# HEGEL AND KIERKEGAARD'S SOTERIO-PNEUMATOLOGY: A CONTRASTIVE-ANALYSIS

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# INTRODUCTION

"Man, know thyself"

Ancient Greek Aphorism

This ancient Greek maxim has commanded the attention of many philosophers since its first utterance. The attempt to know what it means to be human did not end in Greece, however; it continues to be an important quest in Western philosophy. In this essay I focus on two philosopher-theologians who pursued the knowledge that the maxim commands and examine how these two thinkers viewed Christianity as fundamental knowing, being, and becoming "Man."[1] In other words, man's τέλος, for both of these thinkers, is made known and possible in Christianity. These philosopher-theologians are Søren Kierkegaard whom Ludwig Wittgenstein called "the most profound thinker of the nineteenth century" [2] and the German Idealist philosopher, G.W.F Hegel.

Traditionally, these two thinkers are set in opposition to one another. Kierkegaard, considered a proto-existentialist, is typically interpreted as advocating a radical individualism leading to a kind of immoral and misanthropic sectarianism while Hegel, as the philosopher who first articulated the philosophical underpinnings of what would become Marxism, [3] is interpreted as advocating a radical communitarianism leading to an

[1] The issues of gender inclusiveness were not taken into consideration at this point in written communication.

[2] Charles L. Creegan, *Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard: Religion, Individuality, and Philosophical Method* (London: Routledge, 1989), 8.

[3] It should be noted, though, that Hegel himself was not opposed to capitalism. In fact, he believed it was an important, necessary, and beneficial aspect of civil society.

immoral and misanthropic totalitarian state. Despite their disagreements Hegel and Kierkegaard both viewed religion in general and Christianity in particular as providing the cure to the disease of "spiritlessness," or lack of selfhood, that they believed to be rampant in their day. They both acknowledged the centrality of salvation and redemption in the Christian tradition. This is revealed in the characteristically soteriological dimension of their pneumatologies. The attainment of spirit and salvation are, for both of them, co-dependent and mutually inclusive. Their soterio-pneumatologies, however, are widely divergent.[4] For Kierkegaard, spirit and salvation are attained by "the infinite passion of need", i.e., *faith* expressed in *worship* (man's τελος for Kierkegaard), which Christianity and Christ as Paradox require. For Hegel, on the other hand, they are primarily attained via participation in the divine-human community (the modern nation-state) and its customs (*Sittlichkeit*). For Hegel, it is this participation which is man's τελος. In Hegel's thought Christianity and Christ as Mediator and sign of the "reconciliation of opposites"[5], speculatively interpreted, represent this truth.

Accordingly, in this essay I not only provide a contrastive analysis of Hegel and Kierkegaard's soterio-pneumatologies, I also argue that while both Kierkegaard and Hegel provide insight into the role Christianity plays in the path to selfhood, Kierkegaard's emphasis on faith and his understanding of it places him in closer

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[4] Soteriology refers to salvation and pneumatology here refers, not to a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but to a "doctrine" of the human spirit. Both Hegel and Kierkegaard use the term spirit to refer to human selfhood. Another way to understand pneumatology is as anthropology, specifically philosophical anthropology.

[5] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Early Theological Writings* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 12.

agreement with biblical dogma on salvation than Hegel's contention that participation in social or "normative institutions"[6] of the state is *sine qua non* of attaining salvation. Kierkegaard maintains that Hegel's notion of selfhood leads disastrously to the dissolution of the possibility of authentic *Christian* selfhood and salvation. Hegel's vision denies a salvation from without, replaces it with a salvation from within and thus renders genuine Christian faith superfluous.[7] The relationship of faith and salvation present in the New Testament is completely absent from Hegel's soterio-pneumatology. Furthermore, for Kierkegaard, the reality of human sin which constitutes the qualitative difference between God and man which is also absent in Hegel makes the mutually inclusive goals of salvation and spirit attainable only by way of repentance and faith in an Other who, voluntarily and on the basis of love, enters into the human world to grant the create the path to salvation and spirit. Any anthropology or soteriology which ignores sin, for Kierkegaard, is "altogether futile."[8]

I have divided this essay into four chapters. Each chapter investigates in detail the matters most pertinent to Hegel and Kierkegaard's thought. In the first chapter,

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[6] Jerry Z. Muller, *The Mind and the Market: Capitalism in Western Thought*, Reprint ed. (New York: Anchor, 2003), 150.

[7] In this regard Hegel is in continuity with a fundamental element of modern and Enlightenment thought—the replacement of hope in an other-worldly redeemer with hope in a redemption accomplished in and by this world, i.e., by humanity.

[8] Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 86. It should be noted that in the immediate context just quoted Kierkegaard is actually referring to ethics as such and Hegelian ethics in particular, not explicitly to salvation. However, Kierkegaard makes an important allusion earlier in *Fear and Trembling* to his understanding of Hegel's ethic as such that it purports to be the salvation of the individual. More will be said about this later in this essay.

"Metaphysical Tensions", I examine Hegel and Kierkegaard's metaphysics. Giving discussion to their metaphysics is imperative because their metaphysics play an important and integral role in Christologies and pneumatologies. Chapter two, "Christological Tensions", first examines Hegel's philosophy of Christianity in light of his Christology of Jesus as Mediator. I then investigate Kierkegaard's understanding of Christianity in light of his Christology of Jesus as the Absolute Paradox. The third chapter, "Pneumatological Tensions", discusses how Hegel and Kierkegaard's Christologies, based significantly on their metaphysics, influence their pneumatologies. The role of normative institutions (*Sittlichkeit*) in Hegel's pneumatology will be explicated. Then, I present Kierkegaard's critique of the Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* and contention that faith, expressed in worship, is the *sine qua non* of Christian spirituality. Finally, in the conclusion I recapitulate what was said in the previous chapters in order to bring to bear on the mind of the reader more clearly the differences and implications of Hegel and Kierkegaard's soterio-pneumatologies. I will compare Hegel and Kierkegaard's soterio-pneumatologies with what I believe to be the biblical view and demonstrate that Kierkegaard's view of faith-full worship is most congruent with this biblical view.

## METAPHYSICAL TENSIONS

### Hegel: Unity

G. W. F Hegel understood his philosophy to be both a "nullification" or "cancellation" and "resolving" or "lifting". Put another way, he viewed his project as simultaneously a criticism and an appropriation of the philosophers that came before him, including and especially Immanuel Kant (1774-1804).[9] Hegel's primary dissatisfaction with Kant was that he was too concerned with making distinctions, which, to Hegel, was the expression of Kant's preoccupation with *analytical* "reflection" or what Hegel calls Verstand *(*Understanding).[10] Kantian reflection, for Hegel, is incomplete because it is "the cognitive counterpart of a fragmented world and the intellectual expression of divided selves [it] separates but cannot integrate, divides but cannot unite, alienates but cannot reconcile."[11] A brief discussion of Kant's metaphysics is necessary at this point, not only in order to understand Hegel's mission, but also, ultimately, in order to better understand Kierkegaard's disagreement with Hegel.

Kant attempted to deconstruct the claims of traditional metaphysics in his monumental work *Critique of Pure Reason*. In this work, he set out to deduce the *a priori* conditions of the *possibility* of experience. He wanted to articulate *how* experience

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[9] Alastair Hannay and Gordon Daniel Marino, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 101.

[10] Hegel defines reflection as "the action that establishes oppositions and goes from one to the other, but without effecting their combination and realizing their thoroughgoing unity." See Taylor pg. 42.

[11] Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel & Kierkegaard* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 43.

is possible. He posited that it was necessary to suppose, though it could not be empirically proven, the reality of a "transcendental ego" that made possible a unified self-consciousness capable of having experiences. This transcendental ego, or universal subject possessed by all humans, however, is only able to experience, i.e., be affected by things via senses. These things that affect, that we experience, we cannot conceptualize or consider as objects of knowledge without ideas, certain transcendental or universal ideas. Most important of these are the ideas of time and space. Data given to the senses must, in order to be a *coherent* (and therefore intelligible) experience, be organized in a way that the human mind is able to think it. Kant posited that it was the transcendental ego's transcendental ideas that does this organizing. In light of the spatio-temporal limitations of the human ego, Kant concluded that human *knowledge*, because knowledge is intimately linked to experience, is also limited to the confines of the phenomenal realm. This led to his rejection of the validity of traditional metaphysics supposition that the human (the subject) could attain knowledge of noumenal objects such as the soul or God. It also led to his rejection of the notion that the human mind had access to the *essence* of an object or the essential reality of the world because the essence of objects is inaccessible to the human mind on account of the fact, for Kant, that it is only as things appear and as they are experienced that they are apprehended. This is the distinction between noumenon (non-experienced and non-perceived) and phenomenon (experienced and perceived). As Dieter Henrich puts it, this separation of subject and object results in, what is considered from the Hegelian perspective, "the homelessness of the mind."[12]

[12] See: Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*, 45.

For Hegel, this "homelessness" could only be overcome by moving beyond *Verstand* (Understanding) to the higher realm of Reason *(Vernunft)*. *Vernunft* is able to comprehend reality as it really is—a single all-encompassing unity; *Vernunft* gets at the essence of things.[13] Hegel's claim that *Vernunft* could comprehend reality as a whole is based on his new system of logic—the dialectical method. With this method Hegel wanted to demonstrate that the principles of identity and contradiction were inadequate to grasp ultimate reality (the essence of the world) and functioned as the principles of *Verstand.*

The first principle of thought, the principle of identity, is the law that Hegel most aggressively attempted to overcome. According to this law A=A, viz., every*thing* is identical to itself and needs nothing else besides itself to be itself. Everything is, in a phrase, self-sufficient. At first this seems to be adequate. However, Hegel posits that the person who utters this fails to recognize that "in this very assertion, they are themselves saying that *identity is different*; for they are saying that identity is *different* from difference; while this must at the same time be admitted to be the nature of identity, their assertion implies that *identity*, not externally, but in its own self, in its very nature is this, to be *different*."[14] In other words, every*thing* contains and implies its opposite within itself. Thus, if A=A then A=-Ā. As Taylor observes, "A is the negation of its own

[13] Kant himself recognized this distinction but held that understanding was the highest cognitive power. Based on its very nature of seeking ultimate explanation, reason attempts to complete knowledge. This attempt, however, leads to transcendental illusion, which is the tendency to "take a subjective necessity of a connection of our concepts. . .for an objective necessity in the determination of things in themselves." (See http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-metaphysics/)

[14] Translated by William Wallace, *Hegel's Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 1975), 413.

negation, and hence is double negation. The same analysis . . . must be applied to non-A. Non-A becomes itself through relation to its opposite, A. But A has shown itself to be -Ā. Thus non-A also forms itself through a process of double negation: -A=-(- Ā)." [15] Put more simply, determinate identity is constituted by relation to otherness; each other is itself via internal relation to the other, other, *ergo* double negation is the essence of everything. Through this double negation apparently mutually exclusive opposites coinhere, i.e., exist as a unit and are mediated.

This coinherence nullifies the principle of contradiction, which states that everything either *is* or *is not*. In analyzing the concepts of Being and Nothing, Hegel posits that Being, pure existence without predication, turns out to be its opposite—non-being or Nothing. Being is both Being and Nothing.[16] According to the traditional understanding of the principle of contradiction, Being cannot also be Non-Being, its opposite. Being *or* Nothing? That is the question, rather, the law, according to the principle of contradiction. Hegel believes that he has demonstrated otherwise. He believes he has demonstrated their coinherence, and proven the principle of contradiction a chimera. "Their truth is, therefore, this movement of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other: *becoming*, a movement in which both are distinguished, but by a difference which has equally immediately (without any help) resolved itself."[17] In other words, Being and Nothing are united in the concept of Becoming. This results in

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[15] Taylor, 150.

[16] To say that something is without predication is to say that it has not property or characterization.

[17] George Pattison, *The Philosophy of Kierkegaard* (Ithaca, New York: McGill Queens University Press, 2005), 16.

movement, i.e., becoming—"temporally extended existence" or "historical life" being comprehensible and able to be understood rationally (i.e. on the basis of his dialectical method).[18] Existence, for Hegel, can be comprehended logically.

Although it is common to speak of this movement as a synthesis of antithesis and thesis, Hegel himself uses the term mediation.[19] Whereas a "synthesis" takes place manually and externally, "mediation" takes place automatically and internally, viz., the two *relata* are *naturally* and *auto*matically mediated as a result of the internal relation. In *Logic* Hegel writes of the term synthesis that it "easily recalls an external unity and mere combination of entities which are in and for themselves separate."[20] This distinction is fundamentally important and highlights exactly what Hegel believes to be the nature of reality. For this natural co-inherence of opposites—this mediation, is absolute; mediation is the fundamental reality. Everything must be mediated. Without understanding this major element of Hegel's philosophy any attempt to understand Hegel will prove vain.

In *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel demonstrates how this dialectic works out in human progress towards spirit. According to Hegel humanity is, ultimately, experiencing the evolution and development of itself towards self-realization, both in the sense of knowing itself and being itself. Man's realization of his τελος is a historical process of

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[18] Ibid 16.

[19] When Hegel says that the difference between Being and Nothing has "immediately" resolved itself he is referring to the fact that mediation accrued immediately.

[20] G. W. F. Hegel, John N. Findlay, and William Wallace, *Hegel's Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830) (Hegel's Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences)*, 3 ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 1975), 589.

development. One could say that Hegel had a developmentalist or evolutionary view of human progress towards the fulfilment of τελος. This evolution and development plays out the "simple rhythm" of the dialectic method.[21] To say that the development plays out the "simple rhythm" of the dialectical method is to say that the development of humanity towards self-realization and knowledge of itself as Divine (spirit). This collective development and knowledge is salvation and takes place necessarily and naturally through the realm of historical becoming.[22]

The fact that Hegel calls this goal Absolute *Knowledge* indicates that the *Phenomenology* is also concerned with epistemology and metaphysics. He engages in epistemology proper in the first two sections of the *Phenomenology*, namely with respect to Consciousness and Self-Consciousness. Hegel charts how lower forms of consciousness, because of their own inadequacies, necessarily evolve towards more accurate knowledge of truth. These also make apparent Hegel's disagreement with Kantian metaphysics and epistemology.

The first section, "Consciousness", deals with sense-certainty. Sense-certainty is a form of consciousness in which, as he puts it, an "object cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, knowledge of the immediate or of what simply *is*."[23]

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[21] Peter Singer, *Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 1983), 77.

[22] Notice that because this development is collective and involves the human 'race' as a whole the individual who is a member of the race attains salvation only if he participates and is incorporated in the whole. More one the significance of this relationship will be discussed in *Chapter Two: Pneumatological Tensions*.

[23] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1977), 58.

Knowledge of the object is immediate. There is no activity on the part of the mind to *comprehend* the object by the subject. The object is merely *apprehended* or grasped as an object. On the surface this supposedly immediate knowledge of an object appears to be true (or absolute) knowledge because the mind "has not as yet omitted anything from the object, but has the object before it in its perfect entirety."[24] It is, however, in truth, the "poorest truth".[25] This is because all consciousness is able to do at this level is apprehend the object as a *this*, a thing (*Sache*). Sense-certainty *qua* sense-certainty cannot adequately describe the object.

Therein lies the un-truth and deficiency of sense-certainty. Hegel demonstrates this point by asking sense-certainty "What is *This*?"[26] and goes on to point out that consciousness as sense-certainty cannot utter any truth concerning the object as a particular object that is distinct from another object. Because, for Hegel, that which cannot be put into language cannot count as true knowledge, consciousness as sense-certainty does not possess knowledge. It articulates no predicates to the object. "This," "Now", and "Here", the only language consciousness as sense-certainty can use in reference to the *Sache*, are universal terms. That is, they do not communicate anything in particular about the object because they apply to every object generally. Put another way, these terms merely denote the "is-ness" of the object. Put yet another way, every*thing* is "This;" that the object "is" really says nothing specifically about the particular object but

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[24] Ibid., 58.

[25] Ibid., 58.

[26] Ibid., 59.

something that is true of all objects. This level of consciousness corresponds to Being, because at this level of consciousness the mind, ultimately, has nothing as its object. At this level consciousness recognizes the existence of the thing but cannot describe its characteristics or properties. It simply recognizes the existence of a thing without predication. But what can be said (and this 'said' should be understood quite plainly) to exist without predication? Nothing. The inability of sense-certainty to articulate that which it claimed to possess, true knowledge, demonstrates its own internal incoherency. Thus, of necessity, consciousness must rise to a higher level in the attempt to achieve knowledge.

The next two levels Hegel calls Perception and Understanding. Perception apprehends the object more truthfully than sense-certainty in that it can distinguish the different properties of the object. Perception can apprehend "*the thing with many properties*" in its "difference or manifoldness".[27] Though perception predicates, perception cannot get beyond classifying these properties as universal properties. That is, consciousness at the level of perception is unable to return to the object as a single unified object. The object's manifold properties are not indifferent or "simply and solely self-related" but are determinate. That is to say, "they are only determinate in so far as they *differentiate* themselves from one another, and *relate* themselves *to others* as their opposites;"[28] because of this, consciousness must rise to a higher lever in order to "make

[27] Ibid, 66.

[28] Ibid, 69.

sense" of this. This higher level is Understanding. At this level consciousness imposes its own concepts on the object in order to comprehend the object.

Consciousness at the level of Understanding has attained knowledge of the essence of the object because it has dissolved the oppositional tension of the appearance of the object (phenomenon) and the essence of the object (noumenon). That is, the supersensible laws that give the object its apparent shape and the shape itself, coinhere. Essence and appearance are inversely related, they are reciprocal. For Hegel, to have knowledge of the phenomenon is to have knowledge of the noumenon. So, contra Kant who posited that humans do not have access to *das Ding an sich* (the thing-in-itself), Hegel argues that humans do have access on the basis that the *an sich* (in-itself) is a product of human consciousness. Mark Taylor quotes Stanley Rosen at length on this point:

> The effort to affirm the world by analytic thinking immediately transforms the reality or essential significance of the world into concepts or laws: into analytic thinking and its products. The sensuous world is transformed by thinking into the supersensuous world. On the other hand, the supersensuous world is itself derived from the sensuous world, which is consequentially the *essence* of the supersensuous world . . . This reciprocal oscillation is the dialectic of the inverted world.[29]

Through this idea of the "inverted world," Hegel maintains that he has overcome the enigma of Kantian metaphysics and epistemology. Not only has the tension between noumena and phenomena been dissolved, the opposition between subject and object has also been done away with. Noumenon finds its "home" in phenomenon and vice versa. Subject finds its "home" in object and vice versa. This is the case because both subject

[29] Taylor, 190.

and object and phenomenon and noumenon are what they are only in relation to each other. The dissolution of these epistemological and metaphysical tensions plays an important role in Hegel's Christology. With the advent of Christ, God (a supersensiblity) will no longer be understood as the transcendent Other, the absolute opposite of Man, but as the one in whom Man finds his glorious abode and, conversely, the One who finds his abode in Man-God, who is traditionally understood as an object for religious consciousness will be understood now as becoming the active subject developing in human history and culture. This truth, for Hegel, is *the* truth which sets man free and, moreover, it is the development of this truth in human history that results in Man's teleological fulfilment.

## Kierkegaard: Disunity

Søren Kierkegaard was born and lived during the Danish Golden Age during which the arts flourished and were an important part of Danish culture. Hegelianism had begun to have significant influence on Danish thinkers such as Johan Ludvig Heiberg, Hans Lassen Martensen, and Frederik Christian Sibbern. The former two were Hegelianism's positive representatives. Sibbern, an anti-Hegelian, was a teacher and a life long friend of Kierkegaard.[30] This relationship, coupled with his relationship with his teacher and mentor professor Poul Martin Møller, another anti-Hegelian thinker and his reading of the German philosopher and philologist, Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg, who opposed Hegel's view of logic, as he was an Aristotelian, constitutes the matrix from

[30] Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard: a Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 47.

which Kierkegaard would develop his own viewpoint.[31] In this light, Kierkegaard understood himself to be a modern day Socratic figure whose purpose was to tear down that which Hegel and his Danish followers had built.

Hegel's reinterpretation of the three classical laws of reasoning and his creation of a supposedly newer and more rational comprehension of reality is at the center of Kierkegaard's disagreement with Hegel. Kierkegaard posited that Hegel's reinterpretation of these laws was not only counter-intuitive and illogical, but the natural result of forgetting the limitations inherent in human existence. He wanted to remind his contemporaries what it means to say that "the knower is an existing individual."[32] Kierkegaard's challenge of Hegelianism, however, was not only carried out in his capacity as a Socratic figure, but can also be understood as, in a certain and significant sense, "Kantian." One interpreter posits that his research "suggests that Kierkegaard is not only one of Kant's best nineteenth-century readers but also the genuine heir to the legacy of Kant's developed religious and ethical thought."[33] But Kant's religious and

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[31] Ibid. 242.

[32] Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript, in A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 1st Paperback Ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 217.

[33] Ronald M. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: the Hidden Debt* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), xvi. Kant's influence may not be omnipresent, but it is pervasive enough that keeping his metaphysics and epistemology in mind while reading Kierkegaard leads to a deeper understanding of Kierkegaard's position in these matters. The plausibility of Kierkegaard's subtle usage of Kant appears in the many themes on which he wrote. Since this essay focuses on Hegel and Kierkegaard, however, it is not necessary to go in to much detail about Kant's influence on Kierkegaard. It will suffice merely to be aware of the possibly of such an influence in understanding Kierkegaard's rejection of the Hegelian project.

ethical thought was not the only influence on Kierkegaard; he was also influenced by his metaphysics and epistemology.[34]

In the introduction to *The Concept of Anxiety,* a work not actually devoted to metaphysics or epistemology proper, [35] Kierkegaard writes: "The notion that thought on the whole has reality was assumed by all the ancient and medieval philosophy. With Kant, this assumption became doubtful."[36] This comment about Kant suggests that Kierkegaard does not think that the Hegelian philosophers have actually grasped Kant's skepticism, by which he means Kant's skepticism towards the human mind's capability to transcend the spatially and temporally grounded categories in which it thinks and attains knowledge of a non-spatio-temporal thing (viz. a thing-in-itself, "reality' in this sense). This comment on Kant also provides some evidence in support of Greene's hypothesis that Kierkegaard's metaphysics and epistemology are, as suggested previously, in a certain sense Kantian.

However, because Kierkegaard did not, quite intentionally it seems, provide his readers with a traditional systematic philosophy, including a detailed outline of a metaphysics and epistemology, one must settle with "constructing" a "Kierkegaardian metaphysic." This "construction" is based on his technical usage of the term *existence,*

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[34] Recognizing the possibility of such an influence is significant because for such an influence is of much help in explaining the some of the philosophical basis of Kierkegaard's rejection of Hegelianism.

[35] In fact, no work of Kierkegaard is entirely devoted to such matters.

[36] Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: a Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation On the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin (Kierkegaard's Writings, Viii)* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), xvii. (Emphasis added)

for as his statement that Socrates' "merit is to have been an *existing* thinker, not a speculative philosopher who forgets what it means to exist"[37] suggests, it is the fact of human existence and its a/logical nature that reveals his positions on the traditional philosophical questions of epistemology and metaphysics.[38]

One of Kierkegaard's fundamental criticisms of Hegel is his "introduction of movement" into logic. This is an attack on Hegel's dialectical method. Kierkegaard states that Hegel's logic is, in fact, "a sheer confusion of logical science" because of this introduction.[39] The basis of Hegel's introduction of the idea of movement into logic, it should be remembered, was his thesis that the two basic concepts of Being and Nothing, supposed non-identical and mutually exclusive opposites, are in fact identical and mutually inclusive. This identity and inclusiveness results in their being mediated in the concept "Becoming". Hegel called this mediation a *transition*, a *movement*. Specifically, the confusion consists in the fact that, for Kierkegaard, "Transition belongs in the sphere of historical freedom, for transition is a *state* and it is actual."[40] To say that transition is a state and actual is to say that it is a position, a standing, a condition. All of these terms can only be comprehended within the background of physicality and temporality.

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[37] Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 216.

[38] Existence for Kierkegaard is a technical term. Also, to say that existence is a/logical is to say that logic cannot be applied to it. Existence is without logical.

[39] Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 196.

[40] Kierkegaard, *Anxiety*, 82.

The idea of a transition, then, cannot be treated "purely metaphysically" and still be a transition because a transition is an *occurrence,* it is something that happens. But nothing can ever *happen* in logic because *happenings* only take place "in the sphere of historical freedom."[41] But this is exactly what Hegel maintained. His dialectical method treated transition purely metaphysically and as a purely logical occurrence. The consequence of treating an occurrence (a spatio-temporal happening) logically and metaphysically (as something that is supersensible) is that occurrences or spatio-temporal happenings (history, becoming, existence) can be comprehended. But Kierkegaard rejects this view.

Thus, it is the specific question of the possibility of a humanly constructed comprehensive system of existence which opens the door to Kierkegaard's epistemological position. He says, "a logical system is possible [but] an existential system is impossible." He adds, "An existential system cannot be formulated. [But d]oes this mean that no such system exists? By no means; nor is this implied in our assertion. Existence itself is a system—for God."[42] Existence is a system only for God who, in Kierkegaard's thinking, "does not exist."[43]

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[41] All of these terms—occurrence, happening, transition, movement—are, etymologically, integrally connected to things that *take place* (again, a phrase that can only be properly understood in the realm about to be identified) in the physical realm.

[42] Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 197.

[43] Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 231. More will be said on this notion in chapter 2, *Christological Tensions*.

This claim by Kierkegaard that God does not exist reveals much about what it means for a human to be an existent and sheds light both on his epistemology and his metaphysics. Existence for Kierkegaard is a technical term that refers to a complex of ideas. Of utmost importance here is the fact that it designates a spatially and temporally limited being. To exist means to be, as he puts it, "critically *situated*."[44] The Danish term *beliggende* may also be translated as "located." With either translation, however, Kierkegaard is communicating the reality of an individual's being a spatially and temporally limited being which *eo ipso* imposes a limit on the individual's knowledge. A mode of being that can be said to be *located* in existence cannot transcend locality and attain a comprehensive knowledge of a world either *beyond* the world it experiences or *of* the world it experiences. Kierkegaard agrees with the opening sentence of Kant's first *Critique*: "Human reason has the particular fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself but which it cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason."[45] In fact, in *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard says that "The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought cannot think. This passion is at bottom present in all thinking. . . ."[46]

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[44] Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 222.

[45] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason (the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant)*, 1st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 99.

[46] Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments or a Fragment of Philosophy by Johannes Climacus*, New impression ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), 43.

Kierkegaard wanted to maintain metaphysical distinctions. "[T]he view that sees life's doubleness is higher and deeper than that which seeks or 'pursues studies toward unity,'" he says.[47] He also wanted to maintain the epistemological distinction between existence viewed from the standpoint of existence and existence viewed *sub specie aeterni*, the former being the realm of *human* knowledge. However, competence in the philosophical subjects of epistemology and metaphysics is not the primary interest of Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard maintained that accepting the fact of being an existing individual is a necessary step towards the attainment of selfhood and salvation because it is only once this fact is accepted that an individual is able to respond to Christ who is the possibility of salvation.

[47] Ibid., 43.

## CHRISTOLOGICAL TENSIONS

### Hegel: Christ as Mediator

Hegel's Christology, like everything else in his philosophical system, was formulated on the basis of the dialectical method presented in chapter one. As implied earlier, Hegel understood Christianity to be the definitive revelation of the nature of God and of man's τελος. He was not concerned merely to examine the teaching of Christ; rather, as the God-Man, Christ himself is significant. In his *Philosophy of History* Hegel stated his view:

> [W]e do not adopt the right point of view in thinking of Christ only as a historical bygone personality. So regarded, the question is asked: what are we to make of his birth, his father and mother, his early domestic relations, his miracles, etc.?—*i.e.*, what is he *unspiritually* regarded? Considered only in respect of his talents, character and morality, as a teacher and so forth, we place him in the same category with Socrates and others, though his morality may be ranked higher. But excellence of character, morality, etc.—all this is not the *ne plus ultra* (the highest point, ultimate) in the requirements of spirit—does not enable man to gain the speculative idea of spirit for his conceptive faculty. . . Make of Christ what you will, exegetically, critically, historically. . .let all such circumstances have been what they might—the only concerning question is: what is the idea or the truth in and for itself?[48]

Hegel's interest in Christ is not merely historical; but philosophical. He wants to gain the "speculative idea" present in the Christian doctrine of the incarnation. Christ, in the incarnation, expresses a metaphysical truth and gives credence to Hegel's own speculative philosophy. This does not mean that Jesus' historicity is insignificant for Hegel only that it is not, as he puts it, the *ne plus ultra* or most important. What Jesus

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[48] G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, ed. Robert Hutchins, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1977), 306.

represents is what is most important for Hegel: the reality that God is in himself a dialectical unity, viz., a unity of mutually inclusive opposites. As a result, Hegel's Paterology, his theology proper, is an important element of his Christology and, as will be shown in the next chapter, his pneumatology. Because God is not "the 'transcendent,' as he is when 'transcendence' is taken in the static, abstract sense of sheer otherness [but] the dynamic, dialectical process of 'transcending,' a mediated process which includes a moment of otherness within itself,"[49] Hegel interprets the incarnation as a revelation God not as abstractly other, but as a dialectical unity of the divine and human.

The mediation of God and man is made certain and revealed in the God-Man. Hegel says, "the recognition of the identity of the subject and God was introduced into the world when the *fullness of time was come*: the consciousness of this identity is the recognition of God in his true essence. The material of truth is *spirit* itself—inherent vital movement. The nature of God as pure spirit is manifested to man *in the Christian religion*."[50] Again he says, "the intuition of this unity (of object and subject) has been given to man in Christ."[51] The identity of man and God is revealed specifically in Jesus Christ, the one in whom "man appears as God, and God appears as man."[52]

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[49] Warren McWilliams, "Beyond 'mere transcendence': The Riddle of Hegel's Phenomenology," *Perspectives in Religious Studies 6*, no.1 (1979): 50.

[50] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 306.

[51] Taylor., 117.

[52] George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures On the Philosophy of Religion*, Facsimile of 1895 ed. (New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 1999), 67. There is question as to whether Hegel understood the incarnation to be particular or universal, viz., whether or not he believed that God was incarnate in all human individuals or just the singular human individual, Jesus of Nazareth. To give extensive

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is the *conditio sine qua non* of the truth of the reconciliation which Christ represents. As Hegel puts it, "The reconciliation believed to be in Christ has no meaning if God is not known as triune, if it is not recognized that he *is* but is at the same time the other, the self-differentiating, the other in the sense that *this other* (Jesus) is God himself, and has in himself the divine nature, and that the sublation of this difference, of this otherness, this return, this love, is spirit."[53]

In order to grasp Hegel's understanding of the Trinity, one must keep in mind Hegel's dialectical logic. In the logic, determinate identity is constituted by relation to otherness. Therefore, Hegel writes, "God is this, to differentiate himself from himself, to be an object to himself, but in this differentiation, to be absolutely identical with himself—this is spirit."[54] God as spirit is inherent vital movement. To say that the movement of God as spirit is *inherent* is to say that the movement is necessary. In the death of Christ (who was God) that demonstrates the fact that "the human, the finite, frailty, weakness, the negative, is itself a divine moment, is in God himself."[55] It

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investigation into that question, however, is beyond the scope of the present essay. One researcher argues persuasively that Hegel intended to interpret the incarnation as universal rather than unique (see Daniel Peter Ramon, "Hegel on Incarnation: Unique or Universal?" *Theological Studies* 56, no.2 (1995):276-300.) Since it is possible to interpret Hegel's understanding of the incarnation to be universal, coupled with the reality that it appears that Kierkegaard held this interpretation of Hegel, this essay will assume for pragmatic purposes that Hegel's intent was universal as opposed to particular. Kierkegaard likens Hegel's interpretation to ancient paganism. He says in *Training in Christianity,* "The God-Man is the unity of God and an individual man. That the human race is or should be akin to God is ancient paganism; but that the individual is God is Christianity, and this individual is called the God-Man."

[53] Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion*, 99, 100.

[54] Taylor., 115

[55] Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion*, 98.

demonstrates that "otherness or other being, the finite, the negative is not outside of God; and that as otherness it does not hinder unity with God. Otherness, the negation, is consciously known to be a moment of the divine nature. The highest knowledge of the nature of the Idea of spirit is contained in this thought."[56]

That God and man are dialectically unified can be said to be the main thesis of Hegel's speculative philosophy. The incarnation is not only the lowering of God down to man, but also the raising up of man to God. Just as noumenon is dialectically related to phenomenon, so too are God and man dialectically related. This truth, however, must not remain a mere representation as it is in the early and "devotional" Christianity, nor should it only interpreted by the speculative philosopher. According to Hegel, the incarnation has a subsequent history. This subsequent history culminates in Christendom, and necessarily so. In other words, the mediation of the divine and human made known in Christ does not stop with Christ; it develops through the early believers for whom Christ was an object of devotion and ultimately on to Protestant Christendom, in which the reconciliation of the "secular" (culture, politics, etc.) and the religious is realized. Mark Taylor observes that, for Hegel, "Complete reconciliation presupposes an integration of the kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the world."[57] Only when the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world are reconciled in Protestant Christendom can the individual belong to a community wherein he or she finds rest and attains selfhood. In the next

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[56] Ibid., 98.

[57] Taylor, *Hegel and Kierkegaard*, 120.

chapter I will explicate how Hegel believed the divine developed throughout human history, what this development looks like, and what it means when it is consummated.

## Kierkegaard: Christ as Paradox

Kierkegaard's Christology can only be understand in light of his notion of 'existence'. To exist, as noted in *Metaphysical Tensions*, for Kierkegaard, is to be located in the realm of Becoming, the realm in which the limitations of time and space on the existing individual cannot be transcended. Standing contrary to existence is the eternal. The former is the realm of man; the latter is, so to speak, the "realm" of God. The conjunction of the eternal and time, or, rather, the entrance of the eternal into time, constitutes, for Kierkegaard, the essence of Christianity and the enigma and offence of Christ. In other words, "Christianity is . . . the fact that God has existed" as a human.[58] With an obvious allusion to Hegelianism, Kierkegaard says outright that Christianity is *not* a "doctrine concerning the unity of the divine and the human, or concerning the identity of subject and object; nor is it any other of the logical transcriptions of Christianity."[59] This section of the essay will be devoted to demonstrating exactly what Kierkegaard means when he says that God "existed" and what his existence means for man and his τελος.

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[58] Søren Kierkegaard, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 1st Princeton Paperback, ed. Robert Bretall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 231.

[59] Ibid., 230.

Kierkegaard presents his understanding of the incarnation, via the pseudonym Johannes Climacus, in *Fragments* and *Postscript*.[60] Before highlighting what distinguishes Kierkegaard's Christology from Hegel's, it should be noted that they agree on two issues: (a) both Kierkegaard and Hegel want to focus on the truth expressed in the incarnation event itself and (b) both believe that it is in Christianity that the definitive revelation of God is made. That is to say, Kierkegaard, like Hegel, wants to ascertain the truth in and for itself of the incarnation event, although the "truth in and for itself"[61] of Christ is different for Kierkegaard than it is for Hegel as will soon become apparent. Moreover, Kierkegaard's understanding of what the incarnation event reveals about God is substantially different from Hegel's interpretation. For Kierkegaard, the truth in and for itself of the incarnation is not the inherent unity of God and man; rather, it is the absolute qualitative distinction between God and man.

God's historicity—his being in time—is for Kierkegaard what constitutes not only Christianity in general, but the paradox of Christianity in particular. Christianity's paradox is that God has *existed*, has *come in to existence*,[62] by which Kierkegaard means

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[60] It is safe to assume that although Kierkegaard publishes these works pseudonymously that his own views are in line with those he puts in the mouth of Johannes Climacus. The thoughts presented in these works are congruent with those in his private and other signed works. This fact, coupled with the fact that he contemplated publishing the work under his own name until the last minute lends final support to reading *Fragments* and *Postscript* as representative of Kierkegaard's own position. (See: Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments or a Fragment of Philosophy by Johannes Climacus*, New impression ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), lxxxv, lxxxvi.) In addition, although Kierkegaard does not use the term "incarnation" in reference to God's existence in time because he does not want to give credence to the Hegelian understanding of the event, what is typically called the incarnation is an important, if not the most important, element in his thought, just as it was for Hegel.

[61] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 307.

[62] Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 106.

that God has existed as a single individual. In *Postscript* Kierkegaard calls "the fact that God has existed" the absurd. He says, "What now is the absurd? The absurd is—that the eternal truth has come into being in time, that God has come into being, has been born, has grown up, and so forth, has come into being precisely like any other individual human being, quite indistinguishable from other individuals."[63] The absurdity of the incarnation is that God, like other existents, became "critically *situated* in existence as [an] existing individual."[64] As opposed to Hegel who thought that the incarnation represented the reality of the identity of the divine and human, Kierkegaard, holding fast to distinction and the law of non-contradiction, rejects the idea that the divine and human could be mediated. Rather, they come together in Christ as "the opposite of mediation", i.e., as "the Absolute Paradox."[65] In an obvious allusion to the *Carmen Christi*, Kierkegaard says that God took on human form. He identifies this form with "the humble form of a servant. . . . that he was a common man, humble and lowly, not to be distinguished from the multitude of men. . . ."[66] God has appeared as a servant, as a human, *ergo*, "Christianity has declared itself to be the eternal essential truth which has come into being in time. It has proclaimed itself as the *Paradox*."[67]

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[63] Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 220.

[64] Ibid., 222.

[65] Postscript, see Taylor pg 130.

[66] Ibid, 69.

[67] Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 222.

Fundamental to Kierkegaard's interpretation of the incarnation of Christ as an Absolute Paradox is, just as with Hegel, his theology proper. If God in time is an absurdity, then what is God in himself, viz., what is the nature of "God" as such? Although, as with his metaphysics, he does not provide his readers with a work explicitly devoted to developing a Paterology, one can, however, "construct" a paterology from what he says throughout his authorship, and his journals. In one such journal entry he complains that a fundamental problem with modern theology and philosophy, specifically that which is influenced by Hegel, is "that men have removed the deep qualitative chasm from the distinction between God and man."[68] The question then arises, "In what specific sense(s) is God qualitatively different from man?" The first and most obvious qualitative difference between God and man, for Kierkegaard, is that humanity is finite and temporal whereas God is infinite and timeless.[69]

In *Fragments* Kierkegaard calls that which is absolutely and qualitatively different the Unknown.[70] The absolutely and qualitatively different is the Unknown because it is "the absolutely different."[71] That it is absolutely different makes it absolutely unknowable. The Unknown, so to speak, transcends every faculty of the human mind, to make an admittedly Kantian observation. There is absolutely nothing the

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[68] http://www.naturalthinker.net/trl/texts/Kierkegaard,Soren/JournPapers/VIII_1_A.html

[69] This ontological distinction though is not the only difference between God and man. Kierkegaard thinks that one collapses and write of a chimera, as the Hegelians did, then the axiological distinction between God and man will necessarily follow suit.

[70] Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 55.

[71] Ibid., 55.

human mind can think in relation to this Unknown. Though one can know that the Unknown is different, one cannot speak of any properties or characteristics which distinguishes the unknown from man. If one attempts to get around this enigma *via negations* or *via eminentia* to investigate the nature of the Unknown, one compromises the qualitative distinction and exchanges it for a *quantitative* distinction. That is to say, one, as indeed one is bound to do, begins with one's own condition and relates it to the Unknown. In the words of Johannes Climacus himself, "The Reason cannot negate itself absolutely (*apophatic*), but uses itself for the purpose, and thus conceives only such an unlikeness within itself as it can conceive *by means of itself*; it cannot absolutely transcend itself (*katophatic*), and hence conceives only such a superiority over itself as it can conceive *by means of itself*."[72]

These apophatic and katophatic approaches result in *human* thought deciding *for itself* what the specific differential determinations are between it and the Unknown. The problem with this process of making the Unknown, known is that thought "may choose at pleasure from what is at hand and [whatever] the imagination may suggest."[73] In other words, one may decide that the worse in man is his capacity for self-sacrifice and negate that from the Unknown, making the Unknown an egotistical and self-absorbed maniac. One may, likewise, decide and imagine that the best in man is his ability to love and decide that "God is love." But, to do this *by means of itself* human thought can conjure up for itself what is love.

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[72] Ibid., 55. Emphasis mine.

[73] Ibid., 56.

Therein lies the problem with these approaches; they are attempts of the mind to produce a conception of the Unknown. Kierkegaard posits that

> Every time this is done it is essentially an arbitrary act, and deepest down in the heart of piety lurks the mad caprice which knows that it has itself produced the God. If no specific determination of difference can be held fast, because there is no distinguishing mark, like and unlike finally become identified with one another, thus sharing the fate of all such dialectical opposites.[74]

Kierkegaard concludes that if man is to have knowledge of the Unknown, he must receive it; "he must be made to know that it is unlike him, absolutely unlike him . . . It will . . . have to obtain this knowledge *from the God*."[75] In other words, the God (the Unknown) will have to reveal himself to man if man is to gain knowledge of the distinction between God and himself. This revelation that Kierkegaard calls the Moment is the incarnation of Christ—Paradox: when time and eternity touch. Thus, the paradox of the incarnation consists of the fact that the eternal God has come into existence as a man with the result of demonstrating the qualitative distinction between God and humanity.[76]

For Kierkegaard there are epistemological implications to God's becoming a man. God's existence as a man is not an object of knowledge. To say that an individual human being, who is critically situated in existence along with every other individual human being, "is also God; that the Absolute Other is, in other words, also identical with one

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[74] Ibid., 56.

[75] Ibid., 57. Emphasis mine.

[76] In a significant journal entry Kierkegaard writes about the Paradox: "The Paradox is not a concession, but a category, an ontological definition that expresses the relation between an existing, apprehending mind and eternal truth."

"like unto us,"[77] is an offence to Reason is unthinkable. One cannot prove God's coming into existence in time (his historical appearance; the incarnation; the Moment). From Kierkegaard's perspective, one cannot *know* that a man was also God or that God came into existence as a man because it is the Paradox, which, as Kierkegaard writes in a journal entry, is "a category, an ontological definition that expresses the relation between an existing, apprehending mind and eternal truth."[78] Kierkegaard's use of the term "apprehend" is important here as apprehension denotes the attainment of a knowledge or awareness of something by way of prior or present experiences. Apprehension is based on experience but God's existence as a man cannot be experienced. Thus, God's existence as a man cannot be apprehended. In this light, what Kierkegaard expresses here in this journal entry is not different from what he says in *Fragments* under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus. A paradox is not an object of knowledge, it cannot be apprehended; rather, it is an object of *belief* or *faith*.[79] As he writes in *Fragments*.

> Faith (*Tro*) believes what it does not see (in this case, the coming into existence of God in time and space, a historical event); it does not believe that the star is there, for that it sees (and therefore knows); but it believes that the star has come into existence. The same holds true of an event (in this case, the event of the incarnation,).[80]

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[77] Pattison, *Kierkegaard*, 152.

[78] Kierkegaard, *Diary*, 158.

[79] The Danish word, *Tro*, can be translated as both belief and faith. Kierkegaard himself uses the same word to designate two different acts, namely belief and faith. The basis on which he makes this distinction will be made evident as this section proceeds.

[80] Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 101.

## Doubt

In the midst of his argument that belief is the organ through which one relates to the "coming-into-existence" kind of change, Kierkegaard discusses the nature of doubt. Doubt is, as Kierkegaard understands it, the opposite of belief. He bases his position on his interpretation of the nature of Greek skepticism. He contends that the Greeks were right to locate doubt in the will. "Greek skepticism was of the retiring kind (ἐποχή). The Greek sceptic did not doubt by virtue of his knowledge, but by an act of will (refusal to give assent—μετριοθεῖν)."[81] He agrees with the Greeks that immediate sensation and immediate cognition were not deceptive; but rather were valid. Error comes about when one willfully decides to draw a conclusion based on cognitions resulting from what is given to the senses. For example, "If my senses . . . show me an object that seems round at a distance but square near at hand, or a stick bent in the water which is straight when taken out, the senses have not deceived me. But I run the risk of being deceived when I draw a conclusion about the stick or the object."[82] The sceptic *wills* to remain doubtful in order to avoid the risk of error or being deceived by forming a conclusion. In all actuality he or she could overcome the doubt by *resolving* to believe and accept the possibility of error or being deceived.[83] Kierkegaard holds that belief and doubt are not forms of knowledge but opposite passions. As passions they occur, not objectively or necessarily, but subjectively and voluntarily.

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[81] Ibid., 103.

[82] Ibid., 103.

[83] Ibid., 104.

Kierkegaard also distinguishes between two kinds of "belief." The kind of belief just discussed (as being the opposite of doubt), is belief "in general". The other kind is what Kierkegaard calls belief in the "eminent" sense, the highest form of faith. Belief in the eminent sense is Faith and refers to *Christian* faith, or, the faith of the Christian. Christian faith has as its object the paradox of God's coming into existence in time, viz., God's becoming a historical individual. Like other changes that involve a "coming-into-existence", this event cannot have an immediate contemporary; it cannot be immediately cognized, sensed, witnessed, or apprehended. "[I]t is the object of Faith, since it concerns coming into existence. No question is here raised as to the true content of this; the question is if one will *give assent* to the God's having come into existence, by which the God's eternal essence is inflected [changed/altered] in the dialectical determinations of coming into existence."[84] In other words, the question is whether or not one will believe that τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (the Human One)[85] is *also* God, not whether or not the true content of the incarnation reveals, in quite un-Kierkegaardian terms, the qualitative sameness of God and man.

To believe that the Human One is also God is the *conditio sine qua non* of the realization of the human τελος. But because faith is a conviction, a *pathetic* transition and not a dialectical/logical one, the question must be raised: "What would motivate an individual to make the move?" Since there is an inherent risk in believing the Paradox, why not just remain a skeptic and will to doubt? Because the enigma of the God in time

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[84] Ibid., 109. (Emphasis mine)

[85] Mark 14:62 I am here following the translation of the Common English Bible.

cannot be speculatively mediated and made rational and intellectually defensible as Hegel and his Danish followers had posited, there must be some other way that one can make the move to accept Christianity. The move is not made from being distant from oneself via objectivity; rather, Christianity "desires that the subject should be infinitely concerned about himself. It is subjectivity that Christianity is concerned with, and it is only in subjectivity that its truth exists."[86] This task, the task of becoming subjective, of being "infinitely concerned" about oneself, is the first step towards becoming spirit and transitioning from doubt to faith because it opens one up to the possibility of guilt, sin-consciousness, repentance, and finally to the faith. Without these, the attainment of spirit is impossible. Without the unrest that these produce, there will be no possibility of the rest granted by God.

[86] Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 208.

## PNEUMATOLOGICAL TENSIONS

### Hegel: The Ethical

Friedrich Nietzsche contended that every philosophy prior to him had been a "personal confession" of the philosopher who articulated it; that each particular philosophy was "a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir" of the philosopher.[87] In support of Nietzsche's contention the philosophies of Hegel and Kierkegaard could be presented. One can discern in both of these thinkers the influence their individual biographies and life circumstances had on their thought, especially in relation to their pneumatologies.

Hegel was born into a family of civil servants. It is not surprising, then, to learn that he had a great affinity towards the state and a high view of its role in ordering society towards the common good. It also makes sense to suppose that an individual whose family made its living in service to the state would develop a view of the state that emphasizes the duty the individual has towards that state and its social ethic and values. Hegel's family's service and reception of pay from the state was not only because they were bureaucrats and jurists, however; they were also theologians who served as pastors

[87] Robert C. Solomon, *Continental Philosophy since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 1988), 111.

and professors. In Württemberg, Hegel's birthplace, as in many other Protestant German states, these occupations received their pay directly from the government. One should not be surprised, either, then, that Hegel viewed the state as compatible with and necessarily related to religion, and religion being necessarily integral to the functioning of the state.

Hegel's admiration and idealized picture of the Greek πόλις greatly influenced his views on the state and its relation to the common good of a people. He believed that there was much to be learned from the pre-modern view of ethical life as something that had a τελος. Moreover, just as Hegel developed his metaphysics as an alternative to Kant's, so too does he develops his ethics on the basis of the inadequacy of Kant's moral philosophy. An overview of Kant's moral philosophy is necessary at this point to gain an accurate understanding of what Hegel intended to articulate with his notion of *Sittlichkeit* as the space wherein the individual subject finds his/her home in the world.

Kant argued that one must act in accord with a moral law that allows the individual self to remain rational and autonomous. He presents this understanding of morality in his 1785 work *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals.* Anthony Kenny observes that, in this work, "Kant sets out critically the synthetic a priori principle of practical reason, to match his critical exposition of the synthetic a priori principles of theoretical reason."[88] As such, Kant wanted to "construct a pure moral philosophy which is completely freed from everything which may be only empirical and thus belong to anthropology" and asserted that moral law should, when applied to humanity, borrow

[88] Anthony Kenny, ed., *The Oxford History of Western Philosophy* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1994), 190.

"nothing from knowledge of him (anthropology) but gives him, as a rational being, a priori laws."[89]

Kant posited that the individual self must act according to maxims that he or she "creates" in order to be truly free and autonomous. As such, the individual is a self-legislator. Although the individual is self-legislating in regard to the maxims he or she acts upon, Kant did not think this legislation is without restraint. This restraint, however, is not produced from some source external to the individual, this would be heteronomy. The restraint is determined by the individual's ability to use his or her own reasoning capacity to guide his or her will rationally, for reason was given to man as a "practical faculty, i.e., one which is meant to have influence on the will."[90] One should remember though, that Kant does not mean by the notion of rationality a rational will which is able to accomplish some desired end as in Aristotle.

In *Foundations* Kant argued that only the motivation to do one's duty *for the sake of* duty constitutes a good will. For Kant only the uninfluenced will, i.e., the will uninfluenced by inclination or desire, is free. It is the very "*idea* of obligation itself [that] must dictate what our obligations are."[91] All pure practical reason, i.e., reasoning about what one ought to do without giving consideration to desire, objects of desire or what might happen as a result of attaining that object of desire, can know about moral conduct is that one's actions must be done from duty. "[Thus the first proposition of morality is

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[89] Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 2 ed. (London: Pearson, 1989), 5.

[90] Ibid, 12.

[91] Ibid, xii. Emphasis mine.

that to have moral worth an action must be done from duty],"[92] which he defines as "the necessity of an action executed from respect for law."[93] In other words, one's action is done from duty when one performs it solely out of respect for law. In opposition to any form of *eudaimonism* (in which the desire for happiness is the focus of the willing) or *utilitarianism* (in which the utility of an action is the focus of the willing) this makes Kant a strict *deontologist*. In stripping from the will "all impulses which could come to it from obedience to any law, nothing remains to serve as a principle of the will except universal conformity to the law as such."[94] In light of this principle of the will—universal conformity to the law as such from respect for that law—Kant presents his famed categorical imperative: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.," i.e., a law of absolute transcendental authority.[95] In this way, the subject has a freedom of conscience because freedom just *is* acting according to a maxim which the *subject* wills should become a universal law.

One should note that with this understanding of morality, any notion of the moral life being formed by one's particular setting in a particular culture with a particular history is not legitimate and is a violation of acting freely, autonomously and according to one's own conscience. This understanding of duty appears to go against what one typically understands as duty. The concept of duty, for most people, usually refers to

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[92] Ibid, 16.

[93] Ibid, 16.

[94] Ibid, 18.

[95] Ibid, 39.

one's obligations to the given rules of the community in which one acts. This tension between duty, freedom, autonomy and conscience understood as acting in conformity to the universal law, and socially/culturally conditioned inclinations and desires created by Kant, led Hegel to attempt a solution.

Just as Kant's metaphysics resulted, for Hegel, in the "homelessness" of the mind, so too his ethics results in the "homelessness" of the human subject. Peter Singer notes that Hegel had two main objections to Kant's formulation: (1) that the categorical imperative is nothing but a principle of non-contradiction which does not tell a person what he or she should actually do, i.e., it provides no determinate or concrete duties and (2) it "divides man against himself [and] locks reason into an eternal conflict with desire."[96] Kant's categorical imperative not only divides the individual man against himself, but it also sets him in opposition and conflict with the world he or she inhabits. In addition to these concerns, two objections could be made: the necessary consequence of the truth of the first objection is that one's conscience becomes formally synonymous with what one wills. The individual can do whatever he wills so long as he is all right with it being all right for everyone to do. The problem is that the categorical imperative does not provide any objective content for formal moral imperative, because the content is provided subjectively by the individual's will.

As mentioned previously, Hegel had an idealized picture of Greek society and ethical thought. The notion that ethics should be based on a conception of the human

[96] Peter Singer, *Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 1983), 32, 33.

good, for Hegel, is essential to developing any ethical theory. Still, Hegel agreed with Kant that reason should guide ethics and that providing freedom was essential in any moral or ethical theory. The problem was that Kant's notion of freedom was too abstract and indeterminate. Hegel wanted to demonstrate how the modern state was the context in which humans actualize human freedom because the institutions of the modern state were rational. In *Philosophy of Right* Hegel presents his critique of Kantian morality (*Moralität*) and also his own account of Ethical Life, or *Sittlichkeit.* Allen W. Wood summarizes Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*:

> Hegel's view is that individuals, as individuals, can be fully self-actualized and concretely free only if they are devoted to ends *beyond* their own individual welfare, indeed beyond anyone's individual welfare, to *universal or collective* ends, which are summed up in the rational organization of the state. The state for Hegel is not a mechanism for the keeping of peace, or the enforcement of rights, or the promotion of any interest beyond its own existence. Instead, it is most fundamentally the locus of the higher collective ends, which, by rationally harmonizing the rights and welfare of individuals, liberates them by providing their lives with meaning.[97]

The state proper, in other words, exists to give ordered meaning, and freedom, to the lives of individuals by connecting them to the larger good of the community, which *is* the state proper.[98] The function and focus of the state is not primarily the securing of happiness or individual interests but the security and interests of the community as a whole. In this light, the interest and happiness of the individual *is* subordinate but, for Hegel, can only can be actualized when the interest of the whole is actualized.

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[97] Allen Wood, "Hegel's Ethics," 230. Emphasis mine.

[98] From here the distinction between the state *proper*, i.e., the state as the entire community, and the state as a "political entity", i.e., the federal government, will be assumed.

Freedom from within this view, then, takes on a new and, for Hegel, its *true* form. Whereas Kant articulated a morality of abstract freedom—the ability to act according to one's individual conscience—Hegel understood himself to be articulating a view of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) in which "the concept of freedom developed into the existing world [where] a circle of necessity whose moments are ethical powers [which] *regulate* the life of individuals."[99] In this way, Hegel kept Kant's emphasis on duty but rejected the individualization of moral duty for the socialization of ethical duty. He says,

> This ethical substance and its laws and powers are on the one hand an object *over against* the subject. . . . On the other hand, *they are not something alien to the subject.* On the contrary, his spirit (the individual's innermost longings) bears witness to them as to its own essence, the essence in which he has a feeling of his selfhood, and in which he lives as in his own element which is not distinguished from himself.[100]

In other words, the individual lives, moves, and has his being in the state. The individual must needs live in accordance with the social ethos and laws of the state because it is only within the state that he obtains his τελος. The laws and institutions of the state are "duties binding on the will of the individual."[101] If this idea seems authoritarian or restrictive to authentic expression of individuality, Hegel asserts that it is because one holds to an indeterminate subjectivity or abstract freedom. One objects either because one wants to live according to the impulses of "the natural will", i.e., sensually,

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[99] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* 55.

[100] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 55. Emphasis mine.

[101] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 56.

hedonistically, savagely, or "the moral will which determines its indeterminate good arbitrarily."[102]

Duty, understood as arising not purely from individual conscience but from laws imposed on the individual from the community, actually liberates. First, duty liberates the particular individual from dependence on childish natural impulses and the misery that results from being thrown to and fro by inclination. Secondly, ethical duty provides a way out of that vague subjectivity which "remains self-enclosed and devoid of actuality."[103] In a brief, yet informative, discussion on rectitude Hegel rectitude in relation to *Sittlichkeit* with rectitude in relation to *Moralität*. He says

> In an *ethical* community, it is easy to say what man must do, what are the duties he has to fulfill in order to be virtuous: he has simply to follow the well-known and explicit rules of his own situation. Rectitude is the general character which may be demanded of him by law or custom. But from the standpoint of *morality*, rectitude often seems to be something combatively inferior, something beyond which still higher demands must be made on oneself and others, because the craving to be something special is not satisfied with what is absolute and universal; it finds consciousness of peculiarity only in what is exceptional.[104]

That to which the individual as the particular conforms is what Hegel calls "the universal", which are the customary practices of the ethical community. He says, "the self-will of the individual has vanquished together with his private conscience which had claimed independence and opposed itself to the ethical substance. For, when his character is ethical, he recognizes as the end which moves him to act *the universal* which is itself

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[102] Ibid., 56.

[103] Ibid., 56.

[104] Ibid., 56.

unmoved but is disclosed in its specific determinations as rationally actualized."[105] The universal discloses the specific duties the individual must adhere to in order to be ethical.

Hegel divides the state proper into three spheres: family, civil society, and the government. Each of these serves a specific function in the organization of the state, and in each the individual as the particular has his or her particular duties. Each of these spheres shapes the particular will of the individual to the universal will. The family is a community in which the individual's self-consciousness as an individual is linked to his being not an independent person, but a *member*, one *belonging to* a whole, in this case, a family. [106] Civil society is made up of the institutions and their respective practices which are essential for the proper education (*Bildung*) of men and growth of individual freedom. Hegel also calls civil society the "system of needs". Freedom, of course, in the Hegelian sense means to be free from dependence on nature and natural impulses (which from Hegel's point of view Kant's theory fails to ensure against). The third sphere that makes up the state is the central government. All three spheres function to develop individuals into virtuous citizens of the state, and each by nature serves to benefit a higher realm (family→civil society→state).

The family serves primarily three purposes: (1) to introduce each spouse to a sharing union between two individuals (2) to transform merely private property into communal resources, i.e., the family capital, and (3) to provide a context in which children can be brought up morally and taught the customs of the society at large.

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[105] Ibid., 57. Emphasis mine.

` [106] Ibid., 58.

Eventually, though, the family dissolves. This dissolution, in turn, has two causes. One cause is what Hegel calls the "ethical dissolution", the other he calls the "natural dissolution." The ethical dissolution results when, assuming that the parents were successful in their parental duties, the children "have been educated to freedom of personality," i.e., the ability to be independent. The natural dissolution of the family occurs as a result of death.[107] When a member of a family dies, the family is broken. There is then a further need for family members to have recourse to other members of society. Thus, there is a transition of the family to civil society. Hegel writes, "The family disintegrates (both essentially through the working principle of personality, and also in the course of nature) into a plurality to families, each of which conducts itself as in principle a self-subsistent concrete person and therefore as externally related to its neighbors."[108] In other words, the dissolution of the family creates more families. Just as the members of the family were and are dependent upon each other for their individuality and particularity, each particular family, and its members, dependent upon the other families and their members to fulfill their needs. This connection is what Hegel calls "civil society."

Civil society has three moments: the "system of needs", "the administration of justice", and "the police and the corporation." In the system of needs there is "the mediation of need and one man's satisfaction of the needs of all others."[109] This includes

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[107] Ibid., 62.

[108] Ibid., 62.

[109] Ibid., 65.

capitalism in which the production and distribution of goods is left to the market mechanism and its necessary presuppositions of individual rights and private property. When the individual expresses his selfish desires by entering into the system of needs via work, his work is, as Peter G. Stillman notes, transformed "from the particular to the universal, and from (what is similar) the selfish to the social."[110] In other words, the opposition of individual and particular need and the communal good is mediated in the system of needs. "The administration of justice" codifies, makes public, and administers laws that protect and ensure every individual's right while the police or "public authority" enforces the law.

Finally, the state, understood as the central government or "political entity", has the role of achieving and maintaining political autonomy for the purpose of maintaining the sovereignty of the state as a whole. The state as a political entity is a constitutional monarchy divided into three branches: (1) the Legislature that determines and establishes the universal, (2) the Executive which administers the law, and (3) the Crown.[111]

Of supreme importance and relevance to understanding Hegel's political philosophy is Hegel's contention that the state in his own words is "mind (Spirit) on earth (*der Geist der in der Welt steht*) . . . [it] is the divine will, in the sense that it is mind present on earth, unfolding itself to be the actual shape and organization of the world." [112]

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[110] Peter Stillman, "Hegel's Civil Society: A Locus of Freedom," *Palgrave Macmillan Journals* 12, no.4 (1980): 629.

[111] The Executive encompasses both the Administration of Justice and the Public Authority.

[112] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 85.

The state is, in more biblical terms, the Kingdom of God come on earth. It is the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. Therefore, it is the space in which the individual finds his fulfilment. Only within the state does an individual find his meaning. Any individual who exists from without *Sittlichkeit* or state is unjustified and intent to live by natural, unrefined impulses, making him a menace to society, lacking true freedom, or someone with a childish need to be exceptional, to be different. These individuals are, from Hegel's perspective, without home in the world and fail to be fully human because they either reject the state's *Sittlichkeit* and its rational and divine organization via sin, i.e., refusal to act accordingly or because they are not fortunate enough (or because of divine providence?) to have been born in it. Thus, for Hegel, Man is spirit and is saved when he becomes *homo in statu*. Man realizes his τελος with the advent of the modern nation-state.

## Kierkegaard: The Faithful

With Hegel, Kierkegaard's individual biography and familial setting is reflected in his philosophy. Specifically, Kierkegaard's relation to his father, Michael Kierkegaard, shaped his philosophical and theological perspective significantly. Apparently, his father had a dark secret about which only he and Søren knew and concerning which they dared not speak. In a journal entry from 1844 Kierkegaard tells the story of a father and son who, in Kierkegaard's own words, share in common a "quiet despair". The entry is as follows:

> There was a father and a son. Both very gifted, both witty, especially the father. Probably everyone who knew their home and frequented it found them very entertaining. Mostly they debated with each other and entertained each other

> like two clever fellows, not like father and son. Once in a long while the father would look at his son and would see that he was troubled then he would stand before him and say: Poor boy, you are going about in quiet despair; (but he never questioned him more closely; alas, he couldn't, for he too went about in a state of quiet despair). Beyond that no word was ever breathed about the matter. But within the memory of man this father and son may have been two of the most melancholy beings that ever lived.
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> That is the derivation of the term "quiet despair." It is not used in any other context, for people generally have quite another idea of despair. Whenever the son merely evoked the words "quiet despair" in his mind, he would invariably break down and weep, partly because it was so inexplicably appalling, partly because he recalled the voice of his father who, as all melancholy persons, was taciturn, but at the same time, possessed the pithy weight of melancholy.
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> And the father thought the son's melancholy was his fault and the son believed the father's melancholy was his fault, and so they never spoke of it to each other. And that exclamation which the father made was an outbreak of his own melancholy, so that in saying what he did he was talking to himself rather than to his son.[113]

This entry is, most likely, an allusion to Kierkegaard and his father. In another entry from the same year, Kierkegaard makes an important statement that gives some indication about an anonymous father and son relationship in which

> [T]he son secretly discovers everything behind the father and yet dares not know it. His father is a man whom the world esteems, god-fearing and strict; only once when he was intoxicated did he drop a few words that made the son suspect the worst.[114]

The "quiet despair" mentioned by Kierkegaard in the previously quoted entry coupled with this entry gives a clue as to the nature and source of the despair, namely sin. Kierkegaard's experience of his father's and, consequently his own despair and sin, was

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[113] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Diary of Søren Kierkegaard* (New York: Citadel, 2000), 27, 28. .

[114] Ibid., 29.

perhaps the second most important influence on his pneumatology. The first being, of course his interpretation of Christianity.[115]

Kierkegaard's definitive presentation of his pneumatology is found in his 1849 work *The Sickness Unto Death*: *A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*. However, another work, namely, *Fear and Trembling* (1843) is supremely vital to forming a coherent picture of Kierkegaard's pneumatology, his understanding of man and his τελος. The remainder of this section is devoted to exploring Kierkegaard's pneumatology as it is presented in *Sickness* and *Fear and Trembling*. First, *Fear and Trembling* is presented as it gives Kierkegaard's direct criticism of Hegel's notion of *Sittlichkeit*. Then, *Sickness* is presented as it is, in my view, Kierkegaard's definitive presentation of his pneumatology. Both *Sickness* and *Fear and Trembling*, as I will show, diagnose humanity as being in a position of sin and in need of salvation and a savior. That is to say, both works emphasize the reality of human sinfulness and the resultant necessity of a transcendent human salvation available through faith.

C. Stephen Evans and Robert Green observe that many take *Fear and Trembling* to be primarily Kierkegaard's presentation of his ethical views. Those who take *Fear and Trembling* as such posit that it is a defense of divine command ethics. In contrast to this view, Evans and Green, in their own separate research and publications argue that *Fear and Trembling* is not a presentation of Kierkegaard's ethical views, but rather, a presentation of an important aspect of his pneumatology, namely the reality of human sin,

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[115] For a great discussion of Kierkegaard's relationship to his father see Walter Lowrie, *A Short Life of Kierkegaard* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), 67-78.

its deleterious effect on the possibility of becoming spirit, and the hope that faith offers.[116] In order to understand what Kierkegaard wanted to communicate in *Fear and Trembling*, I will now examine that work in the order of the "Problems" in which it is presented. Before getting to the "Problems", though, it is necessary to examine what Kierkegaard says in two sections prior to them, namely, *A Tribute to Abraham* and *Preliminary Outpouring*.

In *A Tribute to Abraham* Kierkegaard states that Abraham is great and worthy of admiration. Why? Because Abraham "believed the preposterous (the absurd)"[117]That is to say, he believed that although God demanded his sacrifice of Isaac, God would still fulfill his promise to him that he, in Isaac, would be a blessing to many nations.[118] As opposed to what he calls "the knight of infinite resignation," who would be willing to sacrifice Isaac and along with him his happiness in the world, Abraham is "the knight of faith." As a knight of faith, Abraham "did not believe that he would be blessed one day in the hereafter but that he would become blissfully happy *here in the world*,"[119] and it is this that makes him great and worthy of admiration. He believed that he would have posterity. In the *Preliminary Outpouring* Kierkegaard says that Abraham is great because he believed by virtue of the absurd, which "does not belong to the distinctions that lie within the proper compass of the understanding. [The absurd] is not identical with the

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[116] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, xi. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*.

[117] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 17.

[118] Gen 12:2;15:5;17:4,5; 17:16;22:17

[119] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*., 30

improbable, the unforeseen, the unexpected."[120] Abraham, according to Kierkegaard, "acknowledges the impossibility and at the same moment believes the absurd, for if he imagines himself to have faith without acknowledging the impossibility with all the passion of his soul and with his whole heart, then he deceives himself and his testimony is neither here nor there since he has not even attained infinite resignation."[121] Thus Kierkegaard connects the two movements of resignation and faith. By the movement of resignation Abraham renounced Isaac, "but by faith Abraham received Isaac."[122] Abraham demonstrates that he has made both of these movements by his willingness (demonstrated by his going to the mountain) to kill Isaac. He demonstrates his faith— his willingness to believe the absurd by his works— by his willingness to put his faith into action.

But it is is not only the absurdity of Abraham's faith, demonstrated by his willingness to kill Isaac and receive him back that interests Kierkegaard. He is also interested in the ethical and religious issues that it raises for the Danish intelligentsia of his day who had become followers of Hegel. The ethical and religious issues raised by Abraham's conduct form the framework of the Problems that take up the rest of the work.

In *Problem 1* Kierkegaard asks, "Is there a teleological suspension of the ethical?" He begins by observing that

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[120] Ibid., 39.

[121] Ibid., 40.

[122] Ibid., 41.

> The ethical as such is the universal, and as the universal it applies to everyone, which may be expressed from another angle by saying that it is in force at every moment. It rests immanently in itself, has nothing outside itself that is its telos, but is itself the telos for everything outside itself, and when the ethical has assimilated this into itself it goes not further. Defined immediately as a sensuous and psychical being, the single individual is the particular that has its telos in the universal, and it is his ethical task constantly to express himself in this, to annul his particularity in order to become the universal.[123]

In asking this question, then, Kierkegaard is asking if there is room for the single individual as the particular to *not* express himself in the universal, i.e., *Sittlichkeit*. One should remember that in Hegel's ethical philosophy *Sittlichkeit* is constituted by the three arenas of family, civil society, and state. Kierkegaard observes that these different arenas are gradations, and, as gradations, each successive arena is more binding on the individual than the previous. Each successive arena is, so to speak, a "higher expression for the ethical" than the previous one.[124] Kierkegaard supposes that this means that one can be ethically justified in suspending a lower duty *so long as* one does not move "beyond the teleology of the ethical."[125] As long as one is within the ethical itself, that is, the ethical as a whole, is not suspended. The single individual as the particular sins when "he asserts himself in his particularity over against the universal . . . and only by acknowledging this can [he or she] be reconciled again within the universal."[126] If the universal is the highest, Kierkegaard observes, then it would have "the same character as

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[123] Ibid., 46.

[124] Ibid., 49.

[125] Ibid., 49.

[126] Ibid., 46.

a person's eternal salvation, which eternally and at every moment is his telos."[127] In other words, if ethical life is the highest, then participation in it equals salvation because salvation is everyone's τελος. Kierkegaard is here completely in line with what Hegel says concerning *Sittlichkeit*. One should remember that Hegel held that in *Sittlichkeit* the individual "has a feeling of his own selfhood," that in *Sittlichkeit* "he lives as in his own element which is not distinguished from himself." Failure to participate makes one guilty and the *only* means by which one can free oneself from this guilt and attain salvation is to repentantly surrender oneself as the particular back to the universal.[128]

Kierkegaard believes this view has its problems from the standpoint of biblical faith and practice. Thus, he asserts with an emphatic "yes" that there is a teleological suspension of the ethical. For Kierkegaard, "the Abraham story contains such a teleological suspension of the ethical."[129] In the Abraham story one finds an individual who "as the single individual is higher than the universal."[130]

In order to demonstrate Abraham's being the single individual who is higher than the universal, Kierkegaard contrasts him with what he calls the tragic hero. The tragic hero is one who still has his telos in the universal, the ethical. He is one who does not go beyond the teleology of *Sittlichkeit*. Kierkegaard presents three examples of the tragic hero: Agamemnon, Jephthah, and Brutus. In each story a father kills his seed. In

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[127] Ibid., 47.

[128] Ibid., 47.

[129] Ibid., 49.

[130] Ibid., 48.

*Iphigenia in Aulis* a soothsayer tells Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia, to Artemis with the hope of persuading her to grant a fair wind which would result in a Greek victory over Troy. Jephthah, an Israelite warrior, vows to God that he will offer as a sacrifice the first thing that comes out of his house if God will give him victory, on behalf of the Israelites, over the Ammonites. Tragically, the first thing that comes out of his house is his only child, his daughter. Brutus, consul of Rome, was forced to put his sons to death for their conspiracy to restore the former king, Tarquin. In each of these stories, the father violates his ethical duty to love his child, viz., they violate their familial duties. Yet they remain heroes because they violate their duty to the family *for the sake of* their duty to something higher, the state, or, the common good of the people. But this is not the case with Abraham:

> The difference between the tragic hero and Abraham is obvious. The tragic hero still remains within the ethical. He lets an expression of the ethical have its telos in a higher expression of the ethical; he reduces the ethical relation between father and son or daughter and father to a sentiment that has its dialectic in its relation to the idea of the ethical life. Here, then, there can be no question of a teleological suspension of the ethical itself.[131]

Abraham, contrary to the heroic, yet tragic, actions of Agamemnon, Jephthah, and Brutus, has his telos *outside* of the universal, the *Sittlichkeit*. He is exceptional. His actions are not, from the Hegelian standpoint, *ethically* justifiable, for there is no exception to the rules of the universal. Abraham was not intent on sacrificing Isaac for the Hebrew people (the only possible communal good to which Abraham can be linked), for they did not exist. As such, there was no higher expression for the ethical. "In so far

[131] Ibid., 53.

as the universal was present, it was still latent in Isaac, hidden so to speak in his loins." He adds, in a personification of the ethical, that it "must then cry out with Isaac's mouth: 'Do not do it, you are destroying everything.'"[132] "Everything" here is, obviously, *Sittlichkeit*, "for the ethical had no other expression than family life for Abraham."[133]

Therefore, if Abraham is to be considered great, it must be from *without* the ethical. As Kierkegaard puts it, "While the tragic hero is therefore great by his ethical virtue, Abraham is great by a purely personal virtue," namely, his faith.[134] His act, or rather his intention to act, is justifiable only when viewed from a higher realm, namely, the religious realm in which the particular stands in absolute relation to the absolute (God). Abraham "exists as the particular in contrast to the universal."[135] Abraham is great only from this point of view. If he is not considered from the standpoint of the possibility of an absolute relation to the absolute (God) then he cannot even to be considered a tragic hero; rather, he is guilty of filicide.

Thus, in the second *Problem*, Kierkegaard asks the question: Is there an absolute duty to God? This is just another way of asking if it is possible to have an absolute relation to the absolute which relativizes the universal and allows the single individual to stand as the particular in contrast to the universal. If not, again, Abraham is a murderer. As was demonstrated in the previous section, Hegel maintained that the state and its

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[132] Ibid., 52.

[133] Ibid., 99.

[134] Ibid., 52.

[135] Ibid., 54.

institutions is the advent of the kingdom of God on earth. Hegel's view collapses relation to the absolute (God) to relation to the universal (the ethical). Kierkegaard challenges this view because, as Evans puts it, "if God is identified with the social order, then God as a transcendent reality disappears; his reality is exhausted by my social duties."[136] In Kierkegaard's own words, "God becomes an invisible vanishing point, an impotent thought, his power being only in the ethical, which completes existence."[137] One should keep in mind that Kierkegaard is not here attempting to present a logical argument. He is not attempting to prove that there is an absolute duty to God; rather, he wants to present it as an existential and religious possibility because he wants to maintain faith as a possibility. He presents it as a hypothesis which, if true, means that "there is an absolute duty to God, and if there be such a thing, it is the paradox described, that the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute." Kierkegaard wants to make room for genuine faith; a faith that does not equal being a good citizen of the state. If there is not, then "faith has never existed because it has always existed, or else Abraham is lost, or else one must explain the passage in Luke 14 in such a way as that tasteful exegete did, and explain the corresponding and similar passages in the same manner."[138] Kierkegaard refers to Luke 14:25-33, specifically to verse 26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." In Kierkegaard's mind this verse lends

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[136] C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's Ethic of Love: Divine Commands and Moral Obligations* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2006), 77.

[137] Ibid., 59.

[138] Ibid., 71.

support to the biblical fact that there is a teleological suspension of the ethical in which one could demonstrate love for God and neighbor in a way that is not foreseen and contrary to the universal.

Abraham's resolve to kill Isaac is not the only ethical problem that Kierkegaard ponders. In the third Problem he deals with the ethicality of Abraham's silence. He asks, "Was it ethically defensible for Abraham to conceal his undertaking from Sarah, from Eliezer, from Isaac?" He begins this section by saying that

> The ethical as such is the universal; as the universal it is in turn the disclosed. Defined immediately as a sensuous and psychical being, the single individual is the concealed. His ethical task, then, is to extricate himself from this concealment and become disclosed in the universal. Whenever he wants to remain in concealment he commits an offense and is in a state of temptation, from which he can emerge only by disclosing himself.
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> Here we are again at the same point. If there is no concealment that has its rationale in the single individual as the particular being higher than the universal, then Abraham's conduct is indefensible, for he disregarded the ethical intermediary forums. If there is such a concealment, however, then we are at the paradox, which cannot be mediated because it is due precisely to the single individual as the particular being higher than the universal, but the universal is precisely the mediation [of the particular]. The Hegelian philosophy assumes no justified concealment, no justified incommensurability. It is therefore consistent in demanding disclosure, but is befuddled in wanting to regard Abraham as the father of faith and in speaking about faith.[139]

The issue of concealment—secrecy, silence—versus disclosure—openness, linguistic expression—is an important theme throughout the entire discussion being had in the third Problem. Kierkegaard brings back into the discussion the distinction between the tragic hero and the knight of faith. The tragic hero, as one who has his telos in the ethical, must make known his intention. "Ethics loves him," says Kierkegaard, "precisely

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[139] Ibid., 71.

because he constantly expresses the universal." [140] Moreover, "If he keeps silent, he assumes a responsibility as the single individual inasmuch as he disregards any argument that may come from outside."[141] Though the tragic hero has the courage to disclose himself and verbalize his actions, he does not achieve the greatness which the knight of faith achieves. Kierkegaard says,

> Despite the rigor with which ethics demands disclosure, it cannot be denied that secrecy and silence actually make for greatness in a person precisely because they are qualifications of inwardness. . . The tragic hero, who is the favorite of ethics, is the purely human; him I can also understand, and all his undertakings are in the open as well.

Kierkegaard says, speaking from the perspective of his fictive author, that he can understand the tragic hero because the tragic hero is able to speak and make known his actions. In being able and willing to do such, the tragic hero also seeks to justify his actions. He does not *have* to remain silent because he can explain his actions to the people. The people will understand him because they understand the ethical and its demands on the individual. The point Kierkegaard makes here is similar to what Ludwig Wittgenstein's interpreters call the "private language argument" and "language game". The basic contention of the interpreters of Wittgenstein is that, according to Wittgenstein, the only way for an utterance to be meaningful is for it to be understandable and meaningful for *others*, not just the speaker. In other words, for Wittgenstein, the rules of grammar are determined by the language's placement in a 'form of life' that is common to the speaker and the hearer of the utterance. The tragic hero, so to speak, because he

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[140] Ibid., 76.

[141] Ibid., 76.

remains within the ethical, does not have to dodge any argumentation from the people who share the common 'form of life' as he (the ethical). He does not have to remain silent; he can, in complete confidence defend himself and his actions before the people and they will concede that he is ethically justified. The knight of faith, i.e., Abraham, on the other hand, cannot defend himself and his actions before the people because he has, so to speak, suspended the 'form of life', i.e., the ethical and has his telos outside of it. His utterance would be completely meaningless to others and would thus demonstrate that his actions were unjustifiable *from the stand point of the ethical*:

> This is Abraham's situation. He can say everything, but one thing he cannot say, and yet if he cannot say it, that is, *say it in such a way that another person understands it, he does not speak*. The relief in speaking is that it translates me into the universal. . . Speak [Abraham] cannot [because] he speaks no human language. Even if he understood all the languages of the world, even if those loved ones also understood them, he still cannot speak—he speaks in a divine language, he speaks in tongues.[142]

Thus, Abraham is *forced* to remain silent. From the ethical standpoint, any desire to assert one's particularity over against the universal places one in a state of temptation, and if one attempts to act on that desire one sins. That is the rationale of the ethical.[143] The rationale of faith, however, is that it is possible for the ethical itself to be the temptation. No one would understand Abraham, "for he cannot say that which would explain everything (i.e. so it is intelligible), that it is a trail, of a sort, mind you, in which

[142] Ibid., 100. Emphasis mine

[143] Ibid., 46.

the ethical is the temptation. Anyone so situated is an emigrant from the sphere of the universal."[144]

## Sin

I asserted previously in this chapter that *Fear and Trembling* is not primarily a defense of divine command ethics, but a presentation of an important and fundamental aspect of his pneumatology, namely the affect sin has on the human ability to become "ethical". One must, then, wonder why it is that up to this point Abraham's willingness to obey God's command to sacrifice Isaac has dominated the discussion. This is because it is not until *Problem 3*, roughly sixteen pages into the chapter, that Kierkegaard explicitly mentions sin and its ethical implications.[145] It is in the context of Kierkegaard's discussion of silence that he raises the issue and, in his words, "makes an observation by which I say more than is said at any point previously."[146] What is the observation? It is that

> In sin the single individual is *already* higher, in the direction of the demonic paradox, than the universal, because it is a contradiction for the universal to want to require itself of one who lacks the necessary condition. If [the Hegelian] philosophy were also to imagine, among other things, that it might just cross a person's mind to want to act according to its teaching, a curious comedy could be made out of that. An ethics that ignores sin is an altogether futile discipline, but if it asserts sin, then it is for that very reason beyond itself.[147]

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[144] Ibid., 101.

[145] Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*..

[146] Ibid., 86.

[147] Ibid., 86.

Kierkegaard is here making the point that there is another way by which an individual can be outside of and higher than the universal, i.e., *Sittlichkeit*—sin. But why does he introduce this theme now?

It should be remembered that in *Problem 1* Kierkegaard first introduces the contrast between Abraham, the Knight of Faith, and Agamemnon, Jephthah, and Brutus, all tragic heroes in their relationship to the ethical. The tragic heroes, because they remain within the ethical, can speak, viz., they can make themselves intelligible in the broad sense of the word, not only lexically intelligible. The Knight of Faith, because he is outside of the ethical, cannot speak, viz., he cannot make himself intelligible, though the people to whom he verbalizes his actions may understand him lexically. Kierkegaard continues this contrast in *Problem 3*, but introduces six new stories to contrast with Abraham's situation.[148] While all five stories are pertinent to the issues Kierkegaard is addressing, the legend of *Agnes and the Merman* is perhaps the most significant in the attempt to understand what he is communicating about the reality of human sin and its affect on the individual's relation to the universal. Thus, it will only be this story that are dealt with in this section.

*Agnes and the Merman* is a popular Danish legend about a seducing Merman who "shoots up from his hiding place in the abyss and in wild lust grabs and breaks the innocent flower (Agnes) that stood by the seashore in all its gracefulness pensively

[148]The stories: a story recounted by Aristotle in his *Politics*, the Danish legend of *Agnes and the Merman*, Shakespeare's Gloucester, the story of Tobias and Sarah recounted in the book of Tobit, and the story of Faust.

inclining its head to the sighing of the sea."[149] As Kierkegaard retells the legend, the Merman sets out to seduce Agnes by his "smooth talk" and, because he is a well-studied and tried seducer who can charm any girl, it at first seems that he will be successful. Agnes is prepared to go with the Merman down into the sea; she, as Kierkegaard puts it, "abandons herself with her whole heart to the stronger one." "Then", he adds, "Agnes looks at him once more, not intoxicated with desire, but absolutely believing, absolutely humble like the lowly flower she took herself to be, absolutely confident, she entrusts her entire destiny to him with this look." [150] As a result, though, the sea, which was the Merman's strength, calms and the Merman collapses because "he cannot withstand the power of innocence, his native element becomes unfaithful to him, he cannot seduce Agnes."[151] The two cannot be together because the predator is a seducing Merman. As a *seducer*, he only finds pleasure and value in the chase, as a *Merman*, he is not human and therefore cannot perform nor function as humans do in human relationships. These two facts result in the hard reality that "he cannot faithfully *belong* to any girl."[152] The Merman is now in a situation that he did not anticipate. He has fallen in love with a girl; he loves Agnes. But what shall he now do?

Kierkegaard states that the Merman has four options; four ways by which he can respond to his present situation: (1) he can remain silent about what he really is, a seducer

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[149] Ibid., 82.

[150] Ibid., 82.

[151] Ibid., 82.

[152] Ibid., 83.

who has become a Merman because of the life he led as a human, and resort to the demonic, i.e., evil, and "excite all the dark passions in [Agnes], scoff at her, mock her, hold her love up to ridicule, and it possible provoke her pride" and take masochistic pleasure in the torture he experiences because of it, for he *does* love her;[153] (2) he can repent and speak, and crush Agnes with the truth; (3) he can repent and not rely on his own ingenuity, yet still remain silent and simply trust that the divine will save her; or, (4) he can repent, be honest with Agnes about who he is and his initial intentions, and marry her.

If the Merman chooses the first option, Kierkegaard says, "By means of the demonic the Merman would be the single individual who as the particular was higher than the universal." Because, and this is crucial, "*The demonic has the same character as the divine in that the single individual can enter into an absolute relation to it*. This is the analogy, the *counter-part* to that paradox of which we speak." [154] The paradox that the single individual can enter into an absolute relation to the demonic and thus being outside of and higher than the universal, is the counter-part to the paradox that the single individual can enter into an absolute relation to the absolute or divine. Though it is the counter-part, Kierkegaard adds, the Merman's silence if he takes this course, does not make him a knight of faith, for he *can* speak and make himself intelligible at least to Agnes. The pain he suffers in his silence and hoax is not justified. If he speaks he will be a tragic hero because he had the courage to be honest with himself and Agnes. Besides

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[153] Ibid., 84.

[154] Ibid., 85. Emphasis mine

these two options there are two more paths that the Merman can follow that will allow him to be "rescued out of the demonic." Both of these following options require repentance.

Path one: "He can hold himself back and remain in concealment but not rely on his ingenuity."[155] If he takes this path then he does not enter into an absolute relation to the demonic; rather, he allows himself to think that the divine will rescue Agnes. This movement, what, in so many words, Kierkegaard calls a monastic movement in accordance with Middle Age practice, is similar, if not identical to, the movement of infinite resignation. This would make the Merman a Knight of Infinite Resignation, that first character to which Kierkegaard contrasts the Knight of Faith. By remaining concealed and giving up Agnes he finds peace but, like the Knight of Infinite Resignation, "is lost to this world," i.e., he will not be reconciled to Agnes.[156]

The final path by which the Merman can be rescued out of the demonic is the way of disclosure. It is at this point that Kierkegaard makes that observation by which he says more than he has said previously. He says,

> [The Merman] then marries Agnes. Nevertheless, he must have recourse to the paradox. For when the single individual by his guilt has come outside the universal, he can only return to it by virtue of having come as the single individual into an absolute relation to the absolute. Now here I shall make an observation by which I say more than is said at any point preciously. Sin is not the first immediacy; sin is a later immediacy. In sin the single individual is already higher, in the direction of the demonic paradox, than the universal, because it is a contradiction for the universal to want to require itself of one who lacks the

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[155] Ibid., 84.

[156] Ibid,. 87.

> necessary condition . . . An ethics that ignores sin is an altogether futile discipline, but if it asserts sin, then it is for that very reason beyond itself.[157]

Kierkegaard's concern here is the Merman's ability to *return* to the universal, which he has already violated. The Merman, if he chooses to remain concealed and resolves to arouse hatred in Agnes against him, he is higher than the universal as a demoniac. If he wishes to return to the universal, viz., if he wishes to accomplish the good and marry Agnes, he must go the opposite direction and enter into an absolute relation to the absolute, i.e., God. By his guilt the Merman became a seducing Merman who could not faithfully belong to any girl. But what was his guilt? Kierkegaard informs the reader that the Merman had a "human consciousness" and "his being a Merman [denotes] a human pre-existence in whose consequences his life was ensnared", so, apparently, there was something he did in his "previous life" which resulted in his present condition.[158]It will therefore be by his *relation to the absolute* that his guilt will be absolved and his ability to live in the world recovered. In this case, his ability to live in the world is represented by his ability to faithfully belong to Agnes.

In a statement that is remarkably similar to what he says about Abraham Kierkegaard writes, "The Merman cannot then belong to Agnes without, after having made *the infinite movement of repentance*, making one more movement, the movement *by virtue of the absurd*. He can make the movement of repentance *by his own strength*, but he also uses absolutely all his strength for that and therefore cannot possibly come

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[157] Ibid., 86.

[158] Ibid., 84.

back and *grasp actuality* again by his own strength."[159] In order to make the connection between the movements the Merman must make, and the movement Abraham made more evident, it is necessary to bring out something that Kierkegaard says back in the *Preliminary Outpouring* about Abraham. He says, "A purely *human courage* is required to *renounce the whole of temporality* in order to gain the eternal . . . But it takes a paradoxical and humble courage net to *grasp the whole of temporality by virtue of the absurd*, and this is the courage of faith. By faith Abraham did not renounce Isaac, but by faith Abraham received Isaac."[160] There are two sets of parallels in these two statements from Kierkegaard about Abraham and the Merman. Both Abraham and the Merman by their own strength and courage renounce and resign, but it is by virtue of the absurd (for Abraham the absurd is that the promise will be fulfilled, for the Merman the absurd is that though he is a merman he will be with Agnes) that they grasp actuality and temporarily. But what does it mean to do something by virtue of the absurd? It means to believe; it means to have faith.

What is Kierkegaard's point here? Why does he make this connection between the movements that Abraham makes and those that the Merman must make, and what is its relation to the Hegelian concept of *Sittlichkeit*? Recall that in *A Tribute to Abraham* Kierkegaard says that he only has the courage to admire Abraham for his actions, but not to follow him in them. But he also acknowledges that Abraham is much more than an individual worthy of admiration. He states that Abraham is "a guiding star that rescues

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[159] Ibid., 86. Emphasis mine

[160] Ibid., 41. Emphasis mine

the anguished."[161] Who are the anguished? One could assume that the anguished are those who are in a similar situation to Abraham's. In this case the anguished would be those who are experiencing the dilemma of choosing either to conform to *Sittlichkeit* or follow God down an alternative path that would render one a menace to society. This is a possible interpretation. Kierkegaard most likely intended that this to be a possible interpretation. He *did* want to maintain the distinction between God and state. He *did* oppose the apotheosis of one's given cultural and societal situation and wants to maintain the possibility of being and doing something which, from the standpoint of the ethical, is *un*ethical. An example of such an individual may be a religious pacifist, who, during a time of war, refuses to joint his or her armed forces in defense of the nation to which he or she belongs. That person's duty to God and what God requires of that individual relativizes that individual's "ethical" duty to protect his fellow citizens—his neighbors—via violence.

So, one can understand the "anguished" to be those who face the dilemma of choosing to follow God or conform to the social conventions of his or her society. One should notice, however, that this is only *one* possible interpretation, and not the *only* interpretation contextually possible. There is another possible meaning behind Kierkegaard's use of the term, because as mentioned previously, *Fear and Trembling* has multiple layers. In this light the "anguished" to whom Abraham is a guiding star refers to another group, who equally, if not more so, need Abraham—those who are *unable,* not because of a duty to God but because of *deformity*, an inability to conform to the ethical.

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[161] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 18.

Those like the Merman. Those like the Mermen who, because of sin, are unable to live in conformity to the ethical. So, in this case Abraham is a guiding star because he represents a possibility; the possibility of being justified *outside* of ethics. To put it another way, he represents the possibility of "salvation by faith" as opposed to "salvation by works", or conformity to *Sittlichkeit*. The sinner has to have his τελος outside of the universal if he is to be saved. From the standpoint of orthodox biblical Christianity all people are in the same situation as the Merman. Everyone fails to live up to the standards that even they establish for themselves. As a result, everyone needs to be saved and transformed and "brought to a position of being able to perform the universal."[162] As Kierkegaard states "when the single individual by his guilt has come outside the universal, he can only return to it by virtue of having come as the single individual into an absolute relation to the absolute (God)."[163]

Kierkegaard makes a passing remark that an individual can 'originally' be placed outside of the universal by "nature" and that the individual would not to be at fault for this. Those who are originally placed outside of the universal by nature "cannot be saved by mediating them into an idea of society. Ethics really only makes a fool of them"[164] In keeping with Kierkegaard's use of literary figures to make his point he uses Sarah from the Hebraic Book of Tobit as an example of such a situation. Sarah, because of the demon who kills her potential husbands, is unable to marry without the help of a divine

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[162] Ibid., 86

[163] Ibid., 86

[164] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 93.

intervention. Because she is unable to marry, from the standpoint of *Sittlichkeit*, she contributes nothing to the flourishing of the society. She is useless, alienated, and does not receive salvation does not conform to Sittlichkeit even though she did nothing to be unable to marry, i.e., she did not exit the universal by means of guilt but by nature and happenstance. Kierkegaard says that it would be unfair for the Ethical to say, if it could speak, "Why do you not express the universal and get married?"[165]

Kierkegaard also adds that one can originally be placed outside of the universal and thus outside of salvation by "historical circumstance". In this instance, however, he does not provide any example of such a situation as he does with being placed outside of the universal by "nature". Nevertheless, it is safe to conjecture that by "historical circumstance" Kierkegaard means those who did/do not have the benefit of being born in Protestant Christendom. It should be remembered that Hegel maintained that Protestant Christendom was, in essence, the Kingdom of God, the full realization of the teaching of the New Testament. In his developmentalist paradigm of world history, Hegel divided the world into five spheres: the prehistorical world (Africa and Native America), the Oriental world (Asia in its broadest sense), the Greek world, the Roman world, and the German world. In this developmentalist paradigm of history and culture, he maintained that all but the German world (and modern Europe in general) were lower cultures. Asia was lower than the Greco-Roman world and the Greco-Roman world was inferior to modern Europe, especially Germany but African and Native American culture was inferior to all. So inferior were African and Native American culture that they were "outside of

[165] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 93.

history."[166] This inferiority was reflected in many ways but primarily in their religion, morality, and political constitution. The German and late-modern European political make-up and *Sittlichkeit* was *the* place were true freedom (salvation) was realized.

Hegel's placement of Africa (excluding Egypt which he considered to be part of Asia) and Native America completely outside of world history, viz., outside of the development of Spirit in the world and relegation of all but late-modern Europe to an inferior step on the stairs of human development, leads necessarily to the conclusion that the people who lived and/or live in those areas were/are not truly Man and do not realize the τελος of Man. This failure is not because of any rejection of the Christian gospel, but merely because they were not fortunate enough to have be born in late-modern Protestant Christendom Europe which just is the Kingdom of God and the locus of salvation.

Kierkegaard finds this to be a betrayal of faith. For Kierkegaard, whether one does not live in conformity with *Sittlichkeit* because of a failure of their part to 'live up' to it, because of natural circumstance, or because of historical circumstance Abraham is a guiding star who demonstrates that one's τελος can be realized and one's salvation is received simply via an absolute relation to the absolute, that is, by faith. Although Kierkegaard is more inclusive in his understanding of the path to salvation, he nevertheless maintains that salvation is neither offered cheaply nor received easily. One

[166] For a wonderful analysis of Hegel's Eurocentrism and geo-cultural racism see: Teshale Tibebu, *Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

can still fail to realize one's τελος by not entering into an absolute relation to the absolute. This failure Kierkegaard calls despair.[167]

In *Sickness Unto Death* (SUD) Kierkegaard gives what he calls "a Christian psychological exposition for upbuilding and awakening" By "Christian psychological exposition" he means a Christian anthropology, or, a philosophical anthropology explained from the standpoint of Christian dogma. In the terms I have used in this present essay, what Kierkegaard presents in SUD is a Christian analysis and description of the human spirit, i.e., a pneumatology. Moreover, because SUD is acknowledged to be a *Christian* deliberation Kierkegaard makes specific references to Christ, unlike in *Fear and Trembling*, as the one in whom one places one's faith. In other words, "the absurd" is replaced by Christ, "the Paradox". Thus, in SUD Kierkegaard makes more explicit, without directing his presentation specifically against Hegel, his soterio-pneumatology.

The book begins with his famous, in surprisingly Hegelian language, articulation of the ontological constitution of spirit. He writes,

> 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 in 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.
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> 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

[167] This pseudonym is anti-Climacus

> is a relation. If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third, and this is the self.
>
> 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.
>
> 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. This is why there can be two forms of despair in the strict sense. If a human self had itself established itself, then there could be only one form: not to will to be oneself, to will to do away with oneself, but there could not be the form: in despair to will to be oneself.
>
> The formula that describes the state of the self when despair is completely rooted out is this: in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it.[168]

First, I should point out that Kierkegaard defines the self as spirit and spirit as a relation. More specifically, the self is only in the *act* of relating. He says "the self is not the relation but is the relation's *relating* itself to itself."[169] He calls this act of relating a *synthesis*, namely the synthesis of "the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity."[170]

Previously in chapter one, "Metaphysical Tension" I noted that some who have written about Hegel use the term synthesis when discussing how Hegel described the reconciliation of opposite. I pointed out that "synthesis," for Hegel himself, was inadequate to describe what he was articulating. He himself actually used the term

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[168] Ibid., 13, 14.

[169] Ibid., 13. Emphasis mine.

[170] Ibid., 13.

"mediation" because mediation, as opposed to synthesis conveyed the idea of a passive, automatic reconciliation.[171] Kierkegaard, though, being closer in time to Hegel, was aware of the distinction which Hegel made between synthesis and mediation. But he laments the replacement of "an old, respectable philosophical terminology: thesis, antithesis, synthesis" with the new, i.e., Hegelian, terminology of thesis, antithesis, mediation.[172] Mediation is too equivocal for Kierkegaard and has no place in the realm of actuality or concrete human existence. This is why he makes the point to distinguish between a relation that is a "negative unity" and a relation that is a "positive unity," which is the self.

John Caputo describes Kierkegaard's point in this way:

> In any relation there are three things—two things related (say 5 and 10, to use a mathematical example) and the relation itself (half, double). A merely 'negative' relation is found among passive, impersonal objects, whether they are physical objects or ideal objects (logic, mathematics). The 'self', on the other hand, is a positive and personal relation. In the self, the relationship is actively taken up and assumed, enacted and performed; the third thing actively carries out and monitors the relationship between the two relata.[173]

But Kierkegaard goes beyond what could be described as the internal activity of the self in relating itself to itself to the external activity of the self relating itself to that which "established the entire relation."[174] Not only must the self, in order to be spirit, relate

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[171] See page 9 in the chapter on *Metaphysical Tensions.*

[172] Kierkegaard, *Anxiety*, 11.

[173] John D. Caputo, *How to Read Kierkegaard* (London: Granta Books, 2007), 104.

[174] Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 13.

itself it itself in within its capacities, what could be described as the development and realization of the *humanistic* self.[175] It must relate itself to that which established it, what could be called the development and realization of the *theological* self.

In the remainder of the SUD book Kierkegaard unpacks what he has said in these opening passages. He articulates more explicitly and fully what exactly he means by despair in its two forms, namely, "in despair not to will to be oneself" and "in despair to will to be oneself". For the purposes of this essay it is neither feasible nor necessary to explore every detail in SUD, especially as it relates to the humanistic aspects of Kierkegaard's analysis of the self; rather, one needs only to understand Kierkegaard's understanding of the theological self as it is that self which he thinks is *the* self for Kierkegaard. In order to understand the theological self we must understand three very important notions present in the work as they build upon what he has said in *Fear and Trembling*. These notions are: (1) despair in its two main forms, (2) sin, and (3) faith.

At the root of all despair is the desire to not be what, in simple terms, God created one to be—a creature who exists in relationship with its creator, or, in Kierkegaard's language, a relation that relates itself to that which established it. Kierkegaard states that there are two forms of despair: (1) despair in weakness, or, the despair of not willing to be one's self and (2) despair in defiance, or, the despair of willing to be oneself. Regarding the first form, despair in weakness, he makes a distinction between what is commonly called despair from and what he means by despair. The former, "common

[175] Much of "Part One" of *Sickness* is devoted to the view of the self's limitations and potential from a humanistic perspective.

despair," is despair over the earthly or over something earthly.[176] This is the despair of the "man of immediacy" as Kierkegaard calls him. This man of immediacy identifies despair as the loss of some finite good. Because, as Kierkegaard says, "he quite literally identifies himself only by what he wears," the man of immediacy despairs when what he wears is lost or damaged, or when what he wears is out of vogue.[177] It is when something happens to him that results in the loss of something earthly and temporal that he thinks he is in despair. But this form of despair leads, if the individual brings his or herself to the next level of consciousness, to despair *of* the eternal which is the same as despair *over* oneself.

To despair *of* the eternal and *over* oneself, Kierkegaard states, is a significant step forward in self-awareness.[178] He says, "if the preceding despair was *despair in weakness*, then this is *despair over his weakness*, while still remaining within the category: despair in weakness as distinct from despair in defiance."[179] In other words, at this level, the man of immediacy becomes aware that he was weak in making something earthly so important. He is then presented with two choices. He can either despair *over* his weakness (and *of* the eternal) or he can turn away from despair (repent) in humility to faith.[180] If he does the former he remains in despair, if he does the latter he is saved. If he

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[176] Ibid., 50, 56, 57.

[177] Ibid., 53.

[178] Ibid., 61.

[179] Ibid., 61.

[180] It is interesting to note the close relationship humility and faith has for Kierkegaard. Six times in SUD (pgs. 61-78) Kierkegaard uses a variation of the phrase "in faith humble. . ."

does the former he also despairs *of* the eternal, viz., he despairs *of* that which would release him from his despair, namely, salvation.[181] In this form of despair there is a certain contradiction that appears: this person despairs over his weakness; he does not want to be this weak self and thus dislikes the weakness, yet he also loves it and because of pride does not dare speak about it. It is pride that places so much emphasis and focuses so much on weakness and it is because "he wants to be proud of his self that he cannot bear this consciousness of weakness."[182] Thus, the man of immediacy becomes the man of "inclosing reserve" who dares not tell a single soul about his weakness. Kierkegaard observes that for this man the greatest danger is the possibility of suicide. He could confide in someone, and it may help, or, he could confide and regret it and be thrust deeper into despair by virtue of regret. This is his dilemma.

Kierkegaard then turns to the despair of willing to be oneself in defiance. Obviously, in order to be in defiance, there must be that which one defies. In this case, the defiance is directed towards the power that has established it—its creator, God. Kierkegaard states that there are two kinds of rebellious despair. There is the defying self that acts and there is the defying self that is acted upon. The former "wants to be master of itself or to create itself, to make his self into the self he wants to be, to determine what he will have or not have in his concrete self."[183]"[I]t is unwilling to begin with losing

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[181] Ibid., 61.

[182] Ibid., 65.

[183] Ibid., 68.

itself but wills to be itself."[184] It is a promethean creation of self that this person wills. Self-mastery in the strict sense is what this person desires. However, to speak of self-mastery is to speak also of an interesting dialectic in which "this absolute ruler is a king without a country, actually ruling over nothing; his position, his sovereignty, is subordinate to the dialectic that rebellion is legitimate at any moment. Ultimately, this is arbitrarily based upon the self itself."

The other form of defiant despair is when the self is acted upon, or, suffers a defect, "something the Christian would call a cross."[185] This defect, or cross, may be poverty, physical illness, or something as simple as an inability to accomplish some task. In other words, it is anything which could invoke pity in others for this individual. This despair is similar to the despair of not willing to be oneself in weakness. An important difference, though, is that this person actually *wills* to remain in his defective state. He wills to remain in his defective state in defiance, in defiance of all existence because he is *offended* by all existence. In this defiance he abhors pity and refuses help. "[W]hen having to be helped becomes a profoundly earnest matter, especially when it means being helped by a superior, or by the supreme one, there is the humiliation of being obliged to accept any kind of help unconditionally, of becoming a nothing in the hand of the 'Helper' for whom all things are possible, or the humiliation of simply being helped by another person."[186] "Rather than help, he prefers, if necessary, to be himself with all the

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[184] Ibid., 67.

[185] Ibid., 70.

[186] Ibid., 71.

agonies of hell."[187] Kierkegaard adds that the more self-awareness this kind of sufferer has in this form of despair, the more it intensifies and the more likely it is to become demonic. When defiant despair becomes demonic, the individual has developed a sort of martyr complex. He views himself and his suffering as evidence, evidence that God is a failure. Kierkegaard says, in parabolic fashion,

> it is as if an error slipped into an author's writing and the error became conscious of itself as an error—perhaps it actually was not a mistake but in a much higher sense an essential part of the whole production—and now this error wants to mutiny against the author, out of hatred toward him, forbidding him to correct it and in maniacal defiance saying to him: No, I refuse to be erased; I will stand as a witness against you, a witness that you are a second-rate author.[188]

The author, of course, in this parable is God. The man defies God and uses himself as evidence that his defect is *God's* failure.

## Sin Again

In all of these forms of despair is the reality of sin precisely because, "Despair is Sin." It is sin to be in despair because despair is in essence (1) not having the proper conception of oneself and (2) not relating to oneself properly, a necessary consequence of not having the proper conception of oneself. For Kierkegaard, it is impossible to think about and relate to oneself properly without having what he calls a proper "conception of God" and relating properly to God. In other words, the proper relation to and conception of oneself is integrally related to having a proper relation to and conception of God.

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[187] Ibid., 71.

[188] Ibid., 74.

The questions now, then, are: "What is the proper conception of God?" and "How exactly does one relate to God?" The answer to these questions were hinted at previously in chapter two: "Christological Tensions". In that chapter I demonstrated that Kierkegaard maintained that there is an infinite qualitative distinction between God and man both ontologically and morally. Thus, the first element of having a proper conception of God is recognizing and accepting that there is a qualitative distinction between God and man both ontologically and, more importantly, morally. This distinction must not be "pantheistically abolished" as in the Hegelian philosophy.[189] As was pointed out in chapter two if the ontological distinction between God and man is abolished, the moral distinction soon follows suit. God must be conceived of as qualitatively different. Kierkegaard states explicitly what constitutes the difference:

> In no way is a man so different from God as in this, that he, and that means every man, is a sinner, and is that "before God," (in God's presence) whereby the opposites are kept together in double sense: they are held together, they are not allowed to go away from each other, but by being held together in this way the differences show up all the more sharply, just as when two colors are held together, *opposita juxta se posita magis illucesunt* [the opposites appear more clearly by juxtaposition]. Sin is the one and only predication about a human being that in no way, either *via negationis* or *via eminetiae*, can be stated of God. To say of God (in the same sense that he is not finite and, consequently, *via negationis*, that he is infinite) that he is not a sinner is blasphemy. As sinner, man is separated from God by the most chasmic qualitative abyss. [190]

It may strike one as odd to assert that saying God is not a sinner is blasphemy. This oddity is dissolved by taking into account what Kierkegaard says sin is basically. In more

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[189] Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*, 117.

[190] Ibid., 121, 122.

scriptural language—. "[S]cripture always defines sin as disobedience."[191] One would be committing blasphemy if one were to say, *via negationis*, that God is not disobedient because that implies that God is, *via eminetiae*, the most obedient. To say that God is sub*servient* at all implies that God is also sub*ordinate* to some power over against himself. But this is not the case because God is absolutely free and does not even have to answer to himself, much less, infinitely less, does he have to answer to his creation.

What is more, this gets to the crux of the proper conception of God and the qualitative distinction between God and man. Man is the sinful creature and God the holy creator. For Kierkegaard, Jesus, the one who appears to negate the ontological qualitative difference between God and man as the Paradox, is also the one who makes evident the moral qualitative distinction between God and man. Kierkegaard writes, "Out of love God becomes man. [God] says: Here you see what it is to be a human being: but he adds: Take care, for I am also God—blessed is he who takes no offense at me." He continues, "As a man he takes a lowly servant form; he shows what it is to be an unimportant man so that no man will feel himself excluded or think that it is human status and popularity with men that bring a person closer to God."[192] Thus, conceiving of the holy creator God as Jesus and Jesus as the holy creator God is the proper conception of God which is the *conditio sine qua non* of proper self-conception and relation.

Based on this conception of God, then, Kierkegaard argues that the proper way to relate to God is faith, which is the opposite of sin and despair. "Faith is: that the self in

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[191] Ibid., 81.

[192] Ibid., 127,28.

being itself and in willing to be itself (a creature) rests transparently in God."[193] In this definition of faith, which, intentionally or not I do not know, brings to mind what Augustine says ("our hearts are restless until they rest in you"), Kierkegaard equates becoming spirit, or becoming the self that one was created to be with a radical acceptance of being a creature existing before a holy God. In another place Kierkegaard says that the faithful person, the theological self, the spiritual self, "is infinitely concerned that he in truth relate himself to God with the infinite passion of need."[194] The person who relates to God with the infinite passion of need also has what Kierkegaard calls an "objective uncertainty" because the objective truth of the object is not demonstrable. But for Kierkegaard the 'how' of the relation is just as, if not more, important as the 'what'. That is, *how* one relates to something is just as important as *what* one relates to.

In the case of the God-relation, the *how* is supremely important. To illustrate his point Kierkegaard presents two hypothetical situations. He writes:

> If someone who lives in the midst of Christendom enters, with knowledge of the true idea of God, the house of God, the house of the true God, and prays, but prays in untruth, and if someone lives in an idolatrous land but prays with all the passion of infinity, although his eyes are resting upon the image of an idol—where, then, is there more truth? The one prays in truth to God although he is worshipping an idol the other prays in untruth to the true God and is therefore in truth worshipping an idol.[195]

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[193] Ibid., 82.

[194] Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 201.

[195] Ibid., 201.

Here one discerns that Kierkegaard places a premium on the worship-*full* relationship to God. *Worship*, says Kierkegaard, "is the expression of faith, is to express that the infinite, chasmic, qualitative abyss between [God and man] is confirmed."[196] Worship is the expression for the 'infinite passion of need.' It is only in worship, or, in the worship-full relationship to the God-Man that man is himself. For Kierkegaard, a man is spirit only when he is *homo cultor*, man the worshipper.

[196] Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 129.

# CONCLUSION

> After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. . . . crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.
>
> Revelation 7:9, 10
>
> [B]ut the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.
>
> Revelation 22:3

I began this essay with the Greek aphorism, "Man, know thyself." I stated in the introduction that this essay would be a "contrastive analysis" of two thinkers, Hegel and Kierkegaard, who took up this task and attempted to explicate in their writings the answer to the questions which this aphorism generates, namely, "What is man?" and "What is his τελος?" I analyzed three aspects of Hegel and Kierkegaard's thought, namely, their metaphysics, Christologies, and finally, their pneumatologies. I attempted to set in stark contrast these two competing soterio-pneumatologies. In order to communicate these stark contrasts I divided the essay into three chapters designated to analyzing these three aspects of their thought with the ultimate goal of understanding their conceptions of man and his τελος. A brief recap of each of these chapters is necessary here in order to help the reader follow the seam of tensions in their thought and the resulting implications for contemporary Christian theology and practice.

In chapter one, *Metaphysical Tension,* I delineated the differences between Hegel and Kierkegaard's metaphysics. I began with their metaphysics (1) because their

metaphysics sheds light on the rest of their philosophy and (2) because the tension between their respective metaphysics explains the tensions between their philosophies, especially as it relates to their Christologies and anthropologies. In other words, the metaphysical tension constitutes their fundamental disagreement.

I began with Hegel. Hegel rejected Kant's dismissal of the claims of metaphysics and developed his 'dialectical method' with which he sought to demonstrate the inadequacies of the laws of contradiction and identity. One should remember that Hegel maintained that supposedly mutually exclusive opposite are essentially mutually inclusive. Opposites coinhere and have their determinate identity only as they are thought in conjunction with one another. This dissolution of the tension between opposites constituted Hegel's contention that everything has its identity in its opposite. For Hegel, two basic categories, which also turn out to be extreme opposites, in which humans think, Being and Nothing, demonstrate the truth of his dialectical method. Pure being without predication is, Hegel maintained, pure nothing. Being, when thought without predication, is nothing (non-being). The tension between Being and Nothing is dissolved in the category of Becoming. Hegel called this dissolution a "mediation," by which he meant an automatic "transition" from one thing (in this case Being) to another (in this case Nothing).

Kierkegaard, on the other hand, who was to a certain degree Kantian in his metaphysical views, maintained that Hegel's re-interpretation of the laws of contradiction and identity, expressed in his dialectical method, was, in his words, a "confusion". Hegel's method was in Kierkegaard's mind a pure abstraction which had no basis in

existence, a technical term in Kierkegaard's vocabulary. Existence, one should recall, was the term through which we gained access to Kierkegaard's metaphysics. To exist meant to be critically situated, to have a location. To be located means to be space and time bound. This spatio-temporal situation, one should also recall, is the realm of Becoming "where existence and actuality come forth."[197] As the word "becoming" implies, the realm of becoming (existence) is the realm where things constantly change, fluxuate, move, and transition. Thus, Kierkegaard accepts the notion of Becoming; however, he rejects the idea that the notion of Becoming can be developed out of the notions of Being and Nothing if these notions are understood purely metaphysically and logically as Hegel maintained because 'transitions' only take place spatio-temporally. Transition, Kierkegaard maintained, is a spatio-temporal category, viz., something that takes places in the *physical* world. Transition cannot be treated "purely *meta*physically". Being and Nothing are metaphysical concepts whereas Becoming is a category which presupposes physicality and temporality. Thus, if the category which supposedly united Being and Nothing is removed then Being and Nothing remain disunited; Being and Nothing remain distinct concepts.

These metaphysical tensions between Hegel and Kierkegaard provided a window into the second tension I discussed in this essay, namely, their *Christological Tensions*. Hegel, one should recall, understood Christ to be the revelation of the truth that supposedly mutually exclusive opposites are essentially identical. In Christ, the absolute Other (God) is identical with his absolute other (man). Thus, just as the concepts of Being

[197] Kierkegaard, *Anxiety*, 13.

and Nothing were united in the concept of Becoming (the realm of the historical) so too God (like the concept of Being) and man (like the concept of Nothing) are mediated in the realm of historical Becoming in Christ, the Mediator, who just is the manifestation of this truth in history and is further developed throughout world (Western) history.

Again, Kierkegaard objected to Hegel's interpretation of Christ on the basis that it confused Christianity with his (Hegel's) philosophy. "The most dangerous thing about Hegel," wrote Kierkegaard in his journal, "is that he has modified Christianity—and thereby made it conform to his philosophy."[198] Viewed from without the Hegelian philosophy, Kierkegaard maintains, Christ is not the Mediator in the Hegelian sense but rather the Paradox. Christ does not *represent* the unity of the divine and the human. Christ *demonstrates* and *reveals* the absolute qualitative distinction between God and man. This distinction is to be understood both ontologically and morally. God is ontologically distinct from man, yet Jesus is also to be believed upon as God. Maintaining the ontological distinction between God and man was tantamount for Kierkegaard because if the ontological distinction is abandoned and Christ is not view as a Paradox that defies apprehension and comprehension then so does the moral distinction. Put another way, if God is qualitatively identical to man in an ontological sense then he is also identical to man in a moral sense. If this is the case then what man wants, God wants; what man values, God values and what man wills, God wills. For Kierkegaard then, Christ is God's entering into human history but he does not represent the unity of God and man: rather, he must be understood as the revelation of God's being different

[198] Kierkegaard, *Diary*, 91.

from humanity and human culture and he must be *believed* upon as Creator, Savior, and Lord. In other words, the purpose of God's becoming man was, because of the moral disparity between God and man, to save him.

In "Pneumatological Tensions", I demonstrated the role Hegel and Kierkegaard's Christologies played in their conceptions of man and his τελος. For Hegel, one should recall, Christ is not to be left as an object of devotion. That which he represents must continue to develop to perfection in world history. This perfection, the Kingdom of God, is the modern nation-state and its customs (*Sittlichkeit*), or, Protestant Christendom. Hegel maintained that the organization of the modern-nation state was divinely rational and that it is only in the state than man realizes his τελος. The modern nation-state is, as Hegel wrote in *Philosophy of Right,* "mind on earth (*der Geist der in der Welt steht*) . . . [it] is the divine will, in the sense that it is mind present on earth, unfolding itself to be the actual shape and organization of the world." Thus, the individual, in performing and keeping his "duties of relationships" in the three spheres that make up the state (family, civil society, and the federal government), finds salvation from "primitive" impulses found amongst what were described as 'savage communities' during the era of colonialism, the subjective morality typified by Kant's categorical imperative, and the childish and immature desire to be extraordinary. Moreover, the individual is saved just by being born in Protestant Christendom, the Kingdom of God, so long, of course, as the individual is a good citizen of the state and contributes to the flowering and security of the state and expresses the state's social ethos. Man realizes himself and is saved, to use the phrase I used at the end of the section on Hegel, when he is *homo in statu*.

Kierkegaard took issue with Hegel's pneumatology primarily for three reasons: (1) it does away with the infinite qualitative distinction God and man, (2) because of the dissolution of the qualitative distinction, man does not have an absolute duty to God as a transcendental reality, and (3) because "God becomes an invisible vanishing point, an impotent thought, his power being only in the ethical", the salvation that Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* offers is a salvation 'by works' and rendered exclusive on illegitimate grounds.[199] Kierkegaard dealt with all of these implications in *Fear and Trembling*, but it is the third implication which I maintained was the primary concern of the book. The message of *Sittlichkeit* is only good news for those who (1) do not have a view of God in which God is absolutely and qualitatively different from humanity and (2) for those who are able to live in conformity with *Sittlichkeit*. What is more, the message of *Sittlichkeit* is bad news for those who view God as being transcendently other and who are unable to live in conformity with *Sittlichkeit*. Kierkegaard gave three reasons for this inability, all of which are significant: sin, nature, and historical circumstance. One should recall that Kierkegaard used the story of Abraham to make his point. Abraham related to the absolute (God) through faith as opposed to through conformity to the Ethical. Because of this Abraham is, in Kierkegaard's words, "a guiding star that rescues the anguished."[200] These anguished were those who sorrow over their inability to live a life in conformity with the Ethical. Whether because of sin, nature, or historical circumstance these sorrowful individuals, these repentant individuals, could take solace in the fact that there

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[199] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 59.

[200] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 18.

was one who had his τελος, not in state and its *Sittlichkeit*, but directly in God by virtue of the absurd, i.e., by faith.

In *Sickness Unto Death* (SUD), Kierkegaard went beyond polemic and critique of the Hegelian philosophy that is substantially present in *Fear and Trembling* to a presentation of a pneumatology that is expressed solely from what Kierkegaard maintains is the Christian view the attainment of salvation and realization of spirit. The central thesis of SUD, one should recall, was that man becomes spirit and receives salvation only in accepting what he is, a creature (and there can be no mention of a creature without the reality of a creator who is distinct from the creature) and rests transparently—has faith—in that which created him, namely, God. To be outside of faith is to be in a position of sin and despair. Sin, then, was no longer understood as being unable to conform to *Sittlichkeit*; it ceased to be conceived merely as an action. Sin, now, just is, not being in an absolute relation to the absolute, to use the language of *Fear and Trembling*. Furthermore, Kierkegaard maintained that being in an absolute relation to God—faith—is expressed in worship which, one should recall, expresses "that the infinite, chasmic, qualitative abyss between [God and humanity] is confirmed."[201] For Kierkegaard, man is saved and becomes spirit, to use the phrase I used at the end of the previous chapter, when he is *homo cultor*, man the worshiper.

I began this chapter with two quotations from Scripture, both of which come from the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is significant for any Christian theology

[201] Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*, 129.

because it is a disclosure not only of the 'how' of the present cosmos' close, but more importantly of the 'what' of the future cosmos' beginning, or, in the language I have used throughout this essay, Revelation tells of the τελος of man and indeed all of creation. This τελος is *faith-full worship* and *worship-full devotion* to a God who is not us, but is for us. It is important to take into account, moreover, two important revelations about man which the book of Revelation offers: (1) that man's salvation belongs to God and Jesus, the Lamb and (2) that the worship-full devotion to God is to be given to God by peoples of all tongues, tribes, and nations regardless of language, ethnicity, or culture. Faith-full worship and worship-full devotion to God. In other words, worship-full devotion to God is *the sine qua non* of realized τελος, in fact, it may be said to be the τελος of man according to the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is intentionally polemical towards the kingdom of Rome. Revelation makes a hard and fine distinction between the kingdom of Rome in which worship of the Emperor and the empire is demanded and the Kingdom of God of which the Christian community awaits in which worship-full devotion to the Lamb of God is fully realized. Although Kierkegaard does not make a direct allusion to Revelation, I believe that his thought, in contrast to that of Hegel, aligns more closely with biblical dogma.

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