension. The style and intent of the Postscript inform a certain strategy of argument. In the treatise we have a direct - dare I say *formal* - disclosure of dialectical principles and structures underlying communication and existence, with the particular purpose of exposing the subjective aspects of human being and communication. Clearly, though, a consideration of human subjectivity cannot occur in isolation from instances of indirect communication, wherein human subjectivity shows itself. Kierkegaard must have examples of indirect communication. A couple of options are open to him. (I reject the possibility of a purely formal presentation out of hand. An exclusively formal account of informal, subjective phenomena would be unintelligible.) He could create instances of indirect communication for himself and then analyze them through direct communication, i.e. philosophical or *formal* (I guess I will use the word) analysis. The direct presentation - the philosophy - thus becomes a kind of meta-text, commenting on the indirect

presentation - the art. This is the Fear and Trembling approach. Kierkegaard rejects this possibility, however. His primary interest in the Postscript is the philosophical - the 'dialectical' of the "dialectical lyric" animating Fear and Trembling - and so he abandons the alternating perspectives of Fear and Trembling; but, once again, he cannot divorce himself entirely from subjective phenomena... A second alternative at once presents itself. He may, where necessary and convenient, invoke indirect, poetic presentations of others, principally Lessing, Socrates and Plato. This is indeed Kierkegaard's strategy in the Postscript. Many of the sections, notably the theses on Lessing, begin with fairly formal discussions. These paragraphs are then nuanced in subsequent paragraphs, as the appeals to Lessing, Socrates and others add some empirical, subjective content to the account of subjectivity.

As already suggested, the tension here smacks of an earlier controversy. In the previous section I maintained, though, admittedly, in a rough and ready way, that Kierkegaard lacked a philosophic means for handling the structures of subjectivity which was not itself an objectivism. In a like manner, there is a certain tension surrounding a discourse concerning indirect communication that is not itself indirect communication. Kierkegaard needs a kind of meta-language that speaks about indirect communication (which is not itself indirect communication) and he must show conclusively that the conclusions of this meta-language have some grounding in indirect communication.

⁶Kierkegaard exploits this juxtaposition of jest and earnestness quite often in the Postscript. Consider, for example, "An Expression of Gratitude to Lessing"(pp.69-71), where he is using jest and earnest to praise Lessing's use of jest and earnestness.

One also finds the same dichotomy in Nietzsche, particularly in the first two paragraphs of the preface to Beyond Good and Evil, where a rather playful critique of the 'seriousness' of past philosophers is followed by the resolve to speak 'seriously'.

⁷This is the passive polemic of Armed Neutrality.

⁸As Taylor points out, this ruse crept into Kierkegaard's daily activities. (CUP, KPA pp.56-57; cf. also Boudry Kierkegaard on Indirect Communication, p.231) Thus he cultivated the reputation of an aesthete, veiling his intense interest in the meaning of becoming a Christian. Taylor, however, neglects to mention how this bears on the whole question of indirect Communication.

This lived contradiction parallels a second sense in which it is possible to communicate indirectly:

But indirect communication can be brought about also in another way, by the relationship between the communication and the communicator. Whereas in the former case the communicator was left out of account, here he is a factor, but (be it noted) with a negative reflection... the mere fact that there is a communicator who himself exists in that which he communicates does not suffice to characterize such communication. If, however, the communicator himself is dialectically qualified, and his own essential being requires reflective definition, all direct communication is impossible. [He then offers the God-man, Christ, as an example]. (Training in Christianity, pp.132-133)

This oxymoronic lifestyle, then, is itself something which defies direct communication, just as the significance of Christ's existence resisted linear transmission to those he encountered.

One finds a similar style of existence in Shakespeare's Prince Hal, King Henry the Fourth, I, except Shakespeare compromises Hal by making him communicate his duality directly (I, ii, 183). But in Hamlet the dichotomies are left unexplained. Shakespeare leaves us to unravel the sense in which one who questions so cogently and sincerely the meaning of existence can also appear insane; and how Hamlet can oscillate between

resolution and trepidation to murder Claudius; and why he should combine intense regard and disregard for Ophelia... More dichotomies could be added.

⁹There is deep irony here. Kierkegaard rejects the objectification of his message, but in so doing he himself, as personal/human writer, recedes into anonymity. One aspect of his identity is privileged over others and objectified as a pseudonymous author. The author, then, becomes a mere prototype. He is not himself in his/her fullness; and yet this is *ethical* communication, according to Kierkegaard:

When in reflection upon the communication the receiver is reflected upon, then we have ethical communication. The maieutic. The communicator disappears, as it were, makes himself serve only to help the other to become. (Journals and Papers, no.654)

One should also notice that the self-denial of indirect communication parallels the asceticism of the more austere forms of Christian worship. There is, as Thomas notes, a certain "martyrdom" to Christian communication. (Indirect Communication: Hegelian Aesthetic and Kierkegaard's Literary Art, p.120)

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